

Reclaiming an Anti-Tin Mining Territory: The Effectiveness of Formal Political Channels in East Belitung

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Abstract

Tin, a mineral abundant beneath the coastal waters of Bangka Belitung, has spurred large-scale mining expansion from land to the sea. This article investigates the phenomenon of “reclaiming an anti-mining territory” as a representation of the Belitung community’s resistance against tin mining expansion into the coastal sea of East Belitung. The article is the result of deep fieldwork conducted during 2017-2020, employing methods such as participant observation and in-depth interviews with PT Timah, district and provincial government, local academics, resistance groups, local CSOs, fishermen, maritime tourist entrepreneurs, and traditional miners. This study reveals the limitations of the common argument that often raises scepticism about the accommodation and effectiveness of formal political channels for civil society resistance during conflicts over the expansion of extractive industries. Through a case study of the successful community resistance in East Belitung against the expansion of coastal tin mining, this article demonstrates that under certain preconditions—specifically, when “anti-sea mining” becomes a popular electoral issue—two specific key conditions can enable formal political channels to be effective: the recentralisation of mining authority and the formation of alliances with political elites. The findings further illustrate that zoning regulations, which were established in response to grassroots aspirations, were adhered to by all stakeholders, including licensed mining companies. These findings also present an opportunity for sustainable natural resource governance reform, particularly in terms of civic engagement in natural resources management.

Keywords:

anti-mining territory; community resistance; formal political channels; East Belitung coast

Introduction

Since 2015, one state-owned tin mining company, PT Timah, and three private tin companies have begun efforts to exploit the sea off the eastern coast of Belitung Island, Bangka Belitung Province, with a 38,200-hectare Mining Business License (IUP). The expansion of the tin mining frontier from land to sea is driven by the unique materiality and geo-spatial characteristics of tin, which are abundant beneath the shallow sea surface—such as that along the Bangka Belitung coast—with its current potential believed to surpass reserves on land. However, the coastal sea is a strategically vital ecosystem both ecologically and economically, upon which local fishermen

and residents depend. Meanwhile, tin mining has the potential to cause pollution in the coastal environment and damage the habitats of coastal animals, thereby rendering subsistence fishermen more vulnerable than ever before and triggering a resistance movement (Savirani & Wardhani, 2022; Sholihin, 2021).

Literature on community resistance against extractive industries, which demonstrates the success of formal political channels, is relatively rare in Indonesia, in particular, as well as in non-mature democratic countries in general (Conde, 2017; Purnomo et al., 2021). This condition occurs due to the high level of collusion between mining businesses and politicians, with mining businesses controlling

various formal political institutions and policy outcomes (Warburton, 2023). Post-reform, the business class in Indonesia, especially in extractive industries, has transformed into a more fluid, more accommodating, and more powerful entity than before, gaining control over many political parties and a majority of votes in legislative institutions (Hadiz & Robison, 2014). The interests and power of these business actors have hindered the implementation of various reforms for sustainable natural resource governance (Toumbourou et al., 2020; Warburton, 2017). Hence, existing literature on resistance toward neoliberal projects, including mining and palm oil industries, especially in Indonesia, tends to be pessimistic about the success of formal political channels in meeting community aspirations (Afrizal & Berenschot, 2022; Conde, 2017; Purnomo et al., 2021; Toumbourou et al., 2020).

In this context, this study does not aim to challenge the prevailing argument about the ineffectiveness of formal political channels in the struggle strategies of various resistance actions in Indonesia. Instead, it seeks to present a specific case study where formal political channels have successfully addressed anti-mining demands and to explain the underlying causes of this effectiveness. In doing so, this study investigates community resistance towards coastal tin mining expansion in the coastal waters of East Belitung occurring between 2016 and 2020 through anti-mining territorial claims expressed via formal political channels, advocating for the coastal zone regulation in the Bangka Belitung Provincial Legislature to exclude mining zones in Belitung coast and to annul all existing mining permits.

This study is structured as follows. It begins by mapping a literature review on the territorial dynamics within the expansion of mining territory and its contentious nature, followed by an explanation of "territory reclaim" as the operational framework.

Following this is a description of tin mining expansion and how resistance emerged, and why the inconsistency and overlap of institutional territorial structures in Indonesia across sectors and levels of government are important contexts for various resistances to mining territory. Next is the elaboration on strategies for reclaiming territory through formal political channels, as well as several conditions that support the success of these strategies. This article ends with the conclusion and reflections of this study.

Literature Review: mining territory as an arena of resistance

A number of studies on the mining frontier have been popular among resource geographers and political ecologists for revealing the relationship between biophysical nature and social dimensions (Conde & Kallis, 2012; Côte & Korf, 2018; Middeldorp et al., 2016; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Slattery et al., 2023; Van Teijlingen, 2016; Zhu & Peluso, 2021). The accumulative nature of capitalism and commodification of nature are foundations to understanding that nature has been turned into a commodity when geologists find economically valuable material in the subterranean (Zhu & Peluso, 2021). Then, mining expansion aims to create territorial boundaries flexibly, adaptively, and opportunistically for capital accumulation (Zhu & Peluso, 2021).

For the state, a territory represents the space where its authorities have legitimacy to exercise power and determine who can access and what activities are permissible or not within a specific place. Meanwhile, state territorialisation refers to various strategies used by states to regulate socio-spatial relations within specific territories. These strategies create new meanings of territory, define new regimes over land use, and legitimise new economic practices (Vela-Almeida, 2018). Additionally, territorialisation can also be understood as an arena where different actors

within the state struggle to articulate the territory in different ways for varying interests. Therefore, territory is closely related to how life, livelihoods, and development paths are continuously reproduced and defined (Vela-Almeida, 2018).

Territorial conflicts in the mining frontier have become a familiar story in developing and resource-rich countries (Bebbington et al., 2008; Conde & Kallis, 2012; Middeldorp et al., 2016). Several cases illustrate that territory is not ecologically static, but socially constructed and politically contested, and embedded in space and scale (Rangan & Kull, 2009). In the context of Indonesia, currently, this country is experiencing a mining rush, with the state continually opening new areas for extraction to reinforce its role as a resource-driven economy (Warburton, 2023). Unfortunately, significant expansion without corresponding preparation of specific instruments to regulate territories has created problems for spatial regulation (Erb et al., 2021).

Bangka Belitung is one of the regions experiencing a tin extraction rush due to the increasing global demand to meet the needs of the rapidly developing electronics and technology industries (Diprose et al., 2022). According to Indonesia's mineral map (Minerba One Map Indonesia or MOMI), the entire Bangka Belitung Islands, including the surrounding waters, has been passed by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources as Mining Territory (*Wilayah Pertambangan* or WP), meaning that the entire of this province geologically contains mineral deposits underground that are potentially exploitable. Consequently, the mining rush leads to the continuous expansion of mining territory, intersecting with territories designated for other purposes (Suryaatmadja et al., 2020).

In the context of Bangka Belitung, past studies have shown the long story of conflicts and contentious politics caused by tin mining (Großmann, 2018; Ibrahim et al., 2018, 2019,

2022; Savirani & Wardhani, 2022; Sholihin, 2021). Ibrahim et al (2018) and Sholihin (2021) reveal an extensive and cohesive fishermen movement supported by various extra networks (environmental activists, tourism entrepreneurs, students, local politicians, and common public) in East Belitung in rejecting coastal tin mining, which they believe will harm the environment and marginalise them from the sea (Ibrahim et al., 2018; Sholihin, 2021). Meanwhile, Großmann (2018) elaborates on the contribution of social media to the mobilisation against tin mining, especially Facebook and WhatsApp. Social media has become a platform for mobilisation, communication, knowledge transfer, as well as openness and solidarity in anti-mining campaigns, enabling the creation of an imagined community against mining (Großmann, 2018).

While the studies outlined above focus on agency, some others focus on social and political structure (Ibrahim et al., 2022; Savirani & Wardhani, 2022). Savirani and Wardhani (2022) elaborate that the specific conditions of local democracy—represented through the fragmentation of district and provincial governments, and the strong framing of "sea people"—drives the anti-coastal mining movement in East Belitung to become extensive and cohesive (Savirani & Wardhani, 2022). Meanwhile, according to Ibrahim et al. (2022), resistance is not only concerned with environmental impacts or local people's dispossession but also with unfair distribution of benefits. Thus, mining on the coast of Bangka becomes a battleground of power between mining companies, the state, and the community in ensuring fair and equitable distribution of benefits (Ibrahim et al., 2022).

Several of the above-mentioned studies have already revealed the connection between mining territory and community resistance (Avcı & Fernández-Salvador, 2016; Bebbington et al., 2008; Middeldorp et al., 2016; Zibechi, 2012). However, struggles to reject mining

territory rarely utilise formal political channels, such as “intra-parliamentary”, as an expression of resistance. This is because the literature above tends to be pessimistic about the infrastructure and political superstructure in developing countries, particularly Indonesia, often depicting a strong relationship between business and politics (Warburton, 2023). Some literature has already shown local community resistance through formal channels, but litigation through courts, rather than through formal political institutions (Afrizal & Berenschot, 2022; Conde, 2017). Although Toumbourou et al. (2020) include demands for post-mining reclamation obligations through changes in regional regulations and has been successful in revising regulations, unfortunately, at the implementation level, signs of success are not evident.

This article addresses the critical issue of inconsistent and overlapping regulations governing mining territories in Indonesia, affecting resistance movements and mining governance. It aims to fill the gap in the literature on community resistance to the mining industry, examining the effectiveness of formal political channels in expressing resistance under specific political and cultural conditions. By focusing on zoning regulations as a reflection of complex socio-territorial relationships, this article explores how formal political channels can effectively address community demands amid territorial conflicts. The findings should highlight the need for continuous discussion to develop more stable and effective governance strategies for mining territories and zoning regulations in Indonesia.

Conceptual Framework: Community Resistance Through Territory Reclaim

Community resistance in this article refers to various forms of opposition and mobilisation expressed in different strategies, where resistance actions can be verbal or physical (Conde, 2017). The core of resistance

action is opposition to power. Conde (2017), in this definition, draws on James Scott’s concept of weapons of the weak to describe how marginalised local communities engage in everyday resistance in response to the rise of neoliberal projects around them (Scott, 2008). Resistance actions are also manifestations of community dissatisfaction and are vehicles used to meet collective demands (Middeldorp et al., 2016). From the perspective of ecological distribution conflicts, resistance actions against mining projects are most commonly caused by the injustice of benefit and risk distribution (Conde, 2017). In addition, the expansion of mining also limits community participation in the decision-making process and the mining business chain, as well as closing off the freedom of local communities to choose their development path (Conde, 2017).

Local community resistance to mining can be sporadic, occurring from time to time, evolving into organised collective actions, and transforming into social movements (Tarrow, 1994). However, this study does not adopt the term social movement due to its implications in explaining its various features, including institutions, discourses, common enemies, and forms of contention (Tarrow, 1994). Instead, this article, while acknowledging that resistance actions against mining can be categorised as social movements, focuses solely on resistance strategies through formal political processes (Avcı & Fernández-Salvador, 2016; Middeldorp et al., 2016). This study also employs the term “community” to refer to the actors engaged in resistance. Referring to Conde (2017), the use of the term “community” has been criticised for overlooking complex actors. However, the community analysed in this article represents a group of lay people living around mining projects, which may consist of various ethnicities, genders, occupational variations, and levels of marginalisation (Conde, 2017).

In order to express their demands, resistance actions—strategies similar to

collective actions or social movements—are most commonly expressed through protests, blockades, and sometimes involve violence. Based on a meta-analysis of 1500 cases cited by Conde (2017) in Martinez Alier et al.'s article, classic repertoire strategies include complaint letters, public campaigns, and street protests. Later, after resistance actions became more institutionally consolidated, these actions began to develop networks with actors outside their circles and mobilise through social media (Großmann, 2018). In conflicts over land against mining and oil palm plantations in Indonesia, many resistance actions are beginning to fight through the courts (Afrizal & Berenschot, 2022). According to Peluso (1992), the repertoire of resistance actions tends to depend on specific historical and environmental circumstances (Conde, 2017; Peluso, 1992). Later, over the past two decades, resistance actions against mining have increasingly connected with external actors, leading to the emergence of several new strategies, namely: involved informal referendums, legal demands for accountability, and networking with academics as three emerging strategies (Conde, 2017).

Essentially, the anti-mining movement rejects mining activities in certain territories. The objection is not directed towards mining activities per se, but rather towards their impacts on the territory. This means that whether an area becomes a mining territory or a non-mining territory is an implication of the struggle between proponents and opponents of mining in expressing their interests. Additionally, socio-spatial dynamics illustrate that the relationship between the social and the territorial is relational, related to discourses on economic and cultural issues, and linked to the various geological and ecological potentials of the territory (Bebbington et al., 2008; Bisht & Gerber, 2017; Erb et al., 2021; Escobar, 2001; Kuecker, 2007; Murray Li, 2000; Simbulan, 2016; Toumbourou et al., 2020; Vela-Almeida, 2018).

Although its success rate is doubted, the formal political pathway also serves as one of the repertoire strategies for resistance movements against mining. The formal political channel is evident in Lyons' (2019) study of the efforts of the Wangan and Jagalingou indigenous communities to reject coal mining expansion on their ancestral land in Queensland, Australia. They express their demands through the use of their rights, regulated by FPIC, to protect Aboriginal tribes from racial policies, to have a say in what and how development is conducted on their land. Unfortunately, this channel was not successful after mining companies and local governments thwarted the regulations (Lyons, 2019). Moreover, Szablowski's (2019) literature review analysed the efforts of large-scale mining companies to anticipate resistance efforts by local communities. These companies seek domination and close local legal spaces, so that communities living in extractive areas have no legal recourse when seeking justice for the mining projects' detrimental effects. This phenomenon is referred to as legal enclosure (Szablowski, 2019). The illustrations above demonstrate that, although formal channels show pessimistic outcomes, there are specific, conceptualised conditions that subsequently influence the success or failure of resistance actions. Therefore, this article elaborates in detail on the political and cultural conditions that enable formal political channels to become successful strategies in achieving the demands of resistance to mining activities.

Methods

This research is based on an in-depth field study conducted from 2017 to 2020, employing a qualitative case study approach to analyse resistance to extractive expansion within specific communities. Rooted in social movement research, this study provides a complex and detailed exploration of the "why" and "how" of community resistance. The case study approach facilitates a nuanced

understanding of the contextual factors influencing current events (Denscombe, 2010). Among the various case study types identified by Denscombe (2010), this research adopts the extreme case studies approach, focusing on a case that contrasts with the general stagnation of formal political channels in addressing community demands. In this context, the study emphasises the effectiveness of formal political channels as a viable strategy for resistance.

To collect representative and detailed data that captures various contexts, this research employed participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. First, participant observation involved actively engaging in community activities opposing mining, such as joining WhatsApp and Facebook groups that mobilised anti-mining demands, participating in discussions with government officials, academics, students, and NGOs, attending hearings with the local government and the East Belitung Legislature, and observing protests and demonstrations. To ensure a natural setting, observations from 2017 to 2019 were conducted with only a few gatekeepers aware of the research

activities. Subsequently, from 2019 to 2020, the researcher disclosed information about the study to address ethical considerations while maintaining distance from the studied groups to ensure objectivity and avoid bias (Denscombe, 2010).

In addition to observation, the author conducted in-depth interviews from December 2018 to February 2019 and December 2019 with approximately 20 purposively selected informants to ensure that the collected data was more comprehensive, accurate, and verifiable. The informants were chosen based on their interests, political positions, and roles in the community resistance to mining expansion in East Belitung. These individuals and institutions served as stakeholders in the tin mining sector. The author assessed their interests and political positions by analysing their discourse and actions during the escalating anti-mining resistance and throughout the agenda-setting formulation of coastal zone regulation from 2018 to 2019.

The final method employed was document analysis, which involved reviewing various local news reports and official documents,

Table 1.
Categorisation of informants based on interests and political positions

Supporting mining territory		Neutral		Anti-mining territory	
Informants	Reasons	Informants	Reasons	Informants	Reasons
PT Timah	Business expansion	Academics from the University of Bangka Belitung	Normative	Fishermen and fishermen's alliance	Mining destroys fishing economy
The Provincial Department of Energy and Natural Resources	Realising existing mining license	Local journalist	Covering both side information	Local environmental NGO (Belitung Care Movement)	Mining damages the environment
NGOs support PT Timah in endorsing coastal mining	Mobilized and funded by PT Timah	The Provincial Department of Environment	Normative	The District Government of Belitung Timur	Representing majority public voices
		People's Miners Association	Only doing mining on land	East Belitung District Legislature	Representing majority public aspiration
				Small-scale tourism entrepreneurs	Mining destroys marine tourism
				Organization of Anti-coastal mining (FORTTAL)	Anti-coastal mining

Source: Author's synthesis

including Law No. 1/2014 concerning Coastal Areas and Small Islands Management (WP3K), the proposed Provincial Regulation on Coastal Zone and Small Islands Spatial Planning (RZWP3K) for Bangka Belitung Province, and the official report from the Special Committee on Anti-Coastal Mining within the East Belitung Legislature.

The collected data was processed through triangulation to avoid researcher bias, then reduced and categorised based on the analytical needs of this paper. Subsequently, the data was elaborated upon using a conceptual framework to address the research question: "How can formal political channels become an effective strategy in the resistance of the East Belitung community against the expansion of tin mining from land to coastal areas?"

Results

The expansion of tin mining to coastal areas and the emergence of community resistance

Tin mining in Belitung Island was first commercially extracted in 1852 by a Dutch company, Billiton Maatschappij, which

operated until Indonesian independence. Approximately ten years after independence in 1945, the Indonesian government nationalised all Dutch tin companies, becoming PT Timah, and the state monopolised the tin mining business until 1998 (Sholihin, 2021). After experiencing the heyday of the New Order era, in the early 1990s, PT Timah announced bankruptcy and stopped most operations in Belitung. PT Timah also laid off about 15,000 local employees. PT Timah's bankruptcy caused an economic shock, increased unemployment, and significantly reduced the economy (Erman, 2009; Savirani & Wardhani, 2022).

Before withdrawing operations in Belitung, PT Timah was expanding its mining frontier from land to coastal with an area of 30,000 Ha on the East Belitung coast, which was later granted permission by the Regent of Belitung District, Darmansyah Husein (Savirani & Wardhani, 2022). Next, after East Belitung District formed in 2003, within a 10-year since East Belitung District was formed (2004-2014), the district official granted tin mining licenses in their coastal area to three private companies,



Figure 1. Map of Mining Business Licenses (*Izin Usaha Pertambangan*) on land and coastal areas in Bangka Belitung

Source: (Kementerian ESDM, 2023)

namely PT Kampit Tin Utama with an area of 2,819 Ha, PT Halaban Primavestama with an area of 2,600 Ha, and PT Biliton Jaya Utama with an area of 2,850 Ha (Sholihin, 2021). Such licenses were granted during the leadership of three different heads of the district: Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), Khairul Effendi, and Basuri Tjahaja Purnama.

PT Timah and other private mining companies aim to expand the mining frontier from land to coastal areas to increase production amid a significant drop in onshore areas, as well as rising tin prices and global demand to support manufacturing industries, including automotive, electronics, and construction. The tin ore potential in East Belitung's coast, valued at up to USD 6.1 billion, benefits both companies and the government (Aprionis, 2018). The Indonesian government supports this expansion to maintain taxes and royalties and generate positive effects for the local community. For instance, PT Timah's state revenue exceeded USD 33 million, with direct contributions to the community surpassing USD 734,000 (Aprionis, 2018). However, while the state and companies promote economic growth, local communities may not always respond positively to mining expansion.

Local community resistance to coastal tin mining in East Belitung began when the Production Suction Ship or *Kapal Isap Produksi*

(KIP) anchored 2 miles from the coastline of Kelapa Kampit Sub-district, the Belitung's northern side, in mid-2016. Local fishermen immediately suspected that the arrival of the ship was for conducting tin exploitation. Then, dozens of local fishermen came to the district head's office to ask the ship to leave Kelapa Kampit (interview with fishermen, January 2019).

Fishermen's concerns about coastal tin mining stem from the damage inflicted on Bangka Island's waters (neighbouring islands with massive coastal tin expansion). Despite mining companies' claims of using environmentally friendly methods, Belitung fishermen are sceptical due to their firsthand experience of mining-related damage in Bangka. This scepticism underscores pervasive corruption in Indonesia's natural resource management, particularly in environmental oversight, including manipulated Environmental Impact Assessments (AMDAL) and failed reclamation programs (Ardianto, 2016). The coastal damage in Bangka has forced fishermen to relocate 30 kilometres offshore, increasing costs and reducing income, while also leading to a decline in fish production, a critical food source for the Bangka community. Belitung fishermen fear similar economic downturns in fisheries due to ongoing mining activities (Sholihin, 2021).

Subsequently, resistance expanded as fishermen formed alliances with local activists,



Figure 2. Environmental impact due to coastal tin mining in Bangka (left: small-scale mining; right: large-scale mining)

Source: (Kurniawan, 2021; Sejati, 2018)

marine tourism entrepreneurs, college students, local politicians, East Belitung's legislature, and district government officials, resulting in the creation of two collaborative movement organisations: People's Forum Reject Coastal Mining or *Forum Rakyat Tolak Tambang Laut (FORTAL)* and Belitung Fishermen Solidarity Alliance or *Aliansi Solidaritas Nelayan Belitung Bersatu (ASNBB)*. They mobilised efforts to make "protecting the coast" a shared issue through the environmental discourse. Throughout 2016-2018, they carried out several campaigns, demonstrations, a hearing with local parliament and government, and online mobilisation to demand that the provincial government revoke all mining permits located on the Belitung coast (interview with Belitung Caring Movement activists, February 2019).

The massive mobilisation broadened resistance to mining expansion, drawing support and attention from local, national, and global actors. Locally, "protecting the coast" became a common issue, with the public strongly opposing mining expansion. Nationally, the anti-mining movement gained support from the Indonesian Friends of the Earth, Mining Advocacy Network, Indonesian Marine and Fisheries Institute, and national media. Minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (2014-2019), Susi Pudjiastuti, also opposed coastal mining in Belitung due to its negative impact on fisheries (Ibrahim et al., 2018; Savirani & Wardhani, 2022; Sholihin, 2021). Globally, Friends of the Earth collaborated with international media, tin end-user companies, and Indonesian stakeholders to form the Tin Working Group, promoting sustainable tin governance in Bangka and Belitung, including the coastal areas (Diprose et al., 2022).

Zoning regulation related to coastal tin mining in Bangka Belitung: inconsistent and overlapping

Unlike land management regulations established since the colonial era, coastal

water management regulations in Indonesia were not formulated until 2007. This delay posed significant problems for tin mining, abundant under the shallow waters of Bangka and Belitung islands. Consequently, tin mining licenses for various companies were issued for decades without clear zoning regulations, leading to superficial analyses that overlooked the ecological and social functions of coastal territories.

In 2007, the central government enacted Law Number 27 of 2007, mandating provincial governments throughout Indonesia to establish coastal zoning regulations within 12 miles of the ocean (Yurista & Wicaksono, 2017). Due to the difficulty in managing the interests of various stakeholders and economic sectors, Bangka Belitung was unable to pass a regional regulation on coastal spatial planning until 2020. As a result, the delay in passing this regulation has led to two problems: conflicts between local communities, the state, and companies during regulation formulation, and overlapping zoning with existing licenses across sectors and government levels (Ambari, 2019).

The period after 1998 saw a shift in authority over coastal tin mining due to democratisation and changes in central-regional relations, resulting in a cycle of centralised-decentralised-recentralised patterns over 26 years. Initially, before 1998, the tin mining authority was centralised under the central government. Since decentralisation under Law No. 22 of 1999, the mining authority was decentralised to provincial and district governments, allowing private companies and communities to become directly involved in the tin business (Erman, 2009).

Subsequently, the distribution of coastal tin authority changed after revisions to regional government laws in 2004 and 2014. Law No. 32 of 2004 on regional government divides mining authority between provincial and district governments, where district governments have

mining authority within a 0-2-mile radius from the coastline, while provincial governments have authority within a 3-12-mile radius. After that, since 2014, the Law on the new local government (Law No. 23 of 2014) transferred the authority for mining within 2 miles of districts to provinces. This change led to confusion and shifting responsibility between the district and provincial governments when resistance arose to revoke mining licenses on the East Belitung coast in 2017. The official of East Belitung District claimed they lacked authority due to the province's takeover, while Bangka Belitung's official argued they could not revoke permits issued by the district government (Interview with Bangka Belitung's Energy and Natural Resources Department official, 2019).

In addition to regulatory inconsistencies, four coastal tin mining permits in East Belitung overlap with regulations from other sectors. Due to the differences in authority across various sectors and levels of government within Indonesia's spatial planning regime, coupled with poorly integrated spatial planning policies, territorial overlaps between sectors occur. Although the One Map Policy has been proposed as a solution to these overlaps, it has yet to successfully harmonise spatial planning across sectors and levels of government. In the case of tin mining, for instance, in 2001, the Minister of Environment mandated the government to conserve coral reefs in waters categorised as good, including those off the coast of East Belitung. However, mining activities inherently damage coral reef conservation efforts. Similarly, in 2016, the Provincial Government designated the waters along the East Belitung coast as part of a marine-based tourism development master plan. As a result, mining activities inevitably lead to contradictions and overlap with the aforementioned regulations (Sholihin, 2021).

The lack of regulation on coastal spatial planning created a "grey area" where various

stakeholders claim territories for their respective economic and social interests. Mining companies claim these territories as mining zones based on existing permits, while local communities, particularly fishermen, claim the coast as a fishing zone, demanding a zero-mining policy. Even though this regulatory chaos reflects poor spatial management in Indonesia, it also provides a political opportunity for various movements to claim anti-mining territory. In this context, the absence of coastal zoning regulations becomes the basis of legal geographies for local communities to oppose mining, despite existing permits.

Zoning struggles to reclaim the anti-tin mining territory

The preceding section demonstrates how the failure of mining companies to grasp the significance of territory led to extensive resistance. However, efforts undertaken between 2016 and 2018 to compel the provincial government to revoke all mining permits in the East Belitung coast did not produce satisfactory outcomes. Regulatory inconsistencies and overlaps allowed provincial and district governments to deflect blame, with the province refusing to revoke permits, citing previous approvals by the district government. This administrative shuffle created a grey area strategy, awaiting the subsiding of resistance actions.

The anti-coastal mining alliance recognises that relying solely on demonstrations and mobilisations is insufficient for achieving long-term demands, particularly since these efforts have not yet led to the revocation of mining permits. Additionally, the financial sustainability of these mobilisations is limited, as the costs associated with ongoing resistance efforts strain their resources, especially when compared to mining companies that possess more stable financial backing to influence state permissions for exploitation (Interview with fishermen's alliance coordinator, 2019).

At the same time, Indonesian regulations mandate that mining activities must adhere to zoning laws established by various levels of government. Each active mining permit requires a "clear and clean" certificate from the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, which ensures that the mining permit area does not overlap with other designated zones. Within this regulatory framework, the anti-mining alliance identified a legal loophole that allowed them to challenge and annul mining permits based on the zoning provisions in the RZWP3K¹. While the RZWP3K plays a pivotal role in coastal and small island management, it has yet to clearly define the allocation of territories in the coastal areas and small islands of Bangka Belitung (Sujadmi & Murtasidin, 2020).

The anti-mining coastal alliance capitalised on regulatory ambiguities regarding coastal zoning to revoke mining permits. According to regulations, if the coastal zone regulation does not designate a mining zone, active mining permits cannot remain operational. By exploiting this ambiguity, the alliance had the opportunity, through legal geography, to transform the coastal area from a mining territory under the mining regime to a non-mining territory under the territorialisation regime. Therefore, even though the political pressure from the alliance weakened, the coastal area could still be safeguarded from tin mining activities.

¹ RZWP3K (*Rencana Zonasi Wilayah Pesisir dan Pulau-Pulau Kecil*) or Coastal Area and Small Islands Zoning Plan is a comprehensive spatial planning instrument that regulates the utilization of coastal areas and small islands in Indonesia. This planning framework, mandated by Law No. 1/2014, is formulated at the provincial level and serves as a fundamental regulatory mechanism for determining permitted and restricted activities within designated coastal zones. The framework encompasses spatial structure establishment, resource utilization patterns, and licensing requirements for various coastal and maritime activities. Its primary objective is to ensure sustainable management of coastal resources while balancing environmental conservation with economic development interests.

The struggle through zoning advocacy began by building alliances with formal political elites in the East Belitung District as political backup. First, this effort commenced with a series of meetings with the East Belitung Head of District to secure formal political support to request the provincial government to revoke coastal mining permits. Following the transfer of mining authority to the provincial level, the district government lost direct benefits from mining activities. Simultaneously, as the 2020 East Belitung regional election approached, the anti-mining issue emerged as a popular political agenda, motivating the head of the district to support the alliance through various political mechanisms. This support included participation in various anti-mining protests, signing a political commitment witnessed by customary leaders of Belitung, and formally sending letters to the Bangka Belitung Provincial Government urging them not to accommodate mining zones in East Belitung's coast (Sholihin, 2021). Furthermore, the district head also actively attended public hearings organised by the Bangka Belitung Provincial Legislature to ensure that the East Belitung coast remained free from tin mining zones (Suharli, 2019).

Second, they also established an alliance with the members of the East Belitung District Legislature. Initially, the district legislature was unresponsive to their demands to free East Belitung waters from mining zones, as conveyed during an earlier hearing. However, following a massive demonstration involving thousands of protesters in late 2017, the local legislature responded positively by forming a Special Committee on Anti-Suction Vessels and Coastal Mining, consisting of 12 legislative members (Qurniawan, 2017). The committee's chairperson, Koko Haryanto, was a former fisherman and village head from the northern coastal region of East Belitung, an area whose coastal waters were also subject to mining permits. As a result, he, alongside

the East Belitung District Head, actively participated in various mobilisations and demonstrations to exclude the East Belitung coast from mining zones (Interview with an East Belitung Legislature Member, 2019).

The work of the Special Committee resulted in two key findings, which were subsequently submitted to the Bangka Belitung Provincial Government, including:

1. Support Belitung as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) for Tourism, as designated by the Central Government, while remaining consistent in not proposing coastal mining before the stipulation of the Coastal Zone Regulation of Bangka Belitung Province.
2. Request that no mining activities be conducted in East Belitung's coastal area until the coastal zone regulation is enacted (Document of the Special Committee's Findings, East Belitung Legislature).

Subsequently, the Chair of the Special Committee and the District Head of East Belitung facilitated representatives of the coalition to participate in a Public Legislative Hearing on the proposed coastal zone regulation at the Provincial Legislature in Bangka Island. Furthermore, both officials personally attended the Legislative Hearing session in July 2019, during which they articulated the collective stance of the East Belitung constituents, who demonstrated unanimous opposition to coastal tin mining operations. The following is a statement from Koko Haryanto during the public hearing:

"Certainly, this must be continuously monitored, I believe. Members of the Provincial Legislature from Belitung must work diligently and seriously to oversee this Draft Regional Regulation. Hopefully, there will not be significant changes once it becomes a regulation, allowing coastal spaces to be utilised promptly for productive activities that can drive the East Belitung economy in

sectors other than mining" (Suharli, 2019).

During the Public Legislative Consultation, Koko strategically engaged with nine representatives from the Bangka Belitung Provincial Legislature who represented Belitung Island's constituencies, garnering affirmative responses from multiple delegates. This political support was subsequently facilitated through systematic legislative advocacy. A notable example involved Beliadi, a founding member of Forum Against Coastal Mining or *Forum Rakyat Tolak Tambang Laut* (FORTAL), who, upon assuming his position as a Provincial Legislature member representing the Gerindra political faction, conducted intensive policy negotiations with Governor Erzaldi, a fellow party affiliate. These negotiations aimed to secure the exclusion of Belitung's coastal waters from designated mining zones (Interview with East Belitung Legislature member, 2019).

Conversely, PT Timah implemented strategic measures to preserve the mining zones within East Belitung's maritime jurisdiction. PT Timah orchestrated the mobilisation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to advocate for their corporate interests. A primary recruited entity was the Indonesian Fishermen Association or *Himpunan Nelayan Seluruh Indonesia* (HNSI). However, empirical evidence revealed that the majority of the Association's leadership hierarchy did not comprise actual fishermen; notably, the chairperson was a mining industry executive. This was exemplified by the case of a Mining Business Permit holder in the Kelapa Kampit coastal region simultaneously serving as the Indonesian Fishermen Association East Belitung director. Through the strategic co-optation and mobilisation of the Indonesian Fishermen Association and various environmental civil society organisations, PT Timah endeavoured to demonstrate the purported compatibility

Table 2.
Local NGOs supporting mining zones along the East Belitung coast

NGO	Narratives
The Indonesia Fishermen Association, Bangka Belitung Region	When the people of Belitung refer to the murky waters of Bangka, the murkiness is not due to mining activities, but rather caused by the weather.
East Belitung Environmental Concern Communication Forum	Concerns about the social and environmental impacts in Bangka do not need to be brought to East Belitung, as the local community is capable of addressing those impacts themselves.
The Indonesian Marine and Fisheries Institute, East Belitung Branch	East Belitung District has no economic potential other than tin mining.

Source: (Sholihin, 2021)

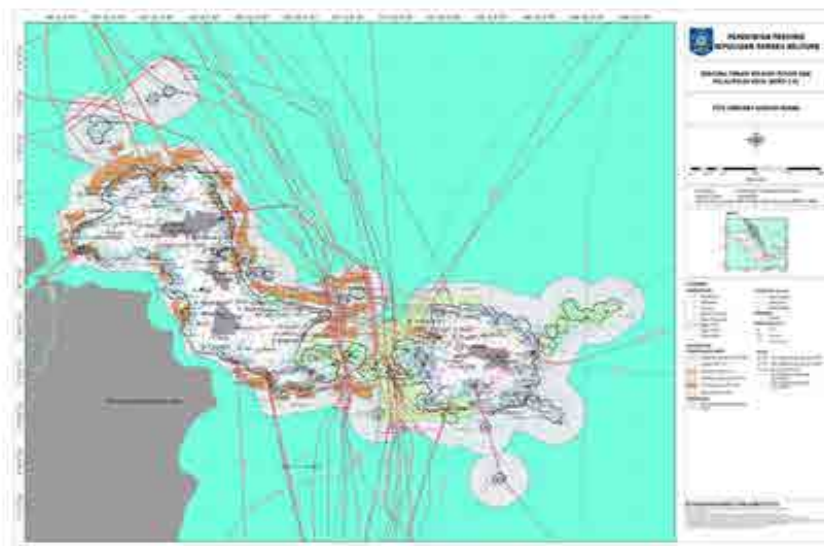


Figure 3. Regional Regulation on Zoning Plan for Coastal Areas and Small Islands (*Perda RZWP3K*) for Bangka Belitung Province 2020-2040

Source: (Rencana Zonasi Wilayah Pesisir dan Pulau-Pulau Kecil Provinsi Kepulauan Bangka Belitung Tahun 2020-2040, 2020)

between coastal mining operations and stakeholders from the fisheries, marine, and environmental sectors (Sholihin, 2021). The following discourse presents statements from local NGOs that endorsed the mining zones during the Public Legislative Consultation at the Provincial Legislature.

Meanwhile, the Provincial Government, as an institution owning the mining authority, holds the responsibility to facilitate the continuation of mining activities by PT Timah and private companies due to their active permits. Consequently, they sought to propose mining zones in the coastal areas of East

Belitung. This intention was evident from a statement by the Provincial Department of Energy and Mineral Resources, which expressed regret over the resistance from the East Belitung community against tin mining in their coastal areas.

"Our department has attempted to accommodate the existing mining permits in the Belitung waters. However, the spatial utilisation in the RZWP3K is not only for mining interests but also involves other interests" (Interview with The Department of Energy and Mineral Resources of Bangka Belitung Province, 2019).

Despite the pressure exerted by PT Timah through its alliances within civil society and political lobbying efforts targeting policymakers at the provincial level to influence the Draft of RZWP3K to accommodate mining zones in the Belitung coastal area, these efforts were insufficient to maintain the mining zones. Ultimately, after years of intense debate, in April 2020, the Bangka Belitung Provincial Legislature passed the RZWP3K, excluding mining zones from all waters surrounding Belitung Island, halting new mining permits and suspending all existing licenses.

The white colour on the map above represents the coastal territory and small islands in Bangka Belitung, while the brown areas indicate mining zones that were previously designated as such along the Belitung coast. The majority of the Belitung coastal zone is marked in green, indicating conservation areas. Additionally, there are designated zones for fisheries, ports, and sea lanes. By implementing these zoning regulations, the community successfully prevented coastal tin mining activities. With the establishment of such coastal zone regulation, the Belitung coast was not designated as a mining zone, preventing new companies from applying for mining permits and existing ones with exploitation permits from conducting mining operations. Consequently, despite a decrease in movement activity afterwards, their territory remained protected from further mining frontier expansion.

In this article, the effectiveness of formal political channels is not only demonstrated by the coastal zone regulation, which does not accommodate mining in the coastal areas of Belitung, but also by the fact that the zoning regulation is adhered to by PT Timah and other licensed companies, as they refrain from exploitation despite their active mining permits. This represents a rare case in Indonesia, where, in most instances, even when regulations accommodate public demands

regarding harmful extractive industries, such rules are often ignored by business actors in the extractive sector (Toumbourou et al., 2020).

The effectiveness of formal political channels: alliance with political elites and re-centralisation of mining authority

By demonstrating the effectiveness and success of formal political channels, this article does not intend to reject the common argument sceptical of formal political channels being open to the public due to collusive business and political relationships (Lyons, 2019; Szablowski, 2019; Warburton, 2023). Instead, this article provides a specific case study that, under certain social, political, and cultural conditions, formal political channels can be effective in meeting community demands. This study proposes two social and political conditions that enable formal political channels to effectively capture anti-mining territory, including alliance with political elites and re-centralisation of mining authority.

Before delving into these two conditions, it is essential to highlight a specific context and precondition that serve as prerequisites: the anti-sea mining issue has become a politically popular topic in Belitung Island. The "anti-sea mining" movement was institutionalised as a significant political issue in 2012, following demonstrations by thousands of local people against the construction of artificial islands for tourism, which involved dredging the coastal waters of Tanjung Pandan (Belitung's city centre). This movement reflects a deep-rooted "attachment to the sea," as the people of Belitung have historically been a maritime society, economically dependent on the sea and culturally tied to it. Since then, the anti-sea mining issue has been discussed in every local political agenda, including local legislative and executive elections. Candidates for district head are publicly questioned about their political positions on protecting the sea from the threats posed by unsustainable industries. This trend

continued in the legislative elections of 2019 and the district head elections in Belitung and East Belitung in 2018 and 2020, respectively. As a result, the growing popularity of the anti-sea mining issue has mobilised significant public action, especially when PT Timah revealed plans to exploit tin along the Belitung coast.

With the aforementioned preconditions established, the following two conditions become clearer. *The first* condition is the alliance with political elites. As outlined in earlier sections, forming alliances with elites has proven to be key to the effectiveness of formal political channels. Movement leaders understand that politicians act rationally, driven by their interests and calculations regarding electoral popularity. The support of elites at the district government reflects electoral and personal interests, where public trust is continually tested within the cycles of local elections.

The political timing during the 2017–2020 period necessitated local politicians to be acutely aware of the electoral incentives and disincentives associated with their political actions. This timeframe encompassed various significant electoral events, including the Belitung district head election (2018), the legislative and presidential elections (2019), and the East Belitung district head election (2020). Within this local context, these political events served as platforms for demanding commitments to anti-sea mining policies while also assessing the positions of politicians or public officials who have historically supported coastal tin mining. Under these conditions, forming alliances with the anti-sea mining movement and contributing to its initiatives provided substantial electoral incentives for politicians. This dynamic locked the East Belitung District Head and members of the district legislature, as well as nine of the provincial legislature members from the Belitung Island electoral district, into the electoral cycle of advocating for East Belitung's

coastal areas to remain free from mining zones. For the anti-mining alliance, elite support at the district level was key to gaining access to meaningful participation in the coastal zone formulation process.

At the provincial level, elite support manifested through pragmatic and personal political interests. The anti-mining coalition's endeavours to exclude Belitung's coastal regions from designated mining zones received accommodation from Didit Sirgusjaya, who served as Chair of the Bangka Belitung Provincial Legislature and leader of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP, a major political party). Didit strategically leveraged his political rivalry with Governor Erzaldi Rosman Djohan of the Great Indonesia Movement Party (Gerindra, another prominent political party), a conflict rooted in their electoral contestation during the 2010 Middle Bangka district election. Motivated by his aspirations to challenge Erzaldi's sibling in the 2020 Middle Bangka electoral race and to secure PDIP's victory in the 2019 legislative elections, Didit systematically utilised local political issues as instruments to critique both Erzaldi's leadership and Gerindra's political positions.

As the chair of the provincial legislature, Didit's support for the anti-mining alliance was evident in several ways: inviting the alliance representatives and hosting meetings during the public hearing, providing opportunities for alliance representatives to voice their concerns during the hearing, and actively ensuring that Belitung Island's coastal areas were excluded from mining zones. Meanwhile, the rest of the 35 provincial legislature members from Bangka Island—out of a total of 45 members—had limited involvement in the zoning debates concerning Belitung's coast. This lack of intervention stemmed from their absence of direct stakes in the mining sector or electoral ties with constituents in Belitung. As a result, there was little advocacy for promoting interests during the *Raperda* (regional

regulation planning) discussions. Thus, the combination of local political elite support and the dynamics of the electoral cycle provided a significant advantage for the anti-mining alliance in Belitung. These factors ensured that formal political channels could effectively accommodate their interests in the coastal zoning process for Belitung Island.

Second, the recentralisation of tin mining authority has limited local institutions' direct and substantial benefits from the tin mining industry. Since all coastal tin mining permits were revoked by the central government. Previously, in 2014, authority on coastal mining within a 0-2 nautical mile area was transferred from the district to the provincial level. As a result, recentralisation has caused local governments to lose significant institutional benefits from the mining industry. Furthermore, politicians at the district level are no longer seen as strategically important to mining companies as they were prior to 2014. Local governments and political elites no longer play a key role when mining companies face licensing challenges. For instance, in the context of Bangka Belitung, efforts by the provincial government to secure a 10% stake in PT Timah through various negotiations have yet to yield results (Rahimah, 2022). Consequently, many local politicians no longer maintain direct relationships with PT Timah and other tin mining companies in Belitung, allowing communities to build alliances independently of these politicians. In conclusion, the recentralisation of mining authority, within the context of regions where anti-mining has become a popular electoral issue, has reduced conflicts of interest at the local level while simultaneously expanding the negotiation space between local communities and local governments.

Discussions

Coastal zone regulation of Bangka Belitung Province stipulates that the coastal

areas in Belitung do not accommodate mining zones, resulting in the inability of existing mining permits to operate and the prohibition of issuing new permits. The findings of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of formal political channels for the anti-mining movement, and regulatory instruments are actively used as political tools to articulate the interests of citizens. This article provides a specific case that contrasts with most literature on resistance movements against mining, which tends to be sceptical about the effectiveness of such channels (Conde, 2017; Toumbourou et al., 2020). This unique case was made possible by the role of political popularity as a catalyst. In the case of Belitung, the anti-mining alliance successfully capitalised on the anti-sea mining issue by framing it within the deeper socio-political context of the region's maritime cultural heritage, where mining activities were perceived as a threat to the community's "attachment to the sea" (Savirani & Wardhani, 2022). This framing garnered widespread public support and provided the movement with legitimacy to elevate the anti-mining territory issue to the political agenda, transforming it into a popular political issue and encouraging politicians to weigh the electoral incentives and disincentives of their stance on this matter.

This study proposes three specific conditions that support the effectiveness of formal political channels. *First*, an alliance with political elites. The anti-mining movement in Belitung leveraged the rational behaviour of politicians, driven by electoral incentives. By capitalising on the popularity of the anti-mining issue, they integrated political elites into the electoral accountability cycle, ensuring electoral rewards for anti-mining supporters and penalties for pro-mining advocates. Although this did not fully materialise during elections, elite support was evidently motivated by pragmatic and personal interests to maintain electoral viability.

Second, exploiting regulatory ambiguities. The overlapping and inconsistent regulations on coastal territorial management provided the anti-mining movement with a legal argument to oppose mining activities. This legal basis proved crucial in counterbalancing the comprehensive licensing documents held by mining companies. While regulatory gaps did not significantly enhance the movement's political leverage, they provided a formal legal foundation to restrict mining activities, even as resistance efforts weakened.

Third, leveraging the recentralisation of mining authority to create new negotiation spaces with elites. The recentralisation of mining authority has reduced the institutional benefits of local governments from mining activities and weakened the patron-client relationships between local elites and mining companies. This shift diminished local elites' motivation to support mining expansion and provided the anti-mining movement with a stronger negotiation platform to build alliances with local political elites in exchange for electoral incentives.

This article addresses a theoretical gap by bringing optimism amidst scepticism regarding citizen participation in mining policies. The anti-mining movement highlighted in this article strategically leverages electoral cycles, cultural values, and regulatory ambiguities to influence policies that accommodate civil society demands (Bebbington et al., 2018; Spalding, 2023). It offers new insights into the study of citizen engagement in natural resource management, emphasising the importance of meaningful participatory spaces for sustainable natural resource governance.

Conclusion

This study challenges the prevailing scepticism in the literature regarding the effectiveness of formal political channels in addressing civil society resistance during extractive industry conflicts. Through the

unique case of East Belitung, it demonstrates that, under specific conditions, such as the popularisation of anti-sea mining as an electoral issue, formal political channels can effectively accommodate community demands. These findings provide new insights into civic engagement and natural resource governance, emphasising the potential of grassroots-driven zoning regulations to reshape territorial management.

Although the findings of this study present promising implications for natural resource governance reform, the long-term effectiveness of these reforms remains uncertain. In long-term, the regulatory success remains vulnerable due to procedural and political constraints. The coastal zone regulation is subject to revision every five years, making it susceptible to power transitions, shifting political landscapes, or stronger political negotiation from mining companies. Moreover, the centralisation of mining authority presents a significant long-term risk, as the central government possesses more comprehensive regulatory instruments, i.e., the Omnibus Law and National Strategic Projects policies, which can override regional regulations to prioritise national economic objectives.

In conclusion, while formal political channels have temporarily delayed coastal mining production, their sustainability depends on consistent public support, the maintenance of "anti-sea mining" as a popular electoral issue, and the accountability of local politicians. It is crucial for the anti-coastal tin mining movement to adapt its strategies by securing ongoing political commitments and actively engaging with electoral agendas to ensure lasting protection for coastal territories.

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