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SOCIAL PROBLEMS: A CASE STUDY OF STREET VENDOR CONTROL (PKL) AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Handil Bakti, Barito Kuala Regency, South Kalimantan, represents a critical intersection between a vulnerable tidal wetland ecosystem and the pressures of massive urbanization. This study analyzes the nexus between conflicting spatial planning policies (street vendor regulation) and ecological threats (waste) to the Handil canal system. A qualitative case study approach was used, triangulating data from direct observations and in-depth interviews. The analysis shows that street vendor regulation is top-down. Although street vendors are cooperative, the local government's failure to provide strategic (economically viable) relocation sites forces them to re-violate regulations, creating a recurring cycle of conflict. Hydrologically, solid waste (plastic/Styrofoam) dumped directly into Handil by residents and street vendors clogs the two-way drainage system, drastically increasing the risk of flooding. The implications of this study emphasize that wetland spatial planning policies must be integrated, humane, and ecologically based. Conservation of Handil as vital infrastructure cannot be separated from the provision of equitable and sustainable business space for informal economic communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia with special emphasis on the Bornean region, is distinguished by geographical characteristics manifested in the form of vast tidal swamps. Handil Bakti, located in Barito Kuala Regency (Batola), South Kalimantan, is located on the banks of the Barito River which is dominated by wetland ecosystems. This area traditionally adapts to the rhythm of water through the local wisdom of Banjar known as "Handil."

Handil refers to a system of artificial channels or canals that the community digs collectively (*bubuhan*) to regulate the tide. The system serves as a vital infrastructure for agricultural irrigation and drainage (Subiyakto, 2020). This historical adaptation shows the community's dependence on the wetland environment for centuries (Wasita & Sunarningsih, 2022). However, over time, Handil Bakti underwent significant changes in land function, shifting from an agrarian area to a center of dense, commercial, and vital transit (Trans Kalimantan Road). This transformation of land functions changes the physical and social landscape, bringing new complexity.

Settlement and economic progress in Handil Bakti create double anthropogenic pressures that are mutually increasing. Initially, population and commercial growth triggered informal economic activities, especially street vendors (PKL). Street vendors serve as an economic safety valve, providing livelihoods for low-income communities and affordable services/goods (Akbar et al., 2020). However, street vendor activities often take over the function of public facilities (sidewalks, road shoulders, river borders/handil), contrary to Regional Regulations (Perda) on public order.

Furthermore, the direct impact of increased population density and unregulated street vendor activities is an increase in the volume of waste and management failure. In the context of tidal land, the problem of waste is crucial because of its ecological threat. Garbage, especially plastic, pollutes Handil channels, disrupts traditional drainage systems, exacerbates flood risk, and damages wetland ecosystems. The conflict between street vendors' needs for economic space and the government's demands for public order and hydrological functions of Handil has become a classic urgent problem in Handil Bakti.

Given the complexity that arises from the intersection of social problems (street vendors and control) and the environment (waste on tidal land), this study describes the specific objectives to analyze the factors that cause street vendor control conflicts and their impact on livelihoods, including street vendors' responses to spatial planning policies and formulate waste

disposal patterns and their ecological impact on the tidal environment of Handil Bakti, especially threats to the hydrological function of local wisdom.

Tidal land is defined as a land area that is affected by fluctuations in seawater or rivers due to tides and tides. This area is included in the wide scope of Wetlands regulated by the Ramsar Convention ([Ramsar, 2016](#)). The Handil Bakti Tidal Land, which empties into the Alalak/Barito River, is most appropriately classified as a type of river/estuary wetland, influenced by brackish/freshwater dynamics and included in the Tidal Swamp type.

Ecologically, tidal lands have natural limitations, such as hydrological and soil quality (high acidity), making them highly susceptible to anthropogenic disturbances. Empirical studies conducted in the region show that during the peak of the rainy season, water often floods the soil with very acidic water quality, characterized by a pH value below four ([Nazili et al., 2025](#); [Syarifuddin et al., 2025](#)). The dynamics of water quality in this canal system, which is notorious for its bidirectional flow, are highly unstable and require careful water management to ensure that high-quality water sustains productivity and ecological survival ([Suwanda & Noor, 2020](#)). Drainage disturbances, such as those resulting from garbage accumulation, can trigger saltwater intrusion or worsen adverse water conditions.

Street vendors (PKL) are a vital component of the informal sector, characterized as economic activities that avoid formal regulation and usually involve minimal capital investment. The role of street vendors as a social safety net and provider of the needs of the lower middle class is recognized globally ([Pancasekti, 2016](#)). However, the existence of street vendors always triggers conflicts because of the use of public spaces that should be intended for the public interest (sidewalks, roads).

Control is an effort to enforce the law of spatial planning (legal space), while street vendor resistance is a demand for economic rights and lived space. The implementation of control policies by local governments (through the Pamong Praja Police Unit/Satpol PP) is often divided into a repressive approach (prioritizing physical eviction) that only produces short-term solutions, or a humanist approach accompanied by coaching and providing strategic alternative locations. Failure to provide humane and strategic relocation solutions is a major factor in the recurrence of conflicts.

Street vendor activities and dense settlements produce a significant volume of waste. In the Handil Bakti area, waste management is often hampered by difficult accessibility, low awareness, and limited public waste bins. In aquatic ecosystems such as Handil Bakti, waste poses two main threats: hydrological and chemical. Hydrologically, solid waste (plastic and styrofoam) clogs Handil's channels, reduces drainage capacity, and directly exacerbates

flooding at high tide or heavy rain. Chemically, food waste and organic waste cause an increase in nutrients (Nitrogen and Phosphorus), triggering *eutrophication* or nutrient enrichment. This process of decomposition of organic waste requires a lot of oxygen, which results in a drastic decrease in the content of Dissolved Oxygen (DO) in the water, creating hypoxia conditions that kill aquatic biota.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach based on a case study. This approach is based on its ability to facilitate a comprehensive examination of contemporary phenomena (street vendor control and waste problems) in a specific and unique real-life context, namely the Tidal Land of Handil Bakti, Barito Kuala Regency, South Kalimantan. Data collection was carried out through triangulation of sources and methods that included direct observation, in-depth interviews, and secondary data analysis.

Direct observation was carried out to observe environmental conditions, garbage piles, locations of traders' activities, and to descriptively inventory the conditions of dominant vegetation (aquatic plants, shrubs, trees) and fauna (fish, birds, insects). In-Depth Interview using sampling techniques aimed at individuals directly involved. The informant group includes the disciplined party (PKL), the Regulatory Party (Satpol PP), the Cleaning Officer, the Head of the Village/Lurah (Provider), and the Market Office/MSMEs. The purpose of the interview was to get a bottom-up (PKL) and top-down (Government) perspective on conflict and governance. Secondary data analysis includes official documents, reports of related agencies (Environment Office/DLH, Trade Office), Regional Regulations (Perda) on Public Order, and regional maps.

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña models. The stages of analysis include: Data Reduction, which is summarizing, selecting the main points, and focusing raw data from interview transcripts and observation notes in accordance with the focus of the research; Data Display by presenting reduced data in the form of a descriptive narrative to facilitate understanding of the relationship between variables; and Conclusion Drawing/Verification by drawing conclusions based on patterns, themes, and relationships found, and verifying them back with field data through data triangulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Handil Bakti ecosystem which is influenced by the *two-way tidal flow* system of the Alalak Barito River experiences environmental pressure due to domestic and trade activities on the banks of Handil. Based on the results of field observations and community interviews, water quality conditions show indications of a decrease in the carrying capacity of the environment, mainly characterized by low *levels of dissolved oxygen* (DO), increasing organic waste, and the dominance of aquatic weeds in several parts of the canal. The results of field measurements showed that DO levels were in the range of 2.1-2.8 mg/L, lower than the conditions of swampy waters that support optimal aquatic life (>4 mg/L). Low levels of DO are related to the high accumulation of household waste and the rest of trade activities that enter water bodies, thereby accelerating the decomposition process of organic matter. In addition, the pH measurement results showed a range of 4.5-5.3 which indicated that the water conditions tended to be acidic, a common characteristic of the tidal swamps of Borneo which was strengthened by the influx of domestic waste and organic sedimentation.

The aquatic vegetation is dominated by swamp-tolerant species such as Hyacinths (*Eichhornia crassipes*), *Pistia stratiotes*, and lotuses. At some observation points, water hyacinth cover is estimated to reach more than 60% of the canal surface, especially in areas with slow water flow and high garbage accumulation. This condition indicates a high nutrient content in the waters that triggers eutrophication. At the time of observation, several types of local swamp fish such as Papuyu/Betok (*Anabas testudineus*) and Sepat (*Trichopodus* sp.) were not found by the surrounding community. Based on interviews with village officials and residents, the catch of swamp fish has decreased compared to the previous 10-15 years when the two types of fish were still easy to find in the Handil channel. The community attributes this condition to the increase in water pollution due to domestic waste and vehicle washing activities around the Handil area.

The activities of street vendors (PKL) on the banks of Handil cause spatial and traffic problems. The main route of Handil Bakti is an important transportation access with a high density of activities in the morning and evening. Based on the results of observations, there are dozens of street vendor stalls that use green lanes and roadsides, causing the narrowing of the road body at several points. The local government through Satpol PP has been conducting control since mid-2025 through socialization, the provision of warning letters, and the dismantling of stalls. Some street vendors had been relocated to the Handil Bakti Main

Terminal Market, but based on interviews, most of the traders returned to their old locations because the number of buyers in the relocation market was considered to have decreased drastically. This finding is in line with previous research which shows that the Handil Bakti Terminal Market still faces various facilities constraints and low economic attractiveness (Jairina et al., 2015; Melinda et al., 2023).

This condition has prompted some traders to look for alternative locations independently around the Handil area to stay close to customers. This shows that the control policy has not fully considered the informal economic aspects of the community. Handling that emphasizes physical control without proper relocation support causes the problem to change locations, rather than being solved comprehensively. Another problem found was the accumulation of garbage on the banks and Handil's body. Based on field observations, the most dominant types of waste are plastic packaging, styrofoam, beverage bottles, and leftover merchandise. At some points, the thickness of the garbage pile reaches a gap of more than 30-50 cm at the edge of the channel. The accumulation of debris causes narrowing of canals and inhibits the flow of tides. The width of the channel, which in some parts should reach about 4-5 meters, appears to be narrowed due to sedimentation and garbage accumulation. This condition causes the flow of water to slow down and trigger inundation in the surrounding residential areas when high rainfall and high tides occur simultaneously.

Waste management efforts have been carried out by the Environment Agency through the provision of five units of large waste boxes by 2025. However, the results of observations show that the facility has not been fully effective in reducing waste in Handil's body because of the low waste separation from the source and the habit of people throwing waste directly into waterways. Overall, the findings of the study show that environmental and spatial problems in Handil Bakti are interrelated. The decline in the quality of the aquatic environment as shown by low DO, high aquatic weed cover, clogging of canals due to garbage, and informal trade activities on the banks of Handil are factors that increase the vulnerability of urban swamp areas to flooding and environmental degradation. Therefore, the management of the Handil area requires an integrated approach that not only focuses on physical control, but also considers the ecological, social, and economic aspects of the local community.

CONCLUSION

Social problems (street vendor relocation) and ecological problems (garbage and handil degradation) in Handil Bakti are inseparable, both exacerbating each other driven by the failure

of integrated governance. The crisis in Handil Bakti was triggered by negative feedback between the dynamics of the informal economy and environmental degradation. The regulation is repressive and fragmented, characterized by the failure to implement policies to ensure the economic sustainability of street vendors. Street vendors who lost money due to non-strategic relocation (lack of buyers) were forced to look for strategic locations near the main road, namely in illegal locations along the banks of Handil. Their presence there directly increases the pressure of garbage and organic waste that is dumped into waterways. Increased direct (behavioral) waste disposal triggers blockages and eutrophication (ecology), which destroys Handil's function as a vital drainage system. The consequences of hydrological damage (increased flood risk) ultimately threaten the social and economic stability of the entire Handil Bakti area. In this context, policies that focus only on physical order (Top-Down) without considering the economic reality of street vendors (Bottom-Up) will only displace and exacerbate ecological problems elsewhere.

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