

## Politics of Ecology On Environmental Management In Regional Autonomy Perspective In Banjar Regency

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#### ABSTRACT So

Studies on political ecology problems always start from justice, poverty, resource inequality, population spikes, and environmental damage. This condition tends to only analyze from the side of causality. This causality explanation has a weakness in answering what allows this condition to occur. The problems in these areas are pretty interesting to study further because regional autonomy is a practice. The Provincial Government and Regency Governments play an essential role in the management and regulation of environmental policies. The purpose of this study is to analyze the political ecology related to the interaction between policy (regulation) and environmental management on social and economic conditions from the perspective of regional autonomy. This study uses a descriptive qualitative research approach. This study's data collection techniques are observation (observation), in-depth interviews, and literature study. The types of data in this study include ecological, economic, and social components of environmental ecosystems. The primary assumption in political ecology is that environmental change is not neutral. Instead, it is a form of a politicalized environment that involves many interested actors. Ecology-politics can be interpreted as a political study that understands human relations with environmental changes resulting from political processes. The political ecology perspective emphasizes that internal problems in the environment rather than external influences, namely due to political and economic pressures outside of itself, including the policy of regional autonomy (decentralization) of natural resources, is not just a technical problem. There are socio-political problems related to access to use and control over natural resources (*power and authority*). Environmental management problems are caused primarily not by technical failures but also by political failures. This means that the approach in environmental management is sectoral, technocratic, exclusive, and elitist, without considering the economic, social, and political forces that are the leading causes of the destruction of natural resources.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Issues of social injustice and inequality underlie the emergence of various environmental problems in many ecological areas. Therefore, political ecology experts view that environmental problems are not caused by problems in the environment itself but are caused by problems of group control over other groups (power & authority). This process of mastery makes people who are in direct contact with the environment unable to avoid helplessness have no alternative other than exploiting the environment in their lives. Ecological politics also view that injustice and inequality cause the emergence of various other problems (multi-impact) in human life, which are reciprocal (Baugh, 2010). This perspective studies the sources, conditions, and political implications of environmental damage, wherein the context of developing countries, the ecological crisis stems more from the imbalance of power relations (Blaikie and Brookfield, 1987).

Inequality of power relations in environmental management, in general, can be traced from a long history of clearing forests and land, including peat swamp forests, for the sake of economic development. The increasing incidence of forest and land fires (Karhutla) and destructive environmental management occur due to forest clearing on a large scale. The company's economic motive drives this for clearing land by burning and factors related to development policies that exploit natural resources. Natural. This political ecology approach used based on the perspective of regional autonomy in viewing environmental management is one of the perspectives in understanding human relations with the environment. This new thought has developed after the implementation of the regional autonomy policy. This new perspective in understanding environmental issues is heavily influenced by neo-Marxian thinking about underdevelopment as a form of criticism from the Malthusian approach and cultural ecology (systemic approach). Therefore, this ecological, political perspective emphasizes that internal problems in the environment do not cause environmental problems, but rather due to external influences, namely due to political and economic pressures outside themselves, including regional autonomy policies (decentralization). Environmental management certainly has political dimensions and implications, where actors such as government and companies have the power and capital to determine the pattern and direction of natural resource utilization. At the same time, community members are the weakest parties and become victims of the impacts. Environmental management is an arena for contesting political interests from the actors' roles, influences, and interests (Arifin, 2012). According to the political ecology view, the consequences of environmental management, including the relationship between humans and nature (destructive or sustainable), are more influenced by political and economic pressures due to the regulation of regional autonomy policies. This is different from the previous view of ecologists who viewed human relations with nature more as caused by internal pressures in the relationship itself, such as population pressure (Malthusian) and technical problems in management (exploitation and conservation) (Arifin, 2012).

Another thing from the description above is that there is an assumption that the regional autonomy regime has failed to internalize the sustainable development paradigm in its political and economic agendas. Environmental damage and forest area changes that continue to occur confirm this situation. This condition also illustrates that the sustainable development paradigm has not yet become a principle in the government's political ecology policy. The sustainable development paradigm is trapped in the choice of economic growth. Meanwhile, natural resources and the environment are seen as mere development capital and ignore intangible and intrinsic values. This condition provides an interpretation direction that various laws and regulations made at the local government level still bias ecological and social sustainability simultaneously (Satria, 2007).

The policy change in environmental utilization indicates a shift in the paradigm of environmental management from being anthropocentric to being exocentric with the ideology of sustainability. From the perspective of the principle of sustainable development by creating a balance of ecology, economy, and social (shallow ecology), which is referred to by the interested parties, it is certainly something that must be done to avoid an ecological crisis. In subsequent developments, the policy has shifted towards ecological dominance (deep ecology), thus providing a shock to the use of peat ecosystems and environmental management more broadly.

The problem of human relations with the environment is not a population density problem or a systemic problem (cultural ecology). Still, it is more caused by inequality and power and authority. Therefore, ecological politics is directing its perspective that environmental damage is not purely caused by internal problems but is dominantly caused by external global factors (macro) (Arifin, 2012).

Based on these problems and conditions, this study aims to analyze the political ecology related to the interaction between policies (regulations) and environmental management on social and economic conditions from regional autonomy. More specifically, this research is intended to provide insight into one of the new ideas in understanding the environmental problems we are currently facing, namely through a perspective known as ecological politics and its relevance to power relations. The series of stages of research

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based on political ecology begins with understanding the existence of regulatory rules made by local governments related to environmental management both at the level of the province of South Kalimantan and Banjar district. Then explore the various actors and institutions that play a role and their relationships and dynamics in environmental management. Furthermore, the main problems in environmental management based on the perspective of political ecology in the regional autonomy policy will also be discussed.

The urgency of this research is that, so far, studies on political ecology issues always start from issues of justice, economy, poverty, resource inequality, population spikes, and policy orientation. This condition tends to only analyze from the side of causality. This causality explanation has a weakness in answering what allows this condition to occur. The problems in these areas are pretty interesting to be studied further because there is a practice of regional autonomy. The Provincial Government and Regency Governments play an essential role in policy management and regulation.

## **2. METHOD**

This study uses a descriptive qualitative research approach. Descriptive qualitative research intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subject holistically and descriptive in the form of words and language, in an exceptional natural context, and by utilizing various natural methods. (Obie et al., 2014). The initial research was conducted using the desk study method with documentation techniques from various library sources. Data analysis of research results in this study was carried out based on data, facts, and critical sources. This study's data collection techniques are observation (observation), in-depth interviews, and literature study. The types of data in this study include ecological, economic, and social components of environmental ecosystems. There is an assumption that the ecological changes that occur are not only due to the rationality of the local population, but there is a political-economic intervention of the state through its policies and environmental conditions that allow both to take place.

Data sources are classified based on two categories, namely primary data and secondary data. Primary data were obtained from the actors as key informants conducted through in-depth interviews and passive participation observations. In-depth interviews were conducted through semi-structured interviews to find problems more openly by asking the interviewees for their opinions and ideas (Krisstin, 2002). Through passive participation observation, the author as a researcher comes to the place where the actor is being observed, but is not involved in the actor's activities (Sugiyono, 2012).

Secondary data sources come from environmental management regulations in the form of Laws, Government Regulations, Ministerial Regulations, SK, Regional Regulations, Governor Regulations, Regional Regulations, and other supporting data obtained from company reports and reports from related agencies/agencies Banjar Regency. In addition, secondary data was also obtained from reports of previous research results and published articles related to this research. The document serves as a complement to data from in-depth interviews and passive participation observations. Secondary data is also helpful in confirming field data.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The art of this research is that studies on political ecology problems always start from justice, poverty, resource inequality, population spikes, and environmental damage. This condition tends to only analyze from the side of causality. This causality explanation has a weakness in answering what allows this condition to occur. The problems in these areas are pretty interesting to study further because regional autonomy is a practice. The Provincial Government and Regency Governments play an essential role in the management and regulation of environmental policies.

In addition to affecting the regional economy, various environmental issues such as forest and land fires, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, decreased biodiversity, land conflicts, and so on are also emerging. The ecological crisis of land and forest fires is complex and many factors influence it. Ineffective environmental management in the end has implications for the conversion of forest functions to the need for extensive land, so that its development is also carried out in peat swamp ecosystems. On the other hand, environmental issues have also increased, especially land and forest fires which also provide a significant loss value and have economic and social impacts.

The socio-ecological political perspective views that the ethnic conflicts that occur are the implications of social relations between actors in natural resource management, which involve political (government) policies. There are five groups of actors interested in natural resource management, including in coastal

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areas, namely the government, businessmen, multilateral institutions, NGOs, and communities. These actors have different authorities, which causes conflict to be unavoidable.

This happens not only because the actor is in power but also because the actor is in a superordinate position and has interests whose substance and direction are opposite to the controlled actor in a subordinate position. Coastal resource management is inseparable from the relationship of knowledge and power conflicts from various actors. The relationship between knowledge and power conflicts leads one actor to gain profit and causes other actors to be harmed, even to the point of causing certain actors to be marginalized, thus permeating social conflicts systematically. The disadvantaged actors in this kind of conflict are local communities who have lost access to natural resources. The role of the government as an agent of coastal resources often causes conflict with the community. Conflicts between the community versus the government as development agents often also involve entrepreneurs. This happens because the government uses its authority to give management rights to coastal areas to entrepreneurs, which significantly minimizes and even denies local communities' power of attorney to be marginalized.

By using Foucault's perspective on discourse, according to political ecology, one of the environmental problems from the outer side is the emergence of the phenomenon of strengthening discourse (discourse) about that environmental management will be more easily handled with regional autonomy policies. In other words, the concept of environmentally friendly environmental management is just a discourse developed by the owners of power by labeling the activities they carry out. Here, the developed discourse provides legitimacy and reinforcement of the reality displayed, thus giving birth to justification. More effective environmental management is socially constructed to be labeled as communal property (shared). The labeling carried out by the owner of power, through this discourse, makes environmental reality finally emphasizes the justification aspect (and not on the truth aspect) (Foucault, 2011).

An approach that can be used to understand an environmental change and become the basis for environmental policies is Political Ecology analysis (Satria, 2007). The central assumption in political ecology is that environmental change is not neutral. Instead, it is a politicized environment that involves many interested actors (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). Ecology-politics can be interpreted as a political study that understands human relations with environmental changes resulting from political processes (Dharmawan, 2007). Political ecology can be interpreted as a political study that understands human relations with environmental changes resulting from political processes. This political ecology perspective emphasizes that environmental problems are not caused by internal problems in the environment but are caused by external influences, namely because of environmental problems—external political and economic pressures, including regional autonomy (decentralization).

The Political Ecology Approach was initially being developed within the branch of Ecological Anthropology. As one of the paradigms in Ecological Anthropology, this approach has begun to develop since the problem of environmental degradation due to deforestation in various regions of the world has increased. Several environmental experts developed this approach, such as Peterson (2000) and Abe-Ken-Ichi (2003). The Political Ecology Approach, by Peterson, is one approach that combines environmental issues (Cultural Ecology) with Political Economy and the dynamics between the environment and humans: between various groups in society on a scale from individual-local to transnational as a whole (Hidayat et al. al, 2011). Based on Naess's view, this approach assumes that human behavior is seen as an essential value in viewing environmental degradation (Peet et al., 1996). This paradigm was born from a critique of the study of environmentalists who saw the natural damage caused by residents so that they must be responsible for the damage and the result of increasingly free economic activity, increased investment globally (Grossman, 1997).

The ecological politics applied by the government from a shallow ecology approach to a deep ecology provides economic pressure that can have socio-ecological implications. Karlsson (2015) states that political ecology discusses the interrelationship between natural resources and society regulated by the government as the holder of state executive policy. Srinivasan and Kasturirangan (2016) state that ecological politics must pay attention to the socio-ecological impacts. The socio-ecological impact in the political ecology approach invariably leads to anthropocentrism, a perspective that puts human interests ahead of ecology. Thus, the government's ecological, political policy can create a development paradox if the implementation is carried out suddenly. The ecocentrism view states that humans are part of the ecosystem and must be based on a balance between ecological, social, and economic sustainability. Therefore, the precautionary principle in an ecological approach must be balanced with a social and economical approach. Otero and Nielsen (2017) report that a socio-ecological transformation is needed regarding land use, settlement patterns, energy systems, and social values for land and forest fires. If no systemic changes are made, mismanagement will have a paradoxical impact that amplifies risk. Academics and practitioners should discuss how to manage non-combustible landscapes towards sustainable development. Environmental damage in the modern era is

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more prominent because now the earth's inhabitants are more numerous; we have technology capable of doing more damage and faster; and we have an economic system that knows no boundaries (Bailey, 1997).

Bailey, 1997). According to him, a political ecologist must look at the changes in the Third World environment and conflicts in terms of environmental problems (ecological problems), the concept of sustainable development, socio-economic characteristics, actors (state and market), and special areas. Bailey has given direction, how the changing political environment can be understood. According to him, this approach begins with an explanation of how environmental changes can take place. Furthermore, these changes are related to political and economic processes. This information increasingly shows that there is a contested interest in ecological management. This contestation also influences other actors in determining choices, orientations, and strategies for environmental utilization.

Natural resource issues in Banjar Regency or South Kalimantan, in general, are not merely technical issues. There are socio-political problems related to access to use and control over natural resources (Satria, 2007). In another analysis, White (2009) stated that environmental management problems were caused primarily by technical failures and political failures (White, 2009). This means that a sectoral, technocratic, exclusive, and elitist approach to environmental management. White quotes Neumann (2005) that all ecological problems are political and ecological, social and biophysical problems at the same time (Mahulaa et al., 2020).

The management of natural resources by the state in this is represented by the Provincial Government of South Kalimantan and the Banjar Regency Government, which is top-down and tends to become a standard pattern that occurs in third world countries. This condition makes it easier for the state's hegemony to natural resources to collaborate with corporations, thereby denying the role of the community, which has an impact on local population resistance. The interest of actors in natural resource management is analyzed by Bryant and Bailey (1997) by developing three fundamental assumptions in political ecology. First, the costs and benefits associated with environmental change are uneven. Environmental changes do not affect political, social, and economic differences for distribution. Second, unequal distribution affects social and economic inequality. In this concept, political ecology refers to the inherent political economy as changes in environmental conditions that affect the political and economic status quo. Third, the unequal proportion of costs and benefits will impact existing inequalities and impact politics related to power relations (Hakim, 2019).

Policy changes that occurred in Banjar Regency in the use of the environment indicate a shift in the environmental management paradigm from being anthropocentric to being exocentric with the ideology of sustainability. From the perspective of the principle of sustainable development by creating a balance of ecology, economy, and social (shallow ecology), which is referred to by the interested parties, it is certainly something that must be done to avoid an ecological crisis. In subsequent developments, the policy has shifted towards ecological dominance (deep ecology), thus giving a shock to the utilization of peat ecosystems, especially agricultural businesses that already exist in Banjar Regency.

In addition to the ecological aspect, the existence of HTI and Mining in Banjar Regency also has a social and economic impact and a demographic impact. The issue of political-economic intervention regarding ecology can have an impact on broad problems such as population issues. This means that population dynamics must be read and understood from various angles and in a broad context. The main issue that I want to raise in this paper is studying the highlands and the context of changes in the ecology and economic sector due to external interventions and how local communities negotiate and strategize about these interventions. Welfare improvement (development) programs in rural areas in Banjar Regency often involve discussions about increasing agricultural production, including food crops. For example, the problem of food vulnerability looks crucial, which we can see from cases of malnutrition or cases of death due to hunger that has occurred (Rosyid, 2015).

Socially, mining, plantations, and forest plantations impact the community, which generally occurs because of land conflicts in particular that occur in Banjar Regency. Wetlands International (2015) states that land conflicts in mining and HTI areas generally occur due to permits to community land as concessions, poor communication between the parties, restrictions on community access to the area, and land ownership conflicts. Conflicts can occur horizontally between communities, communities-companies, companies, or vertically between companies/communities and the government. Scale Up (2008) stated that during 2008 there were 96 conflicts based on natural resources, with a conflict area of 200,586 ha. Ecological disasters due to improper management and utilization of peatland-based natural resources have caused various losses, both directly and indirectly, which led to economic losses. Smoke generated from land and forest fires

impacts health, transportation, education and leads to economic losses. However, the economic value provided by forest resources should not be ignored (Muharram, 2020).

The socio-economic paradigm is reflected in the HTI program in Banjar Regency, which aims to increase the potential and quality of production forests by applying intensive silviculture to meet the raw material needs of forest product industries. The development of the domestic forest product industry is aimed at increasing added value and foreign exchange, increasing land productivity and environmental quality and expanding employment and business fields. HTI development permits are granted to permanent production forest areas considered unproductive, including peatlands, which have not yet become a central issue in disaster vulnerability.

On the other hand, environmental issues have also increased, especially land and forest fires which also provide an enormous loss of value and have economic and social impacts. Flood conditions in Banjar Regency and several other regencies in South Kalimantan in early 2021 justified this condition. Natural resource management has been exploited like an economical machine for human needs. The orientation of natural resource management refers to development and neoliberalism, making the direction of development economic-centric. The impact is that natural resources are used as consumptive objects for economic growth and development so that exploration and exploitation of natural resources occur as much as possible, which has an impact on environmental damage and resource curses on communities in the surrounding environment (Jati 2013). This, when associated with mining and HTI activities on peatlands in Banjar Regency, has become a matter of national and international debate and controversy. Including when it is associated with applying the principles of sustainable development (Law Number 32 of 2009) with the principles of harmony and balance as well as integration in environmental (ecological), economic and social aspects. This illustrates the importance of the ethic of growth to realize prosperity, but with full awareness of protecting the environment. Thus, a shallow ecology approach is an option in the implementation of development in Indonesia.

In its development, there has been a tug of war between ecological and economic interests related to the existence of HTI and the emergence of massive land and forest fires that occur almost every year in South Kalimantan. This factor became one of the changes in the approach to deep ecology carried out by the government, which led to the issuance of government policy PP No. 71 of 2014 concerning Protection and Management of Peat Ecosystems junto PP No. 57 of 2016 and the issuance of Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation No. P.14, P.15, and P.16. This policy was followed by issuing the Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation Number P.17 as an amendment to the Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation Number P.12/Menlhk-II/2015 concerning Industrial Plantation Forests.

The ecological politics applied by the South Kalimantan provincial government and the Banjar Regency government from a shallow ecology approach to a deep ecology approach provides economic pressure that can have socio-ecological implications. Karlsson (2015) states that political ecology discusses the interrelationship between natural resources and society regulated by the government as the holder of state executive policy. Srinivasan and Kasturirangan (2016) state that ecological politics must pay attention to the socio-ecological impacts. The socio-ecological impact in the political ecology approach invariably leads to anthropocentrism, a perspective that puts human interests ahead of ecology. This condition is very commonly seen in the management of natural resources and environmental management in South Kalimantan. Thus, the political ecology policies carried out by the provincial and district governments can create a development paradox if the implementation is carried out suddenly. The ecocentrism view, which states that humans are part of the ecosystem, must balance ecological, social, and economic sustainability.

Therefore, the precautionary principle in an ecological approach must be balanced with a social and economical approach. Otero and Nielsen (2017) report that a socio-ecological transformation is needed in governance in the era of regional autonomy in terms of land use, settlement patterns, energy systems, and social values for land and forest fires. If no systemic changes are made, wrong management will have a paradoxical impact that strengthens the risk of damaging environmental governance.

Various implementations of government policies often fail to protect the environment and reduce the number of poor people, and this phenomenon shows that this problem has very complex dimensional variability. The problem is not only due to the weak supervision and law enforcement against destructive exploitation of forests and the environment, but more so because of the inability of the government regime to manage resource wealth wisely and sustainably. Another reason is due to the limited natural resources that are still available. There is no political policy that can optimally satisfy all parties. There are always parties who benefit and are more disadvantaged by a government policy because of its motives and interests. In the end, poverty due to the unfair distribution of the benefits of natural resources and environmental management becomes homework for the government to formulate policies that are entirely appropriate to alleviate poverty (pro-poor) and realize community welfare as mandated in the 1945 Constitution (Winarwan, 2011).

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#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study of natural resource management (SDA) and environmental policies by the governments is more concentrated on implementing and evaluating natural resources policies. Even though public policies fail and are less than optimal due to policy formulations that are not systematic, partial, and have not touched the substance of the problem. The ecological crisis of land and forest fires is complex, and many factors influence it. The use of peatlands for HTI, settlements, and industry in Banjar Regency has become a controversy over the destruction of peatlands, so it is a debatable area. The response to ecological crisis has shifted in the direction of short-term policies, and protecting and managing peat ecosystems is a top priority. As well as returning the function of utilization to being protected through the restoration of the peat ecosystem. This condition has implications for the emergence of shocks to the operations of the forestry and agricultural industries. Policies with an approach that rejects the economic basis based on industrialization must be applied carefully to avoid other effects on other sectors. On the other hand, local government policies must implement sustainable development towards a balance between conservation and utilization of peat ecosystems.

Ecological changes that occur are not only due to the rationality of society and companies but there is a political-economic intervention by the government through its policies. The approach used to understand an environmental change and become the basis for the formulation of environmental policies is political ecology analysis. The primary assumption in political ecology is that environmental change is not neutral. Instead, it is a form of a politicalized environment that involves many interested actors. Ecology-politics can be interpreted as a political study that understands human relations with environmental changes resulting from political processes. This political ecology perspective emphasizes that internal problems in the environment do not cause environmental problems but rather due to external influences, namely due to political and economic pressures outside of itself, including the policy of regional autonomy (decentralization). The problem of natural resources is not just a technical problem. There are socio-political problems related to access to use and control over natural resources (power and authority). This means that the approach in environmental management is sectoral, technocratic, exclusive, and elitist, without considering the economic, social, and political forces that are the leading causes of the destruction of natural resources.

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