

## Coastal Conflicts and Access to Justice: An Analysis of Traditional Maritime Disputes in Karimun Regency Riau Islands

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### Abstract

*Coastal areas represent critical socio-ecological systems that are increasingly threatened by extractive industries and overlapping regulatory regimes. This study investigates coastal conflicts in Perayun Village, Karimun Regency, Indonesia, with a focus on how traditional fishing communities access justice in the face of resource exploitation and regulatory fragmentation. The research problem arises from the weak formal recognition of traditional fishing rights and the persistent tension between state law, local customary law, and economic interests. Using a juridical-empirical approach, the study combines normative legal analysis with field data collected through semi-structured interviews with local fishers, customary leaders, and government officials, supported by secondary sources such as legal documents, and media publications. The theoretical framework integrates legal pluralism and environmental justice to examine the coexistence of multiple legal orders and the distributional inequities in resource governance. Findings reveal that customary institutions play a central role in regulating fishing zones, resolving disputes, and maintaining social cohesion. While these mechanisms provide accessible and context-sensitive justice, they remain vulnerable when disputes involve external actors who do not recognize customary legitimacy. Structural barriers, including geographical isolation, fragmented intergovernmental coordination, and limited transparency, further undermine access to formal justice. This study contributes to the literature by demonstrating how legal pluralism and environmental justice intersect in coastal governance, highlighting both the resilience and precarity of traditional communities. Practically, it calls for responsive policies that strengthen local institutions, ensure participatory decision-making, and formally recognize traditional fishing rights as an essential step toward achieving socio-ecological justice in Indonesia's coastal regions.*

**Keywords:** *Coastal Conflict, Legal Pluralism, Environmental Justice, Traditional Fishing Rights, Access to Justice.*

### Abstrak

Wilayah pesisir merupakan sistem sosial-ekologis yang krusial namun semakin terancam oleh industri ekstraktif dan tumpang tindih rezim regulasi. Penelitian ini mengkaji konflik pesisir di Desa Perayun, Kabupaten Karimun, Indonesia, dengan fokus pada bagaimana komunitas nelayan tradisional memperoleh akses terhadap keadilan di tengah eksploitasi sumber daya dan fragmentasi regulasi. Permasalahan penelitian berangkat dari lemahnya pengakuan formal terhadap hak tradisional nelayan serta ketegangan yang terus terjadi antara hukum negara, hukum adat, dan kepentingan ekonomi. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan yuridis-empiris, penelitian ini memadukan analisis hukum normatif dengan data lapangan yang

diperoleh melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur bersama nelayan, tokoh adat, dan pejabat pemerintah, serta didukung oleh sumber sekunder seperti dokumen hukum, dan publikasi media. Kerangka teoretis mengintegrasikan legal pluralism dan environmental justice untuk menelaah koeksistensi berbagai sistem hukum dan ketidakadilan distribusi dalam tata kelola sumber daya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lembaga adat berperan sentral dalam mengatur zonasi tangkap, menyelesaikan sengketa, dan menjaga kohesi sosial. Mekanisme ini menyediakan keadilan yang lebih mudah diakses dan kontekstual, namun tetap rentan ketika sengketa melibatkan aktor eksternal yang tidak mengakui legitimasi hukum adat. Hambatan structural, seperti isolasi geografis, fragmentasi koordinasi antar-pemerintah, dan keterbatasan transparansi, semakin memperlemah akses keadilan formal. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi dengan memperlihatkan bagaimana legal pluralism dan environmental justice berinterseksi dalam tata kelola pesisir, sekaligus menyoroti resiliensi dan kerentanan komunitas tradisional. Secara praktis, penelitian ini mendorong kebijakan yang responsif dengan memperkuat institusi lokal, memastikan pengambilan keputusan partisipatif, serta mengakui secara formal hak tradisional nelayan sebagai langkah penting menuju keadilan sosial-ekologis di wilayah pesisir Indonesia.

**Kata kunci:** Konflik Pesisir, Pluralisme Hukum, Keadilan Lingkungan, Hak Nelayan Tradisional, Akses Keadilan.

## Introduction

Coastal zones represent one of the most productive ecosystems in the world, yet they are also among the most vulnerable to exploitation and spatial-use conflicts. Globally, pressures on coastal areas stem from population growth, infrastructure development, and marine-based economic activities such as industrial fisheries, tourism, and seabed mining (Small & Nicholls, 2003). Spatial-use conflicts in coastal regions frequently emerge from clashes between modern economic interests and the traditional practices of local communities that depend on marine resources for their livelihoods (Bavinck et al., 2014).

As an archipelagic state, Indonesia faces complex challenges in managing its coastal and marine territories. National policies promoting a blue economy agenda often collide with the interests of traditional fishing communities (Satria, 2015). Ectoral regulations, such as Law No. 1 of 2014 on Coastal and Small Islands Management, although intended to ensure sustainable use, often generate conflict in practice due to weak recognition of the traditional rights of coastal communities (Resosudarmo et al., 2019).

In international legal scholarship, the concept of traditional fishing rights has long been recognized as an instrument to safeguard the entitlements of local communities reliant on fisheries (Pomeroy & Rivera-Guieb, 2005). However, in the Indonesian context, the recognition of traditional maritime rights continues to face significant legal and

administrative barriers. Inconsistencies between customary law, national legislation, and local government policies have created a regulatory gray area that is frequently exploited by powerful economic actors, further marginalizing the position of traditional fishers (Bedner & Arizona, 2019).

Karimun Regency in Riau Islands Province represents one of the regions with a high intensity of coastal conflicts. Activities such as sea sand mining, reclamation, and coastal land conversion have triggered disputes between corporations, local governments, and traditional fishing communities. According to Sembiring, the head of a fishing group in Perayun Village, many fishers have raised concerns over declining catches, the degradation of mangrove ecosystems, and restricted access to traditional fishing grounds (Sembiring, personal communication, February 12, 2025). These conflicts affect not only economic aspects but also the social, cultural, and ecological justice dimensions of coastal communities.

Although there is a growing body of research on coastal management in Indonesia, studies that specifically focus on access to justice for traditional fishing communities in the context of maritime conflicts remain limited. Most scholarship emphasizes ecological issues, such as mangrove degradation and declining fish stocks (Ali, 2023; Satria, 2015), or economic concerns, such as the impact of licensing on fisher livelihoods (Adrianto & Matsuda, 2004; Lin et al., 2023). Some research also addresses fisheries governance and policy, but discussions on the recognition of traditional rights and access to both formal and informal legal mechanisms remain scarce (Bedner & Arizona, 2019; Muhdar et al., 2019). Consequently, a research gap persists regarding how coastal communities can access justice mechanisms through litigation, customary mediation, or administrative processes to safeguard their traditional rights in the face of spatial-use conflicts.

This study aims to analyze coastal conflicts in Karimun Regency with a specific focus on access to justice for traditional fishers. More specifically, it seeks to identify the root causes of the conflicts, examine the barriers communities face in seeking justice, and propose policy recommendations that can strengthen the recognition of traditional rights. Theoretically, this research contributes to enriching the literature on legal pluralism and environmental justice within the context of Indonesia's coastal governance. Practically, it offers policy insights that are responsive to the needs of coastal communities. In doing so, the study highlights the urgency of integrating customary practices into formal legal frameworks to achieve more inclusive and equitable conflict resolution.

## Legal Framework

Various legal systems often coexist within a single society, creating complex interactions between state law, customary law, and the community's informal regulations. Legal pluralism explains this phenomenon, emphasizing that society is not solely subject to national law but also adheres to local norms internalized through social and customary practices (Griffiths, 1986). This approach helps to understand how claims of rights and obligations may overlap or conflict when formal and informal legal systems intersect.

Legal pluralism is relevant to this study because coastal conflicts often involve tensions between the traditional rights of fishing communities and licensing regulations issued by the government. This theory allows for an analysis of the legitimacy of traditional rights that have not been formally recognized and how local social norms can influence or fill the gaps within national law (von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2006). Through this approach, the study can evaluate the interaction between customary practices and formal legal mechanisms in protecting the interests of coastal communities.

In addition, environmental justice emphasizes the importance of a fair distribution of environmental burdens and benefits, community participation in decision-making processes, and access to remedies when ecological damage occurs (Schlosberg, 2007). This theory highlights the social, economic, and political dimensions of natural resource management, underlining the need to protect vulnerable communities from the adverse impacts of development or economic activities that affect their environment.

Environmental justice is particularly relevant to this study because traditional fishing communities are often the most affected by coastal ecosystem changes, land reclamation, and sand mining. Through this theoretical lens, the study can assess the extent to which communities have access to justice mechanisms, whether through formal legal channels, customary mediation, or other non-litigation mechanisms. This approach also underscores the necessity of environmental restoration and compensation for affected communities, thereby enabling a broader analysis of both social and ecological justice.

The combination of legal pluralism and environmental justice provides a robust theoretical framework for examining coastal conflicts and access to justice for traditional fishing communities. While legal pluralism helps to understand the complex legal structures and potential overlaps of norms, environmental justice highlights fairness in the distribution of environmental burdens and benefits, as well as community participation. Integrating these

two theories allows for a comprehensive analysis of the interrelationship between law, society, and the environment, while also offering a foundation for policy recommendations that are responsive to the protection of traditional rights and socio-ecological justice (Agyeman et al., 2012).

## **Research Method**

This study employs a juridical-empirical approach, combining normative legal analysis with field data collection. This approach was chosen to obtain a comprehensive understanding of coastal conflicts, traditional fishing rights, and mechanisms of access to justice, whether through formal legal channels or customary mechanisms. The juridical-empirical approach enables researchers to examine the regulatory framework while simultaneously verifying the practices and lived experiences of communities on the ground (Marzuki, 2017; Soekanto, 2008).

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews and participatory observation with six key informants representing various stakeholders. The traditional fisher representatives included Sembiring, head of the fisher group, and Azmi Khalid, a group member. Customary leaders consisted of H. Mahmud, head of the Perayun Village Customary Institution, and Hj. Ratna Dewi, its secretary. The village government was represented by Village Head Tarub Murdiono and Village Secretary Ulul Hidayat, while the district government was represented by Irwan Syah (Head of the Fisheries Division) and Lestari Nur (Head of the Coastal Environment Section). These primary sources provided insights into traditional fishing practices, conflict experiences, dispute resolution strategies, and community access to both formal and customary justice mechanisms.

Secondary data were obtained from official government documents, statutory regulations concerning coastal management, NGO reports, academic publications, and media coverage on coastal conflicts and maritime licensing. These secondary sources were used to analyze the applicable legal framework, assess the legitimacy of traditional rights, and provide relevant historical and policy context for the case study (John W. Creswell, 2016).

Data analysis was carried out using a combination of normative juridical analysis and qualitative thematic analysis. Normative juridical analysis was employed to examine regulations, policies, and legal principles governing the traditional rights of fishers and conflict resolution mechanisms. Meanwhile, qualitative thematic analysis was applied to

identify patterns, themes, and key issues emerging from interviews and observations, including barriers to access to justice, the interaction between formal and customary law, and environmental impacts experienced by the community (Braun & Clarke, 2008; Ridder et al., 2014).

The validity of the study was maintained through source, method, and theoretical triangulation by comparing information obtained from fishers, customary leaders, government officials, and NGOs. Research ethics were upheld by obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring confidentiality of identities, and granting participants the right to withdraw from the study at any time. This approach ensured that the collected data were valid, reliable, and relevant for analyzing coastal conflicts and the access to justice of traditional communities in Perayun Village, Karimun Regency, Riau Islands.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Traditional Fishers' Management Practices and Rights***

The management of marine areas by traditional fishing communities in Perayun Village, Karimun Regency, reflects a socio-ecological system that has been inherited across generations. Fishers in this village not only rely on the sea as an economic resource but also internalize customary norms regulating marine zoning, fishing rights, and rules for sharing catches. These practices function as a collective mechanism to sustain resources and to prevent horizontal conflicts among fishers.

This system underscores that coastal waters are not merely economic spaces but also social and cultural domains imbued with values. In an interview, Sembiring, the head of the fishers' group, explained that fishing zones are allocated based on customary agreements guided by the village's customary institution. According to him, such territorial arrangements ensure that no fisher feels disadvantaged while maintaining the ecological balance of the coastal environment that supports community livelihoods (Sembiring, personal communication, February 12, 2025). This resonates with perspectives highlighting that community-based management practices are often effective in realizing commons management in coastal regions (Bavinck et al., 2014).

Customary leader H. Mahmud further emphasized that customary law regulates the types of fishing gear permitted and prohibits destructive practices such as the use of trawl nets. According to him, these customary rules not only safeguard ecosystems but also

uphold moral values in social relations among fishers (H. Mahmud, personal communication, February 15, 2025). This principle reflects the logic of legal pluralism, wherein customary norms operate in parallel with state law and are often more relevant for local communities (Griffiths, 1986; von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2006).

In addition, Azmi Khalid, a member of the fishers' group, explained that disputes arising at sea are usually resolved internally through customary deliberations. According to him, this mechanism is considered faster, less costly, and fairer than bringing cases to formal legal institutions, which are geographically distant from the village (A. Khalid, personal communication, February 15, 2025). This finding aligns with the environmental justice literature, which emphasizes the importance of access to justice mechanisms that are compatible with the socio-economic contexts of vulnerable communities (Schlosberg, 2007). Customary mechanisms not only function as tools for conflict resolution but also serve as crucial instruments in maintaining order and reducing the potential escalation of disputes at the community level.

Meanwhile, Hj. Ratna Dewi, secretary of the customary institution, emphasized that the legitimacy of customary institutions remains very high in the eyes of the community. According to her, customary decisions are rarely contested, even by younger generations, as they are regarded as integral to the identity and survival of the community (Hj. R. Dewi, personal communication, February 15, 2025). This illustrates that customary-based governance practices not only address technical fisheries issues but also strengthen social cohesion (Davidson & Henley, 2007). The enduring legitimacy of customary institutions demonstrates that local norms function not merely as social rules but also as cultural foundations that provide stability for coastal resource governance.

From a normative perspective, the position of traditional fishers' rights in Indonesia still faces the problem of weak recognition. This condition reveals a gap between the ideals of national regulation and the customary legal practices exercised by local communities. To better understand this issue, several analytical aspects can be outlined as follows:

1. **Weak Formal Recognition.** Normatively, the state has not provided strong recognition of traditional fishers' rights, leaving their position within the national legal framework marginal.

2. Contrast with International Literature. In fact, in the global literature, traditional fishing rights have been recognized as an important instrument for protecting local communities dependent on fisheries (Pomeroy & Rivera-Guieb, 2005).
3. Legal Inconsistency. The disharmony between state law and customary law creates a legal grey area that can be exploited by external actors to control coastal resources.
4. Vulnerability of Local Communities. This condition renders traditional fishers vulnerable, particularly when facing external parties such as marine sand mining companies or government authorities that issue permits without adequate public consultation (Bedner & Arizona, 2019).
5. Implications for Socio-Ecological Justice. As a result, the principles of environmental justice and community participation are often neglected, leaving traditional fishers without the legal protections they are entitled to.

The weak recognition of traditional rights generates not only juridical problems but also significant social, ecological, and political implications. This condition underscores the urgent need for more responsive and inclusive policymaking, one that integrates adat (customary law) with formal legal frameworks to ensure both the sustainability of coastal resources and justice for local communities. Strengthening this legal integration would also enhance community resilience and reduce potential conflicts in the future.

Accordingly, the adat-based management practices in Perayun Village, Karimun Regency, reveal that traditional fishers are not merely resource users but also resource managers with their own normative systems. These systems provide social legitimacy, mechanisms for dispute resolution, and adaptive technical regulations for fisheries. Nevertheless, the absence of formal state recognition renders such practices vulnerable to marginalization, particularly when confronted with large-scale economic interests. Therefore, integrating customary values into the formal legal order is a critical prerequisite for strengthening access to justice and safeguarding the sustainability of coastal ecosystems.

### ***Conflict and the Dynamics of Coastal Communities' Access to Justice***

Access to justice for coastal communities, particularly in Perayun Village, Karimun Regency, cannot be separated from the structural limitations of legal infrastructure available in the region. The village's geographic position—far from the regency's administrative center—combined with limited maritime transportation, makes it difficult for local communities to reach judicial institutions. This condition is further exacerbated by the lack



of legal outreach conducted by state authorities, leaving communities without sufficient knowledge of dispute settlement procedures through formal channels. Consequently, the presence of state law at the grassroots level remains weak (Fauzi, 2006). In other words, geographical distance and infrastructural constraints have created a “barrier of justice” that severs community access to formal legal institutions. As a result, state law is often perceived as merely symbolic, providing little tangible benefit for coastal populations.

In interviews, the Head of Perayun Village, Tarub Murdiono, emphasized that communities more frequently rely on customary mechanisms for dispute resolution. According to him, the adat-based process is perceived as simpler, more affordable, and faster compared to the bureaucratic formal legal procedures that require considerable transportation and administrative costs (T. Murdiono, personal communication, February 12, 2025). The community’s persistent trust in customary institutions underscores the significant role of local wisdom in filling the vacuum left by the inaccessibility of state justice (Bedner & Vel, 2010). This phenomenon is often referred to as a “manifestation of legal pluralism,” where customary law operates as an alternative instrument when state law fails to address the needs of society at its most basic level.

This practice essentially reflects a dualism in dispute resolution mechanisms: on the one hand, there is formal law that promises legal certainty, while on the other, there is customary law that is more aligned with the community’s practical needs. Within the social context of coastal communities, opting for the customary path constitutes a rational strategy to overcome their limited access to formal justice. However, this reliance on adat-based resolution also generates challenges when disputes involve external actors outside the community, who may not always recognize the legitimacy of customary law (Benda-Beckmann & Turner, 2018; Flambonita, 2021).

This condition reflects a structural gap in the implementation of access to justice for coastal communities. Although the state has formally enshrined the principle that all citizens are entitled to equal legal protection, the geographic realities and socio-economic conditions of coastal populations render this principle difficult to materialize. These barriers ultimately push communities to rely more heavily on customary pathways, even though such mechanisms do not always provide maximum protection from the perspective of formal law (Buana, 2016; UNDP, 2005). Hence, this preference can be understood as a form of pragmatic adaptation by local communities, while at the same time carrying structural

vulnerabilities since the legitimacy of adat does not possess the same coercive power as state law when confronted with external actors.

Moreover, the dominance of customary mechanisms also reflects a cultural resistance to state law, which is often perceived as less relevant to local contexts. Adat-based processes are capable of preserving social harmony through more flexible, peace-oriented approaches that avoid prolonged conflict. In contrast, the formal legal system is frequently seen as rigid and disadvantageous for marginalized groups who lack the resources to pursue it. This reality highlights the urgent need to develop an access-to-justice model that integrates customary values with the formal legal system, an approach referred to as a model of legal coexistence within the framework of legal pluralism (Davidson & Henley, 2007).

Thus, the dynamics of access to justice for coastal communities in Perayun Village serve as a mirror of the broader structural problems faced by rural communities across Indonesia. When state law fails to be substantively present and just, communities will continue to rely on non-formal mechanisms as their primary means of dispute resolution. At the same time, this presents a pressing challenge for government and policymakers to formulate legal policies that are responsive to the geographic, social, and cultural conditions of coastal societies.

### ***Challenges in Implementing National Regulations at the Local Level***

The implementation of national regulations on coastal management often encounters administrative and institutional obstacles when applied at the village level. Norms formulated at the central level tend to be normative and generic, whereas field realities demand adjustments to geographical conditions, social contexts, and local institutional capacities (Resosudarmo et al., 2019). As a result, there is a gap between the legal text and its practical execution: regulations exist, but mechanisms to communicate, adapt, and enforce them at the village scale are frequently inadequate. The Secretary of Perayun Village, Ulul Hidayat, emphasized the lack of regulatory dissemination from higher levels of government, leaving many residents unaware of their rights and available legal procedures (U. Hidayat, personal communication, February 12, 2025).

Institutional capacity at the village level constitutes another key factor determining the effectiveness of implementation. Like many other coastal villages, Perayun faces a shortage of human resources with adequate knowledge of marine and environmental regulations.

Without technical training, village officials find it difficult to translate statutory provisions into actionable local policies (Ribot, 2003). The Village Secretary also explained that village apparatuses often act merely as facilitators in adat deliberations because they lack the authority or expertise to initiate the administrative processes required by national regulations (U. Hidayat, personal communication, February 12, 2025).

Coordination across multiple levels of government (village–district–province–central) is often fragmented, resulting in programs or directives from above not always reaching or aligning with village-level realities (Brixiova, 2008). This fragmentation amplifies the risk of conflicting or incompatible policies, such as the issuance of coastal-use permits that disregard traditional fishing maps. An official from the Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries in Karimun Regency, Irwan Syah, acknowledged that coordination mechanisms remain suboptimal, thereby weakening the verification of local rights claims. According to him, the main causes include weak bureaucratic communication channels, overlapping inter-agency authorities, and the absence of coordination mechanisms grounded in community participation (I. Syah, personal communication, February 17, 2025).

The perspective of legal pluralism clarifies why formal regulations often remain ineffective: state law operates in parallel with adat (customary) norms that have long governed the management of marine space. When formal rules are neither internalized nor accommodated in culturally sensitive ways, communities will continue to rely on adat mechanisms, which they perceive as more legitimate and responsive (von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2006). A customary leader in Perayun Village, H. Mahmud, emphasized that communities prioritize dispute resolution through adat institutions because these provide social certainty, even though they may not always guarantee formal legal certainty (H. Mahmud, personal communication, February 12, 2025). This situation illustrates a legal paradox, whereby the state is normatively present through regulations but substantively absent in ensuring justice that resonates with local needs.

Transparency and access to information also weaken the implementation of regulations. Coastal communities often lack access to licensing documents, environmental impact assessments (AMDAL/UKL-UPL), or zoning data that underpin decision-making processes. This lack of information constrains communities' ability to raise objections or hold licensing authorities accountable (UNDP, 2005). According to Lestari Nur, Head of Coastal Environment at the Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries in Karimun

Regency, efforts are being made to improve the dissemination of documents, yet budgetary limitations and technical constraints remain significant obstacles. Almost every year, planned programs for publishing environmental information fail to run effectively because funding is prioritized for physical infrastructure development, while regulatory transparency is treated as a secondary concern (L. Nur, personal communication, February 17, 2025).

The political-economic dimension further shapes the implementation of regulations on the ground: investment interests and economic pressures frequently accelerate licensing processes without adequate public consultation (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999; Pomeroy & Rivera-Guieb, 2005). When economic priorities prevail, the protection of traditional rights and mechanisms for community participation are marginalized. Irwan Syah, Head of Fisheries at the Department of Marine Affairs and Fisheries in Karimun Regency, acknowledged the role of local political dynamics, which make regulatory enforcement complex and at times compromise-driven (I. Syah, personal communication, February 17, 2025). On one hand, this condition reflects a form of policy flexibility shaped by political calculations and local economic interests. On the other, such compromise-based practices risk undermining legal consistency and ultimately generate uncertainty for the protection of traditional fishing rights.

In the dimension of law enforcement and remedial mechanisms, effectiveness also remains weak. When violations occur that disadvantage coastal communities, formal litigation processes often require significant time and high costs, leading communities to rely once again on customary mediation mechanisms. This condition represents what has been called the paradox of regulation: while legal instruments exist to provide protection, the costs and complexity of accessing such instruments render them ineffective for marginalized groups (Bedner & Arizona, 2019; Vel & Bedner, 2015). Without systematic efforts to strengthen administrative access and provide pro bono legal support, this imbalance will continue to recur. The fragmentation of authority across government institutions further aggravates the situation, as the absence of strong coordination frequently produces overlapping policies that undermine the effectiveness of legal protection at the local level.

Analytically, the challenges of implementing national regulations in Perayun Village are the product of an interaction between weak institutional capacity, fragmented coordination, limited transparency, political-economic pressures, and the strong normative legitimacy of customary law. Addressing these problems requires a dual strategy: (1) strengthening

institutional capacity and context-specific legal awareness programs; (2) establishing clear and accountable cross-level coordination mechanisms; and (3) developing participatory models and recognition of traditional rights (e.g., registration of traditional fishing grounds) that bridge formal law and adat, an approach supported by the literature on co-management and legal pluralism (Pomeroy & Rivera-Guieb, 2005; von Benda-Beckmann & von Benda-Beckmann, 2006). Implementing these recommendations would enhance the reality of access to justice for coastal communities in Perayun and similar localities.

## Conclusion

This study underscores that coastal conflicts in Perayun Village, Karimun Regency, reflect the inherent complexity of legal pluralism in marine resource governance. Customary-based management practices have proven effective in sustaining ecosystems and reinforcing social cohesion, yet they remain vulnerable due to the absence of formal recognition by the state. This lack of recognition creates a normative gap that weakens the bargaining position of traditional fishers when confronting external actors and large-scale development policies.

Access to justice for coastal communities is still constrained by structural factors, including limited legal infrastructure, geographical isolation, insufficient dissemination of regulations, and high litigation costs. These barriers push communities to rely on customary mechanisms that are faster, cheaper, and contextually grounded—yet not always recognized within the formal legal system. This dynamic illustrates the paradox of law: the state's regulations exist normatively but remain substantively absent in guaranteeing protection and justice for marginalized communities.

Practically, this study emphasizes the need for responsive policy strategies through three key measures: strengthening local institutional capacity, establishing accountable cross-level governmental coordination, and ensuring formal recognition of traditional fishers' rights. The integration of customary law into formal legal frameworks is not only essential for bridging the access to justice gap but also fundamental for realizing socio-ecological justice in Indonesia's coastal governance.

Moreover, the findings highlight that failure to address this regulatory paradox risks deepening the structural exclusion of traditional fishing communities in the face of rapid economic expansion. Conversely, adopting a co-management model that genuinely incorporates local knowledge and customary norms could foster both ecological

sustainability and more equitable resource governance. Ultimately, sustainable coastal governance requires a paradigm shift: from a state-centered legal approach to a pluralistic model that values, legitimizes, and institutionalizes community-based practices as part of Indonesia's legal order.

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