

## RESEARCH ARTICLE



## Power Struggles and Conflict Visibility in Contested Political Forests: A Case Study in Sukaslamet Village, Indramayu Regency, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Forest tenure conflicts have been a problem in Perhutani's management areas for decades. As an entity authorized to manage, exploit, and protect most of the forest areas in Java, Perhutani's forest management is not free from land occupation issues. The duality in viewing land rights between Perhutani from the legal side and the community from the historical side of control is a narrative that continues to be debated and is challenging to resolve. This study aims to describe the local dynamics of forest tenure conflicts through empirical evidence of the historical trajectory of forest tenure in the Perhutani management area in Indramayu. Using a qualitative research method, this study presents case studies of land tenure conflict events within the framework of conflict visibility assessment and the Actor-Centered Power (ACP) approach in its analysis. The results of the conflict visibility assessment show the gradation and historiography of forest tenure conflicts in Perhutani-managed areas and produce several important findings to complement the forest tenure conflict literature. The research findings show how shifts in actor power led to changes in forest tenure conflicts in Indramayu. Finally, the establishment of the Forest Areas with Special Management policy as an effort to resolve conflicts can cause new contestations by inviting other powerful actors.

## Introduction

The implementation of forestry governance is centered on land tenure and control over land use and utilization. Over 60% of Indonesia's land is claimed to be state forest area controlled by the forestry sector itself [1]. The Dutch colonial government initiated the establishment of a formal framework for forest areas, which was effectively operationalized in Java. Through the *Boschordonantie voor Java en Madoera* 1865 and *Domeinverklaring* 1870 regulations, the government made land claims (forests) that could not be proven to have ownership rights [2]. These claims were followed up through the management handover to *Jawatan Kehutanan (Dienst van het Boschwezen)*, which later transformed into the State Forestry Companies (Perhutani). Perhutani is the entity that manages, exploits, and protects most of the forest areas in Java to date. This arrangement is often termed the oldest political forest in Indonesia, where forest areas are used to territorialize state power [3,4].

Territorialization practices in the form of forest area claims, boundary demarcation, and use control are carried out to limit community access to forest areas [5]. Therefore, people who violate the restrictions are often perceived as forest encroachers, which is often the cause of tenurial conflicts [6]. Various studies have demonstrated the complexity of tenurial conflicts in areas claimed as forest areas, particularly in Perhutani-managed areas [5–8]. Diverse efforts continue to be made to resolve these conflicts, including the approval of Social Forestry (SF). This policy aims to provide rights to local communities regarding forest utilization, support livelihoods, and achieve conservation outcomes [9,10]. However, the SF policy is considered a form

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of State interest to regain control of forest areas [10]. The implementation of SF limits commercialization space and creates a subsistence economy, so it has yet to alleviate peasant poverty [1,11].

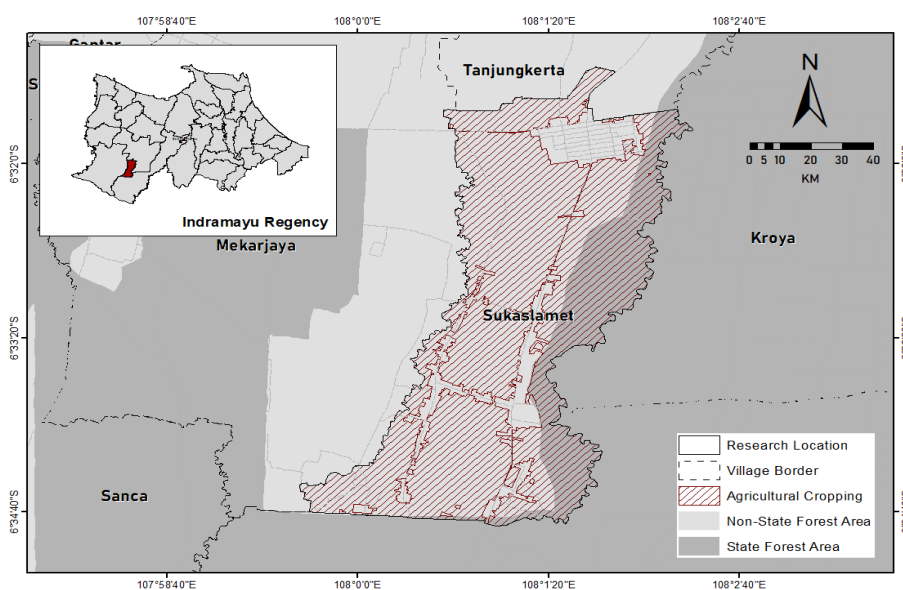
Similar problems occur in Indramayu Regency, West Java Province. The forest area in Indramayu Regency reaches 40,741.76 ha, which is divided into production (32,845.91 ha) and protected (7,895.85 ha) forest areas [12]. The entire forest area is included in the management area of Perhutani's Forest District, locally referred to as the *Kesatuan Pemangkuan Hutan/KPH* Indramayu. A series of technically but politically charged forest management operations were conducted to limit peasant access to land use and forest products. Limited access to peasants has led to prolonged tenurial conflicts, including those over the control of forest areas. Based on the results of Perhutani's site typology assessment [13], KPH Indramayu is categorized as an adaptive management unit in which social issues strongly influence the composition of the management area. Furthermore, almost 80% of its management area is categorized as a tenurial conflict and adaptive zone. This categorization shows that the forest area in KPH Indramayu strongly interacts with various community activities, such as timber theft and farming. Peasants have narrow management spaces and are often subordinate to Perhutani. As in other locations in Java, the SF policy has stalled as a conflict-resolution effort. The SF policy is not attractive because peasants want tenurial certainty in the form of land certificates that have been controlled [14].

In principle, peasants' limited access to forest areas is the ultimate reason for various tenurial conflicts in forest areas. Using the case of forest tenure conflicts in the management area of Perhutani, a state company mandated to manage almost all production and protected forests in Java and Madura, this study attempts to explain the local dynamics of peasant land tenure. In particular, this study attempts to find empirical evidence on the historical trajectory of the visibility of land tenure conflicts in Perhutani-managed areas in KPH Indramayu. This will provide a better picture of struggles over the use of and access to forest areas in Indonesia, complementing the existing literature. To explain this, this research develops a conflict visibility assessment framework to present the conflict in latent and manifest gradations [15]. Furthermore, conflict analysis was examined using the Actor-Centered Power (ACP) theory developed by Krott et al. [16]. ACP theory has been intensively tested in several studies [8,17–19] focusing on understanding actors' empirical power resources in socio-political relationships.

## Methods

### Research Location

This research was conducted in Sukaslamet Village, a forest village within the management area of Perhutani. Administratively, Sukaslamet Village is located in the Kroya Sub-district, Indramayu Regency, West Java (Figure 1). The village covers an area of 1.445 ha, 83% of which is dedicated to agricultural cropping, particularly rice fields. Moreover, with a population of 12,231 individuals, almost 90% depend on land-based livelihoods for sustenance.



**Figure 1.** Map of research location in Sukaslamet Village, Indramayu Regency.

Peasants have long engaged in agricultural cropping practices. In fact, according to Fernando [20], rice commercialization in West Indramayu has occurred since the 1880s. The practice has continued to increase with population growth due to the migration of agricultural laborers from Cirebon in the early 1900s. This historical trajectory has resulted in massive agricultural cropping practices, even in state forest areas. At the research location, there is over 300 ha of state forest area, which has long been an area of conflict between Perhutani and peasants. Figure 1 illustrates that although the area is legally under Perhutani's management, peasants utilize the entire state forest area in the village as agricultural cropping areas.

### Data Collection

This study used both the primary and secondary data. The secondary data used in the study included legal regulations, government documents, Perhutani documents, newspapers, and reports from relevant studies. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews with the informants, respondents, and participant observations. Informants provided general information and insights, especially regarding matters outside themselves, whereas respondents provided information and insights about themselves. Informants and respondents were determined using the snowball sampling technique [21]. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of different data sources. The triangulation technique involves collecting data from various sources and analyzing them comprehensively [22]. This process was continued until no further differences were found, and reconfirmation was deemed unnecessary.

### Data Analysis

This research seeks to understand social issues, particularly land tenure conflicts, in the Perhutani KPH Indramayu management area. Thus, the research uses a qualitative method with a case study strategy [22,23]. Qualitative methods can better capture detailed explanations of social reality from research subjects. In addition, qualitative methods can describe the complexity of a problem by investigating its underlying causes [24]. Data analysis was carried out descriptively, qualitatively, and through two stages of analysis. First, the dynamics and visibility of land tenure conflicts were analyzed using the actor-based conflict visibility assessment framework approach [15]. This approach focuses on the gradation of the interaction of conflicting actors (peasants and perhutani) in latent and manifest situations [25]. Then, the analysis of actor power uses the Actor-Centred Power (ACP) approach, which focuses on three elements of power, namely coercion, disincentives, and dominant information [16].

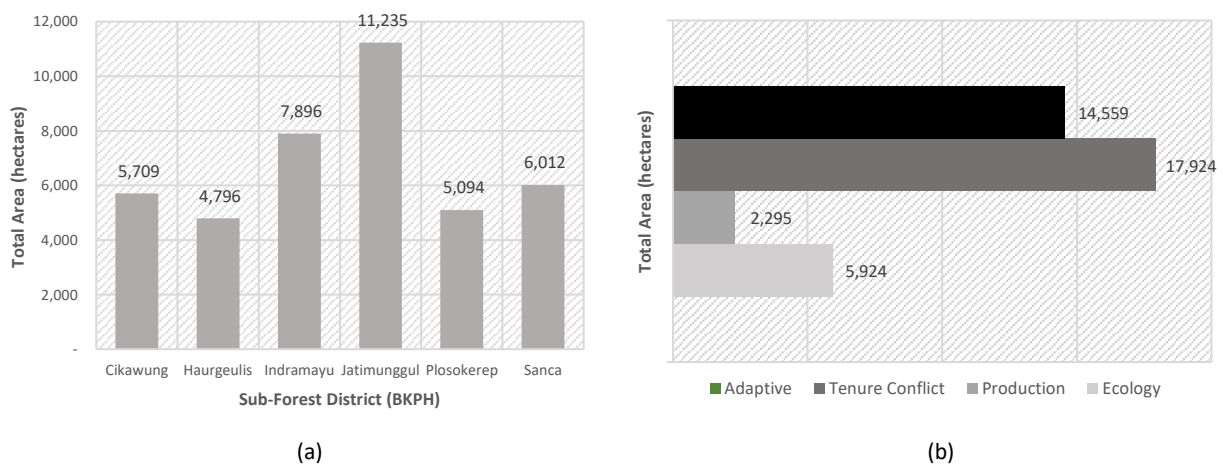
## Results and Discussion

### Historical Description of Forest Tenure in KPH Indramayu

As explained earlier, establishing the Forestry Bureau (*Jawatan Kehutanan*) was a critical milestone in the state's control of forests. This institution has become a tool for the state to territorialize most of the forests in Java. In 1873, the Forestry Bureau established a territorial forestry organization by dividing its area into several forest districts (*Bosch District*), which was later strengthened through 1897 forestry laws. Furthermore, the forest area in Indramayu became part of the management of the *Bosch District*. The practice of forest arrangement through the establishment of forest boundaries is carried out to support forest management and restrict access to local communities. Establishing forest area claims with various restrictions is a form of state territorialization of land maintained today [3,4].

The existence of the Forestry Bureau persisted into the post-independence era of Indonesia. In 1957, the devolution of forestry autonomy to Provincial Governments led to changes in West Java's forestry management structure. Based on Government Regulation No. 64/1957 on the Transfer of Central Government Affairs (including Forestry) to Regional Governments, forest management by the Forestry Bureau was replaced by the Provincial Forestry Agency. The forest area (including in Indramayu) was divided based on forest management units with boundaries set by the Minister of Agriculture. Moreover, after fully recognising Indonesia's sovereignty (1949), various rebellious movements emerged in West Java, especially the *pagar betis* tragedy of *Darul Islam* and the *aksi sepihak* tragedy of the *Partai Komunis Indonesia* [1,5]. During this period, the forest area in Indramayu became a political battleground, resulting in forest degradation [7]. Despite the long history of forest management on Java Island, the Perhutani entity in West Java was legally established in 1978. Through Government Regulation No. 2/1978 on the Addition of Production Units of the State Forestry Companies, the entire state forestland in West Java, including the Indramayu Regency, was designated as a management area of Perhutani.

Currently, the state forest area in Indramayu Regency is managed by Perhutani's Forest District, locally referred to as *the Kesatuan Pemangkuan Hutan/KPH* Indramayu. Covering a managed area of 40,741.76 hectares divided into 6 Sub-Forest Districts (*Bagian Kesatuan Pemangkuan Hutan/BKPH*), there are 28 villages directly interacting with the state forest area [12]. As explained earlier, the KPH Indramayu management area is one of the areas with high conflict intensity. The high interaction with various community activities often conflicts with Perhutani's forest management mandate, especially since only 2,294.6 hectares (5.64%) of the forest area are considered explicitly for Perhutani's production activities (Figure 2). However, in 2022, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) Decree No. 287/2022 was issued, designating 33.138 ha (84%) of forest area in Indramayu as Forest Areas with Special Management (*Kawasan Hutan Dengan Pengelolaan Khusus/KHDPK*). Departing from the assumption of forest management failure on Java Island, this policy revokes Perhutani's authority over designated areas. This received opposition from Perhutani and was considered an effort to re-centralize forest management in Java. However, some see this policy as an innovation in the stagnation of forest management by Perhutani. The KHDPK policy is considered to correct Perhutani's failure owing to many social problems. Despite potential failures in implementation, the basis of this policy provides space for peasants to gain better livelihood options [26].



**Figure 2.** (a) Division of KPH Indramayu management area based on BKPH [12], (b) The results of the typological site assessment by Perhutani [13].

## Dynamics of Forest Tenure Conflict

### *The Period of 1978–1997*

As mentioned earlier, various rebellion movements post-Indonesian independence turned the forest area in Indramayu into a political battleground, causing forest degradation and influencing the community's interaction with the forest [5,7]. In Sukaslamet, peasants have been practicing agricultural cropping in forest areas since the early 1960s, after the expulsion of *Darul Islam* rebels from the forest area. This practice persists despite the transfer of authority to Perhutani in 1978. Peasants cultivate forest areas through a shifting agroforestry system, depending on Perhutani's logging areas. The system is entirely under the control of Perhutani personnel, such as *mantris* or *mandors*. Perhutani personnel have the power to determine who and where the cultivation of forest areas occurs. It is not uncommon for Perhutani personnel to resort to eviction threats (locally referred to as *patok merah*) against peasants deemed to violate regulations. In addition, peasants are charged a fee (locally referred to as *catu*) for the harvest of their cultivation. Despite occasional small-scale resistance from peasants, the Perhutani personnel wield sufficient power networks to address these issues. Security forces and law enforcement were practically carried out by Perhutani personnel. This approach is deemed effective in suppressing peasant resistance and upholding forest management mandates due to support from a totalitarian regime [5,8].

### *The Period of 1998–2010*

The political and economic crisis 1998 escalated the conflict between peasants and Perhutani (KPH Indramayu) into an open confrontation. The reform dynamics in rural communities have led to various grassroots movements, resulting in increased tenurial conflicts and forest degradation [6]. Apart from the

heightened intensity of timber theft, this movement triggered various activities related to peasants' occupation of forest areas. Peasants have attempted to gain full control over the forest area by damaging Perhutani's plants, sometimes leading to violence [27]. Despite Perhutani introducing the *Pengelolaan Hutan Bersama Masyarakat/PHBM* policy—a co-management approach involving local communities in forest management—incidents of timber theft and plant damage persist and tend to increase. According to Andriyana and Hogn [28], various pressures and the euphoria of reform have driven changes in Perhutani's approach to addressing conflict situations. The issuance of internal regulations on PHBM (Director Decree No. 136/2001 concerning of Community Based Forest Management) opens up opportunities for peasants to access a greater flow of benefits from forest resources. Nevertheless, the practice and implementation of the PHBM faced various rejections from Perhutani's structures at the KPH level and illegal logging networks at the site level.

In Sukaslamet, the implementation of the PHBM was effective only in 2006. It began with establishing a Village Forest Community Organization locally known as *Lembaga Masyarakat Desa Hutan/LMDH*. In the PHBM scheme, peasants must be affiliated with an LMDH institution to implement co-management practices. The PHBM policy was initially considered effective in reducing the intensity of forest disturbances that had occurred. However, some internal policies of the KPH Indramayu have rekindled the conflict, bringing it back to an open stage. In 2010, KPH Indramayu initiated efforts to regulate the agroforestry land that peasants had controlled. Peasants are required to create bunds, clear pathways for the main agroforestry species, and redesign the intercropping pattern of Eucalyptus plants. The coercive approach is again employed by threatening to revoke cultivation rights if peasants fail to adhere to prescribed conditions. The action faced adverse reactions in the form of protests as it was deemed detrimental to peasants. However, these protests proceeded to the mediation stage, facilitated by LMDH administrators.

**Table 1.** The dynamics of forest tenure conflict in Sukaslamet Village, Indramayu Regency.

Time	Event of conflict
1978	Based on Government Regulation No. 2/1978 on the Addition of Production Units of the State Forestry Companies, the Central Government revoked the Provincial Government's forestry authority and designated the West Java forest area (including in Indramayu) as Perhutani's managed area.
1990	The peasants began to resist Perhutani's coercive approach, but the conflicts were not massive/collective and could be suppressed through Perhutani's policy instruments.
1998	The political and economic crisis during the reform era resulted in various incidents of forest looting, timber theft, and community-driven occupation of forest areas.
2001	Perhutani introduced the PHBM policy in response to reform dynamics, but forest looting and timber theft incidents persist.
2006	The practice of co-management through PHBM is implemented by establishing LMDH (Forest Village Community Organization) and signing cooperation agreements.
2010-2011	Peasants protest actions against the policies of KPH Indramayu include the redesign of the agroforestry land policy (2010) and the planting of forestry plants (2011).
2012	Peasants affiliated with the local farmer organization (STI) have started demanding the implementation of agrarian reform.
2013-2014	The various actions of peasants and members of STI in demanding their interests received responses from Perhutani personnel and security forces.
2018	The weakening of STI's influence in Sukaslamet due to differences in the views of STI elites towards IPHPS policies.
2022	Through MoEF Decree No. 287/2022 issuance, all forest areas in the village are designated as KHDPK areas, while peasants continue their agricultural cropping practices.

### ***The Period of 2011–2014***

Without a clear resolution to the previous issues, KPH Indramayu once again implemented policies to control forest areas in the village. In 2011, an internal policy emerged to plant *Anthocephalus cadamba* trees in intercropping areas. This policy also garnered protests, as it was seen as Perhutani's attempt to take control over intercropping lands owned by peasants [4]. Furthermore, the scale of protest actions was more significant than in the previous year. Prolonged demonstrations are more structured and target institutions other than Perhutani, such as the Regional Representative Council and Regency Government. Subsequently, the protest ended through a mediation process between Perhutani and the peasant masses facilitated by the Regency Government. This is not unrelated to the role of various grassroots movements that have been proliferating since the reform era [8]. Moreover, the protests involved diverse actors who were perceived to be able to resolve these issues.

The intensity of these conflicts has escalated since the emergence of various social movements by peasants in Indramayu. In 2012, peasants in Sukaslamet—particularly those cultivating forest areas—began to affiliate with a local farmers' organization, *Serikat Tani Indramayu/STI*. Although the organizational scale is at the district level, the collective involvement of Sukaslamet peasants constitutes one of the main pillars of the STI movement. The presence of STI in Sukaslamet transforms the relationship between peasants and Perhutani. First, peasants began to affiliate with other farmers' organizational networks at the local and national levels. At the national level, STI is affiliated with organizations such as *Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria/KPA* and *Aliansi Petani Indonesia/API*. Furthermore, STI is also a member of *Komite Nasional Pembaruan Agraria/KNPA*—an alliance of agrarian reform movement organizations at the national level—thereby strengthening the political position of peasants in advocating for their interests [8].

Second, the spread of agrarian reform ideals aligned with the needs of peasants further strengthens the influence of STI, subsequently leading to an increased intensity of conflict. Since the formation of STI, various protest actions have proliferated, both through minor actions (damaging Perhutani plants) and confrontations against Perhutani personnel. Even during this period, the financial losses suffered by KPH Indramayu due to forest disturbances are the highest in West Java [29]. With the support of the STI network, peasants have become increasingly courageous in halting various Perhutani activities in the field. The peak of conflict escalation between peasants affiliated with STI and Perhutani occurred in 2013. Initiated by protests against the construction of a reservoir (dam) within a forest area in one of the STI base villages, this action culminated in violent conflict. Differing from previous actions that consistently culminated in mediation stages, this time, Perhutani responded to STI's actions using a coercive approach. In conjunction with security forces, Perhutani conducted sweeps of villages affiliated with STI members and engaged in intimidation towards peasants who were members of the STI. Besides leading to a clash between the two factions, this incident resulted in the apprehension of several STI elites, who were deemed provocateurs. The actions eventually garnered public condemnation, mainly from various national-level organizations affiliated with STI.

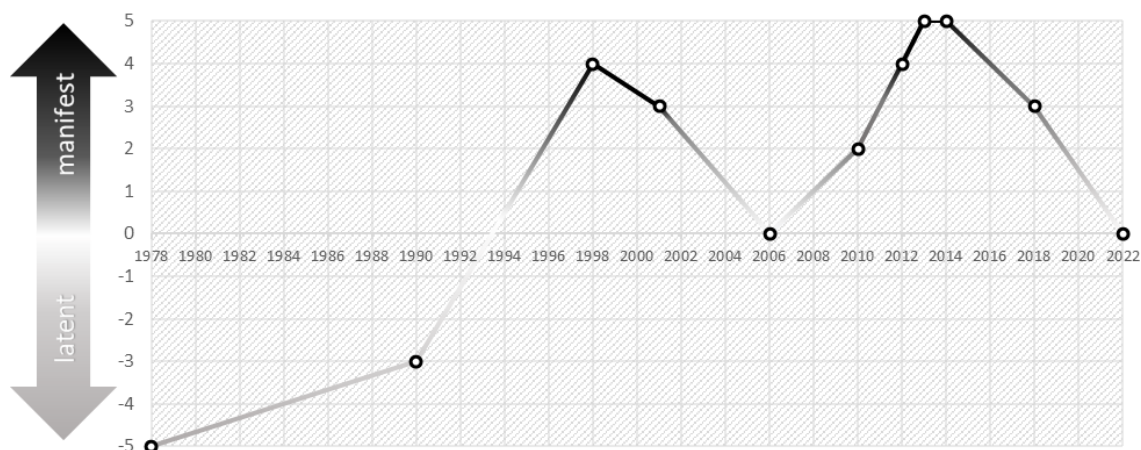
### ***The Period of 2015–2022***

After various incidents, the influence of the STI continued to strengthen the organization of peasants. The STI organization persistently consolidated its power both internally and externally. The STI organization is considered to provide security in peasants' practice of agricultural cropping. The various strategies used practically inhibit the movement of Perhutani personnel who have been considered 'pests' by peasants. Moreover, STI also issued a counter 'cultivation card' to legitimize peasants' access to the land they controlled. In the end, Perhutani was increasingly pressured and forced to reduce its interest in forest areas in the village. Nevertheless, the influence of STI in Sukaslamet has declined because of differing views among STI elites regarding the *Izin Pemanfaatan Hutan Perhutanan Sosial/IPHPS* policy (MoEF Regulation No. 39/2017 concerning of SF in Perhutani Management Area), which subsequently divided peasants into STI and non-STI members.

The organization of the STI endured in Sukaslamet until MoEF Decree No. 287/2022 was issued, designating the entire forest area in Sukaslamet as KHDPK. This policy entirely revokes Perhutani's authority over the forest areas in the village, especially given the absence of remaining stand assets. Furthermore, the KHDPK policy opens up avenues for legitimizing peasants' access to forest areas through social forestry schemes. Nevertheless, the long history of forest tenure conflicts has made peasants sceptical of various government promises. Currently, peasants are seeking higher recognition of the rights to the land they control, not just social forestry [14,30].

### **Conflict Visibility and Power Relations**

The dynamics of tenure conflicts in KPH Indramayu show a series of processes of state territorialization in forest areas, as well as counter-territorialization by peasants [3]. Therefore, a more heuristic approach is needed to measure the visibility of conflicts resulting from the territorialized practices of the state. Figure 3 shows the visibility of forest tenure conflicts in Sukaslamet Village. The visibility trend line shows the gradual escalation of conflict from a latent to a manifest situation, returning to latent at a certain point in the year. According to Sahide et al. [15], state actors (Perhutani) tend to suppress conflicts in latent situations through various policy interventions. Meanwhile, peasants tend to escalate conflicts in manifest situations to attract public attention and improve their bargaining position.



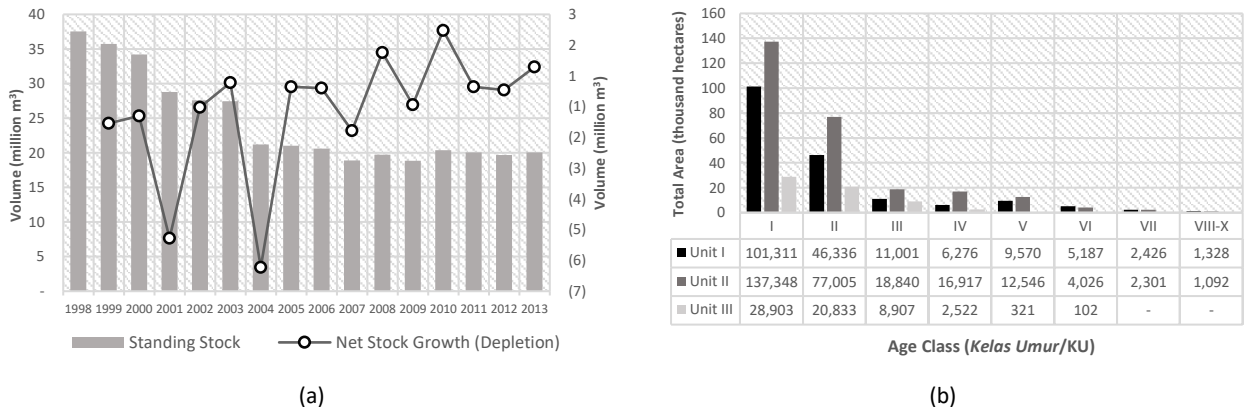
**Figure 3.** The histogram of the conflict visibility (Adapted from Sahide et al. [15]).

### **Reform Dynamics and Teak Forest Destruction**

Although conflict escalation has occurred since the 1990s, the conflict remained in a latent situation for almost two decades (1978–1997). This is closely tied to the historical roots of Perhutani's authority in Java Island. The studies by Peluso [5] have demonstrated the extent of Perhutani's power during this period. Perhutani field personnel even become a daunting spectre for peasants as they patrol armed. Even Peluso [5] described Perhutani personnel as an 'additional armed force' in securing forest areas during this period. With various coercive powers at its disposal, Perhutani personnel can maintain control over various activities conducted by peasants. Although there was resistance from peasant farmers in the early 1990s, with the support of the totalitarian regime, Perhutani's coercive power managed to suppress that resistance. This is also in line with the findings of Charmakar et al. [31], where formal institutions (Perhutani) tend to employ coercive power in exercising their authority.

In 1998, the escalation of conflict sharply increased towards a manifest situation. This occurred as an accumulation of various triggering situations due to the euphoria of reform. Although Perhutani still employs coercive power in responding to timber theft and forest occupation situations [8], this faces resistance from peasants. According to Andriyana and Hognl [28], the timber theft and forest occupation movement is a retaliatory response to the coercive approach traditionally conducted by Perhutani. Figure 4a shows that Perhutani's teak assets have declined since the reform era [32]. Waves of timber theft in 2001 and 2004 led to the depletion of standing teak assets, which led to an overall decline in teak standing stock. Moreover, various calls for 'land for the people' by President Gus Dur encouraged peasants to take control of Perhutani's damaged lands due to encroachment. Thus, the structural condition characterized by a significant power disparity between Perhutani and peasants and the political turmoil of reform propelled the conflict situation to become significantly manifest [19,27]. The problem continues, resulting in significant financial losses for Perhutani. State losses due to the depletion of Perhutani teak stands in 1998–2013 were estimated at IDR 6.4 to 15.1 trillion [32].

Eventually, conflict escalation could be driven to the basic visibility level after implementing the PHBM policy in 2006. The manifest conflict escalation in 1998 still needed to be sufficiently stable due to the absence of a robust external coalition and the conflict's predominantly politically driven nature of turmoil reforms. However, the destruction of teak assets during the reform period has severely affected Perhutani. Perhutani's coercive power is no longer a frightening spectre for peasants [8]. Moreover, the stand structure dominated by young stands (Figure 4b) further emphasizes that Perhutani's power cannot guarantee the sustainability of its production. On the other hand, Perhutani began introducing PHBM to resolve conflicts and engage communities in forest management. Perhutani began to lower its level of interest and build coalitions with the Government, both at the district and village levels. Although the traditionally practised coercive power is perceived to weaken, this can be regarded as a shift in Perhutani's approach to implementing incentive-based strategies through co-management practices [16]. Initially, the implementation of PHBM was deemed effective in mitigating conflicts in various areas managed by Perhutani [34,35], thus propelling the conflict situation to a basic visibility level. However, implementing PHBM is merely considered Perhutani's effort to regain control over forest areas and often triggers conflicts with peasants [5].



**Figure 4.** The condition of Perhutani's teak stands; (a) Standing stock and net stock growth (depletion) from 1998–2013 [32], (b) Age class structure of teak stands in 2013 [33].

### Power Shifts in Contestation over Control of Forest Areas

Based on Figure 3, several moments triggered the conflict to return to a manifest situation. The conflict escalation shifted from basic visibility (scale 0) in 2006 to maximum (scale 5) in 2013, which persisted until 2014. As previously explained, during this period, both parties responded strongly by forming their respective coalitions and maximizing their available resources in escalating the conflict [15]. The escalation pattern differs from the previous escalation (1998), due to the involvement of other actors outside Perhutani and peasants. Since the reform era, the influence and participation of various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local farmers' organizations have been strengthening in PHBM [8,28]. The involvement of other actors in the conflict, especially the presence of STIs, changes the pattern of interaction between peasants and Perhutani. Based on the historical roots of prolonged conflict and disillusionment with various internal Perhutani policies, peasants began to change their resistance strategies against Perhutani's dominance. Peasants strengthen their power through collective action (horizontal relationships), establishing coalition networks with supra-local civil society groups, and forging connections with various stakeholders to reinforce their political position [36].

The situation led to a power shift in the forest tenure conflict occurring in KPH Indramayu. The weakening of Perhutani's coercive power and the failure of PHBM incentives have made Perhutani no longer the sole dominant actor in the political contestation for forest control in Indramayu [8]. Meanwhile STI has emerged as a new force by leveraging sources of power such as incentives and dominant information to consolidate the power of peasants. The dominant information on agrarian reform spirit and security incentives in practising agricultural cropping further strengthens the power of peasants, especially the power of STI. Ultimately, this power shift affects the visibility level of forest tenure conflicts. With their various sources of power, peasants succeed in pushing conflicts far into the manifest level. At the same time, Perhutani policy interventions have proven unsuccessful in resolving land occupation issues in their managed areas. This further emphasizes the causal relationship between power shifts and the visibility of conflict in forest occupation in the Perhutani management area [19].

### Political Forest Renegotiation and Open Moments

Although the conflict situation returns to basic visibility due to KHDPK policies (Figure 3), it does not address the underlying issues regarding forest area occupation. Through this policy, the central government seeks to revoke Perhutani's authority and renegotiate forest areas occupied by peasants. Under the guise of restructuring rights and access to forest areas, the central government offers access in the form of SF permits for those forest areas. However, the complexity of the existing problems is considered impossible to answer only by this policy. This policy has the potential to fail and will only be a policy rhetoric that only fulfils administrative needs [9,26,30]. Indeed, this constitutes a renegotiation of rights over forest areas, wherein the state endeavours to regain control over the political forest [4]. On another front, the dynamics of the conflict have led peasants to develop a distrust towards forestry authorities. They perceive that cultivating forestry plants equates to legitimizing forestry authority over the land they control.



Moreover, the ambiguity of operational regulations regarding forest area management, especially concerning who benefits from potential forest areas, may invite free riders to the contestation. How and by whom the forest will be distributed remains a fundamental question that has yet to be answered [26]. In addition, information uncertainty still colours policy implementation, which further muddies contestation at the local level. Lund [37] calls this situation an 'open moment', where the reordering of the social order through the redefinition of rules and land tenure relations offers double-edged possibilities for the reassertion or erosion of power. During periods of intense realignment, pre-existing power disparities allow powerful parties to capitalize on 'open moments' to strengthen their interests [1,38].

## Conclusions

Conflicts can be dynamic because they can be influenced by various variables such as national policies, law enforcement, and different interests between actors. The historical trajectory of forest tenure practices in the research location shows a series of state territorialization processes in forest areas, as well as counter-territorialization carried out by peasants. Our findings further strengthen the literature on how power dynamics at the local level should concern policymakers. The results of the conflict visibility assessment show the gradation and historiography of land tenure conflicts in the Perhutani management area and produce several essential findings to complement the literature on forest tenure conflicts in Indonesia.

First, land tenure conflicts in Perhutani's forest management practices have revived local territorialization practices by peasants. The practice of local territorialization emerged as a manifestation of resistance to the practice of state territorialization in the Perhutani management area. Second, shifts in actor power have led to changes in land tenure conflicts. The presence of STIs as a new power in the conflict continuum can become a source of strength for peasants to maintain their existence in forest tenure practices. Third, the establishment of the KHDPK policy as an effort to resolve conflicts can cause new contestations by inviting other powerful actors. The policy causes an 'open moment' situation where there is a possibility for other powerful actors (besides Perhutani and peasants) to strengthen their interests in the forest area.

## Author Contributions

**EDS:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Writing - Review & Editing; **SS:** Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision; and **RM:** Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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