Elite-peasant relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia: decentralization, dispossession, and countermovement

Iqra Anugrah

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This study investigates why elites accommodate peasant interests concerning land rights and natural resource management at the local rather than national level and variations of local accommodation of peasant interests across districts in post-authoritarian Indonesia, a young middle-income democracy with a substantial agricultural population. Utilizing ethnographic, interview, and archival/document materials from 24 months of fieldwork with a focus on three case studies – the national dynamics of agrarian politics in Jakarta, the land rights struggle led by the Bengkulu Peasant Union (STaB) in North Bengkulu District, and the advocacy efforts for watershed sustainability and peasant livelihood promoted by local farmers’ groups and environmental activists in Serang District – I analyzed factors shaping the occurrence and variation of accommodation of peasant interests by the elites.

This study found that the presence of a unified organizational platform representing peasant communities and the convergence of interests between elites and peasants influence the occurrence of accommodation of peasant interests by the elites. This explains why there is a lack of accommodation of peasant interests at the national level where peasant organizations are fragmented and a lack of interest convergence between elites and peasants. Conversely, in North Bengkulu and Serang, the local peasants are organizationally unified and there is a convergence
of interests between the local elites and the peasants, leading to accommodation of peasant interests at the local level.

Moreover, this study also found that variations in local accommodation types are shaped by the degree of salience of local agrarian issues and the strength of the local civil society. In North Bengkulu, the main local agrarian issue – land rights – is politically salient. Furthermore, its civil society landscape is vibrant. This led to the occurrence of accommodations through mobilization in which peasant interests are accommodated after sustained peasant mobilization by STaB. In contrast, in Serang, the local agrarian issues – environmental degradation and the declining quality of peasant livelihood – are less politically salient. Additionally, the local civil society landscape is less vibrant. This has led to the emergence of accommodation through corporatism, in which peasant interests are accommodated under a corporatist natural resource governance framework.

Echoing Karl Polanyi, this rise of societal efforts to protect peasant livelihood and influence agrarian politics in contemporary Indonesia can be seen as an example of a countermovement against the excessive marketization and elite expropriation of social life. Relatedly, this research also highlights several important theoretical and practical implications, namely: 1) the persistence of “the peasant question” in the Global South, 2) the intersecting dynamics between agrarian changes and democratic politics, 3) the extent to which rural social movements and community organizations can contribute to democratic deepening, and 4) the extent to which political democracy can contribute to the empowerment of marginalized populations and a more equitable development outcome—in other words, the democratization of development and class relations.
ELITE-PEASANT RELATIONS IN POST-AUTHORITARIAN INDONESIA:
DECENTRALIZATION, DISPOSSESSION, AND COUNTERMOVEMENT

BY
IQRA ANUGRAH
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Doctoral Director:
Kheang Un
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The saying “it takes a village to raise a child” could not be more true. In the process of producing this dissertation, I have relied on so many people and accumulated a lot of debt from their generous help. The next couple of pages are therefore dedicated to thanking their tremendous contribution. As usual, naming names risks missing some people. In that case, the error of omission is all mine.

First and foremost, as a field researcher, I have to thank my primary local interlocutors in the field – the ordinary peasants and villagers, who kindly welcomed, chatted with, provided shelter for, and most importantly, embraced this clueless city boy as one of their own. They opened up their homes to me and shared their rich life stories. I learned a lot from them not only about my dissertation topic but also about life in general. For that, I would be forever grateful. *A luta continua.*

The gruelling dissertation writing process was greatly helped by guidance from my dissertation committee and some other mentors. Kheang Un is the model dissertation adviser that anyone could hope. My time working with him at Northern Illinois University (NIU) has been pleasant and fulfilling both professionally and personally. I really appreciate his commitment to and support for this dissertation project, even when I did not have yet a clear idea of what it would look like. The help of other committee members is also significant. Scot Schraufnagel guides my thinking to be more “PoliSci-y” and methodologically-sounding and is always ready to help with administrative matters. Eric Jones infects me with the historical way of inquiry and
convinced me to learn Dutch. Michael Buehler sets a high standard for the study of Indonesian local politics and his willingness to work with me even after his departure to SOAS is highly appreciated. Michele Ford from the University of Sydney did not sit at the dissertation committee, but for me she effectively served as the unofficial fifth member. She took me under her wing and encouraged me to publish and participate in the Southeast Asianist tribe. Her support is always motivating. This dissertation also bears the mark of the late Danny Unger, who read early drafts of the dissertation proposal and gave some important suggestions. Ajarn Danny, you will be missed. Needless to say, the contribution of these mentors has been immense.

Writing this dissertation requires long fieldwork, which in turn requires a lot of logistical support. Thanks to the generous funding from the NIU Political Science Department Russell Smith Scholarship, the Transparency for Development (T4D) Predoctoral Fellowship from the Ash Center at Harvard Kennedy School and Results for Development Institute, the Visiting PhD Scholar Fund from the University of Sydney’s Southeast Asia Center, and the ENITAS Scholarship from the Institute of Thai Studies at Chulalongkorn University, I was able to conduct two-years of fieldwork in Indonesia. In particular, I would like to thank Steve Kosack, Courtney Tolmie, and Jessica Creighton from the T4D Project for their trust in my work and invitation to collaborate with them. My time in Sydney was also a fruitful one, since I was able to connect with Australia’s Southeast Asian Studies community. My research also benefits from the institutional support of the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education, and Information (LP3ES) in Jakarta, which warmly welcomed me as a Visiting Research Fellow and provided office space throughout my fieldwork period. I thank my colleagues at LP3ES, especially the Institute’s Deputy Director, Triyaka Lisdiyanta, for their support.
The role of my home institution, NIU, is also equally significant. Both the Department of Political Science and the Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS) on campus have been lively and supportive intellectual homes in the middle of DeKalb’s flatland and its bone-crushing winter, not to mention their financial support and excellent training. I would like to thank the following faculty members in the Department for their professional advice in assisting me to enter *Academia Obscura*: Michael Clark, Colin Kuehl, Aarie Glas, and Ches Thurber. At the Center, the support of Judy Ledgerwood during her tenure as the Center’s director is very appreciated. Besides intellectual guidance, institutional and collegial support is also crucial. Without the administrative support of April Davis and Jackie Joiner in the Department as well as Kim Wilson and Angie Dybas before their departure, I would be lost in navigating the University’s paperwork. The Center also gave me the opportunity to interact with wonderful Southeast Asianists across campus and take “weird” courses on Southeast Asia’s pre-colonial history and ghosts for instance. The Center’s staffs are also lovely people. Special thanks to Liz Denius for her help in editing my funny English.

Different parts of this dissertation have been presented at the Department and CSEAS on campus, LP3ES, Kyoto University’s Southeast Asian Studies in Asia Conference, workshops at the University of Sydney, Chulalongkorn University’s ENITAS Awardee Presentation, Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta at the invitation of the American Institute for Indonesian Studies (AIFIS), Akatiga Center for Social Analysis in Bandung, the worker-owned Diskaz Labor House Coffee shop in Jakarta, and Akar Foundation in Bengkulu. I thank the participants of these forums who gave me the opportunity to test my hunches and hypotheses, corroborate my empirical findings, and correct me when I was wrong. Additionally, conversations with Jeffrey
Neilson, Edward Aspinall, Hanny Wijaya, and Muhammad Yunus Rafiq helped me to sharpen my arguments.

Additional support throughout my PhD is also appreciated. Kristen Borre from the Department of Anthropology on campus gave a good grounding on anthropological methods and was a key supporter for my fellowship and job applications. Gail Jacky at the University Writing Center saved me from any formatting errors. Scholarships from the American-Indonesian Cultural and Educational Foundation and a travel grant from the Rajawali Foundation helped me to stay afloat during my studies. The Dissertation Completion Fellowship from NIU Graduate School allowed me to focus on my dissertation writing and job hunting without teaching duties. I also thank Mas Nico Harjanto for his continuous support, Bang Umar Abdullah for his help with several grant applications, Bang Djayadi Hanan for convincing me to go to the United States for graduate training, and Thushara Dibley at the University of Sydney for her help with my job search documents. Special thanks also to coffeehouses in DeKalb and elsewhere –places at which I did a significant portion of my writing throughout my Ph.D. program and injected myself with an unhealthy amount of caffeine on a regular basis – without which, I would never have survived grad school.

This logistics-heavy research would not be possible without the support of so many people on the field. In Serang, my entry to the villages was facilitated by the T4D Project and its local NGO partner, PATTIRO. I would like to thank Jenna Juwono from the T4D Project and the PATTIRO staffs – Panji, Subhan, Angga, Ari, and Anty – for their help. I would also like thank activists at Rekonvasi Bhumi, particularly Nana Rahadian and Nuril who shared their experience and facilitated my entry to the Cidanau peasant communities. But above all, I would like to thank the community members in the villages in which I conducted my research. They must be
wondering why on earth this random city boy became interested in their lives, but nonetheless they invited me for late-night talks over coffee and cigarettes and all sorts of community events. In particular, I should mention the great contribution of Kang Rohili, one of my best friends in the field. Kang Rohili’s family kindly hosted me during my fieldwork period. Thank you, Bu Haji, kakangs, and teteh. Kang Rohili’s willingness to share his rich life and collaborate with me for our ongoing research project – his life history – is very much appreciated. I promise that we will get it done! Conversations with Uday Suhada, Oom Dipo, Utang A. Madjid, and several officials helped me to better understand their views and the local context and dynamics. Mas Abdul Hamid, a veteran Banten researcher, connected me with some key informants and shared his insights on all things Bantenese. Any researcher interested in the study of Banten Province should consult him and will certainly benefit from doing that. I would also like to recognize the help of my research assistant, Abdul Haris “Djarot” Djiwandono, and his willingness to share his perspectives as a student activist.

In Makassar and Bulukumba, tons of individuals also helped me. Thanks to Bang Taslim, Bang Asfar, Kak Asrul, and Kak Amran, for facilitating my entry to Bulukumba and opening so many doors. Kak Yani and Bung Rahmat in Makassar convinced me to share my research experience and engage with key activists and scholarly communities in the town. Mustaqim helped to locate some key articles at Fajar daily. Comrades at the Bulukumba branch of the Alliance for Agrarian Reform Movement (AGRA) – Bung Njet, Bung Gatot, Bung Purna, Bung Edi, Kak Lolo, Che’ Konang, and many others – kindly shared their experience and welcomed me in their activities – including impromptu dinners with all sorts of fresh seafood, including grilled stingray (boy it was really good – your generosity knows no limit, Che’ Konang!). To the peasant communities in both upland and lowland Bulukumba, I also express my gratitude.
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In North Bengkulu, my last district case study, I thank the following individuals: Bang Erwin, Bang Yogi, Bang Andom, Bang Warman, Mba Dinar, and Bung Oky at Akar Foundation. Bang Giran, Bang Wawan, Bang Marhen, Bang Dedi, Pak Parno, Pak Hari, and other members of the Bengkulu Peasant Union (STaB). Pak Parno and Pak Hari as well as their families also kindly hosted me during my field research in their communities. Muspani, for sharing his insights. Bang Karjiyo and Pak Warsiman at North Bengkulu’s local daily, Radar Utara. Pihan Pino and Zaky Antoni at Rakyat Bengkulu. Bang Rheeno and Bang Mardhian, who kept me company in Arga Makmur. These people have shared their experience, helped in locating key data and archives, and encouraged me to share my research experience with the broader activist and peasant communities in North Bengkulu. Equally important, I would also like to thank Rahmi Hartarti’s family in Arga Makmur and Kota Bengkulu, who convinced me to take the needed occasional breaks from research to enjoy the good things in life, such as devouring grilled fish, taking a long walk at the traditional markets, or simply chilling around over a glass of fresh pineapple juice. Thank you, Oom, Tante, Pakde, and Bude.

Sadly, over the course of my PhD studies, I lost a number of friends and mentors who passed away. The passing of Utomo Dananjaya, a long-time progressive Muslim activist; Dede
Farokhah, a young female worker and a community activist in Serang; and Syahrir Abu Rahmat, a preacher-turned-movement organizer in Bulukumba, is surely a blow for Indonesia’s social movement landscape and a great personal loss for me. *Mas* Tom was a great supporter for my intellectual development. *Teh* Ojong and *Ustadz* Bucek went beyond their “call of duty” as local interlocutors and became my close friends in the field.

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Without the help and inspiration of mentors at my previous institutions – Edgar Porter, A Mani, and Joseph Progler at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University and Elizabeth Collins at Ohio University – I would not have been convinced and/or able to undertake a Ph.D. in the United States. So thank you, Porter-Sensei, Mani-Sensei, Progler-Sensei, and *Ibu* Collins.
My stay in DeKalb would be much less enjoyable without the cheerful support from the Indonesian community and my fellow graduate school colleagues. For that, I thank my DeKalb Mafia Housemates – Afrimadona, Azriansyah Agoes, and Eunji Won – as well as others, in alphabetical and household order – Ali Akrom and Lily Akrom, Dani Muhtada and Hikmi Zain, Lensi Handayani and Elvi Gogo, Sirojuddin Arif and Iim Halimautussadiyah, Ronnie Nataatmadja and Gantina Setiawati, Rahmi Hartarti Aoyama, Riza Alen, Sinta Febrina, Silvia Ginting, Sura Ginting, Testriono and Nurseha, Titik Firawati, the kids, and obviously, Srie Ramli and Tunru Lambogo, the chief elders and godparents of Indonesians in the town. The support of my departmental colleagues, especially the 2012 cohort and fellow international students in the department, has been crucial in every step of the arduous Ph.D. training: the long coursework phase, the painful rite of initiation called the Ph.D. candidacies, the adventurous field research, and the never-ending dissertation writing. I also thank the Indonesian community in Athens, Ohio, who welcomed me during my nine-month stay at Ohio University before transitioning to NIU. In particular, I have to thank Airlangga Dermawan, Lina Himawan, and Yazid Sururi for their help.

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Of course, the last paragraph should be dedicated for my family – my parents and my siblings. They wait patiently and continue to be my biggest supporters. They encourage life exploration and tolerate my unusual life choices. My apologies for my absence. I cannot thank them enough. I hope I can continue on a less traveled path and take care of them. My biggest thanks go to my mom – thank you for showing me through example to be a stubborn, critical, and committed life fighter. I will continue to fight the good fight.

May God bless all of them. *Victoria acerta!*
DEDICATION

For peasants and other working people in Indonesia and elsewhere

“Come, join in the only battle wherein no man can fail,
Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his deed shall still prevail.”
(William Morris, “The Day is Coming”)
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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AGRA</td>
<td>Aliansi Gerakan Reforma Agraria, Alliance of Agrarian Reform Movement</td>
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<td>AMAN</td>
<td>Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara, Alliance of Indigenous People of the Archipelago</td>
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<td>AMS</td>
<td>Angkatan Muda Siliwangi, Siliwangi Youth</td>
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<td>API</td>
<td>Aliansi Petani Indonesia, Indonesian Peasant Alliance</td>
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<td>APTRI</td>
<td>Asosiasi Petani Tebu Rakyat Indonesia, Indonesian People’s Sugarcane Peasant Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>ARC</td>
<td>Agrarian Resource Center</td>
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<td>BAL</td>
<td>Basic Agrarian Law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bapedalda</td>
<td>Badan Pengendalian Dampak Lingkungan Daerah, Environmental Impact Management Agency</td>
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<td>Binmas</td>
<td>Bimbingan Massal Swasembada Beras, Mass Guidance for Rice Self-Sufficiency Program</td>
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<td>BKTN</td>
<td>Bank Koperasi Tani dan Nelayan, Peasants’ and Fishers’ Cooperative Bank</td>
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<td>BPN</td>
<td>Badan Pertanahan Nasional, National Land Agency</td>
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<td>BPMD</td>
<td>Balai Pendidikan Masyarakat Desa, Village Education Center</td>
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<td>BRWA</td>
<td>Badan Registrasi Wilayah Adat, Ancestral Domain Registration Agency</td>
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<td>BTI</td>
<td>Barisan Tani Indonesia, Indonesian Peasants’ Front</td>
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<td>BUBT</td>
<td>Badan Usaha Buruh Tani, Peasant Workers’ Cooperative Enterprise</td>
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<td>BULLOG</td>
<td>Badan Urusan Logistik, Indonesia’s Marketing Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBNRM</td>
<td>Community-based Natural Resource Management</td>
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<td>CONAFOR</td>
<td>Comisión Nacional Forestal, National Forestry Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>Communist Party of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPI(M)</td>
<td>Communist Party of India (Marxist)</td>
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<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organization</td>
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<td>DPD</td>
<td>Dewan Perwakilan Daerah, Indonesia’s Senate</td>
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<td>ELSAM</td>
<td>Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat, Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy</td>
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<td>FKDC</td>
<td>Forum Komunikasi DAS Cidanau, Cidanau Watershed Communication Forum</td>
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<td>FNKSDA</td>
<td>Front Nahdliyin untuk Kedaulatan Sumber Daya Alam, Nahdliyin Front for Natural Resource Sovereignty</td>
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<td>Forum BPD</td>
<td>Forum Badan Perwakilan Desa, Village Representatives’ Association</td>
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<td>Forum Kades</td>
<td>Forum Kepala Desa, Village Head Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPPB</td>
<td>Forum Paguyuban Petani Kabupaten Batang, Community Forum for Peasants in Batang District</td>
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FSPI  
*Federasi Serikat Petani Indonesia, Federation of Indonesian Peasant Unions*

FWI  
*Forest Watch Indonesia*

GAPENSI  
*Gabungan Pelaksana Konstruksi Nasional Indonesia, Indonesian National Contractors’ Association*

GTZ  
*German Technical Cooperation Agency*

Ha  
*Hectares*

HGU  
*Hak Guna Usaha, Commercial Lease Rights*

HKTI  
*Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia, Indonesia Farmers’ Harmony Association*

HPH  
*Hak Pengusahaan Hutan, Forest Exploitation Rights*

HPHH  
*Hak Pemungutan Hasil Hutan, Forest Harvesting Rights*

HPK  
*Hutan Produksi Konversi, Convertible Forests*

HPMJT  
*Himpunan Petani Mandiri Jawa Tengah, Central Java Independent Peasant Association*

HTI  
*Hutan Tanaman Industri, Industrial Timber Plantation*

HYV  
*High-yielding Variety*

ICICO  
*Integrador de Comunidades Indígenas y Campesinas de Oaxaca, Integrator of Indigenous and Campesino Communities of Oaxaca*

ICRAF  
*World Agroforestry Centre*

IIED  
*International Institute for Environment and Development*

JATAM  
*Jaringan Advokasi Tambang, Mining Advocacy Network*

Jawara  
*Local strongmen who typically possess martial arts expertise*

KADIN  
*Kamar Dagang dan Industri, Chamber of Commerce and Trade*

KBHB  
*Kantor Bantuan Hukum Bengkulu, Bengkulu Legal Aid Office*

Komnas HAM  
*Komisi Nasional untuk Perlindungan Hak Asasi Manusia, National Human Rights Commission*

KNID  
*Komite Nasional Indonesia Daerah, Regional Indonesian National Committee*

KNPA  
*Komite Nasional Pembaruan Agraria, National Committee for Agrarian Reform*

KPA  
*Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria, Consortium for Agrarian Reform*

KPK  
*Komisi Pemberantas Korupsi, Corruption Eradication Comission*

KPRI  
*Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia, Confederation of Indonesian People’s Movements*

KpSHK  
*Konsorsium Pendukung Sistem Hutan Kerakyatan, Consortium for People-centered Forest Management*

KSP  
*Kantor Staff Presiden, Presidential Staff Office*

KSPS  
*Komunitas Swabinana Pedesaan Salassae, Salassae Rural Self-Governing Community*

KTH  
*Kelompok Tani Hutan, Forest Farmers’ Group, another type of poktan*

LAP  
*Land Administration Project*

LBH  
*Lembaga Bantuan Hukum, Legal Aid Foundation*

LKMD  
*Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa, Community Resilience Board*

LMD  
*Lembaga Masyarakat Desa, Village Assembly*
LP3ES  Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education, and Information
LPJL  Lembaga Pengelola Jasa Lingkungan, Environmental Service Management Agency
LSM  Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat, Indonesian term for NGOs and CSOs
MIFEE  Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate
MoU  Memorandum of Understanding
MP3EI  Masterplan Percepatan dan Perluasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Indonesia, Masterplan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesian Economic Development
MSSD  Most Similar Systems Design
MST  Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra, Landless Worker’ Movement
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
NU  Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia’s largest traditionalist Islamic organization
P3I  Persatuan Pergerakan Petani Indonesia, Association of Indonesian Peasant Movements
RT/RW  Rukun Tetangga/Rukun Warga, neighborhood coordination networks
Pansus  Panitia Khusus, government or parliament special investigation committee
Partai Gerindra  Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya, Great Indonesia Movement Party
Partai Hanura  Partai Hari Nurani Rakyat, People’s Conscience Party
Partai Nasdem  Partai Nasional Demokrat, National Democratic Party
PAS  Pago por Servicios Ambientales, Payment for Environmental Services
PD  Partai Demokrat, Democratic Party
PDAM  Perusahaan Daerah Air Minum, Regional Water Company
PDBI  Pusat Data Bisnis Indonesia, Indonesian Business Data Center
PDIP  Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle
Perindo  Partai Persatuan Indonesia, Indonesian Unity Party
PES  Payment for Environmental Services
PITL  Persatuan Insan Tani Lampung, Lampung Peasant Union
PKBH  Persatuan Kantor Bantuan Hukum, Association of Legal Aid Offices
PKI  Partai Komunis Indonesia, Communist Party of Indonesia
Poktan  Kelompok Tani, neighborhood-based farmers’ group
POS  Political Opportunity Structures
Perhutani  State Forestry Company
PPAB  Paguyuban Petani Aryo Blitar, Aryo Blitar Peasant Association
PPAN  Program Pembaruan Agraria Nasional, National Agrarian Reform Program
PPP  Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, United Development Party
PPPSBBI  Persatuan Pendekar Persilatan Seni Budaya Banten Indonesia, Indonesian Union of Bantenese Men of Martial Arts, Art, and Culture
PPR  Partai Perserikatan Rakyat, People’s Confederation Party
PRD  Partai Rakyat Demokratik, People’s Democratic Party
PRONA  Proyek Operasi Nasional Agraria, Government Land Title Legalization and Certification Program
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<th>Full Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>PT DSJ</td>
<td>PT Dinamika Selaras Jaya</td>
<td>a private plantation and mining company</td>
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<tr>
<td>PT KTI</td>
<td>PT Krakatau Tirta Industri</td>
<td>a water company and a beneficiary of PES in Serang</td>
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<tr>
<td>PT Lonsum</td>
<td>PT London Sumatera</td>
<td>a multinational rubber plantation company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT SIL</td>
<td>PT Sandabi Indah Lestari</td>
<td>a private plantation company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT TMPA</td>
<td>PT Tri Manunggal Pasifik Abadi</td>
<td>a private plantation company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTI</td>
<td>Rukun Tani Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Peasant Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarbupri</td>
<td>Sarekat Buruh Perkebunan Republik Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Plantation Workers’ Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMID</td>
<td>Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi</td>
<td>Students in Solidarity with Democracy in Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPI</td>
<td>Serikat Petani Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Peasant Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPJB</td>
<td>Serikat Petani Jawa Barat</td>
<td>West Javanese Peasant Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPP</td>
<td>Serikat Petani Pasundan</td>
<td>Sundanese Peasant Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPSU</td>
<td>Serikat Petani Sumatera Utara</td>
<td>North Sumatran Peasant Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>STaB</td>
<td>Serikat Tani Bengkulu</td>
<td>Bengkulu Peasant Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tahura</td>
<td>Taman Hutan Raya</td>
<td>Forest Conservation Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCSSSP</td>
<td>Tree Crops Smallholders Sector Project</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Transmigrasi</td>
<td>Transmigration, an internal migration scheme promoted during the New Order period to encourage rural migration from Java to the less-populated Outer Island provinces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ulama</td>
<td>Religious scholars and figures, also known as kyai</td>
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<td>VMF</td>
<td>Stichting Het Voedingsmiddelenfonds</td>
<td>Food Supply Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>WALHI</td>
<td>Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Forum for the Environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YLBHI</td>
<td>Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia</td>
<td>Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation</td>
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<td>YTM</td>
<td>Yayasan Tanah Merdeka</td>
<td>Free Land Foundation</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“Society protected itself against the perils inherent in a self-regulating market system – this was the one comprehensive feature in the history of the age”
(Karl Polanyi (1957) in “The Great Transformation”)

Problem Statement

Why do elites accommodate peasant interests concerning land rights and rural livelihood at the local rather than national level in post-authoritarian Indonesia? Moreover, what explains variations in the types of local accommodation of peasant interests by the elites across districts in Indonesia? Relatedly, what are the different types of local accommodation of peasant interests? These are the questions this dissertation sought to answer. Using the Indonesian case, this dissertation grapples with two larger lines of social science inquiry: what enables peasants to institutionalize their demands and force elites to respond to their interests? Furthermore, what makes elites concede to peasant demands?

Historically, peasants have been imagined as anything but themselves. State planners, landlords, bureaucrats, industrialists, and big traders see them as soon-to-be-conquered subjects. In popular discourse, they are depicted in a binary opposition: either as angry rebels or happy villagers. In reality, the truth lies somewhere between and is much more complex, as peasants constantly adjust their strategies for engaging the elites, a social force with greater political and economic resources and social networks that maintains a dominant position in society.
Structurally, elites are resource-endowed and have the capacity to perpetuate their rule.\textsuperscript{1} The continuation of elite rule can be found in all political organizations (Mosca, 1939). Critical social science theories have long pointed out that elites are the dominant player in many aspects of political, economic, and social realms. Here, elites can be defined as people who “occupy the command post” in the state, the military, the business world, and the social life and whose power is consequential (Mills, 1956, pp. 3-4; 13). Their pivotal role also suggests “the existence of a hierarchy and an uneven distribution of socially valuable resources” (Fukai & Fukui, 1992, p. 25). This definition includes bureaucrats, politicians, businesspeople, and community leaders such as clerics and local strongmen. Typically, these actors also share similar social milieus and bases. Their power source is also fungible: “wealth may be turned into social status and social status into political office and power.” (Fukai & Fukui, 1992, p. 25). It is to capture this complexity that I use the term “elites” instead of other terms such as “classes” and “leaders.”\textsuperscript{2}

Under authoritarian political and social arrangements, peasants rely more on everyday forms of resistance (Scott, 1985). But in a democratic setting, they are more likely to express and address their grievances openly. This is what has been going on in Indonesia for the past two decades (1998-2018). After more than three decades of authoritarianism and statist developmentalism under the New Order (1966-1998), Indonesia experienced the dual transition to electoral democracy and a neoliberal market economy in 1998. This opened both opportunities and challenges for the Indonesian peasant class. Throughout this work, peasants are defined as

\textsuperscript{1} As Mills (1956) points out in his observation of the American elites, “those who sit in the seats of the high and the mighty are selected and formed by the means of power, the sources of wealth, and the mechanics of celebrity, which prevail in their society” (p. 361).

\textsuperscript{2} Here, I subscribe to the structuralist view of elite and power relations since it recognizes the uneven and power-laden nature of political arena and the structural limitations of ordinary citizens in influencing political dynamics. Even Dahl (1961), the archteorist of political pluralism, readily admits that “running counter to this legal equality of citizens in the voting booth, however, is an unequal distribution of resources that can be used for influencing the choices of voters, and between elections, of officials” (p. 4).
rural cultivators whose production surpluses are transferred to the dominant classes in society. This category includes rural laborers, landless peasants, smallholders, and middle peasants. This definition, which includes the lowest as well as middle strata of the peasantry, better captures the sociological complexity of the rural dispossessed for two reasons: first, the degree of socio-economic precariousness of lower and middle peasants is not too different and, second, both of them play an important role in peasant mobilization and organizations in Indonesia at least since the 1980s.

As a marginalized social group, peasants, just like their lower-class and subaltern counterparts – workers, urban poor, and cultural and gender minorities – continue to pose a problem for the ruling elites. Across the developing world, the push for state-led, export-oriented development in both market and command economies since the end of the World War II and the shift to neoliberalism since late 1970s seem to quash the rural and peasant way of life, either gradually or violently. Obsessed with creating “the modern peasants,” elites in many postcolonial countries subjugate this group to various experiments, which deprive them of their relative autonomy from both the state and market forces. Under the current decades of neoliberal hegemony, a policy prescription that places an untamed free market and its expansion in the many aspects of life as a governing principle of political, economic, and social lives

---

3 This definition is mainly based on Wolf’s (1966) definition of peasants. For an overview of anthropological debates on the definition of the peasantry, see Silverman (1979).
4 This study includes the three types of peasants into the working definition because all of them possess what is described as “revolutionary potential,” that is, the tendency to participate in collective actions to improve their livelihood. This can also be read as the potential for these different types of peasants to participate in peasant-based social movements. See Alavi (1973), Charlesworth (2008), and Wolf (1971) for arguments and debates on the revolutionary potential of the middle peasantry, Ondetti (2008), Wolford (2010), Wright & Wolford (2003) on the landless peasantry, and Desai (2003) and Sandbrook, Edelman, Heller, & Teichman (2007) for cross-class alliances between middle peasants and landless peasants and rural laborers. For a good literature review on the definition of peasant, see Edelman (2013).
5 On the role of the middling peasants in peasant movements and many other aspects of the rural life and beyond, see Bachriadi (2010, Ch. 5) and Scott (2012, pp. 84-99).
6 Thanks to Muhammad Yunus for this point.
through the Holy Trinity of privatization, deregulation, and financialization (Harvey, 2007; Williamson, 1990), the peasantry continues to face challenges and threats against its livelihood. The consequences are bound to be catastrophic for the peasant class, but they did not stand still.

This act of peasant defiance against the expropriation of land and natural resources by political and economic elites is a recurring theme in many societies. Echoing Karl Polanyi’s (1957) notion of “double movement” – that is, the rise of societal resistance against the excessive and totalizing marketization of the social life – I see the rise of organized peasantry and efforts to promote peasant interests as, to use Polanyi’s own term, a “countermovement” against the destructive control of untamed market forces on land and other natural resources in post-authoritarian Indonesia. While Polanyi focuses mostly on the case of land enclosure in the early days of British capitalism, his analysis resonates with the experience of many developing countries including Indonesia (Hall, Hirsch, & Li, 2011). Through my district case studies, I sought to find factors accounting for the success or failure of countermovement by testing variation across cases.

This contentious relationship between elites and peasants, that is between state authorities and dominant economic actors on one hand and the toiling rural population on the other hand, has received tremendous scholarly attention. Throughout history, the relations between elites and peasants have always been contentious. The European state formation experience shows that when different sets of elites – particularly the monarchy, the declining aristocracy, and the rising bourgeoisie – are more unified or at least able to overcome their collective action problem, it is easier for them to tame the revolutionary potential of the peasantry (Anderson, 1979; Tilly, 1990). Conversely, elite fragmentation in the wake of the breakdown of local authorities in rural areas allows peasants to influence the trajectory of regime change through rebellions and social
revolutions in both Western and non-Western contexts (Moore, 1966; Paige, 1975; Scott, 1976; Skocpol, 1979; Wolf, 1999). When peasants cannot challenge the elite ideological and material hegemony openly, they turn to discreet everyday forms of resistance (Kerkvliet, 2002; 2005; Scott, 1985; 1990).

In the developing world, the specter of peasant revolutions and national liberation movements from Latin America to Asia continues to color popular imaginations and perceptions of peasant collective action (Wolf, 1999). But during the heydays of post-colonial authoritarianism, whether in capitalist or state socialist context, peasants’ anarchistic tendencies were greeted by state control and repression, often in the name of development. But the relaxation of political grip coupled with the impact of economic liberalization in many developing countries have given a new lease on life to the organized peasants, who take this opportunity to voice their grievances and, under certain circumstances, express dissent. In democratic and decentralized political settings, peasant collective action has taken a rather new form from mutual-aid societies and contentious political action to organized social movements and political parties. At the same time, many old elites with links to the old authoritarian era remain in power or, at the very least, continue to dominate politics.

Against this backdrop, this dissertation engaged with this growing conversation on agrarian politics. Taking the case of post-authoritarian Indonesia, a middle-income young democracy with a substantial agricultural population, it analyzes the politics of elite-peasant relations and agrarian policies in the changing context of development and state-society relations. Specifically, this dissertation investigated what accounts for accommodation of peasant

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7 As of February 2017, according to the World Bank’s Indonesia Economic Quarterly, around 31.8% (39.7 million workers out of 124.5 million workers) of the Indonesian workforce were employed in agriculture, a category that includes agriculture, hunting, forestry, and fishing (The World Bank, 2017).
interests concerning land rights and rural livelihood by elites and variations in types of such accommodation across local districts in post-authoritarian Indonesia. To fully explain this puzzle, a focus on just one of the two social forces under study was not sufficient. This is because to explain social and political changes, one has to look at the elites and the masses and the relationship between the two (Alagappa, 1995, p. 29; Czudnowski, 1982). Therefore, this dissertation examined the dynamic relationship between elites and peasants.

To put it differently, this research project posed the following questions: 1) Why do elites accommodate peasant interests concerning land rights and rural livelihood at the local rather than national level in post-authoritarian Indonesia? 2) What explains variations in the types of local accommodation of peasant interests by the elites across districts? 3) What are the different types of local accommodation of peasant interests in contemporary Indonesia? In this dissertation, the Indonesian case serves as an empirical reference to address the bigger questions concerning elite-peasant relations in the changing context of state-society relations and development. Utilizing ethnographic, interview, and document/archival data based on a national-level analysis and a controlled comparison of two districts – North Bengkulu and Serang – this dissertation hypothesizes that

H1: The degree of organizational unity among peasants and the convergence of interests between elites and peasants explain the occurrence of accommodation of peasant interests by the elites.

H1a: Fragmentation among peasant organizations and the lack of interest convergence between national elites and peasants explain the lack of accommodation of peasant interests by the elites at the national level.
H1b: The presence of a unified organizational venue representing peasant communities and the convergence of interests between local elites and peasants explain the occurrence of accommodation of peasant interests by the elites at the local level. In other words, the two independent variables in this hypothesis are necessary for the occurrence of accommodation. But the presence of only one of them is not sufficient to trigger accommodation. For accommodation to occur, both variables have to appear in tandem.

Using a multi-scalar approach, I contrasted the state of agrarian politics at the national level – where there is a lack of accommodation of peasant interests – with the dynamics of elite-peasant relations in the two district case studies, North Bengkulu and Serang – where there is a meaningful accommodation of peasant interests. I used this analysis to test my first hypothesis.

Moreover, for the two abovementioned cases of local accommodation, I tested the following hypothesis:

H2: The strength of local civil society and the degree of salience of local agrarian issues account for variations in the pattern of local accommodation.

H2a: The combination of vibrant local civil society and more salient agrarian issues lead to accommodation through mobilization in which peasant interests are accommodated after a sustained peasant mobilization.

H2b: The combination of weaker local civil society and less salient agrarian issues lead to accommodation through corporatism in which peasant interests are accommodated under a corporatist framework.

Four key terms used in the hypotheses need further clarification. The first one is interest convergence. By interest convergence, I refer to the confluence of interests between elites and peasants under particular political and policy circumstances. It can occur because of a variety of
factors, such as social mobilization, sustained advocacy campaigns, electoral pressure, the need to fill in a policy gap or a combination of those factors. The key point here is that the occurrence and endurance of interest convergence is contingent on the state of a constellation of political factors. This concept can capture the reality of newer democracies such as Indonesia, where political dynamics, especially at the subnational level, are often marked by volatility, personal connections and networks, political expediencies, and local contexts. It also better fits the Indonesian case rather than other analytical lenses such as the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), which starts from the premise that the interaction of relatively stable “competing advocacy coalitions within a policy subsystem” consisted of both state and non-state actors influences policy change (Jenkins-Smith & Sabatier, 1993, p. 5). As my cases will show, it is political contingencies, rather than stable advocacy coalitions, that pave the way for the accommodation of peasant interests by local elites. Interest convergence also differs from Tarrow’s (2004, p. 18) conception of political opportunity structures (POS) that merely emphasizes the expansion and reduction of political space. These two are not the same: new political openings do not necessarily lead to elite-mass interest convergence, as my discussion on non-accommodation at the national level in Chapter 3 and in Bulukumba District in the concluding chapter show.

The three other key terms are accommodation of peasant interests, civil society, and agrarian issue salience. This dissertation primarily looks at accommodation concerning land

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8 The ACF lens was developed mainly based on the United States (US) experience (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993), but this does not necessarily mean that it only fits the US context. Instead what I argue here is that such a framework probably better fits established policy areas with a substantial degree of competition among state policy agencies and actors and influence from societal actors. In Indonesia, although agrarian policies are an established policy area, they were quite insulated from policy influence during the authoritarian New Order era. It was only after democratization that societal actors gained more substantial leverage and this does not necessarily lead to the emergence of a stable policy coalition comprised of both state and non-state actors when considering agrarian politics.
rights, natural resource management, and rural livelihood. As for the term civil society, I used the definition provided by Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens (1997, pp. 327-329) that describes civil society as encompassing both lower-class mobilization and the density of associational life. The last term, agrarian issue salience, can be defined simply as the extent to which agrarian problems are politically important. Focusing on this variable is important because Tarrow’s (1994, p. 83) POS framework sometimes overemphasizes the influence of political opportunities and thereby overlooks the role of deprivation and grievance in incentivizing collective action.

Pockets of local accommodation of peasant interests in Indonesian districts after democratization and decentralization are in contrast with the situation at the national level, where the organized peasantry – that mostly consists of peasant unions and corporatist peasant organizations as well as other groups such as environmental and indigenous peoples’ movements – is much more fragmented and there is a lack of interest convergence between the elites – the state elites and the capitalist class – on one hand and the peasantry on the other hand. In other words, although peasants and their allies are still unable to effectively challenge oligarchic interests in national politics, they are able to wring some concessions at the local level. We might be tempted to believe that this is merely an issue of scale – accommodations are more likely to happen at the local rather than national level simply because the political arena is smaller, in which the Olsonian collective action problem can be overcome more easily. However, this is not always the case. In Bulukumba District, for instance, there is no major concession for land grabbing so far even though the local peasants are organizationally unified. In contrast, Lula’s Brazil and Allende’s Chile are examples of two successful cases of land reform at the national

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9 On the collective action problem, see Olson (1965).
level. Therefore, scale cannot be the main factor for explaining the occurrence of accommodation of peasant interests.

Using Karl Polanyi’s (1957) notion of “double movement” as a theoretical lens in examining this phenomenon, I see the rise of the peasantry in contemporary Indonesia as a countermovement to the increasing pressure of marketization of land and other rural natural resources in post-authoritarian period. As a matter of fact, the current state of agrarian condition in post-authoritarian Indonesia offers a mixed picture. Surely, political openness in the democratic era allows peasants to organize more openly and assertively, but land dispossession remains commonplace. According to the data from the Consortium for Agrarian Reform’s (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria, KPA) 2014 year-end report, there were around 1,500 agrarian conflicts over a disputed area of over 6.5 million hectares (ha) within a period of 10 years (2004 – 2014), covering a wide range of lands from wetlands to smallholding plantations and involving almost one million agricultural households. The same report also shows that while in 2009 there were only 89 agrarian conflicts, by 2014 the number had increased five times to 472. Most of these agrarian conflicts are essentially land grabbing by state and corporate authorities through various means. The rate of land grabbing and subsequent dispossession of the peasantry from their land is also notoriously high in the Outer Island regions such as Sumatera and Sulawesi (Firmansyah, Aritonang, Terome, Hari S., & Bahari, 1999).10

The current landholding structure also reveals the persistence of rural inequality in terms of access to and ownership of land. Between 2010 and 2014 for example, the total area of agricultural land remained more or less the same, which was around 36 to 38 million ha, but it was big private and state-owned corporations that continued to dominate the agricultural sector

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10 The term “Outer Islands” refers to islands and regions outside Java, Madura, and Bali.
By 2015, there were more than 2,400 plantation companies across Indonesia, the majority of them were oil palm corporations (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2017).

In the area of natural resource management, one is also presented with a mixed picture. Under the New Order period, the regime prioritized large-scale exploitation of forest, mining, oil, coastal, and marine resources and extracted rents from those sectors, often for the benefit of regime cronies (Lynch & Harwell, 2002, pp. 35-73; Ross, 2001, Ch. 7; Seda, 2014; Winters, 1996). After the twin process of democratization and decentralization, the hope for a more democratic governance framework for natural resource sectors and other related reforms soon had to face on-the-ground realities. This is because the extent to which a more decentralized and participatory policy framework for natural resource management can be successfully implemented is inevitably influenced by the institutional design of decentralization, a process that is fundamentally political (Andersson, Gibson, & Lehoucq, 2004). This is also the case in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Lacking the experience, assistance from the central government, and the institutional capacity to face natural resource management issues, district governments found it challenging to develop local laws for natural resources, especially in the early years of decentralization (Patlis, 2002). Moreover, issues surrounding natural resource governance are often highly political in nature, involving oligarchic interests and other long-standing actors who benefit from illegal businesses, especially in the forestry sector (Gellert, 2005; McCarthy, 2010; Nomura, 2009). The politics of natural resource management becomes especially challenging when it intersects with local political conflicts and social dynamics, in which peasants and other

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11 This category includes wetlands (sawah), dry field (tegal), garden (kebun), land for shifting cultivation (ladang), and temporarily unused land (lahan sementara tidak digunakan).
rural citizens are at a disadvantage (Fox, Adhuri, & Resosudarmo, 2005). In response to these challenges, community-oriented policy schemes particularly community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) have gained more prominence in recent years, as they are seen as the potential solutions to the problem of resource governance at the local level. But CBNRM is not a panacea, since, as Agrawal and Gibson (1999) point out, what constitutes community-based itself is contested. Furthermore, in the context of Southeast Asia including Indonesia, CBNRM risks oversimplifying the complex realities of rural communities as well as their narratives and ways of navigating issues pertaining to rural resources (Li, 2002).

The Indonesian experience mirrors the region-wide development in Southeast Asia, where there is an increasing trend toward land grabbing by state and corporate actors spurred by factors such as the commodity boom, crony capitalism, and increasingly large-scale foreign investments in the agricultural and plantation sectors, among other factors (Borras & Franco, 2011; Hall, Hirsch, & Li, 2011; Hofman & Ho, 2012). This trend is a part of the wider global land rush that is expected to continue for the years to come (Cotula, 2012). In terms of exclusionary natural resource management in the region, numerous examples abound in sectors ranging from dam and hydropower projects to fisheries and forestry (Henke, 2011; Kuhonta, 2009; Thim, 2014; Sedara & Öjendal, 2011).

It is therefore not surprising to see the growth of agrarian movements in various regions in Indonesia. Some of these movements then formed national-level peasant unions, such as the

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12 There is a wide variety of CBNRM, but in many cases, it includes the incorporation of the existing traditional, community-based framework for regulating access to and ownership of natural resources into the state-based legal framework. Several CBNRM schemes also have mechanisms to incentivize rural citizens to join such schemes (e.g. financial compensation, land tenure security, joint land governance, community capacity building, and the like) and fulfill other goals (e.g. environmental conversation) while maintaining their livelihood source.

13 A more comprehensive organizational mapping of the agrarian/land rights movement will be presented in Chapter 3. For the purpose of this dissertation I focus mostly on the peasant movement.
Federation of Indonesian Peasant Unions (Federasi Serikat Petani Indonesia, FSPI), the National Peasant Union (Serikat Tani Nasional, STN), the Alliance of Agrarian Reform Movement (Aliansi Gerakan Reforma Agraria, AGRA), and the Association of Indonesian Peasant Movements (Persatuan Pergerakan Petani Indonesia, P3I), among others. But many peasant movements remain localized and have strongholds in specific regions, namely Java and some other Outer Island provinces such as Bengkulu, Central Sulawesi, and South Sulawesi.

This, however, is just one side of the story. Other than peasant-based social movements, patron-clientelistic and corporatist institutions claiming peasant interests also continue to play a significant role in post-authoritarian rural politics. Of particular interest are the farmers’ groups or kelompok tani (poktan). As institutions whose creation was mainly sponsored by the New Order regime, poktan served as the extension of the state’s arm in rural areas to ensure political stability and distribution of the latest agricultural technologies (e.g. tractors, diesel pump for irrigation, and fertilizers) and credit programs down to the village level without disrupting the regime’s productivist orientation during the authoritarian period. The state’s promotion of poktan formation has been very successful. In 2013, for instance, there were more than 318,000 registered poktans across Indonesia (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2013). Poktan continues to play an important role in post-authoritarian rural life and its role has diversified. A cursory view of the literature reveals the many roles poktan takes in the post-authoritarian context, such as agricultural technology adaptations (Nuryanti & Swastika, 2011), livestock management (Muslim, 2006), organic farming (Mayrowani, 2012), harvest marketing (Sarasutha, 2002), forest

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14 For poktan’s role under the New Order regime, see Liddle (1987). For its role in Java and the Outer Islands especially Sulawesi, see Mackie and O'Malley (1988) and Acciaioli (1994) respectively.

15 By productivist, I mean the economic orientation which aims to extract surplus value from the rural-based agricultural sector to the urban population. Of course, some measures to keep rural inequality and poverty in check could be taken while implementing the policy at the same time, which is exactly what the New Order regime did.
rehabilitation (Wahid, 2008), timber operation (McCarthy, 2007, p. 160), community event organizers (Uker & Fanany, 2011, pp. 5-6), and even serving as political brokers and intermediaries (Hamdi, 2016, p. 287; Rohman, 2016, p. 237; Rubaidi, 2016, p. 269; Sobari, 2016). In daily life, poktan and its members also take part in social events, gatherings, and rituals, such as regular Koran recitation gatherings or pengajian (Personal observation of KTH members in Cidanau, July 13, 2017). It has also served, for a long time, as something akin to rural mutual-aid societies; membership in poktan allows peasants to coordinate agricultural production activities, improve their farming techniques, cultivate a shared sense of peasantness, and mediate their relationship with local elites. Therefore, while it is easy to see poktan as just another artefact from the old days of authoritarianism, such a view is far too simplistic and overlooks the complex roles that poktan takes in democratic settings. In fact, some of these roles seem to have the potential to promote rural citizen participation in public affairs. As I show in my discussion on Serang in Chapter 5, poktan serves a key role in the implementation of meso-level corporatism through the Payment for Environmental Service (PES) mechanism.

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16 And a range of many other roles: as a group-mechanism to solve coordination dilemmas among peasants in conducting farming, a distributor of state and local government subsidies for fertilizers and agricultural technologies, and a local treasury, among others.

17 It is interesting to see how these authoritarian era institutions become the vehicles citizens, especially villagers, could actually use to advance their interests. For example, the Family Welfare Movement (Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga, PKK), another village institution created by the New Order to tame women’s and feminist activism in rural areas, has been used by ordinary village women to voice their problems and advance their interests (Soetjipto & Adelina, 2013). Who would have thought this statist, paternalistic, and conservative auxiliary organization can be used to benefit lower-class rural women? Strangely, there has been less discussion on poktan among activists in agrarian social movement circles in Indonesia. This suggests we need to pay more attention to poktan given its significant role in contemporary Indonesian village life.

18 That is, corporatist arrangement at subnational level, such as at the district level. On this topic, see Cawson (1985).

19 The basic logic of PES is to get the beneficiaries of environmental commodities – carbon, air, water, and the like – the “users” so to speak, to give financial compensation to the community that provides those commodities. A fuller elaboration on PES will be given in Chapters 2 and 5.
It is to capture this dynamic that I focused on the two case studies. In North Bengkulu District, the Bengkulu Peasant Union (*Serikat Tani Bengkulu, STaB*) is at the forefront of the struggle for land rights, whereas in Serang District it is the local forest farmers’ groups (*Kelompok Tani Hutan, KTH*)\(^{20}\) and an environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) called Rekonvansi Bhumi that act as the intermediary between peasant communities and local governmental and business interests in the collaborative water resource governance policy area through the PES scheme. In the former, peasant interests are accommodated through mobilizational efforts, such as land occupation and protests. The local peasants managed to force the local state and corporate elites to grant them legal ownership and utilization rights over an abandoned ex-plantation area. In the latter, peasant interests concerning their livelihood are accommodated through a corporatist governance framework, in which peasants receive financial compensation for their efforts in providing and maintaining watershed resources.

This new wave of agrarian struggle and advocacy in post-authoritarian Indonesia resurfaces in the context of decentralization, which was introduced in 1999 to devolve some authority from the central government to subnational governmental units. This policy reactivates local politics as a terrain for political struggle among local actors. This is even more pertinent in the Indonesian case, where one of the most extensive decentralization reforms in the world took place and peasant struggles and advocacy efforts by their nature can be very localized. In Indonesia, decentralization is better understood as an unequal instead of a neutral playing field in which elites have more political advantage in shaping the course of decentralization. This in turn makes decentralization prone to the possibility of elite capture. While the unprecedented level of

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\(^{20}\) KTH is another version of *poktan*. While *poktans* are associations of wetland farmers, KTH are similar associations for forest farmers.
electoral competition combined with a free press and a vibrant civil society landscape result in a higher level of vertical accountability, Buehler (2010, pp. 282-283) argues that “beyond casting their votes, however, citizens are not able to actively influence and shape local politics as much as had initially been hoped following decentralization and the introduction of direct local elections.” This elite-dominated playing field is also the reality that many peasants and concerned activists face in their work on the ground.

This reality finds echoes in Polanyi’s ideas. Polanyi shows that the radical separation between the economic and political realms as preached by different stripes of free market fundamentalism are mythical (Block & Somers, 2014). While countermovement can be seen as a self-checking and self-defense mechanism against the excessive expansion of market relations, it should also be read as a part of the conscious societal effort against marketization and elite-driven expropriation. Indeed, one of the key arguments from Polanyi’s works is that the experience of commodification stemming from untamed market relations has become more common than the experience of exploitation at the point of production, especially in the neoliberal age, an experience that has triggered sustained resistance from various social movements globally (Burawoy, 2017). In that sense, one can argue that another key take-away from Polanyi is an emphasis on the role of lower-class mobilization for social change beyond the classical production point such as factories and the need for a conscious coordinated effort to promote lower-class interests via compromises and alliances (Burawoy, 2003). Extending this argument even further, what this countermovement aims to achieve is essentially the right to economic, social, and cultural rights and the extension of democratic citizenship beyond its usual liberal connotation of the legal-formal and political citizens’ rights (Somers, 2008). This

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21 This is probably one area of overlap between Polanyi and Gramsci.
perspective captures the dynamics of elite-peasant relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia and deals, more generally, with the question of rights in a democratic polity.

The Great Transformation that elevates market relations above other forms of societal relations also took place in Southeast Asia. Some scholars have applied the Polanyian framework to analyzing the social, economic, and political transformations in the region (Collins, 2007; Hughes & Un, 2011). Of particular interest here is John Sidel’s (2015) research on the enduring legacy of marketization of resources in Southeast Asian politics. He shows the continuing influence of such a process on capitalist development and political dynamics in Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia. While I welcome Sidel’s critical materialist reading of Southeast Asian politics and appreciate the comprehensive historical and geographical scope of his analysis, I propose that we need a different view of the double movement. In his article, Sidel almost sounds like he is making a “path dependent” or “deep equilibrium” argument about the impact of resource commercialization on present-day Southeast Asian politics. Although I agree with Sidel that the long historical process of the Polanyian great transformation has had an enduring impact on Southeast Asian politics, I contend that we need an analysis that is more attentive to political contingencies and the dynamic interaction between elites and peasants at the local level. As argued by Collier and Collier (1991, p. 5), socio-economic foundations of politics are indeed important, but politics is not simply a “locked-in” function of the underlying socio-economic structure, as there is also “an autonomous political logic” at play. By paying closer

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22 Here Sidel works largely from a Marxist framework, although he also acknowledges the affinity between his framework and the works of Polanyi and Moore.

23 Here, path dependence can be described as “what happened at an earlier point in time will affect the possible outcomes of a sequence of events occurring at a later point in time” (Sewell, 1996, p. 262) that “once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high” (Levi, 1997, p. 28). Deep equilibrium is a version of path dependence that “occurs when the various factors contributing to the resilience of a particular institution or set of institutions are so considerable that once arrangements settle on that point they are highly likely to endure for an extended period of time” (Pierson, 2004, p. 157).
attention to political contingencies, we can better capture the process of resource marketization and the countermovement against it. Moreover, such an approach can help us better understand the connection between macro-historical processes and contemporary local dynamics and illuminate the causal mechanisms of those processes. This is what I sought to do in this study.

Going back to the Indonesian context, a number of key studies have quite extensively discussed the socio-political impacts of agrarian transformation and rural political changes, open and manifest agrarian conflicts, and the intersection between the two. On the first topic, several leading scholars have written extensively on Indonesia’s agrarian transformation and its impact, especially on how the accelerating rate of rural dispossession affected peasants and the prospect for agrarian reform (Bachriadi & Wiradi, 2011; Bernstein & Bachriadi, 2014; White & Wiradi, 2009; Wiradi, 2009a; 2009b). Others have also covered this topic in different contexts, from the impact of non-agricultural economic activities on rural livelihood to a gender-based analysis of agrarian transformation (Borkenhagen, 2003; Chamim, Irawanto, Pareanom, Hae, & Budiman, 2012; Fortin, 2011; Gunawan, Thamrin, & Suhendar, 1998; Gustian, et al., 2014; Rustiani, Sjaifudian, & Gunawan, 1997; Safitri, 2014; Savitri, 2007; Shohibuddin, 2010; Simon, et al., 2015; Warman, Sardi, Andiko, & Galudra, 2012; Yuliana & Dewy, 2012). Although its elaboration on the mechanics and details of agrarian transformation is insightful, more often than not, this body of literature only discusses the influence of such transformation on the social and political organizing of the peasantry in passing.

Much has also been written on the second topic, either as historical overviews or single case studies (Afiff, 2004; Collins, 2007; Fauzi, 1999; 2003; Li, 2007; Rachman, 2011; 2012;
Urano, 2010; Wahyudi, 2005), comparative studies (Bachriadi, 2011; Bertrand, 1995; Tyson, 2010), or as national-level analyses of a specific domain of public policy and social activism, such as community forestry (Di Gregorio, 2011; Siscawati, 2012). Although mainly focusing on agrarian movements, these studies also made the effort to link with the broader processes of agrarian transformation. Nonetheless, there have been few attempts to explain the dynamics within the ruling elites as well as variations in elite-peasant relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia.

Thus, my empirical contribution to the existing literature on agrarian politics in Indonesia through this study is threefold: 1) to highlight and analyze variations in elite-peasant relations in Indonesian local politics, 2) to discuss peasant organizations other than peasant unions and movements and their relationship to the elites, and 3) to bring into attention relatively understudied yet important cases in both Java and the Outer Islands. Equally important, this study is also an intellectual exercise in political science regarding the agrarian problem. Although this study is eclectic in that it incorporates insights from other disciplines such as economic and political anthropology, political ecology, and agrarian studies, this study is also political science research since it looks at the politics of elite-peasant relations as a part of the broader dynamic of state-society relations and development in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Indeed an eclectic approach in researching political phenomena can help political scientists to come up with multiple analyses to account for social processes, rich narratives, and complex causality (Marx, 2002, p. 126; Sil & Katzenstein, 2010).

I also deliberately focus on the subnational level not only because peasant movements and organizations in general are pretty localized, but also because local politics and the elites

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25 Most of the studies in the existing literature overwhelmingly focus on Java.
who operate within it are the frontier of state power and its desire to govern its population (Elazar, 1988; Ferguson, 1994; Scott, 1998; 2010). In that light, I then see the decentralization of power from national to local authorities in post-New Order Indonesia as a site of political struggle over power and resources among different social forces in which elites have the first-mover advantage (Choi, 2011; Hadiz, 2010; Tans, 2012). This in turn makes decentralization prone to the possibility of elite capture and affects the effectiveness of the advocacy efforts for peasant interests and the broader civil society mobilization at the local level.

Research Methodology and Case Selection

This dissertation combines several qualitative methodological techniques from three intellectual traditions – comparative politics, area studies, and political ethnography – to answer the two main questions. To do that, I present a multi-scalar analysis of the dynamics of elite-peasant relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia. I first discuss my theoretical and conceptual framework in Chapter 2 and agrarian politics at the national level in Chapter 3, followed by in-depth analyses of the local accommodation of peasant interests in North Bengkulu and Serang in Chapters 4 and 5, respectively. Given that I ask about geographical variation in the first question, it is then imperative to conduct a multi-scalar analysis of the Indonesian experience to capture the diverse dynamics and processes occurring at different geographical scales or units and the possible connections between them (Chowdhury, et al., 2011; Xiang, 2013). Following Snyder’s (1997, p. 24) advice, conducting a multi-scalar analysis of one central topic, the dynamic interactions between elites and peasants, with specific attention to the local dynamics allows me

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26 That is, governing in the Foucauldian sense (Foucault, 2007).
to link anthropologically-inclined local political studies with comparative case studies of political institutions and social groups.27

Here, I seek to bridge macro-theory (a general framework derived from Polanyian’s grand theories), meso-level theorizing (causal claims and mechanisms), and empirical evidence (from fieldwork). A focus on formulating meso-theories, with an emphasis on causal pathway identification, has long been a hallmark of comparative politics (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 109-124; Kohli, et al., 1995). While this concern is appreciated, it is also important to link this meso-level theorizing with macro-theories and empirical data. An overemphasis on meso-theorizing risks missing the fit between theoretical claims and on-the-ground realities as well as the connection between such claims and broader social science debates. Engagement with Polanyi’s body of thought can be seen as an attempt to bridge macro- and meso-theories. In this project, the Polanyian notion of double movement serves as the general framework – the macro-theory in a sense – to understand the politics of elite-peasant relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia. To use the case study typology, this study employed both disciplined configurative and heuristic approaches in case study research, because it used “established theories to explain a case” and at the same time “inductively identified new variables, hypotheses, causal mechanisms, and causal paths” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 75). The strength of this small-N comparison is “the development of thick theory: richly specified, complex models that are sensitive to variations by time and place” (Coppedge, 1999, p. 471).

In analyzing the three case studies, I combine both variable-centered analytic explanations and detailed narratives in each case (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 210-211). Analytic explanations show the connection between the variables and overall causal claims on

one hand and the observed empirical realities on the other hand, whereas detailed analysis illuminates the causal mechanisms at work. Here, the devil is in the details. Therefore, I sometimes used detailed narratives to construct and empirically ground the causal mechanisms.

Using ethnographic, interview, and document/archival data based on a controlled comparison of three cases, I sought to unearth both objective data and subjective perceptions and the narratives of actors involved in the dynamics of elite-peasant relations and used them to test my hypotheses. Here, controlled comparison can be defined as “the study of two or more instances of a well-specified phenomenon that resemble each other in every aspect but one” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 151). In doing so, I used process tracing to show the causal mechanism that unfolds (Bennett, 2008; George & Bennett, 2005, p. 206) in each case study. This process is partly deductive but mostly inductive. While I already had some possible independent variables and hunches in mind before conducting the field research, eventually I had to change them as I went deeper into my research process and found better explanatory variables based on the empirical findings. As qualitative case study research, this study has some advantage in explaining not only why but also how the phenomena of interest – non-accommodation, local accommodation, and variations in local accommodation – emerge. This point is important because the causal effect of the independent variables of interest is not the same as its causal mechanism (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 135-148). Quite different from quantitative research, the emphasis here is not on the average effect of independent variables based on the dataset observation but rather on the causal process observation leading to the outcomes (Mahoney, 2010, pp. 123-125; Mahoney & Goertz, 2006, p. 229).

Designwise, this study adopted Mill’s method of difference, otherwise known as Most Similar Systems design (MSSD) (Nagel, 1950; Przeworski & Teune, 1970). This method of
controlled comparison remains useful and applicable to study various topics in comparative politics. Specifically, it allows the researcher to explicate the causal arguments and variations in the observed variables using illustrative cases (Marx, 2002, p. 108). Here, I followed a looser application of MSSD by choosing cases with as many similar background characteristics as possible rather than using cases selected on the basis of similar control variables (Anckar, 2008, p. 390; Faure, 1994, p. 311). In fact, given the non-experimental nature of MSSD, one can only control competing explanatory variables “indirectly through the careful selection and/or sampling of research sites, or cases” (Faure, 1994, p. 312). Typically this also means selecting geographically and culturally similar cases (Anckar, 2008, p. 393). I conducted this analysis in two stages. Firstly, to test the first hypothesis, I contrasted the Indonesian national case – the case of lack of accommodation – with the two district case studies – the cases of local accommodation. Secondly, to test the second hypothesis, I contrasted the two district case studies – North Bengkulu and Serang – to show the divergent trajectories of local accommodation – through mobilization and corporatism, respectively. In many aspects, these three cases share many similarities, i.e. these are governmental units with changing contexts of state-society relations and development in which elites continue to dominate politics and economy, especially in rural areas. Additionally, North Bengkulu and Serang share some other similar features. In both districts, peasant household-based agriculture retains an important role in the local

28 For some recent applications of Mill’s methods in comparative politics works, see Kuru (2009), Lewis (2007), Marx (2002), Pepinsky (2009), and Slater and Simmon s (2012).
29 This looser application of MSSD in social sciences is possible because in non-experimental and non-statistical research design, one does not have to strictly follow the ceteris paribus requirement. In fact, qualitative researchers typically have less control over the observed cases and variables and therefore have to ensure the validity and reliability of the obtained data through other means (e.g. triangulation, direct personal observation, and inductive reasoning, among others). We should also keep in mind that what James Stuart Mill, the early theorist of controlled comparison, was describing “were varities of the experimental method and not of the comparative analysis of social or political phenomena” (Tarrow, 2010, p. 233). Therefore, some adjustments should be made when applying controlled comparison in analyzing social or political phenomena.
Both districts are also located in provinces considered to be economically lagging in their regions (Banten Province in Java and Bengkulu Province in Sumatera), which also makes them an interesting paired comparison. For the first hypothesis, I show how despite their similarities the three cases have different outcomes: the lack of accommodation of peasant interests at the national level and the occurrence of such kind of accommodation at the local level in North Bengkulu and Serang. This is because there is a unified organizational platform for the local peasants and there is a convergence of interests between them and the local elites. The presence of these two independent variables in tandem explain why local elites accommodate peasant interests in the two districts. For the second hypothesis, I show how despite their similarities, the district case studies exhibit different types of local accommodation of peasant interests: through mobilization in the former and through corporatism in the latter. This variation is a product of different levels of civil society vibrancy and agrarian issue salience between the two districts: higher in both aspects for North Bengkulu and lower in both aspects for Serang. In this design, although the three cases share similar characteristics in several aspects and parallel causal mechanisms to some degree, the dynamics in each case are relatively independent from each other. Addressing this concern is important in qualitative research because the lack of independence of cases means the researcher possibly overlooks “the spillover effect” in which the dynamics in one case influence or are interrelated with others (George & Bennett, 2005, pp. 33-34).

Other concerns related to case selection also need to be addressed. First, the district case studies selected here represent an empirical puzzle: why do pockets of local accommodation

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30 See Bachriadi (2010) and Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Serang (2016) for agricultural profiles and other related information of North Bengkulu and Serang Districts, respectively.
occur at all? A cursory investigation suggests this is different from the general trend at the national level and in many subnational governmental units across Indonesia. Hence, the cases of local accommodation in North Bengkulu and Serang represent substantively important cases (Mahoney & Goertz, 2006, pp. 242-243). Secondly, this means choosing the district cases based mostly on the outcome of interests or the dependent variable – variations in the types of local accommodation. A mainstream political science approach tends to caution against choosing based on the dependent variable because of the possibility of selection bias (Geddes, 1990; King, Keohane, & Verba, 1994, pp. 128-149). However, there is a value in undertaking such an analysis. It can help identify which variables are consequential for the observed outcomes (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 23). It is also particularly useful in elucidating various causal processes within different cases (Ragin, 2000). Still, to address the said caution, I examined three additional cases – Bulukumba District in South Sulawesi Province, the Kerala State in India, and the Oaxaca State in Mexico – in the concluding chapter, Chapter 6. Each additional case also represents divergent outcomes – lack of accommodation in Bulukumba, accommodation through mobilization in Kerala, and accommodation through corporatism in Oaxaca. Obviously, one has to be careful making subnational comparisons beyond national borders. With this consideration, I therefore selected additional subnational cases with roughly similar features (local governmental units with agriculture-dominated economy and lively peasant activism). At the national level, India and Mexico are also similar to Indonesia: middle-income democracies with substantial agricultural population and long histories of agrarian contentious politics. In this exercise, I show how my causal arguments can be applicable in other cases and contexts, thereby increasing

31 Especially, to identify which ones are not necessary or sufficient factors for the outcomes.
32 Keep in mind that out of the three additional cases here, I only did fieldwork in Bulukumba. For Oaxaca and Kerala, I had to rely on secondary sources.
the analytical leverage of my arguments. Needless to say, with MSSD the nature of
generalization is limited and contextual rather than universal (Freidreis, 1983, p. 266; Lijphart,
1975, p. 172). While the use of qualitative comparisons to test and provide evidence for external
validity might be unusual, this is not unheard of in comparative politics (Slater & Ziblatt, 2013).
Take, for example, the groundbreaking works by Robert Putnam and his co-authors (1993) and
Elisabeth Jean Wood (2003) on social capital and rural insurgency, respectively, in which they
used qualitative data, including subnational-level data to make generalizable claims.

As has become apparent by now, I also adopted a subnational comparative method in my
research. Initially unusual, comparison across different local political units has gained more
currency as a valid methodological strategy because it can increase the number of observations
and control for competing explanatory variables in a small-N research design, especially in
countries with high degrees of internal heterogeneity (Snyder, 2001). This approach is not alien
to political science – V. O. Key’s (1949) classic work on Southern politics in the United States
for instance resolutely focuses on local politics in the Southern states. Recent works in the
growing literature on subnational democracy and authoritarianism have also adopted a
subnational focus (Behrend & Whitehead, 2016; Gibson, 2012; Sidel, 2014), signifying the
analytical value of scaling down the unit of analysis. Indeed, for a long time, comparative
politics has been susceptible by “the whole-nation bias” (Lijphart, 1975, pp. 166-169). Hence,
the subnational comparative method works nicely to study topics such as agrarian politics in
Indonesia, a complex topic in a diverse country. Given the emphasis on local contexts and causal
process, observation field research, particularly ethnography, was an appropriate data gathering
technique for this dissertation project.
I conducted field research for two years (Summer 2015-Summer 2017) in Indonesia. I spent six months in the Serang District in Banten Province (September 2015-February 2016; July 2017), two months in the North Bengkulu District in Bengkulu Province (April-May 2017), two months in Bulukumba District in South Sulawesi (May-June 2016), and the rest of the months in Jakarta with intermittent visits to other districts and provinces. The purpose of this field research was to gather relevant empirical details, weave the appropriate narratives from the local informants, and analyze various events and contingencies to do process tracing (Wood, 2007, p. 125). As is normally the case in any field research, so long as ethical research procedures are followed, there is no set of rigid rules for the fieldwork. My fieldwork was punctuated by my participation in the Transparency for Development (T4D) research project, which also took place in the Serang District. This project, although unrelated to this dissertation, required me to live in rural communities and observe them closely, which gave me a good grounding in understanding peasant livelihood and local politics in contemporary Indonesia. The time spent in Bulukumba and Jakarta also allowed me to get a more comprehensive view of Indonesia’s agrarian politics through interactions with relevant informants and circles. Furthermore, the nature of my fieldwork enabled me to gain insights, including some previously-untapped data that might not be easily accessible by other researchers. This helped me strengthen my causal claims and make sense of underexplored empirical findings for future research.

33 I followed Wood’s (2007, p. 123) definition of field research as “research based on personal research subjects in their own setting.”

34 The T4D project, jointly organized by the Ash Center at Harvard Kennedy School and Results for Development, investigates whether community-based transparency and accountability improve development outcomes in the field of maternal and neonatal healthcare in Indonesia and Tanzania using both randomized controlled trial (RCT) and ethnography. I conducted commissioned research as a predoctoral fellow and a field researcher for the project. For further information about the project, see http://t4d.ash.harvard.edu/

35 I also used some data from this research for my chapter on Serang.
My main methodological strategy during fieldwork was political ethnography. Albeit still located at the margin of mainstream political science research, ethnography in the study of politics is not only useful for providing narratives but also in making more grounded generalizations and abstractions (Wedeen, 2010). Indeed such a task has been undertaken by several outstanding ethnographically-inclined comparative politics works (Fujii, 2009; Scott, 1976; Wood, 2003). There are different strands of ethnography in political science, but they all are committed to in situ immersion in a particular locale with a keen eye toward the complexity of local events and the experience of the local interlocutors (Schatz, 2009). For the purpose of this study, I adopt a realist ethnography. A realist approach in ethnography is useful because of its insistence in “adjudicating truth claims and establishing causality that other approaches do not” (Allina-Pisano, 2009, p. 55). While the researcher’s positionality and the informants’ narratives might shape the interpretations of the social phenomena under study and the general conclusions of the investigation, an effort to test and establish causal claims rather than an insistence on privileging nuances for nuances’ sake is still important to give us a better and, hopefully, more comprehensive understanding of the said phenomena. Here, I stand from a realist view of science that acknowledges that while we as researchers inevitably shape and are shaped by the very phenomena we study, this does not change that there is a social we try to understand systematically. From this standpoint, causation outside of our experience as social agents is real and traceable. Of course, it is always challenging to observe causal mechanisms

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36 One can argue even further that ethnography is also scientific, albeit of a different kind. After all, if we can agree that the research methods of zoologists and wildlife biologists are valid and rigorous, why can we not say the same for ethnographers who do essentially the same thing – intensive in situ observation and interaction?
37 For the realist view of science, see Roy Bhaskar’s classic works, *A Realist Theory of Science* (1975) and *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979). For a social science adaptation of realism, see Sayer (1992). For a more specific political science adaptation of realism, especially in international relations, see Kurki (2008).
and effects at an empirical level, but it is by no means impossible.\textsuperscript{38} I also worked under the assumption of a holist\textsuperscript{39} view of social reality (Bevir, 2008), which, in contrast to empiricist and methodological individualist assumptions of mainstream political science approach, problematizes the said assumptions and 1) takes history and local contexts seriously and 2) puts both individual experiences of social agents and snapshot views of social reality into the totality of the social life in which they are embedded. Then the case studies, especially the district ones, should be seen as, to use Burawoy’s (1979) words, “an expression of the totality” that can be used to “construct a picture of the entire society” by way of contextual generalization (p. xv). Essentially, I attempted to incorporate reflexivity “to extract the general from the unique” and “to move from the “micro” to the “macro’” (Burawoy, 1998, p. 5). Of the three district field sites I observed, I made the most use of ethnography in Serang. Due to time and resource limitations, I spent a considerable less time in the other two districts, North Bengkulu and Bulukumba. Nonetheless, while I was not able to conduct the typical period of six months to one year of ethnographic research in those two districts, I still incorporated ethnographic sensibilities throughout my stays in those districts, a methodological strategy suggested by ethnographically-inclined political scientists (Schatz, 2009).\textsuperscript{40} Similarly, I also applied the same strategy throughout my stay in Jakarta, during which I also interacted with relevant interlocutors. To give a more balanced view, while this dissertation focuses on the “big picture” of the phenomenon, 

\textsuperscript{38} Those – including some sections of social sciences and humanities – who argue that causality is impossible to observe or that reality does not exist might as well try to live in a realm of pure fantasy. As the famous physicist Alan Sokal (1996, pp. 62-64) aptly points out, “Anyone who believes that the laws of physics are mere social conventions is invited to try transgressing those conventions from the windows of my apartment (I live on the twenty-first floor.)”

\textsuperscript{39} Not to be confused with the term “holistic.”

\textsuperscript{40} In Boasian anthropology, the “gold standard” would be to spend six months to one year in one research site. However, this is not always possible even for seasoned researchers. Therefore, I did my best to do intensive research in North Bengkulu and Bulukumba through close interaction with my local interlocutors. For this reason, I believe my research in those two districts can still be called ethnography proper.
the “structural dynamics” so to speak, it also briefly discusses the narratives of some key actors and the vignettes from key events in relevant paragraphs. This is done to properly account for the interactions between social structures and agencies and between macro-level and micro-level data, which are co-extensive and co-constitutive (Mills, 1959; Sewell, 1985).

In gathering primary data, especially interlocutor narratives and ethnographic field notes, I combined multiple strategies ranging from formal interviews and participation in governmental, activist, and community meetings to going to farms and hanging out at coffeehouses. In total, I managed to conduct around 120 interviews in Indonesian and other regional languages with a variety of informants – peasants, activists, local leaders, and bureaucrats – throughout the fieldwork period. In met my informants through random, purposive, and reference-based encounters. Most of the interviews were semi-structured; others were more open-ended, but they all were conducted within the general framework of this study. Not all interviews are weighted equally, since different informants served different purposes. Sometimes I just needed to confirm the views of the informants or the empirical details of particular events, but on other occasions I needed to ask about other things, such as the life experience of the informants, their assessments of particular events and issues, and the societal contexts where they live. This strategy of striking a balance between understanding interlocutor narratives, gathering empirical details, and identifying causal mechanisms is indeed recommended for interview-based political science inquiry (Rathbun, 2008). I also collected additional information by consent in personal

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41 I am a native speaker of Indonesian and Sundanese and picked up the local dialect of Javanese spoken in Serang. In my conversation with local peasants and rural community members in Serang, I spoke Sundanese in Sundanese-speaking communities and whenever possible tried my best to speak Javanese in Javanese-speaking communities. In other research sites I spoke in Indonesian.

42 Or through random, purposive, and snowball sampling in a more general term. I use the term “encounter” to emphasize the relational approach common in fieldwork-based and area studies scholarship and distinguish it from the “hit-and-run” approach of snapshot interviewing common in development industries and, sadly, some sections of the social sciences.
conversations with many of these informants, especially during informal encounters. Most of my informants agreed to let their real names be cited in this study. The only exception is some local residents in areas with ongoing or historical agrarian conflicts, such as parts of Bulukumba District, for obvious safety reasons. For this group of interlocutors, I use pseudonyms instead. But in general, I do cite the real names of the local activists and peasant leaders because they consented and encouraged me to mention their real identities so their stories will be known.

Overall, heeding Fujii’s (2018) advice, I tried to be as relational as possible in my interviews since field interview is never a one-way street but rather a two-way interaction.

In my work with my local interlocutors, I combined both non-participant and participant observation. Technically, this involved a lot of shadowing and spending time with my local interlocutors. Such an approach exposed me to a wide range of experiences, from having breakfast coffee with the District Secretary of Bulukumba and participating in field visits to rural communities in Serang to staying at the house of local peasant leaders or the local peasant union’s office for days. This allowed me to establish rapport and tap into a vast amount of information. My main guiding principle while in the field was this: to interact with the local interlocutors in the most comfortable manner for them, which technically means most of the time I avoided taking notes in front of my informants and wrote the notes away from them. Inevitably, this strategy involves all sorts of serendipities and the ability to present oneself strategically. For example, I asked seemingly clueless questions and listened attentively in one interview with a paternalistic local bureaucrat in Bulukumba. I also participated in – or rather, stumbled upon – activities that at a first glance might have nothing to do with my research but actually revealed important information, such as having a chat about commodity prices and agricultural techniques with the local peasants or occultism with the local activists, attending weddings, or spending
time at the district party office. This combination of intentional participation and accidental encounter has always been a part of fieldwork-based political science research (Anderson, 2016; Fenno, Jr., 1978; Fujii, 2015; Zirakzadeh, 2009).

Additionally, I also triangulated my findings with other data, including data from focused group discussions (FGDs), documents from various sources (government agencies, peasant organizations, and NGOs), official statistics, and local and national newspaper articles as well as existing studies in the literature to ensure the validity and reliability of my findings. Local-level data are particularly useful to give a more complete picture of the two district case studies. For instance, articles from local newspapers, including *Rakyat Bengkulu* and *Radar Utara*, provide detailed information on key features and events in North Bengkulu, such as the influence of private plantation companies in the local economy and the day-to-day dynamics of peasant protests. In my analysis of the Serang case study, insights on farmers’ groups and local civil society obtained from an FGD with local activists also helped me verify my findings. This sensitivity toward local materials is important because there is a growing body of scholarship and secondary sources on the development of local politics in Indonesia in the last twenty years (1998-2018). Therefore, following Lustick’s (1996) suggestion for researchers to pay careful attention to secondary materials and historial data, I also tried to exercise caution in my treatment of the additional data.

Ultimately this leads to the question of ethics and biases. I am aware of the differences in social backgrounds between myself as a researcher and the people I study in this dissertation.

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43 Of course, Benedict Anderson’s (2016) posthumously published memoir is a great testament to the colorful and fruitful experience of fieldwork, a research approach which remains highly useful.
which sometimes translates into unequal power relations, (Shehata, 2006).\textsuperscript{44} I also acknowledge my personal bias as a participant in Indonesia’s social movement scene who sympathizes with the plight of the peasantry and the struggle for a more democratic, equal, and just Indonesia. Thus, it was important to maintain some critical distance and objectivity from my marginal position as a researcher (Edelman, 2009, p. 246; Patchirat, 2009), especially because this research has some elective affinities with socially engaged activist research (Hale, 2006). This attempt to create some critical detachment from my objects of study does not mean that my study has little relevance for contemporary problems – quite the contrary. This is because some of my independent variables – the ones in the first hypotheses – happen to be leverage variables, that is variables of interest for actors studied in this dissertation (peasants, activists, and policymakers).\textsuperscript{45} Therefore, findings from this study will be of their interest as well.

It should also be noted, however, that there are two limitations of this research. First is the lack of elaboration on the intersection between gender and agrarian politics. Studies on agrarian politics, especially regarding social movements, open conflicts and protests, and other related topics, tend to be very masculine. In reality, however, rural women play an equally important role in this dynamic, yet their contribution is often neglected or downplayed, often in a very subtle way.\textsuperscript{46} Given the focus of this study, my focus was primarily on the more masculine dimension of this phenomenon. Secondly, as a participant observer I was not able to experience more hands-on and direct engagement with the more technical aspects of my investigation, such

\textsuperscript{44} This unequal power relationship can go in different ways. I am more privileged compared to my peasant and activist interlocutors, but it is the other way around with the elites – they have more power and authority over me.

\textsuperscript{45} This also means that these actors have some leverage in shaping these variables. For more about leverage variables, see George and Bennett (2005, pp. 279-280).

\textsuperscript{46} Indeed even in daily economic activities, such as the amount of (productive) labor put into farming not to mention the unpaid labor (reproductive and social), women’s contributions are often overlooked, while in reality – in rice farming and rubber plantation for instance – female peasants work as much as their male counterparts and even more! (Suryakusuma, 1986; Wijaya, 2016).
as taking part in farming activities or participating in some closed-door meetings to resolve agrarian conflicts, for practical reasons: I am not used to farming techniques (e.g., plowing land and planting seeds) nor was I able to attend meetings that had happened before this research was conducted. Sometimes I was just too physically exhausted to shadow my informants and, therefore, had to go back to my place to write up my field notes from the day with whatever little energy was left. However, I tried my best to shadow my informants as closely as possible, attend as many meetings as possible, and pay attention to and discuss the female peasants’ narratives in my elaboration, however little it is. Further exploration on these aspects should be taken up in future research.

Particular attention should be given to the literature in Indonesian language. Agrarian studies in Indonesia is a rich field with a relatively long history. Hence, it would be amiss to overlook this group of literature, which is why I incorporate them into my analysis.

**Significance of the Study**

This study makes several contributions to the literature on democratization, social movements and lower-class mobilization, and politics of development. It also seeks to engage in the interdisciplinary conversation on agrarian studies, Indonesian studies, and comparative subnational politics.

Comparative studies on democracy and authoritarianism have alluded to the existence of “authoritarian enclaves” – broadly defined as institutional spaces lacking democratic characteristics – as one of the major obstacles for democratic consolidation (Linz & Stepan, 47). As a rite of passage for a field researcher, this led me to a series of illnesses in the field. I did, however, become involved in doable physical work, such as making fences and cleaning up houses.
Across developed and developing democracies, including Indonesia, these enclaves of authoritarian, quasi-democratic, or illiberal political practices are often found at the subnational level (Behrend & Whitehead, 2016; Gibson, 2012; Hadiz, 2010; Sidel, 2014). Hence, there is a need to further inquire about the scope and quality of contemporary democracies beyond their formal features and national-level analysis. Key studies on satisfaction with democracy in both mature and newer democracies tend to focus on public opinion regarding institutional dimensions of democracy at the national level (Anderson & Guillory, 1997; Canache, Mondak, & Seligson, 2001; Curini, Jou, & Memoli, 2011; Mair, 2013). While this cross-national endeavor to gauge the quality of democracy via public perception is appreciated, it does not reveal much about the nuances and complexity of how ordinary citizens experience democracy in everyday local contexts. Other studies have also attempted to assess the quality of democracy in a more holistic manner, by evaluating multiple dimensions of democracy or using indices such as the V-Dem index (Cho, 2014; Kim, 2016; Morlino, Dressel, & Pelizzo, 2011). Still, these studies mostly focus on the dynamics and quality of democracy at the national level. A number of works in this vein take a different angle, looking at the intersection among the quality of democracy, innovations in political participation such as participatory budgeting and neighborhood associations, and the local civil society and social movement landscape (Geisel, 2009; Houtzager & Acharya, 2011; Pogrebinski & Samuels, 2014; Wampler, 2008). Others have alluded to a new research direction, looking at how rising socio-economic inequality might undermine the quality of democracy, especially in terms of the success of its consolidation and the citizens’ ability to exercise their rights (Houle, 2009; Levin-Waldman, 2016).

For one of the most recent accounts on the rise of rapid inequality worldwide see Piketty (2014). The issue of inequality in electoral democracies also presents a dilemmatic challenge: severe inequality negatively impacts democracy, but a drastic measure to overcome inequality might upset democratic stability too (Bermeo, 2009).
indicates a growing trend – or rather a resurgence – of studies on the intersecting dynamics among development, democracy, and inequality, especially at the subnational level. This study adopted a similar approach. By shifting and scaling down the focus to the everyday dynamics of local politics, this study presents a richer and more contextual picture of the challenges in deepening and improving the quality of democracy at the subnational level.

Relatedly, this study also sheds light on the role of civil society, social movements, and lower-class mobilization in deepening democracy. The literature suggests that social movements contribute to the deepening of democratic rights and political processes (Fung & Wright, 2001; Gaventa, 2006; Keck & Sikkink, 1998), but how exactly and in what ways they contribute to democratic deepening might vary across contexts. It is expected that a livelier civil society and social movement landscape that includes both a dense network of associational lives and vibrant class mobilization efforts will enhance both the participatory and social features of democracy, moving beyond its formal dimension (Huber, Rueschemeyer, & Stephens, 1997). This debate is especially pertinent in the context of agrarian politics in Indonesia and the developing world because the commodification of rural commodities, particularly land, does have an impact on the propensity and ability of peasants to voice and advance their interests in the political sphere.

Furthermore, this research also poses a question about the place of democratic rights and promises – civil and political liberties and economic empowerment – as well as the rule of law in a patronage-ridden democracy with deep socio-economic inequality such as that in Indonesia. As O’Donnell (1993; 2004, pp. 42-43) rightly points out, the prevalence and persistence of “brown areas” – patron-clientelism, favoritism, and other forms of particularistic political practices more broadly – can jeopardize the quality of democracy especially in newer democracies. Ultimately, it also addresses a long-standing question for social scientists, policymakers, and activists: to
what extent can political democratization contribute to the empowerment of the marginalized
groups and a more equitable developmental outcome – in other words, the democratization of
development and class relations?

This study also contributes to the study of politics of development. From cross-national
and theoretical literature we know that democratization in many cases is an attempt to solve
distributional conflict between the elites and the masses (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2000; 2005;
Boix & Stokes, 2003). Democratizations is also expected to pave the way for socialization – that
is, the deepening of social and economic rights of the citizens via the extension of rights to
previously excluded or marginalized groups, such as workers, minorities, and civil society
groups (O'Donnell & Schmitter, 1986, p. 12). On average, democracies also improve the welfare
of the citizenry, with notable achievements in terms of workers’ rights and maternal and child
health (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000, pp. 168–176, 264; Zweifel & Navia,
2000). But these claims and findings need to be qualified because there is a substantial variation
with regard to the intersecting dynamics between democracy and development, especially in
rural contexts. Three reservations are worth mentioning. First, while transition from authoritarian
rule and democratization might expand political opportunities (Bunce, 2000, p. 708; Tarrow,
1994), what happens afterwards is a realm of political contingencies. Such a transition does not
necessarily lead to improved developmental outcomes. Second, while democracies do
outperform nondemocracies in some dimensions, such as education and health spending, these
benefits are unevenly distributed, benefitting the middle- and upper-income groups rather than
the poor (Ross M., 2006). Third, evidence from historical and case-based studies show that
some modernizing authoritarian regimes – notably Meiji Japan, Mexico under PRI, and Taiwan
under KMT – did implement several elements of rural redistribution, such as the disbandment of
feudal structure, land reform, and rural subsidies (Albertus, Diaz-Cayeros, Magaloni, & Weingast, 2016; Amsden, 1985; Trimberger, 1978). Given this, we are then left with an important question: under what conditions and to what extent can a democratic polity extend the economic and social rights of its citizens and implement redistribution policies, especially in rural context? This is the gap that my dissertation tried to address. Indonesia is an important case for this question because it is a young middle-income democracy in which agrarian issues remain salient. Furthermore, by closely examining national and subnational cases, this study can better specify the underexplored causal conditions and mechanisms in large-N studies. No less important is this study’s focus on social movements and civil society groups. While Boix’s (1998) study of Spain and Britain emphasizes the role of political parties as vehicles for voters’ economic preferences and for shaping economic and social policies, this study shows that in the context of a young democracy like Indonesia, it is social movements and civil society groups namely peasant unions, farmers’ groups, and NGOs that play a role in aggregating interests and influencing rural policies. This finding also echoes Diamond’s (1999, pp. 230-242) earlier observation that civil society in newer democracies plays a substantial role beyond its arena of operation and supplements the role of political parties in stimulating participation and deepening democracy. I substantiate this claim mainly in the discussion on the North Bengkulu and Serang case studies. While in North Bengkulu the local peasant union – STaB – undertakes such a task primarily through its disruptive capacities, poktans and their NGO allies in Serang influence local policies via a corporatist framework. Findings from these two case studies also resonate with the recent works on democracy and development by Usmani (2017, Ch. 3) that emphasizes the role of disruptive capacity of the lower-classes in promoting democratization and democratic deepening and varieties of local corporatism by Cawson (1985). In the context of Indonesian
studies, this study also complements Aspinall’s (2005) seminal work on the role of civil society in Indonesia’s democratization. While his work mainly highlights the key influence of the urban-based, middle-class opposition in setting the groundwork for democratization in New Order Indonesia, this dissertation picked up where he left off by focusing on the role of rural lower-class organizations in deepening Indonesia’s young democracy.

By bringing back in the study of agrarian politics, this study shows the continuing relevance of the peasant question – that is, the question of how the modern state should treat its peasant population – for comparative politics. It also contributes to the agrarian studies literature. The rise of land and natural resource dispossession, whether through land-grabbing or more subtle forms of expropriation, such as the long-term lease of farmland through commercial transactions, has had tremendous impact on the peasantry (Cotula, 2012; White, Borras, Hall, Scoones, & Wolford, 2012). This agrarian dispossession has prompted a wide range of rural dispossessed to organize and articulate their demands. Borras (2009, p. 11) notes that agrarian movements have been among the most vibrant sectors of civil society during the past four decades. Most of these movements are indeed rural workers’ and peasants’ and farmers’ movements in the global south and small and part-time farmers’ groups in the north. This period has also witnessed the emergence of the rural-based and rural-oriented social movements, including indigenous peoples’ movements, women’s movements, environmental movements and anti-dam movements, anti-GM crop movements, fishers’ movements, and rural-urban alliances.

This study then provides an important empirical addition by highlighting the Indonesian case and bringing it into the larger discussion on the response of the peasantry to agrarian dispossession, especially in the neoliberal era. But this study does not focus solely on agrarian or peasant movements. It also looks at other forms of peasant organizations, such as farmers’ groups or the poktan in the Indonesian context. By bringing attention to these non-movement types of peasant organizations, it gives a richer picture of peasant organizations and collective actions beyond the
focus on peasant unions, other agrarian movements, and rural contentious politics dominant in
the literature. Theoretically, it attempts to provide causal mechanisms for Polanyi’s (1957)
notion of societal countermovement. It also makes a methodological contribution by combining
ethnographic research with a small-N comparative analysis, moving beyond the single case study
approach dominant in agrarian studies on Indonesia.

Lastly, this dissertation enriches the ongoing debates on Indonesian politics and
comparative subnational politics. The last two decades of Indonesia’s political development has
sparked scholarly debates on the direction of the country after democratization. The debates
revolve around several major themes such as its post-authoritarian trajectory, local political
dynamics, and oligarchic influence. A prevailing view in the literature sees post-authoritarian
Indonesia as an electoral democracy marred by oligarchic rule (Robison & Hadiz, 2004; Winters,
2011). Indonesia’s democratic transition does not fundamentally challenge the continuing
hegemony of oligarchy – whether defined as a collective stratum of politico-economic elites
embedded in a complex network of state actors and social forces under late capitalism in
Indonesia à la Robison-Hadiz or a group of super wealthy individuals in Winters’s definition –
and its politics of power and wealth defense.\(^{49}\) This material inequality subsequently leads to
political inequality, making post-authoritarian Indonesia a patronage democracy with deep socio-
economic inequality. This development is also reflected in local political dynamics after
decentralization, wherein a plethora of old elites cultivated during New Order authoritarianism –
mostly politico-bureaucrats, but also local politicos, and entrepreneurs with links to
governmental projects – maintained their dominance through savvy maneuvering in local

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\(^{49}\) Despite some parallels in their analyses, these scholars come from different theoretical positions – Marxist
(Robison and Hadiz) and Aristotelian-Weberian (Winters). For a discussion on these different strands of oligarchy
theories, see Ford and Pepinsky (2013).
electoral politics, sometimes with the help of varied paramilitary groups (Buehler, 2013; Hadiz, 2010; Okamoto & Rozaki, 2006 Tans, 2012; Wilson, 2015). In recent local election cycles for executive heads (2010-2017), an analysis from the Mining Advocacy Network (Jaringan Advokasi Tambang, JATAM) also calls attention to the increasing role of extractive industries, especially mining, in shaping elections and broader political dynamics at the local level (Johansyah, 2017).

While this study largely subscribes to the oligarchy thesis of Indonesian politics and recognizes the threat of rural inequality for the stability and quality of Indonesian democracy, this study attempted to present a more nuanced picture. It did not merely offer a bleak simplistic picture of the elite capture of democracy in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Attention should also be given to the role of pressure from below, that is from the organized citizenry. While the continuing dominance of the old elites is a pretty apt description of Indonesian politics – as the empirical findings of this study also confirm – Aspinall (2013) is also right when he argues there is a qualitative difference in the level and forms of popular agency of the lower-class in democratic era compared to the authoritarian yesterdecades. Of course, as he also warns, any analysis accounting for the role of popular agency in Indonesian politics should be qualified by the fact that the avenues through which the lower-classes influence are still limited to fragmented activism and electoral populism, deprived from a robust electoral vehicle in the form of social movement-based or lower-class-based political parties or established ties with any political parties in general (p. 103). His assesment of the limitation of popular agency of the masses in Indonesian politics is also confirmed in this study: peasant influence in local agrarian policies and political dynamics in the two district case studies essentially oscillate between fragmented activism and electoral populism. This study also sought to provide a more detailed,
comprehensive view of elite dominance as well as resistance against and negotiation of it by looking at agrarian politics at both national and local levels. In a way, it provides a corrective to the static model and elements of pessimistic teleology inherent in some strands of the oligarchy thesis. It also contributes to the enduring discussion on local politics worldwide across regional and historical contexts.

Dissertation Outline

This dissertation includes the following chapters. This chapter, the first chapter, is the introduction to the study. It outlines the main puzzle and hypotheses of this dissertation. It also highlights the study’s methodological approach and significance for the existing literature as well as real-world problems.

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework of this study. It starts by presenting the logic of Polanyian theoretical lens. It then discusses the causal mechanisms of this study’s hypotheses. In relevant paragraphs, I clarify and discuss key concepts and terms pertaining to the main concerns of this dissertation – agrarian politics, statecraft and market, elites, civil society, and decentralization.

Chapter 3 is a discussion of the politics of elite-peasant relations at the national level. In this chapter, I show how the organizational fragmentation among peasant movements and organizations in post-authoritarian Indonesia means there is a lack of a unified organizational platform for the peasantry. This lessens the ability of the peasantry to advocate for their interests and force the elites to compromise. I also show the continuing elite dominance in agrarian sectors and the lack of interest convergence between national elites and peasants. These factors account for the lack of accommodation of peasant interests by the elites at the national level. I
also discuss the inner-workings of agrarian politics in contemporary Indonesia and give some contexts for the discussion on the district case studies in the next chapters.

Chapter 4 discusses the case study of North Bengkulu, a classic example of accommodation through mobilization. It analyzes the struggle of the peasants, organized under STaB, for livelihood and land rights in the district. In this chapter, I focus on STaB’s successful advocacy efforts to obtain land rights in an abandoned corporate-owned plantation area and financial compensation from the Indonesian government for harvest failure. Local elites conceded to peasant demands in North Bengkulu because of the presence of a unified organizational platform for the local peasants under STaB and interest convergence between local elites and peasants especially in the context of electoral politics. Here, local accommodation in North Bengkulu is influenced by the high level of severity and salience of agrarian issues and the vibrancy of local civil society landscape. I also briefly discuss STaB’s attempts to participate in electoral politics and build solidarity economy to give a more complete picture of agrarian struggle at the local level.

Chapter 5 discusses the case study of Serang, an understudied example of accommodation through corporatism. It analyzes the efforts of the local peasants, supported by the Rekonvansi Bhumi activists, for shared access to watershed resources and livelihood improvement. In Serang, local forest farmers’ organizations, or KTHs, play an important role in mediating elite-peasant relations and communicating the peasant interests to the local political and economic elites as a common organizational platform for the local peasants. At the same time, local elites also find the need to reach out to societal actors in the new, decentralized political settings and address emerging rural policy gaps. But Serang presents a different local context: in comparison to North Bengkulu, agrarian grievances are less severe and local civil
society is weaker in Serang. This paves the way to the accommodation of peasant demands for a better livelihood through a corporatist framework of collaborative water governance based on the PES scheme in which peasants and elites participate. Here, the Rekonvasi Bhumi activists play a key role as policy entrepreneurs and intermediaries between elites and peasants.

Chapter 6 is the conclusion of this study, divided into four sections. The first section is the overview of the three case studies. The second section puts the Indonesian case in the broader comparative perspective and tests this study’s causal claims in three additional cases – Bulukumba (South Sulawesi Province), Kerala (India), and Oaxaca (Mexico), – to show the transferability of such claims. The third section discusses the study’s engagement with and implications for the broader literature and directions for future research. The fourth section provides the final remarks for this study.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides the theoretical and conceptual framework used in this dissertation and a review of the relevant literature. It discusses Polanyi’s ideas as the general framework for this study. Then it specifies the causal mechanisms for each hypothesis. It also situates this study in the larger debate in the existing literature. Key terms and concepts are also elaborated throughout this chapter. Here, I formalize my argument using diagrams for the Polanyian general framework as well as causal claims for the two hypotheses. Formal diagrams for qualitative research strengthen the elaboration in prose as “a useful heuristic,” which helps researchers “to make a precise and explicit statement” of the main argument (Gerring, 2007, p. 182).

Polanyi’s Revenge: On Market Society, the State, and Rural Countermovement

Any analysis of the political impacts of market expansion benefits from consulting the works of Karl Polanyi, one of the key heterodox political economy thinkers of the 20th century. An economic substantivist, he contends that the rule of the market is a historical human-made phenomenon institutionalized by state, legal, and cultural instruments.50 It is beyond the

50 As an economic substantivist, Polanyi is probably best described as a critical, somewhat heterodox materialist. While he believes that material factors do shape the social world significantly, he thinks that the social dimension of human life cannot be reduced to a mere condescension of economic factors and relations. This is the point where he differs from vulgar liberal and Marxist accounts of political economy. This heterodox stance might have something to do with his spirituality: while he was never an observant religious practitioner, he saw emancipatory aspirations in religions, especially Christianity, and sought to integrate them into socialist politics, a stance he took in the heydays of secular Enlightenment and Positivism. For a information about Polanyi’s spirituality, see Polanyi (2016, pp. 79-91) and Dale (2016, pp. 18-21).
scope of this dissertation to consult his whole intellectual oeuvre, so I limit my discussion to relevant points and use his magnum opus, *The Great Transformation* (1957, henceforth referred as TGT) as a starting point, wherein he outlines some of his key ideas on political economy. In TGT, Polanyi surveys economic development in ancient societies, including the non-Western ones, but his primary focus is 18th-century Britain and the larger political development in Europe until the aftermath of the First World War. He attempted to track the rise of market economy in many societies and subsequently the rise of market societies in which societal interests were rendered subservient or equal to the market logic. Polanyi is not against market per se, as he is aware that even before the transition to an industrial capitalist economy, market already existed in both Western and non-Western societies. In many non-Western societies, including pre-colonial Southeast Asia for example, trade routes and market transactions were thriving (Reid, 1988; 1993; Wade, 2009; Wolf, 1982). What he is against is the rise of market society. Market, in his view, has always been embedded in the social life of human society. The rise of the market economy and subsequently market relations as the governing principle of society were not a natural outcome of the progression of individuals as utility-maximizers as preached by the liberal orthodoxy but rather a result of a conscious state effort. To decouple the market from the social and use it as the hegemonic governing principle of life was bound to cause catastrophic consequences. It is for these reasons that we can call Polanyi a theorist of the primacy of the social (Somers & Block, 2014).

Given that the market economy and the state are two sides of the same coin in Polanyi’s view, Polanyi also paid significant attention to the role of the state in crafting market institutions.

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51 Later, as a part of his critique of free market utopianism and other attempts to naturalize market society, he turned into the study of ancient economies with his collaborators (Polanyi, Arensberg, & Pearson, 1957; Polanyi & Rotstein, 1966), a seemingly boring topic but with important theoretical implications.
and logic. This puts him in contrast with mainstream economics, which put the two entities in diametrically opposed positions. Polanyi was also more receptive toward government interventions in the economy (Rogerson, 2003), although analysts and interpreters of his works have different opinions on the kind of political economic arrangements that he envisioned. He was also aware that the state is inextricably linked to the power of the ruling class and class relations within society (e.g. Polanyi, 1957, pp. 155–162, see also Searcy, 1993, p. 229). From Mitchell (1991), we know that it is difficult to locate the state in the context of state-society relations and define its boundaries and complex relationship with social forces. But to divorce it altogether from the dynamics of class relations is also too naïve, a point with which Polanyi would concur. To complement Polanyi’s conceptualization of the state, I adopted Bob Jessop’s (2008, p. 124) strategic-relational approach of the state. This approach suggests that the exercise and effectiveness of state power is a contingent product of a changing balance of political forces located within and beyond the state and that this balance is conditioned by the specific institutional structures and procedures of the state apparatus as embedded in the wider political system and environing societal relations. Thus, a strategic-relational analysis would examine how a given state apparatus may privilege some actors, some identities, some strategies, some spatial and temporal horizons, and some actions over others; and the ways, if any, in which political actors (individual and/or collective) take account of this differential privileging by engaging in “strategic-context” analysis when choosing a course of action.

To put it briefly, we need to disaggregate the state as an analytical unit, looking at its personnel as part of the political elites but distinct from economic elites such as business actors. While it is hard to disentangle the overlapping interests between state elites and other elites at the local

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52 I will briefly touch on this issue in the concluding chapter.
53 In his observation of New Order Indonesia, Richard Robison (1986) comes to a more-or-less similar conclusion that deserves to be quoted at length here: “While we must stress that state power in capitalist society is not immediately reducible to class power and that the state as a system of political domination relatively autonomous of class forces, the fact that the state exists in the context of a particular system of class relationships does limit and shape the form and exercise of state power” (p. 118).
level, certain political contingencies can make the state and the economic elites concede to peasants’ demands.

Using the case of England’s transition to industrial capitalism, Polanyi (1957) also notices that the push for total marketization of the social life will be met by resistance from a wide array of societal forces in defense of the intrusion of market logic in various non-economic aspects of life. This is especially true with regard to the commodification of three economic factors: labor, land, and money. He calls this dialectical process a “double movement,” and in this dynamic, he terms the attempt by society to save itself from market excesses as “countermovement,” which he defines as “a deep-seated movement sprang into being to resist the pernicious effects of a market-controlled economy” (Polanyi, 1957, p. 76). This concept can be depicted as follows:

![Figure 1. Polanyian concept of double movement as a general framework.](image)

I employed this framework to analyze the politics of elite-peasant relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Notice that although this framework mainly looks at the intersection between the development of market economy and changing state-society relations across

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54 Before the emergence of market economy, labor, land, and money were simply the fruits of human society and nature and the tools for economic transactions. With the rise of the supposedly “self-regulating” market society, those three factors became increasingly commodified, eventually turned into another type of commodities. For this reason, Polanyi labels labor, land, and money under market economy as “fictitious commodities.”
historical and societal contexts, we need to keep in mind that the process of market expansion is both state-driven and elite-driven, whereas the act of countermovement is both society-driven and lower-class-driven. But this act of saving market society from itself is not only driven by the subordinated classes and group, since it is in the interest of the society as a whole to tame the excesses of market economy. Thus, in this framework, cross-class alliance and elite-mass interest convergence in defense of society can possibly occur under certain circumstances. Again it is important to look at the state, especially at the subnational level. In my district case studies, I show that because of its regulatory capacity, the response of state elites toward peasant demands has important policy and political consequences. Moreover, under certain circumstances, such as decentralized political settings, local state elites can make an independent policy choice and even act against the interests of key economic actors. However, this course of action does not indicate a complete autonomy of the local state vis-à-vis the dominant classes à la statist theories (Skocpol, 1985), since at the end of the day, the local state will need to serve the interests of the economic elites and maintain the existing social order.55

Naturally, the hegemonic logic of market and the ones who benefit from it have an upper hand in this dynamic. Countermovement, therefore, can either succeed or fail. In this study, I was interested to find out what accounted for those divergent outcomes in my empirical studies. Schematically, this process can be described as follows:

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55 Regarding the relative autonomy of the state, see Block (1977) and Poulantzas (1969).
Here, there are two different outcomes. At the national level, countermovement against market expansion largely fails, so does the agrarian struggle in Bulukumba District. Hence, we see little to no accommodation of peasant interests at the national level and in Bulukumba District. Conversely, we see two successful cases of countermovement in the districts of North Bengkulu and Serang. In the former, local accommodation of peasant interests by the elites was achieved after sustained peasant mobilization, leading to the decommodification of land – in this case, the abandoned and unused private plantation area – occupied by the peasants. In the latter, such a local accommodation was achieved via a corporatist framework to alleviate the excesses of market operation, conserve water resources, and improve peasant livelihood. In both districts, there is variation in terms of the outcomes and mechanisms of local accommodation. This shows that countermovement against unfettered market forces can take different forms, ranging from the more moderate ones like various corporatist arrangements to the more extensive or radical ones such as decommodification of the commons and democratic control and ownership of natural resources.
This phenomenon does not only occur in Indonesia. Keep in mind that what is distinctive about the market in modern capitalist economy is the shift from market as a form of voluntary economic transaction into what Wood (2002) calls market as imperative in which we are structurally forced to participate in the market economy. Such a notion also shows how the market logic has been embedded in the broader social relations. Again, the classic example that Polanyi raises in TGT is illustrative: land enclosure in the early days of British capitalism shows the functional shift of land as a means of livelihood to commodified private property driven by the elite interest and the rise of market-induced commercial impulse.

In TGT, Polanyi ends his analysis on Europe at the interwar period. Somewhat anticipating Luebbert’s (1991) comparative analysis on the divergence of regime trajectories in interwar Europe, he highlights the rise of countermovements, both of democratic and authoritarian varieties, against the ravages of the market expansion regionally and globally. This double movement continued well after World War II. The market hegemony is not left wild and untamed. While the then Eastern Bloc countries adopted state socialist planning in their command economies (Ellman, 1979), capitalist economies implemented the welfare state model, whether through conservative (taming the masses), liberal (mitigating the bad impacts of the market), or social democratic (decommodification of the commons) arrangements (Esping-Andersen, 1990).

A historic conjuncture disrupted this post-war arrangement. There was a declining faith in the role of the state in promoting economic development whether through import-substituting and sovereigntist variants of state-led development (Bates, 1981; Hirschman, 1968) or the embedded liberal approach that combines free trade, welfare provision, and full employment (Ruggie, 1982). In its place came neoliberalism, a policy paradigm that promotes privatization,
financialization, deregulation, retreat of the state, and entrepreneurialism and, more importantly, a philosophy that places untamed free market expansionism as a governing principle of political, economic, and social lives (Harvey, 2007; Williamson, 1990). The neoliberal paradigm has been on the rise in both developed and developing countries since 1970s. A major implication of this shift in the global political economy for rural sectors is the intensification of what the geographer David Harvey (2003, pp. 145–152 ) calls “accumulation by dispossession,” that is, the process of privatization and commodification of land, labor, and other natural resources, sometimes with the help of an exclusionary policy framework, extra-economic coercion, or the combination of the two. The neoliberal ascendancy also means more dependence on the market for both the lower- and middle-peasants even to just fulfill their subsistence needs (Bernstein, 2010, p. 102). In response to this new form of intrusion on their livelihood, peasants have pursued a variety of ways to defend themselves. To paraphrase Albert Hirschman (1970), peasants can choose to exit – escape from the interference on their lives, voice – express open dissent against it, or loyalty – choosing peace with the status quo. In practice these are not exclusive choices, as the way peasants exercise their agency is also shaped by the existing structural conditions. This also means that the neoliberal ascendancy does not go unchallenged, since neoliberal policies are usually greeted by public opposition or a more sustained form of resistance from social movements (Ashman, 2004; Pierson, 1996). But in general, the neoliberal orthodoxy has remained triumphant. In the agrarian sector, this global advent of neoliberalism and its push for a total marketization of social and political spheres has deprived peasantry of the means of livelihood, especially land and other related natural resources. This parallel between our predicament and what Polanyi observed shows the continuing relevance of his work.
This new wave of double movement also takes place in Asia. For instance, in Southeast Asia, various structural changes associated with colonialism and post-colonial development such as market intrusions on subsistence farming, the withering of old patronage networks, and the increasing political salience of class identity have led to either avoidance or open confrontation and negotiation in facing market forces and state authorities in both capitalist and command economies (Adas, 1981; 1986; Fox, et al., 2009; Huizer, 1980; Ng, 1974; Kerkvliet, 1977; 2005; Scott & Kerkvliet, 1973; Stoler, 1995; Vandergeest & Peluso, 2006). Again, in this intersecting dynamics between statecraft and market forces, the peasant question continues to loom large. In Cold War Asia, this question was answered by crafting a domesticated and accelerated version of the Asian modern state: a repressive developmental state in both capitalist and command economies. Despite their divergent pathways, both types of developmental state share a common characteristic: they are both labor-repressive, both in urban and rural contexts. The main difference is that while capitalist developmental states extract surpluses from the lower-classes through market mechanism and with the help of the capitalist class, socialist developmental states do so via direct appropriation by the state (Vu, 2010, pp. 5-8).

This was also the period when the Green Revolution – an agricultural policy centered on the implementation of large-scale monoculture farming of high-yielding varieties (HYVs) supported by fertilizers, mechanization, and refined irrigation – was adopted widely in the developing world, including Asia. 56 While this state-sponsored and market-led policy scores a

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56 With HYVs, staple foods (e.g., rice, corn, soybean, potato, and wheat) can be harvested in a large scale a couple of times a year. Of course, a variety of other factors also influence the level of agricultural productivity, but with HYVs, one has a better starting point to harvest more. In Indonesia, some famous examples of HYV rice are the IRRI-developed IR 64 (known also with its commercial name, Setra Ramos) and IR-42. A government research institute under the auspice of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Indonesian Center for Rice Research (Balai Besar Penelitian Tanaman Padi, BB Padi) is probably one of the, if not the, leading institutions in rice research. It is expected that around 80% of rice varieties cultivated in Indonesia are the products of the BB Padi (Badan Litbang Pertanian-Kementerian Pertanian Republik Indonesia, 2007).
notable success in increasing food supply in a short period of time for the world’s population (Evenson, 2005), prominent critics have underscored its political, economic, social, and ecological impacts, such as the loss of biodiversity, environmental degradation, threat of declining food supply in the long run, and decline of democratic control of the local farming community at the expense of state and corporate interests (Scott, 1998, pp. 262-306; Shiva, 1991).

The growth of large-scale, capital-intensive agriculture in this period also led to declining peasant control of agricultural production. A particularly alarming development in this aspect is the rise of agricultural oligopolies. To give some illustration, by 2005, the top 10 companies in each of these different agriculture-related sectors (namely biotechnology, seeds, and pesticides) controlled around half or more of the global market (ETC Group, 2005). In the genetically modified (GM) seed sector, there are six corporations – Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Dow, Bayer, and BASF, commonly dubbed as the “Gene Giants” – that dominate the market, and in recent years they have been moving to merge into three companies, effectively increasing the size of oligopoly in the sector (ETC Group, 2013; Purdy, 2016). The cost of this oligopoly has been tremendous: globally, whereas the peasant-based food web “uses less than 25 percent of agricultural lands to grow the food that nourishes more than 70 percent of people,” the industrial food chain “uses more than 75% of the world’s agricultural land” with severe socio-ecological

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57 Evenson notes that by 2000, yield growth accounted significantly for all food production increases in developing countries, at around 86 percent. Furthermore, more modern varieties of food crops (for rice, wheat, maize, sorghum, millets, barley, beans, lentils, groundnuts, cassava, and potatoes) have been introduced and adopted, not to mention the real price for these food and feed grains has dropped by more than half since the beginning of the Green Revolution (pp. 471-481). In recent debates on the historiography of the Green Revolution, see Kumar, et al. (2017).

58 That is, the material basis of oligarchy. Strangely, this topic has been rather underexplored somewhat in the current conversation on oligarchic theories. My thanks to colleagues from the Purusha Research Cooperative (Koperasi Riset Purusha, KRP) for bringing up this point. For a classic elaboration and critique of monopolistic tendency in supposedly competitive capitalist economies see Baran and Sweezy (1966).
impacts in the process (ETC Group, 2017, p. 17). Indonesia is not immune from this
development. In 2001, Monsanto tried to enter the Indonesian market. This was met by
resistance from various peasant and civil society groups (GM Watch, 2005). On the ground, the
resistance against Monsanto’s GM seeds was pretty fierce – in Bulukumba, for example, the
local peasants and indigenous Kajang community burned Monsanto’s pilot project and
successfully kicked the corporation out of the community (Iwan Salassa, personal
communication, May 24, 2016; Khudori, 2004, pp. 254-259; Sunarti Sain, personal
communication, June 24, 2016). In 2004, Indonesia’s anti-corruption commission started its
investigation of Monsanto’s alleged attempt to bribe key Indonesian government officials
(Mapes, 2004). Notwithstanding this opposition, Monsanto recently planned to make a comeback
to Indonesia, announcing its intention to approach the current Indonesian government in 2015
(Manuturi, 2015).

Outside of agricultural production activities, elite-led market penetration also occurs in
the realm of natural resource management and conservation activities. Oil discovery and
management, for example, sometimes lead to the deepening of entrenched interests in the sector
at the expense of state capacity building and democratic space for ordinary citizens and dissident
actors (Karl, 1997; Watts, 2004). Even in the supposedly more sustainable “green economic”
sectors popular in the Global South such as carbon payments (including REDD+60), ecotourism,
community-based wildlife management, to name a few are not immune from the possibility of

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59 Iwan Salassa is a long-time agrarian activist in Bulukumba. Sunarti Sain, a former student activist who was also
involved in agrarian advocacy, is now the editor-in-chief of Bulukumba’s major local newspaper, Radar Selatan.
60 REDD+ stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the role of conservation,
sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries. This is a new
policy scheme developed by parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. For further
information on the scheme see http://www.un-redd.org/
alienating rural citizens including the peasantry from the democratic control over their livelihood and common resources (Brockington & Ponte, 2015). Evidence for this new form of dispossession and market penetration – also known as “green grabbing” or “green washing” – can be found in a wide range of economic activities, from ecotourism and conservation (Marijnen, 2017; Ojeda, 2012), to hydropower dam construction and tree plantations (Baird & Barney, 2017), to forestry governance (Nel, 2015), and to wildlife and water resource management (Green & Adams, 2015; Marcatelli, 2015), among others. From institutional economics research, we know that the overextraction and misallocation of resource endowments is more likely in countries where accountability and state competence are lacking (Robinson, Torvik, & Verdier, 2006). Such insight is also applicable in green economic sectors in developing countries. Here, one has to remember that resource and environmental politics, just like any other types of politics, is a power-laden site of contests over resources and authorities (McCarthy & Warren, 2009). This new wave of exclusionary politics in the realm of natural resources and conservation governance has triggered resistance from peasants and civil society groups worldwide (Doyle & McEachern, 2001; Mittelman, 1998).

Given this intrusion of rural livelihood by state and market forces in both state socialist and capitalist contexts, Asian peasants have resisted through a variety of ways, ranging from informal types of insubordination, moral protests, mobilization through social movements, or electoral participation (Kenney-Lazar, 2016; Kerkvliet, 2005; O'Brien & Li, 2006; Phatharathananunth, 2006; Sandbrook et al., 2007, pp. 65–92 ).\(^6\) This rural countermovement

\(^6\) This fact, unavoidably, will require us to revisit the debates on agrarian transition. One of the major debates of such kind is the Lenin-Chayanov debate on the nature of the agricultural economy. While Lenin argued that the peasant economy inevitably will be penetrated by capitalist social relations and therefore lead to class differentiation among the peasantry, Chayanov argues instead that there is a distinctive peasant mode of production centered around household economies and although he does not deny socio-economic differentiation among the peasantry
has also emerged in contemporary Indonesia, a trend that can be traced back to the decades of 1970s when independent initiatives to foster rural development and civil society after the destruction of the rural mass base of the Left took off. Starting from the 1990s onwards, the country has undergone important economic and political reforms: economic liberalization in the early 1990s, democratization in 1998, and decentralization in 1999. The twin process of democratization and decentralization was the key critical juncture that opened new POS for peasants and their activist allies. Once again, we are presented with the Polanyian question: what is the contour of double movements in Indonesia after decades of authoritarian rule?

Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: Rural Countermovement under Decentralized Politics

Recent developments in agrarian politics in post-authoritarian Indonesia cannot be disassociated with the broader process of rural marketization worldwide. As Sidel (2015) points out, agricultural commercialization in the early process of state formation in Southeast Asia has an enduring impact on the present-day politics in the region. Here, I am interested in analyzing how the current form of Polanyian double movement unfolds in contemporary Indonesia. Specifically, I seek to present my hypotheses through formal diagrams. To give a better understanding on the Indonesian context and specify the scope of my investigation and causal

such kind of inequality is better described by demographic variation between households, shaped largely by life cycle pattern and changes in consumer-worker ratios. To oversimplify, while Lenin emphasizes the role of economic factors external to rural households, Chayanov instead emphasizes the role of internal demographic factors for explaining the development of peasant economy. Responding to this debate requires us to not only engage with theoretical complexities but also, and probably more importantly, to look at the empirical data. To date, we find supports for both theories from many cases, including the ones in the developing world. Admittedly, to dig into the empirical puzzle of this issue requires sensitivities to the nitty gritty of rural economy, such as rural life cycle, commodity types, and the like and willingness to some sort of theoretical eclecticism combining both theories. For several arguments about the contemporary relevance of the Lenin-Chayanov debate and the need to combine both perspectives see Bernstein (2009), Harrison (1979), and Schulman and Newman (1991)

62 On critical junceturbe, see Collier and Collier (1991), Pierson (2004), and Slater and Simmons (2010). On POS, see Tarrow (1994).

63 Special thanks to Sirojuddin Arif for his help in crafting the diagrams.
process tracing, I integrated the discussion of the new political context after democratization and under decentralization with elaboration of my hypotheses and variables.

Political changes after the fall of the authoritarian New Order regime unleashed vast opportunities for societal actors to advance their agenda, especially at the local level. But democratization is not a linear and teleological process and democratic deepening is not always guaranteed. It is a pretty well-founded assessment that Indonesian democracy can coexist with oligarchy (Robison & Hadiz, 2004; Winters, 2011). Locally, what one might typically encounter is not a robust local democracy with a strong participatory component à la Brazil, but rather is a highly clientelistic form of patronage democracy (Blunt, Turner, & Lindroth, 2012; van Klinken, 2009). This suggests that the progress of democratic deepening and the quality of local democracy are uneven and contingent on local contexts. This is especially true for agrarian issues. While we see an unprecedented level of peasant mobilization, advocacy, and lobbying vis-à-vis the elites and the state, this new wave of rural activism does not always translate into real policy influence and change. It is one thing to be able to mobilize one’s fellow neighbors in protest of a land-grabbing incident or to lobby for a greater citizen participation in district water governance; it is another thing to be able to get the land back or to convince the local bureaucrats to include peasant representatives in the next meeting on water resources. In other words, success stories of peasant struggle for land rights and a more participatory framework of natural resource governance remain few and far between.

This leads us to the question of the possibility of a successful rural countermovement, that is the accommodation of peasant interests by the elites in Indonesia – a contemporary example of market society. Therefore, in my first hypothesis, I sought to understand the conditions under which the accommodation of peasant interests can occur. In other words, what
accounts for the occurrence or non-occurrence of such an accommodation? In my observations, I sought the contrast between the situation at the national level and the district case studies. I hypothesized that the degree of organizational unity among the peasants and the convergence of interests between the elites and peasants explain the likelihood of accommodation of peasant interests by the elites.

**Variables**

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<tr>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Dependent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rural countermovement</td>
<td>Peasant unity interest convergence</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
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**Variable Operationalization and Causal Pathways**

This argument goes as follows. At the national level, fragmentation among peasant organizations and the lack of interest convergence between elites and peasants explain why elites do not really accommodate peasant interests nationally (Hypothesis 1a). When peasants are...
organizationally fragmented, they are unable to form a unified platform to exert an effective mass pressure against the elites. Such an inability is exacerbated when there is a lack or an absence of meeting of interests between elites and peasants, thereby offsetting the likelihood of accommodation of peasant interests. This lack of national-level interest convergence is a product of the continuing interlocking of interests between political and economic elites. As I show in the next chapter, such an arrangement precludes the possibility of elite-peasant interest convergence at the national level.

Conversely, at the local level, the presence of a unified organizational venue representing peasant communities as well as interest convergence between elites and peasants explain the occurrence of accommodation in some districts – in this case, in North Bengkulu and Serang (Hypothesis 1b). When peasants are organizationally unified, they can better exert their pressure against the elites. Such pressure through lobbying, mass mobilization, or the combination between the two becomes influential under certain political circumstances – for instance, when local elites need votes during elections or inputs and participation in some policy issues. During these moments, there is a convergence of interests between elites and peasants, paving the way for a quid pro quo exchange between the two and subsequently local accommodation of peasant interests. Again, following the logic of the first hypothesis, both variables have to be present for accommodation to occur. The Bulukumba case shows how the existence of a unified organization is necessary but not sufficient for the emergence of local accommodation of peasant interests.

The independent variables in this hypothesis, peasant organizational unity and interest convergence between elites and peasants, need further elaboration. By “the degree of organizational unity among peasants,” I refer to the extent to which peasants can overcome the
coordination problem among themselves and act under a single platform.\textsuperscript{64} This can be done when there is a major peasant organization representing the peasantry as a whole or when different peasant organizations can act in unison, as we can see in North Bengkulu and Serang, respectively. This is not the case at the national level, where different peasant organizations are unable to overcome their coordination dilemma, rendering their activism less effective than expected. In this dissertation, I am mainly interested in organized peasants, whether under social movement-oriented unions or the corporatist poktans. While organized peasants, just like organized workers, only represent a fraction of the Indonesian peasantry, their influence and, at times, mobilizational power can go beyond their immediate membership.\textsuperscript{65}

Further clarification should also be made regarding the characteristics of present-day Indonesian peasants. Here I recognize that the Indonesian peasantry is not a single entity, as class differentiation also takes place among Indonesian peasants. Unfortunately, the Indonesian word for peasant, \textit{petani}, does not differentiate between the terms peasant and farmer and their different connotations (less wealthy for the former, more entrepreneurial for the latter), not to mention that in many Indonesian villages a landlord or owner of agricultural production machines may call himself as a peasant or a farming person (\textit{petani} or \textit{orang tani} with an emphasis on his humble origin of the small scale of his agricultural production activities). In the village in which I lived in Serang for six months, for instance, I met a land-owning \textit{Haji} who introduced himself to me as an \textit{orang tani}, notwithstanding his high social stature in the community.\textsuperscript{66} Contrast this with a fellow neighbor of his, who referred to the \textit{Haji} as middleman

\textsuperscript{64} Here I follow Weingast’s (1997) definition of coordination problem.
\textsuperscript{65} For a good explanation of how the influence of social movements can go beyond their membership, see Thachil (2011).
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Haji} is an Indonesian term for those who have performed the Islamic pilgrimage or \textit{Hajj} to Mecca.
(tengkulak) and now no longer cultivate rice due to the high production cost of rice farming.\textsuperscript{67}

From this illustration alone, we can see the inherent contradiction in the Indonesian term petani. In this context, Bernstein’s (2010, Ch. 7) assessment cannot be more accurate: more and more peasants have transformed from subsistence-oriented rural cultivators to petty-commodity producers subject to market volatility, especially in the Global South. Contemporary peasants in the developing world are not the same as peasants under feudalism in medieval Europe. This is also true for Indonesian peasants. For a more concrete illustration of this point, consider this vignette from my field research in Bulukumba:

Pak Amir is a 50-year-old peasant and a branch leader of AGRA in Bulukumba, South Sulawesi. He owns some rice field and farm land, where he grows commodity crops, as well as some cattle. Coming from a farming family, he traveled around and had a variety of jobs before he got back into farming again. For some time, he worked as a migrant worker in a rubber plantation in Malaysia. He also worked briefly for the nearby rubber plantation company, PT Lonsum. The savings from his days working in Malaysia and selling cattle allow him to renovate his house and send his eldest daughter to college. I learnt from Bung Njet, AGRA community organizer in charge of Bulukumba District, that without his savings and the extra income from raising cattle, he will remain as a poor peasant. (Amiruddin, personal communication, May 21-22, 2016; R. “Njet” Tahas, personal communication, May 22, 2016)\textsuperscript{68}

Even in an economically-better middle peasant household – say, a family of Muslim educators with peasant background in Serang – the off-farming economic activities of the household subsidizes the on-farming ones (Rohili, personal communication and observation, September 2015 – February 2016).\textsuperscript{69} Indeed the balance between on-farm and off-farm economic activities

\textsuperscript{67} The term tengkulak has some negative connotations, as they are seen as benefitting from peasants’ precariousness to market volatility. Because of this, many peasant communities across Indonesia have “love-hate” relationships with the tengkulaks.

\textsuperscript{68} Amiruddin and Rudy “Njet” Tahas are both affiliated with AGRA as a peasant leader and a community organizer respectively.

\textsuperscript{69} Rohili is the headmaster of a local vocational high school in his community. He and his family ended up as my host family during my fieldwork in Serang. Other than a series of formal interviews and informal conversations, I also observed their daily activities quite closely.
for peasant and rural household income in Indonesia becomes increasingly equal overtime (Neilson, 2016). As I argued in the introductory chapter, this shows the degree of socio-economic precariousness faced by both lower and middle peasants. In brief, it is for these reasons I focused on these two groups in my observation of the Indonesian peasantry.  

With regard to the interest convergence variable, my focus was on the confluence of interests between elites and peasants as a result of dynamic political contingencies and expediencies rather than a function of a relatively stable political coalition. In a way, my working definition of interest convergence has some similarities to the strategic alliance perspective, which argues that policy outcome is a result of strategic alliance coalesced during the bargaining process among actors who do not necessarily share similar interests prior to the policy negotiation stage (Mares, 2000; 2003). My definition of interest convergence is similar to such a formulation but differs in several aspects. The strategic alliance perspective argues that policy outcome from a particular strategic alliance is moderated into a second-best choice for some actors and gives more emphasis to the role of reformist state actors (bureaucrats and politicians) as policy entrepreneurs. But in my observation, I found that the policy course taken might be the first preferred choice for the peasants in North Bengkulu or a new commonly agreed on policy for all related stakeholders in Serang. Additionally, I put emphasis not only on reformist policy entrepreneurs who might be state or non-state actors, but also on the role of civil society advocacy and mobilization from below for shaping policy course and the broader political processes.

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70 Inevitably, the recognition of the role of the middle peasants is also an act of moral judgment: it would be vicious and unjust to overlook or, worse, dismiss the contribution of the middle peasants (and in some cases, “patriotic landlords”) in various emancipatory political projects such as peasant revolts and national liberation movements.
In addition to specifying the conditions and factors shaping the contour of rural countermovements in post-authoritarian Indonesia, I also identified variations in the cases of successful countermovement. I attempted to answer this puzzle in the second hypothesis. In this hypothesis, I stated that the strength of the local civil society and the degree of salience of local agrarian issues explain the different pathways of local accommodation of peasant interests.

Variables

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<tr>
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<td>Civil society strength</td>
<td>Variation of accommodation</td>
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<td>Issue salience</td>
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Variable Operationalization and Causal Pathways

- Stronger civil society, Higher issue salience → Mass mobilization → Accommodation-decommodification (North Bengkulu)
- Weaker civil society, Lower issue salience → Corporatist framework → Accommodation-livelihood improvement (Serang)

Figure 4 Causal claims and mechanisms for second hypothesis. Note: arrows indicate causal direction and mechanisms.

In the two district case studies in which local accommodation of peasant interests occurs, another causal process also takes place. In North Bengkulu, where the local civil society landscape is more vibrant and agrarian issues are more politically salient, accommodation
primarily emerges through mobilization in which peasants and their allies use confrontational strategies such as mass demonstration and land occupation to increase their bargaining power vis-à-vis local elites. This is because agrarian problems in North Bengkulu are more severe and enduring – issues pertaining to land rights. This not only triggers the peasants to take a more contentious strategy in engaging the elites but also increases the saliency of the agrarian problems. Moreover, the more vibrant civil society landscape in the district also increases the ability of the local peasants to make their case and expand the choices of their contentious strategies. When pressure from below intersects with the need of the local elites to reach out and down to the peasants for political and economic aims – for example, votes and social stability for investment, then local accommodation after sustained peasant mobilization will occur. The end goal of this attempt to obtain some accommodation is decommodification, arguably one of the more extensive objectives of countermovement.

In Serang, a different pattern of local accommodation emerges. Compared to North Bengkulu, Serang has a less vibrant local civil society. Additionally, the agrarian issues the local peasants face are less severe – rural livelihood and water resource governance – and therefore less politically salient. Given this, the peasants have less incentive to take a more contentious route and can instead rely on a more conciliatory approach for facing the local elites. Since the local civil society landscape in the district is less vibrant, peasants have less exposure to a wider range of ideas and strategies and tend to depend on several key actors – in this case, the environmental conservation activists under Rekonvasi Bhumi. When this combined lobbying from below effort by the peasants and the activists intersects with the need for the local elites to address policy gaps and issues related to water resources, then local accommodation after sustained lobbying will occur. In this model, the objective is to promote shared access of
resources, improve peasant livelihood, and alleviate market externalities, a comparatively more moderate type of countermovement.\footnote{This collaboration between rural community members and civil society activists in policy advocacy and the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in addressing policy gaps in various issues and promote broader governance reforms seems to be a visible feature after decentralization. This is visible in Serang but also other places where I had a chance to talk with local activists and shadow their activities such as Bantaeng District in South Sulawesi Province and Lebong District in Bengkulu. As a comparison, see Ito’s (2006) similar assessment of the role of CSOs in Bandung District.}

Here Vail’s (2010) conceptualization of the varieties of responses toward commodification is useful to better define the two types of local accommodation as rural countermovements. In his definition, oppositions and correctives to commodification encompass political, social, and cultural activities that reduce market influence in the social life. This includes a wide variety of initiatives, ranging from conservation trusts and ethical consumption to solidarity economy and asset redistribution. While Vail’s extensive elaboration of alternatives to commodification is appreciated, his conflation of such a wide range of alternatives into one label – decommodification – is problematic. There are fundamental differences among the autonomous attempts to occupy and socialize land, state-sponsored experiments with universal basic income, and civil society and community-based advocacy for a more responsible local governance and corporate practices. These alternatives are different. In this dissertation, I contend that we should use the term decommodification only to refer to attempts to subvert market logic, as I will show in my discussion of North Bengkulu.

The next question then is how to conceptualize efforts to alleviate market excesses, as shown in the Serang case, for example. Here Vail’s (2010) framework is still useful, but we need to modify it. Rather than labelling the kind of local accommodation in Serang as decommodification, it is more accurate to call an example of accommodation through
corporatism. In this context, Schmitter’s (1974, pp. 93-94) classic definition of corporatism as a mechanism of interest representation in which competing state and societal organizations take different governance functions to come up with a negotiated policy or social outcome better fits the Serang case. Given its negotiated nature, it is apparent this kind of accommodation is less extensive compared to decommodification proper.

The independent variables in this hypothesis also require some clarification. With regard to civil society, I adopt the definition of civil society defined by Huber, Rueschemeyer, and Stephens (1997, pp. 327-329) and combine both Gramscian’s and Tocquevillean’s views (Alagappa, 2004; Hughes, 2008; Taylor, 1990) of civil society. Here civil society refers to both lower-class mobilization and the density of associational life. The emphasis in this definition is on civil society as a school of democracy and a bulwark against arbitrary state power (Tocquevillean) as well as a site of struggle for the defense and advancement of the interests of the subordinated class (Gramscian). I am also aware that civil society is not a panacea for various challenges presented by market expansion and elite dominance in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Far from a rosy picture of civil society in popular discourses, I wanted to show the limits and contradictions within the local civil society landscape in post-authoritarian Indonesia and their subsequent impacts on the advancement of peasant interests, especially in the district case studies. In North Bengkulu, STaB’s foray into electoral politics eventually led to its decline, whereas in Serang, the promotion of shared access to watershed governance ironically also deepens market norms in the local peasant community. From the literature, we know that civil society is not always a progressive force. Civil society has uneven impact on the mobilization of the subordinated classes and the advancement of their interests. Some types of civil society might promote the participation of subordinated classes, whereas other types of civil society
might actually inhibit such participation by limiting and confining political participation of the lower classes within the parameter of insulated and technocratic framework dominated by powerful interests, whether they are from the state, the market, or other social forces (Ferguson, 1994; Jayasuriya & Hewison, 2004; Petras, 1999; Somers, 2008; White, 1994, pp. 385-386).

The other variable, agrarian issue salience, refers to the extent to which agrarian problems in a particular locality can become politically important. The saliency of a particular issue is inevitably influenced by whether the issue is severe and enduring. The issue of the lack of land access and ownership is arguably more severe than the declining quality of peasant livelihood due to increasing market dependence. There is a qualitative difference between diversifying farming commodities and taking up transient jobs to supplement household income due to market pressure and abruptly losing one’s land. Simply put, the salience of an agrarian issue is always linked to the degree of its severity. Of course, to better measure the degree of agrarian severity, a more comprehensive set of data gathering techniques, including a household survey, is needed. Given the logistical limitations of this research, I instead relied on existing statistics and other data such as interviews and newspaper articles to show the link between agrarian severity and its political salience.

Acknowledging the limitations of local accommodation of peasant interests in the two district case studies vis-à-vis elite dominance and market forces also shows further engagement with the questions that Polanyi posed a long time ago regarding strategies to overcome market dependence. This issue is also connected to the question of formulating alternatives for market society, which will be further discussed in the final chapter. A brief comparison of pathways to local accommodation in the two districts is presented below:
Table 1
Comparison of Local Accommodation Variations in North Bengkulu and Serang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District names and characteristics</th>
<th>North Bengkulu</th>
<th>Serang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types of unified peasant organizations</td>
<td>Peasant union (STaB)</td>
<td>Community-based poktans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimensions of interest convergence from elite perspective</td>
<td>Political: electoral support</td>
<td>Political: policy gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic: stability for investment</td>
<td>Economic: sustainability of economic resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil society vibrancy</td>
<td>Stronger</td>
<td>Weaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian issue salience</td>
<td>Stronger</td>
<td>Weaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways to accommodation</td>
<td>Mainly through contentious mobilization</td>
<td>Mainly through a corporatist arrangement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resulting accommodation</td>
<td>Decommodification</td>
<td>Shared access to resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of these developments occurred under a new political terrain of decentralized local politics. Bear in mind that Indonesia is a country that has undergone one of the most extensive decentralization reforms in the world. Although the dynamics of agrarian politics at the national level still matter because of its sheer size and influence on the local processes, agrarian politics by nature is very localized, and therefore, what happens at the local level inevitably also shapes the countrywide dynamics of agrarian politics. Thus, it is important to discuss the intersecting dynamics between decentralization and local agrarian politics.

In democratization studies, decentralization in new democracies is discussed as a part of the larger institutions of horizontal accountability (O'Donnell, 1999). While this angle is important, one needs to look beyond such a perspective to grasp how decentralization unfolds at the subnational level. There is acknowledgement of the need to look at the politics of decentralization more locally, there are differing views of decentralization in the literature. The conventional institutionalist view, common in many development agencies and the mainstream
scholarship, sees decentralization mainly as a technocratic and administrative process instead of a political one or an extension of electoral democracy and good political leadership at the local level (Grindle, 2007; Martinez-Vazquez & McNab, 1997). Such a view neglects the delicate and political nature of decentralization (see for instance Smoke, 2010, pp. 194–195). In reality, the many assumptions equating decentralization with improved governance outcomes can be inconclusive, untenable, or worse, empirically unproven (Treisman, 2007). More importantly, decentralization, whether administrative, fiscal, or political, is not only a process of technocratic planning and a matter of good governance and leadership but also a site of political struggle over power and resources among conflicting social forces (Carroll, 2010). Indeed the broader landscape of local politics itself can be seen “as much an arena for class or caste conflict as any other” (Crook & Manor, 1998, p. 295). Furthermore, insights from several comparative case studies of local governmental units in Asia, Latin America, Russia, and Africa show that “transferred powers – whether discretionary or merely the implementation of mandates – follow the contours of existing divisions and inequalities shaping national and local politics” (Ribot, Chhatre, & Lankina, 2010, pp. 131-132).

Consequently, decentralization is better understood as an unequal instead of neutral playing field. One also needs to look at decentralization more comprehensively, not only in terms of its institutional design but also in terms of the actors, authorities, power relations, and accountability mechanisms involved in the process (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999, pp. 476-479). The relationship between decentralization and the empowerment of the local citizenry is a complex one, which implies that one has to unravel it, examining the extent to which decentralization promotes or impedes community empowerment (Brinkerhoff & Azfar, 2010, pp. 107-114). In the context of unequal power relations, elites have more political advantage in shaping the course of
decentralization. This in turn makes decentralization prone to the possibility of elite capture. Elites not only shape the direction and sequence of decentralization, but they can also hijack it for their own benefits (Chowdhury & Yamauchi, 2010; Faletti, 2010; Fritzen, 2007; Jütting, et al., 2004). This is even more complicated in Indonesia, where local elites have different, sometimes competing, views and interpretations of decentralization (Hidayat, 2007). With regard to the dynamics of the double movement, decentralization is also implemented as an avenue to promote pro-market policies in some cases (Eaton & Connerley, 2010, p. 1&13). Decentralization, therefore, presents not only opportunities but also challenges for marginalized citizens and social movements, including peasants.

In post-authoritarian Indonesia, decentralization has been a political project from the very beginning (Fitran, Hofman, & Kaiser, 2005; Kimura, 2013). Over the course of its development, a mélange of local elites and their right-hand men groomed during the New Order period – bureaucrats, local political operators, state-dependent business contractors, patronage-based student activist and paramilitary groups, and the like – have been able to capitalize on this newfound opportunity and dominate local electoral and political dynamics (Hadiz, 2010). Regarding local electoral politics after decentralization, a quick look at the sociological profiles of the winners of local direct elections for district heads and mayors in the last two election cycles (2005 and 2010) suggests that these winning candidates are mostly old elites with ties to the authoritarian era, such as local bureaucrats and entrepreneurs (Buehler, 2013; Kementerian Dalam Negeri, 2006; 2011). An in-depth study of several rural communities in West Java also suggests that the devolution of power and resources to the village government does not necessarily lead to the empowerment of the village community, as village elites and officials still perpetuate the existing patrimonial and patronage-based power relations (Ito, 2011). There are
also valid concerns raised by Indonesian civil society actors regarding the prospect of democratic practices at the grassroots level and the quality of public services post-decentralization (Antlöv, 2009). Performancewise, decentralization in Indonesia brings a mixed result, but a key take-away point from this observation is that the role of the executive heads of the local governments after decentralization is crucial in promoting policy reforms (von Luebke, 2009). This indicates the key role of the executive branch of local governments in influencing Indonesian local politics after decentralization.

I tried to capture the interrelated dynamics between decentralization and the double movement in my case studies. In my discussion on the two district case studies, I show how advocacy efforts from below are important, but the convergence of interests between the peasant-activist coalition and the local elites is crucial too, without which policy reforms or interest accommodations will be unlikely to occur. This shows that both independent variables in the first hypothesis have to appear in tandem for local accommodation of peasant interests to happen.

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the framework for my analysis of the politics of elite-peasant relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Using Polanyi’s concepts of double movement and countermovement as a general framework for this analysis, I show how recent developments in agrarian politics in contemporary Indonesia after democratization and decentralization can be seen as part of the new surge of the Polanyian double movement. The changing contour of state-society relations in post-authoritarian Indonesia provides new opportunities for the peasants to respond to the impact of market intrusion and elite dominance on their lives. But such an
opening does not always lead to the fulfillment of peasant interests, as the extent to which those interests can be accommodated is mediated by other factors.

Political and economic elites are more willing to accommodate peasant interests when the peasants are organizationally unified and there is a convergence of interests between elites and peasants. Advocacy efforts from below by unified peasants are necessary to bring peasant interests to the elites’ attention, but it is not sufficient. For accommodation of peasant interests to happen, interest convergence between elites and peasants should also occur. The presence of these two variables in tandem are the necessary and sufficient conditions for the accommodation of peasant interests by the elites. This is the contrast between the situation at the national level, where peasants are organizationally fragmented and there is a lack of interest convergence between elites and peasants, and the situation in the two observed districts, North Bengkulu and Serang, where peasants are organizationally unified and there is a convergence of interests between local elites and peasants.

In the district case studies, we also see variations in the types of local accommodation. North Bengkulu is the classic example of accommodation through mobilization, whereas Serang is an understudied case of accommodation through corporatism. These divergent pathways of local accommodation are shaped by two variables, namely the vibrancy of local civil society and the degree of agrarian issue salience in each district.

I also clarify some key concepts used in this dissertation and put the Indonesian case into the larger regional and global contexts. I also try to strike a balance between the call to make a parsimonious meso-theory of social phenomena and the need to pay attention to the empirical details gathered from my fieldwork. With this framework in mind, I now turn to my three case studies in the following chapters to empirically ground my causal claims and mechanisms.
CHAPTER 3
AGRARIAN POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY INDONESIA

Introduction

This chapter analyzes the lack of accommodation of peasant interests at the national level. Essentially, it tests the first hypothesis of this study. It provides an overview of agrarian politics at the national level in contemporary Indonesia. It starts by giving some historical background on agrarian politics from the colonial era until the early independence period (1830-1965) and during the New Order (1966-1998). As will become apparent in my discussion, some legacies of this history continue to shape the contour of agrarian politics in contemporary. The chapter then shifts to a discussion on agrarian politics in post-authoritarian Indonesia (1998-onwards). In each discussion, a focus is given to the overlapping dynamics among agrarian change and dispossession and the larger social, political, and economic development. Although the bulk of the discussion on the post-authoritarian period concentrates on the elite-rural social movement interactions, I also examine the condition of the peasantry in general and their other non-movement strategies of collective actions.

In this chapter, I show how the absence of a unified peasant organization due to fragmentation among different peasant movements and organizations combined with the lack of interest convergence between elites and peasants account for the lack of accommodation of peasant interests at the national level in the post-authoritarian period. The combination of these
two variables explain why two major pro-peasant policies, agrarian reform and participatory resource governance, have not yet materialized even after two decades of democratization, a more open and vibrant wave of peasant activism, and a generally more inclusive agrarian policy framework. An analysis of the current state of peasant and agrarian movements, organizations, and their allies provides a more comprehensive picture of their potentials and limits for challenging oligarchic interests at the agrarian sector and for advancing their agendas.

**Agrarian Politics since the Late Colonial Era**

Indonesia’s agrarian structure has undergone a massive transformation since the early days of Dutch colonialism. However, upon closer look, there are some continuities and legacies felt until now. There are at least three key agrarian policy concerns throughout Indonesian history: 1) food supply, particularly rice, 2) land ownership and productivity, and 3) agricultural improvement. For centuries, affordable rice prices “appear to have been the basis for rice policy” starting from the mid-17th century (Mears & Moeljono, 1981, p. 21). This policy was also reinforced by the need to supply cheap food prices for colonial plantation workers and, in the post-Great Depression period, deficit areas in the Outer Islands such as Bali and South Sulawesi (pp. 21–24). Seeing the need for a more interventionist approach in the rice policy, the colonial government established the Food Supply Fund (Sticting Het Voedingsmiddelenfonds, VMF), the predecessor of the New Order marketing board BULOG (Badan Urusan Logistik) to regulate the rice marketing (p. 24). In 1830, Johannes van den Bosch, Governor General of colonial Indonesia – then known as the Dutch East Indies – introduced the Cultivation System

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72 Mears and Moeljono (1981) note that in 1655 Amangkurat I, the Sultan of Mataram, “prohibited the export of rice from Java when a severe drought resulted in rising prices.” (p. 21).
(cultuurstelsel) in Java, an economic policy that required local peasants to spare a portion of their land or work, sometimes as corvée labors, at export-oriented plantations in place of a land tax to increase colonial revenues (van Niel, 1981). The structural impacts of this policy on the Javanese peasants have been devastating, with variations across classes and regions (Elson, 1984; 1994). The rise of liberal political forces in the Netherlands, who opposed the Cultivation System, led to the dismantling of the Cultivation System, although a political compromise between market-oriented liberals and extraction-oriented conservatives in the colonial metropole meant that the activist orientation of the Dutch colonial state was preserved, setting the basis for the early development of a colonial state with a developmentalist orientation in the Dutch East Indies (Fasseur, 1991; 1992). In general, the colonial agrarian transformation “in the mid-19th century prior to and during the era of the Cultivation System” in Java “revealed a pervasive growth of capitalist relations and purposes.” (Knight, 1982, p. 147). But in this process, although many peasants were proletarianized into landless peasants, plantation workers, or “free labors,” they were not necessarily integrated into the emerging modern market economy (Knight, 1988; Knight & van Schaik, 2001). This created a condition of “dual economy” – an economy driven by capitalist mode of production and an enduring rural economy of peasant households. This became a lasting feature of the Indonesian economy. Seen from the Polanyian perspective, the Dutch colonial period marks the deepening of market relations into colonial Indonesia.

The Dutch colonial hegemony was interrupted in 1942 with the coming of the Japanese into the Pacific during the Second World War. While the Japanese occupation period was relatively short (1942–1945), it had a tremendous impact and left several long-lasting institutional legacies. First, given the wartime context, the Japanese intensified the extraction of

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73 This system is infamously known in Indonesia as the forced cultivation system.
agricultural products, especially rice for military supplies, and forced many peasants to work as forced labors (rōmusha) for various purposes, including large construction projects that brought tremendous suffering and high death rates (Sato, 1994). Second, the Japanese introduced the community and neighborhood system (Rukun Warga/Rukun Tetangga, RT/RW) in colonial Indonesia, modeled after their own version of tonarigumi, the neighborhood coordination networks that organized community affairs, surveillance, and mobilization in emergency situation (Kurasawa, 1993). The RT/RW system remained in place even after the end of the Japanese occupation in 1945 and since then has become an important mediator of state-society relations in Indonesia (Kurasawa, 2009). This legacy left the newly-independent Indonesian Republic in 1945 with an extensive institutional infrastructure to reach out to society but with a significant lack of capacity for policy enforcement as state power and institutions were slowly remade, as evidenced by the Republic’s inadequacy in effectively providing rice to its citizens during the 1945–1949 Revolutionary War against the incoming Allied forces (Vu, 2003). In 1947, the Republican government set up Village Education Centers (Balai Pendidikan Masyarakat Desa, BPMD), a precursor to the many versions of state-sponsored agricultural education and improvement centers for years to come (van der Eng, 1996, p. 125).

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74 All villages and urban administrative units in Indonesia are divided into several RWs; each consists of several RTs. Each RT appoints a community member as the RT chief, who then reports to the RW chief who supervises several RT chiefs.
75 During the authoritarian years, the RT/RW networks became the state’s eyes and ears at the neighborhood level. But besides its surveillance function, which to a degree still continues as a way to ensure public security, the networks essentially work as the front office of public services in the community. In both urban and rural areas, community members need to ask their respective RT leaders to gain access to basic public services such as obtaining ID cards and registering as voters. In poorer areas, especially in villages, RT leaders play an important role in relaying public policy affairs to their fellow community members and channeling government subsidies such as subsidized rice and conditional cash transfer. To put it briefly, the RT/RW networks have been an important feature of Indonesia’s state-society relations for decades.
76 The centers and programs that came afterward focused on improving the agricultural techniques of the peasants. Later, NGOs also participated in these activities and created their own programs. In many respects, these initiatives were sometimes imbued by paternalism toward the peasants by state authorities and activists.
This period of rapid agrarian and political transformation also marked the emergence of rural contentious politics. Like its Southeast Asian neighbors, Indonesia has a long history of peasant rebellions and left-wing revolts (Benda & McVey, 1960; Kartodirdjo, 1973; Shiraishi, 1990; Williams, 1990; Young, 1994). With the exception of several notable small-scale social revolutions, such as the 1946 Three Regions Affair on the northern coast of Central Java (Lucas, 1989), peasant activism in the post-independence period combined electoral engagement and mass mobilization. Although led by peasants, other social forces including indigenous peoples also participated in this struggle. One notable example is the Dompea movement in the South Sulawesi Province, formed in 1954, in which members of the indigenous Kajang community sought to protect their land and cultural practices from the incursions of the puritan Darul Islam rebellion (Gibson T., 2000).

With the end of the tumultuous early independence years (1945–1959), Indonesia entered the Guided Democracy period (1959–1965), a shift welcomed by politically-exhausted civilian and military leadership. In this period, Sukarno took a major role, leading the newly transformed semi-authoritarian state and implementing a series of populist policies. Throughout this period (1945–1965), the PKI was arguably at the forefront of peasant rights advocacy. In terms of mobilizational politics, the Indonesian Peasants’ Front (Barisan Tani Indonesia, BTI) and Plantation Workers’ Union (Sarekat Buruh Perkebunan Republik Indonesia, Sarbupri) – two unions with close ties to PKI and almost eight million members – championed direct action (White, 2016). BTI also made a contribution to agricultural improvement when one of its leaders of middle-peasant origin, Jagus, invented several HYV rice seeds (Leksana, 2016). Besides the passing of BAL in 1960, the Guided Democracy regime also instituted several key agrarian policies. The regime sponsored the establishment of the Peasants’ and Fishers’ Cooperative Bank
(Bank Koperasi Tani dan Nelayan, BKTN), a state-owned bank specializing in microfinance, rural cooperatives, and the Mass Guidance for Rice Self-Sufficiency Program (Bimbingan Massal Swasembada Beras, Binmas) (Mears & Moeljono, 1981, pp. 24-25). Although often thought of as a creation of the New Order, the Binmas program was originally conceived during the Guided Democracy period. The initial idea behind the Binmas program was to recruit college students and other agricultural science experts to serve in rural communities and help peasants improve their farming techniques. A pilot project of the program in West Java around 1963-1964 was quite a success and soon expanded to other areas (van der Eng, 1996, p. 103). In 1963, based on the first official agricultural census, the majority, around 70 percent of near landless and middle-peasants (with an average land ownership of 1 ha or less per household), held only 28.6 percent of agricultural land. While this indeed implied a pretty unequal landholding structure, in comparison to later development under the New Order, when a subtler process of class differentiation among the peasantry as well as large-scale dispossession occurred, this situation was relatively more equal.

By now it is evident that the roots of the many features of agrarian policies in contemporary Indonesia – such as government intervention in the rice policy, an obsession with agricultural improvement, and extractive land policy (in short, state paternalism and state-assisted market expansion) – can be traced back to the colonial and early independence eras. This is not an argument for vulgar historical continuities; instead it simply shows there are parallel concerns regarding agrarian policies throughout different historical periods. A particular exception however is the Guided Democracy period. Despite its semi-authoritarian tendency, irredentist

77 The BKTN itself was an amalgamation of several banks. In 1968, BKTN was officially renamed as the People’s Bank of Indonesia (Bank Rakyat Indonesia, BRI).
foreign policy, and hyperinflated economy, it was the period when an extensive and populist land reform campaign mandated by the 1960 Basic Agrarian Law (BAL, *Undang-undang Pokok Agraria, UUPA*) was launched.\(^7^8\) Other than land reform, BAL also emphasizes the social function of land and limits the individual size of land holding. Utrecht (1969) notes that by 1964, around 450,000 ha of land were redistributed (pp. 85-86).

### Table 2

Patterns of Agricultural Land Control, 1963

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of landholding (ha)</th>
<th>Percentage of farm</th>
<th>Percentage of land holdings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.10-0.25</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25-0.50</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.50-1.00</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.00-2.00</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.00-5.00</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>24.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5.00</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on the 1963 Agricultural Census Data. (Bachriadi and Wiradi 2013, p. 43) These figures do not differentiate between wet rice and dry cropping patterns and exclude much of forest lands and farm and plantation workers.

To this date, there have been no similar policies comparable to that period. But the Guided Democracy regime was built on a shaky foundation – a delicate balance of power between the army and its civilian allies on one side and the Communists on the other side, guarded by Sukarno as the populist leader. When the news of the alleged Communist coup was broadcast, the army and its allies soon capitalized on that and gained an upper hand, leading to the mass killings of hundreds of thousands of Communist cadres and suspected leftists and the

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toppling of Sukarno around 1965-1966 (Robinson, 2018; Roosa, 2006). But the land reform policy continued until 1968 under the supervision of the New Order regime with occasional intrusions from local military authorities. The protracted struggle to implement this policy, starting in 1962, resulted in the distribution of around 800,000 ha land to nearly 850,000 families by 1967 with the breakdown as follows:

Table 3
Redistributed Lands, 1962–1967

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Redistributed lands</th>
<th>Area (in hectares)</th>
<th>Number of recipient households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surplus land</td>
<td>116,559 ha</td>
<td>135,859 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absentee owners’ land</td>
<td>17,477 ha</td>
<td>40,037 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land from regional governments</td>
<td>111,407 ha</td>
<td>131,335 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land from central government</td>
<td>555,874 ha</td>
<td>539,912 families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>801,317 ha</td>
<td>847,143 families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Calculated from official government data. (Utrecht 1969, p. 87)

In 1968, it was estimated that an additional 200,000 acres was distributed to about 200,000 families, “bringing the total to about one million ha of land redistributed to one million families” from the initial goal of three million targeted households (Utrecht, 1969, p. 87). Bear in mind that this land redistribution occurred when the Indonesian economy was still mainly agricultural with a much lower degree of land inequality compared to today’s condition. There was also fierce opposition from the military, especially the army who benefitted from the gradual state seizure of foreign assets starting from 1949 and subsequently controlled a significant chunk
of the economy.\textsuperscript{79} This campaign was also a historic example of land reform by leverage instead of land reform by grace because of the significant role of the BTI and other local peasant movements and direct actions in pushing the state to implement the policy.\textsuperscript{80} But this participatory redistributive experiment was terminated when the foundation of the Guided Democracy regime, the delicate balance of power between the communists on one side and the army and its civilian allies on the other side, was disrupted. The anti-Communist pogrom followed by the toppling of the erratic-yet-charismatic Sukarno circa 1965–1966 sealed the regime’s fate, along with its populist dreams and aspirations.

**Agrarian Politics under the New Order**

In the aftermath of the anti-Communist massacre in 1965, the New Order proponents managed to rise in power and consolidate their rule in 1966. Following the orientation of the regime’s social base and leading figures, it started a gradual dismantlement of Sukarno’s agrarian policies and the broader aspiration for agrarian justice from the early independence era. Bachriadi (2010) observes that the New Order overturned the earlier populist agrarian policies through three ways: 1) extension of state power over land in the name of the Article 33 of the Indonesian constitution and BAL, 2) rural repression, and 3) the promotion of state-sponsored large capitalist enterprises in agricultural, plantation, and forestry sectors (p. 39).

Haunted by the specter of the rural class struggle, the New Order regime essentially tamed peasant radicalism by entrenching state coercive apparatuses and promoting capitalist

\textsuperscript{79} For a classic elaboration of the consolidation of state capitalism in Indonesia from 1949 to 1965 see Robison (1986), especially Chapters 2 and 3. The military control of several state-owned enterprises, especially at local factories and plantations, also intensified its rivalry with PKI-linked workers’ unions.

\textsuperscript{80} Whereas land reform by grace depends on the graciousness of the rulers, land reform by leverage instead relies on active mobilization by the peasants themselves to push for land redistribution (Powelson & Stock, 1990, p. 4).
development in the countryside (Antlov 1995; Pincus 1996). As noted by Fauzi (1999), the New Order issued several new laws and regulations to ensure rural capitalist development, most notably the Laws No. 1 in 1967 on Foreign Investment (*Undang-undang Penanaman Modal Asing*), No. 6 in 1968 on Domestic Investment (*Undang-undang Penanaman Modal Dalam Negeri*), and No. 5 in 1967 on the Principles of Forestry (*Undang-undang tentang Ketentuan-ketentuan Pokok Kehutanan*) as well as Government Regulations No. 21 in 1970 on Forest Exploitation and Forest Harvesting Rights (*Hak Pengusahaan Hutan, HPH dan Hak Pemungutan Hasil Hutan, HPHH*), and No. 7 in 1990 on the Industrial Timber Plantation (*Hutan Tanaman Industri, HTI*) (pp. 168–185). The regime also capitalized on the legal provision in BAL, called the commercial lease rights (*Hak Guna Usaha, HGU*) and intensified the use of HGU to promote large-scale investments in the plantation sector. These new regulations, especially the HPH, HPHH, and HGU rights as well as the HTI scheme, gave the regime legal legitimacy and policy instruments to promote large-scale, capital-intensive investments in rural areas. The Indonesian Business Data Center (*Pusat Data Bisnis Indonesia, PDBI*) estimated that under the HPH rights alone, more than 64 million ha of forestland were controlled by around 20 business groups by 1994 (Khudori, 2005, p. 213).

In politics, peasant mobilization was restrained, and left-leaning unions were banned. In their place the Indonesian Farmers’ Harmony Association (*Himpunan Kerukunan Tani*

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Indonesia, HKTI) was established by the regime ostensibly to represent – but in fact control – peasants’ interests in authoritarian-corporatist fashion (Samson, 1974). In village administration, several restrictions were also implemented. The regime standardized many local variations of village governance and replaced the previously autonomous village councils and social boards with the regime-controlled village assembly (Lembaga Musyawarah Desa, LMD) and community resilience board (Lembaga Ketahanan Masyarakat Desa, LKMD), many of whose members were part of the village elites and regime loyalists (Antlov, 1995, pp. 43-44). The regime also cultivated patronage relations with many village heads (lurah/kepala desa) and sub-district chiefs (camat) to control village politics. (Nordholt, 1987). Open expressions of contentious politics in rural areas were constrained, forcing subtler forms of resistance in the realm of everyday politics. At the same time, the Bimas program was pursued on a wider scale to improve peasants’ agricultural productivity (Sadjad, 1976).

The regime also reversed the earlier policy of land reform, promoting large-scale investments, especially in state lands and forests, and keeping rural poverty in check through Green Revolution-style agricultural modernization, consumer cooperatives for peasants, a

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82 A similar corporatist organization for fishers, the All-Indonesia Fishers’ Association (Himpunan Nelayan Seluruh Indonesia, HNSI), was also established (Fauzi, 1999, p. 159).
83 Some notes on the Indonesian terms on government positions and structures: there are two types of villages in Indonesia, desa and kelurahan. Typically, desa is more rural and has a directly-elected village head (kepala desa), whereas kelurahan is more urban and its head (lurah) is a civil servant directly appointed by the district or city government in which it is located. Kelurahan is also used to refer to smallest administrative units in urban areas. In reality though, these two terms are often used interchangeably. A sub-district, headed by a chief (camat), is a collection of villages or urban administrative units.
84 For an excellent discussion on this issue see Bertrand (1995).
85 For some interesting first-hand accounts on the experience of college students as volunteers for Bimas and other related programs see Jahja (1973) and Swasono (1973).
86 These cooperatives, commonly known as village cooperatives (Koperasi Unit Desa, KUD), provided farming equipment, fertilizers, seeds, microcredit, and training on farming techniques. They also served as centers for post-harvest processing and marketing (Hadisapetro, 1973, pp. 31-32). The regime’s emphasis on corporatist consumer cooperatives is in contrast with PKI’s proposal of rural producer cooperatives which aims to impose direct and collective control over agricultural production activities (Aidit, 1963).
government interventionist rice policy through BULOG, and transmigration (Booth & McCawley, 1981; Hadisapoetro, 1973; Mears & Moeljono, 1981; van der Eng, 1996). The regime scored notable successes in its Green Revolution-oriented policies. It achieved a drastic increase of per capita food supply from 1,699 kcal in 1966-1970 to 2,830 kcal in 1991-1995 (van der Eng, 2000, p. 616). Furthermore, the total agricultural outputs also rose significantly from 50.5 million tonnes of rice equivalents in 1961-1965 to 137.1 million tonnes in 1991-1995 with an average growth rate of 2.9 percent per annum during the 1961-2000 period (Fuglie, 2004, p. 217). Evidence from local case studies in both Java and the Outer Islands also show the contribution of the Green Revolution to agricultural and village development (Deuster, 1982; Edmundson & Edmundson, 1983). This was achieved by the allocation of state revenues from the oil boom in the 1970s to 1980s for rural infrastructure building (irrigation systems, roads, and community health clinics), agricultural improvement (through fertilizers, HYVs, and microcredit schemes), and domestic rice price stabilization (striking a balance between producers’ and consumers’ needs), all supported by sound macroeconomic policies (Falcon, 2014).

But the overall achievement of the New Order agrarian policies was a mixed one: while agricultural growth improved, the regime’s rice and transmigration policies scored a much more moderate success in ensuring enough food and land supply. 87 This set of policies was also pursued without addressing the structural imbalance in the access to agricultural means of production especially land. At the village level, especially in Java, this also means that while everyone might have enough to eat, class differentiation between the more affluent and the

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87 Transmigration (transmigrasi) policy, which relocates citizens from different parts of Java to the Outer Islands, basically encourages citizens, many from crowded villages in Java, to migrate to the Outer Island provinces and start new lives there. The program was initiated in the colonial era, but it was under the New Order that it really took off. Typically, a newly arrived migrant family will receive a plot of land for farming and housing. The program still continues.
percentage of poorer peasants increased. In this changing context of political economy and state-society relations, the differentiation processes developed not only because of inequality in land ownership but also because of the preferential recruitment of agricultural labor for various stages of farming activities by the village elites and richer farmers as a means of workforce hiring and social control (Hart, 1986, pp. 14-15; 195). Agricultural modernization also brought differentiated impacts for different strata of the peasantry; the increasing commercialization of and technological application in agriculture often only benefitted the more well-to-do farmers, while less wealthy and poorer peasants were less able to withstand market pressure in different forms (Collier, Wiradi, & Soentoros, 1973; Sadjad, 1983; Siahaan, 1983; Tjondronegoro, 1990; Trijono, 1994; Wahono, 1994). In late 1970s and 1980s, the issuance of HGU rights increased exponentially, leading to the expansion of large-scale plantations and subsequently violent grabbing of peasants’ lands in many places (Peasants and activists in Bulukumba, Jakarta, and North Bengkulu, personal communication, May 2016–May 2017). During this period, the accelerating rate of large-scale construction projects and exclusionary conservation practices also contributed to the worsening rate of land dispossession and agrarian condition as a whole (Aditjondro, 1998; Lucas, 1992; Peasants in Bulukumba, personal communication, May 16–17, 2016). This statist-developmentalist agrarian orientation was reversed in 1990 when the World Bank started to give funding to its own version of the land titling program in Indonesia, the Land

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88 The most intensive periods of interviewing and data gathering for this assessment took place in Bulukumba in May-June 2016 and North Bengkulu April-May 2017. In Bulukumba, I also managed to corroborate this assessment with local bureaucrats and politicians. In between the two periods, numerous informal conversations with activists and peasants from different regions who came to Jakarta allow me to better confirm this periodization.

89 This also suggests parallel processes of dispossession in Java, as elaborated by Aditjondro and Lucas, and in the Outer Islands, as experienced by peasants in lowland Bulukumba. In my interview with the local peasants, they told me how they were driven out of their homes and farming lands after the government enforced a series of exclusionary conservation policies. A special thanks to Sukardi, a peasant leader in this lowland area who gave a detailed account of the struggle of his community against this eviction.
Administration Project (LAP) to the Indonesian government to promote economic liberalization and market integration (Warren & Lucas, 2013). This combination of political, economic, and social strategies should be seen as part of the New Order’s attempt to modernize Indonesia through a structural-functionalist manner and to consolidate oligarchic reordering of Indonesia’s political economy while keeping its multi-class constituents in both urban and rural areas satisfied and in check via an oscillating combination of statist, populist, and liberal policy measures (Karsono, 2013; Robison, 1986; Robison & Hadiz, 2004). Overall, the impact of increasing agricultural productivity was lessened since the structural roots of rural poverty were largely unaddressed.

The seemingly glowing achievement of the regime’s pragmatist modernization with steroid was not without cost. Although the regime claimed to redistribute around 2.2 million ha land to 1.1 million families through transmigration schemes during its reign, the Gini ratio of landholding kept increasing and many migrants found difficulty adjusting to their new homes because of communal tensions, infertile lands, and poor facilities. Many local and indigenous people were also evicted from their lands (Bachriadi & Wiradi, 2011, pp. 8-9). The regime’s promotion of large-scale, capital-oriented development also dispossessed thousands of rural families from their homes and lands. As a consequence, the absolute number of small landholders and landless peasants continued to grow. Bachriadi and Wiradi (2011) present this development in their analysis of agricultural census data from 1973–2003:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of farm households (million)</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Absolute-landless’ (million households)</td>
<td>7.1 (33%)</td>
<td>5 (21%)</td>
<td>9.1 (30%)</td>
<td>13.4 (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peasant landholders (million households)</td>
<td>14.5 (67%)</td>
<td>18.8 (79%)</td>
<td>21.1 (70%)</td>
<td>24.3 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total landholding by peasant landholders (million ha)</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>21.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average landholding by peasant landholders (ha)</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gini ratio of landholdings</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: From Agricultural Census Data. (Bachriadi and Wiradi 2011, p. 16)

In brief, the New Order cushioned the early process of the deepening of market relations in the countryside and tightened its political control of the peasantry. Given that, it is understandable the mode of rural activism that emerged in the first two decades of the New Order was more moderate than that of the Guided Democracy. During this period, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with rural development such as Bina Desa, Mitra Tani, and the Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education, and Information (Lembaga Penelitian, Pendidikan, dan Penerangan Ekonomi dan Sosial, LP3ES) promoted an agriculture-based and people-centered rural economy (Aspinall 2005, 87–94; Karsono, 2013, pp. 499-524; Muhtada 2008). These NGOs, and especially Bina Desa, was a training ground for many agrarian activists who later facilitated the formation of other land rights NGOs and movements.
Populist and social democratic critics of the New Order economic policies also voiced their oppositional views of agricultural development (Arief & Sasono, 1997; Mubyarto, 1983; Rahardjo, 1984; 1997). Nonetheless, their alternative views of rural development, albeit critical of the regime, were imbued with developmentalist and productivist biases, assuming for example that helping peasants to improve the agricultural productivity of their farmlands was the best solution for rural poverty and inequality. In short, what they sought was moderate reform rather than a radical overhaul of the regime’s vision of rural development.

From the 1980s, however, there was a monumental shift as branches of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (Yayasan Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Indonesia/Lembaga Bantuan Hukum, YLBHI/LBH) in cities across Indonesia became more involved in land rights advocacy efforts, combining elements of legal advocacy, political organizing, and student activism (Bachriadi, 2010, pp. 121-153). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, several noteworthy land disputes involving vested economic interests of the regime and their allies, including the cases of Kedung Ombo Dam in Central Java and Cimacan Golf Course in West Java, received a great deal of attention from the press and the wider public due to the resistance of local peasants against forced eviction and seizure of their lands (Aditjondro, 1998; Lucas, 1992; Salman, 1996). Such open resistance to the regime’s policy was startling. It exposed peasants and their allies – NGO and student activists – to the experience of challenging the regime more openly and sharpened

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90 This is a focus group discussion (FGD) with researchers from the Pusaka Foundation, an NGO working on indigenous peoples’ issues.

91 A particular exception, however, is the leftist and Chayanovian populist critiques from two leading activist-scholars at the Bogor Institute of Agriculture (Institut Pertanian Bogor, IPB), Gunawan Wiradi and the late Sajogyo who for a long time advocated more progressive policies such as extensive land reform and rural workers’ cooperatives. With the help of other scholars, they built what is now known as the Bogor School of critical agrarian studies (Mazhab Bogor). For an excellent discussion on this school of thought see Luthfi (2011).
their militancy. It also provoked different reactions within the ruling elites. While the majority preferred to maintain the status quo, others were more sympathetic to the peasants’ plights and helped their cause to some extent. But this dynamic was not a one-way street. As pointed out by Bachriadi (2010) and other scholars (Afiff, Fauzi, Hart, Ntsebeza, & Peluso, 2005), the more liberalized political atmosphere during the late authoritarian period also gave more opportunities for peasants and activists to openly voice their grievances.92

These episodes of conflict marked an attempt to build a wider alliance for land rights connecting peasants and villagers with urban-based activists (Bachriadi, 2010).93 Building on the efforts of student activists who had channeled their activism in various study circles and action committees, activists from LBH and various NGOs worked to establish links with victims of land disputes in the early to mid-1990s. These efforts bore fruit with the formation of a series of local peasant unions, including the West Java Peasant Union (Serikat Petani Jawa Barat, SPJB), the North Sumatran Peasant Union (Serikat Petani Sumatera Utara, SPSU), the Lampung Peasant Union (Persatuan Insan Tani Lampung, PITL), and the Central Java Independent Peasant Association (Himpunan Petani Mandiri Jawa Tengah, HPMJT). At the national level, meanwhile, activists affiliated with the left-leaning Students in Solidarity with Democracy in Indonesia (Solidaritas Mahasiswa Indonesia untuk Demokrasi, SMID) formed the National Peasant Union (STN) in 1993, with the explicit aim of connecting peasants’ struggles with what was to become the leftist People’s Democratic Party (Partai Rakyat Demokratik, PRD). In the following year, the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (KPA) was established as a national

92 Of course, liberalization was selective. Some social forces and their aspirations – several elements of political Islam for instance (Liddle, 1996) – were accommodated by the regime while others were ignored or repressed.
93 In my observation this pattern, that is the use of case-by-case advocacy as a starting point to consolidate and form local peasant movements, still continues.
coalition of peasant unions, agrarian movements, NGOs, and individuals for agrarian reform. Sympathetic to the militancy of many local unions and movements, KPA focused on advocacy campaigns and supported direct action. Land also emerged as one of the main foci of the nascent environmental movement, especially the Indonesian Forum for Environment (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia, WALHI). Founded with the support of a leading New Order technocrat and later environmentalist, Emil Salim (1978), WALHI was heavily involved in advocacy efforts for land rights and other concerns of the rural citizenry (Lipschutz & Mayer, 1996).

These deliberate efforts to address the issue of land rights (the main concern for rural Indonesians) and rebuild a new mass politics in Indonesia (the main aspiration of urban, middle-class activists) tested the limits of political dissent at a time when the regime was gradually and selectively liberalizing. What happened during this period was a protracted process through which various modes of land rights activism, ranging from political and legal advocacy to the formation of land reform policy coalitions and peasant unions, emerged, overlapped, and coalesced with each other. This wave of activism contributed to societal pressure for regime change, serving as a foundation for cross-class alliances in rural areas and provincial towns. But its impact on democratization, although important, remained limited because of its rural base.

Other social forces, such as urban-based student activists and communal elites, many of them belonging to religious organizations, forged the urban cross-class alliance that gave the final

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94 During this period, the occasional deployment of anti-Communist rhetoric and attacks by state security and paramilitary forces also hindered further development of the movement, especially against local peasant groups, which intensified their direct actions such as land occupations in mid-1990s, although KPA enjoyed relative freedom in relation to advocacy.

95 In this context, liberalization can be defined as limited relaxation of the authoritarian regime’s political grip and promotion of political pluralism within its framework (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986). Democratization necessarily goes further.
push to the dismantling of the authoritarian regime (Slater, 2010). Along with other mass-based movements, most notably the labor movement (Ford, 2009), the movement for land rights undermined the stability of the regime. But the issue of land rights itself was subsumed into the larger issue of political and economic reforms at the moment of regime change, making the land question itself just a footnote in the demands of the pro-democracy coalition.

Post-Authoritarian Agrarian Politics: Continuing Elite Dominance

The fall of the regime and the process of democratization that followed in 1998 spurred a more assertive wave of agrarian and environmental activism (Peluso, Afiff, & Rachman, 2008). In addition to a newfound political openness, the increasingly pro-market agrarian policy of the state and the current rate of land dispossession contributed to the increasingly oppositional stance of the land rights movement. Both the rural dispossessed and their allies saw this opening as an opportunity to be seized. This upsurge in land rights activism culminated in the formation of both local and national peasant unions across Indonesia in early 2000s (Bachriadi, 2012).

Nonetheless, we have not yet seen any major accommodation of peasant interests concerning land rights and natural resource governance in post-authoritarian period, for two reasons. First, within this period, peasant rights movements and organizations fought some crucial battles and attained some key victories. But the democratic period is also marked by internal disagreements, conflicts, and tensions within the movement itself, the genesis of which can be traced back to the early development of the movement under authoritarianism and to broader patterns of working relationships among Indonesian social movements. Second, despite democratization, collusive relationships between state and economic elites in the agrarian sector remain rampant. This continuing interlocking of elite interests leads to the maintenance of elite
dominance in the agrarian sector, thereby precluding the possibility of an interest convergence between elites and peasants even during moments of political contingencies. This suggests that new political opportunities in post-authoritarian Indonesia do not necessarily lead to the convergence of interests between the elites and the organized peasantry at the national level, let alone a stable policy coalition that transcends class interests. The combination of these two factors explains why the growing, but fragmented, agrarian movement, with peasant unions and agrarian NGOs at the frontline, has been unable to push the state and the capitalist class to implement large-scale, nationwide land reform and a more democratic control in resource governance. In other words, as I pointed out in the first hypothesis, the combination of fragmentation among peasant organizations and the lack of interest convergence between elites and peasants explain the non-occurrence of major accommodation of peasant interests at the national level.

Democratization marks the changing context of elite-peasant relations. No longer at the margins, agrarian issues have been brought to the policy table, thanks to sustained pressure from the movement. During the early years of democratic transition, possibilities for agrarian reform abounded due to political contingencies of that time, although it was only during the presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (2005-2014) that a clearer agrarian policy platform was delineated. Since then, various policies on agrarian reform and related issues have been formulated and implemented. Nevertheless, the main problem of unequal agrarian structure remains unaddressed, causing the movement to maintain a critical distance from the state.

The early phase of Indonesia’s democratic transition and reform, Reformasi, saw policy changes pertaining to agrarian reform such as the strengthening of the National Land Agency (Badan Pertanahan Nasional, BPN) and the passing of Parliamentary Decree No. IX/2001 (TAP
MPR No. IX/2001) to bolster the mandate of agrarian reform and give a framework for natural resource management (Rachman, 2011, pp. 53-65). In the 18-month transition period (May 1998-November 1999), a series of swift and sweeping changes occurred: Suharto stepped down, his Vice President, Habibie, took over as the president and implemented policy reforms in many areas, including agrarian policy (p. 53). The then-State Minister of Agrarian Affairs who was also the BPN head, Hasan Basri Durin, “decided to create space for hearing the critiques and suggestions articulated by agrarian movement leaders, NGO activists, and critical scholars” (p. 54). Around the same period, independent peasant organizations and movements emerged and occupied land areas under the control of private and state-owned enterprises including the State Forestry Corporation (Perhutani) and activist groups, most notably KPA lobbied the Habibie administration to fulfill the implementation of the BAL (pp. 53–57) that only came into realization under Megawati’s Presidency (2001-2004). Given the interim nature of Habibie’s presidency and political volatility at that time, there was no major deal struck between the government and the agrarian movement at that time (pp. 55–56). In 2001, after the passing of the Decree, which used the 1960 BAL as a primary reference, there were high hopes for land reform. But this enthusiasm was short-lived, as new policies proved difficult to implement at the local level where local agrarian conflicts are widespread, especially in the context of overlapping and competing national and local land authorities not to mention that agrarian movement organizations had different and competing views of the Decree (pp. 59–62). 96 This delicate situation was exacerbated by many disputes surrounding HGU rights and the government’s

96 Specifically, while KPA activists saw the Decree as an important bargaining chip to push the state to implement land reform, FSPI and its allies viewed, it instead was a Trojan horse for neoliberal agendas, especially in natural resource management. Such a disagreement, however, did not emerge among environmental activist groups who supported the Decree.
shifting focus to macroeconomic issues other than agrarian reform (Thorburn, 2004; Tjondronegoro, 2009). These issues created friction between the movement and the state. Keep in mind that despite political openings during this period, the economic dominance of key conglomerates and elites, many of them with close ties to the New Order regime, remained unchallenged. In 2000 alone, 25 major corporations, some of them are Suharto’s long-time cronies, still held 223 HPH rights controlling over 27 million ha forestlands (Arifin & Rachbini, 2001, p. 125). Many of them also were implicated in rent-seeking activities and corruption cases (pp. 126–127). In these early years of democratic transition, the newly democratizing Indonesian state had to make a delicate balance between pushing various reform agendas and maintaining the larger social and political stability. Faced by the pressure from agrarian movement leaders and activists who neither expected the emergence of democratic space after authoritarian breakdown nor had a clear policy proposal other than land reform, the state did not go further beyond adopting piecemeal agrarian policy reforms. The deep degree of entrenched political-economic interests of the New Order-linked elites also limited the extent to which state apparatuses could promote, implement, or even be receptive toward agrarian policy reforms. Since there was a lack of convergence between elite and peasant interests during this period of political volatility, the chance for the occurrence of a major agrarian policy reform was limited.

Agrarian issues remained a major problem as Indonesia’s young democracy consolidated. One of the major tensions between the state and the movement emerged in Yudhoyono’s first term as president (2005-2009) when the introduction of a policy of land title legalization effectively shifted the focus of agrarian reform policies to private land title registration for rural households without tackling the fundamental question: structural inequality in the ownership of, and access to, land. This policy, misleadingly titled as the National Agrarian Reform Program
(Program Pembaruan Agraria Nasional, PPAN), shifted the policy focus “from the sphere of agrarian justice to land title legalization which fits with other neoliberal policies” (Rachman, 2011, p. 67). Engineered by the then-BPN head, Joyo Winoto, PPAN aimed to legalize land title for 8.15 million convertible forests (Hutan Produksi Konversi, HPK) and some other 1.1 million areas, making a total of 9.25 million potential targeted areas, but its actual implementation was difficult since the BPN could not get the other responsible ministries – the Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry, and Finance, respectively – to agree to its proposal (Rachman, 2011, Ch. 4; Setiawan, 2008, p. 404-420; SPI, 2009). Two ministries instead preferred to continue their existing policies – the Ministry of Agriculture with its Green Revolution-style policies and the Ministry of Forestry with its various social forestry schemes. It was not until 2010 during Yudhoyono’s second term that PPAN was reformulated with a significantly lower target area. To carry on its land-titling mission, BPN therefore decided to target around 7.3 million abandoned lands previously leased to private entities as objects for land title legalization. From 2005–2008, the number of land titles issued from the government-sponsored registration channels were as follows:

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97 In its formulation this policy drew inspiration from the works of Hernando de Soto, the Peruvian market economist, who argues for the legalization of informal economies and property rights for the poor and is pretty much in line with previous programs promoted by the World Bank in Indonesia. Such a framework, however, excludes redistributive measures as a policy choice. For insight into de Soto’s thoughts, see his book, The Mystery of Capital (2001). For a review of his works, see Mitchell (2005).

98 HPK are forest areas that can be used for industrial plantations, smallholder agriculture, mining, and transmigration settlements.

99 This category includes HGU and other forms of lease, use, and construction rights given to private entities.
Table 5

Total Number of Land Certificates Issued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Government-sponsored Legalization Schemes</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proyek Operasional Nasional Agraria (PRONA)</td>
<td>80,361</td>
<td>84,150</td>
<td>349,800</td>
<td>418,766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redistribusi Tanah</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>4,700</td>
<td>74,900</td>
<td>332,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legalisasi Konsolidasi Tanah</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>6,635</td>
<td>10,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legalisasi Tanah UKM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10,241</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legalisasi Penguasaan, Pemilikan, Penggunaan, dan Pemanfaatan Tanah (P4T)</td>
<td>43,948</td>
<td>16,943</td>
<td>424,280</td>
<td>594,139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legalisasi Transmigrasi</td>
<td>50,000</td>
<td>47,750</td>
<td>26,537</td>
<td>24,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>181,509</strong></td>
<td><strong>165,384</strong></td>
<td><strong>883,452</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,410,910</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on BPN (2008). Indonesian terms are specific categories of land legalization schemes. PRONA (National Agrarian Operational Project) and P4T (Land Legalized for Control, Ownership, Use, and Utilization of Land) are mass land-titling schemes proposed by district/city governments (for PRONA) or BPN provincial offices (for P4T). Legalisasi Konsolidasi Tanah (Legalization of Land for Consolidation) are remapped land, areas. Legalisasi Tanah UKM is legalization of land used by small and medium enterprises. Lastly, Legalisasi Transmigrasi is legalization of land used for transmigration settlements. (Rachman 2011, pp. 90-91)

In total, 2,641,255 titles were issued through the government schemes between 2005 to 2008. Combined with titles issued through the World Bank loan-sponsored schemes, the number became a little over five million titles. If we combine these numbers with voluntary land-titling registrations from individuals, groups, and businesses, the total issued titles were around 13 million cases. This claim of “a national record of 13 million titles issued under Yudhoyono’s
presidency” became one of the major points of his campaign (Rachman, 2011, pp. 92-94). Clearly, this achievement should be qualified for several reasons. First, even from a purely technical viewpoint, the actual registration processes of these land-titles were not as smooth as the administration claimed, not to mention more than half of the approved land-title applications were private applications from individuals and businesses. Second, a closer look at Yudhoyono’s agrarian policy and campaign claim reveals that the allocated land areas for land reform for 2005–2008 were only close to 350,000 ha. Third, the extent to which his agrarian policy actually benefitted poor peasants, supposedly its main beneficiaries, was also doubtful and was questioned by many in the agrarian movement. Critics argued that if anything land-titling renders small landholders more vulnerable to market pressure since their possession of individual titles makes it easier to sell, mortgage, and eventually lose their lands. Left to the hands of the state without any political and economic control from below as in the ideal scheme of land reform by leverage, land-titling risked paving the way for further intrusion of market relations into an already highly unequal agrarian structure (Bachriadi, 2007; Fauzi, 2009). Fourth, his administration released a set of new laws on land allocation for public purpose, biofuel, investment, and food estate between 2005-2008, which actually limited peasant access to land and counteracted whatever positive impacts his land-titling policy brought (SPI, 2008). But despite this, Yudhoyono labelled the land-titling policy as “agrarian reform,” while in reality it barely addressed Indonesia’s decades-long agrarian inequality. Furthermore, Yudhoyono’s presidency also saw the introduction of agrarian policies that normalized and naturalized land

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100 Somewhat naïvely and ridiculously, Yudhoyono in his congratulatory statement for one of BPN land title legalization ceremonies advised peasants not to sell their lands (Detik News, 2010). In the lack of proper alternative economic schemes to organize agricultural means of production and farming activities after redistribution or land-titling, it will be difficult for peasants to withstand market pressure.
dispossession under various guises such as the Masterplan for the Acceleration and Expansion of Indonesian Economic Development (*Masterplan Percepatan dan Perluasan Pembangunan Ekonomi Indonesia*, MP3EI) for infrastructure development, the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) project for food security, and the development of biofuel sources, all of which were large-scale and corporate-oriented (Ito, Rachman, & Savitri, 2014; Kasyrno & Soeparno, 2012; SPI, 2008). Some of these pro-market legislation and policies, particularly on biofuel development, MP3EI, and MIFEE, were also supported and welcomed by actors in the government and the corporate sector. Key officials in the Ministry of Industry, for example, encouraged the government to promote biofuel development and consumption (Kementerian Perindustrian Republik Indonesia, n.d.). The government also provided fiscal incentive to increase biofuel consumption, a move welcomed by many corporate actors who want to tap wealth from the fast-growing global biofuel boom (Husein, 2017). In the case of MIFEE, the Medco Group, an industrial conglomerate, some other 40 companies that have received concessions in the estate, and the notoriously corrupt former district head of Merauke, Johanes Gluba Gebze, were some of the ardent supporters and beneficiaries of the MIFEE project (Ito, Rachman, & Savitri, 2014, pp. 34-37).

It is therefore not surprising that Yudhoyono’s presidency saw an increase in agrarian conflicts, mostly sparked by land-grabbing by state authorities or corporations. Again the data from KPA’s 2014 year-end report are illuminating. From 2004 to 2014, there were some 1,500

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101 The full-blown introduction with MIFEE also exacerbates the problem of long-standing racial discrimination against the Melanesian local residents of Papua. For a thorough elaboration of MP3EI see the MP3EI White Book jointly published by the Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs, the Ministry of National Development Planning, and the National Development Planning Agency (2011) and Kimura (2012). On biofuel development in Indonesia, see Legowo, Kussuryani, and Reksowardojo (2007).

102 In 2016, Gebze was sentenced to 10 years in prison and fined IDR 200 million (Aivanni, 2016).
agrarian conflicts involving almost one million agricultural households and over 6.5 million ha of land involving almost one million agricultural households. It also shows that while there were only 89 agrarian conflicts in 2009, the number had increased by more than five times to 472 in 2014. Most of these conflicts involved land-grabbing by the state and corporations. The breakdown for these figures is as follows:

Figure 5. Agrarian conflict area per year.

Figure 6. Number of agrarian conflict cases per year.

Furthermore, data from the Ministry of Agriculture show that while the total area of agricultural land remained more or less the same between 2010 and 2014 at around 36-38 million
hectares, big private and state-owned corporations continued to dominate the agricultural sector and the share of employment in agriculture dropped significantly (Pusat Data dan Sistem Informasi Pertanian, 2015). Meanwhile, in a period of 12 years (2000 – 2012), “investors acquired 9.5 million ha of land in Indonesia, the largest in the world, according to Land Matrix figures” (Kurniawan, 2014). This contributed to the increasing conversation rate of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes. By 2015, the number of plantation companies across Indonesia was close to 2,500, half of them were oil palm plantations (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2017). These numbers reveal the severity of both latent and open agrarian dispossession and conflicts in post-authoritarian period and the continuing dominance of large capital interests in the rural sector. In the end, whatever achievements of the Yudhoyono period should be qualified in that his economic policy largely followed the business-as-usual platform and mostly negated the benefits of his market-oriented land-titling policy. With this balance sheet, leading agrarian movements and other elements of civil society such as the Indonesian Peasant Union (Serikat Petani Indonesia, SPI), KPA, and the Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (Lembaga Studi dan Advokasi Masyarakat, ELSAM) heavily criticized Yudhoyono’s agrarian policies (Fiansyah, 2013; SPI, 2008; Virgianti, 2014). He was also criticized for his paternalistic view that peasants and fishers should remain neutral in politics (Detik News, 2011). This criticism is indicative of the growing distance between the organized peasantry and the state during Yudhoyono’s presidency.
Table 6
Number of Large Estate Crop Companies by Types of Crops, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Crops</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perennial crops</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubber</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil palm</td>
<td>1,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoa</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clove</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapok</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chincona</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seasonal crops</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar cane</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2,458</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These are preliminary figures based on BPS’s survey of plantation companies. (Badan Pusat Statistik 2017)

The presidency of Joko Widodo/Jokowi (2014-present), hailed as the people’s president at first, initially gave a new hope for the deepening of agrarian reform. But despite a semblance of pro-agrarian reform platform, which included conflict settlement, land redistribution, land title legalization, and social forestry, there was little change after he assumed the presidency. In essence, his agrarian policy is only slightly different than Yudhoyono’s, despite the support of civil society groups during his campaign and the inclusion of prominent scholars and activists in his administration. Jokowi aims to redistribute nine million ha of land, but this target already includes the leftover targeted areas from Yudhoyono’s presidency. Additionally, land-titling remains the cornerstone of Jokowi’s agrarian policy (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria, 2016b). More than halfway through his presidency, agrarian conflicts also remain rampant. In 2015 alone, KPA noted there were “252 agrarian conflicts concerning 400,340 ha of land and
involving 108,714 households” (Ompusunggu, 2016). In 2016, the latest KPA year-end report showed at least 450 agrarian conflicts regarding 1.2 million ha of land and involving more than 86,000 households (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria, 2016a). Of these conflicts, the majority of them were due to plantation expansion and infrastructure projects. At the same time, the massive conversion of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes also contributed to the dropping share of agriculture in Indonesia’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employment from 22.09 percent and 55.1 percent, respectively, in 1990 to only 13.45 percent and 31.9 percent in 2016 (Ribka, 2017). Unsurprisingly, the business community gladly welcomes this development, especially in terms of the easing of land conversion for infrastructural projects (Idris, 2016).

Indeed the Jokowi administration continued to support big palm oil businesses, which it sees as a lucrative economic sector (Firmansyah, 2017; Issetiabudi, 2018). For example, five palm oil conglomerates – Wilmar Group, Darmex Agro Group, Musim Mas, First Resources, and Louis Dreyfus Company – received a subsidy totalling 7.5 trillion IDR during January-September 2017 from his administration (CNN Indonesia, 2018).\(^\text{103}\) More recently, his presidency has attempted to cut bureaucratic hurdles for land conversion processes and plans to issue a new presidential decree to strengthen the legal instrument for land conversion for upcoming infrastructural projects (Kamaludin, 2016; Sofia, 2018).\(^\text{104}\) On several occasions, he reiterated his commitment to develop massive infrastructures, especially in remote and frontier areas (Deny, 2018; Rachman, 2017). Given this, the extent to which Jokowi’s agrarian policy platform will

\(^{103}\) This subsidy was channeled through a newly-established government institution responsible to the Ministry of Finance, the Board of Trustees of Palm Oil Plantation Fund (Badan Pengelola Dana Perkebunan Kelapa Sawit, BPDPKS). On BPDPKS, see its website http://www.bpdp.or.id/

\(^{104}\) Some of these projects are designated National Strategic Projects (Proyek Strategis Nasional, PSN). By 2017, 30 PSNs have been completed, ranging from airports, power plants, and dams (Himawan & Hapsari, 2018). For a brief explanation of PSN, see https://kppip.go.id/proyek-strategis-nasional/
effectively improve the lives of the poorest among the rural citizenry remains questionable (Saturi, 2015). There is more political freedom to organize openly, but in some regions peasants, indigenous people, and their allies continue to face harassment from various state authorities such as police and military officers or hired thugs. In some of these cases, movement activists and members have continued to be labeled as troublemakers, or worse, communist sympathizers (Berita Kebumen, 2013; Rachmawati, 2017)

As the state continues to favor corporate and market interests in the agrarian and plantation sector, corporate actors also continue their business as usual and solidify their dominance in the sector. In the seed business, the case of PT BISI International – a major hybrid seed company in Indonesia, deserves special attention since it is illustrative of the continuing dominance of political and economic elites in seed provision at the expense of the peasant interests. A subsidiary of Charoen Pokphand, the Thai agribusiness conglomerate PT BISI International specializes in the production and selling of food crop seeds, especially corn, and is based in Surabaya, Indonesia’s second largest city, with research facilities in several cities in Sumatra, Java, and Lombok Islands. Its international partners include Chia Tai Seed and Monsanto, but its main partners are two domestic state-owned enterprises (SOEs): PT Pertani and PT Sang Hyang Seri. These two state agribusiness corporations buy seedlings from PT BISI International to be marketed and sold as subsidized seedlings for peasants. PT BISI International is a market leader in this sector, which controls more than 50 percent of the market share in hybrid corn seed business (Amir, Mulawarman, Kamayanti, & Irianto, 2014, pp. 83-180).
Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodities</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables and</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fruits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pesticides</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on PT BISI International’s annual reports. (Amir, Mulawarman, Kamayanto, and Irianto 2014, p. 180),

The majority of PT BISI’s income comes from other sources and transactions. However, as can be seen in the 2007 to 2011 data, the two abovementioned state-owned companies continue to contribute a substantial portion of income for PT BISI.

While on average the Indonesian government only contributed around 20 percent of PT BISI International’s total income from 2007-2011 (Amir, Mulawarman, Kamayanti, & Irianto, 2014, p. 138), the fact that the government as one of the company’s main partners relies on it for subsidized seedling supply tells us about the close connection between these two entities and their mutual need to maintain their dominant role in agricultural production. Furthermore, many peasant households rely on the government supply for gaining access to subsidized seedlings. In this context, where corporations such as PT BISI and the government continue to decide the terms of the seed business, peasants still do not have much bargaining power.
Table 8

PT BISI International’s Income from Transactions with the Government (in million IDR)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year and Company Names</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT Sang Hyang Seri</td>
<td>88,000</td>
<td>171,600</td>
<td>254,539</td>
<td>239,636</td>
<td>146,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT Pertani</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>257,300</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>88,000</td>
<td>428,900</td>
<td>254,539</td>
<td>239,636</td>
<td>146,343</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Net Sales</td>
<td>889,588</td>
<td>1,627,821</td>
<td>782,125</td>
<td>894,865</td>
<td>998,656</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on PT BISI International’s financial reports. (Amir, Mulawarman, Kamayanto, and Irianto 2014, p. 138).

The sugar industry is another important arena of contestation in which state and corporate interests continue to mutually reinforce each other and prevail. An industry with a long history since the colonial era, the sugar industry has been a key source of income and rent for state elites and business actors, including sugar importers (Khudori, 2005). Crafted as a syndicated industry during the New Order period, the nature of market competition in the sugar sector remains oligopolistic and dominated by SOEs and other corporate actors with links to state elites even after sugar trade liberalization and the fall of authoritarianism (Khudori, 2004, pp. 245-248; 2005, pp. 45-47). Historically, the structural position of sugar cane workers and small farmers vis-à-vis the elites in the industry has always been weaker.105 A major peasant union in the sugar

105 During the New Order period, small sugar cane farmers were encouraged to join the Smallholders’ Sugar cane Intensification Program (*Tebu Rakyat Intensifikasi*, TRI) – essentially a government-promoted contract farming scheme with big corporations designed to squeeze out more surplus value from sugar cane smallholders at a cheaper
industry, the Indonesian People’s Sugarcane Peasant Association (*Asosiasi Petani Tebu Rakyat Indonesia*, APTRI), founded in 1994, intensified its advocacy campaign between 1998 and 2000. It eventually emerged as one of the key stakeholders in the industry, representing the sugar cane peasants in a field long dominated by state authorities and big capital interests, but its influence remains limited and localized. In the post-authoritarian period, the big sugar SOEs – the State Plantation Companies Nos. IX, X, and XI (PTPN IX, X, and XI) and PT Rajawali Nusantara Indonesia (PT RNI) – continue to play a significant role in the market (Khudori, 2005, pp. 111-136), although new corporate players, including the ones benefitting from sugar trade liberalization, also become increasingly important (Baderi, 2016). Nonetheless, regardless of the competing sectoral interests between sugar producers and importers, the government continues to support these large-scale enterprises (Julianto, 2016; Savitri, 2011; Wicaksono, 2016). The continuing government support for both corporate-oriented domestic sugar production and sugar import, a move supported by the corporate actors in the industry (Agustinus, 2015), also suggests the enduring confluence of interests between state and economic elites in this sector.

Lastly, natural resource and conservation policies have become another arena of contestation between elites and peasants in recent years. It is true that the post-authoritarian political space provides new venues for a more participatory policy framework such as social policy legislation and the involvement of societal actors, including NGOs in policymaking processes on natural resource and environmental issues (Lindayati, 2002; Wollenber & Kartodihardjo, 2002). But this new political arena of resource and environmental politics is not an unequal playing field since it is always shaped by the existing configuration of power and price, since sugar cane companies could ask smallholders to farm sugar cane and sell it to the companies without paying rent for the land as they previously had (Bachriadi, 2004, pp. 24-31).
control over resources and authorities (McCarthy & Warren, 2009). In the case of forest resource politics, for example, the repeated tug-of-war between local and central authorities as well as the existence of political entrepreneurs and opportunistic actors often derail attempt for further reforms that might benefit the local people (Resosudarmo, 2004; Tyson, 2010). In recent years, environmental conservation has also become a contested arena, especially between local political elites and resource users on the one hand and the peasants on the other hand, as we can see in conflict cases in several national parks (Bettinger, 2015; Li, 2007; McCarthy, 2006). This trend is still going on. In lowland Bulukumba, for instance, the local peasants were forcefully evicted from their land in the 1980s because they were perceived as illegal occupiers in the Forest Park (Taman Hutan Raya, Tahura) area. Since then they have been struggling for residential rights (Amdas, 2017; Peasants in lowland Bulukumba, personal communication and observation, May 16–18, 2016). In tackling these problems, elites often, to use anthropologist Tania Li’s (2007) words, render them to be “technical,” overlooking their political and contentious nature. This technocratic tendency in resource governance is also apparent in various implementations of REDD+ projects in Indonesia in which there is a discursive gap and a lack of information exchange between policymakers and other stakeholders, such as civil society actors and the local people (Gallemore, Prasti H, & Moeliono, 2014; Moeliono, Gallemore, Santoso, Brockhaus, & Di Gregorio, 2014). This has the potential to further marginalize peasants and the larger rural lower-classes from the very policymaking process in which they should be involved.

This is not to suggest there has been no change. There is indeed a qualitative difference in terms of political openness in the post-reform era that allows these movements to organize openly. Rural lower-classes and their allies can now engage the state in different ways, leading to local accommodations ranging from the issuance of local regulations acknowledging the rights of
indigenous communities to legalization of peasants’ land claims after years of struggle (Peasants and activists in Bulukumba, Jakarta, and North Bengkulu, personal communication, May 2016–May 2017; see also Gaol (2016) and Purnama (2016)). In the view of many in the movement, however, no substantive policy change with regard to land ownership and redistribution or agreement regarding the targets or objects of land reform was achieved in the two decades following regime change despite a rhetoric of agrarian reform. The many plantations and large-scale farms operated under HGU rights that have been the cause of the accelerating land-grabbing rate since 1980s are not targeted as land reform objects. Corporate interests in the many aspects of agricultural production also continue to receive support from the state. In short, both political and economic elites at the national level – state authorities and corporate actors – continue to maintain the existing status quo in the agrarian sector to the detriment of the peasantry. The interlocking interests between the two sets of elites, partly a legacy of developmentalist policies under the New Order, give little reason for them to change the many policies that benefit them. Whether for profit, rent extraction, or large-scale infrastructural projects, such an elective affinity of interests leads the national elites to withstand mass pressure from peasants and their civil society allies. Consequently, the agrarian movement continues to rely on mass mobilization and direct action when engaging with the state. But this engagement becomes less effective when the movement is rift with fragmentation, a byproduct of the authoritarian legacy and internal dynamics within the movement itself.

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106 For example, peasants and activists with whom I talked during the solidarity protest with peasants from the Kendeng mountainous area in Central Java espoused such a view (Personal observation of Kendeng solidarity protest, March 13-27, 2017).
The twin process of democratization and decentralization has opened new opportunities for the organized peasants to challenge elite dominance in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Since then, various efforts of mobilization, lobbying, and other forms of advocacy have been taken up to advance peasant interests. Nevertheless, the organized peasants have not overcome their coordination problem. Several factors explain why the many peasant movements and organizations remain fragmented, namely the historical legacy of peasant activism during the New Order, internal dynamics within peasant movements and organizations, disagreements over tactics and policy platforms, and local political realities, among others.

The early years of the reform period witnessed the intensifying of open direct actions by peasants, indigenous people, and other elements of the rural population and their allies mainly through mass demonstrations and land occupation. The existing scholarship has documented these struggles in various regions such as North Sumatra (Afiff, 2004; Situmorang, 2003), South Sumatra (Collins, 2007), Bengkulu (Bachriadi, 2010), East Kutai (Urano, 2010), West Java (Rachman N. F., 2011), Malang (Wahyudi, 2005), Central Sulawesi (Li, 2007b), and South Sulawesi (Tyson, 2010), as a part of the national trend of agrarian activism (Fauzi, 1999; 2003). What is particularly striking about these mobilizational strategies is that, by employing them, peasants effectively challenge unequal power relations in everyday politics. Through these forms of “rightful resistance” (O’Brien, 1996), peasants also uphold and expand the notion of the rule of law.

Peasants and their rural and middle-class allies scale up their activism and campaigns to the national level as a measure of last resort, taken only when local efforts prove inadequate. By
raising the profile of local agrarian struggles and enlisting the help of sympathetic state and non-state allies, activists hope to acquire more bargaining power with local elites. Typically, scaling up involves a national campaign and advocacy effort and the formation of many solidarity action committees, a common strategy since the early days of agrarian activism under the New Order.

Recent agrarian conflicts that generated attention in national agrarian activist circles include cases in Tulang Bawang (Lampung), Sukamulya (West Java), and the Kendeng Region of Central Java (Barahamin, 2017; Fahriza, 2017; Matanasi, 2017). In these most recent conflicts, national solidarity campaigns and networks were established to draw attention to the severity of these conflicts against big capital in Tulang Bawang and Kendeng and airport construction in Sukamulya. By rallying people to their cause, it is expected that peasants and activists can exert more pressure against the establishment to fulfill their objective. Keep in mind these solidarity efforts are largely episodic and do not go beyond the goal to resolve the local agrarian conflicts.

Such an approach suggests that the historical legacy of peasant activism under the New Order continues to shape the current mode of peasant organizing. In the 1980s and early 1990s, the embryo of a more contentious and assertive form of peasant activism, which took an explicitly confrontational stance against the state and the economic elites, was mostly driven by victims of land conflicts (Bachriadi, 2010, Ch. 4). This approach, which tends to overemphasize agrarian activism as a conflict-based advocacy, still shapes the current mode of activism and advocacy for peasant rights until now (Iwan Nurdin, personal communication, July 17, 2018; Personal observation of Sajogyo Institute’s Limited Discussion in Bogor, July 19, 2018). A major problem of this episodic approach to advocacy for peasant rights is that it is sometimes difficult for both the peasant communities and the activists to continue their activism once the

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107 Iwan Nurdin is a former secretary general of KPA. He now serves as chairperson of KPA’s national board.
pressing goal, such as elite recognition of land rights, is achieved. In Iwan Nurdin’s words, “the advocacy is over once the peasants get their land.” Besides its myopia, another major blind spot with this approach is its partiality and lack of longer-term strategy: it is one thing to win land rights in one area, but it is another thing to maintain peasants’ democratic control over and production activities in that land.

Another historical legacy from the New Order period is the continuing importance of neighborhood-based farmers’ groups or poktan. There is a bias in the literature on agrarian studies in Indonesia toward peasant and agrarian social movements. In reality, however, peasant unions and movements, just like their labor counterparts, represent only a fraction of the peasantry. Besides organized social movements, peasants are also part of other networks of associational life and organizations, ranging from religious and social organizations to informal micro-credit networks and sports clubs, including poktan. Even after the fall of New Order authoritarianism, poktan continues to play a role in Indonesian villages. Surprisingly, however, there is little attention given to this particular institution. To get a glance into the role of poktan in contemporary village life in Indonesia, consider Kusworo’s (2014, pp. 123-124) observation of Pak Timan, a poktan chair in a village in Lampung:

He was chair of a village farmers’ group (kelompok tani) with over two hundred members for more than a decade. With an elementary school education, his literacy was an important reason the villagers choose him for this position. Pak Timan coordinated the provision of credit for members of the kelompok to buy chemical fertilizers from the sub-district agricultural extension officers who also routinely give advice on better planting materials and cultivation techniques. Pak Timan was often selected as the farmers’ delegate in meetings in the capital of the sub-district, district, and province. In his capacity as chair of the kelompok, he initially organized the villagers in the land-titling program. According to Pak Timan, two thirds of the population now had their land titled.

From Kusworo’s narrative of Pak Timan’s life, we can see the importance of poktan and its members in Indonesian village life. First and foremost, it organizes production activities
among its members. Secondly, it mediates the relationship between villagers, especially its members, with other institutions and actors – the sub-district office, the land-titling program, local bureaucrats and politicians, potential customers, NGO workers, and many others. Thirdly, it also serves as a transmission belt for the dissemination of good plant and crop seeds and the latest farming and cultivation techniques to increase agricultural productivity. In doing so, it is expected that peasant livelihood will improve and such a success can be replicated in other communities. In a way, this “productivist” tendency, this obsession with improving agricultural productivity out of concern for meeting consumers’ needs and, hopefully, peasant livelihood, has been a lasting paradigm of the Indonesian state, a view that can be traced back all the way to the pre-colonial era. At the same time, however, this space of imposition from above is also a venue through which peasants can articulate and negotiate their interests. This also means that joining a peasant social movement is just one among many other options for peasants to articulate their interests. But in communities where both of them are present, their membership overlaps; peasants are involved in both poktan and movement activities. Again, there is little discussion on how these two avenues for collective action and interest aggregation can be utilized concurrently and strategically. Many in the movement may view poktan as a conservative institution, but as a sociological reality, it is the first bastion of many Indonesian peasants to arrange and maintain their livelihood. The continuing relevance of poktan also

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108 Strangely, this practice has some parallels with the developmentalist emulation campaign, a la Vietnamese state socialism. What makes it even stranger is the fact that governments in both capitalist and market-Leninist economies keep promoting this practice among their peasant population. For some discussion on the recent practice of the emulation campaign in Vietnam see MacLean (2013) and VietNamNetBridge (2015).
suggests an additional challenge to building a unified peasant movement for both movement-oriented peasants and activists.109

The internal dynamics within peasant movements and organizations also contribute to the inability of the organized peasantry to form a united form at the national level. To be fair, one of the most notable achievements in the post-New Order period has been the shift from a middle-class-oriented liberal form of advocacy led by legal aid bureaus and NGOs to a social movement-based form of advocacy representing rural lower-class interests. Once typically seen as beneficiaries of activists’ advocacy efforts, peasants and other rural poor now play a greater role in the movement, with many assuming leadership positions at the local level. However, the dream to build a unified agrarian movement remains a herculean task. Given the case-based and episodic nature of agrarian activism in many places in Indonesia, many peasant unions and alliances remain very localized.110 Additionally, the sheer number of these unions and alliances also makes coordination efforts among them challenging. A quick view of agrarian movements, alliances, and NGOs under KPA’s network for example, many of them are peasant unions, shows that there are 85 local peasant unions and other related movements and 68 CSOs affiliated with the network.111 Bear in mind that the nature of this network is rather loose, as several members of KPA’s network also join other nationwide alliances or federations.112 This

109 This picture seems to be in contrast with the more advocacy-oriented and combative image of peasant unions and other agrarian social movements. Indeed, while the role of poktans and peasant unions overlap in some aspects, there are some qualitative differences between the two. Peasant movements, especially unions, typically grew out of the common experience of land dispossession and political oppression, and their growth is relatively recent. Poktan, on the other hand, is a decades-old institution closely-linked to the state with nationwide reach all the way down to the village level. As for now, it remains to be seen whether further rapprochement between peasant unions and poktans will be taken as a future movement strategy.
110 Thanks to Hanny Wijaya for this observation.
111 Essentially, KPA maintains working and coordinating relationships with these local peasant movements and their NGO allies. A complete list of these affiliated organizations can be found in http://kpa.or.id/dummy/organisasi/anggota/or and http://kpa.or.id/dummy/organisasi/anggota/ngo
112 For instance, STaB and the Sundanese Peasant Union (Serikat Petani Pasundan, SPP) are also affiliated with the Association of Indonesian Peasant Movements (Persatuan Pergerakan Petani Indonesia, P3I).
organizational density can be both beneficial and challenging: on the one hand, it cultivates peasant activism and other forms of agrarian advocacy, but on the other hand, it makes movement organizing more demanding.

The challenging task for establishing a united front for peasants and other rural dispossessed at the national level is reflected in numerous attempts to build a nationwide agrarian movement. A key player in this is the Alliance of Indigenous People of the Archipelago (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara, AMAN), which was established in 1999 to promote the interests of indigenous people including their land rights. The formation of AMAN was a significant move, which coincided with the larger trend of indigenous (adat) revivalism in post-New Order era (Bourchier, 2007; Henley & Davidson, 2007). In the early 2000s, the consolidation of many local peasant movements led to the creation of the Federation of Indonesian Peasant Unions (FSPI), which later became the Indonesian Peasant Union (SPI). As part of this transformation, SPI required the local unions to restructure as branches of the national organization, prompting the withdrawal of leading several unions, including SPP and STaB, from SPI because they did not want to lose their autonomy. Another split, this time involving KPA and its affiliated organizations, occurred in 2004 with the creation of the Alliance of Agrarian Reform Movement (AGRA), which also aimed to pursue a more unified and collectivist peasant movement. As time went on, AGRA also faced the problem of internal splits (Bachriadi, 2010, pp. 239-261; 280-287).

In addition to SPI, AGRA, STN, KPA, and AMAN, major players in the post-authoritarian period included the Indonesian Peasant Association (Rukun Tani Indonesia, RTI),

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113 Internationally, SPI is affiliated with La Via Campesina and AGRA is affiliated with the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC), which is a federation under the International League of People’s Struggle (ILPS).
the Indonesian Peasant Alliance (*Aliansi Petani Indonesia*, API), the National Committee for Agrarian Reform (*Komite Nasional Pembaruan Agraria*, KNPA), and APTRI. More recently, some big local unions such as SPP, STaB, and the Aryo Blitar Peasant Association (*Paguyuban Petani Aryo Blitar*, PPAB) joined P3I, which is affiliated with the multi-sectoral Confederation of Indonesian People’s Movements (*Konfederasi Pergerakan Rakyat Indonesia*, KPRI). Some activists in the religious movement, such as the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), also organized the peasantry and other rural lower classes, leading to the establishment of the Nahdliyin Front for Natural Resource Sovereignty (*Front Nahdliyin untuk Kedaulatan Sumber Daya Alam*, FNKSDA).\(^{114}\) The environmental movement has played a role in connecting this diverse array of local struggles. In the early years of the reform era, WALHI was heavily involved in numerous mass struggles for land rights in different places. Later, it supported the formation of many peasant and indigenous people’s movements at the local level. Many WALHI cadres are also trained to give education on citizen activism, politics, and social analysis with critical or class perspectives for members and cadres of peasant and indigenous people’s movements. Several key NGOs and think tanks including the Sajogyo Institute, the Agrarian Resource Center (ARC), the Mining Advocacy Network (*Jaringan Advokasi Tambang*, JATAM), the Free Land Foundation (*Yayasan Tanah Merdeka*, YTM) Sawit Watch, and the Pusaka Foundation are also important partners for agrarian unions and movements (Amiruddin, personal communication, May 21, 2016; Researchers from the Pusaka Foundation, personal communication, August 15, 2016; Andre Barahamin and Parid Ridwanuddin, personal

\(^{114}\) Except for FNKSDA, these movements have been discussed quite extensively in the literature. On FNKSDA, see Nashirulhaq (2017).
communication, November 13, 2016; Z. “Lolo” Yusuf, personal communication, June 8, 2016. See also Muhtada (2008)).

These organizational dynamics within and among different unions and organizations pose an additional challenge for the cohesiveness of the peasant movement. Fragmentation can take various forms such as disagreements, past rivalries, competing claims, and splits among different peasant unions and agrarian movements over organizational structure, autonomy of local branches and movements, membership base, and political orientation, not to mention the lure of opportunism for some activists, organizers, and movement members. Cynical comments regarding former labor and agrarian activists-turned-mainstream politicians, for instance, abound (AGRA activists in Bulukumba, personal communication, May-June 2016). To gain a sense of how deep-seated the problem of fragmentation in the movement is consider this vignette from my fieldwork: an activist friend of mine asked me to present my research findings for a public discussion in Jakarta. When I asked him about the, he said, “let’s try to find somewhere ‘neutral,’ we don’t want to be seen as favoring one organization over the others” (Social movement activist, personal communication, April 26, 2016). Long-time agrarian and social movement activists too corroborate this assessment, citing their past disagreements regarding tactics as one of the challenges for them to overcome their rifts (Agrarian and social movement activists in Bengkulu and Jakarta, personal communication, April–July 2017). These old wounds might seem trivial, but since it occurred among the key organizers, it does have an impact on the peasant movement as a whole. Even when activists of different organizational backgrounds have good working relationships, this does not necessarily mean that they share the same goal and

115 Zulkarnain “Lolo” Yusuf is a former director of the South Sulawesi Branch of WALHI. Andre Barahamin and Parid Ridwanuddin are affiliated with the Pusaka Foundation and the People’s Coalition for Maritime Justice (Koalisi Rakyat untuk Keadilan Perikanan, KIARA, a fishers’ advocacy NGO), respectively.
approach in defense of peasant interests (Agrarian activists in Bulukumba, personal communication, May–June 2016).\textsuperscript{116} This disagreement among movement actors also emerges in a more formal setting. For example, in a workshop organized after the 2014 National Conference on Agrarian Reform, leaders of agrarian and peasant movements as well as their NGO allies had substantive differences in key issues such as tactics for engaging state elites, the role of research in agrarian advocacy, and the role of peasant organizations and civil society groups in monitoring the implementation of agrarian policies on the ground (KPA & Sajogyo Institute, 2014).\textsuperscript{117} At a more local level, such as in Bulukumba, I also witnessed how it might take a while for movement actors to agree on several key issues, such as whether to continue their advocacy campaign for peasant land rights in areas affected by corporate-driven land grabbing (Personal observation of various community meetings in Bulukumba, May–June 2016).\textsuperscript{118}

Over time, the peasant movement has also expanded its scope of activism. Softer, more diplomatic approaches, including policy advocacy and lobbying, are often used to balance the movement’s more contentious tactics. A good example of this is the participation of agrarian movements and NGOs in agrarian law reform at both the national and local levels (Lucas & Warren, 2003). A key politico-legal victory was achieved in 2001 when SPP mobilized thousands of West Javanese peasants to stage a demonstration in favor of the Parliamentary Decree No. IX/2001, which as noted earlier strengthened the mandate of the 1960 Basic Agrarian

\textsuperscript{116} In Bulukumba, there are two groups of agrarian activists: the elder generation, who worked until the early 2000s and are mostly affiliated with the Foundation for People’s Education (Yayasan Pendidikan Rakyat, YPR), and the younger generation, who started their work 2009-2010 and are affiliated with AGRA. While they do recognize the contributions of each other, a common response to the question of the prospect for their future collaboration was something along the lines of “we’ll see how it goes” or “at some point we’ll work together.”

\textsuperscript{117} See also for instance several meeting minutes of this workshop.

\textsuperscript{118} In upland Bulukumba, the local peasants and indigenous people are generally sympathetic to the attempt to revive the advocacy campaign for their land rights. However, some of them are still traumatized by past experiences of repression by state apparatuses and betrayal of a key peasant union leader.
Law (Afiff, Fauzi, Hart, Ntsebeza, & Peluso, 2005, pp. 4-5). In recent years, some activists have also taken up key positions in the state bureaucracy including as an advisor at the Presidential Staff Office (Kantor Staf Presiden, KSP) or as one of the vice chairpersons of the National Human Rights Commission (Komisi Nasional untuk Perlindungan Hak Asasi Manusia, Komnas HAM), among other governmental posts. But this diversity of tactics and policy platforms also becomes a new source of disagreements for movement actors. For example, the KPA activists supported the 2001 Parliamentary Decree No. IX, citing its potential to be used as a bargaining chip for peasants and activists to negotiate with local authorities on the ground, but the then-FSPI and its allies saw the Decree instead as a Trojan horse for neoliberal agendas, particularly in natural resource governance (Rachman, 2011, pp. 59-62). Moreover, while the inclusion and participation of social movement activists in several policy areas and political processes in post-authoritarian Indonesia might suggest the deepening of pro-reform agendas right at the center of power (Mietzner, 2013), this is not necessarily the case for agrarian issues. In the case of the agrarian and peasant movements, the activists’ influence remains largely limited in terms of agenda setting, with no major agrarian policy changes occurring since movement actors joined the bureaucracy. Moreover, their involvement in the government is a contested and divisive issue for many in the movements as well.\footnote{This is the general sense that I got from personal conversations with activists as well as observations of and participation in various movement events and activities throughout my fieldwork period.}

In addition to advocacy and lobbying, some peasant unions decided to expand their strategies by participating in electoral politics. STaB pursued a variety of electoral strategies, from supporting district head candidates with close connection to civil society to fielding its own candidates to participate in the local and national parliamentary elections (Bachriadi, 2010). It
also endeavored to build a new social movement-based political party called the People’s Confederation Party (Partai Perserikatan Rakyat, PPR) (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 338). SPP also experimented with participation in formal political channels on a smaller scale, lobbying local government officials and politicians at the district level and contesting elections for the Village Representative Council (Badan Perwakilan Desa, BPD) seats in Garut District, West Java (Afiff, Fauzi, Hart, Ntsebeza, & Peluso, 2005, pp. 16-18). The Community Forum for Peasants in the Batang District (Forum Paguyuban Petani Kabupaten Batang, FPPB) in Central Java also chose to participate in village electoral politics, fielding cadres for village head elections in several villages in the Batang District (Safitri, 2010). AMAN, too, has repeatedly fielded cadres to contest for seats in local parliaments and the national senate as well as candidates for district heads with modest success (Barahamin, 2017; (Gumanti, 2016). The electoral strategy is not exclusive to the peasant and agrarian movements. Labor, for instance, has also intervened in the electoral arena in various ways, including in collaboration with the peasant movement, as demonstrated by the experiment in the 2013 Deli Serdang District Head Elections (Caraway & Ford, 2017).

The attempt to engage in formal politics and policy-making processes should, however, be viewed with some caution. First, the inclusion of agrarian movements and NGOs and leading scholar-activists does not necessarily guarantee pro-land rights policies. If anything, as the history of several lower-class movements suggests (Piven & Cloward, 1979; Usmani, 2017, Ch. 3), it is their daily expression of contentious politics – that is, their disruptive capacity – that gives peasants and the rural poor leverage to make their case, negotiate with authorities, and have their demands implemented. Second, while electoral participation allows movement cadres to hone their political skills, and in some cases gain seats in parliament or other political offices,
engagement in electoral politics has the potential to exhaust the energy of the movement too quickly or worse result in political adventurism. For example, some STaB cadres in North Bengkulu ran in local parliamentary elections on the ticket of the People’s Conscience Party (*Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat*, Hanura), a party of old elites and oligarchs led by Wiranto, a former New Order general with a reputation as a human rights violator (Peasants and activists affiliated with StaB, personal communication, throughout April 2017). The choice to participate in elections with such a party is unlikely to help the movement achieve its goals, let alone support broader pro-democratic agendas.

Organizational fragmentation among peasant movements and organizations is also exacerbated by the gap between the political imaginations of movement organizers and the everyday reality of day-to-day organizing. In general, however, it is safe to say that the movement tends toward anti-capitalism and populism insofar as land rights and agrarian justice constitute the primary material interest of the rural dispossessed (Vu, 2009). My field observation also attests that a mixed variety of populism, which has a long tradition in Indonesian political thought, also colors the movement’s political imagination and agenda. As evident in many cases, it is not always easy to bridge the gap between activists’ political imagination and peasants’ most pressing concerns or for that matter the class differences between them (Bachriadi, 2010; Sangaji, 2007). For instance, in the case of the indigenous people movements, while there is indeed a genuine concern for the plights of indigenous people as marginalized communities, crude and elitist nativism still influence the political articulation of the movement (Bourchier, 2007; Li, 2007a). In facing state and market forces, indigenous people

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120 During fieldwork I also learned that this political maneuvering – joining a mainstream party – also happened with WALHI activists in other places.
also tend to have very little bargaining power, even in fighting for the right to govern their own customary forests – one of their primary bastions of livelihood and cultural autonomy (Rachman, 2014; Savitri, 2014). With regard to the organized peasantry, despite the attempt to promote leftist or progressive ideas and introduce a more systematic form of organizing, activists must reconcile their ideal respective organizing schemas with varying local contexts and real conditions on the ground. At the local level, the agrarian movement also faces the challenge of educating its organizers as well as rank-and-file members on the importance of ideology, political organization, and solidarity economy.  

Organized peasants also have to face various challenges posed by local political realities. The democratic era has seen a devolution of power, which has created new space for advocacy. However, local oligarchic actors including bureaucrats, business actors, and brokers continue to dominate local politics, leaving little room for social movement actors to intervene in local political contestations (Hadiz 2010; Johansyah 2017). Furthermore, in rural areas, a wide range of neoliberal schemes, such as micro credit and block grant programs, have paved the way for the so-called individual economic empowerment through inclusion in market citizenship (Carroll, 2010, pp. 180-207). All of this, combined with the enduring webs of patron-client relationships, make organizing efforts to build collective solidarity even harder. Why should a peasant community join or form a union when it can directly lobby the local parliament or district government to help them make the case for land recognition (Sukardi, personal communication, May 17, 2016)? Areas where poktan activities and other forms of rural

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121 I witnessed this on several occasions during my field visits.

122 Eventually however, this peasant community decided to join AGRA after years of self-advocacy. This example illustrates different options available for peasants and other marginalized rural communities – joining a movement is just one among many options. Sukardi is a local peasant leader in lowland Bulukumba.
associational life are visible are not necessarily immune from patron-clientelistic practices either (Hamdi, 2016, p. 287; Rohman, 2016, p. 237; Rubaidi, 2016, p. 269; Sobari, 2016).

Other Forms of Rural Countermovement: Economic, Cultural, and Knowledge Production Strategies

Beyond the traditional realm of social and political advocacy, peasant movements and organizations have also expanded their activism to economic, cultural, and knowledge production spheres. While sporadic experiments with this other form of rural countermovement have always been part of everyday life for many peasant communities, the taking up of these strategies as a conscious effort to improve the organizing capacity of the peasants and increase their bargaining power vis-à-vis the elites is a pretty recent initiative. The results of this new set of strategies have been modest.

As a part of the effort to address economic situations on the ground and realize its economic vision, the agrarian movement has also expanded its strategies into the economic realm. The question that many peasant unions grapple with is what happens after land is reclaimed. Typically, problems include the distribution of reclaimed land, its re-commodification or monetization, and maintenance of agricultural productivity. Peasant unions usually attempt to institute a solidarity economy model to avoid conflict between the needs of the community and individual peasant households after land reclamation. Technically this means not only distributing reclaimed land to individual households but also establishing a communal land for common agricultural production through which agricultural surplus can be generated and distributed collectively (Gunawan, personal communication, August 14, 2015; R. “Njet” Tahas,
A number of unions have pursued different ways to establish a solidarity economy. One often-cited example is SPI’s attempt to grow coffee on reclaimed land in Kepahiang in the province of Bengkulu (Sipayung, 2016; SPI, 2016). SPI members in the districts of Kepahiang and Rejang Lebong have been able to organize coffee production through a cooperative formed by SPI. Unlike typical cooperatives that are structured as consumer cooperatives, this cooperative sought to organize production activities democratically. For some time, SPI has been able to maintain this attempt of democratic production and aims to increase its coffee production level and find a market to sell its coffee products (Observation of SPI’s Public Discussion on peasant rights, April 27, 2016). SPI has also been experimenting with organic farming as an economic strategy to improve peasant livelihood and political consciousness (Edwards, 2013).

While engaging with the market, it seeks to promote more sustainable farming practices based on family farmers as a strategy to counter neoliberalism. Another organization that promotes an organic farming strategy is the Salassae Rural Self-Governing Community (Komunitas Swabina Pedesaan Salassae, KSPS) in Bulukumba, which seeks not only to improve the quality of agricultural outputs and peasant livelihoods but also to challenge the domination of big capital (Chandra, 2014; 2016). Through organic farming, it is hoped that peasants will have the ability to control production by themselves, gradually lessening their dependence on big fertilizer corporations, and eventually developing their political consciousness (A. Salassa, personal communication, June 15, 2016).

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123 Gunawan is a researcher at LP3ES, Jakarta

124 Armin Salassa is a long-time agrarian activist in Bulukumba who now focuses on organic food development.
In addition to various attempts to engender democratic production, the agrarian movement has attempted to establish a number of peasant cooperatives and credit unions. Such cooperatives, described as peasant-run collective enterprises (*Badan Usaha Buruh Tani*, BUBT) by the late Professor Sajogyo, an eminent rural sociologist, have been discussed by agrarian scholars and activists since the late 1970s. Their basic aim is to involve landless and near landless peasants in farming activities on land purchased, owned, and collectivized by the state through a democratic farming enterprise controlled and organized by the peasants themselves (Shohibuddin, 2016). Credit unions have also gained popularity as an alternative financial institution to support of farming activities and eventually a rural-based solidarity economy (Fernando, Wijaya, Polimpung, & Yesica, 2015). This is by no means an easy task. In the case of SPI’s experiment in Kepahiang, for example, its coffee cooperatives have struggled to maintain their operations and accountability, causing members to withdraw (Local activists in Bengkulu, personal communication, May 15, 2017).

In general, efforts to promote solidarity economy have faced difficulties in maintaining and scaling up their operation, not to mention that peasant unions and rural communities at large may have different opinions regarding strategies to develop solidarity economy (Personal observation of KPA public discussion on rural cooperatives in Jakarta, April 7, 2017). In a way, this is understandable as it was not until 2010 that the building of a solidarity economy became a key strategy of the movement (A. “Sastro” Ma’ruf, personal communication, July 19, 2017). Such an effort is also challenging because of the gap between the movement’s dominant

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125 This is an FGD held and organized by Akar Foundation, an NGO focusing on advocacy and solidarity economy building among peasants in Bengkulu.

126 Anwar “Sastro” Ma’ruf is a long-time labor and social movement activist who now sits at KPRI’s national leadership board.
narrative and rural economic realities resulting from a partial misdiagnosis of the nature of agrarian transformation in contemporary Indonesia. This is because the movement’s platform of comprehensive agrarian reform, which stems from the assumption that peasant livelihood mainly depends on on-farm economic activities, does not fully address the reality that the proportion of on-farm and off-farm economic activities for peasant and rural household income in Indonesia has become increasingly equal over time (Neilson, 2016). In other words, agrarian reform and other forms of farming-centered economic strategies are necessary but not sufficient for tackling unequal agrarian structure and rural poverty. Altogether, the combination of these factors – the recentness and experimental nature of these economic strategies combined with a misanalysis of the roots of rural poverty – in the context of a fragmented peasant organizational landscape also means that the economic countermovement cannot yet serve as an effective strategy to oppose elite domination.

Last, but not least, the movement also intervenes in the realm of cultural and knowledge production as a strategy of resistance. As part of their increasingly political orientation, organized peasants have adopted a plethora of assertive and contestational strategies, including mass demonstrations, land occupation, daily protests against officials and other people in power, and the burning of transgenic seeds. This strategy can be deployed at various stages – from everyday forms of resistance to open practice of contentious politics. As an illustration, consider this fragment from an interview I conducted with a local peasant in lowland Bulukumba whose community suffered from “green grabbing” – land grabbing by the local state authorities in the name of environmental conservation:

127 Lacking is also a sensitivity toward the fact that not all agricultural commodities require farming at a larger scale. Rice, for example, remains effectively produced by family farming in small plots of land (Ambarwati, Harahap, Sadoko, & White, 2016).
I used to be scared by the forest police who marked and claimed that our land belongs to the *Tahura* conservation area. Initially, I complied with the request, but when he asked me to surrender my machete, I was really pissed off. So, in one campaign by local political candidates, I told these politicians and officials, ‘well sir, next time you better asked those deer and pigs to attend your campaign and vote for you. After all, you only want to protect them, not us!’ (Kamaruddin, personal communication, May 16, 2018)128

Through his narratives and sarcasm, this peasant challenged the local elites, the existing power relations, and the very notion of no-human conservation. In addition to everyday cultural strategies, these direct actions also incorporate more visible types of cultural tactics including theatrical acts and protest songs. The use of the arts as a protest method incorporates a wide range of narratives, ranging from the unity of peasants and indigenous people in their struggle for land rights (Gueta & Manga, 2013), to the importance of socially-engaged arts and artists in peasants’ struggle (Batubara & Mariana, 2015), and to the deployment of indigeneity, peasantness, and motherhood as an expression of insubordination (Anugrah, 2016; Yulius, 2016).

Furthermore, in the realm of knowledge production, the movement has made a breakthrough in the use of participatory mapping as a way to challenge the elites. Participatory mapping challenges the claim over people’s lands by the state and the capitalist class both at empirical and epistemological levels (Kurniawan, 2016; Pramono, 2013). Through participatory mapping, peasants can back up their ownership claim and challenge the official data of the state and corporate authorities. This strategy has been practiced and adapted by a number of peasant unions (Personal observation of KPRI national conference in Jakarta, January 12, 2016). Its actual implementation on the ground incorporates both the cartographic skill of the activists and

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128 Kamaruddin is a pseudonym. In this context, machete is not a weapon (although it can be used as one) but rather a means of agricultural production. Taking it away from the peasants in this community basically violates their sense of moral economy, their perceived rights to subsistence and livelihood.
the participation of the local peasants as gatekeepers of information regarding landownership. In one case, for instance:

First, I draw the sketch of the (contested) area. Then, along with the local community members, I verify it. We split into different teams and each team has its own GPS tracker. Typically, we split into three teams. We try to record each contested spot and record its specific coordinates in the tracker. After we’re done collecting the data, I will turn them into an excel file and then use ArcGIS (a mapping software) to create the map. (Arwin Sampoerna, personal communication, June 10, 2016)\textsuperscript{129}

By using these strategies, peasants and indigenous peoples are able to move beyond the strategies of informal and subtle “everyday forms of resistance” and illegibility in facing the statist ambition of legibility (Scott 1985; 1998). Rather than refusing to engage with the “official claims” regarding land ownership and resource management, peasants and their activist allies instead create their own data to challenge the official claims, making their land claims “legible” in the eyes of the elites and therefore valid. Moreover, in contrast to the largely technocratic vision of state and corporate mapping, this cartographic strategy is more participatory and at times also relies on mass mobilization. In Bulukumba, for instance, it took a series of protests until the district BPN office finally agreed to give the peasants a copy of the HGU rights document of the PT London Sumatera (Lonsum), a transnational rubber plantation company with whom the peasants have been in conflict (Peasants and activists in Bulukumba, personal communication, May–June 2016). In the case of the indigenous people, another major group of rural dispossessed, members of AMAN in various places have also conducted their own participatory countermapping backed by mass mobilization to support the struggle for their customary land (Rachman & Masalam, 2017, p. 111). AMAN even takes it one step further by creating its own participatory database of customary land across Indonesia called the Ancestral

\textsuperscript{129} Arwin Sampoerna is an AGRA organizer in Bulukumba with specialization in participatory mapping.
Domain Registration Agency (Badan Registrasi Wilayah Adat, BRWA), a joint initiative implemented in cooperation with some other CSOs.\(^\text{130}\)

This cultural countermovement is by no means new. Historically, cultural narratives have always been a part of peasant contentious politics. But what is new is the integration of technocratic knowledge such as cartography in advocacy efforts for peasant rights. Even in areas in which technocratic approach is typically dominant, such as land mapping, peasants utilize mass mobilization to help their participatory mapping effort and in turn use the data from the mapping to back their land ownership claim. Again, while this innovation has been proven to be quite effective in challenging elite claim of land control and ownership, this limited success should be taken with some caveats since it has not been able to lead to a major policy change on land registration at the national level. It also remains to be seen whether peasant movements and organizations can come up with a coherent cultural and knowledge production strategy beyond the existing local experiments.

Conclusion

How would we assess the role of the organized peasants in the process of democratic deepening and its overall achievement at the national level in light of this elaboration? During the New Order, the peasants exerted limited, but nevertheless significant, pressure on the regime both by challenging the limits imposed on dissent and alternative political ideas and oppositional formations under authoritarianism. Since the fall of Suharto, the peasantry has grappled with new

\(^{130}\) BRWA was established in 2010 by AMAN and some other CSOs, namely Participatory Mapping Working Network (Jaringan Kerja Pemetaan Partisipatif, JKPP), Forest Watch Indonesia (FWI), Consortium for People-centered Forest Management (Konsorsium Pendukung Sistem Hutan Kerakyatan, KpSHK), and Sawit Watch. Its website and database can be accessed at http://brwa.or.id/
political openings, which present both opportunities and challenges. There is more room for marginalized rural populations to mobilize and influence agrarian discourses. Yet while some concessions have been made, organized peasants are still unable to mount a unified resistance against the state and the market, suffering as they do from legacies of the New Order period, the internal dynamics and disagreements within and among the many different peasant movements and organizations, and an inability to cope with local and national political realities in post-authoritarian Indonesia. This ultimately leads to the organizational fragmentation of the peasantry at the national level. Moreover, there is a lack of interest convergence between peasants and the political and economic elites at the national level, who find little reason to concede to peasant demands given their interlocking set of mutual interests. Consequently, the peasants cannot yet pose an effective challenge to the elites and their influence remains limited and at times token and confined to the agenda setting stage of the elite-controlled political processes.

The political settings under which the organized peasants currently operate have allowed them to expand their scope of activism beyond advocacy approaches developed during the New Order era, leading to a diversification of their strategies. Over time, organized peasants have taken different approaches and strategies in advancing their struggle. Moving away from early economistic concerns and foci on legal-oriented advocacy, they have taken an increasingly political tone. More recently, they also have started to experiment with a variety of other strategies in the economic, cultural, and knowledge production realms designed to back their political initiatives. However, mass mobilization continues to be the main weapon of the peasants, whereas economic organizing, a rather recent concern, remains an afterthought in many instances. This diversification of countermovement strategies does not lead to a coherent unified
strategy of engagement with the national elites. In this context, disagreements regarding movement strategies can be seen as an indication as well as a product of organizational fragmentation among peasant movements.

Some concessions, such as the strengthening of various regulations concerning peasants and the implementation of some degree of participatory policy framework in agrarian matters, have been won, but at the same time the land-grabbing rate has increased exponentially along with occasional yet continuing repression and harassment of peasant movements. The technocratic paradigm also remains the main approach for agrarian policy, not to mention corporate influence in the agrarian sector is far from tamed. The peasants have had more success at the local level, winning land dispute cases after hard-fought battles and influencing local political dynamics in several regions.

This upsurge in agrarian conflict has coincided with the decentralization of political power to districts and municipalities, which has significantly empowered local governments and provided new opportunities for the movements’ advocacy efforts. This shift, combined with the localized nature of many agrarian conflicts, explains why agrarian activism often takes place in the districts. Agrarian social movements and other forms of peasant organizations have some leverage and bargaining power with local governments since local elites must respond to societal pressure in securing their interests, whether it is to stay in office, maintain investment levels, or implement agricultural policies in general, as we shall see in the case of North Bengkulu and Serang. But in contrast to those local concessions and successes, the achievement at the national level has been modest.

At the same time, the expansion of peasant modes of activism and strategies, especially in the political and economic domains, has opened opportunities for the advancement of the
struggle for peasant rights. Through these efforts, the peasants and their allies have shaped discourse on agrarian politics. Its most important achievement has probably been to put agrarian reform back on the policy table. Its mobilizational strategies have also revitalized populist discourses regarding peasant livelihood. The peasants have also challenged the discourse of Indonesian democracy by highlighting the rights and participation of marginalized rural populations beyond the liberal emphasis on civil and political liberties. At the very least, by keeping its repertoire of struggle alive, peasant movements have managed to insert rural concerns and social justice into debates about Indonesian democracy. In this way, it has contributed to the deepening of Indonesian democracy by bringing in concerns over agrarian and ecological justice, rural socio-economic inequality, and political rights of rural citizens to the table in an electoral democracy characterized by deep socio-economic inequality.

But these new political opportunities alone are not sufficient to drive substantial agrarian policy changes. Despite a more democratic political environment, the continuing interlocking of elite interests means that the scope for a meaningful policy change driven by peasant mobilization and advocacy from below is still limited. This situation is also exacerbated by the fact that despite the increasing intensity of peasant activism, organized peasantry still suffers from fragmentation among different organizations and movements, rendering its real policy influence less effective.

If we take agrarian reform – or land redistribution at the minimum – as a benchmark for land rights policy, we must conclude that no comprehensive agrarian reform agenda has been implemented at the national level. In that sense, no major accommodation of peasant interests at the national level has occurred after almost two decades of authoritarian breakdown and democratization in Indonesia. In several cases the state has conceded, but these accommodations
remain localized. It remains difficult for the peasantry to push the state to turn the assets of big
capital interests, such as Perhutani and big corporations holding HGU rights, into objects for
land reform. In other words, there have been no agrarian reform policies comparable to the
populist land reform campaign under Sukarno in terms of their extensiveness, swiftness, and
socialist-populist undertone since 1998. The movement has won some concessions locally, but at
the national level its capacity to influence the direction and implementation of land reform policy
remains limited, indicating the absence of a radical change in the power structure of agrarian
politics at the national level.
CHAPTER 4
ACCOMMODATION THROUGH MOBILIZATION IN NORTH BENGKULU

Introduction

This chapter delves into the first of the two case studies of local accommodation of peasant interests, North Bengkulu. Here, I sought to test both the first and second hypotheses. Unlike the situation at the national level, where there is a lack of accommodation of peasant interests, in North Bengkulu we see a rare and successful example of such an accommodation. This is because in this district the two variables necessary for the occurrence of accommodation are present. In North Bengkulu, the Bengkulu Peasant Union (STaB) has managed to overcome the collective action problem among the peasantry and serves as an organization unifying disparate peasant interests. Interest convergence between elites and peasants in North Bengkulu, a product of local political dynamics and contingencies in the district, also occurs in several policy areas. The combination of these two factors than leads to the occurrence of local accommodation in this district.

I divide my discussion on North Bengkulu into the following sections. Firstly, I discuss the local agrarian and political contexts of North Bengkulu and show how the New

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131 Until 2003, Bengkulu Province was divided into three districts: North Bengkulu, South Bengkulu, and Rejang Lebong. After that, these three districts were further divided into several new districts, namely Mukomuko, Central Bengkulu (from North Bengkulu), Kaur, Seluma (from South Bengkulu), and Lebong and Kepahiang (from Rejang Lebong). The pre-2003 North Bengkulu District area, which includes both present-day North Bengkulu and Mukomuko Districts, has been the stronghold of STaB. The cases discussed in this chapter are the ones that occurred in the geographical boundaries of the present-day North Bengkulu District.
Order period is a critical juncture for local politics in the district, since it was during the New Order that the expansion of HGU rights and land-grabbing cases intensified and the embryo of local resistance against agrarian dispossession emerged. Second, I move on to local political dynamics after authoritarianism. In the democratic era, agrarian issues became politically-salient. Responding to this new political space, peasants and their activist allies formed STaB as a province-wide peasant union. When political opportunities arising from a meeting of interests between local elites and peasants in the district materialized, STaB managed to capitalize on these opportunities to push for the accommodation of its members and the peasantry as a whole. In this section, I discuss three cases of local agrarian conflicts: 1) land occupation of PT Sandabi Indah Lestari’s (SIL) HGU plantations, 2) land-grabbing of peasant lands by PT Air Muring, and 3) crop failure in rubber plantations under the Asia Development Bank (ADB)-funded Tree Crops Smallholders Sector Project (TCSSP) scheme, with a focus on the land occupation case.

Third, North Bengkulu is a home of both severe agrarian grievances and a vibrant civil society landscape. It is these local contexts that led to the emergence of local accommodation through mobilization. Finally, I situate the North Bengkulu case in the broader context of the societal countermovement and decommodification of market relations.

Local Agrarian and Political Contexts in North Bengkulu: A Historical Overview

As a resource-rich province, Bengkulu has a long history of agrarian conflicts and rural resistance. In the pre-colonial era, powerful local nobilities and royalties from Sungai Lemau, Sillebar, Sungai Hitam, and Mukomuko ruled Bengkulu and later descendants from Madura and Bugis royal families also joined the rank of the ruling elites in the area (Setiyanto, 2001, p. xxvii). The coming of the long reign of Dutch colonialism, only interrupted briefly during the
British interregnum (1811–1815),\textsuperscript{132} accelerated the development of a plantation economy in Bengkulu (pp. 25–29).\textsuperscript{133} Inevitably, this development of colonial economy and its supporting bureaucracy decreased the political standing of the local elites and burdened the rural masses, many of whom had to toil in the colonial plantations. As a result, Bengkulu witnessed a series of sporadic peasant and rural revolts as well as anti-colonial political activities during the Dutch and later Japanese colonial administrations (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1979, pp. 66-68; 1983). The wave of rural-oriented populist politics also swept Bengkulu throughout the early years of independence and Sukarno’s Old Order period until 1965 (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1977, pp. 205-206; 22; 1979; Ikram & Dalip, 1993, p. 53; Yauw, 1982), when the Left was crushed and the New Order regime rose to power.

Under the New Order, both agrarian dispossession and resistance against it intensified. Reflecting the national trend in the decades of 1970s and 1980s, there was an accelerating rate of commercial exploitation of forest commodities and land grabbing by corporations under the guise of the Forest Exploitation Rights (HPH) and Commercial Lease Rights (HGU) (Activists from Akar Foundation, personal communication, June 1, 2017; Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1990, Ch. 3).\textsuperscript{134} Throughout the New Order period, there was a tightening political control of the rural society in the province (Ikram & Dalip, 1993, Ch. 4). Some official government accounts have also documented changes in rural communities in Bengkulu after the expansion of large-scale commercial activities in the forest and plantation areas and complaints

\textsuperscript{132} This short period of British rule in the then Dutch East Indies was a spillover of the Napoleonic Wars in the colony. For an account on British interregnum in Bengkulu, see Burhan (1988).

\textsuperscript{133} Major plantation commodities from this period include coffee, clove, pepper, nutmeg, cotton, beans, tobacco, sugarcane, and Areca palm (pinang), among others. In this period, shifting cultivation – also known as swidden agriculture – was also widely practiced, signifying a different cultivation strategy from Java where wetland farming was and is still the norm. Later on, gold mines also started to operate in Bengkulu.

\textsuperscript{134} Akar Foundation is a local rural development and agrarian NGO specializing in the promotion of rural solidarity economy in Bengkulu.
from the peasants and other rural residents over land-grabbing cases and unfair land transaction deals (Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1990, pp. 91; 102-112). This trend of agrarian dispossession continued into the 1990s. For example, local peasants in Putri Hijau Sub-district, one of STaB’s strongholds in North Bengkulu, attest that their conflict with PT Air Muring, a private plantation company operating in the sub-district, started in early 1990s (STaB peasant members in Putri Hijau Sub-district, personal communication, May 3–6, 2017).135

Other factors specific to Bengkulu also exacerbated agrarian dispossession in the province even further. Being a resource-rich yet poorly developed province, Bengkulu was the site for several poorly-planned community plantation projects and the destination for the Javanese migrants who resettled in the province under the *transmigrasi* scheme.136 Furthermore, many plantation estates in Bengkulu lack supporting infrastructures and facilities. This means these estates rely on land expansion and cheap workforce, which, according to Kartodirdjo and Suryo (1991), paves the way for the consolidation of large-scale profit-oriented plantations. At the same time, the New Order administration started to promote the contract-farming scheme for local peasants, called the Nucleus-Estate and Smallholders Plantation Scheme (*Perkebunan Inti Rakyat, PIR*), and *transmigrasi* resettlement from Java, both of which contributed to agrarian conflicts in this province (Bachriadi, 2010, pp. 324-326).137 From 1969 to 1993, around 85,000 migrants resettled to Bengkulu (p. 325). This development often led to structural conflict.

135 This is a series of interviews with STaB peasant members in Putri Hijau Sub-district.
136 The *transmigrasi* resettlement program essentially is a population redistribution program. While this policy was initially implemented under the Dutch administration, it was during the New Order that *transmigrasi* was heavily promoted. In fact, the program is still going on. The basic idea of *transmigrasi* is to resettle rural villagers from the heavily populated Java to the less-populated Outer Islands provinces, such as Bengkulu. Keep in mind that this is one of the ways through which the New Order addressed the issue of rural poverty without disrupting the structure of rural landholding. In this chapter, I use the term *transmigrasi* resettlement program and transmigration interchangeably. On *transmigrasi*, see Bazzi, Gaduh, Rothenberg, and Wong (2016) and Hoshour (1997).
137 PIR essentially is a form of contract farming between plantation corporations and nearby communities developed in the 1980s with assistance from the World Bank. It has been implemented widely throughout Indonesia since then.
between peasants and large-scale corporate-based plantations and occasional land disputes between the local residents and the incoming Javanese migrants.

In response to this development, peasant protests as well as middle-class activism on agrarian issues started to emerge. Similar to the development of agrarian activism at the national level, the main concern for local activists in Bengkulu in the 1980s was mainly the socio-economic improvement of the rural peasantry, which found its channel via the Gemini Foundation (*Yayasan Gemini*), a rural development NGO (Muspani, personal communication, June 5, 2017). But later the activists realized they needed to take a more confrontational, assertive stance against the regime at that time. At the same time, many local peasant communities started to get into conflict with state and corporate authorities – some of them even spontaneously occupied unused corporate plantations (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 335; StaB-affiliated peasants in Putri Hijau Sub-district, personal communication, May 3, 2017).

This development propelled the activists to refine their strategy, which eventually led to the formation of STaB in 1997, stemming from the Bengkulu Legal Aid Office (*Kantor Bantuan Hukum Bengkulu*, KBHB). The KBHB was not a legal aid office in a traditional sense; instead it was a hub for lawyers as well as university students, activists, academics, and peasants to coordinate their activism and address various social issues. Later, KBHB expanded its networks by opening branch offices in Arga Makmur (North Bengkulu District), Curup (Rejang Lebong District), and Manna (South Bengkulu District) and, along with legal aid offices in Yogyakarta and Purwokerto, formed an umbrella organization called the Association of Legal Aid Offices (*Perkumpulan Kantor Bantuan Hukum*, PKBH). It was from KBHB’s network that STaB and

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138 Muspani is a lawyer and an activist who was active in the early years of STaB.
139 This is a group interview with four peasants in the sub-district: Aseng, his wife, Eni, and his neighbors, Gulap and Siari.
other mass-based organizations emerged around 1998 (Bachriadi, 2010, pp. 328-329). The development of STaB can be seen as a response to increasing agrarian conflicts in Bengkulu (Marhendi, personal communication, May 26, 2017).

After democratization in 1998, both peasants and activists saw the opportunity to settle long-standing agrarian conflicts, promote peasant interests, and intervene in the post-authoritarian political arena. In this context, STaB emerged as one of, if not the leading, social movements in Bengkulu, with a stronghold in North Bengkulu District.

Agrarian Politics in Bengkulu in Post-New Order Period: The Rise of STaB

It was another day of chatting with Pak Hari Patono, the current chairperson of STaB. I have been staying at his place for almost a week by now. I had conducted interviews with his fellow neighbors, who used to be active in STaB during its heydays. Now it’s his turn to share his stories with me…He talked about the problems that his community has been facing all this time, his encounter and collaboration with the student activists, and all that. Most importantly, he showed me some pictures of STaB’s demonstrations and conferences and reminisced, softly but proudly, ‘in those days we managed to mobilize thousands of people to the street, even the governor was afraid of us.’ (notes from field visit to Putri Hijau Sub-district, early May 2017)

Hari Patono’s statement captures the dynamics of STaB in agrarian politics in Bengkulu in the last two decades (1998–2018). Founded in 1998, STaB quickly rose as a leading political actor in Bengkulu. While it was established in response to increasing agrarian conflicts in the province, it later also served as a vehicle for the local activists to intervene in the local and national electoral competition (Bachriadi, 2010; Muspani, personal communication, June 5,

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140 These other organizations are the Bengkulu Fishers’ Union (Serikat Nelayan Bengkulu, SNEB), the Association of Bengkulu Independent Traders (Himpunan Pedagang Mandiri Bengkulu, HPMB), the Bengkulu Municipality Waster Collectors’ Union (Serikat Pemulung Kota Bengkulu, SPKB), and the North Bengkulu Women’s Union (Serikat Perempuan Bengkulu Utara, SPBU).
141 Marhendi is a student activist-turned-lawyer and a member of STaB and KBHB. He was STaB’s secretary general for 2005–2012.
It started to become involved in local politics at the onset of decentralization and in the context of enduring agrarian grievances in the province. Although the intensity of its activities has been waning in the last couple years, it still has some presence among the local peasants.

In the post-authoritarian period, Bengkulu still faces many agrarian problems, especially land conflicts between local communities and plantation companies holding HGU rights. A research report from the University of Bengkulu documents that in 2002 alone, 58 HGU holding-companies controlled close to 126,600 ha of plantation areas (Gunawan, 2003, p. 2). The same report also notes that according to data from KBHB, the combined area of plantation estates controlled by big companies under HGU rights and PIR scheme was a little over 268,800 ha, a much bigger concentration of wealth compared to the total of 212,310 ha owned by peasant households throughout the province (p. 2). The Bengkulu branch of WALHI, a leading environmental NGO, describes these conflicts as a “time bomb” waiting to explode (Walhi: Kasus Tanah Tinggalkan Bom Waktu, 2003). These conflicts are exacerbated by the fact that many plantations estates, operated under HGU lease, are not utilized by the owners. For example, in North Bengkulu alone, almost half of 112,000 ha of registered HGU estates in 2003 were inactive (PBS Banyak "Bangkrut," 6,500 Ha HGU Dicabut, 2003). Eventually this problem of absentee estates gained some attention from the public and the local political elites (HGU di BU Perlu Segera Didata Ulang, 2003; KBHB Mendesak Kasus Petani MMU Disikapi, 2003; Tata HGU, Optimalkan Perkebunan, 2003). Another large-scale economic enterprise, mining, also spurs land conflicts throughout the province. In a fashion similar to the issuance of HGU rights, the issuance of mining operation permit can be politicized, not to mention that local authorities can turn a blind eye to the existence of illegal mining. This has happened in several instances (Distamben Akui Galian C PT AAJI Tak Berizin, 2012; Distamben Diminta Tidak
“Obral” Izin Pertambangan, 2012). Local activists suggest that powerful local and national elites such as Agusrin Maryono Najamuddin, a former governor of Bengkulu, and several generals in Jakarta are behind some of these plantation and mining companies – as owners, rent-seekers, or political backers (Activists from Akar Foundation, personal communication, June 1, 2017; Wawan, personal communication, May 26, 2017).

This is the reality that many peasants in the province face in their daily life. To better illustrate this point, consider this observation from my field visit to the village of Lembah Duri in Ketahun Sub-district:

Thursday night, April 12, 2017. I was invited to join the regular Koran recitation gathering or pengajian by Pak Parno, my host and local interlocutor in the village. Despite the rocky and muddy road (the road system in this community has not been asphalted yet), we managed to arrive at the pengajian gathering. Community members in this village hold the gathering on a regular basis not only to maintain their communal tradition but also to update fellow community members with the latest development affecting their village.

After the Koran recitation ended, the attending community members chatted for a while over coffee, cigarettes, and traditional snacks. Not long after that, Pak Parno opened a discussion on the recent plan of PT Dinamika Selaras Jaya (DSJ), a plantation and mining company, to start coal mining nearby the community. The impact of this mining operation on the local livelihood has been a concern for the community. In Pak Parno’s words, “they’re rich people who seek wealth, while we just seek to live and survive.”

This tells the wide range of agrarian problems, ranging from land and crop failure disputes to the lack of transparency on agricultural budget spending, the local peasants deal with frequently. It also shows how these issues have become part of the daily conversation in peasant communities in the province.

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142 Wawan is a student activist-turned-lawyer and was active in STaB and KBHB. He is now a politician with the People’s Conscience Party (Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat, Hanura).

143 STaB also does some advocacy work on this issue. For example, in 2003, the North Bengkulu Branch of STaB demanded the local district government be more transparent regarding the use and allocation of the district budget for forestation (Serikat Tani BU Desak Proses Kasus Reboisasi, 2003).
A closer look at the geographical origins and landholding structures of STaB members further reveals the degree of agrarian precariousness in Bengkulu. In his original survey data of STaB membership in 2007, Bachriadi (2010, pp. 340–341) shows that more than 60 percent of STaB members are actually migrants from other provinces who came to Bengkulu for familial ties (marriage) or economic opportunities. Of these 60%, many of them are Javanese migrants who participated in the *transmigrasi* scheme in Bengkulu. Some of these migrants were also victims of eviction in the infamous Kedung Ombo Dam project in Central Java.¹⁴⁴ In my fieldwork, most of the peasants I talked to were either Javanese migrants or descendants of Javanese migrants in Bengkulu and other provinces in Sumatra, such as Lampung.¹⁴⁵

With regard to their landownership status, an overwhelming majority of STaB member, around 72 percent, already owned some land before they joined the union. At the time the survey was conducted, many of them were middle peasants. After they joined STaB, not all of them participated in the land occupation campaign since they already owned some land. In fact, only about 42 percent joined the occupation in 2007, while the rest focused more on the advocacy efforts to improve rural livelihood and facilities (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 344).

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¹⁴⁴ The Kedung Ombo case was one of the key anti-dam protests that received a lot of public and media attention during the New Order. For some accounts on the case, see Aditjondro (1998) and Lucas (1992).

¹⁴⁵ A quick view of the names of several villages and hamlets in Bengkulu, particularly in North Bengkulu Districts, reveals that these are Javanese village names (e.g. Karya Bakti, Suka Jaya, Suka Maju, Purwodadi, to name a few). Some hamlets in fact use numbers as their names (e.g. D1, D2, D3, and so on), signifying the allocated residential and farming areas to which the migrants were assigned (or chose after deliberation among them). All of this suggests the visible presence of the Javanese migrants in the province.
Table 9
Origin of STaB Members, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Original residents</th>
<th>Migrants from other districts</th>
<th>Migrants from other provinces</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North Bengkulu</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Bengkulu</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebong</td>
<td>94.0%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejang Lebong</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kepahiang</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>44.0%*</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seluma</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>71.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaur</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A note on the categories: “original residents” refer to those who were born and live in their current place of residence, “migrants from other districts” refer to those who migrate from other districts within Bengkulu, and “migrants from other provinces” refer to those who migrated to Bengkulu from other places in Indonesia.

* This occurred because Kepahiang split from Rejang Lebong in 2004. Therefore, a portion of Kepahiang’s population actually comes from Rejang Lebong. In total, roughly around 61 percent of STaB members in Bengkulu Province were migrants from other provinces based on this 2007 survey. These statistics do not include data from the Central Bengkulu District, which split from North Bengkulu in 2008. (Bachriadi 2010 from his own survey in 2007)

Table 10
Percentage of STaB Members Controlling Land before Joining the Union, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of landholding</th>
<th>North Bengkulu</th>
<th>South Bengkulu</th>
<th>Lebong</th>
<th>Rejang Lebong</th>
<th>Kepahiang</th>
<th>Seluma</th>
<th>Kaur</th>
<th>Total members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Landless</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
<td>44.0%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 0.25 ha</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25-0.5 ha</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5-1 ha</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
<td>16.0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 ha</td>
<td>27.4%</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-5 ha</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; 5 ha</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Bachriadi’s (2010, p. 344) own survey in 2007.

Furthermore, among the land occupiers, 84 percent held de facto control of around 0.5-2 ha per household. Note that it is difficult even for STaB to keep an actual record of land
occupation and reclaiming data, since new claimants might just come into an area and then occupy land or join an existing land occupation campaign.

### Table 11

**Landholding Structures of STaB Members (Claimants) on Occupied and Reclaimed Land by Districts, 2007**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size of landholding</th>
<th>North Bengkulu</th>
<th>South Bengkulu</th>
<th>Lebong</th>
<th>Rejang Lebong</th>
<th>Kepahiang</th>
<th>Seluma</th>
<th>Kaur</th>
<th>Total claimants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 0.25 ha</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.25-0.5 ha</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5-1 ha</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 ha</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>37.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;5 ha</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Bachriadi’s (2010, p. 343) own survey in 2007. Bear in mind that Lebong, Kepahiang, Seluma, and Kaur were newly established districts when the survey was conducted and most of the population in Bengkulu Province, including the peasants, remained concentrated in the three old districts (North Bengkulu, South Bengkulu, and Rejang Lebong) at that time. This might explain the unusual distribution of landholding structures among claimants in the four new districts.

Given this context, we can see the severity of agrarian grievances and, consequently, the political salience of agrarian issues in Bengkulu. This is even more pronounced in North Bengkulu. In 2007, there was a relatively high proportion of landless and middle peasants – 24.8 percent and 57.6 percent, respectively. Moreover, the majority of peasants in the district are actually migrants from other provinces, many of them are Javanese. To put it simply, the question of land access and ownership is a high-stake issue for the North Bengkulu peasants. These local agrarian issues are severe and, therefore, politically salient.

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146 In this context, we can assume that those who own around 0.5-2 ha are the middle stratum of the peasantry.
It is in this context that STaB came to the local political scene. To achieve its goals, STaB utilizes three strategies: 1) advocacy of various agrarian conflict cases, especially land disputes; 2) electoral intervention in local and national politics; and 3) experiments in building solidarity economy among its members. On the ground, the union strategically alternates among direct actions such as mass demonstrations and land occupation and negotiations with local political and economic elites.

STaB operates in the context of a vibrant civil society landscape in which peasant mass mobilization is present and there is a dense network of social movement actors and CSOs. The genesis of this vibrancy can be traced to the latter years of the New Order regime when agrarian dispossession in Bengkulu prompted peasants and activists to mobilize. But it is only after democratization and subsequently decentralization that STaB and its allies found their momentum, which allows them to better capitalize on new political opportunities presented by the post-authoritarian political terrain.

In this context, while the role of peasant mobilization is clearly important, its magnitude and political weight are amplified by the activists’ assistance. In other words, it would be more difficult for the peasants to attain the bargaining power stemming from their mobilizational capacity without the help of the activists and the broader local civil society network that provides the supporting infrastructure for protest, information sharing among movement allies, popular education for peasants and activists, and negotiation with the local elites. This is not to say that the result of peasant mobilization depends entirely on the leadership of the activists and the civil society network in Bengkulu and beyond. Without the leadership and mobilization of the peasants themselves, who work collegially with the activists on a relatively equal footing, the peasants would not be able to maintain their sustained opposition and build a sense of communal
solidarity all the way to the neighborhood level. Nonetheless, the broader civil society context with which STaB and its rank-and-file members interact is crucial for improving the organizational capacity of the peasantry and leveraging the impact of their mobilization.147

More specifically, the role of KBHB and its activists is important in assisting the peasants’ struggle. The early generation of KBHB activists in cooperation with the local community leaders recruited middle-class activists, peasants, fishers, and street vendors, and together they formed the “collective activists of Bengkulu” (Kolektif Aktivis Bengkulu), which played a key role in recruiting and educating both activist and community member cadres on politics, legal-based advocacy, and community organizing (Bachriadi, 2010, pp. 337-338).148

Outside of social movement advocacy, KBHB activists and fellow travelers also play a role in other sectors such as the media and electoral monitoring. For example, some KBHB activists also work as journalists in local newspapers such as Rakyat Bengkulu and Radar Utara, thereby ensuring that STaB’s activities receive enough coverage in their respective outlets (Karjiyo, personal communication, April 18–19, 2017; Warsiman, personal communication, May 10, 2017).149 Other STaB cadres also had the opportunity to join the local election and election

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147 This dynamic relationship between middle-class activists and lower-class union members also occurs in another key sector of Indonesian social movement, the organized labor (on this, see Ford, 2009). Of course, in both labor and peasant movements; the early encounter between the middle-class activists and the lower-classes is sometimes marked by misunderstandings or a feeling of inferiority among the lower classes – initially they found it difficult to speak in public or engage in discussion with their activist allies and the like. But over time they were able to overcome such a barrier and work in a more collaborative and equal manner with their activist counterparts, which is also the case in Bengkulu.

148 These popular education sessions are given to both activists and peasants. Topics discussed in this session include politics, social analysis, legal-based advocacy, community organizing, and social solidarity. Facilitators who lecture on these sessions sometimes come from other organizations outside Bengkulu, thereby expanding the network of allies for STaB and KBH. The experience of participating in a mass-based social movement through community meetings, protests, and negotiations with local authorities as an educational experience for many STaB members (Dediyanto, personal communication, May 17, 2017; Padmo, personal communication, April 15, 2017; Wawan, personal communication, May 26, 2017).

149 Karjiyo and Warsiman used to be active in KBH. They now work as journalists for Radar Utara, a local newspaper in North Bengkulu District. Karjiyo is the chief editor for the paper, whereas Warsiman is the general manager. Warsiman also used to work for Rakyat Bengkulu before joining Radar Utara.
monitoring commissions, a strategy that is not only useful to prevent electoral manipulation against STaB-affiliated political candidates but also provides the opportunity for these cadres to learn about “the inner working” of local government (Dediyanto, personal communication, May 17, 2017; Wawan, personal communication, May 26, 2017). Appointed STaB and KBHB cadres managed to take positions in these commissions in various sub-districts and districts in Bengkulu. Moreover, KBHB even managed to produce its own data clearinghouse to collect all data pertaining to regulations on elections in the early period of electoral reform in Indonesia (2003-2005), which became a key reference point for the local election commission, NGOs, political parties, and voter education programs in Bengkulu (Budiman, 2008, pp. 3-4). All of this tells us about the organizational capacity of STaB and the strength of its affiliated networks. The extensive network in which STaB is embedded also allows it to exchange information and tactics, scale up its issues and activities, and tap external resources. Beyond these formal organizational venues, movement consolidation and capacity building also occur in informal spaces and everyday contexts. Discussions on the next protest and lobbying strategies or the latest political updates might occur in places such as the KBHB Office in Bengkulu City or the joint STaB-KBH secretariat in Arga Makmur, the administrative center of North Bengkulu. During the peak of STaB’s activities, it was a common occurrence, according to the activists and the peasants, to have peasants, activists, and other allies from other places and organizations

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150 For instance, a STaB/KBH activist, Halid Saifullah, served as the head of the local election commission in Rejang Lebong District for 2008-2013 period (KPU Rejang Lebong, n.d.).
151 Dediyanto, a former student activist, served as the head of KBHB’s Arga Makmur branch for 2003-2007 period. He had a brief stint as a politician with the People’s Mandate Party (Partai Amanat Rakyat, PAN) and now works as a community facilitator for urban issues for the Bengkulu City Government.
152 Other peasant movements and CSOs with connections with STaB include API, AGRA, KPRI, KPA, SPP, and peasant unions from Boyolali and Cilacap Districts in Central Java, among others. Sometimes, CSOs within the orbit of STaB’s network also donate funding to KBH. This resource can then be utilized to fund KBH activities, cover the logistics of community organizing (e.g. transportation costs for activists who conducted field visits to the peasant communities), and support some elements of STaB’s activities.
discuss various aspects of their advocacy efforts until very late at night at those offices or houses of local peasants.

Effectively, STaB serves as the major peasant union in the province with an organizational infrastructure and membership base down to the village and community levels.\textsuperscript{153} By 2001, STaB “claimed a membership of around 13,000 peasants, consolidated into 207 groups” (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 339). While this number should be taken with some caveats since the union did not really pay attention to the detailed registration of its membership at that time, it nonetheless gives as a rough estimate of its membership base. Besides STaB, SPI also has some presence in Kepahiang and Rejang Lebong Districts in Bengkulu. In those two districts, SPI established peasant cooperatives to organize coffee production on reclaimed land (Personal observation of SPI public discussion in Jakarta, April 27, 2016; SPI, 2013; 2014).\textsuperscript{154} But SPI had less success in maintaining its cooperatives, causing its members to gradually withdraw (Activists from Akar Foundation, personal communication, June 1, 2017). This basically leaves STaB as the main vehicle for organized peasants in the province. Given the scope of its activities, organizational structure, and impact on local politics and, more importantly, peasant livelihood in the province, STaB’s presence is felt and recognized beyond its formal membership base. The rise of STaB then paves the way for a unified peasant response against elite domination in the agrarian sector in Bengkulu, something lacking at the national level.

\textsuperscript{153} At the community level, peasant households participating in STaB are divided into several community groups. In a way, this group also serves as a work unit for agricultural production purposes in the context of rubber and palm oil plantations. To date, STaB still maintains some presence in the peasant communities even after its most active period (Padmo, personal communication, April 15, 2017; STaB peasant members in Putri Hijau Sub-district, personal communication, May 3–6, 2017).

\textsuperscript{154} SPI used to be known as FSPI. STaB was a member of FSPI, until it withdrew its membership when the then-FSPI, which retains the autonomy of its local peasant union members, changed its structure from a federation into a more unified peasant union and subsequently mandated its local members to become SPI branches. This caused several local mass-based peasant unions to withdraw, citing the lack of autonomy as the main reason. For more on this conflict, see Chapter 3.
The other two strategies that STaB utilizes – electoral intervention and solidarity economy building – can be seen as a way to support and further advance STaB’s goal of agrarian justice. Activists in STaB pursue the former because they believe that winning elected posts to attain political power is vital for securing the hard-won gains from advocacy for land rights, whereas the latter is needed to counter the commodification and monetization of land areas the peasants have won. The overall achievement of these two strategies is mixed, with less success compared to the traditional social movement advocacy strategy.

To better illustrate this dynamic, we now turn to the North Bengkulu District case. In my elaboration, I constructed a chronology of the case dynamics and analyzed the hypothesized variables at play. Here is a case of the successful local accommodation of peasant interests, where the interests of STaB as the representative organization of the local peasantry meet with the interests of the local political and economic elites, who need a societal base for electoral support and stability to maintain investment in the plantation sector. Again, in this case, local accommodation of peasant interests is possible because the peasants are united and there is an interest convergence between the elites and the peasants, as stated in the first hypothesis. STaB’s struggle and achievement in North Bengkulu is also a classic example of accommodation through mobilization, wherein a peasant organization, in this case a peasant union, uses confrontational strategies such as land occupation and mass demonstrations to increase its bargaining power vis-à-vis elites. Here, as pointed out in the second hypothesis, it is the degree of local agrarian issue salience and the vibrancy of local civil society that shape the trajectory of local accommodation in North Bengkulu.
Starting from 1998, STaB gradually developed its reputation as a leading social movement connecting peasant and activist interests in Bengkulu. Its most active period was in the early years of the reform period (1998–2004) when its activities in both peasant rights advocacy and electoral participation in local and national politics coalesced. Of the many STaB branches, North Bengkulu has been the most active one and remains the union stronghold today (Wawan, personal communication, May 26, 2017). To increase its bargaining power, STaB utilizes both direct actions such as land occupation as well as lobbying the local elites. Indeed, STaB sees the two strategies as interrelated – direct actions are employed to be able to bargain with the local authorities or when the lobbying effort comes to a standstill (Dediyanto, personal communication, May 17, 2017). Throughout the province, including in North Bengkulu, STaB uses its extensive network in civil society and connection with both state apparatuses and corporate actors for dealing with various agrarian conflict cases. For the purpose of this dissertation, I focus on the case of land occupation in the HGU plantation of PT SIL, a local plantation company whose partners include Wilmar, a leading Asian agribusiness corporation. Here is a successful attempt of the peasantry for getting legal recognition of 1,265 ha of land that

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155 The details about PT SIL can be found on its company website at http://www.sandabi.co.id/ and Redaksi SI (2018). PT SIL is a supplier for Wilmar and some other local companies. Both PT SIL and subsequently Wilmar as its client have been criticized for PT SIL’s intimidation against community members in its area of operation in the Seluma District, Bengkulu because the community members wanted to file a complaint about PT SIL’s operational conduct to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) mechanism (Fachrizal, 2016). This then led to Wilmar’s own investigation on PT SIL’s ground operation with the assistance of community members and local NGOs. The details of this investigation can be accessed in http://www.wilmar-international.com/sustainability/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Progress-Update-on-PT-SIL.pdf
they have controlled through occupation for years. I then discuss the other two cases of STaB’s advocacy efforts as additional references.

**Land Occupation in PT SIL’s HGU Plantations**

It was a busy, intense day on Thursday, January 12, 2012. Around 1,500 peasants under STaB’s banner staged a demonstration in front of the local government and parliament offices in Arga Makmur, the administrative center of the North Bengkulu District. Coming all the way from their home villages, Lembah Duri and Simpang Batu, they occupied these offices because they felt that their concern over the fate of their land was unaddressed by the local authorities even after a series of negotiations with representatives from the local police force and the district government (1,500 Warga Eks Sebayur Hari Ini Duduki Pemkab, 2012). These land-hungry peasants, many of them were Javanese migrants or their descendants, had been living in this area since 2002 (Suparno, personal communication, April 13-15, 2017). They came to this area after finding that this area was unused plantation estates operated by PT Way Sebayur, a HGU-holding company. Knowing this opportunity, peasants from various places in Bengkulu, backed by STaB, started to move to this area. They eventually formed two new villages, Lembah Duri and Simpang Batu. Given the ambiguous legal status of these HGU estates, what mattered the

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156 Both the peasants and PT SIL representatives came to agreement regarding the size of land controlled by the peasants in a meeting on September 28, 2013, hosted by the district secretary at that time, the late Said Idrus Albar.

157 Colloquially this case is also known by the locals as the Sebayur case. Therefore, I occasionally use that term throughout my elaboration.

158 Suparno is a peasant leader affiliated with STaB and a key actor in this land occupation effort.

159 These two villages, Lembah Duri and Simpang Batu, are new villages formed by the incoming peasants. To date, the legal status of these communities is “village in preparation” (desa persiapan), meaning that legally speaking they are not yet recognized as official villages since they are still in the process of attaining status as administrative villages. Therefore, when dealing with administrative and bureaucratic matters, the neighboring village, Air Sebayur, acts as the caretaker for Lembah Duri and Simpang Batu villages. Agrarian conflict in these villages has derailed the peasants’ effort to gain legal and institutional recognition of their communities. For more details on this issue, see Bengkulu Ekspress (2016) and Dinata (2017).
most for the peasants at that time was to be able to use the land for their farming activities. This period of relative stability was interrupted in 2009 when PT Way Sebayur went bankrupt and had to give up its HGU rights to the central government. This phenomenon of unproductive HGU utilization in Bengkulu was not new, for it had been going on for quite a while (PBS Banyak "Bangkrut," 6,500 Ha HGU Dicabut, 2003). Not long after that, PT SIL won the public bid for the HGU rights of the area. This then marked the beginning of turf wars between PT SIL and the local peasants.

The nature of the agrarian problem in this area is pretty complex and can be traced back to all the way to 1982, when PT Way Sebayur started its HGU plantation estates, initially for cacao farming. In 1988, another company, PT Tri Manunggal Pasifik Abadi (TMPA), also operated its HGU plantation estates for cocoa. Each of them controlled different HGU estates: PT Way Sebayur controlled estate no. 33 (6,328 ha), while PT TMPA controlled estate no. 11 (3,000 ha).\(^{160}\) Neither company maximized the operation of its HGU plantations. For example, PT TMPA only cultivated 400 ha out of its 3,000 ha estate. In fact, it stopped cultivating its estate in 1994 for financial reasons. Peasants who came and resided in the area in early 2000 pointed out that PT Way Sebayur’s plantation estates had already turned into unused forest when they entered the area and found the old cacao and mahogany trees. Therefore, starting in 1994, peasants started to come to the area. They argued that since the HGU estates were already abandoned by the companies that are supposed to utilize them, then they as community members had a right to reside on and farm in the area. In a way, the peasants and the activists who supported the land occupation do have a point, since according to the Government Regulation No. 40/1996 (PP No. 40/1996), HGU holders lose their rights if they abandon their

\(^{160}\) See STaB’s official letter No. 1/STAB-B-BU/U/01/2014.
This steady inflow of peasants into the estates reached its peak in the period of 2002 to 2004. By this time, STaB was already involved in the logistics of the occupation, arranging transportation to get into the area and contacting other CSOs, social movements, and media outlets to join the convoy into the area (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 323; Suparno, personal communication, April 13-15, 2017; Tugiran, personal communication, June 11, 2017).

The 2002-2004 period of land occupation by the peasants in this area soon garnered local and even national attention. At one point, Kompas, a leading Indonesian national daily, covered this act of direct occupation (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 324). In 2003, the North Bengkulu District Government announced it wanted to re-measure and reassess the size and productivity of the HGU estates in Ketahun, a move welcomed by STaB (STaB Dukung Ukur Ulang HGU BU, 2003). But in 2009, the on-the-ground tension slowly escalated when many peasant residents in the area heard about the possibility of PT SIL’s takeover of the unproductive HGU estates (Haryono, personal communication, April 15, 2017).

Throughout this period (2002-2009), this tension also triggered advocacy and mobilization efforts in support of the peasants’ struggle for farming rights in the plantation area. In this period, STaB utilized both lobbying and direct action as its advocacy strategies. It sought to talk with the representatives of the district government and the local parliament, approached

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161 Specifically, the details on this point can be found in Articles 3, 16, 17, and 18 of PP No. 40/1996. Furthermore, the first point in Article 17 clearly states that one of the reasons to lose HGU rights is when the HGU plantation is abandoned by the owner. This legal leeway was strategically utilized by land-hungry peasants and their activist allies to justify land occupation in the area. The full text of PP No. 40/1996 can be found at http://www.bpn.go.id/PUBLIKASI/Peraturan-Perundangan/Peraturan-Pemerintah/peraturan-pemerintah-nomor-40-tahun-1996-1087 (in Indonesian).

162 Tugiran is a STaB activist who now works as a school teacher in Arga Makmur. He was the General Secretary of the North Bengkulu Branch of STaB for 2003–2006 period.

163 Haryono is the village head of Air Sebayur Village, which neighbors the HGU plantation estates. Air Sebayur itself is a young village. It was founded by Javanese migrants who moved into the area in 1986 to participate in the PIR scheme for rubber plantation. The initial population of Air Sebayur was around 260 households, but now the village is a home to around 500 households, almost double in size (Haryono, personal communication, April 15, 2017).
several key political actors on a more personal level, and formed alliances with other CSOs and social movements in Bengkulu, such as the Village Heads Association (*Forum Kades*), the Village Representatives Association (*Forum BPD*), KBH, local student activists, and the Lingkar Insani Study Circle (*Kelompok Studi Lingkar Insani*). At the same time, peasant residents also intensified their farming and protest activities, showing their commitment to stay in the area at all costs. This was by no means an easy process, as several STaB activists were criminalized for their advocacy activities and imprisoned for a brief period in 2009. (Dediyanto, personal communication, May 17, 2017; Semua Warga Sebayur Siap Ditahan Polres BU, 2008; Tugiran, personal communication, June 11, 2017; Wawan, personal communication, May 26, 2017).

In this period, the peasants also started to reap the benefits of their labor. They enjoyed the profits generated from rubber, benefitting from the market boom for rubber in 2007-2008 and, as a result, could afford more commodities, such as buying their own motorcycles. During these years, many car and motorcycle dealers approached peasant households in the HGU plantation area, offering automotive loans for them (Suparno, personal communication, April 15–17, 2017). This fact also explains the peasants’ increasing attachment to their occupied land.

But the key moment occurred in 2011. Through a public auction organized by the central government, PT SIL won the bid for the HGU lease rights of the plantation estates on which the peasants had been living and farming (Pemerintah Daerah Bengkulu Utara, n.d.). Therefore, PT

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164 STaB activists were also involved in the establishment of some of these social movements, such as *Forum Kades* and *Forum BPD*.

165 Essentially these activists were framed by the local authorities as perpetrators who embezzled the funds donated by the local peasants to cover the logistics of the advocacy effort for the TCSSP case. Some were imprisoned for a couple of weeks; others for months. Rumor has it that the incumbent governor of Bengkulu at that time, Agusrin Maryono Najamuddin, was the actual mastermind behind this politically motivated charge. When I brought up this case in my conversations with the local peasants who were affected by the TCSSP scheme, they immediately laughed, showing that they too were aware it was a political move, and seconded such an assessment. I explain more about this in the section on the TCSSP case.
SIL now controlled both estates no. 33 and no. 11 – a total of 9,328 ha. This sent a wave of shock through the peasants. While recognizing the fact that many of them de facto lived in a legal limbo, they also thought that the public bid for the HGU rights of PT Way Sebayur and PT TMPA was a bit fishy (Suparno, April 13–15, 2017). This might be an over-speculation by the peasants, but their suspicion was not completely unfounded, for it is common knowledge that the granting of HGU rights is often political. As a matter of fact, the two HGU estates were actually confiscated by the South Jakarta Public Prosecutor’s Office in 2006 because the owner of both PT Way Sebayur and PT TMPA, PT Haspram, bought the two companies using embezzled funds from Bank BNI, a state-owned bank (Fajarwati, 2017). Overall, the fact that the HGU holder had now changed created more uncertainty for the future. Moreover, the lease for both HGU estates would end soon – 2012 and 2018 for estates no. 33 and 11, respectively (Noverdo, 2017; Suparno, personal communication, April 13–15, 2017). This is why the peasants decided to stage a series of demonstrations to safeguard their occupied land. On Thursday, January 12, 2012, the peasants occupied the district head office and the local parliament, hoping to negotiate with the district head, Imron Rosyadi (1,500 Warga Eks Sebayur Hari Ini Duduki Pemkab, 2012). On the spot, both the peasants and the local district government managed to reach three key agreements: 1) the peasants would not be evicted from their land; 2) the district government would act as a mediator for the conflict between the peasants and PT SIL, with a focus on a resolution regarding land ownership of and access to estate no. 33; and 3) a multi-party ad hoc team would be formed by the district government to investigate the situation on the ground (Demo, Warga Eks Sebayur 166 According to Suparno, an abandoned HGU plantation should be returned to the government first before it is publicly auctioned. If we look at several articles in PP No. 40/1996, it is clearly stated that an abandoned HGU estate technically becomes state land. Given the shady circumstances in which the public bid for these abandoned HGU estates took place, Suparno and his fellow peasants do have a point.
Menangis, 2012). Approximately 20 representatives of the peasant community were also able to meet with several local members of parliaments (MPs) and raise their concern (Demo, Warga Eks Sebayur Menangis, 2012).

But the conflict became more complicated when it was found out that there were big landowners inside PT SIL’s plantation estates. The local press, Radar Utara, reported that PT SIL only utilized 1,400 ha out of its whole plantation area ("Petani Berdasi" di Eks Sebayur, 2012). This group of big landowners, dubbed as “farmers with ties” (petani berdasi) by the local peasants, controlled more than 2,000 ha of land in the HGU area. The existence of this group of big landowners was also confirmed by the local peasants and village officials (Haryono, personal communication, April 15, 2017; Suparno, personal communication, April 13–15, 2017).

In the wake of this development, the district government then decided to form an ad hoc inventory team mandated to measure the total area of land the peasants occupied and to investigate the possibly illegal involvement of the big landowners, a move supported by STaB (STaB Kawal Pembentukan Tim, 2012; Tim Konflik SIL Dibentuk, Petani Berdasi Terancam, 2012). This 140-member team consisted of representatives from the local district government, PT SIL, and the local peasant community, with a relatively equal representation for each group divided into several groups working on different sections of the disputed area. The local parliament also launched its own investigation by forming its own panitia khusus (pansus) or

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167 This agreement was literally written by hand on paper and signed by the district head and two activists who assisted the peasants at that time, Dediyanto and Gahani. This is a common practice in many cases of protests against authorities in Indonesia.
168 This Indonesian term is a form of sarcasm and social critique, as typical peasants neither wear ties nor own big plots of land, hence the use of term “farmers in ties” to call these big landowners. Radar Utara only published the initials of the landowners’ names, but they managed to get the details of their land ownership: SB owned 742 ha, AA owned 425 ha, RS owned 140 ha, BI owned 174 ha, and BN, BD, and PT jointly owned 600 ha. In total, they controlled an area of 2,081 ha split into both estates. The exact circumstances that enabled these big landowners to obtain control of those areas are not exactly clear.
169 The legal basis of this team is the District Head’s Decree No. 54/2012 (SK Bupati No. 54/2012).
special committee (Kerja Pansus Tak Sama dengan Tim Gabungan, 2012). In mid-February 2012, an incident raised even more tension and stake in this conflict: a peasant was stabbed to death near the HGU area. This incident became the headline of the local news for a couple of days (Insiden Berdarah di Sebayur Akibat Kelalaian Pemerintah, 2012; Petani Sebayur Tewas Ditusuk, 2012). The chair of the local parliament’s special committee on the Sebayur case, Eka Kurniadi, suspected that this death case was a result of intervention from a third party in the case, a sentiment shared by the peasants on the ground as well (Ada Pihak Ketiga yang Ikut “Bermain”, 2012; Polisi Buru Tsk Penusukan, 2012). In early March 2012, another unexpected case happened: there was a rumor that PT SIL’s top executives paid a visit to houses of the committee’s key members, an accusation rejected by several committee members, including the chair (Ada Dugaan Gratifikasi, 2012; Infonya, Ada Pertemuan Rahasia Pansus dengan Petingi PT SIL, 2012).

This tension notwithstanding, progress toward conflict resolution were made. An early agreement between PT SIL and the peasants was achieved on February 21, 2012, in which peasants were offered three options: they could keep their land, sell it to PT SIL and receive some financial compensation, or join the PIR as a partner of PT SIL (PT SIL dan Penggarap Capai 3 Kesepakatan, 2012). This agreement, held at the district government office, was facilitated by the National Land Agency (BPN) and its Bengkulu Province office and attended by 20 peasant representatives and two PT SIL’s general managers. The local parliament’s special committee also confirmed in late February 2012 that big landowners were present in PT SIL’s HGU area and had been utilizing the area for quite a while (SK Tim ke Bupati, Pansus Pastikan "Petani Berdasi", 2012). Both peasants and PT SIL, committed to clear up the confusion surrounding the business operation of these landowners, also submitted the results of their fact-
finding investigations to the committee (Petani Berdasi di Sebayur Akan Segera Terungkap, 2012). In May 2012, PT SIL and an NGO called Green Sumatera Community separately filed a charge against the big landowners with the local police for their illegal occupation of PT SIL’s HGU land and business operation (Green Sumatera Community Laporkan Petani Berdasi, 2012; Petani Berdasi Bakal Dilaporkan ke Polisi, 2012). On June 16, 2012, the district government’s inventory team concluded its investigation and submitted its final report to the district head. On August 14, 2012, the district head sent an official letter for PT SIL, asking the company to keep negotiating with the local peasants and keep in touch with all related stakeholders. This request received a reply from Hendro Prasetyo, PT SIL’s general manager, who in principle had no objection to the peasants’ request for legalization and left it to the district government and the North Bengkulu branch of BPN to handle all technical matters on the ground. In early November 2012, the district government submitted a proposal for land title certification and legalization under the PRONA scheme to the national government (2013 Prona Diusulkan, 2012). This development suggested some possibility that the occupied land could be included in the legalization proposal, thereby giving some concessions to the demands of the peasantry.

While the struggle for land rights in this area continued, the dynamics started to enter a period of relative stability until late February 2013 when the tension between PT SIL and one of the landowners resurfaced, making the attempt by the Lembah Duri community more challenging (Mediasi SIL dan Laihok Terjadi Aksi Saling Tunjuk, 2013). On February 28, 2013,

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170 They conducted these investigations separately.
171 See STaB’s official letter No. 01/STAB-B-BU/U/01/2014.
172 This is official letter No. 028/1072/B2, signed by the district head himself.
173 This is official letter No. 416/SIL-GM/XI/1012, signed by the general manager himself.
another incident occurred, raising the tensions surrounding the case even more. A group of community members, led by EK and TT, decided to damage and burn several facilities at PT SIL’s plantation, including offices and residential facilities for company employees, causing an estimated loss of IDR two billion for PT SIL (Ramadhan, 2013; Ratusan Warga Duduki PT SIL, 2013). The police soon arrested both ringleaders, and a total of 15 community members were convicted by the local court in August 2013 (Kasus Pengrusakan dan Pembakaran Aset PT SIL: 15 Terdakwa Divonis 10 Bulan, 2013). This vandalism was committed out of frustration and anger (Padmo, personal communication, April 15, 2017; Suparno, personal communication, April 13–15, 2017; Tugiran, personal communication, June 11, 2017). The extent to which involvement of spoilers from outside of the community in instigating this action is unclear. In any case, this incident escalated the tension and derailed the conflict settlement process for quite a while. But despite these tensions, negotiations between the peasants and PT SIL continued. In April and June 2013, PT SIL signed two memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with peasant communities in Lembah Duri and Simpang Batu, respectively, in which both sides agreed that enclaves would be provided in PT SIL’s HGU area after the inventorization process. On September 28, 2013, another follow-up meeting between the two conflicting parties was held at the official residence of the district head, facilitated by the district secretary, the late Said Idrus Albar. Both parties agreed that enclaves would be provided for peasant land located in estate

175 There are different versions regarding the number of community members participating in this act. Some news reports mention that there were around 300 participants in this act of vandalism. Others mention a much lower number. In my interviews with the key actors during fieldwork, they pointed out that many community members in the plantation area were unaware there had been a fire, suggesting the possibility that the number of the arsonists might be lower than 300.

176 Padmo is a local peasant affiliated with STaB and a key actor in the land occupation effort.

177 See STaB’s official letter No. 01/STAB-B-BU/U/01/2014.

178 I obtained a copy of the official meeting minutes signed by the attendants and the district secretary. See also the abovementioned STaB’s letter.
no. 33. Specifically, the enclave would cover land for community farming and plantation (763 ha) as well as watershed (502 ha). Therefore, the total of the promised enclave area was 1,265 ha, around 20 percent of the total area of estate no. 33. This was the demanded size of enclave that STaB had been advocating (Slamet, personal communication, April 20, 2017).\textsuperscript{179} At this stage, the conflict had largely subsided. Considering the peasants’ relationship with PT SIL and the local government was not always smooth, this was quite an achievement.\textsuperscript{180} By the time I left the district (early June 2017), negotiations between the peasants and the local elites on estate no. 11 were ongoing. It was estimated that the peasants could obtain ownership of around 600 ha of enclaved land in estate no. 11 (Suparno, personal communication, April 13–15, 2017).

Throughout this period, the peasants also undertook a struggle at the village level. Not all village officials were supportive of their initiative. The village head of Lembah Duri, for example, was not enthusiastic about this advocacy effort in the view of the peasants (Suparno, personal communication, April 13-15, 2017). Neither were some other village officials. Faced by this lack of support from their most immediate officials, the peasants from both villages started to protest against the village heads. For instance, on December 4, 2011, a group of 100 protesters who demonstrated in front of PT SIL’s office in the plantation area accused the village heads of Lembah Duri, Simpang Batu, and a neighboring village, Benteng Besi, complaining that they had sided with PT SIL (Walhi Bengkulu, 2011).\textsuperscript{181} The intervention from spoilers, such as the big landowners and agents provocateurs behind the burning incident, also aggravated the state of

\textsuperscript{179} Slamet is the incumbent chairperson of the North Bengkulu branch of STaB.
\textsuperscript{180} Suparno for instance told me that the peasants initially “found it hard to trust the local district government, which tends to favor the company.” In another interview with Agus, the village secretary of Lembah Duri, he also pointed out that at the beginning PT SIL “was not really transparent.”
\textsuperscript{181} After knowing about this demonstration, the village head of Simpang Batu decided to flee for a while, out of fear for his safety.
the conflict. There are also some disagreements among the peasants themselves. Community members in Simpang Batu, for instance, were not really satisfied with the 20 percent allocation of PT SIL’s HGU area for the local community (Fajarwati, 2017).^{182}

But overall, other factors created a favorable situation for the local peasants. First, throughout this period of protracted struggle, it is safe to say that the local peasants were unified. Surely, there were disagreements regarding strategies and tactics in facing the local state and corporate authorities, not to mention that the vandalistic act of some peasants ended up derailing their own struggle. Nonetheless, the peasantry as a whole was committed to finding some kind of resolution for their grievances. They also found an organizational vehicle in STaB – an effective one in fact. This ensured the organizational unity of the local peasants over the course of their struggle.

Secondly, although the peasants and the local elites – the local government and PT SIL – disagreed on many points, there was a meeting of interests between the two sides that paved the way toward some kind of accommodation for the peasants’ demands. The peasants demanded legal recognition of their use of land in PT SIL’s HGU estates at first and later ownership of that occupied land. To achieve this, they needed to engage with the elites who controlled political and economic resources and had the policymaking authority.

For different reasons, the local elites in North Bengkulu too needed to respond to the needs of the peasantry. Of particular attention here is the political interest of Imron Rosyadi, the former district head of North Bengkulu. A long-time local politician, he served as the district head for two periods (2006–2011 and 2011–2016). His encounter with STaB began in 2005. At

^{182} It is important to note, however, that in principle they still support the struggle of their fellow community members in Lembah Duri.
that time, he was still the deputy district head and wanted to run as a district head candidate in the upcoming 2005 election. Needing the electoral support to ensure his victory, he “asked STaB to support him in his candidacy” in the election (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 346). In a quid pro quo move, STaB asked him to stop repression and arrests against STaB members, something that had occurred during the tenure of the previous district head, Muslihan DS – a former military officer. It turned out that this arrangement worked pretty well. In 2005, “KBH and STaB activists were deployed as part of the support teams for candidates” in all district head elections in Bengkulu Province, including North Bengkulu (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 347). This effort bore fruit. Imron won the election with 47.8 percent of the vote and fulfilled his promise: although Imron did not publicly support STaB’s land occupation, the union could continue its occupation free from harassment and repression. During his first tenure (2006-2011), he also financially assisted in the purchase of a new STaB-KBH joint secretariat in Arga Makmur and “tried to legitimize the land occupation” in PT Way Sebayur’s plantation “through the local transmigration program” (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 346). Bear in mind this was the first direct election for local leaders held at the district, since the district head was selected by the local parliament until 2005. In this new institutional setting, the election for the district head is no longer a largely insulated intra-elite manner, since then aspiring candidates have to “reach out” and “reach down” to society. Thus,

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183 The election was held in 2005, but Imron Rosyadi was officially inaugurated as the district head in 2006. Since the two time term limit for each executive head post (head and deputy head) is counted separately, Imron was able to run for reelection as a district head in 2011. In total, he served as an executive head in North Bengkulu District for 15 years: four years as the deputy district head (2001–2005), one year (2005–2006) as an acting district head, when the then district head was running in the election for the governorship of Bengkulu Province, and 10 years (2006-2011; 2011–2016) as the district head of North Bengkulu, with a different running mate in each term. That each candidate can run with a different running mate in local elections is a common feature in Indonesian local politics after authoritarianism, reflecting the volatility and dynamics of decentralized local politics. For more on Imron’s political career, see Peresmian Sekretariat Pemenangan, Dukungan Imron jadi Gubernur Tak Terbendung (2015).

184 This was not the first time STaB intervened in the electoral arena. In 2004, STaB successfully utilized its electoral machine to lead Muspani to victory for a seat in the national senate. Hence, by 2005, STaB activists and cadres already had some experience intervening in the electoral arena.
political hopefuls such as Imron had to approach societal forces with mobilizational and vote-getting capacity to support them.

It is important to note that by 2005, STaB already had enough experience and ability to intervene in the electoral arena. STaB’s debut in electoral politics started in 2004, when the union tried to send one of its leading figures, Muspani, to the newly-established Regional Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah, DPD), the national senate. Armed with a special campaign team and up to 7,000 volunteers comprised of activists and peasants down to the village level, including seven activists serving as commissioners in various district election commissions, Muspani won as a seat as one of the four DPD representatives from Bengkulu with almost 65,000 votes (Bachriadi, 2010, pp. 347-348). This successful breakthrough into the electoral arena garnered a lot of attention from social movement circles. Even Tempo, the leading national news magazine, published a report about this achievement (Yulianto, 2005). With this experience in hand, it is not surprising to see STaB’s successful performance in mobilizing electoral support for Imron Rosyadi’s district head candidacy in North Bengkulu in 2005.

This quid pro quo arrangement continued in Imron’s second term (2011–2016). In a manner similar to the partnership in the first term, STaB asked Imron to sign a political contract, a pledge that the concerns of the peasants would be taken seriously by his administration.

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185 The seven activists selected as local election commissioners are Emex Verzoni, Holman, and Zainan Sagiman in South Bengkulu District, Irwanto and Halid Saifullah in Rejang Lebong District, Julisti A. in North Bengkulu District, and Heri Sunaryanto for the provincial election commission. Muspani’s wife, Fonika Thoyib, was also selected as an election commissioner for Bengkulu City (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 347).

186 Thrilled by this meteoric achievement, STaB endeavored to build its own social movement-based political party, PPR, with the help of other interested social movements. Unfortunately, this experiment did not last long: PPR failed to meet the requirements requested by the General Election Commission to participate in elections. This affected the morale of STaB organizers, members, and their allies. STaB then decided to send its cadres to mainstream political parties such as Hanura, PAN, Golkar, the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (Partai Demokrasi Indonesia-Perjuangan, PDIP), the National Democratic Party (Partai Nasional Demokrat, Nasdem), and the Indonesian Unity Party (Partai Persatuan Indonesia, Perindo), a strategy that has scored little success so far.
(Tugiran, personal communication, June 11, 2017). In addition to this strategy, STaB also utilized lobbying and other channels of informal communications with sympathetic local elites. For instance, STaB maintained close communication with the late district secretary and the then-head of the BPN Office in Bengkulu Province, Isda Putra (Tugiran, personal communication, June 11, 2017). This tactic of obtaining support for STaB’s actions from key figures in the local government, especially the district head, is important in the view of the activists. In the words of Dediyanto, a STaB/KBHB activist, “if Imron wasn’t the district head, we would be doomed” (personal communication, May 17, 2017).

The use of electoral support as a bargaining chip was also utilized at the village level. The peasants of Lembah Duri and Simpang Batu villages also analyzed and approached village officials differently, depending on their stance on the conflict. As I have elaborated in the previous paragraphs, the peasants pressured the village elites, such as village heads, whose stance on the land rights struggle was unclear in their view. On the other hand, they were willing to vote for village head candidates who supported their struggle. This happened in one of the past village head elections in the Air Sebayur village. In one of the community meetings during the election campaign period, Haryono, who was running for the village head position at that time, made an appeal to the community members of the two preparatory villages to vote for him and in exchange he promised to support their struggle for land rights in the contested HGU area and formal administrative recognition of their villages (Agus, personal communication, April 15, 2017; Suparno, personal communication, April 13–15, 2017). Haryono also needed to

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187 I forgot in what year the election was held precisely, but 2013 or 2014 Haryono was running for a seat in the North Bengkulu local parliament, so he must have been elected and served as a village head before that period. The meeting described above took place in Suparno’s house, where I also stayed during my visit to PT SIL’s HGU area. Suparno’s description of this meeting was dramatic, pointing out how Haryono solemnly declared he would support the local peasants’ struggle followed by cheers from the meeting attendants after hearing his statement. Keep in
maintain this electoral support since he was running for a seat in the North Bengkulu local parliament under the Golkar Party ticket.\textsuperscript{188}

Obviously, it is difficult to measure the actual effect of STaB’s electoral mobilization on the victories of these local elites. Nonetheless, the elites perceived the union’s support as important for their candidacies. What is important here is not necessarily the actual impact of peasant support for them, but rather the perceived impact of peasant electoral mobilization. Such a perceived impact alone presumably was enough to convince the key local elites in North Bengkulu to reach out and bargain with STaB.

Other than the need to reach out to the peasantry for electoral support, the local elites also responded to their demands because of the need to maintain social and political stability necessary to maintain the investment level in the district. This is an assessment with which the activists themselves concur (Tugiran, personal communication, June 11, 2017). PT SIL for example hired Husin, a former KBHB lawyer, as its legal representative in the hope that having him as a lawyer would ease the negotiation with the local peasants (Wawan, personal communication, May 26, 2017). A cursory review of several articles in the Radar Utara daily also confirms that there was a structural tendency of the district government – that is, the local state – to act in favor of the interests of big capital holders in the long run (Block, 1977). The PIR scheme for palm oil plantations, for instance, is still heavily promoted by the local district government (Program Plasma 1,500 Hektar, Bakti Bupati Pada Masyarakat, 2014; Wabup Setujui Plasma Sawit Suka Makmur-PT SIL, 2012). Furthermore, Imron Rosyadi during his

\textsuperscript{188} He lost in this election and decided to go back to the village politics. He is now the incumbent village head of Air Sebayur.

\footnotesize{mind that the two preparatory villages are under the administrative control of Air Sebayur, so community members living in those two villages also vote in Air Sebayur Village Head elections.}
second term as a district head also said that he “will open as many opportunities as possible for investors who are interested in doing business in North Bengkulu,” especially in the plantation and mining sectors (BU Miliki Investor Terbesar, 2014). Last, but not least, plantation corporations such as PT SIL and PT Air Muring also regularly publish advertisements in the Radar Utara, indicating the extent of their influence in the local economy, which cannot be easily neglected.

In brief, it is this combination of the two variables, the organizational unity among the local peasants under STaB and the interest convergence between them and the local elites – the district government and PT SIL – that led to the accommodation of peasant interests in North Bengkulu. In turn, the form of local accommodation that emerged in the district was shaped by the local context, that is the salience of agrarian issues and the vibrancy of local civil society. In North Bengkulu, agrarian issues are politically salient. There is an enduring peasant grievance caused by the lack of land ownership among the peasants. Note also that the peasants in Ketahun already enjoyed a period of relative prosperity, which heightened their attachment to their hard-fought land. This led the peasants to engage with the local elites through contestational strategies based on mass mobilization. Through mass mobilization, the peasants hoped to get their aspiration recognized and heard by the local elites. Pursuing a strategy similar to many lower-class social movements (Piven & Cloward, 1979), this act of disruption of the established everyday order such as land occupation, mass demonstration, and exchanging arguments with the local police force gave the local peasants some leverage to negotiate with the local elites. This was further facilitated by the vibrancy of local civil society in North Bengkulu. In this rich network of associational life, the KBHB plays a key role as the main partner of the North Bengkulu branch of STaB and the local peasants. But other civil society actors play an important
role, too. Student activists are an important actor (Suparno, personal communication, April 13-15, 2017). So is the local media, which works closely with StaB and other movement actors. The fact that STaB is connected with the larger civil society network beyond North Bengkulu also helps in channeling resources and information needed for the struggle as well as scaling up the issue to sympathetic allies, key actors, and the larger public outside of the district. It is for these reasons the type of local accommodation of peasant interests in North Bengkulu is accommodation through mobilization.

The struggle of the local peasants under STaB for their land rights in PT SIL’s HGU plantation is not the only story of agrarian struggle in North Bengkulu. The other two major episodes of peasant struggle in the district are STaB’s advocacy of the crop failure case under the TCSSP scheme and the ongoing agrarian struggle against land-grabbing by PT Air Muring, a subsidiary of the Bakrie Group, a leading national conglomerate. The overall conclusion of these two cases is more moderate compared to the success in PT SIL case; local peasants managed to get financial compensation for the crop failure under the TCSSP scheme, but they are still fighting against PT Air Muring to get their land back from the corporation. We see a lack or even an absence of accommodation of peasant interests in their struggle against PT Air Muring’s land-grab because there is a lack of interest convergence between the peasants and the local elites. I now discuss these two cases briefly to enrich my elaboration on the North Bengkulu case.

189 The current patriarch of the Bakrie Group, Aburizal Bakrie, is also a major national oligarch and a Golkar Party politician.
Advocacy for Financial Compensation for Crop Failure under the TCSSP Scheme\textsuperscript{190}

The TCSSP scheme is a form of “smallholder rubber plantation development project funded by ADB” (Bachriadi, 2010, p. 336). In essence, it is a microcredit scheme for rubber cultivation with high quality seedlings funded by an ADB loan from the Indonesian government (OECD, 2010, pp. 51-52). It is estimated that thousands of peasant households throughout Bengkulu Province joined the scheme at one point. This explains why the peasants complained when the harvest in TCSSP-funded rubber plantation did not yield the expected result and decided to voice their concerns.\textsuperscript{191}

The TCSSP case in North Bengkulu began in 1991, with its official implementation in 1992. In 1991, officials from the Plantation Agency of the North Bengkulu District Government started to survey villages and got in touch with local communities, asking about possible interest in rubber cultivation. Some community members expressed interest, leading to the creation of work groups for the cultivation, with 20-25 members in each group. A survey to profile the targeted peasant households for this scheme as well as meetings to inform community members about the details of the scheme, including rubber cultivation techniques, were held throughout the targeted communities in North Bengkulu. Thrilled by the economic prospect of rubber cultivation, peasants in these communities decided to participate in this project and signed the contract. In 1992, the scheme officially started. The peasants received some assistance with the rubber cultivation, especially for land clearing, seeds, and other production facilities such as

\textsuperscript{190} This section largely draws from interviews with Hidayat, Hari Patono, and Riadi, local peasants and STaB cadres living in Putri Hijau Sub-district, held on May 5-6, 2017. Hari Patono is the current chairperson of STaB. Hidayat used to be active in the village government in his community, serving in different capacities in the periods of 2000-2003 and 2008-2013. Additional references are cited throughout this section.

\textsuperscript{191} Putri Hijau Sub-district is one of the, if not the major, epicenters of mass mobilization and protests in the TCSSP case.
fertilizer and microcredit. They started to cultivate rubber under this scheme and other peasants also joined the scheme in the following years.\textsuperscript{192}

Problems started to arise in 1997 when the peasants had their first rubber harvest with the seedlings from the project. They found that the amount of latex produced by the rubber trees was much lower than what was initially promised by the local government.\textsuperscript{193} By 1998-1999, the average harvest result was even worse in terms of quality and quantity. Riadi even described it as “horrible.” The peasants also complained about the conditions for the loan payment. For instance, they were asked to start paying two years after they planted the trees, which was different from the initial agreement. After years of participating in this scheme, what they had was bad harvest product and debt. Therefore, the peasants in various communities in North Bengkulu started to discuss this problem and ways to solve it with their fellow community members. They then made three demands to the government: 1) return of the land certificates used as collateral to obtain the TCSSP microcredit, 2) financial compensation for the crop failure, and 3) debt cancellation.

They later got in touch with STaB, which was rapidly expanding at that time. From 2000-2001, the North Bengkulu District Government investigated the TCSSP case. This then led to issuance of a district head’s decree on the case, which requested a temporary hold on loan payment for the peasants. Meanwhile, the local peasants under STaB started to intensify their struggle. More community meetings and education sessions were held in the communities affected by the failed TCSSP scheme. In 2003, the Governor of Bengkulu dispatched an ad hoc

\textsuperscript{192} The scheme was introduced annually in North Bengkulu, so peasants who were interested in this scheme joined it in cohort – some joined the inaugural cohort, others participated in the scheme in the following years (1992, 1993, and so on). In total there are five cohorts of participants in the TCSSP project.

\textsuperscript{193} They were told that each tree could produce around 100 grams of latex/day, while in reality they only got around 5-10 grams of latex/day.
team to investigate the matter and found that indeed several project managers and administrators were involved in the corruption of the project fund, which explained the low quality of production materials distributed to the peasants. It was estimated that 3,470 peasant households were directly affected by this project failure. Marhendi, the former secretary general of STaB for 2005-2012, even claimed that around 14,000 peasant households in the districts of South Bengkulu, Seluma, North Bengkulu, and Mukomuko became the victims of this corruption case. This corruption also ruined approximately 3,844 ha of peasant plantations due to low-yield seedlings and other related damages. Given the severity of this situation, the peasants then decided to stage protests in front of the Ministries of Agriculture and Finance in Jakarta with the support of the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Bengkulu and the Governor of Bengkulu (Marhendi, personal communication, May 26, 2017; OECD, 2010, pp. 51-52; Sumpeno, 2011, p. 12).

Advocacy efforts for the TCSSP case were not always smooth, as several STaB activists became the victims of the governor’s politicking and were briefly imprisoned as a result. But regardless of this contentious saga between the elites and the activists, the mass pressure from the peasants managed to bring the local elites to the negotiation table. At the district level, there was a need for Imron Rosyadi, then the deputy district head at that time, to respond to the peasants’ demands, given his need for electoral support in the new terrain of local politics. The governor also decided to concede to the peasants, which might be partly explained by the fact his investigation team found corruption in the TCSSP project. While we do not know for sure the exact reason the governor responded to the mass pressure of the local peasants, we know that at

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194 Dediyanto and Hari Patono told me that the governor’s move actually targeted Muspani, his political rival. To do that, the governor then made an “indirect hit” by attacking the activists, who had close relationships with Muspani (Dediyanto, personal communication, May 17, 2017; Patono, personal communication, May 6, 2017).
that time he worked in a new political environment – that is decentralized local politics – in which societal pressure related to government transparency cannot be easily ignored. This also shaped his attitude toward the case, which was also a contentious and politically-salient one. In any case, “a strategic alliance was forged including farmers, the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Bengkulu, and the governor of the province, to elaborate recommendations backed by research and analysis” (OECD, 2010), signifying a convergence of interests between the peasants and the local political elites. The peasants too were helped by the extensive network of civil society that allowed them to obtain the necessary logistical resources for their sustained mass mobilization and, more importantly, scale up their issue up to the national level. As a result, the peasants’ debts were cancelled and they received some financial compensation for the losses caused by the TCSSP rubber trees. Some peasants were still waiting for their land certificates, while others already had theirs, but overall the conflict had largely subsided.

Struggle against Land-grabbing by PT Air Muring

The struggle of the local peasants in Putri Hijau Sub-district against PT Air Muring is the case of ongoing agrarian conflict in North Bengkulu. The conflict began in 2003, when PT Air Muring started to expand its area of operation. Soon, the corporation started to grab nearby peasant land, thus escalating the conflict. Some attempts were taken to mediate the two conflicting parties, including ceasing any farming activities on conflicted areas. But PT Air Muring violated the agreement by harvesting latex on the disputed areas, disappointing the local peasants (Warga Gugat PT Air Muring, 2003).

195 This section largely draws from the group discussion with the local peasants in Putri Hijau Sub-district on May 3, 2018. Additional references are cited throughout this section.
This tension inevitably led to an open conflict between the corporation and the local peasants. As the peasants started to consolidate their advocacy efforts and agenda, PT Air Muring also attempted to exert its influence in the community. According to Aseng, one of the key figures in this struggle, the corporation tried to identify the key figures behind the peasant protests and pressure them to stop their struggle. Undeterred, the local peasants decided to stage a huge protest in Bengkulu City in 2006, also under STaB’s banner. This protest can be seen as a part of the peak period of peasant protests organized by the union throughout the province. Around 1,000 male peasants went to the city to participate in the protest. Most of the female peasants – their wives – stayed in their plantation estates to anticipate possible pressure and intimidation from PT Air Muring. As expected, the corporation sent a crowd to scare and move the female peasants away from their land. Eni, herself a participant in this female-led land occupation, described the tension on the ground and the determination of the female peasants to stay on their land. Alas, they had no choice but to move. Overpowered, the female peasants had to back off, watching the hired crowd root out their rubber seedlings and claim portions of their land. Because of this episode, the conflict practically came to a standstill until now.

The land-grabbing case by PT Air Muring provides a nice contrast and a case for natural experiment for the first hypothesis of this study. Here, we have the case of a unified, sustained peasant mobilization but with a lack of interest convergence between the local elites and the peasants. In this case, we do not see any kind of accommodation. In other words, the absence of the interest convergence variable explains why the elites have not conceded to the peasants’ demands, even after a period of sustained opposition from below.
Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the case of accommodation through mobilization in North Bengkulu. It analyzes the presence of variables shaping the occurrence and type of local accommodation of peasant interests by the local elites in the district. As I have elaborated in the previous paragraphs, local accommodation of peasant interests by the elites occurred in North Bengkulu. This is because the two variables needed for the occurrence of local accommodation were present in the district. In North Bengkulu, the peasants were organizationally unified under STaB. Moreover, there was a convergence of elite and peasant interests. The peasants needed the local elites to respond to their demands and the elites needed them for electoral support and social stability. Mass pressure from below combined with the need to reach out and down opened opportunities for the peasants and their activist allies to voice their aspirations and engage the elites through a quid-pro-quo strategy. The combination of these factors led to the emergence of local accommodation in the district.

Local political contexts and contingencies also shaped the type of local accommodation in North Bengkulu. In the district, agrarian issues were highly salient. They directly affected the state of peasant livelihood and had significant social and political ramifications for the elites. Additionally, the district was also the home of a vibrant civil society landscape, motored by STaB, KBHB, student activists, local media, and the larger civil society and social movement network beyond the district with which the local actors are connected. These two factors explain why local accommodation of peasant interests in North Bengkulu was mainly achieved through mass mobilization. Confrontational measures such as protests and direct actions as well as
electoral mobilization were used as a bargaining chip for the peasants to create opportunities for
negotiations regarding policy changes with the local elites.

While the nature of this accommodation was localized, we should not overlook the logic
of the Polanyian countermovement at play here. Similar to many other places in Southeast Asia
(Sidel, 2015), we see the process of agrarian dispossession, especially land enclosure, took place
throughout the Bengkulu Province under the New Order period, during which peasants were
dragged kicking and screaming. New political opportunities under democratic and decentralized
political environment then allowed the peasants to more assertively show their opposition to the
excessive tendency of marketization. Facing what is essentially the problems of absentee
landownership and mishandling of a development project, the peasants in North Bengkulu made
a case for their livelihood. They strategically made an appeal to the rule of law principle, citing
corruption in both the bid for HGU rights won by PT SIL and the TCSSP implementation as one
of the reasons for their struggle. They even went further by appealing for their rights as citizens,
including their rights to livelihood. In my encounter with them in the field, many also pointed out
the contrast between their practice of farming for livelihood and autonomy and the large-scale
plantation businesses for profit. Here, one can argue that the end goal of peasant opposition in
this case was decommodification of market relations. STaB’s advocacy for land rights should be
seen as part of the broader “processes that challenge and limit the scope of commodification by
fencing-off non-market spheres from market encroachments” (Vail, 2010, p. 312).

By discussing recent developments in local politics, civil society, and agrarian context in
North Bengkulu, this chapter shows that local accommodation of peasant interests in the district
occurs because STaB provided a unified organizational platform for the local peasants. But it is
not the only factor. The convergence of interests between the peasants under STaB and the local political and economic elites is another variable that made local accommodation possible. But STaB had more moderate success in the realm of electoral intervention compared to its achievements in land rights advocacy. STaB’s experience also shows the irony of its political orientation: while this political orientation, a rarity in the Indonesian social movement landscape, helps the union to attain more leverage in bargaining with the elites, it is this very characteristic that also depletes its energy and enthusiasm.

The North Bengkulu case study shows a typical example of accommodation through mobilization in post-authoritarian Indonesia. In other words, there are parallels between what happened in North Bengkulu and other places in Indonesia. But there is also another type of local accommodation of peasant interests that is more conciliatory and corporatist in nature, which is the subject of my next chapter on Serang.
CHAPTER 5
ACCOMODATION THROUGH CORPORATISM IN SERANG

Introduction

Moving from the North Bengkulu case study, we now turn our attention to the case study of Serang District in Banten Province. Serang is another example of local accommodation of peasant interests; however, unlike North Bengkulu, which represents a classic model of accommodation through mobilization, Serang represents a different model of elite accommodation of peasant interests that I call accommodation through corporatism. This is because Serang differs from North Bengkulu in terms of the strength of its civil society and the salience of its agrarian issues. Accommodation through corporatism emerges as a mode of local accommodation in Serang because of its weaker civil society landscape and less politically salient agrarian issues. In this case we also see the presence of a unified organizational platform for the local peasant community and a convergence of interests between local elites and peasants, which made local accommodation possible. To empirically anchor this claim, I examine efforts to improve peasant livelihood through collaborative water governance and sustainable farming via the PES mechanism in the district brokered by Rekonvasi Bhumi through the Cidanau Watershed Forum (Forum Komunikasi DAS Cidanau, FKDC) for peasant communities living on the banks of Cidanau River.

I divide my discussion on Serang into the following sections. First, I discuss the historical background of local politics in Serang with a focus on its agrarian politics and civil
society landscape, especially under the New Order period, a critical juncture in its local political history. It is under the New Order that the once-vibrant peasant activism and social movement initiatives were curtailed. Second, I elaborate how post-authoritarian political reform in Serang opened up opportunities for the peasants to voice their aspirations and civil society actors to advocate on behalf of their beneficiaries and promote certain policy changes. More specifically, I will show that 1) it was only after the fall of authoritarianism that the issue of sustainable watershed resource management emerged and became salient and 2) it was civil society actors, in this case, Rekonvasi Bhumi activists, who pushed for PES scheme implementation in the absence of a clear policy on water resource management in the district, a move supported by the local peasants organized under KTHs, the local forest farmers’ groups. Third, notwithstanding the convergence of interests between state and corporate actors on one side and Rekonvasi Bhumi and the local peasants on the other side, the type of local accommodation in Serang differs from that of North Bengkulu, a product of its less vibrant civil society landscape and less salient agrarian issue. Following Schmitter’s (1974, pp. 93-94) definition of corporatism, the nature of local accommodation in Serang is corporatist because of its emphasis on mutual bargaining among different state and societal interest representations toward a negotiated social outcome. The end result here is not decommodification of agricultural commodities, but rather a shared access mechanism to natural resources. Finally, I discuss the case of accommodation through corporatism in Serang in relation to the broader debates on societal countermovement and corporatism.
Banten has a long history of dynamic local politics. The Banten Sultanate was founded in the 16th century and enjoyed a period of prosperity as a thriving commercial center in Western Java, with Serang as its capital before its decline in the 17th century (Lubis, 2004; Ota, 2006). Its status as a trading outpost with rich agricultural commodities attracted foreign traders. But its internal palace feud at the onset of Dutch colonialism in pre-colonial Indonesia made it unable to resist colonial intrusion on its sovereignty. This led to a series of revolts and rebellions dashed by an amalgam of localist, populist, and class sentiments. The appeal of the ousted elites to the past grandeur mixed with class and regionalist aspirations of the peasantry. Later, the returning Hajis – religious scholars who made their pilgrimage to Mecca and became important social actors – joined this growing social movement. In contentious and decisive historical moments, this movement erupted into revolts, such as the famous peasants’ rebellion in Cilegon in 1888 (Kartodirdjo, 1973) and the communist-led revolt in 1926 (Williams, 1990). These uprisings were mostly launched in the periphery, except for the colonial-era Ciomas movement and Ce Mamat’s rebellion in Serang after independence (Lubis, 2004, pp. 104-107; 171-173).

With all of this, it is no wonder that Banten quickly gained a reputation as a region of uprisings, a still-popular perception. In this tumultuous region, the role of Bantenese local strongmen, popularly known as jawara, has always been important. Originally, jawaras were social bandits trained in martial arts, but later they became an influential elite group on their

\[196\) Ce Mamat, the nom de guerre of Mohamad Mansur, was the chairperson of the post-independence local parliament, the Regional Indonesian National Committee (Komite Nasional Indonesia Daerah, KNID) in Serang District. A fervent anti-colonialist, he took part in the 1926 Communist Revolt and was heavily involved in nationalist politics. After Indonesian independence in 1945, he returned to Serang, served a brief stint at KNID, and formed the People’s Parliament who gained support from local jawaras and the peasantry and then led the rebellion, which was quickly suppressed.
own. They gained prominence during the colonial era, serving as guards for religious teachers or *ulamas* and embarking on a career in protection racketeering (Okamoto & Hamid, 2008). Their expertise in private security gained them credentials during crucial political moments. Indeed, they played an important role in various revolts and rebellions in the region. They were even organized by the communists, along with *ulamas*, as party cadres (Williams, 1990, p. 196). When Suharto took power in 1965 and crushed the communists, he used the same strategy of organizing *kiais* and *jawaras* into interest associations to build a power base for his regime (Hamid & Facal, 2013, pp. 53–54; Okamoto & Hamid, 2008, pp. 116–117). This regime change allowed the *jawaras* to rise as a hegemonic political power in the region. The New Order regime coopted them, and they were willing to support it, seeing the regime’s approach not as a form of cooptation but rather as an important political opportunity to be seized. Both *ulamas* and *jawaras* were organized into government-linked squads – the Satkar Ulama and Satkar Pendekar, respectively. The Satkar Pendekar was later renamed the Indonesian Union of Bantenese Men of Martial Arts, Art, and Culture (*Persatuan Pendekar Persilatan Seni Budaya Banten Indonesia*, PPPSBBI). Many *jawaras* entered the business world, a profession of choice to finance themselves and then joined the regime’s party, the Golkar Party. This step ensured their access to political and economic resources and subsequently their dominance in local politics for years to come.

Of the many *jawara* groups, one particular figure stands out: the late Tubagus Chasan Sochib. Colloquially known as Haji Chasan, he was the patriarch of a powerful *jawara* family, the Rau Dynasty. After a brief stint at an Islamic boarding school (*pesantren*), he joined a guerilla unit during the revolutionary period in the early years of Indonesian independence. He
started his business career as a rice dealer at the Rau Market. After providing logistic support for the Siliwangi military division in 1967, during the early phase of the New Order, he then established his own construction company, CV Sinar Ciomas, later renamed PT Sinar Ciomas Raya, and greatly expanded his political, economic, and social power. He frequently won government contracts, made a foray into tourism and real estate, and built connections with big business players such as the Krakatau Steel Company, the largest steel company in Southeast Asia. He was also a key player in both the Regional and Central Chambers of Commerce and Trade (Kamar Dagang dan Industri, KADIN) and the Indonesian National Contractors’ Association (Gabungan Pelaksana Konstruksi Nasional Indonesia, GAPENSI), a Golkar loyalist, and a leader of PPPSBI. All of these activities allowed Chasan to amass economic power, maintain his control over the jawaras, and build his political dynasty (Hamid, 2006, pp. 48-51; Hamid & Facal, 2013, pp. 54-56; Okamoto, 2004; Okamoto & Hamid, 2008, pp. 117-119).

Another important social force, ulamas or kyais, also played an important role during the New Order regime. The regime sought to cultivate patronage over the ulamas, given their Islamic credentials and social standing. Hamid (2010, pp. 425-430) notes that to cement its power base and political legitimacy in Banten, the regime actively recruited ulamas into Golkar and exerted its influence on Islamic educational institutions in the province. In Serang District, for instance, in 1977 it was the Islamic United Development Party (Partai Persatuan Pembangunan, PPP) who won the general elections in the district with 54.97 percent of the votes, by 1987, Golkar had become the dominant party with a total vote of 60.35 percent,

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197 Because of this origin, Chasan’s dynasty is also known as the Rau Dynasty.
198 PPP, formed in 1973, is a fusion of several Islamic parties following the New Order’s policy of limiting the number of formal political parties in Indonesia into three, with PPP as the umbrella party for pious Muslim voters.
sidelining PPP with only 29.19 percent of the vote, thanks to the political maneuvering of the ulamas (pp. 427-429).

The New Order period then is the critical juncture that turned the fate of societal forces in Banten. Despite its political volatility, the long period from the rise of contentious politics under colonialism to 1965 witnessed a rich history of local social movements in Banten. While ulamas and jawaras were key players during this long period, the role of the rural masses was also significant, since they provided the popular base for various peasant and left-wing uprisings in the province. But under the New Order, jawaras, ulamas, and other regime loyalists virtually dominated the local political scene. It was a relationship based on mutualism, for the regime needed their support and vice versa. That, combined with the regime’s other tools of domination, such as the use of its own military-linked organized youth gang, the Siliwangi Youth (Angkatan Muda Siliwangi, AMS) allowed it to extend control down to the neighborhood level.199 With the exception of the growing activism of factory workers in the industrial areas of Serang and Tangerang in 1990s (Ford, 2009; Kammen, 1997)200, there was not much open activism ala the colonial and early independence eras among the rural masses during the New Order period.

Recollection of memories of the villagers in Serang who lived through the New Order period confirmed such an assessment. They remembered the New Order mostly as a period of state-led development, when policy matters were largely formulated and decided from above (Villagers in three communities in Eastern Serang, personal communication, September 2015 – February 2016; KTH members in Cidanau, personal communication, July 13, 2017). For

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199 On AMS and its network in West Java and Banten, see Honna (2010, p. 147).
200 The Tangerang region – both the city and the district – has always been more industrialized than Serang, which is partly agricultural. That means Tangerang is a long-time center of labor strikes, although Serang also witnessed some important cases of industrial actions. For an account on industrialization and urbanization in Tangerang, see Hadiz (1997, pp. 120-130).
instance, a long-time village secretary in Harundang Village told me that during the period he
was mostly busy taking care of village administration and making sure he fulfilled the
requirements to be appointed as a village secretary with civil servant status (Village secretary of
Harundang, personal communication, October 29, 2015). Another rural resident, Pak Romli, who
is a peasant, an RT leader, and a community elder, also suggested that under the New Order he
primarily focused on improving his livelihood. In an attempt to improve his economic well-
being, he once migrated outside his village, Dukuh, working as a security guard and a rickshaw
driver, before going back to Dukuh (Romli, personal communication, February 25, 2016).

Pak Romli’s testimony also corroborates the larger and longer trend of seasonal
migration among Bantenese peasants (Hugo, 1982, p. 64), a practice that still continues today.
This gives us a glimpse of the characteristics of the contemporary rural economy in Serang. Keep
in mind that while the western part of Serang is primarily agricultural, the eastern part is a more
integrated urban and industrial economy. As a result, facing increasing market pressure on the
traditional farming economy, peasants take transient jobs between farming seasons or abandon
farming altogether, adopt other trades such as tailoring clothes and car seat covers, or work as
motorcycle taxi drivers or errand workers at traditional markets (Villagers in three communities
in Eastern Serang, personal communication, September 2015–February 2016). The rural youth
even tend to go for non-farming jobs, working at factories or in the informal sectors. This does
not mean the peasants choose other occupations entirely of their own free will since they are still
subject to market forces. But this Polanyian process of great transformation, or what Moore
(1966) calls as the commercialization of agriculture, occurred more gradually in Serang than it
did in North Bengkulu. Morover, the relative availability of transient jobs in Serang also
cushioned the transition from a largely agricultural economy to a semi-industrial economy, making it somewhat more bearable for the peasants.

This observation also indicates two things. First, peasants in contemporary Serang face a completely different situation compared to their rebellious ancestors in the peripheral area of Banten under colonialism. The mixture of peasant grievances, colonial intrusion on peasant livelihood, the lack of political freedom, and the existence of radical political organizations proved to be a lethal trigger for the outbreak of mass contentious politics. Conversely, the penetration of patron-clientelism in the absence of an autonomous social movement representing the rural masses and the availability of livelihood options beyond traditional farming economy imply that peasants in contemporary Serang, to use Albert Hirschman’s (1970) word, can opt for “exit” (moving away from farming and looking for other opportunities) rather than “voice” (expressing open dissent against external threats on the traditional peasant livelihood). Second, the expansion of the urban and industrial sector in Serang’s local economy means that local peasants and their family members have alternatives outside of the farming sector. This is not to suggest that farming has been completely abandoned. The point here is that although peasants and villagers in Serang remain economically precarious, their level of precariousness is different compared to their counterparts in North Bengkulu. In other words, although agrarian issues remain important in Serang, those issues are not as pressing as the ones in North Bengkulu, where land dispossession occurred quite extensively.

The self-reinforcing mechanism of the regime’s durability and the dominance of local ulamas, jawaras, and bureaucrats, and the local patronage networks they have built have left little space for civil society and oppositional activities. This legacy is still intact after the New
Order’s fall in 1998, which later incapacitated the vibrancy of local civil society in Banten in post-authoritarian settings.

Local Politics, Civil Society, and Agrarian Context in Serang after Decentralization

A high hope for change came when the decentralization policy was introduced in 1999; Banten officially separated from West Java and became a new province in 2000 after a long effort. For a while, public euphoria fueled by hope for change and regionalist sentiment was immense (Mansur, 2001, pp. 123-143). Civil society actors, ranging from student organizations, local activists, and trade unions, had high expectations about the future. But one should keep in mind that it was the local elites, their brokers, and other political intermediaries who played the crucial role in pushing Banten to become a province (Masdupi, 2005, pp. 50–51; 77–85; Mansur, 2001, pp. 143–178; Mansyur, 2010).

The jawaras were well-positioned to respond to this new development as they were the most organized social force in Banten.202 As a result, they were the ones who could capitalize on this political opportunity most quickly, effectively, and efficiently. The jawaras’ kingpin, Chasan Sochib, quickly rebranded himself as a pro-reform politician (Okamoto, 2004). Chasan, now the self-proclaimed “Governor-General” of Banten, soon proved his political savviness as the all-Banten patriarch of jawaras and his dynasty. Ratu Atut Chosiyah,203 Chasan’s daughter with his first wife, participated in the 2001 election for the governor post. Despite the fact that

201 Some key local actors behind the creation of the new Bantenese Province include K. H. Irsyad Djuwaeli and Uwes Qorny (Lubis, 2004, pp. 199–237).
202 The ulamas, especially the ones in Serang, have largely stopped becoming political actors on their own and tend to participate in post-authoritarian local politics as brokers and intermediaries for others (Hamid, 2010).
203 For an account of Atut’s biography written by the jawaras-backed campaign group for Atut, the United Volunteers of Banten (Relawan Banten Bersatu, RBB), see Arifin (2006).
the former ruling party Golkar only received 12 out of 69 seats in Banten Provincial Parliament and Atut’s lack of political experience, the candidate pair Chasan supported, Joko Munandar and his own daughter Atut managed to win the election for the governor and vice governor posts, respectively. The introduction of nationwide direct regional elections for local leaders at the provincial and district levels starting from 2005 does not necessarily mean that Chasan and the jawaras were losing ground. In fact, in the 2006 Bantenese Gubernatorial Election, Atut competed as a governor candidate and successfully won the election with her new running mate, Mohammad Masduki. Chasan was a kingmaker until his death in 2011. Through formal channels as well as shady backroom dealings, he strategically utilized his resources and showed his expertise. He mobilized jawaras, bought votes, and coopted potential critics during elections. When needed, he deployed coercion and threats as well. All of this ensured the jawaras’ domination in the early years of Banten Province (Hamid 2006, pp. 51–63; 2014, pp. 580–583; Okamoto & Hamid, 2008, pp. 119–138). By 2011, Atut won her second term as a governor in the 2011 gubernatorial election with a new running mate, and numerous members of the Rau Dynasty had occupied executive head posts in four out of eight districts in the province (Buehler, 2013; Hamid, 2014, pp. 583–585). This seems to mark that the rule of jawaras was here to stay. The dominance of the Rau Dynasty, however, did not go unchallenged. In 2013, the Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi, KPK) arrested Atut and her brother, Tubagus Chaeri Wardhana or Wawan, for corruption and bribery cases (Hamid, 2014, p. 590). Whether the impetus for this legal decision came from elite maneuvering, pressure from civil society, or some combination between the two, the recent decline of the jawaras particularly the Rau Dynasty did not mean that they were retreating from local politics. Members of the Rau Dynasty continued to win a series of local elections for executive head posts even after Atut was
imprisoned (CNN Indonesia, 2017; Wirawan, 2015). In 2017, a member of the Rau Dynasty, this time Atut’s own son, Andika Hazrumy, successfully reoccupied the executive branch of the provincial government as the vice governor after winning a fierce election as a running mate for Wahidin Halim, the now-incumbent governor of Banten (Suprapto, 2017). The blow against Atut might weaken the Rau Dynasty, but the jawaras as a social force still survive and in fact maintain their dominance in local politics.

This leads us to the question of elite domination and civil society advocacy in Serang. What are the mechanisms of local elite control in Serang? What are the responses from civil society elements in the district in post-authoritarian era? What are the impacts of this elite-dominated local democracy for the rural population especially the peasantry? A closer look at the local political dynamics in the district reveal several findings. First, the jawaras’ rule continues to be a feature of Bantenese local politics in post-authoritarian context including in Serang. The jawaras and other actors, benefitting from their rule such as rent-seeking local bureaucrats and politicians, have the ability to penetrate and coopt civil society, thereby weakening its advocacy and oppositional efforts. Second, unlike STaB and its network in North Bengkulu, civil society actors in Serang so far have not been able to form a unified front or platform across groups and issues. Nonetheless, under specific political conjunctures, these actors can form ad hoc strategies and coalitions to pursue certain goals. Third, this limited influence from civil society gains additional leverage in certain policy areas in which there are policy gaps. In this case, local

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204 For instance, local activists and NGOs have worked together in anti-corruption advocacy efforts, election monitoring, and other attempts to curb the influence of the Rau Dynasty and its supporters in elections and other political processes (Indonesia Corruption Watch, 2016; Romli, 2016. U. Suhada, personal communication, January 25, 2016).
political, economic, and administrative elites have to rely on the role of organized citizenry and their activist allies to formulate and implement certain policies.

In the countryside, the jawaras, along with other old elites – bureaucrats, ulamas, politicians, and local entrepreneur depending on government contracts – continue to exert influence over rural citizens. Across Banten, including Serang, the Rau Dynasty continues to build patronage networks through vote-buying, operational assistance funding for village-level healthcare (Posyandu) volunteer cadres, and the creation of a provincial government-funded community development program called Gerbang Ratu (Gerakan Pembangunan Kecamatan Rakyat Banten Bersatu) (PATTIRO activists, personal communication, April 28, 2016).

At the community level, vote-buying and other patron-clientelistic practices occur in various dimensions. In a village in the Kragilan Sub-district, a Member of Parliament (MP) of the Serang District Parliament from the Democratic Party (Partai Demokrat, PD) offered financial assistance for the construction of basic infrastructure such as roads and school classroom from the constituency-based allocated funding for local and national MPs, called the Aspiration Fund (Personal observation, February 10, 2016). In another village in the industrial sub-district of Cikande, a local MP from the Gerindra Party holds a regular Koran recitation gathering, or pengajian, in which he freely distributes coffee and cigarettes to the male...

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205 The Gerbang Ratu program translates as the Movement for Sub-district Development for the United People of Banten. It is modelled after the National Program for Community Empowerment (Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Mandiri, PNPM), a nationwide program introduced in 2007 to empower local communities through community development projects, block grants, and technical assistance by local facilitators. PNPM aims to promote a market-driven, neoliberal vision of good governance by granting competitive grants to community-driven projects. Gerbang Ratu is basically a localized, perverted version of PNPM: granting communities block grants of up to one billion rupiah per sub-district allows the Rau Dynasty to penetrate society and strengthen its patronage network down to the village level. Notice also wordplay here: Gerbang Ratu, which reminds one of Ratu Atut and her dynasty. For an explanation of the Gerbang Ratu program, see Antara Banten (2013) and Biro Humas dan Protokol Provinsi Banten (2013). On PNPM and its critics, see Carroll (2009), Jakimow (2016), and Sunjoyo (2013).

206 PATTIRO is a leading good governance NGO in Indonesia with local networks in different provinces.

participants and sponsors the creation of a pre-kindergarten program in the community (Villagers in three communities in Eastern Serang, personal communication, November 11, 2015). Money politics are also common, especially in regional and local elections. My local interlocutors in several villages in Serang agreed that such practices are common, particularly for regional and local elections – for governor, district head, and village head posts as well as seats in the regional parliament when candidates try to outperform each other in their attempt to win votes (Villagers in three communities in Eastern Serang, personal communication, September 2015–February 2016). A local anti-corruption activist described this as “a common practice” (U. Suhada, personal communication, January 25, 2016).

This does not mean that open expressions of rural grievances are non-existent. Protests against what is considered to be severe cases of local corruption—the embezzlement of subsidized rice allocation and funds for poor citizens for example—did occur in some places (Villagers in three communities in Eastern Serang, personal communication, September 2015 – February 2016). More recently, peasants in Padarincang Sub-district in Western Serang have been protesting against the construction of a geothermal power plant in their community (Pairus, 2017; Sutompul, 2018). In other words, sustained economic grievances did translate into political action in some cases, but these episodic instances of contentious politics seem to be the exception rather than the norm. Possibilities for the creation of a more sustainable cross-class and multi-sectoral alliance – with student and labor movements or NGO activists – are

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208 From my interview and informal conversations with community members in Eastern Serang, I found that a rough estimate for the market price for vote-buying in village head elections is between IDR 20,000-300,000 (approximately USD 2-30) per person. The market price tends to be higher in the more industrialized areas.

209 Uday Suhada is a famous anti-corruption and governance transparency activist in Banten.
present. But in general, elements of local civil society and social movements in Serang are still unable to organize an effective oppositional challenge against the old elites. This weakness is exacerbated by the ability of the old elites to coopt civil society actors (e.g., journalists, professional activists, and college students), the existence of opportunistic actors posing as civil society representatives, and the limited capacity of the mostly urban-based civil society or oppositional political actors to extend their influence down to the neighborhood level.

Elites’ cooptation of civil society in Indonesia is not a new phenomenon, but the extent to which it is exercised in Serang is more effective compared to in North Bengkulu. Bear in mind that in the early phase of Banten’s transition from a part of West Java into a new province, old elites and a plethora of middlemen played a significant, if not dominant, role in giving birth to the new province and crafting the post-authoritarian political arena (Mansur, 2001, pp. 143–178; Mansyur, 2010, pp. 19–24; Masdupi, 2005, pp. 50–51). In the post-authoritarian context, local jawaras, bureaucrats, and politicians find various ways to influence and coopt civil society actors in the student movement, the NGO sector, and local media, especially in terms of funding, patronage network, and the freedom to operate. Several local accounts have documented the transformation of some elements of the student movement into new political brokers or the corrosive influence of elite funding and sponsorship in the media, to name a few (Hamid, 2015, p. 84; Mabruri, 2010; Mansyur, 2010).

Of particular interest is the dynamics of local NGO and

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210 A student activist told me that episodic solidarity campaigns organized by college student activists on anti-corruption or peasant rights platforms for example do happen, but so far this does not translate into a more long-lasting alliance or movement (Abdul Haris “Jarot” Djiwandono, personal communication, December 1, 2015).

211 This weakness also occurs in the more informal type of civil society activism in Serang and Banten. Many cultural centers and social literacy movements focus on making independent village and community libraries and popular education projects, but they are still running behind their counterparts in other towns and cities in Indonesia (Haki, 2010).

212 In Banten, local newspapers also depend a lot on local government institutions and businesses to fund their operation through advertisements as they cannot rely on readers’ subscription alone. Journalists, who are economically precarious, can also obtain extra income from the local elites if they write articles favorable to them.
media sectors after democratization. What weakens the advocacy, mobilizational, and oppositional capacity of these two sectors is not just elite trickery but also the fact that democratization and subsequently decentralization have opened up opportunities for both committed activists and spoilers of all sorts. Stories of how these opportunistic spoilers extort money from government projects and community initiatives under the guise of “monitoring” activities abound (Hamid & Facal, 2013, pp. 58-59; Ikhsan, 2010; Masdupi, 2005, p. 77). They also often serve as the pawns of local jawaras and business interests, a common phenomenon since the establishment of Banten as a new province (“Nana” Rahadian, personal communication, October 26, 2015; U. Suhada, personal communication, January 25, 2016). This practice can be found virtually everywhere in the province, and in Serang, this is a common occurrence across different communities. For instance, many village residents are suspicious when they hear about NGO or media activities, thinking they are only looking for a share of money extorted from various governmental and community projects, especially the ones supervised and sponsored by the village governments in their respective areas. Given this perception, the Indonesian translation of the term NGO (Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat or LSM) has a rather negative connotation for the general public. This is why professional civil society workers and activists prefer to call themselves representatives from “societal organizations” (lembaga kemasyarakatan) instead.

While civil society and social movement actors working on anti-corruption, social accountability, and lower-class issues find it difficult to advance their activities, the urban

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213 “Nana” Rahadian is the executive director of Rekonvasi Bhumi, a leading environmental NGO in Banten.
214 On several occasions I witnessed how these fake NGO activists and journalists tried to investigate village budget allocation or school classroom construction activities. Usually the investigation is completed when a village official or a community member involved in those activities gives them money for cigarettes and transportation fees.
middle-class Islamists managed to mount an effective oppositional challenge to the old establishment in Banten, although it did not last long. The Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera, PKS), an Islamist party inspired by the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, made some inroads to attract the non-elite voters, especially the religious middle-class and some elements of the labor movement. In Banten, PKS attracts the votes and networks of the middle-class through its service provision such as modern Islamic school networks (Hamayotsu, 2011, pp. 8-9; 15). Okamoto (2010, pp. 237-238) notes that PKS’s expansion of its service provision strategies, such as volunteer works and donation for flood-stricken communities as well as its approach to the organized labor and the jawaras, led to the rise of PKS votes in the regional parliament from 2.6 percent in 1999 to 11.9 in 2004. He also observes that PKS was one of the few political actors who openly challenged the Rau Dynasty in the provincial parliament during the period of 2001-2004, attacking Atut for her alleged involvement in corruption cases. It even succeeded in beating the Dynasty in the 2005 Serang District Head election (pp. 240-242). Its district head candidate, Taufik Nuriman, “won by a slim margin of around 10,000 votes” (p. 241). But such a gain did not last long, as the Dynasty still retains extensive social networks and economic power with significant political clout, which forced Taufik to concede to run for his reelection as a district head in 2010 with Tatu Chasanah, another daughter of Chasan (p. 242). Even PKS also had to approach jawaras to maximize its chance to win the local elections. All in all, this marks another limitation of the Islamist middle-class opposition in challenging the old elites’ rule in Banten. In brief, the combination of these internal and external factors has led to the weak capacity of the civil society in Banten, including Serang. Obviously, this does not mean

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215 Okamoto notes that PKS managed to make some inroads in urban areas and industrial sites by promoting a platform of moderate reconciliation between labor and capital interests. PKS also attempted to organize the jawaras by establishing the Jawara Front of Prosperity and Justice (Barisan Pendekar Keadilan Sejahtera).
that civil society in Banten is non-existent. But from a comparative perspective, it is in many ways weaker than its counterpart in North Bengkulu, which has a lot more bargaining power in interacting and negotiating with the local elites.

In addition to the continuation of elite rule, peasants in Serang also face increasing market pressure. In Serang, one of the major agrarian issues is rapid land-use change from farming to non-farming activities. While this issue is not as contentious as the case of land dispossession in North Bengkulu,\(^\text{216}\) it nonetheless affects the state of peasant livelihood in the district. To gain a sense of the dynamics of land-use change in Banten Province including Serang, recent data on wetland area in the province provides a glimpse on the impact of land-use change on farming activities.

Table 12

Size of Wetland Area (in Ha) in Banten Province, 2009–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Land category</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Irrigated wetland (sawah irigasi)</td>
<td>111,084</td>
<td>108,884</td>
<td>107,750</td>
<td>156,930</td>
<td>104,385</td>
<td>107,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wetland (sawah non-irigasi)</td>
<td>84,725</td>
<td>87,860</td>
<td>89,415</td>
<td>34,090</td>
<td>90,331</td>
<td>93,265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dry field (tegal/kebun)</td>
<td>170,267</td>
<td>167,393</td>
<td>167,297</td>
<td>165,759</td>
<td>165,559</td>
<td>171,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Land for shifting cultivation (ladang/huma)</td>
<td>85,878</td>
<td>82,708</td>
<td>78,401</td>
<td>80,426</td>
<td>83,708</td>
<td>80,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Temporarily unused land (Lahan sementara tidak digunakan)</td>
<td>19,644</td>
<td>25,337</td>
<td>15,195</td>
<td>14,374</td>
<td>14,035</td>
<td>9,309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


\(^{216}\) This does not mean that land dispossession does not occur in Banten. In Lebak District, for example, the local peasant union, the Banten Peasant Association (Persatuan Petani Banten, P2B), has been in conflict with several HGU-holding corporations over land rights for the local peasants (PPB Minta HGU PT The Bantam dan Preanger Rubber Diserahkan ke Masyarakat, 2016).
As we can see from the table, there is a 31.3 percent decrease in the area of irrigated wetland throughout Banten from 156,930 ha in 2012 to 107,809 ha in 2014. The Food Security Board of Banten Province also notes that the conversion rate of farming areas to non-farming purposes is around 237 ha per year (Dewan Ketahanan Pangan Provinsi Banten, 2015). Although I do not have the data on wetland area and land-use change specific for Serang, we still can infer from the province-wide data that land-use change has a significant impact on rural and peasant livelihood in Serang. Perceptions from the local residents can tell us how such an impact is felt on day-to-day basis. One of my key interlocutors in Serang, Rohili, once lamented about how corporations and property developers have been buying paddy fields from the local peasants in preparation for their future businesses, turning the local people into “guests at their own houses” (Rohili, personal communication, September 10, 2015). Some members of forest farmers’ groups (KTH) I interviewed also point out that while they think the state of their livelihood has been improving over time, they have more needs now as the cost of living has been increasing as well (KTH Members in Cidanau, personal communication, July 13, 2017). Keep in mind that as I pointed out in the previous paragraphs, the nature of the local economy in Serang – a semi-industrial agricultural economy in close proximity to urban centers – cushions the impact of land-use change since peasants and other rural residents can offset their diminishing agricultural income with non-agricultural activities.

Nevertheless, despite continuing elite rule and market pressure, accommodation of peasant interests does occur in Serang. More specifically, in terms of the improvement of peasant livelihood and the creation of participatory spaces for water resource management; organized peasants under the forest farmers’ groups (KTH) with the help of local environmental activists managed to implement schemes to increase additional incomes for peasant households and
promote collaborative water governance through the Payment for Environmental Services (PES) mechanism. These KTHs essentially serve as a vehicle to represent peasant interests. At the same time, there are policy gaps pertaining to peasant livelihood and water resource governance. This becomes an avenue for policy advocacy for local environmental activists, who eventually bring together the KTHs, the Serang District Government, and corporations using water resources from the Cidanau Watershed where the peasants live. All of them find that the issue of environmental sustainability and peasant livelihood in the watershed is important, albeit for different reasons. The creation and operation of the Cidanau Watershed Communication Forum (FKDC) brokered by a leading environmental conservation NGO, Rekonvasi Bhumi, allowed for the accommodation of peasant interests. The FKDC serves as a venue for interest representation and intermediation of these different groups to come up with a negotiated social outcome for the peasants, the local government, and the business sector. In other words, this is an example of accommodation through corporatism, which will be the subject of the discussion in the next section.

Cidanau Watershed and Its Peasants

Situated between two districts, Serang and Pandeglang,217 Cidanau Watershed is a home for forest farming communities who live on the banks of Cidanau River. The watershed covers a catchment area of 22,620 ha, including the Rawa Danau reserve, a 2,500 ha nature reserve with great biodiversity. It is also a major water resource for communities in Serang, Pandeglang, and

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217 For the purpose of this research, I only focus on Serang.
Cilegon Districts as well as around 120 industries in the Krakatau Industrial Estate in Cilegon.\textsuperscript{218} PT Krakatau Tirta Industri (KTI), a subsidiary of the state-owned steel company Krakatau Steel (KS), is the major user of this water resource. As a water supply company, KTI provides water for other corporations in Cilegon, including the local government-owned water company (\textit{Perusahaan Daerah Air Minum, PDAM}) (FKDC, 2009, pp. 7-8; Kadin Banten, 2012;).

Roughly 133,000 people live around the watershed area.\textsuperscript{219} A little over 60 percent of the total population are adult citizens.\textsuperscript{220} It is estimated 68 percent of the total adult population are working with regular incomes. Of those 68 percent, about 36 percent are peasants, that is owner-operators of smallholdings, while the rest mainly work in other sectors of the rural economy such as small-scale livestock farming and rural industries or as small-scale merchants and civil servants.\textsuperscript{221} The average landholding in this area is around 0.2-0.5 ha per household. These peasants are forest farmers who rely on tree crops, particularly melinjo,\textsuperscript{222} coconut, robusta coffee, cocoa, durian, jackfruit, jengkol,\textsuperscript{223} stinky beans, clove, banana, cardamom, and a wide range of horticultural products\textsuperscript{224} as well as timber as a major source of their income.\textsuperscript{225} To supplement their farming incomes, they also work as construction workers, informal workers at

\textsuperscript{218} The average water discharge for the Cidanau River is around 8,000-10,000 liter/second, but the discharge rate in the Cidanau Watershed area is just around 1,000-2,000 liter/second (Dinas Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan Provinsi Banten, 2017; FKDC, 2009, pp. 40–41).

\textsuperscript{219} As of 2009, the size of the population has remained more or less the same.

\textsuperscript{220} This includes the percentage of the working age population (55.74 percent) and senior citizens over the age of 64 (4.6 percent).

\textsuperscript{221} Rural industries in this area include rock breaking, traditional food (cake, tempeh, tofu, and palm sugar), electronic appliances repair, wicker, and golok (traditional machete) industries. For an anthropological history of Indonesia village industries, see Dunham (2009). Those who work as small-scale merchants or local civil servants can be categorized as the members of the middle-class in this community.

\textsuperscript{222} Melinjo (\textit{Gnetum gnemon}), or locally known in Banten as tangkil, is a plant native to Indonesia. It is widely used for vegetable soup, deep-fried crackers, or in stir fries.

\textsuperscript{223} Jengkol (\textit{Archidendron pauciflorum}), another native plan of Southeast Asia, is also used in Indonesian dishes.

\textsuperscript{224} This includes chili, ginger, yardlong beans, cassava, tomato, soybean, and corn, among others.

\textsuperscript{225} Around the 1970s upland rice (\textit{padi gogo}) was cultivated in this area, but by the 1980s the peasant residents shifted to forest commodities, which are easier to maintain and more profitable.
traditional markets, motorcycle taxi drivers, or staff at nearby tourist sites on a seasonal basis. Many of them are members of the KTH, which organizes production activities, community events, and community relations with external actors, including bureaucrats, company representatives, local social and political leaders, and activists (Fahrizal, 2009, pp. 43-44; Hidayat, 2011, p. 103; FKDC, 2009; KTH members in Cidanau, personal communication, July 13, 2017; Leimona, Pasha, & Rahadian, 2010; Munawir & Vermeulen, 2007, pp. 21-22). In a way, Cidanau Watershed reflects the typical characteristics of Javanese agriculture, which are different from agricultural practices in the Outer Islands such as the ones practiced in North Bengkulu.

While the state of peasant livelihood has been a longstanding concern for policymakers and civil society actors in Serang, what first attracted the attention of environmental activists to the Cidanau Watershed area was environmental issues in the watershed. Initially, these activists ran their NGO, Rekonvasi Bhumi, under the general platform of protecting biodiversity and the environment. Later, they found that the Rawa Danau reserve and its watershed is a major water resource in Banten. These activists later interacted with local peasant communities, who were struggling economically (“Nana” Rahadian, personal communication, October 26, 2015). Land-use change in the area also has significant socio-ecological impacts on the environment and local peasants surrounding the watershed. Due to market pressure, local peasants who are still dependent on land for their farming activities and livelihood have expanded their agricultural activities further into the forest and even into the reserve area, often illegally. From the late 1990s to 2007 for example, the number of people living and farming illegally in the protected area increased from 600 to 1,500. This led to increased sedimentation in the Rawa Danau Reserve and occasional flooding and erosion in the nearby community. At the same time, there
was a lack of attention to the Cidanau Watershed area from the KTI as the primary user of this water resource. KTI instead complained that the water quality from the watershed was decreasing due to the peasants’ farming activities (Budhi, S., & Iqbal, 2008, pp. 42–45; FKDC, 2009, pp. 40–41; KTH Members in Cidanau, personal communication, July 13, 2017; Leimona, Pasha, & Rahadian, 2010, p. 108; 103–105; Yoshino, Ishikawa, & Setiawan, 2003, p. 27). After the end of authoritarianism, the local peasants in Cidanau also felt that the government “paid less attention to rural development” and therefore in the early years of the reform period they had “a diminished sense of trust in the government” (Leimona, Pasha, & Rahadian, 2010, p. 123). All of this, combined with the lack of policies and regulations from the local government both at district and provincial levels, imply that this issue has not been addressed effectively by the local government and/or other related stakeholders. While there were past policies governing watershed and conservation areas from both central and local governments, these policies were often partial and overlapped, not to mention their lack of enforcement, making the end result less effective (FKDC, 2009, p. 37; Utang A. Madjid, personal communication, October 26, 2015).226 In Madjid’s words, “before [the existence of FKDC], [previous policies] were partial at best…furthermore, there was a lack of coordination [among different agencies.” My conversation with several key local politicians and bureaucrats at the provincial also corroborated such an assessment, revealing a policy gap in watershed governance unaddressed by the bureaucracy (Agus Tauchid, personal communication, November 17, 2015) or simply a lack of knowledge about such kind of issues (Asep Rahmatullah and Muflikah, personal

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226 Utang A. Madjid is a bureaucrat from the Citarum Ciliwung Watershed Management Agency (Badan Pengelolaan DAS Citarum Ciliwung, BP DAS Citarum Ciliwung) who is also actively involved in FKDC.
communication, October 27, 2015). For example, when I asked Asep Rahmatullah and Muflikhah, two local MPs, about the kind of policy instruments and steps local governments in Banten – both at the provincial and district levels – have taken to address agrarian issues, they tended to refer to the typical policy instruments associated with developmentalist policies of the New Order, such as training programs and agricultural subsidies for peasant households, especially for poktans and KTHs. Even Agus Tauchid, a senior bureaucrat in the Banten Agricultural Agency, also replied in a relatively similar manner, although as a long-time local bureaucrat he has more knowledge with regard to the reality faced by peasant communities in Banten and the kind of policy instruments the provincial and district governments have to address agrarian issues. While these local figures do acknowledge key agrarian issues in Banten such as rapid land-use change and the declining quality of peasant livelihood, they typically propose existing policy instruments particularly local regulations, agricultural subsidies, and institutional capacity development for poktans and KTHs as a way to address those issues. The implementation of these policies, however, have become business as usual rather than an effective tool to address the said issues. Moreover, existing local regulations on agrarian issues are not necessarily well-implemented. In brief, it is this lack of awareness of and policy measures on social and ecological issues surrounding the Cidanau Watershed that triggered the creation of FKDC.

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Agus Tauchid is the current Head of Banten Agriculture Agency (Dinas Pertanian), formerly the Head of the Province’s Food Security Agency (Badan Ketahanan Pangan). Asep Rahmatullah and Muflikhah are Banten Provincial Parliament’s Speaker and Deputy Speaker for the 2014-2019 term, respectively.
The early development of a collaborative governance framework for the Cidanau Watershed area can be divided into two phases: the initial phase of sounding out the proposed framework to the local government and KTI (1998 – 2001) and the preparatory phase regarding the implementation of the PES scheme (2002–2004). This early period of civil society-driven local corporatism has been documented in a detailed manner in several key studies; some were written by Rekonvasi Bhumi activists and partners (FKDC, 2009; Laila, Murtiaksono, & Nugroho, 2014, p. 144; Leimona, Pasha, & Rahadian, 2010). The following paragraphs on the early history of FKDC are based on these works.

The first phase (1998-2001) started in the period between democratization and the establishment of Banten as a new province separate from West Java. Out of the concern for environmental and water resource conservation as well as peasant livelihood in the Cidanau Watershed, the Rekonvasi Bhumi activists started to approach both community members as well as local elite stakeholders. A series of public discussions and workshops were organized by Rekonvasi Bhumi to spark awareness and further discussion on the Cidanau Watershed. The activists kept approaching the local governments of Banten Province and Serang District as well as KTI. This sustained effort bore fruit. In 2001, the Head of the Banten Province Environmental Impact Management Agency (Badan Pengendalian Dampak Lingkungan Daerah, Bapedalda) mandated the formulation of a working agenda for the management of the Cidanau Watershed in regulation SK No. 660/166-Bpdda/2001. In 2002, a governor’s decree mandating the creation of FKDC (SK No. 124.3/Kep.64-Huk/2002) was issued, serving as the legal basis for FKDC. Later, in 2007, Bapedalda issued a revised regulation on the technicalities of PES implementation in
Cidanau (*Keputusan Kepala Bapedalda Provinsi Banten No. 01/SK-FKDC/II/2007*), thereby strengthening the existing guideline for PES implementation in the community.

With the decree as its institutional and legal basis, FKDC now could officially operate as a tripartite forum connecting the local government, KTI, and the peasant community, brokered by Rekonvasi Bhumi. In the second phase (2002-2004), FKDC faced both challenges and opportunities. The very idea of collaborative governance involving peasants, corporate representatives, and bureaucrats in one forum brokered by civil society actors was not easy to digest for the local government, not to mention the fact that the working culture in FKDC itself was completely different from the typical working culture of Indonesian bureaucracy. Moreover, the fact that an attempt to address policy gaps came from societal instead of governmental actors was also something new for the local bureaucrats and KTI. Another challenge was to convince KTI and other corporations benefitting from the Cidanau Watershed. A survey of 56 corporations conducted by FKDC with the help of a graduate student from Imperial College London revealed that only 39% of the surveyed businesses were willing to pay for environmental services, signifying the lack of awareness of environmental and rural livelihood concerns among corporate actors in the region.

At the same time, this initiative started to attract attention and support from external actors who provided key support in this phase, namely the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF), the German Technical Cooperation Agency (GTZ), the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), and the Jakarta-based Institute for Economic and Social Research, Education, and Information (LP3ES). In 2003, GTZ funded a member of FKDC to

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228 Initiatives like this are in also in line with ICRAF’s program, the Rewards for Use of and Shared Investment in Pro-Poor Environmental Services (RUPES). On RUPES, see http://rupes.worldagroforestry.org/
learn about social forestry and PES in Costa Rica. In 2004, FKDC finally invited KTI to join the PES scheme and facilitated negotiations between the peasants and the company. In 2005, FKDC was ready to implement its first PES installment.

PES and Its Outcomes

The year 2005 marked the first five-years cycle of the PES scheme in Serang (2005–2010). As of now, it has entered its third cycle (2014–2019/2015–2020).229 The first cycle was a crucial phase for all parties involved in the PES implementation. FKDC started to play its role as the intermediary for all related stakeholders. Keep in mind that although FKDC is a tripartite forum, its daily operation practically relies on Rekonvasi Bhumi and the KTHs. At this stage, the frequency of meetings with local peasants and bureaucrats started to intensify. A series of negotiations with KTI also managed to convince the corporation to pay its share through the PES scheme.

While the idea of using market instruments to achieve environmental goals can be traced back to the 1970s, PES as an idea and a policy measure started only to gain popularity in the 1990s (Gómez-Baggethun, de Groot, Lomas, & Montes, 2010; Potschin, Haines-Young, Fish, & Turner, 2016; Wunder, 2005). By definition, PES can be defined as a payment mechanism by the users of environmental commodities for providers whose land use and agricultural practices support the availability of those commodities (Tacconi, Mahanty, & Suich, 2010, p. 6; Wunder, 2005). This service provision covers a wide range of environmental commodities, from agricultural products and water supply to air quality and cultural services such as tourism, but

229 The second cycle was from 2009-2014 or 2010-2014, depending upon the start of the payment. Different KTHs joined the scheme at different times, but they all operate within the five-year cycle.
four types of PES stand out: carbon storage, biodiversity protection, watershed protection, and landscape beauty (Wunder, 2005, p. 2). Similar to other mechanisms such as carbon trading, the logic of PES is simple: commodity providers, typically peasants, forest farmers, and rural citizens, are financially compensated for the environmental services they deliver to the users or beneficiaries of those services, such as local water companies, corporations, or urban consumers. In doing so, providers are also encouraged and compensated for adopting sustainable agricultural and conservation practices.

In the case of Cidanau, KTHs that agree to participate in PES are required to plant trees in the allocated areas to receive the payment from KTI via FKDC. Leimona, Pasha, and Rahadian (2010, pp. 113-115; 120-123) explain how the payment mechanism works. Each participating KTH is obligated to plant 500 trees per hectare throughout the contract period. It is free to plant any trees except timber trees. In other words, peasants participating in the scheme are not allowed to exploit forest for timber in exchange for financial compensation. The nature of the payment contract is collective, meaning that if one KTH member breaks the rule, then FKDC can reduce the amount of payment or terminate the contract for the group as a whole. Each KTH is also encouraged to spare five percent of its received payment for group savings and other activities, such as buying seedlings and maintaining trees. For the first year of the contract, the payment is disbursed in three instalments: 30 percent on the contract signing, 30 percent after six months of implementation, and the remaining 40% at the end of the first year. From second year onward, the payment is disbursed in two installments, 40 percent after the first six months and the rest 60 percent at the end of the year. In all of this, the role of KTHs is crucial for maintaining contract commitment among the members. There were no written rules or official sanctions other than payment reduction or contract termination, but the KTHs managed to
maintain member compliance through informal social sanctions such as exclusion from social gatherings. In particular, leaders of these KTHs play “a vital role in the scheme,” especially in maintaining “the sustainable effectiveness of forest restoration efforts” (Pirard, de Buren, & Lapeyre, 2014, p. 418). The PES scheme institutional framework in Cidanau can be depicted as follows:

Figure 7. PES governance in Cidanau, Serang. (Adapted from Budhi, and Iqbal 2008). Note: Solid line represents institutional relationships and dashed line represents contractual relationships.

In the context of the Cidanau Watershed, a PES agreement was signed in October 2004 between KTI and FKDC. In 2005, the PES implementation finally kicked off. At first, only two KTHs joined, Karya Muda II\(^{230}\) and Maju Bersama (Laila, Murtilaksono, & Nugroho, 2014). From this initial stage, FKDC served as the intermediary between KTI and the KTHs, a role that it continues to play now. The initial payment mechanism was divided into two layers – KTI as

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\(^{230}\) Karya Muda II was also one of, if not the earliest, KTHs Rekonvasi Bhumi activists got in touch with.
the user would pay FKDC first, and it would then disburse the payment to the KTHs. The first installment of payment from KTI also served as a start-up cost.

For the first two years (2005–2007), KTI voluntarily paid IDR 175 million annually to FKDC for a total of 50 ha of land split equally in two villages: Citaman Village in Ciomas Sub-District and Cibojong Village in Padarincang Sub-District. The two KTHs participating in the scheme were supposed to receive IDR 3.5 million per ha annually, but because FKDC anticipated the possibility that KTI might rescind its commitment to the PES scheme after the inaugural payment, FKDC decided to stretch the total amount of IDR 350 million for two years into an annual disbursement for the whole four-year period. That means instead of getting IDR 3.5 million per ha annually, peasants only got IDR 1.2 million per ha annually, with the rest of the payment stored as savings for future use. As it turned out, KTI showed its commitment to the scheme and in fact increased its payment amount to IDR 200 million annually for the rest of the first payment cycle (2007–2010). This new payment, combined with the saving from the first installment of payment, were then allocated to the expansion of area for PES, from 50 ha to 100 ha (FKDC, 2009, pp. 86-92; Leimona, Pasha, & Rahadian, 2010, pp. 112-115).

In this first payment cycle, several adjustments were made to address issues related to the payment process (FKDC, 2009, pp. 51-53; 83-91; Leimona, Pasha, & Rahadian, 2010, pp. 112-113; Munawir & Vermeulen, 2007, pp. 36-40). First of all, the technical details of the payment required FKDC to constantly improve the payment mechanism. Second, it took a series of negotiations to come up with the final amount of payment that all related stakeholders could

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231 This initial payment rate was formulated from payment and compensation amounts of existing conservation and rehabilitation programs, such as People’s Forest Development (Pembangunan dan Pengembangan Hutan Rakyat, P2HR) and the National Forest Rehabilitation Program (Gerakan Nasional Rehabilitasi Hutan Lahan, GERHAN) (FKDC, 2009, p. 87; Leimona, Pasha, & Rahadian, 2010, p. 112).
agree with. Finally, reflecting on that experience and given that it was difficult for both KTI and the peasants to conduct the transaction directly, FKDC then decided to set up an ad hoc team of nine members representing the different stakeholders involved in the project – seven from the local government, one from KTI, and one representative of KTHs – to regulate the payment. The ad hoc team was mandated to mediate the transaction between KTI and KTHs. To ensure a smooth payment mechanism, the team managed and disbursed the payment from KTI to the peasants and wrote the contracts for each KTH. Needless to say, the role of the ad hoc team was crucial in this process. The team continued to operate until 2006, when it was replaced by the Environmental Service Management Agency (Lembaga Pengelola Jasa Lingkungan, LPJL). LPJL is now the unit in charge of managing PES-related financial affairs and works closely with FKDC’s General Secretary. Fifteen percent of the payment from KTI is allocated for LPJL’s operational costs, including verification of the area covered under PES. Other components of FKDC’s operational costs such as capacity building for FKDC’s human resources, promotion of the PES project, monitoring and verifying tree planting and other field activities, and organizing meetings.

From the second payment cycle (2010–2014) onward, FKDC managed to expand the scope of the PES project (Amaruzaman, Rahadian, & Leimona, 2017). KTI remained the only environmental service user before the Banten Provincial Government and Asahimas Chemical, a private chemical industry in Cilegon, agreed to make some financial contribution to the project starting from 2014 and 2015, respectively. Over time, FKDC also substantially expanded the coverage area for PES. The amount of payment received per ha for each new KTH started at a higher rate, at IDR 1.35 million per ha annually, adjusted to the current economic condition. Continuing KTHs received a higher rate of payment, at IDR 1.75 million per ha annually. The
payment rise was adjusted for every payment cycle in accordance to the economic condition and the length of participation in the project. As of now, the PES project in Cidanau is entering its third cycle. Below is the full list of buyers and KTHs participating in the PES project from its initial inception until now:

Table 13
List of Buyers of Ecosystem Services in Cidanau Watershed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contract Phase</th>
<th>Contract Period</th>
<th>ES Buyers &amp; Co-investors</th>
<th>Company Business</th>
<th>Total amount (in million IDR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2005–2007</td>
<td>KTI</td>
<td>Water provider</td>
<td>569 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2008–2009</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>190 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2010–2014</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,195 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Banten Province</td>
<td>Provincial gov’t</td>
<td>172 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jan–Sep 2015</td>
<td>KTI</td>
<td>Water provider</td>
<td>255 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Banten Province</td>
<td>Provincial gov’t</td>
<td></td>
<td>81 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asahimas Chemical</td>
<td>Chemical industry</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total amount of contribution 2005-Sep 2015</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,492 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2016–2018</td>
<td>Asahimas Chemical</td>
<td>Chemical industry</td>
<td>120 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2016–2019</td>
<td>KTI</td>
<td>Water provider</td>
<td>1,265 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total projected amount of contribution 2005-2019</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3,877 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Amaruzaman, Rahadian, and Leimona (2017). 3,877 million IDR equals to USD 387,7000, using the exchange rate of 1 USD = 10,000 IDR. Keep in mind that this projected amount also includes payment for participating KTHs in Pandeglang District.

Table 14
List of KTHs Participating in the PES Project in Serang District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>KTH</th>
<th>Sub-district</th>
<th>Members (persons)</th>
<th>Contract Duration</th>
<th>Area (Ha)</th>
<th>Contract Amount (in million IDR)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Begin</td>
<td>End</td>
<td>Rate (IDR/Ha/Year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karya Muda II</td>
<td>Ciomas</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td>Apr 2010</td>
<td>1.2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sep 2010</td>
<td>Aug 2015</td>
<td>1.75 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table continues on next page
We can see from the data in Table 14 that throughout the three payment cycles there was an increase in the amount of payment for each KTH from KTI. While this is by no means a redistributive measure like taxation, the PES project does address several local concerns, namely environmental degradation around the Cidanau Watershed, the decreasing quality of peasant livelihood in the area, and the lack of attention from local government and corporate actors on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>KTH Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maju Bersama*</td>
<td>Pada-rincang</td>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td>Apr 2007</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>million</td>
<td>million</td>
<td>million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Agung Lestari*</td>
<td>Gunung-sari</td>
<td>Feb 2008</td>
<td>Jan 2009</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>million</td>
<td>million</td>
<td>million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Karya Muda III</td>
<td>Ciomas</td>
<td>Sep 2010</td>
<td>Aug 2015</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2019</td>
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Note: This list does not include participating KTHs in Pandeglang District. (Amaruzaman, Rahadian, and Leimona 2017; FKDC 2013c).

* = The group contract was terminated due to the violation of the tree planting requirement.

** = The real amount of financial compensation paid to some KTHs might differ from the projected amount of payment because of tree planting rule violation, delay in the disbursement of payment, or an additional carryover from the previous payment cycle.
the said issues. There were some additional benefits for the local peasants as well. First, they became more familiar with various conservation projects and technologies. In particular, more and more peasants adopted terracing, the practice of forming sloping land resembling a series of step (Budhi, S., & Iqbal, 2008, pp. 50-51). This technique is not only good for conservation but also for farming in steep forest areas. Peasants who participated in the project also became more aware of environmental issues in the watershed, such as erosion, land slides, and downstream sedimentation and had a higher level of trust of civil society actors (Leimona, Pasha, & Rahadian, 2010). Moreover, recent research findings show that peasant households participating in the PES project have more diverse food and higher intake of meat and carbohydrates (Tennhardt & Amaruzaman, 2016). Others have also suggested that Cidanau is one of the few PES sites in Indonesia that “may continue without external funding support” (Heyde, Lukas, & Flitner, 2012, p. 17). But these data only show the quantitative performance of the project. Equally important, we should also ask, what does this mean for the peasants themselves? My conversations with local peasants who are also members of participating KTH revealed their reception of the project.232

In general, it is safe to say that the participating peasants are mostly satisfied with the outcome of the PES project, citing additional income for their households as one of, if not the main, benefits from the project (KTH Members in Western Serang, personal communication, July 13, 2017). Needless to say, this perception did not emerge overnight. At the beginning of the project implementation, many of them expressed skepticism about the project. For instance,

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232 When I interviewed them, I was accompanied by Pak Memi, a long-time poktan member and a resident in Cidanau Watershed area. I also chatted with them in Sundanese, which is the language spoken in the area. By employing this strategy, I was able to get honest answers from the peasants without worrying that they merely confirmed the perceptions of the activists or other stakeholders. It also allowed me to triangulate my other findings.
many of them said, “At first, we were afraid that our forest stands would be taken away and it turned out that that wasn’t the case.” After they were given assurance that the project only regulated the use, and not the ownership, of their lands, they were willing to join. They also added that over time, more and more KTHs were interested in joining the project. In fact, some community members and village officials decided to reactivate existing KTHs or form new ones so that they could participate in and reap the benefits from the PES project. Many also pointed out that through this governance mechanism, the KTHs were able to expand their networks with the government, corporate, and civil society actors as well as other KTHs and poktans. This point is particularly important given the wide perception among peasants and many rural residents in Serang that they were left behind by the government after the reform period.²³³

Furthermore, the KTH members also showed their increasing awareness of environmental issues in the watershed and the benefit of conservation activities. Several members pointed out that flooding is less frequent now and the community as a whole has more water supply, thanks to their conservation efforts.²³⁴ Some KTHs even planted more trees, exceeding the 500 trees per hectare target.

Finally, they also added that they managed to allocate some portion of their payment for group economic and social activities, ranging from cattle raising to giving donations for orphans and the needy in their communities. Several KTHs also continued to participate in the project after the first contract term, suggesting potential for the project’s sustainability. For the most part their PES-related activities were self-organized initiatives. The village governments in this area,

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²³³ For instance, they pointed out on several occasions that it is better to do farming now, during the reform period, than doing it under the New Order era. But they also pointed out that they have more household needs now, particularly for consumer goods such as televisions and motorcycles. This indicates how market pressure has affected the peasant community in Cidanau.

²³⁴ Specifically, this effort employs two strategies, tree planting and making biopore absorption holes.
which used to be the dominant development actors, also supported the KTHs’ initiatives and, in some cases, even made financial contributions, but their role was largely peripheral.

The role of KTHs in this context is important since these neighborhood-based peasant organizations provided a unified organizational platform for the local peasants. While these KTHs are technically different and autonomous from each other, they all work pretty much with the same approach and in the same context and frequently keep in touch with each other. As a matter of fact, these KTHs exchange information and emulate best farming and livelihood practices from each other. Hence, in contrast to the situation at the national level, peasant members of KTHs in Cidanau are able to solve their communication and coordination problems. This also allows them to communicate their concerns to the Rekonvasi Bhumi activists and the local elites more effectively.

To expand their source of income, synergize their conservation and farming activities, and maintain the sustainability of their activities, KTH members with assistance from FKDC and Rekonvasi Bhumi have also undertaken several economic initiatives. For example, they have attempted to diversify their agricultural activities. This includes goat breeding, melinjo crackers production, and business training from the Industry, Trade, and Cooperative Agency (Dinas Koperasi, Perindustrian, dan Perdagangan) of Serang District (Munawir & Vermeulen, 2007, pp. 42-45). FKDC and Rekonvasi Bhumi also assist the peasants through activities such as training and sharing of latest agricultural techniques. An example of such activities is the durian growing technique training in which a peasant who has been successful in growing durians was invited to share his growing techniques with KTH members participating in Cidanau’s PES project (Personal Observation, October 4, 2015). However, there is one caveat on this

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235 This peasant is a leading member of his poktan from another area outside of Cidanau.
successful record: as indicated by the peasants themselves as well as in a recent study on the impact of the project on their livelihood (Fahrizal, 2009, pp. 70-73), the economic benefit of the project for the community is still mainly dominated by its direct use value, that is as an additional source of cash income for peasant households. Therefore, it is not surprising to see that over time various activities have been implemented to increase the project’s social impact. The good news is that economic benefit is not the only reason for the peasants to join the project. A survey of 270 participating peasants taken between December 2012 and January 2013 showed that around 27 percent of the respondents cited various social motivations, particularly the fact that their fellow community members joined the project as reasons for them to follow suit (Lapeyre, Pirard, & Leimona, 2015, pp. 287-288). In other words, peasants in Cidanau look at their participation in the project not only in economic terms but also through a local cultural lens.

In brief, while local peasants in Cidanau have complaints about the state of their livelihood and the local government’s lack of attention, the declining quality of their livelihood is not as severe as that of their land-hungry counterparts in North Bengkulu and other sites of agrarian conflicts in Indonesia where peasants’ livelihood is directly threatened by the possible seizure of their lands by state and corporate actors. To put it differently, local agrarian issues in Cidanau are less severe and less salient compared to cases in North Bengkulu.

Because of the continuing performance of the PES project in Cidanau, peasant communities in Cidanau often receive study visits from other KTHs and poktans, local government and civil society actors from other districts and provinces in Indonesia, and researchers (FKDC, 2012; 2013a; 2013b). This is something the local PES stakeholders pointed out during my series of visits to the area. In one instance, I even met another graduate student
researcher who was also conducting a field visit in the area. All of this shows how Cidanau is perceived as a local success story by others.

However, despite its success, the early implementation of the PES project in Cidanau was by no means smooth. Other than institutional resistance and inertia from local governmental actors during the formulation phase of the project, there were also attempts by several corporate actors to undermine project implementation. In one interview, Nana revealed how several waste-producing factories tried to bribe him with the expectation he would stop or slow down his advocacy activities. In response to that offer of “friendship money,” he replied, “if you want to be my friend, you better take care of your waste!” (Rahmat, 2015). In my interview with Nana, he also admitted that in the first eight years of his effort (1998–2006), there was a lot of friction between Rekonvasi Bhumi and its NGO partners on one side and local governmental actors and KTI on the other side (“Nana” Rahadian, personal communication, October 26, 2015). He even had a harder time working with the local parliaments, both at the district and provincial levels. But despite these challenges, he eventually managed to establish good working relationships with these stakeholders. Keep in mind also that project implementation does not necessarily lead to a stable policy coalition comprised of local societal, governmental, and corporate actors, à la the ACF framework. While it is true there are overlapping interests among the KTHs, Rekonvasi Bhumi, PT KTI, and the Serang District government, it was the activists and the peasants who were heavily involved in the actual operation and implementation of the project – from stakeholder meetings to payment disbursement. Even government-appointed agricultural facilitators typically follow the lead of the activists and KTH members in the field. Furthermore, it might be too soon to say there is a multi-stakeholder stable policy coalition regarding the issue of watershed governance at this stage, since PES as a policy proposal grew as a product of
political contingencies rather than a meeting of stable and clearly-outlined policy preferences, not to mention that the way the project is being implemented is still evolving.

Moreover, while the implementation of the collaborative water governance framework in Cidanau gives more participation space for the local peasants in the local governance processes, the scope of their participation is still limited. Peasants might be represented in FKDC and become involved in various deliberative processes in the PES project, but such an experience of participation is qualitatively different from the kind of transformative experience peasants in STaB encounter. In a major community meeting between KTH members in Cidanau and FKDC representatives that I attended for example, I noticed that

the ones who paid most attention were probably the more active KTH members and the leaders. Furthermore, I did not really see any female KTH members spoke up in the meeting. I also got the impression that the Rekonvasi Bhumi activists and the FKDC representatives dominated the conversation in several instances. Of course, the peasants spoke up too. Pak Bahrani and some other peasants for example raised the fact that the payment only raises a bit despite the fact that they had done more conservation efforts. Some concerns regarding KTH’s commitment and compliance were also raised in the meeting, but FKDC representatives such as Pak Utang also quickly added and readily admitted that the government agencies involved in the PES project and FKDC should have shown more commitment and cooperated with each other. (Personal observation, December 25, 2015)

This does not mean that this kind of participation is not meaningful at all and that there is no problem with participatory space and the pattern of working relationship between peasants and activists in peasant unions and rural social movements. We need to unpack, however, what this kind of participation implies for the process and prospect of democratic deepening at the community level. While I do not dismiss this participatory channel as another form of technocratic and limited forum and do see its potential, I also see it as a form of what Foucault (1975) might call as a disciplining mechanism in which the governed subjects are expected to comply with the hegemonic norms. In this case, there is certainly a process of negotiation among
the peasants, the activists, and the other stakeholders, but the peasants are nonetheless expected
to make an effort so the PES project can be successfully implemented.

Conclusion

What does the Serang case tell us about the pattern of local accommodation of peasant
interests in post-authoritarian Indonesia? In Serang, accommodation occurred because of the
presence of a unified organizational platform for the peasants in Cidanau and the convergence of
interests between the state and corporate elites and the peasants. In this case, the concern of the
peasantry, namely the poor state of their livelihood, was taken up by their community-level
organizations, the KTHs, and their NGO partner, Rekonvasi Bhumi. Although the Rekonvasi
Bhumi activists were initially more concerned with environmental conservation in the Cidanau
Watershed, they eventually worked with the local peasants through the KTHs to address the
issue of the deteriorating peasant livelihood.

The KTHs provide a unified organizational platform for peasant communities living in
the watershed area. They were both social and economic organizations, playing important roles
in managing agricultural production activities among their members; maintaining contact and
working relationships with external stakeholders such as civil society, government, and corporate
actors; and fostering a sense of community among their members through village social events,
such as regular gatherings and Koran recitation or pengajian sessions. In the context of the PES
project implementation, the KTHs also played a crucial role in policing environmental
conservation compliance among their members and maintaining the peasantry’s credible
commitment to the collaborative governance of the watershed area.
Another factor, the convergence of interests between local elites and peasants, is also present in Serang. While concerns over peasant livelihood and environmental degradation in Cidanau have been one of the long-standing concerns for officials from the governments of Serang District and Banten Province as well as KTI as the main corporate beneficiary of water resources in the watershed, the issue did not receive a lot of attention until Rekonvasi Bhumi pointed it out. These local political and economic actors also did not really have a policy breakthrough other than to continue the existing policies. But interestingly, it was from this lack of policy concern that the possibility of interest convergence between the elites and the peasants emerged. This was the advocacy opportunity that Rekonvasi Bhumi later seized. Its sustained advocacy, lobbying, community partnership, and technical advising efforts later bore fruit: it managed to create a common ground for both parties, a space through which they could have their interests addressed – livelihood issues for the peasants and policy gap concerns for the elites. The peasants who had been facing market pressure and experiencing the declining quality of their livelihood were interested in the opportunity to increase their household income and make their environment more sustainable – in other words, the possibility of alleviating market excesses and improving their livelihood. On the other hand, the elites – the local government of Serang District and PT KTI – did not have the exact policy instruments to address the issues of water resource management, environmental sustainability, and rural livelihood in the Cidanau Watershed. In the context of decentralized local politics, this necessitated them to reach out to key societal actors – Rekonvasi Bhumi and the KTHs. Combined, the two abovementioned dynamics echo the logic of the first hypothesis.

Here, Rekonvasi Bhumi played a key role as a policy entrepreneur and, more importantly, as an intermediary. As a policy entrepreneur, Rekonvasi Bhumi successfully came up with a
policy proposal and pushed to get it implemented. Its network and collaboration with other NGO partners also help it hone its policy proposals over time, making them more palatable and applicable for both elites and peasants. As an intermediary, it skilfully straddled between the two different worlds: the air conditioned-room of the government and corporate offices and the forests in which the peasants live. Although it perceived itself as a CSO working for the peasants, it also collaborated with the local government officials in crafting and implementing the collaborative governance framework for the watershed area. Extending Mares’s (2000; 2003) argument, I see the policy outcome in this context – local accommodation for the peasants, new policy instruments for the elites – as a result of strategic alliances formed by actors who at the beginning did not share similar interests. During the negotiation process, the role of Rekonvasi Bhumi through FKDC became crucial, both in mediating the peasants and the elites and formulating a new commonly agreed on policy for all stakeholders in Serang.

Besides the occurrence of the local accommodation of peasant interests in Serang, there is another dynamic at play here. In this district, the pattern of local accommodation that emerged is different from that of North Bengkulu. Here, we have an example of accommodation through corporatism in which peasant interests were mainly accommodated in a corporatist framework through FKDC regarding a negotiated outcome acceptable for both the peasants and the elites brokered by an intermediary actor, Rekonvasi Bhumi. Accommodation through corporatism emerged in Serang because in the district the strength of civil society was weaker and agrarian issues were less salient in comparison to the situation in North Bengkulu. In Serang, civil society actors had been unable to form an effective opposition against the jawaras’ rule. Furthermore, it was extended by several internal problems, such as its limited capacity to penetrate rural areas and the existence of opportunistic actors posing as NGO activists or journalists. In the Serang
side of the Cidanau Watershed, Rekonvasi Bhumi remains as one of, if not the most important, NGO actors in the area. It is able work quite closely with the peasant communities and withstand the penetration of opportunistic civil society actors (“Nana” Rahadian, personal communication, October 26, 2015; KTH Members in Cidanau, personal communication, July 13, 2017). Indeed, it is precisely because of the presence of Rekonvasi Bhumi, which is famous for its clean reputation, that opportunistic actors masquerading as civil society workers are hesitant to enter communities around the Cidanau Watershed.

In terms of the severity of agrarian grievances in Serang, the two main issues in the district – the declining quality of peasant livelihood and environmental degradation around the watershed area – are less severe compared to the land conflicts in North Bengkulu. This has two implications. First, while the Cidanau peasants do have agrarian discontent, they are still able to maintain their farming areas, and their livelihood in general is quite stable. Market pressure in recent years has forced them to take additional transient jobs to support their households, but this problem is nowhere near the level of livelihood threat the peasants in North Bengkulu experienced. This precluded the Cidanau peasants from taking more contestational action against the local elites, as they had little reason to do so. As a comparison, we might refer again to the recent case of peasant opposition against the construction of a geothermal power plant in the Padarincang Sub-district because the local peasants perceived it as a threat to their livelihood and the environment (Pairus, 2017; Sutompul, 2018). Second, the limited capacity of local civil society actors in Serang also means that generally speaking they have less bargaining power compared to their counterparts in North Bengkulu. But this does not mean that they have no policy influence at all, since for certain issues and policy niches they can exert their influence, as the experience of Rekonvasi Bhumi shows. In this kind of setting, rather than pushing for
accommodation through mass mobilization and other contestational strategies, the peasants and their activist allies could use a more conciliatory approach for engaging the local elites.

Looking at the features of the local accommodation of the peasant interests in Serang, the nature of this type of accommodation is best described as corporatist. Here, following Schmitter’s (1974, pp. 93–94) classic definition of corporatism as a governance framework of interest representation wherein bargaining state and societal organizations representing their respective beneficiaries take different roles to produce a negotiated outcome, the pattern of elite-peasant relationship in Serang can be described as corporatist. Corporatism is also characterized by the presence of a unified bureaucracy, a unified sectoral or societal association, and the differentiation between state and society (Atkinson & Coleman, 1985, p. 42) – features that can be found in Serang case.

Each social force in the collaborative governance of Cidanau has its own representational organization. These organizations, through the framework set up by FKDC, played different roles in the governance of the PES project in the area to come up with a commonly-agreed to policy on water resource and watershed management. The distinctive feature of this corporatist arrangement, however, is the fact that it was civil society-driven. Rekonvasi Bhumi via FKDC played a key function as the intermediary for both the elites and peasants. But this local-level corporatism differs from the national-level corporatism commonly found in European countries such as Sweden, France, or Germany. In Serang, what we have is an example of meso-level corporatism in which the corporatist arrangement applies only at the subnational level or specific sectoral interests (Cawson, 1985, pp. 11-12).

Finally, through elaboration of local politics, civil society, and agrarian context in Serang, this chapter shows that local accommodation in the district occurred because the KTHs
and their activist allies were able to provide a unified organizational platform for the local peasants living in the Cidanau Watershed area and to capitalize on the convergence of the interests between the peasants and the local political and corporate elites. This then led to the occurrence of local accommodation in the district. The contexts in which this type of local accommodation emerged explain why it took a different form compared to the local accommodation in North Bengkulu. In comparison to North Bengkulu, the local civil society landscape in Serang is less vibrant. Furthermore, its local agrarian issues are less salient. The combination of these two variables led to the emergence of accommodation through corporatism as a model of accommodation of peasant interests by the local elites in Serang. Last, but not least, this chapter also presented the corporatist nature of such an accommodation and its limits in challenging market relations.
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

“There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism”
(Walter Benjamin (1969, p. 256) in the “Theses on the Philosophy of History”)

This final chapter presents the concluding remarks of this dissertation. In this chapter, I first give an overview of my arguments and the three case studies. Second, I put the Indonesian case into a comparative perspective and test my causal claims in three additional subnational cases – Bulukumba (South Sulawesi, Indonesia), Kerala (India), and Oaxaca (Mexico) – to increase the analytical leverage of my arguments. I then situate this study in the broader literature, showing its potential avenues for future research. Finally, I discuss the broader implications of this study.

Overview

This study sought to address why elites concede to peasant demands and accommodate their interests at the local rather than national level. It also attempted to explain the different pathways of local accommodation of peasant interests. I argue that elites accommodate peasant interests if two variables are present: first, there is a unified organizational platform representing the peasant community and, second, there is a convergence of interests between the elites and peasants. These variables have to appear in tandem for such an accommodation to occur. At the national level, these two factors are absent: peasant movements and organizations remain
organizationally fragmented and there is a lack of interest convergence between the elites and peasants. This explains the absence or lack of accommodation of peasant interests at the national level.

However, at the subnational level, these two variables are present. In both North Bengkulu and Serang, the local peasants are organizationally unified – under STaB in the former and the KTHs in the latter. Furthermore, there is a convergence of interests between the local elites and peasants. Whether driven by the need for electoral support, the maintenance of social stability, or the existence of policy gaps, such a condition necessitates the local elites in the said two districts to reach out to the peasants and other related civil society actors.

But these cases of local accommodation have different characteristics. In North Bengkulu, local accommodation is primarily achieved through mobilization and other contestational strategies, whereas in Serang, it is mainly achieved in a corporatist framework. I have identified the causal pathways for this variation of local accommodation. This variation is mostly shaped by the local agrarian and political contexts. In North Bengkulu, agrarian issues are severe and politically salient. Furthermore, the local civil society landscape revolving around STaB-KBH networks is vibrant. This leads to the occurrence of accommodation through mobilization. Conversely, in Serang, agrarian issues are less severe and less politically salient and the local civil society is less vibrant. This explains why the accommodation of peasant interests primarily occurs through corporatism. I have identified the causal pathways for these two types of local accommodation, but a closer look at the two district case studies suggests we can now assess the strength of each independent variable for the second hypothesis. The contrast between peasant responses in the Cidanau Watershed and the Padarincang Sub-district where there is an ongoing opposition against the construction of a geothermal power plant seems to
suggest that the variable of agrarian issue salience might have a greater causal effect in shaping
the contour of local accommodation.

Hypothetically, we can argue it is the degree of agrarian issue salience that has more
influence in shaping the trajectory of local accommodation of peasant interests. That is, there is a
possibility that regardless of the strength of local civil society, accommodation will be primarily
achieved through mobilization when the existing local agrarian issues are more politically
salient. In this kind of situation, peasants will most likely rely on mass mobilization, given the
severity of agrarian issues they face. A cursory examination of various cases of agrarian disputes
and peasant activism in Indonesia before and after democratization also seems to suggest that
sometimes it is the degree of agrarian issue severity and salience that attracts other civil society
actors to join the advocacy efforts of the local peasantry. The other combination, the case of a
strong civil society network in an area with less salient agrarian issue might suggest other
possible pathways and typologies of local accommodation that can be examined in future
research.

The Indonesian case is a part of the broader dynamics of double movement as elaborated
by Polanyi (1957). In this framework, attempts by the local peasants and their allies to resist or
provide correctives for market intrusion on peasant livelihood can be seen as a form of societal
countermovement against the destructive impacts of excessive marketization and elite
domination.

The Serang case also shows the limits of accommodation through corporatism. Although
the initial impetus for the promotion of PES in Cidanau was concerns pertaining to
environmental and water resource sustainability and peasant livelihood, that is the excess of
marketization, the implementation of the PES project, and the collaborative approach to
watershed governance more generally also entails the use of market instruments and mechanisms. Compared to the decommodification approach in North Bengkulu that to some extent aims to tame the market, the response toward the excess of market relations in Serang is more modest. One can even argue quite cynically that the PES project in Cidanau ends up promoting a form of market citizenship rather than a true form of community empowerment. Of course, this is not to suggest that local accommodation of peasant interests in Cidanau is simply a sham. After all, as Vail (2010) suggests, corrective attempts against the negative impact of the market can also be seen as one among the many efforts to protect the commons. Moreover, even under neoliberal or market-based development programs, ordinary community members can still feel a sense of empowerment and perceive themselves as agents of change (Jakimow, 2016). The local peasants in Cidanau too seem to be generally satisfied with the PES project. Nonetheless, this does not change the fact that the market logic and paternalism from the activists and FKDC representatives still creep in this collaborative attempt of watershed management. Herein lies the irony of the case of local accommodation in Serang: in an attempt to correct the excess of market relations, it also contributes to the deepening market norms in the local peasant community.

Additionally, this study also confirms Aspinall’s (2013) assessment that the influence of the lower-classes in post-authoritarian Indonesian politics is still largely confined to two venues: electoral populism and fragmented activism. In North Bengkulu we see the case of the former, while in Serang we see the case of the latter. It also shows that the Polanyian framework better

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236 This is the view of a local activist colleague of mine regarding Rekonvansi Bhumi activities in Serang (Anugrah, 2017). For a brief elaboration and critique of market citizenship, see Nawyn (2012).
237 This is not surprising. Tania Li’s (2014) decades-long research in Sulawesi shows that sometimes land enclosure and the deepening of market relations in rural communities might be initiated by the peasants themselves, under certain circumstances.
explains the dynamics of agrarian politics in Indonesia compared to the POS framework or the ACF framework.

**Indonesian Case in Comparative Perspective**

One should not see the Indonesian case in isolation from the broader regional and global contexts. In addition to putting the Indonesian experience into the regional context of Southeast Asia, it is also important to compare it with parallel cases in other regions. Here, I cite some key examples from Latin American countries and the Indian subcontinent, two other regions with a long history of peasant contentious politics, to show how the Indonesian case is part of the recent developments in global agrarian politics.

Historically, the spirit of agrarian populism popular during the apex of peasant-based anti-colonial, national liberation movements was highly influential (Scott, 1976; Wolf, 1999). But its influence dwindled in the face of the new ruling elites’ ambition to foster discipline among the citizenry, often pursued in authoritarian manners, in post-colonial state building. After the rise of neoliberalism, transnational agrarian movements (TAMs) in the developing world gain more prominence, albeit with varying degrees (Borras, Edelman, & Kay, 2008).

These movements achieve different degrees of success. In India, peasants have participated in local electoral politics through the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) and other social movements to build subnational social democratic regimes in Kerala, West Bengal, and Tripura (Desai, 2003; Sandbrook et al., 2007, pp. 65-92). The success of these local pockets of social democracy has been exceptional in its extensive level of economic redistribution, negotiated social outcome, and social movement mobilization. The recent rise of several leftist movement-based governments in Latin America under the Pink Tide seems to
indicate the shifting balance of power in favor of the rural population, especially peasants and indigenous peoples, but in actuality rural social movements have different levels of influence when it comes to shaping agrarian policies (Silva, 2009). In Brazil, the Landless Workers’ Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra, MST) has been able to push the state to accommodate peasant interests, especially regarding the implementation of land reform (Wright & Wolford, 2003). But in Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela, countries with sharper class conflict and stronger authoritarian, oligarchical, and corporatist legacies, the success of the peasant movements has been more modest (Enríquez, 2013; Sandbrook et al., 2007, pp. 147-174; Trevizo, 2011).

Other than peasant unions and movements that emphasize contentious politics as their main strategy, peasants also join other forms of organizations from neighborhood-based farmer groups to environmental advocacy groups. Survival guilds and mutual aid societies for instance are common features in many rural societies. Various savings and credit societies are an example of such associations (Bouman, 1977). What is even more common is farmer groups, whose initial purpose revolves around the need to organize agricultural production activities and maintain community solidarity but later on take up other functions, especially in navigating the political and economic lives of their members. In the Indonesian context, it is the local version of farmer groups, poktans, that play such a role in rural life. Until today, they are still in existence even after the new wave of double movement under neoliberalism, suggesting their continuing role for peasant communities in engaging and withstanding market forces. In recent years, other modes of peasant organizing, such as food rights movements and environmentalism, have also become a part of this new surge of countermovement (Akram-Lodhi, 2015; Larsson, 2015;

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238 These are also known as food justice, local food, food sovereignty, slow food, or organic food movements.
Lipschitz, 2001; van der Ploeg, 2014; Warburton & Yoshimura, 2005). These newer articulations of rural interests cover a wide range of issues and strategies, ranging from organic food and food sovereignty advocacy to anti-dam campaigns and promotion of CBNRM projects. These newer modalities of rural countermovement also reverberate in the Indonesian context. Hirsch and Warren (1998, p. 2) note that in Southeast Asia, environmentalism, “particularly since the late 1980s, has become something of a legitimizing discourse of opposition” and a cross-class issue connecting the concerns of both the educated urban middle-class and the rural poor. More recently, efforts have been made by local communities, rural organizations, NGOs, and social movements to promote organic farming, alternative food systems, and the broader architecture of solidarity economy in Indonesia, but movement actors have different and sometimes competing views on what constitutes a large-scale yet sustainable food system and an ideal type of rural solidarity economy (A. Salasa, personal communication, June 15, 2016; A. “Sastro” Ma’ruf, personal communication, July 19, 2017).

Insights from this Indonesia-focused study, therefore, can enrich this ongoing conversation on the response of the peasantry regarding this new form of double movement under neoliberalism. By focusing on subnational politics and the dynamic interaction between the elites and peasants and covering both social movement-oriented and corporatist peasant organizations, this study also attempted to make some theoretical, methodological, and empirical contributions to the existing literature. But given the relatively limited scope of this study, it is imperative then to touch on several cases to see how my causal claims can travel to other

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239 I also had a chance to discuss this issue with several agrarian activists in two public discussions on food politics in Jakarta on November 11, 2016, and March 24, 2017. While the agrarian populist view of food sovereignty that advocates a peasant household-based economy of food production seems to dominate the activists’ discourses, there are also skeptics within the movement who point out the need to integrate large-scale planning and technological adaptation for agricultural production to be sustainable and long-lasting.
contexts. It is for these reasons that I discuss the three additional cases of Bulukumba, Kerala, and Oaxaca.

Extending the Argument

As an attempt to increase the analytical leverage of my arguments, I tested the transferability of my two hypotheses by looking at three additional subnational cases of organized peasants under duress in democratic settings: Bulukumba, Kerala, and Oaxaca. Each case represents three different outcomes: non-accommodation in Bulukumba, accommodation through mobilization in Kerala, and accommodation through corporatism in Oaxaca.

Bulukumba

The wetland peasants in Bulukumba face two fronts of agrarian conflict: with the multinational rubber company, PT Lonsum, in upland Bulukumba and with the local district and provincial governments in lowland Bulukumba. In Bulukumba, the peasants have been relatively united since the beginning of their advocacy efforts, and in recent years they have found a unified organizational platform through AGRA, one of the few nationwide peasant unions. But the lack of interest convergence between the local elites and the peasants explains the lack of accommodation of peasant interests in the district.

The conflict between the local peasants and PT Lonsum can be traced back to the 1980s, when PT Lonsum intensified its land-grab of peasant land and started to claim the seized land as part of its own HGU plantation estates (Peasants and activists in Bulukumba, personal communication, May–June 2016; Tyson, 2010, pp. 132–135). During the New Order, local peasants near PT Lonsum also had to endure repression and intimidation to give up their land
from local security forces (Amiruddin, personal communication, May 21–22, 2016). Around the same period, peasants in lowland Bulukumba were also forcefully evicted from their land by the local district government because they were seen as illegal occupiers in the Forest Conservation Park or Tahura (Sukardi, personal communication, May 17, 2016). In both areas, sometimes the peasants were deceived into giving up their land despite the fact they had been staying and farming in the area for generations or possessed legal title and certificates for their land. According to AGRA’s estimation, around half of PT Lonsum’s 5,784.46 ha of HGU-certified rubber plantation estates and 2,184 ha out of 3,475 ha of the Tahura forest actually belonged to the local peasant communities (Amdas, 2017; Peasants and activists in Bulukumba, personal communication, May-June 2016; Rusdianto, 2016).

After years of advocacy efforts since the 1980s, the fall of the New Order regime finally provided new opportunities for the local peasants to push for their rights (Salassa, personal communication, June 25, 2016; Sukardi, personal communication, May 17, 2016; Tyson, 2010, pp. 135-138). Political contingencies in the early years of the reform period facilitated a victory for the local peasants in upland Bulukumba. After years of legal battle with PT Lonsum, a group of peasant communities led by Pak Salassa won its case after the Supreme Court of Indonesia ruled in favor of the peasants (Tyson, 2010, pp. 135–138). Unfortunately, the on-the-ground process of releasing 200 ha of land to the peasants as mandated by the Supreme Court was derailed, partly due to PT Lonsum’s lack of commitment to the court ruling (Salassa, personal communication, June 25, 2016; Tyson, 2010, pp. 138–141). This reescalated tensions in the community. The local peasants in upland Bulukumba, in alliance with the indigenous

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240 Salassa is a local peasant leader in upland Bulukumba who has been a key advocate for land rights in his community since the 1980s.
community of Kajang and the local activists, decided to stage a peaceful protest and a land reclaiming campaign on PT Lonsum’s plantation estates. On July 21, 2003, the peasant protest was violently repressed by the local police force, causing several deaths and the arrest of many local peasants and activists (Iwan Salassa, personal communication, May 24, 2016; KontraS, 2003). This case captured the attention of activists and social movement organizations across Indonesia and became a national headline in several major newspapers. An investigation from the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) concluded that the suppression of the peasant protest in upland Bulukumba was a human rights violation (Tim Penyelidikan Bulukumba, 2005). This violent response from the local state authorities created a lasting trauma in the community, which explains the decline in land rights advocacy efforts for around six years (2003–2006) (Peasants and activists in Bulukumba, personal communication, May–June 2016).

In 2009 to 2010, a new generation of community organizers under AGRA again approached the peasant and Kajang communities in upland Bulukumba, trying to convince them to join AGRA and again fight for their land rights. This approach was welcomed by the peasants and the Kajang community. From 2009 onward, peasant communities in upland Bulukumba along with other marginalized groups in the district – the Kajang community, plantation workers in PT Lonsum’s rubber estates, and fishers – have been struggling for their land rights as part of AGRA (Peasants and activists in Bulukumba, personal communication,

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241 Currently, the majority of AGRA organizers are newer cadres. But some of them have been involved in the social movement landscape in Bulukumba for a long time and participated in the solidarity campaigns for Bulukumba in the past.
Peasant communities in lowland Bulukumba have also been fighting for their land and joined AGRA too.\textsuperscript{242}

In Bulukumba, the peasants are relatively unified, not to mention that the district is a site of a vibrant civil society landscape. In recent years, several figures in the local government, such as the incumbent deputy district head: Tomy Satria Yulianto, and the incumbent district secretary: Andi Bau Amal, have also made an effort to mediate the agrarian conflicts in both upland and lowland Bulukumba. They are also known as reformist figures in the local government.\textsuperscript{243} But so far there is no major interest convergence between the local elites and the peasants, showing that the expansion of POS in the district does not necessarily lead to the variable needed for local accommodation of peasant interests to occur. There is a possibility that there might be a major resolution in the conflict in the Tahura forest (Amdas, 2017). But at this point, other than political freedom to organize openly, there is no major accommodation of peasant interests concerning land rights in Bulukumba.

\textbf{Kerala}

Kerala has been hailed as one of the success stories of social democracy in the periphery (Sandbrook et al., 2007; Ch. 3). In Kerala, we see another example of local accommodation of peasant interests. The peasants were represented by the Communist CPI(M) and its affiliated

\textsuperscript{242} When I conducted my field research in Bulukumba, Sukardi and AGRA organizers just had got in touch with each other. I attended several community meetings to set up an AGRA branch in this community and conduct participatory mapping in the area.

\textsuperscript{243} I confirmed this assessment with the local peasants and activists. I also had a chance to interview both officials.
social movements. Sustained peasant mobilization in the context of local democratic politics forced the local elites to concede to the peasants’ demands and accommodate their interests.

Just like many other states in India, Kerala also was once dominated by landlordism. Peasant rebellions were a common occurrence during the British colonial period (Sandbrook et al., 2007, p. 75). This made the anti-colonial struggle in Kerala wedded to the class struggle in the agrarian sector. Early on, Kerala’s leftists, who were still working within the nationalist Congress Party at that time, started to build a broad united front of the peasantry and other related social movements, such as the anti-caste movement, progressive reading clubs, and the like (Desai, 2003, pp. 181-184; 188-189). Historically, the landed elites in Kerala were also upper-caste, but elements of the upper-castes, such as upper-caste leaders and activists as well as upper-caste members of Nair and Namboodiripad communities, have been a part of the caste equality struggle since the colonial era, thereby doubling the potency of the struggle for independence and lower-peasant rights and slowly destroying “the caste hierarchy from the top.” (Desai, 2003, pp. 193-194).

This historical legacy, interaction with key moments of political contingency, led to the presence of a unified organization representing the local peasantry and the convergence of interests among the elites and the peasants and other lower-classes. In 1956, the Communists in Kerala – then organized under the Communist Party of India (CPI) after their break from the Congress Party – “captured the majority of seats in the legislative election” (Sandbrook et al., 2007, p. 79). Up until the 1970s, class politics occupied the center stage of Kerala’s local politics. It was also the period when the Kerala’s leftists, who later joined CPI(M) after its break

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244 As Sandbrook et al. (2007, p. 65) and several other observers have pointed out, notwithstanding its Marxist rhetoric, the CPI(M) does not follow a revolutionary line and instead promotes an electoral path backed by lower-class mobilization to manage the market economy and deepen democratic rights.
from CPI, started to expand its electoral base, effectively cementing a “green-orange alliance” between middle farmers and agricultural laborers and widening their networks of social movements and associational life, thanks to their rich civil society infrastructure since the colonial days (Desai, 2003, pp. 195-196; Sandbrook et al., 2007, pp. 71-79). Key reforms benefitting the peasantry in 1970s – comprehensive land reform in 1970 and agrarian labor legislation in 1974 – occurred after a sustained large-scale peasant mobilization. At the same time, the elites were willing to accommodate the peasant demands, out of their commitment to electoral democratic values and the fact that they were not threatened by the prospect of the wholesale socialization of the elites’ means of production, assets, and economic resources à la Chile in 1964-1973 (Sandbrook et al., 2007, p. 80). CPI(M) too were committed to electoral and legislative processes. This facilitated the meeting of interests between the local elites and the peasantry, thereby paving the way for local accommodation through mobilization.

Oaxaca

The last additional case, Oaxaca, is the case of accommodation through corporatism. Quite similar to Serang, peasant communities in Oaxaca also participate in the collaborative governance of the forest resources. The main difference is that this PES-based collaborative framework is part of the nationwide implementation of PES project in rural Mexico promoted by the National Forestry Commission (Comisión Nacional Forestal, CONAFOR) (Corbera, 2010), meaning the national context is more conducive to the occurrence of local-level accommodation through the PES mechanism. However, while the federal government has played a key role in PES implementation, various states, including Oaxaca, have taken various initiatives to promote PES and other forms of collaborative resource governance projects regionally (Osborne &
Shapiro-Garza, 2017, p. 3). The willingness of both federal and local state elites to embrace and promote PES is mainly driven by three factors, namely the need to respond to the market and financial incentives of PES promoted by the international community, environmental conservation concerns, and the lack of alternative policy frameworks (León, Bauche, Graf, Cortina, & Frausto, 2012; McAfee & Shapiro, 2010, pp. 585-588). This suggests that the state elites, who are the primary elite stakeholders in environmental conservation politics in Mexico, have their own interests and reasons to embrace new policy proposals on the environment.

The nationwide PES project in Mexico, the Payments for Carbon, Biodiversity and Agroforestry Services (Pago por Servicios Ambientales, PAS), was a result of the sustained lobbying effort of peasant and forest-based organizations, “including the Mexican Council for Sustainable Agroforestry, the Mexican Network of Forestry Organizations, the National Network of Coffee Producers Organizations, and the National Union of Community Forestry Organizations, among others” (Corbera, 2010, p. 56). In Oaxaca, it is the Integrator of Indigenous and Campesino Communities of Oaxaca (Integrador de Comunidades Indígenas y Campesinas de Oaxaca, ICICO) that represents a wide range of peasant and indigenous communities and pushes for implementation of forest-based carbon offset programs (Osborne & Shapiro-Garza, 2017, p. 10).245 The peasants mainly see the PES project as an opportunity to improve their livelihood after the devastation brought by neoliberal reforms in the 1980s and 1990s (p. 10). Oaxaca, too, is famous for its long and rich tradition of community self-governance, including in natural resource management (p. 10), which implies the willingness of the local government to accommodate these societal efforts. In this state, decisions regarding how the money will be spent is decided by community-based democratic assemblies (p. 13),

245 That is, a program to reduce carbon emission from forest by preserving trees and other forest resources.
signifying the ability of the local peasant organizations and communities to control the governance of the PES program and manage their additional income. The Oaxaca case also shows that the presence of a unified organizational representation of the peasantry from below and the meeting of interests between the elites and the peasants facilitated the occurrence of local accommodation of peasant interests in a corporatist fashion.

The three additional cases here show how the causal claims of this study can apply in contexts beyond the district case studies. Obviously, more research is needed to test my two hypotheses more rigorously. Nevertheless, this brief comparative analysis gives us a sense of the testability and applicability of the two hypotheses of this dissertation.

Broader Implications

A key contribution of this study is to revitalize the discussion of rural politics. Whether it is about the American South or a far-flung village in the Indian Subcontinent, various issues concerning rural politics once dominated scholarly conversations and debates in comparative politics and political science more generally. This kind of study is often seen as the domain of the anthropologists, but as I have shown in my previous chapters, findings from this study have broader implications for both theoretical discussions and practical concerns.

First, this dissertation shows the continuing relevance of the study of agrarian politics. In the context of a middle-income young democracy with a substantial agricultural population such as Indonesia, this study analyzed the conditions under which the interests of the rural lower-classes could be accommodated in the changing context of state-society relations. It also showed how the dynamics of agrarian politics at the subnational level had a significant impact on the quality and working of local democracy. Additionally, it showed how and in what ways peasants
and other marginalized groups and social movements could contribute to the deepening of electoral democracy beyond its formal attributes.

Second, it also triggers further discussion on the possibility of the reorganization of society and the economy beyond the confines of the market society. Recall our theorist in this study, Karl Polanyi. Polanyi himself was not only a theorist and critic of market economy. More importantly, he was a socialist and a theorist of post-capitalist economy, envisioning a democratic planned economy in which “the economy is subordinated to society” (Polanyi, 2016, p. 385). Responding to both laissez-faire liberals like Ludwig von Mises and technocratic Marxists like Otto Neurath, Polanyi argued that there is another possible way of reorganizing the economy beyond a full-scale centrally planned economy without pricing signal à la Neurath or Mises’s unregulated free market utopia. For him, an alternative arrangement would be a market economy controlled by social actors – producers and consumers organized in democratic bodies like unions and cooperatives (Mendell, 1990; Rosner, 1990). Thus, to argue that a Polanyian critique of market economy – including its critique of the expansion of capitalist social relations and land dispossession in rural areas – always implies a Keynesian welfarist solution is unwarranted, since the policy prescription Polanyi himself suggested goes beyond Keynesian social democracy or embedded liberalism. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible to formulate and

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246 In recent years, there has been a resurgence in Polanyi studies. For some major reviews and discussions of Polanyi’s ideas, including his intellectual biographies and edited volumes of his writings, see Block and Somers (2014), Brie (2017), Dale (2010; 2016a; 2016b), Polanyi (2014; 2016), Polanyi-Levitt (2013), Rogan (2017), and Somers (2008).

247 This is a translation of Polanyi’s original article in German entitled “Sozialistische Rechnungslegung” (roughly translated as “Socialist Accounting” or “Socialist Calculation” in English) published in 1922.

248 These economists with different ideological persuasions sparked a fierce debate called “the Socialist Calculation Debate.” Polanyi’s participation in this debate, which was dominated by liberals and Marxists, was under the radar.

249 For a discussion of the possibility of applying a Polanyian approach to economic management in contemporary context, see Roy and Hackett (2017).
argue for a welfarist position based on a Polanyian framework, although his critique suggests a more progressive position.

Future Research

For future research, several methodological improvements and new topics can be pursued. First, definitely, is to increase the number of observations. While small-N research is still beneficial for this kind of research, the inclusion of more district cases from Indonesia or a comparative study of subnational political units across countries could improve the arguments advanced in this study. An ideal scenario would be to have a medium size-N like Colliers (1991) did in *Shaping the Political Arena* or what Levitsky and Way (2010) did in their *Comparative Authoritarianism* by combining additional fieldwork and secondary data analysis.\(^{250}\) In any case, adding more subnational cases would have greatly enhanced the strength of this study’s argument. If appropriate data are available, this study could have also integrated some quantitative analyses for future projects. Second, this study could have improved its controlled comparison design by better specifying some of the key independent variables (e.g., agrarian issue salience), matching relevant new cases based on variations in their independent variables, and identifying the interaction effects of the independent variables. Third, further fieldwork should be conducted to gain more data to better specify the causal mechanisms in both the national case and the district case studies and further develop a typology of variations in the local accommodation of peasant interests. Third, this study could also benefit from a more historical and anthropological investigation of its cases, especially by focusing on one key dimension of agrarian politics (e.g., the historical development of one particular village or the trade flow and

\(^{250}\) Levitsky and Way conducted detailed case studies analysis of 35 countries.
commodity chains of key agricultural products such as rubber). Such an intellectual exercise could help identify more nuances and complexities, specify the causal mechanisms, and generate new hypotheses and insights. Here, I essentially followed the suggestions outlined by Lijphart (1971) and Tarrow (2010) for improving the analytical strength of paired comparison research.

From this research, two research topics are particularly worth pursuing. First is the anthropology or sociology of agricultural work. Seminal works in agrarian and labor studies, such as James C. Scott’s (1985) *Weapons of the Weak* and Michael Burawoy’s (1979) *Manufacturing Consent*, managed to come up with groundbreaking claims about the agency of peasants and workers and their relations with the broader societal dynamics precisely because of their attention to the everyday dynamics of labor, which they also experienced first hand in their field research (Scott mingled as much as he could with his peasant neighbors, whereas Burawoy worked as a factory worker for his research). More insights could be explored from this kind of somatic ethnography. The fact that this is not the traditional research genre for political scientists adds another reason for the need to conduct future political science research with an emphasis on deep ethnographic exploration to make contextual generalizations and generate theoretical insights. The second topic that needs to be explored is efforts to promote rural solidarity economy by peasant social movements in Indonesia and beyond. To the best of my knowledge, this is a greatly underexplored topic. Empirical findings from this research also have the potential to generate interdisciplinary conversations on solidarity economy.

**Epilogue**

Walter Benjamin, the Frankfurt School critical theorist, once lamented that a monument of civilization is also a record of barbarism. Such an assessment describes the fate of the
peasantry in a changing society quite accurately. In Indonesia, the decades of progress under the
New Order regime were achieved at a significant cost: the marginalization of the peasantry. The
twin process of democratization and decentralization gives new opportunities for the peasantry to
resist the excesses of marketization. Alas, this is not a panacea. As I have shown in my
discussion on the case studies, the peasants do not live in a historical vacuum. The extent to
which they can have their interests heard and accommodated is shaped by their social, economic,
and political milieus. Nonetheless, despite their circumstances, they act, and thus, they live.

The demise of capitalist developmentalism and state socialism – both ended up as
caricatures of the emancipatory potential of modernity and paternalistic regimes for the peasants
– paved the way for the full-blown market intrusion in different parts of the globe, including
Indonesia. But this expansion is met by a variety of rural countermovements. This is what my
case studies illustrate. The success of the rural countermovement in post-authoritarian Indonesia
is obviously limited. However, I do not want to end this study with a depressing note. Nor do I
want to take a naïve voluntaristic view of the possibility for peasants to change their
circumstances, since the peasant interlocutors I met in the field are certainly aware, well too
aware, of the structural limitations of their agency.

A cautious optimism, then? Maybe. Here, I would like to cite Moore’s (1966, p. 505)
often-overlooked observation:

The chief social basis of radicalism has been the peasant and the smaller artisan in the
towns. From the facts, one may conclude that the wellsprings of human freedom lie not
only where Marx saw them, in the aspiration of the classes about to take power, but
perhaps even more in the dying wail of a class over whom the wave of progress is about
to roll.

Such is the challenge faced by the peasantry in Indonesia and elsewhere. The quality of
Indonesian democracy will be decided by the extent to which it can empower its marginalized
rural population and promote social justice. The peasant question is still relevant and will continue to haunt political discourses regarding democracy, development, and class relations in Indonesia and beyond.
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