

**EXPLAINING THE UNEXPLAINED: SEA LEVEL RISE AND
THE COMPLEXITY OF COASTAL GOVERNANCE IN INDONESIA
(THE CASE OF SEMARANG)**

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ABSTRACT

For centuries, the coastal area of Semarang has been known for its vulnerability to the threat of sea-level rise. Despite its geographical features as a low-lying and flood-prone swampy zone, the interlocking socio-ecological processes in this area—most notably groundwater extraction and capital-driven development—coupled with the ongoing climate crisis, have intensified the threats of sea-level rise and exacerbated inequalities in how those risks are experienced, making it a historically rooted and highly complex issue to resolve.

Adopting a normative-empirical method, this study aims to present a comprehensive overview of how laws and policies related to coastal governance have influenced the current conditions of sea-level rise in Semarang, through a combination of literature review, semi-structured interviews, and non-participatory observations. In addition to this analysis, this research also incorporates a socio-legal approach, particularly by employing political history analysis to examine coastal governance practices during the colonial period and its implications for the ongoing realities along the coast.

The findings suggest that legal mechanisms intended to address sea-level rise in Semarang may, paradoxically, contribute to its intensification. Indeed, in a system where authorities pursue a development agenda rooted in a capital-intensive economic growth model, coastal governance becomes even more challenging, as it may pose a threat to the very political and economic structures that have contributed to the phenomenon of sea-level rise in the first place. In fact, the laws and policies designed to tackle the crisis have been shaped by these enduring structural forces—rooted in and sustained since the colonial era—and have arguably come to uphold the unequal economic model they were meant to change.

Keywords: Sea Level Rise, Coastal Governance, Socio-Ecological Processes, Colonial Legacy, Legal Mechanisms.

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**MENJELASKAN YANG TAK TERJELASKAN: KENAIKAN MUKA AIR LAUT
DAN KOMPLEKSITAS TATA KELOLA PESISIR DI INDONESIA
(STUDI KASUS SEMARANG)**

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INTISARI

Selama berabad-abad, pesisir Semarang dikenal sebagai wilayah yang rentan terhadap kenaikan muka air laut. Selain kondisi geografisnya sebagai dataran rendah rawan banjir, kerentanannya diperburuk oleh proses sosial-ekologis yang saling mengunci—seperti ekstraksi air tanah dan pembangunan berbasis kapital—serta krisis iklim yang terus berlangsung. Kombinasi ini memperkuat ancaman sekaligus memperdalam ketimpangan atas dampak yang dirasakan, menjadikannya persoalan struktural yang menyejarah dan kompleks.

Penelitian ini menggunakan metode normatif-empiris untuk mengkaji bagaimana hukum dan kebijakan tata kelola pesisir membentuk kondisi terkini kenaikan muka air laut di Semarang, melalui studi pustaka, wawancara semi-terstruktur, dan observasi nonpartisipatif. Pendekatan sosio-legal turut diterapkan, dengan analisis sejarah politik untuk menelusuri praktik tata kelola pesisir sejak masa kolonial dan dampaknya hingga kini.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mekanisme hukum yang dirancang untuk mengatasi kenaikan muka air laut justru berpotensi memperburuknya. Dalam sistem yang berorientasi pada pembangunan ekonomi padat modal, tata kelola pesisir menjadi semakin kompleks karena berbenturan dengan struktur politik dan ekonomi yang menjadi penyebab krisis. Faktanya, hukum dan kebijakan yang dirancang untuk mengatasi krisis ini justru dibentuk oleh permasalahan sistemik yang telah mengakar serta dipertahankan sejak era kolonial—dan secara paradoksial justru berperan mempertahankan model ekonomi yang timpang, yang seharusnya diubah.

Kata Kunci: *Kenaikan Muka Air Laut, Tata Kelola Pesisir, Proses Sosial-Ekologis, Warisan Kolonial, Mekanisme Hukum.*

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