

### *Book Review*

**Sholahudin, Umar. (2024). “Konflik Agraria: Kebijakan Industrialisasi, Dualisme Hukum, dan Dekade Krisis”. Intrans Publishing. 182 pp.**

**Abdus Sair<sup>1\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Doctoral Program in Social Sciences, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Airlangga University.  
[abdus.sair-2019@fisip.unair.ac.id](mailto:abdus.sair-2019@fisip.unair.ac.id)

#### **Abstract**

The book *Konflik Agraria: Kebijakan Industrialisasi, Dualisme Hukum, dan Dekade Krisis* offers a critical reflection on the imbalance in the management of agrarian resources in Indonesia. It thematically discusses issues of agrarian reform, the historical roots of conflict, sociological-legal approaches, and case studies such as Banyuwangi, which illustrate how industrialization policies have escalated land conflicts. The author highlights the dominance of state and corporate power in shaping policies, along with the weak legal protection afforded to agrarian communities. While the book presents important data and case studies, it is considered lacking in theoretical depth, field-based approaches, and transformative solutions. Additional criticism is directed at its disjointed narrative structure and less evocative language. Despite these limitations, the book serves as a valuable starting point for understanding agrarian conflict, though it leaves ample room for deeper conceptual exploration and approaches more aligned with social justice.

**Keywords:** *agrarian conflict, industrialization, agrarian law, agrarian reform, social justice.*

#### **Abstrak**

Buku *Konflik Agraria: Kebijakan Industrialisasi, Dualisme Hukum, dan Dekade Krisis* merupakan refleksi kritis atas ketimpangan pengelolaan sumber daya agraria di Indonesia. Buku ini mengulas secara tematik persoalan reforma agraria, sejarah konflik, pendekatan sosiologi hukum, hingga studi kasus di Banyuwangi yang menunjukkan bagaimana kebijakan industrialisasi justru memicu eskalasi konflik tanah. Penulis menyoroti dominasi kekuasaan negara dan korporasi dalam menentukan arah kebijakan, serta lemahnya perlindungan hukum terhadap masyarakat agraris. Meski menyajikan data dan studi kasus yang penting, buku ini dinilai kurang mendalam dalam pemanfaatan teori, minim pendekatan lapangan, dan belum menawarkan solusi transformatif. Kritik utama juga diarahkan pada struktur naratif yang terpisah dan penggunaan bahasa yang kurang menggugah. Buku ini menjadi kontribusi awal yang berguna, namun masih menyisakan ruang untuk pendalaman konseptual dan pendekatan yang lebih berpihak pada keadilan sosial.

**Kata kunci:** *konflik agraria, industrialisasi, hukum agraria, reforma agraria, keadilan sosial.*

**\*Corresponding Author:** Abdus Sair ([abdus.sair-2019@fisip.unair.ac.id](mailto:abdus.sair-2019@fisip.unair.ac.id)). Doctoral Program in Social Sciences, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Airlangga University. Kampus B UNAIR Jl. Airlangga 4-6, Surabaya. Indonesia.

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## Introduction

Agrarian conflict remains one of the structural issues that persistently recurs throughout Indonesia's socio-political history. These conflicts go beyond mere land disputes; they reflect the deep-seated power imbalances between the state, corporations, and agrarian communities. The roots of agrarian conflict in Indonesia can be traced back to the colonial era, when the Agrarian Law of 1870 (*Agrarische Wet*) and the *Domeinverklaring* policy enabled the colonial government to monopolize land ownership, allowing customary lands to be claimed as state property (Peluso, 2016).

After independence, efforts toward agrarian reform were initiated through the enactment of the Basic Agrarian Law (*Undang-Undang Pokok Agraria* or UUPA) No. 5 of 1960. However, the implementation of this law stagnated, especially under the New Order regime, which prioritized industrialization and economic growth. This developmentalist orientation led to widespread land conversion—particularly of agricultural and forest areas—into industrial zones, large-scale plantations, and infrastructure projects, resulting in land dispossession for many communities (Lucas & Warren, 2013).

Legal dualism between customary law and state law has further complicated the issue. Many indigenous communities are not formally recognized in their land rights, despite managing their land for generations (Kurniawan & Rye, 2024). Meanwhile, the state, through various policy instruments, often grants land concessions to large companies without consulting or securing consent from local populations.

According to the Consortium for Agrarian Reform (*Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria* or KPA), agrarian conflicts have significantly increased over the past two decades, both in terms of number and the total area of land involved. In 2022 alone, there were 212 recorded agrarian conflicts involving over 500,000 hectares and affecting thousands of farming families, indigenous peoples, and coastal communities (Konsorsium Pembaruan Agraria, 2023).

In this context, the book *Konflik Agraria: Kebijakan Industrialisasi, Dualisme Hukum, dan Dekade Krisis* is essential reading. It not only

explores the historical roots of agrarian conflict but also offers a critical analysis of state policies that often favor capital interests while neglecting agrarian justice.

## Discussion

The book *Konflik Agraria: Kebijakan Industrialisasi, Dualisme Hukum, dan Dekade Krisis* presents a profound reflection on the persistent agrarian problems in Indonesia. The author unpacks the complexity of land conflicts through a multidisciplinary approach that attempts to bridge theory and social reality yet simultaneously leaves some critical gaps that warrant further examination.

From the very first pages, the book clearly aligns itself with marginalized agrarian communities who have been sidelined by the sweeping tide of industrialization. The author highlights how state policies that promote development and industrialization have, in fact, contributed to the marginalization of people's land rights. The ideal of Indonesia as a *rechtsstaat* (rule of law state), envisioned within a welfare state framework, is portrayed as inconsistent with legal practices on the ground. Rather than acting as a protector of citizens, the state is often seen as a dominant actor in perpetuating agrarian inequality (Umar, 2024: 1).

The book is divided into seven thematic chapters, beginning with the foundational ideas of agrarian reform. In this chapter, the author revisits the spirit of the Basic Agrarian Law (UUPA) of 1960, presenting it as a progressive legal foundation. The UUPA is framed within the context of a legal state aimed at realizing agrarian justice. Unfortunately, the discussion tends to be normative and becomes trapped within legal idealism, failing to sufficiently demonstrate how legal norms actually clash with the socio-political realities in practice.

Moving into the second chapter, readers are presented with data and narratives concerning development, conflict, and agrarian crises. Here, the book's strength becomes apparent, especially in the use of data from institutions such as the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA). Case studies of agrarian conflicts in various regions, including East Java, are presented as evidence that these conflicts are systemic rather than incidental. The author convincingly shows that

the roots of conflict lie not only in overlapping policies but also in the weak legal protection for indigenous communities, farmers, and local populations (Umar, 2024: 13).

However, when the book transitions to discussing agrarian conflict through the lens of legal sociology, the narrative becomes less compelling. While the author attempts to connect agrarian conflict to social theory—including Charles Stanford's concept of chaos (Umar, 2024: 34), the analysis leans more toward a compilation of literature rather than offering a fresh theoretical synthesis. Instead of introducing a novel perspective, this chapter gives the impression that the author has yet to fully integrate theory with the empirical cases discussed earlier. There are no field findings critically analyzed through a distinct socio-legal approach, which causes this section to feel detached from real-world experiences.

The following chapter explores power and legal monopoly by the state. The author elaborates on how law is not neutral but rather serves as an instrument controlled by powerful actors—namely the state, corporations, and local elites. The analysis of how dominant groups monopolize legal authority stands out as one of the book's highlights. In this view, agrarian conflict is understood not merely as a legal or administrative issue, but as a consequence of asymmetrical power relations (Umar, 2024: 49). Unfortunately, the book does not delve deeper into how law is manipulated by these dominant actors in practice.

Chapter five marks a crucial turning point in this book, as the author presents a case study from Banyuwangi as a concrete example of how industrialization policies have triggered conflict. The industrial zone project, initiated by the local government and handed over to the private sector, has proven to be a source of escalating conflict over the land in Bongkoran, Wongsorejo. The designation of this area as an integrated industrial zone through Regional Regulation (Perda) No. 8 of 2012 by the Banyuwangi Regency Government and Regional House of Representatives (DPRD) indirectly legitimized the interests of PT Wongsorejo, a company that has long been in conflict with the local residents (Umar, 2024: 63). This illustrates how local legal instruments can be used to reinforce capital domination while disregarding the existence of

residents who have inhabited the land for generations.

The agrarian conflict in Bongkoran, discussed in chapter six, reveals the grim reality of the relationship between the state, corporations, and the people. Bongkoran is home to nearly 300 farming families who have lived on the land even before Indonesian independence. However, their existence has not been legally recognized. PT Wongsorejo, claiming to hold a Right to Cultivate (HGU) derived from colonial-era erfpacht rights, asserts control over more than 600 hectares of land, including 220 hectares in Bongkoran (Umar, 2024: 89). Here, the author implicitly reveals how colonial legacies, in the form of erfpacht rights, continue to serve as legal justification for the exploitation of people's living spaces—even in the post-reform era.

The final chapter highlights the bleak reality of agrarian reform implementation in Indonesia. The author firmly asserts that agrarian reform efforts have often been reduced to political slogans with little genuine implementation. In practice, the government tends to side with corporations rather than protect its citizens. Land redistribution policies are still sluggish and often merely administrative in nature (Umar, 2024: 141), rather than serving as transformative efforts to dismantle structural inequality. As a result, agrarian conflicts continue to emerge, with their intensity even increasing over time.

However, despite offering many important insights, the book contains several critical shortcomings. One of the main weaknesses lies in its heavy reliance on secondary sources and the lack of in-depth field-based research. Although the author includes several case studies, such as the agrarian conflict in Banyuwangi or Bongkoran, the narratives mostly depend on institutional reports or documentary references rather than empirical research grounded in the lived experiences of affected communities. Consequently, the book feels somewhat removed from the actual social realities. The author appears to observe from a distance rather than immerse in the socio-political dynamics on the ground.

Additionally, from a theoretical standpoint, the book struggles to build a solid analytical framework. Although some theories are mentioned such as Charles Stanford's theory of

chaos and several approaches in the sociology of law their presentation feels rushed and lacks depth. These theories are not fully contextualized within the agrarian conflicts discussed, making them appear more like supplementary quotations than sharp analytical tools. Unfortunately, this weakens what should have been the book's analytical strength and causes its arguments to fall flat.

Another shortcoming lies in the book's inability to offer a synthesis or more progressive ideas. While the author successfully highlights the state's bias toward corporations, the book ultimately stops at critique. It does not propose concrete alternatives for agrarian policy, conflict resolution strategies, or institutional designs that could ensure agrarian justice in the future. In other words, the book reveals problems more than it offers pathways forward.

The structure of the book, divided into seven thematic chapters, also gives the impression of a fragmented narrative. Each chapter stands on its own and is not fully connected within a coherent logical thread. This makes it difficult for readers to grasp the overarching line of thought from beginning to end. The sections on history, law, and case studies run in parallel without strong conceptual integration.

In terms of writing style, the book uses a tone that is academic and informative but lacks emotional appeal. Yet, agrarian issues are not only about land—they are about justice, livelihood, and human dignity. The absence of a narrative that touches on human aspects makes the book less capable of evoking empathy from readers, especially those unfamiliar with technocratic language.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, *Konflik Agraria: Kebijakan Industrialisasi, Dualisme Hukum, dan Dekade Krisis* is an important contribution in unveiling the grim realities of agrarian conflict in Indonesia. The book successfully maps out various dynamics and inequalities that have emerged as a result of state policies that favor industrialization and corporate interests over agrarian communities. The author presents concrete case studies, such as the conflicts in Banyuwangi and the Bongkoran land dispute,

which illustrate how state power and legal systems are often monopolized by dominant groups.

Nevertheless, the book is not without its shortcomings. Its heavy reliance on secondary sources, limited field data, and underdeveloped theoretical engagement weaken the overall strength of its arguments. The absence of concrete solutions and a human-centered narrative also make the book more descriptive than transformative.

Overall, this book serves as a useful starting point for readers seeking to understand the roots and complexity of agrarian conflict in Indonesia. However, it still requires greater conceptual depth and a more grounded approach in order to make a stronger contribution to the struggle for agrarian justice.

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## Book Cover

