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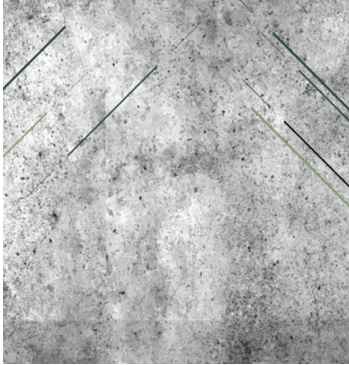
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The Bitter Side of Tourism: Political Ecology of Port Ownership Dispute and Identity Politics in Nusa Penida, Bali

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Abstract

Tourism expansion has increasingly become a dominant development strategy in many coastal and island regions of Indonesia. While tourism-led development is often associated with economic growth and infrastructure improvement, recent studies highlight its socio-ecological consequences, particularly the emergence of resource conflicts and uneven distribution of benefits. However, existing studies largely focus on vertical conflicts between local communities, investors, and the state, while limited attention has been given to the ways tourism development can generate horizontal conflicts among local communities themselves. This article addresses this gap by examining the ownership dispute over Nyuh Kuku Port in Nusa Penida, Bali. This research employs a qualitative case study approach to investigate how tourism-driven economic transformation reshapes local resource relations and triggers inter-community conflict. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis involving community members, local leaders, and relevant stakeholders. The findings show that the rapid growth of tourism since the early 2010s has transformed coastal livelihoods from seaweed farming and fisheries toward tourism-related services. The increasing economic value of port infrastructure generated new forms of competition over access and control of coastal resources. Unequal distribution of financial contributions from tourism transportation operators intensified tensions between Ped Village and Kampung Toya Pakeh Village, leading to competing claims over port ownership. The dispute further evolved through identity mobilization and local elite contestation. This study contributes to political ecology scholarship by demonstrating how tourism development can reconfigure local power relations and transform environmental resource disputes into horizontal conflicts mediated by identity politics.

Keywords: Political Ecology; Tourism Development; Identity Politics; Local Conflict.

Introduction

Almost entering the last two decades, Nusa Penida Island is experiencing a rapid socio-economic transformation along with the expansion of the tourism industry. Since the early 2010s, the area has developed into one of the leading destinations in Bali, characterized by an increase in tourist flows and the development of mobility support infrastructure. Nyuh Kuku Pier became a strategic node in the process, serving as the main entrance and exit of tourists. The intensification of the role of jetties not only expanded local economic activity, but at the same time shifted the utilization pattern of coastal spaces previously dominated by seaweed cultivation.

This change in the function of the space gave rise to an ownership dispute between Kampung Toya Pakeh Village and Ped Village. The conflict is not limited to the administrative framework between the service villages, but is intertwined with the dimension of customs through the involvement of Nyuh Kuku Traditional Village. The complexity increases given that Kampung Toya Pakeh Village is not integrated within the customary village structure as is prevalent in Bali,

so that this dispute brings together two institutional regimes (government of official villages and traditional villages) each of which has a different basis of legitimacy in claiming space.

Empirically, this conflict does not manifest in the form of overt violence, but rather exhibits a persistent accumulation of social tensions. Such tensions are reflected in the strengthening of social boundaries between groups, the friction between youth, as well as the reproduction of ownership claims to space that are transmitted to the next generation. In further developments, this conflict extended into the realm of identity, especially through the articulation of religious differences between the predominantly Muslim community of Kampung Toya Pakeh Village and the predominantly Hindu Ped Village. In fact, before tourism expansion took place, the relationship between the two communities was relatively cohesive and buttressed by a mutual dependence on marine resources.

The shift from solidarity-based social relations to more competitive ones suggests that this dispute cannot be reduced to a mere question of territorial boundaries. Rather, the conflict coincided with changes in local economic structures and the increasing strategic value of coastal space. In this context, the tourism-led development approach helps to explain how tourism-based development promotes the intensification of the economic value of space, while opening up space for an uneven distribution of benefits (Hall, 2019; Fletcher, Murray & Blanco-Romero, 2021). A number of studies assert that this model of development often results in inequality of access to resources and economic opportunities at the local level (Cole, 2012; Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2015).

To read such dynamics in greater depth, Raymond L. Bryant and Sinéad Bailey's (1997) political ecology perspective offers an analytical framework that situates changes in space and environment as the result of power relations between actors. Within this framework, the Nyuh Kuku Pier dispute can be understood as a contestation over control of a strategic resource of increasing value in the context of the tourism economy. Thus, conflict is not solely fueled by scarcity, but rather by imbalances in the distribution of access and management authority. On the other hand, Scott's (1981) moral economy perspective suggests that coastal societies previously buttressed by principles of solidarity and mutual aid mechanisms experienced a shift towards more competition-oriented relations when market logics strengthened, thus opening space for the emergence of horizontal conflicts at the community level (Cole, 2012; Fletcher et al., 2021).

Although the study of conflicts in tourism development has grown, most studies still place conflicts in a vertical framework between local communities with the state or investors (Buscher & Fletcher, 2020). Meanwhile, studies that examine how development conflicts transform into horizontal conflicts through local political dynamics and the articulation of social identities are still limited. In this context, this article suggests that tourism development not only produces vertical tensions, but also reconfigures communities' internal social relations into arenas of horizontal conflict. By combining political ecology and moral economy perspectives, this study reveals how changing control over resources and the penetration of market logics intersect with local political dynamics in shaping social fragmentation and identity politicization at the community level. As such, this article offers a new reading of tourism conflict as a process of transformation of internal social relations, rather than simply a scramble for resources between actors of different scales.

Method

The research method is crucial as a bridge and direction for the author in data collection (Creswell, 2018). In data collection, this paper uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to understand the dynamics of social conflict related to the ownership dispute over Nyuh Kuku Pier on Nusa Penida Island, Klungkung Regency, Bali. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of the social processes underlying the conflict, including how local actors interpret and respond to the dispute in everyday social life. The case study was chosen because the Nyuh Kuku Pier conflict is a social phenomenon with contextual characteristics and is tied to a specific social space. The research focuses on two primary areas involved in the dispute: Ped Village and Kampung Toya Pakeh Village in Nusa Penida District,

Klungkung Regency, Bali Province. Both villages are geographically close to Nyuh Kuku Pier, which has developed as a major transportation point for tourists to Nusa Penida. The pier's strategic location within the tourist mobility network makes it a highly valuable economic space and has given rise to ownership claims from various local actors.

Research data was obtained through primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through field observations and in-depth interviews with several informants directly involved in and knowledgeable about the dynamics of the conflict. Research informants included local communities, village officials, community leaders, traditional leaders, and sub-district government officials involved in the dispute mediation process. Interviews were conducted semi-structured using open-ended questions, allowing researchers to explore informants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding the pier ownership conflict. Informants were selected using primary, key, and additional categories, taking into account their social position and knowledge of the conflict dynamics. This strategy was used to ensure that the data obtained could account for the various perspectives emerging within the community regarding the dispute. In addition to interviews, researchers also observed social and economic activities in the pier area to understand the social context surrounding the conflict. Secondary data was obtained through various supporting documents, such as village administrative archives, local government reports, and academic literature discussing territorial conflict, local politics, and tourism development dynamics. This secondary data was used to enrich the analysis and provide broader context to the phenomenon under study.

Data analysis was conducted in three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, researchers selected and grouped information relevant to the research focus. The organized data was then presented in the form of a thematic narrative to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions through an interpretation process of the relationships between various field findings, thus explaining the dynamics of conflict within the context of changes in the tourism economy in Nusa Penida.

Results

Harmony of Inter-Village Life Before the Dispute

Before tourism developed as a major sector of the local economy, social relations between the communities of Ped Village and Toya Pakeh Village were characterized by relatively harmonious interaction patterns. Social life during that period can be understood as a "social romance" formed through daily practices reflecting solidarity, tolerance, and shared dependence on natural resources. This harmony is reflected in the social interactions, culture, and economic activities of the community, which still retains a coastal agrarian character. Social relations between the communities are maintained through various shared traditions. One social practice that brings the communities of the two villages together is the regular holding of *tajen*, or cockfighting, held by the Toya Pakeh Village community and attended by residents of surrounding villages. Although this practice is normatively viewed as gambling and recognized by the Muslim community, it is more meaningful as a means of strengthening social ties across communities. In practice, the proceeds from this activity are also used to support village development, both infrastructure and social activities.

Furthermore, social relations between the villages are strengthened through the tradition of *ngejot*, the practice of sharing food during religious celebrations. During Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, the people of Toya Pakeh Village provide food to the people of Ped Village, such as traditional cakes or sacrificial meat. Conversely, during *Nyepi* and *Galungan* celebrations, the Hindu community in Ped Village provides *surudan*, food offered in religious ceremonies, to the Muslim community in Toya Pakeh Village. This tradition not only represents interfaith tolerance but also symbolizes social solidarity that transcends religious boundaries. The existence of these traditions demonstrates that differences in belief do not become a source of conflict in the lives of coastal

agrarian communities. Instead, conditions of economic constraints and high dependence on nature encourage communities to build mutually supportive collective relationships. In this context, the social life of the people of Ped and Toya Pakeh Village aligns with James C. Scott's concept of peasant moral economy. According to Scott, subsistence agrarian communities tend to prioritize the principles of togetherness and equity as a survival strategy in times of economic uncertainty. This collective character is also related to the economic structure of the community, which largely works as fishermen and seaweed farmers. Since the 1980s, the Nusa Penida region has been known as one of Bali's leading producers of high-quality seaweed. The community's economic activities are heavily dependent on the sea as its primary source of livelihood. In the seaweed production system, ownership of cultivated land is marked by bamboo stakes and passed down from generation to generation, while the production process involves laborers involved in planting, maintenance, and harvesting. Although it provides income, this commodity is generally only sufficient to meet the community's basic needs. This high dependence on natural conditions exposes the community to various economic risks, particularly when bad weather causes crop failure or a decline in catches. In such situations, the community develops various survival strategies, as explained in Scott's concept of survival mechanisms. These strategies include reducing household consumption, seeking additional employment, and utilizing social networks as an economic buffer system. The practice of borrowing money or goods between neighbors and between villages serves as a concrete form of social solidarity that strengthens the community's communal character.

Furthermore, shared livelihoods also foster solidarity in preserving marine resources as a means of collective production. The community collectively develops social rules to prevent fishing practices that damage the marine ecosystem, such as the use of trawl nets. The sea is seen as a source of life that must be collectively protected, even symbolically personified as a "mother" who provides a livelihood for the community. However, this relatively stable agrarian lifestyle began to change with the development of tourism infrastructure in the Nusa Penida area, particularly since the operation of Nyuh Kuku Pier as a tourist entry point. The presence of the tourism industry has triggered various environmental impacts, particularly marine pollution due to sea transportation activities that traverse seaweed cultivation areas. This situation has sparked resistance from the community, who felt their livelihoods were threatened. Although there were protests and demands for compensation from the sea transportation company, the community's bargaining position was relatively weak because the company has obtained an operational permit from the government.

In the long term, increasing marine pollution and the growth of the tourism industry are driving people away from the agricultural sector and shifting to the tourism services sector. This transformation not only changes the structure of livelihoods but also shifts people's perspectives on natural resources. While previously viewed as a primary means of production that must be protected, in the context of the tourism economy, the sea is positioned more as a commodity that supports tourism industry activities. The transition of community livelihoods from the agrarian sector to the tourism industry in Kampung Toya Pakeh Village, Nusa Penida, represents the dynamics of power relations in development governance that tend to be skewed. Anshori's (2017) findings revealed that the marginalization of seaweed and salt farmers is rooted in weak policy adherence to the protection of the agrarian sector, so tourism expansion proceeds unaccompanied by adequate socio-ecological mitigation mechanisms. This situation is exacerbated by the degradation of coastal ecosystems as a result of fast boat fuel residues in the early phase of tourism development, which directly decreases the productivity of local commodities and weakens the traditional economic base of the community.

"If it used to be (before tourism became the main industry) all day working in the sea, we have plots for seaweed. Yes, if in mainland Bali (Bali Island) they work to the rice fields, we here to the sea. Our asset here yes used to be the plot. (M, former seaweed farmer of Kampung Toya Pakeh Village, 2020).

"... I switched to being a guide at that time because there was no other choice. The income from salt has gone down. Other friends have done the same, especially the seaweed. (C, former Ped Village salt farmer, 2020)

The findings of this study confirm that livelihood transformation takes place through unplanned processes and minimal community participation. Such change occurred autodidactically in the context of structural forcedness, along with limited policy socialization and absence of work transition guidance. This condition reflects an institutional failure to manage economic change inclusively, while at the same time suggesting the existence of a veiled process of dispossession that shifts local communities' control over their resources and living spaces, as well as placing them at a peripheral position in the structure of a tourism economy that is increasingly connected to global market logics

The Onslaught of the Tourism Industry, Commercialization of Marine Potential, and the Origin of the Dispute

The development of the tourism industry in Nusa Penida has historically accelerated since 2012. Compared to mainland Bali, which has prioritized tourism as a primary sector since the 1990s, tourism development in Nusa Penida has lagged behind due to limited accessibility due to its separation from the Bali provincial government. However, the government has since intensively accelerated development with the aim of boosting regional economic growth while addressing issues of poverty, isolation, and regional underdevelopment. Tourism development in this region is the result of policy synergy at various levels of government. Nationally, the direction of tourism sector development is regulated by Law Number 10 of 2009 concerning Tourism, which positions tourism as a strategic sector in national economic development. This policy has been translated into various regional regulations, including the Bali Provincial Spatial Plan and the Klungkung Regency Spatial Plan (RTRW) for 2013–2033, which designates Nusa Penida District as a strategic tourism development area. Within this framework, Ped Village and Kampung Toya Pakeh Village are part of the area directed to support the commercialization of marine resources and the development of tourist destinations.

The implementation of this policy has accelerated infrastructure development and the growth of tourism support facilities such as hotels, villas, restaurants, and various other tourism services. Economically, the tourism sector contributes significantly to regional income. Local government data shows that this sector is a major contributor to Klungkung Regency's Regional Original Income (PAD), reaching approximately 45 billion rupiah in 2019, with the largest contribution coming from the Nusa Penida area. Furthermore, the number of tourist visits has also shown a significant increase, with a total of 1.160.000 visitors in 2025. From a political ecology perspective, this development cannot be understood solely as a process of economic development, but also as a transformation of power relations in the control and utilization of natural resources (Rahmawati & Hidayat, 2019). According to Raymond L. Bryant and Sinead Bailey (1997), environmental change is often closely linked to political and economic dynamics and the distribution of power among actors involved in the development process. In the context of Nusa Penida, the development of tourism infrastructure and increased maritime transportation activity have not only transformed the function of coastal areas but also shifted the utilization patterns of marine resources, which previously served as the economic basis of coastal agrarian communities.

This economic transformation is evident in the shift in community livelihoods, from those previously dominated by seaweed farmers and fishermen to those working in the tourism service sector. The presence of Nyuh Kuku Pier as one of the main entry points for tourists to Nusa Penida has spurred the formation of a new center of economic activity. Various businesses have developed around the pier, including transportation services, porters, restaurants, lodging, grocery stores, and souvenir shops. In this context, the pier serves not only as transportation infrastructure but also as a new economic space, providing livelihood opportunities for local communities. However, the accelerated development of tourism has also brought with it various ecological and

social consequences (Mahagangga & Nugroho, 2020). Increasingly intensive maritime transportation activity has caused pollution and disruption to coastal areas previously used for seaweed cultivation. The damage to the marine ecosystem has directly impacted the productivity of the fisheries and seaweed cultivation sectors, which were previously the primary sources of livelihood for coastal communities. Within a political ecology framework, this situation demonstrates how development projects often result in an unequal distribution of impacts between actors who gain economic benefits and community groups who bear ecological risks (Bryant & Bailey, 1997).

Furthermore, minimal community involvement in the development planning process also weakens the bargaining position of local communities in facing these changes. Many residents admit to not receiving adequate information about tourism development plans before development projects are implemented. This top-down development pattern indicates that development decisions are determined more by the government and investors than by local communities as the parties directly affected (Prasetyo, 2023). In the literature on political-economic tourism, this phenomenon is often referred to as tourism-led development, a development strategy that positions tourism as a driver of economic growth, it often results in an unequal distribution of environmental benefits and risks (Cole, 2012; Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2015). In this context, community resistance did emerge, particularly from seaweed farmers and fishermen who felt that maritime transportation activities had damaged their means of production. However, the weak organizational base of the community and the availability of short-term economic compensation prevented this resistance from developing into a broader social movement. Interestingly, after the vertical conflict between the community and investors subsided, a horizontal conflict emerged between the communities of Ped Village and Kampung Toya Pakeh Village regarding the ownership and management of Nyuh Kukuh Pier.

This dispute stemmed from the issue of the distribution of economic benefits from the pier's activities. The communities of Kampung Toya Pakeh believed that the area was previously a shared use area when it was still used for seaweed cultivation. However, after the pier developed into a center of tourism economic activity, various forms of contributions and compensation from investors were received by only one village. This situation gave rise to perceptions of injustice, which then triggered claims regarding ownership and management of the pier area. Thus, the Nyuh Kukuh Pier dispute demonstrates that tourism development not only changes the economic structure of the community but also triggers shifts in power relations regarding the control of local resources. From a political ecology perspective, this conflict can be understood as a consequence of the commercialization of coastal space, transforming natural resources from a collective means of production into an economic commodity contested by various actors with differing interests (Agustang, 2019).

Discussion

False Energy: Environmental Politicization and the Nyuh Kukuh Pier Dispute

The transformation of community livelihoods in Nusa Penida, particularly in Ped Village and Kampung Toya Pakeh Village, cannot be understood solely as the success of economic development through tourism. Behind the increased economic activity accompanying the growth of the tourism industry, there are socio-ecological dynamics that highlight the problematic side of development. The glorification of tourism development as a driver of community welfare tends to obscure the various negative implications that arise, particularly coastal environmental degradation and the emergence of social conflict between communities (Ardika, 2018). Beyond the issue of compensation, the development of Nyuh Kukuh Pier must be situated within a broader policy framework that positions Nusa Penida as a strategic tourism zone at both national and provincial levels. Through Government Regulation No. 50 of 2011 concerning the National Tourism Development Master Plan (RIPPARNAS) 2010–2025, Nusa Penida is designated as part of a National Tourism Strategic Area (Kawasan Strategis Pariwisata Nasional/KSPN), reflecting its prioritization in

national tourism expansion. This designation is further reinforced through Bali Provincial Regulation No. 16 of 2009 on Spatial Planning, which categorizes Nusa Penida as a Strategic Provincial Tourism Area. These regulatory frameworks institutionalize tourism as the dominant development trajectory, legitimizing infrastructure expansion, including the intensification of maritime access through facilities such as Nyuh Kuku Pier.

Within this policy context, the development of port infrastructure cannot be understood as a neutral or purely technical intervention. Rather, it represents a state-driven spatial reconfiguration aimed at integrating local coastal areas into broader circuits of tourism capital. However, the implementation of this agenda reveals a limited degree of community involvement in decision-making processes. Empirical accounts indicate that the expansion of tourism infrastructure, including the operation of fast boat services, proceeded without adequate consultation or participatory planning with affected communities. As a consequence, local residents were positioned primarily as objects of development rather than as subjects with agency in shaping its trajectory. From a political ecology perspective, this situation demonstrates how development projects often operate through a process of environmental politicization that involves the interests of various actors with differing positions of power (Wiranatha et al., 2021).

From a political ecology perspective, this situation demonstrates how development projects often operate through a process of environmental politicization that involves the interests of various actors with differing positions of power (Wiranatha et al., 2021). The political ecology analytical framework developed by Raymond L. Bryant and Sinead Bailey emphasizes that environmental change in developing countries never occurs neutrally. Rather, such change is the result of interactions between the state, economic actors, and local communities in the process of controlling and utilizing natural resources. In the context of the Nyuh Kuku Pier dispute, these three actors can be clearly identified. The state is represented by governments at various levels, from village and district governments to provincial governments, which determine tourism development policies (Nordholt & Van, 2019). Business actors are represented by fast boat investors who utilize the pier as the primary infrastructure for tourism transportation. Meanwhile, the communities of Ped Village and Kampung Toya Pakeh Village are grassroots actors directly impacted by the environmental and economic changes that occur.



Figure 1. Nyuh Kuku pier location and former seaweed cultivation location

Source: Primary Data, 2023.

The development of maritime transportation activities at Nyuh Kuku Pier has significant ecological consequences. Fuel waste from fast boat activities is slowly polluting the coastal area, which was previously used for seaweed cultivation. This condition has led to a decline in seaweed cultivation productivity and has impacted fishermen's catches. For coastal communities that previously relied on agriculture and the maritime sector for their livelihoods, these changes directly threaten their subsistence economic base. In other words, the development of tourism infrastructure not only changes the function of coastal areas but also reshapes the pre-existing local economic structure.

The initial community reaction to these changes actually took the form of resistance. Several community leaders from Ped Village and Kampung Toya Pakeh Village attempted to demand compensation for the damage to seaweed cultivation areas caused by maritime transportation activities. One resident even revealed that tourism development was carried out without adequate outreach to the community:

"There was never any outreach, let alone any questions about what tourism development would be like. Suddenly, the number of tourists increased, and so, even self-taught residents rented motorbikes and cars. Some even became guides." (Waik, 2020).

However, this resistance movement did not develop into a broader social movement. Within a political ecology framework, this situation can be understood as part of a strategy of domination employed by economic and state actors to mitigate potential vertical conflict (Yang et al., 2013). As Bryant and Bailey argue, dominant actors often respond to community pressure by providing short-term economic compensation, which ultimately weakens the solidarity of community movements.

In the case of Nyuh Kuku Pier, community demands were finally accommodated through compensation provided by fast boat investors. However, this compensation did not resolve the underlying issue, namely the damage to the coastal ecosystem that resulted in the loss of the community's means of production. In fact, the compensation provided served as a starting point for new tensions because the distribution of economic benefits from the pier's activities was not evenly distributed among the affected communities. Fast boat investors then made voluntary contributions of approximately 27 million rupiah per month to Ped Village, the village that administratively oversees the dock area. Some of these funds were also allocated to Nyuh Kuku Traditional Village, which holds customary authority over the area. This policy of providing donations based on administrative area gave rise to perceptions of injustice among the residents of Kampung Toya Pakeh Village. For these villagers, environmental damage caused by dock activities was a shared loss, yet the economic benefits were only received by one village. This situation illustrates how an unequal compensation distribution strategy can trigger horizontal conflict between communities. From a political ecology perspective, this phenomenon is often understood as a strategy of divide and rule that indirectly shifts the vertical conflict between communities and investors into horizontal conflict between local communities (Yang et al., 2024).

In addition to these dynamics, changes in the economic structure of communities can also be explained through the perspective of the peasant moral economy developed by James C. Scott. Scott asserts that agrarian communities are fundamentally subsistence-oriented, prioritizing livelihood stability. However, when a market economy begins to dominate, social relationships previously based on solidarity and subsistence norms become commercialized (Putra & Pitana, 2020). In the context of Nusa Penida, this process is reflected in the shift in people's perspectives on the sea. While previously viewed as a source of livelihood that must be protected, in the context of tourism, the sea is now understood as an economic commodity that can be exploited for profit.

This transformation in perspective is inseparable from the reproduction of development discourse by the government and investors. The tourism industry is consistently presented as a symbol of progress and modernity, believed to improve community welfare. Narratives of new job opportunities, increased incomes, and modern living become important instruments in building

social legitimacy for tourism development projects. Consequently, community resistance to the ecological impacts of development is gradually fading as community involvement in tourism economic activities increases. However, the successful integration of the community into the economic logic of tourism does not simultaneously eliminate the potential for conflict. As the pier develops into a promising center of economic activity, new competition emerges for control of these resources. The ownership dispute over Nyuh Kukuh Pier between Ped Village and Kampung Toya Pakeh Village is a manifestation of this process. The conflict, which initially concerned environmental issues and community livelihoods, eventually evolved into a conflict over territorial claims and the distribution of economic benefits.

In the dynamics of this dispute, the role of local elites cannot be ignored. Both the village government and the customary village have political and economic interests related to the management of the pier's resources, including the management of voluntary donations from investors. The lack of transparency in the management of these funds raises indications of abuse of power in local resource governance. This situation aligns with criticisms of the implementation of village autonomy, which show that strengthening local authority is not always accompanied by increased accountability of village governments (Dwipayana, 2003). The involvement of customary villages in the dispute also demonstrates how cultural identity can be used as a political instrument in resource conflicts. The Nyuh Kukuh Traditional Village asserts that the pier area lies within their customary territory and therefore has the cultural legitimacy to maintain control over it. The strengthening of the customary village's position has further gained legitimacy following legal recognition of it through regional regulations in Bali. In this context, customary identity serves not only as a cultural symbol but also as a source of political legitimacy in maintaining access to economic resources.

The above complexity leads to the understanding that the dispute over ownership of Nyuh Kukuh Pier is more than just an administrative dispute over village boundaries. The conflict is the result of a more complex process involving local economic transformation, environmental degradation, unequal benefit distribution strategies, and the political interests of local elites (Kangas, Tolvalen & Kyttä, 2022). A political ecology perspective demonstrates that this conflict is a consequence of the commercialization of coastal resources within the framework of tourism development, which places local communities in a vulnerable position. Without resolution efforts that comprehensively consider the social, ecological, and political dimensions, this horizontal inter-community conflict has the potential to persist and even deepen the marginalization of local communities in the tourism development process divide and rule concept indirectly shifts the vertical conflict between communities and investors into horizontal conflict between local communities. (Wang et al., 2016).

In the dynamics of this dispute, the role of local elites cannot be ignored. Both the village government and the customary village have political and economic interests related to the management of the pier's resources, including the management of voluntary donations from investors. The lack of transparency in the management of these funds raises indications of abuse of power in local resource governance. This situation aligns with criticisms of the implementation of village autonomy, which show that strengthening local authority is not always accompanied by increased accountability of village governments (Dwipayana, 2003). The involvement of customary villages in the dispute also demonstrates how cultural identity can be used as a political instrument in resource conflicts. The Nyuh Kukuh Traditional Village asserts that the pier area lies within their customary territory and therefore has the cultural legitimacy to maintain control over it. The strengthening of the customary village's position has further gained legitimacy following legal recognition of it through regional regulations in Bali (McKercher, 2025). In this context, customary identity serves not only as a cultural symbol but also as a source of political legitimacy in maintaining access to economic resources.

Reinforcing Identity Issues in the Pier Dispute

The agrarian issues surrounding the ownership dispute over Nyuh Kuku Pier between Kampung Toya Pakeh Village and Ped Village demonstrate that resource conflicts are not solely economic or administrative. As analyzed through the perspectives of political ecology and peasant moral economy, development practices oriented toward village capitalization have given rise to the marginalization of grassroots communities through the politicization of the environment and the internalization of market ideology. In this context, tourism development not only triggers coastal environmental degradation but also creates space for social conflict and the transformation of inter-community relations. From the political ecology perspective developed by Raymond L. Bryant and Sinead Bailey, environmental conflict is fundamentally linked to the distribution of power in the control of natural resources. Inequality in the control and allocation of agrarian resources forms the foundation for the struggle for access to strategic resources, including the pier, which serves as tourism economic infrastructure. This aligns with Noer Fauzi Rachman's (2016) argument, which emphasizes that agrarian conflicts are often rooted in unequal resource control structures that fuel competition between social actors.

In the case of Nyuh Kuku Pier, the dimension of resource struggles is clearly evident in the economic aspect, particularly regarding the distribution of voluntary contributions made by fast boat investors to the village each month. These contributions constitute a new economic resource of strategic value to the village government. Therefore, the dispute over pier ownership reflects not only a territorial boundary conflict but also a struggle for political and economic interests between local elites seeking to maintain and expand control over these resources. Furthermore, the changes in the community's economic structure resulting from the development of the tourism industry can also be understood through the perspective of the peasant moral economy proposed by James C. Scott. Scott explains that agrarian communities fundamentally develop collective solidarity as a survival strategy in vulnerable economic conditions. This solidarity is manifested through various social and cultural practices that strengthen inter-community ties. In the context of the communities of Ped Village and Kampung Toya Pakeh, this solidarity was previously reflected in various shared activities such as the *ngejot* tradition, cockfighting, sports tournaments, and the practice of mutual security during religious holidays.

These social relations demonstrate that multiculturalism among communities has long been shaped through the experience of living together as "Nusa people." Religious differences are not seen as a source of conflict because communities have a collective awareness of interdependence in navigating the economic constraints of the archipelago. Even though spatial segregation based on religious identity exists, this has never sparked significant social tension. Historically, this spatial segregation is rooted in past royal policies. During the heyday of the Klungkung or Gelgel Kingdom, residential areas for Muslim communities were granted as a reward for the loyalty of Muslim soldiers in the war against Dutch colonialism in the 17th century. These settlements became known as "Javanese Villages," including Toya Pakeh Village, which has since developed into a Muslim community in Nusa Penida. One informant explained:

"...we also have minimal written historical records. But it was probably around the time of the Puputan Kusamba War. Because the Muslim soldiers were loyal, the king granted them land to settle." (Ketut, 2020).

Unfortunately, this multicultural harmony began to erode when a dispute arose over ownership of Nyuh Kuku Pier. Tensions that initially related to territorial boundary issues gradually escalated into identity conflicts between village communities. Previously cooperative social relations have transformed into competitive, even antagonistic, relationships. Some social practices, such as *ngejot*, joint sports activities, and participation in securing religious activities, have ceased. At the same time, the reproduction of multicultural discourse in everyday life has been replaced by discourses of identity distinctions such as "local" and "immigrant," "majority" and "minority," and the

the label "neighboring village." This phenomenon demonstrates how resource conflicts can develop into identity conflicts through the politicization of identity. In this context, identity does not emerge naturally as a source of conflict, but is instead produced and reproduced through specific political practices. Referring to political ecology analysis, the strengthening of identity sentiment cannot be separated from eco-interests. The political economy of local elite actors involved in the dispute. Since the pier's re-operation, tourism development practices have been imbued with various elite interests, exploiting development narratives for social legitimacy.

"...we only found out what they were like after the pier started producing. Maybe they forgot who they were fighting for." (Informan A, 2020).

"With the dispute, I'm quite tolerant of people whose intentions are to undermine us. We gave them our land a long time ago." (Informan B, Local Resident Ped Village, 2020).

This statement demonstrates how historical narratives and moral claims are used to strengthen the legitimacy of each party in the conflict. From a local political perspective, the use of this kind of identity narrative is often linked to efforts to mobilize public support. Since the reform era, the opening of democratic space through decentralization has provided greater opportunities for local elites to exploit identity issues as a political strategy. This phenomenon has also attracted the attention of local political observers such as Gerry van Klinken and Henk Schulte Nordholt (2007), who believe that decentralization in Indonesia often gives rise to local strongmen or elites who exploit political power to maintain dominance at the regional level. The greater distribution of authority to regional and village governments opens up opportunities for the emergence of local oligarchies, including in the management of village economic resources.

"...territorial boundaries have been discussed since 2012, but the community didn't really care. It wasn't until the election campaign became more public that the public began to join in." (Bowo, 2020).

Through various social forums such as village meetings, village development deliberations, traditional gatherings, and even informal conversations in coffee shops, identity discourse is continuously reproduced in people's daily lives. This process gradually shapes the collective perception that the pier conflict is not simply an economic or territorial issue, but also relates to the honor of group identity.

"We're lucky, if we hadn't been made aware during the campaign, we might not have known that our position as a minority is under threat." (Mamak, 2020).

This statement demonstrates that feelings of being threatened as a minority group do not emerge entirely organically within society, but rather are formed through the politicization of identity by elite actors. In other words, identity becomes a political instrument used to strengthen internal solidarity and mobilize community support in the conflict. Critically examining these dynamics, the strengthening of identity issues in the Nyuh Kuku Pier dispute cannot be separated from the interaction between resource conflicts, economic transformation due to tourism, and local political practices in the era of decentralization. This conflict demonstrates that economic development unaccompanied by equitable resource management has the potential to trigger social fragmentation in a multicultural society. In this context, identity becomes a new arena for the struggle for interests of local elites who seek to maintain or expand control over village economic resources.

Conclusion

The ownership dispute over Nyuh Kukuh Pier demonstrates how tourism development in coastal areas fundamentally reconfigures the control of strategic resources, reshapes social relations, and transforms local governance structures. Within the framework of tourism-led development, infrastructure such as the pier is not merely a supporting facility, but a key economic asset that concentrates access to mobility, capital circulation, and tourism revenue. In the context of Nusa Penida, the transformation of the pier from a coastal production space into a tourism gateway has elevated its value as a contested resource, thereby intensifying competition over its ownership and management. This shift in the material significance of the pier is accompanied by a transformation in how communities relate to natural resources. The sea, once embedded within a subsistence-oriented moral economy, is increasingly redefined as a commodified space within the tourism market. As a consequence, social relations that were previously sustained by norms of solidarity and interdependence are progressively reorganized through competitive and exclusionary logics. In this setting, access to the pier becomes a critical determinant of economic positioning, creating new forms of differentiation within and between communities.

From a political ecology perspective, the conflict surrounding Nyuh Kukuh Pier reflects a struggle over the control of newly valorized resources, where unequal access generates tensions that extend beyond material interests. The contestation over the pier is not only about economic benefits, but also about authority, territorial claims, and legitimacy in governing space. As tensions escalate, these material disputes are increasingly articulated through identity-based narratives. Differences in religion, locality, and communal belonging are mobilized to reinforce claims over the pier, transforming an initially resource-based conflict into a conflict infused with symbolic and cultural meaning.

Importantly, the dynamics of this conflict reveal that the competition over the pier does not affect the community uniformly. Groups that are able to secure access to tourism-related opportunities benefit from the reconfiguration of the local economy, while others (particularly those whose livelihoods depend on traditional coastal practices) experience exclusion and marginalization. In this context, identity becomes a strategic instrument through which groups negotiate, justify, and defend their claims over contested resources. As a result, the dispute over Nyuh Kukuh Pier evolves into a layered conflict in which struggles over economic resources are inseparable from the politicization of identity.

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