

Social Movements and Climate Adaptation: The Provincial Politics of Coastal Reclamation in Indonesia


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Anti-reclamation movements are common in Indonesia, but their effectiveness varies. Such movements, which oppose the infilling of coastal waters and wetlands, consistently draw support from environmentalists, fisherfolk, and coastal residents. To succeed, however, they must transcend these constituencies and mobilize broad coalitions. In this paper, I apply the concept of political opportunity to explain variation in the ability of anti-reclamation movements to achieve this goal. Specifically, I argue that the opportunity to build broad coalitions depends on the positioning of political, economic, and communal elites. Disagreement among these groups creates opportunities for activists to recruit some of them as allies in the construction of economically diverse, cross-class coalitions. Consensus, by contrast, excludes elites as potential allies, forcing activists to build geographically expansive but class-based coalitions. To develop my argument, I draw on local news archives and primary source documents to compare similarly situated anti-reclamation movements in Bali and Makassar. In Bali, the movement flourished by cultivating an alliance with communal elites and local businesses. In Makassar, the movement withered because public officials, local businesses, and communal elites all welcomed reclamation. My findings imply that anti-reclamation movements are most likely to succeed when they emphasize communal identities with cross-class appeal. Yet such tactics alienate parallel movements from one another and undermine national activism. As a result, anti-reclamation movements fight the same battles over and over without achieving national reforms that would empower coastal communities to participate in coastal planning. Under such conditions, reclamation deepens the vulnerability of coastal communities to climate change.

Climate change and coastal development have compounded the risk of coastal flooding in Indonesia, as in many developing countries (Nicholls et al. 2021; Shaw et al. 2022; Willemsen, Lelij, and Wesenbeeck 2019). Cities like Jakarta and Semarang are already facing difficult decisions about whether to protect coastlines or retreat from the coast (Colven 2017; Ley 2021). For cities facing this choice, coastal reclamation—the process of creating land by infilling coastal waters or wetlands—offers the enticing prospect of an apparent win-win solution. Reclamation opens new land for waterfront development and at the same time elevates the coastline and generates revenue for coastal defenses (Bisaro and Hinkel 2018; Oppenheimer et al. 2019).

However, the costs of reclamation disproportionately burden coastal communities, and its benefits disproportionately accrue to developers and property owners (Herbeck and Flitner 2019; Padawangi 2019; Siriwardane-de Zoysa 2020; Valenzuela, Esteban, and Onuki 2023). As a result, reclamation provokes intense distributive conflict.

In Indonesia, such conflicts have recently arisen in many of the hundreds of towns and cities that have proposed reclamation projects (Ambari 2019; Hutauruk 2018; Yorhanita 2019). In numerous cases, opposition to reclamation has produced anti-reclamation movements, or local coalitions of activists, community organizations, and residents that engage in a variety of formal and informal tactics to resist coastal reclamation. Although these movements resemble one another, their effectiveness has varied across cities. In cases such as Bali and Jakarta, anti-reclamation movements have mobilized thousands of people who, through massive protest or coordinated voting, blocked reclamation (Padawangi 2023). In cases such as Makassar and Manado, reclamation has proceeded despite the best efforts of anti-reclamation activists (Susilo and Meulder 2018).

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What explains variation in the effectiveness of anti-reclamation movements? In this paper, I draw on the literature on social movements to account for diverging trajectories. Anti-reclamation movements share a similar set of challenges rooted in reclamation's locally specific effects. Specifically, activists must build alliances between communities that are harmed by reclamation and those that are not. Their opportunity to do so, however, depends on the positioning of political, economic, and cultural elites with respect to reclamation. On one hand, elite discord with respect to reclamation allows the possibility of cross-class mobilization. Under these conditions, activists can build broad movements that incorporate geographically and economically diverse communities. On the other hand, elite consensus in favor of reclamation forecloses the possibility of cross-class mobilization. Under these conditions, anti-reclamation movements can expand geographically, but they will struggle to mobilize support outside of working-class coastal communities.

My argument is based on a comparison of similarly situated anti-reclamation movements in Bali and Makassar, Indonesia. By tracing the evolution of both movements, I demonstrate organizational, strategic, and historical similarities. Yet the Balinese movement invoked identity to mobilize tens of thousands of people, while the Makassar movement championed fishing rights and mobilized many fewer people. I explain this divergence by highlighting the contrasting positioning of elites between cases. In Bali, the anti-reclamation movement allied with local businesses and communal elites, who also opposed reclamation. In Makassar, elite allies were not available, because provincial and city officials, local businesses, and communal elites all welcomed reclamation.

My findings imply that reclamation projects cannot be equitable when protest movements are coastal communities' only means of participating in the policymaking process. I show that anti-reclamation movements, like other social movements (Meyer 2004), turn to protest because formal channels of political participation are closed to them. Yet protest is polarizing (McAdam 1996b). Without institutions that can support compromise, anti-reclamation movements either block reclamation altogether or fail to influence coastal development at all.

These constraints impose a strategic conflict upon activists. Existing work shows that national reforms open up opportunities for local movements to achieve their goals via formal means (Almeida and Stearns 1998; Hochstetler and Keck 2007; Khagram 2004). However, my argument implies that political opportunities encourage anti-reclamation movements to "stay local" and to appeal to communal identities whenever possible. This approach increases the chances of local success but alienates parallel anti-reclamation movements from one another. Meanwhile, frames that could provide the basis for a national

anti-reclamation movement, like fishers' justice, are unlikely to succeed locally. As a result, anti-reclamation activists face a trade-off between short-run opposition to particular projects and long-run advocacy for national reform.

This paper applies insights from social movement theory to the emerging literature on climate adaptation. In doing so, it generates implications for both literatures. First, the paper describes political and institutional variables that condition the potential of coastal reclamation as an equitable means of climate adaptation. Climate planners risk inequitable and maladaptive outcomes if they dismiss the concerns of anti-reclamation movements or overlook the significance of participatory institutions. Second, the paper documents a dilemma arising from countervailing political opportunities at different geographic scales. By demonstrating that local opportunities can subvert efforts to build national movements, the paper suggests that multi-level analysis of political opportunity can enrich explanations of movement outcomes.

Coastal Reclamation and Climate Adaptation

Climate change is intensifying flood risk in coastal cities. Sea levels have risen 20 centimeters since 1900, and are projected to rise another 38–77 centimeters by 2100 (Fox-Kemper et al. 2021). Storm surges, high tides, and rainstorms that were once considered extreme now occur with alarming frequency. In response, coastal cities are experimenting with various strategies to reduce risk, including the construction of protective defenses, the planning of retreat scenarios, and the implementation of flood accommodations (Dedekorkut-Howes, Torabi, and Howes 2020; Oppenheimer et al. 2019).

In addition to these strategies, economists have suggested that coastal reclamation could be well suited to cities that must adapt to climate change with limited resources, as is the case throughout the Global South (Bisaro and Hinkel 2018; Bisaro et al. 2020). According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "land reclamation is mature and effective technology" that "can provide predictable levels of safety" if "the entire land area is raised above the height of" extreme sea level events (Oppenheimer et al. 2019, 393). By conditioning waterfront development on climate-friendly reclamation, cash-strapped cities can attract private financing and generate tax revenue to fund coastal adaptation.

However, the climate-related benefits of coastal reclamation are conditional. Reclamation can exacerbate flood risk as well as mitigate it. For example, some reclamation projects reduce overall levels of protection by destroying natural flood defenses like coral reefs and mangrove forests (Dedekorkut-Howes, Torabi, and Howes 2020; Oppenheimer et al. 2019). Reclamation can also redistribute risk

to neighboring communities if developers block drainage networks or channel run-off into adjacent neighborhoods (Marks 2023; Valenzuela, Esteban, and Onuki 2020). Accordingly, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has acknowledged that “land reclamation raises equity issues with regards to access and distribution of the new land created, specifically due to the political economy associated with high coastal land values, and the involvement of private capital and interests” (Oppenheimer et al. 2019, 393).

The key cluster of variables that condition the equity of coastal reclamation projects are “planning and governance instruments” (Bisaro et al. 2020, 685). In principle, planners can counteract reclamation’s inequitable effects by consulting with affected communities, incorporating social housing, and providing fair compensation (Bisaro 2019; Bisaro et al. 2020; Dedekorkut-Howes, Torabi, and Howes 2020). Participatory planning and redistributive mechanisms are particularly important in cases of coastal reclamation for waterfront development because “high private involvement can lead to trade-offs between enabling funding for adaptation, and negative effects on adjacent areas and populations” (Bisaro 2019, 140).

Yet consultation, compensation, and redistribution are difficult governance tasks that require strong institutions to facilitate the “bidirectional flow” of information, broad “participation in policy implementation as well as formulation,” and credible commitments between public officials, developers, and coastal communities (Doner 2009, 72). In theory, formal institutions such as representative legislatures, public hearings, notice-and-comment, environmental impact assessments, and litigation can generate these capacities and ensure that coastal communities are consulted and compensated. In practice, however, officials and developers may try to circumvent these costly obligations, while formal channels of political participation can be compromised by conflicted officials and biased courts (Bisaro 2019; Bedner and Berenschot 2023).

The emergence of anti-reclamation movements in Indonesia and elsewhere indicates that formal institutions have failed to involve coastal communities in planning and governance. Meyer (2004) describes a curvilinear relationship between political openness and protest, in which social mobilization is impossible under highly repressive regimes and unnecessary under highly participatory regimes. In between these extremes, social movements emerge under permissive but unrepresentative regimes because they articulate marginalized interests. So it is with anti-reclamation movements. Coastal communities mobilize because they are locked within systems that allow protest, but do not facilitate meaningful participation in policymaking for coastal reclamation.

As I show in this paper, anti-reclamation movements in Indonesia seek redress by informal means only after testing

formal avenues of participation. Yet informal protest does not facilitate consultation and compensation, either. Rather, it leads to more “polarized conflict” (McAdam 1996b, 342). Accordingly, reclamation projects either founder amid massive resistance or run roughshod over coastal communities. In either scenario, the potential for equitable climate adaptation is lost.

I would suggest that coastal reclamation can only be contemplated as an equitable means of climate adaptation if coastal communities carve out a place for themselves in institutionalized politics. Put differently, the politics of reclamation must move along the downslope of Meyer’s protest curve. In contexts as varied as Japan, India, and Brazil, anti-development movements respectively championing the causes of mercury poisoning, dam construction, and deforestation achieved progress as a result of vertical alliances between local, national, and transnational movements (Almeida and Stearns 1998; Hochstetler and Keck 2007; Khagram 2004). In each of these cases, national or transnational movements won significant institutional, legislative, or regulatory reforms that in turn empowered local movements to engage in institutionalized politics.

In contrast, anti-reclamation movements have so far not “scaled up” to national politics, at least not in Indonesia. As a result, Indonesian anti-reclamation movements keep fighting the same battle over and over without achieving the institutional reforms that would facilitate equitable climate adaptation.

The Provincial Politics of Reclamation

Anti-reclamation movements share much in common with other anti-development movements. For example, anti-reclamation movements oppose reclamation because it displaces human and natural communities in the name of progress, just as other movements oppose dams, irrigation projects, ports, pipelines, highways, plantations, and mines. However, certain peculiarities of coastal reclamation distinguish anti-reclamation movements from their anti-development counterparts (table 1).¹ Specifically, recent trends in the setting and financing of coastal reclamation limit the horizons of anti-reclamation movements, undercutting their ability to organize on a national scale.

First, coastal reclamation is now largely an urban phenomenon (Sengupta et al. 2023). Historically, reclaimed land supported port, agriculture, and flood control projects. More recently, however, coastal reclamation is increasingly being purposed for exclusive, upscale waterfront developments, an inherently urban type of project (Herbeck and Flitner 2019). The urban setting distinguishes coastal reclamation from development projects that unfold in rural areas, such as irrigation projects, hydroelectric dams, plantations, and mines.

Second, coastal reclamation, when it is intended for waterfront development, is privately financed (Bisaro and

Table 1
A comparison of development projects

	Urban Setting	Rural Setting
Public Financing	Ports <i>Examples:</i> Makassar New Port (Carruthers 2016)	Irrigation <i>Examples:</i> Colorado River Storage Project (Bsumek 2013, 2023) Salam Canal (Rap and Jaskolski 2019)
Private Financing	Waterfronts <i>Examples:</i> Center Point of Indonesia Nusa Benoa	Plantations <i>Examples:</i> Tana Integrated Sugar Project (Neville 2021)

Hinkel 2018). Waterfront developments on reclaimed land are highly lucrative, because they create attractive, high-end real estate in desirable locations where it is otherwise cost-prohibitive to obtain large tracts of land. In this sense, reclamation opens the marine “hinterland” for urban development (Kusno 2011, 2013). Accordingly, governments commonly demand that developers bear the full cost of reclamation in exchange for ownership of a share of the reclaimed land. Private financing distinguishes coastal reclamation from development projects that typically require public funding, such as ports, roads, dams, and irrigation projects.²

The combination of private financing and urban location has decentralized the governance of coastal reclamation relative to other development projects. Coastal reclamation projects are manageable for local and provincial governments with limited fiscal resources and weak bureaucratic capacity. Eager investors have freed local governments from the constraints of national budgeting and ministerial implementation, never mind the strings attached to development assistance from international financial institutions like the World Bank.³ Moreover, the bureaucratically challenging process of land acquisition that hampers so many other projects is mitigated, though not eliminated, in coastal reclamation projects with footprints that encompass publicly owned foreshore, nearshore, and offshore areas (Davidson 2015).

As a result, local and provincial governments in decentralized political systems like Indonesia’s undertake coastal reclamation frequently, independently, and with limited oversight. These decentralized dynamics have produced considerable empirical uncertainty. As Sengupta et al. (2023, 1) have observed, “despite its growing global importance and reach worldwide, coastal reclamation is regarded as a local issue. Subsequently, the scale, intensity, and justification are not globally known, rather they are documented through localized case studies.”

Anti-reclamation movements reflect these decentralized dynamics, resulting in a “provincialized” politics of

reclamation. For example, anti-reclamation activists, in contrast to their rural counterparts, rarely undertake long journeys to the capital to dramatize their appeals, because the relevant governing authorities are locally based (Kammen 1997; Neville 2021).⁴ Instead, the urban setting ensures that coastal reclamation projects are salient to a large population, enhancing the potential of local organizing. As a result, anti-reclamation movements have fewer incentives to join national or transnational alliances than movements working in rural settings or opposing nationally or internationally funded projects (Khagram 2004; Hochstetler and Keck 2007; Tsing 2005).

In the case of Indonesia, no national anti-reclamation movement has emerged despite the rapid proliferation and increasing prominence of coastal reclamation projects (Yorhanita 2019). It is telling that early efforts to nationalize the issue have achieved little success despite the formation of local anti-reclamation movements in nearly every major city with an active reclamation project (*BBC News Indonesia* 2016). In this respect, anti-reclamation movements replicate the structure of civil society during Indonesia’s authoritarian era, when the New Order regime tolerated local activism but eliminated national political organizations (Boudreau 2004). Like those predecessors, anti-reclamation movements organize in parallel but separately, without the support of a national movement.

Anti-Reclamation Movements

Anti-reclamation movements emerge because reclamation imposes disproportionate costs on poor coastal communities while generating disproportionate benefits for real estate developers and investors. Waterfront developments often exclude the poor and attract wealthy new residents. Reclaimed land blocks access to the sea for existing communities, undermining livelihoods among fisherfolk (Aziziah et al. 2023; Betteridge and Webber 2019; Padawangi 2019; Susilo and Meulder 2018). And the physical transformation of the coast alters ocean currents, river discharge, sedimentation, and coastal erosion in unpredictable ways that may

harm nearby communities (Elyda, Wardhani, and Mariani 2016; Jellinek 2017).

Accordingly, reclamation provokes “ongoing organized conflict” because it imposes concentrated costs on one social group while bestowing concentrated benefits on another (Wilson 1995, 335). These conflicts are often characterized by mutual incomprehension between contestants that understand the coastal environment in contradictory ways (Hein and Thomsen 2023). In Indonesia, such conflicts consistently pit poor coastal communities and environmental advocates against provincial governments and developers. Meanwhile, the allegiances of “bystander publics,” or the bulk of the population who lack a direct stake in the result, become a focal point of contention (McAdam 1996b, 340).

Contests over reclamation unfold in both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forums. A typical pattern in Indonesia, pioneered by anti-dam activists in the 1980s and forest conservationists in the 1990s (Aditjondro 1998; Tsing 2005), begins with position papers and participation in public hearings. When those efforts fail, litigation follows, stalling the project and buying time for movement activists to mobilize public support. Finally, litigation gives way to protest when the lawsuits fail or a critical mass of supporters has been achieved.

Importantly, institutionalized tactics rarely, if ever, succeed in Indonesia. Public hearings rarely foster dialogue and Indonesian courts reliably defer to developers and governments over civil society plaintiffs (Bedner and Berenschot 2023). To their credit, anti-reclamation activists consistently seek to achieve their goals by means of institutional participation, as I show in this paper. However, Indonesia’s democratic but insufficiently participatory institutions have shifted the politics of reclamation to the apex of Meyer’s (2004) protest curve. In other words, the institutional bias in favor of reclamation has compelled anti-reclamation movements to seek influence by means of coalition building and mass mobilization.

To that end, anti-reclamation movements engage “in mobilization contests to demonstrate who has the most support and resources at their command” as well as “framing contests attempting to persuade authorities and bystanders of the rightness of their cause” (Zald 1996, 269). When successful, these efforts attract widespread support, empowering anti-reclamation movements to capture the attention of the press, interrupt commerce, sway elections, and pressure cabinet ministries. Like other movements, anti-reclamation movements “derive much of their effectiveness as agents of social change from their ability to disrupt public order” (McAdam 1996b, 341).

In their mobilizational efforts, Indonesian anti-reclamation activists benefit from a dense network of “social ties” (Brooker and Meyer 2018) and a deep stock of “coalitional capital” (Weiss 2006). These linkages between civil society organizations were forged over time

during previous episodes of activism, including the pro-democracy, anti-dam, and forest conservation movements (Boudreau 2004; Tsing 2005; Weiss 2006). This legacy benefits contemporary activists by facilitating cooperation between organizations and muting potential rivalries (Zald and McCarthy 1987).

Complementary to mobilization, anti-reclamation movements engage in framing, or “strategic efforts of movement groups to fashion meaningful accounts of themselves and the issues at hand in order to motivate and legitimate their efforts” (McAdam 1996b, 339). Initially, anti-reclamation movements tend to frame reclamation as a threat to the environment and as a source of social injustice. Such claims appeal narrowly to reclamation’s “natural” enemies, but rarely attract bystanders to the movement. Thus, anti-reclamation movements learn over time how to frame their work broadly, as I discuss later.

Of course, proponents of reclamation, including public officials and real estate developers, contest these efforts. Reclamation proponents deploy their political and economic might to attract supporters, influence media coverage, and mobilize counter-coalitions. In addition, proponents consistently frame reclamation as a source of widespread benefits “for the people” (*untuk rakyat*) and belittle anti-reclamation movements as the representatives of “only a few individuals” (*segelintir orang*).

Types of Movements

Indonesian anti-reclamation movements share numerous similarities. They emerge out of similar distributive conflicts, face analogous challenges, operate within a shared institutional framework, and inherit a common legacy of environmental activism. As a result, they resemble one another organizationally, employ similar strategies, and evolve in parallel trajectories. Yet for all their similarities, anti-reclamation movements diverge in their effectiveness. I ascribe this divergence to differences in composition between movements. All movements seek to encompass the wider community, but different movements incorporate different groups. I argue that the degree to which movements encompass different classes is the crucial feature that determines the effectiveness of anti-reclamation movements.

On one hand, class-based movements incorporate working-class communities whose material interests are threatened by public and private development projects. In the case of reclamation, class-based movements naturally include poor coastal communities and fisherfolk, but in principle they could also incorporate other marginal groups such as urban kampongs, informal settlements, riverbank communities, and peri-urban villages (Padawangi 2022).

On the other hand, cross-class movements incorporate economically diverse groups that do not necessarily share material interests. For example, cross-class movements might unite fisherfolk, poor coastal communities, middle-class neighborhoods, and local business owners under the

same banner. In doing so, they transcend class and transform the movement into one that accommodates a diversity of material interests.⁵

Cross-class movements have two critical advantages over class-based movements. First, their mobilizational potential for a given area is greater. In the limit, cross-class movements can mobilize an entire population. Meanwhile, class-based movements exclude certain groups by definition. As a result, class-based movements grow by expanding geographically, which increases their size at the expense of dispersing their supporters across a wider area.

Second, cross-class movements can more credibly claim to represent the interests of the wider community, gaining criticism that they represent only a few individuals. Two features lend weight to such claims. First, they descriptively represent the community by incorporating economically diverse groups. Second, they frame their opposition in ways that unite factions with differing material interests. In doing so, they articulate broadly shared interests that appeal throughout society. In contrast, class-based movements tend to champion environmental and economic justice in ways that are unlikely to resonate with the rich.⁶

Political Opportunity and Coalition Building

Like other movements, anti-reclamation movements diligently seek to expand their coalition of supporters by appealing to some broader community. Yet some movements build geographically diverse class-based movements, while others build economically diverse cross-class movements. Applying a classic concept from the social movements literature, I explain this divergence as a function of political opportunities to build coalitions.

The social movements literature has long understood that “the timing and fate of movements” depend “upon the opportunities afforded ... by the shifting institutional structure and ideological disposition of those in power” (McAdam 1996a, 23). Sydney Tarrow (1996) identifies four dimensions of political opportunity, namely political access, shifting alignments, influential allies, and elite divisions. These dimensions encompass both formal institutions and informal political alliances as they constrain or enable social movements to influence politics. Together, they define a set of “environmental conditions that allow protest to emerge and resonate with government and other social actors” (Meyer 2004, 139).

In the case of anti-reclamation movements, I argue that elite divisions are the critical factor that explain coalition-building opportunities with respect to reclamation.⁷ Specifically, elite attitudes toward reclamation determine whether any elites are suitable coalition partners for anti-reclamation movements. Elites are “individuals and small, relatively cohesive and stable groups with major decisional power” that flows from their leadership over political,

economic, and cultural organizations (Higley 2018, 27). If elites agree that reclamation is desirable, then that consensus deprives anti-reclamation movements of powerful allies. However, if elites disagree about the benefits of reclamation, then that fragmentation creates an opportunity for anti-reclamation activists to join forces with like-minded elites.⁸

However, cross-class coalitions do not mechanically follow from a divided elite. Rather, they are constructed over time in a process that involves activists working strategically given political opportunities. Meyer (2004, 140) offers a useful framework for understanding this coalition-building process. The environmental and community activists who lead anti-reclamation movements are “consistent champions ... regardless of the strategic environment.” They oppose reclamation without hesitation, no matter the odds, and with any available frame. In contrast, their potential allies are more akin to “strategic respondents” who “mobilize on some issues sometimes, in response to both circumstances and to organizers’ efforts.” They only join movements that have a high probability of success, and they demand socially and ideologically acceptable frames to justify their participation. Thus, even when elite divisions make coalition-building possible, anti-reclamation activists must still strategically recruit elite allies, not least by tailoring movement frames to suit the needs of elites.

The demands of coalition building, and the character of the resulting coalition, depend on the identity of the movement’s elite allies. With respect to reclamation controversies, it is useful to distinguish among political, economic, and communal elites (Slater 2010).⁹ Political elites, including incumbent officials and opposition politicians, have influence over government finances and land use regulations, including with respect to reclamation. Economic elites, including local business owners and national developers, have a pecuniary stake in the economic effects of reclamation projects. And communal elites, including customary leaders¹⁰ and religious notables, possess symbolic power that accrues from their roles as custodians of local tradition, ritual, and identity (Slater 2009).¹¹

An alliance between coastal communities and any one of these groups is empowering for the movement, but the tenor of the resulting coalition varies with the capabilities of the ally.¹² For example, a movement that incorporates opposition politicians would need to win elections, but after doing so could halt reclamation with the stroke of a pen. A movement that incorporates local businesses might act collectively to stifle campaign contributions, restrict tax revenues, or amplify public oversight (Fairfield 2015; Tans 2020, 2023).

Most importantly, a movement that incorporates customary leaders or religious notables inherits symbolic power to “inspire thousands of people from diverse walks

of life” (Slater 2009, 219). With the endorsement of customary leaders or religious notables, anti-reclamation movements gain the ability to make broad appeals based on communal solidarity rather than material interests. As a result, communal elites uniquely empower anti-reclamation movements to mobilize large numbers of people cutting across class, making them critical allies when formal channels of participation, such as elections, lawsuits, and public hearings, are unreliable. For this reason, anti-reclamation “movements have only been able to successfully mobilize around tropes of ‘culture and tradition’” (Padawangi 2019, 143).

In sum, I expect cross-class movements to emerge when elite fragmentation over reclamation creates opportunities for anti-reclamation movements to incorporate elites, especially communal elites.

Similar Anti-Reclamation Movements

My argument that elite attitudes toward reclamation shape opportunities for anti-reclamation movements to build cross-class coalitions is based on a comparison of the politics of reclamation in Bali and Makassar, Indonesia.¹³ Different types of movements emerged in these two cases, despite numerous similarities with respect to their organizers, the particulars of the projects, and the characteristics of the communities. This “apparent anomaly,” in which seemingly similar cases “demonstrate surprisingly different outcomes,” makes the comparison a useful hypothesis-generating exercise in which differences between cases can be treated as “putative causes” (Gerring 2007, 131).

I offer additional support for my argument by tracing the process by which these movements diverged over time. Ricks and Liu (2018, 844) accord special significance to counterfactuals in process-tracing research designs, because they imply that “another outcome was possible.” In controlled comparisons such as this study, “empirical alternatives” serve “in lieu of” hypothetical counterfactuals. In that spirit, I argue that these movements would have followed similar trajectories but for elite divisions. The paper thus presents cross-case evidence that elite attitudes covary with the class composition of movements, and within-case evidence that elite fragmentation generates transformational opportunities for cross-class organizing.

Indonesia is an important test case for reclamation because the country exhibits precisely the characteristics that should make “advancing the line” an attractive strategy for adapting to sea-level rise. Rapid rates of relative sea level rise combined with a large and growing population in low-lying coastal zones make Indonesia highly vulnerable to coastal flooding (Neumann et al. 2015; Nicholls et al. 2021; Willemsen, Lelij, and Wesenbeeck 2019). Compounding the problem, under-resourced local governments lack the fiscal capacity to invest in costly coastal defenses. Under such conditions, reclamation is believed

to offer a mechanism to marshal private investment and increase public revenue for coastal defense (Bisaro et al. 2020; Bisaro and Hinkel 2018; Oppenheimer et al. 2019). However, Indonesia’s anti-reclamation movements suggest that this view is incomplete. More specifically, they present a useful opportunity to examine the political and institutional variables that limit the potential of reclamation to generate broadly shared benefits, including protection from coastal flooding.

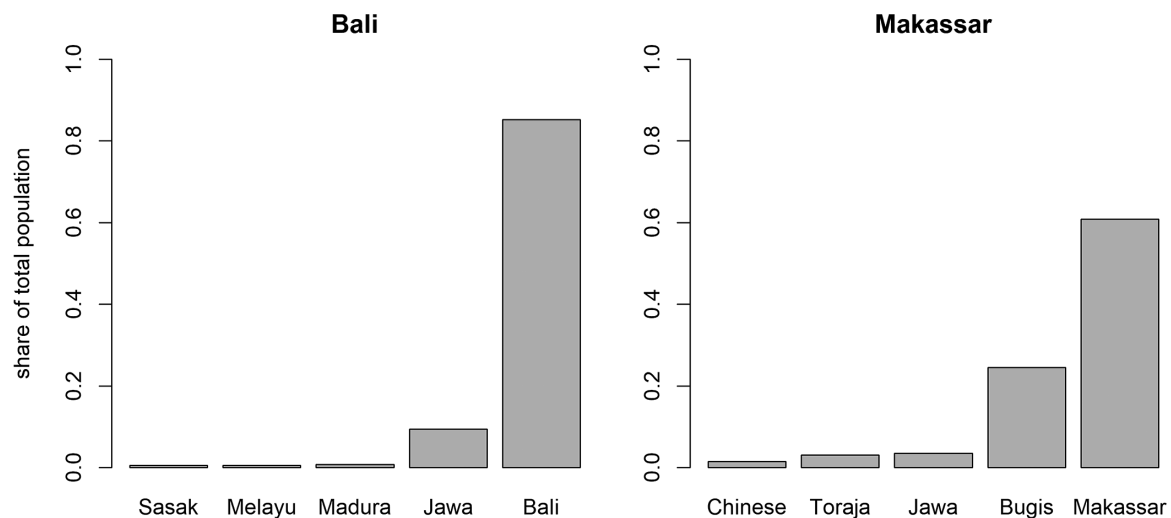
But Indonesia is more than a test case. It is a testing ground where local and provincial governments are empowered to reclaim land, developers enthusiastically bid for the contracts, and national officials cheer them on. Coastal reclamation plainly serves the “new developmentalism” of outgoing president Joko Widodo, which has sought rapid economic growth by means of massive infrastructure projects (Warburton 2016, 2018; Hudalah 2023). Moreover, the outgoing president’s formidable popularity suggests that many Indonesians share his obsession with infrastructure development. In short, Indonesia’s contemporary political economy has been highly conducive to the rapid proliferation of coastal reclamation. As a result, Indonesia offers a useful opportunity to apply subnational comparisons to refine the scholarly understanding of the politics of reclamation.

To this end, I conduct a hypothesis-generating exercise by comparing anti-reclamation movements in Bali and Makassar. These two movements are well-suited to this method because they diverged despite similarities in organization, goals, history, and context, as the following enumerates.

First, the movements united similar coalitions of civil society groups that practiced similar tactics of opposition. In both cases, the respected environmental advocacy group Walhi (Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia, or The Indonesian Forum for the Environment), led coalitions of environmentalists, human rights activists, student organizations, anti-corruption watchdogs, and community-based organizations. Moreover, both movements participated in public consultation, brought litigation, and staged public demonstrations.

Second, the movements opposed similar projects backed by matching alliances of provincial officials and national developers. In the case of Bali, reclamation was proposed to create ten or more islands over a total area of 800 hectares (Ha) in Benoa Bay, which adjoins both the city of Denpasar and Badung district (Wardana 2019). In the case of Makassar, reclamation was proposed to create approximately 150 Ha of land in Makassar Strait as part of a 600 Ha development project that would face downtown Makassar (Iqbal and Akbar 2014). Both provincial governments conceded reclaimed land to national developers for the construction of luxurious homes, high-end hotels, upscale commercial spaces, and prestige landmarks. In

Figure 1
Ethnicity in Bali and Makassar, 2010



Data source: Minnesota Population Center (2017)

Bali, the developer was Tirta Wahana Bali International (TWBI), a subsidiary of Artha Graha. In Makassar, the developer was Ciputra Surya.

Third, both movements emerged in the context of large metropolitan areas experiencing land scarcity. The Denpasar and Makassar metropolitan areas are densely populated, highly developed urban areas where land is scarce, especially in prime locations.¹⁴ As a result, Denpasar and Makassar were recently two of the three most expensive property markets in Indonesia outside of Java Island (Gnagey and Tans 2018).¹⁵

Fourth, the ethnic and religious composition of both societies is similarly homogenous. In Bali province, 82% of residents identify as Balinese and practice Hinduism. In Makassar and surrounding districts, 85% of residents identify as Makassarese or Bugis, ethnic groups indigenous to South Sulawesi, and practice Islam (Minnesota Population Center 2017). Figure 1 illustrates the similar distributions of ethnic groups between cases. Accordingly, communal attachments in both communities are strong and distinctive.

Fifth, both communities have recently experienced episodes of anti-development mobilization. In Bali for example, local communities organized against the development of resort hotels at Tanah Lot in 1993 and Padanggalak in 1997 (Schulte Nordholt 2007; Warren 1998). These protests prefigured the subsequent anti-reclamation movement in composition and tactics. In Makassar, a diverse coalition of civil society and community organizations opposed the re-development of Karebosi Field, a public park, in 2007.¹⁶ Ten years earlier, “heightened ethnic tensions” contributed to deadly anti-

Chinese riots after Lippo Group became involved in coastal development in the Tanjung Bunga area (Sutherland 2011, 813).¹⁷ Although levels of violence differ, both movements inherited historical legacies of discontent with large, disruptive development projects.

Of course, Bali and Makassar are not identical. Bali’s customary institutions are legally recognized, provincially funded, and culturally celebrated in ways that probably make them more capable of mass mobilization than their counterparts in Makassar. In addition, Bali’s customary village leaders may be more firmly embedded in village societies than Makassar’s aristocrats. Yet Makassar’s communal institutions, both customary and religious, have proven capable of promoting collective action, and Balinese villages are divided, too, by caste.¹⁸

In addition, Bali and Makassar differ economically. The Balinese economy is highly dependent on beach tourism, while Makassar’s economy includes a diversified mix of agricultural, industrial, and commercial activity oriented toward its South Sulawesi hinterland and eastern Indonesia. Thus, the economic effects of reclamation might reasonably be expected to differ between cases. However, I suggest that an important mechanism by which economic structure affects reclamation outcomes is by shaping elite attitudes.

In sum, anti-reclamation movements in Bali and Makassar were evenly matched. They emerged in similar locations, faced similar opponents, pursued similar objectives, and possessed similar organizational, tactical, cultural, and historical resources. Yet they diverged over time with respect to class composition and mobilizational capacity. As a result, the Bali movement successfully

Table 2
Selected demonstrations in Bali and Makassar

	Stage	Date	Organizer	Size	Source
BALI	Uncoordinated	Jul. 31, 2013	Walhi	dozens	<i>Bali Post</i> (2013b)
		Aug. 2, 2013	GEMPAR	hundreds	<i>Bali Post</i> (2013d)
	Emergent	Aug. 15, 2013	ForBALI	dozens	<i>Bali Post</i> (2013a)
		Jun. 27, 2014	ForBALI	two thousand	Apriando (2014)
		Jan. 29, 2016	ForBALI	thousands	<i>Bali Post</i> (2016f)
	Consolidated	Feb. 28, 2016	ForBALI and customary villages	ten thousand	<i>Bali Post</i> (2016c)
Jul. 10, 2016		Customary villages	ten thousand	Pasopati (2016)	
MAKASSAR	Uncoordinated	Apr. 18, 2011	Makassar Gowa Student Solidarity Forum	dozens	<i>Fajar</i> (2011a)
		Aug. 6, 2012	Residents of Tanjung Bunga	dozens	<i>Fajar</i> (2012)
	Emergent	Apr. 1, 2014	LBH	dozens	Chandra (2014)
		Feb. 14, 2016 (recurring weekly)	ASP	dozens	Chandra (2016)
		May 18, 2017	ASP	hundreds	Hardiansya (2017)
	Consolidated	Jun. 11, 2017	ASP, Takalar People's Alliance and others	one thousand	Chandra (2017a)
		Mar. 5, 2018	ASP	hundreds	Chandra (2018)

blocked reclamation, while the Makassar movement did not.

Diverging Trajectories

A comparison of each movement's demonstrations over time shows a similar trajectory as well as the timing and nature of their divergence (table 2). Both movements emerged following a series of small, uncoordinated actions. Over time, their mobilizational capacity grew as they forged new alliances and increased their notoriety. However, their parallel trajectories diverged as they became consolidated. In Bali, the movement acquired and sustained the ability to mobilize 10,000 demonstrators, whereas in Makassar, the movement mobilized 1,000 demonstrators but could not sustain that number.

During the first stage of both movements, demonstrations were small, uncoordinated, and led by different standard-bearers. In Bali, details of the Benoa Bay project were published on July 8, 2013 (*Bali Post* 2013e). Within weeks, Walhi organized a demonstration attended by a few dozen protesters (*Bali Post* 2013b). Separately, GEMPAR, representing members of the coastal community of Tanjung Benoa, organized a demonstration attended by a few hundred people (*Bali Post* 2013d). In Makassar, the uncoordinated stage of opposition lasted longer, but it was similarly characterized by small protests conducted in different locations under various banners. For example, an early student protest opposed reclamation at historic Fort Rotterdam on the grounds that it threatened cultural heritage (*Fajar* 2011a). In 2012, land conflict between residents and a developer led to arson at Tanjung Bunga,

adjacent to Center Point of Indonesia (Yusriadi and Irwan 2012). Two years later, the South Sulawesi chapter of Indonesia's Legal Aid Society (Lembaga Bantuan Hukum, LBH) supported a protest campaign organized by residents who were evicted from the Center Point of Indonesia project site (Chandra 2014).

During the second stage, formal alliances were established to coordinate protest under a single banner. In both cases, this emergent stage persisted for two and a half years. In Bali, ForBALI (Forum Rakyat Bali Tolak Reklamasi Teluk Benoa, or the Balinese People's Forum Against the Reclamation of Benoa Bay) was established in August 2013 to coordinate among environmentalists, community organizations, democracy activists, religious leaders, students, artists, and others (*Bali Post* 2013a; Erviani 2013). In Makassar, the Alliance to Save the Coast (ASP, Aliansi Selamatkan Pesisir) was established in January 2015 to coordinate among environmentalist, student, and human rights organizations (Marzuki 2015). These umbrella organizations immediately became the faces of their respective movements. They organized demonstrations, lobbied the government, and published manifestos listing reasons to oppose reclamation. Yet protest remained small during this stage.

During the third stage, the movements were suddenly and dramatically transformed by new allies. In Bali, customary villages threw their support behind the movement in early 2016. Overnight, the movement acquired the capacity to mobilize 10,000 demonstrators. The movement sustained this impressive mobilizational capacity for years. Even two years later, the movement turned out

7,000 supporters to urge the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries to allow the Benoa Bay location permit to expire (Koalisi Seni Indonesia 2019). In Makassar, an alliance between ASP and fishers' justice organizations coalesced in June 2017 around their shared opposition to sand mining in the Makassar Strait (Chandra 2017a). As a result, the movement acquired the capacity to mobilize 1,000 demonstrators, including protesters from neighboring Takalar district. However, the movement was unable to replicate those numbers during subsequent protests.

Thus, these movements followed a similar progression as they learned to coordinate their activities, frame their appeals, and recruit allies. However, the Bali movement became a cross-class movement after incorporating customary leaders, while the Makassar movement became a class-based, geographically broad movement after incorporating fishers' justice organizations.

In the case studies that follow, I trace the evolution of these movements to show that Balinese elites were divided with respect to reclamation, while Makassar elites were united. The Balinese movement took advantage of this opportunity by constructing a message, based on the concept of "sacred sites," that appealed to Balinese of all backgrounds. In contrast, the Makassar movement embraced opposition to sand mining as a means of mobilizing diverse fisher communities against reclamation. However, elite consensus in favor of reclamation deprived activists of elite allies in their coalition-building efforts.

The case studies draw on press sources and academic accounts, written in English and Indonesian, as well as primary sources published by supporters and opponents of reclamation. I document change over time within both movements using digital archives of *Bali Post* and *Fajar* (a Makassar daily), which I obtained from each newspaper's head office during fieldwork in Indonesia between 2015 and 2016. Both archives cover a period of approximately six years from 2010 until 2015.

Bali: Nusa Benoa

The Nusa Benoa project proposed to reclaim a collection of islands in Benoa Bay, located in southern Bali off the coast of Denpasar. Initially, Governor I Made Mangku Pastika approved the project in secret and awarded it to TWBI, a subsidiary of the Jakarta-based developer Artha Graha, owned by Tomy Winata. However, when *Bali Post* broke the story, public uproar forced the governor to withdraw his approval and authorize a project feasibility study instead.

Public uproar quickly coalesced into a coalition of environmentalists, students, artists, and political activists who allied themselves with coastal communities under threat. Local entrepreneurs and businesses opposed the project as well, driving a wedge between business leaders and the governor's allies. The anti-reclamation movement took

advantage of elite discord by reaching out to business groups and cultivating the support of customary village leaders.

Coastal Communities

Twelve villages in and around Denpasar share frontage along Benoa Bay (Wardana 2019). Among these, Tanjung Benoa was most exposed to reclamation's potential effects by virtue of its location on a narrow peninsula extending northward into the mouth of the bay. At the time of the Nusa Benoa proposal, Tanjung Benoa was experiencing beach erosion, and residents feared that reclamation would exacerbate the problem. At the same time, the village economy depended on tourism and watersports. Many residents believed that reclamation would undermine these activities, though some anticipated that it would bring new jobs and visitors to the area.

Those opposed to reclamation staged a demonstration within weeks of the news of the project. Calling themselves GEMPAR, the protesters rejected reclamation on the grounds that the bay was a source of livelihood, common to all (*Bali Post* 2013g). While their agenda emphasized economic harm, other villagers worried about ecological disaster. For example, I Wayan Dibia Adnyana, chairperson of Tanjung Benoa's customary advisory council, feared that the project would submerge the village (*Bali Post* 2013f).

Local Businesses

By and large, Bali's local business community opposed the reclamation proposal because its members feared competition from the Nusa Benoa resort. Local businesses, like Bali's economy in general, are highly dependent on tourism. For example, accommodation, food and beverage, and transportation—three industries closely related to tourism—accounted for 32% of Bali's economic activity in 2015 (*Provinsi Bali Dalam Angka* 2018).

Bali hosts millions of domestic and international tourists per year, yet competition in the tourism industry is fierce.¹⁹ Thousands of bars, restaurants, and hotels compete in a crowded marketplace (*Buku Statistik Pariwisata Bali* 2019). Hotel occupancy rates are chronically low due to a surfeit of rooms, of which there were 60,000 in 2014. Moreover, the competition is unequal. Many large resorts are owned by Jakarta-based conglomerates or multinational firms, while smaller establishments are disproportionately Balinese. As a result, Balinese businesses tend to be protectionist, and the Nusa Benoa project threatened to bring a formidable new opponent to town (Wardana 2019).

Accordingly, prominent business groups openly opposed reclamation. For example, Ida Bagus Ngurah Wijaya, chairperson of Bali Tourism Board, advocated for the provincial government to shift investment away from southern Bali in the name of "balance" (*Bali Post* 2013c).²⁰ Tjokorda Oka Artha Ardana Sukawati, chairperson of the Bali chapter of the Indonesian Hotels and

Restaurants Association, condemned the Nusa Benoa project as culturally “artificial” (Rhismawati 2013).

Communal Elites

Customary villages (*desa adat* or *desa pakraman*) are custodians of tradition and ritual in Bali. They organize religious festivals and stage cultural events. Decisions are taken by an elected council that meets at least once per year (Gubernur Bali 2019). They are legally recognized and publicly funded, and their influence and fiscal capacity have grown since Indonesia’s transition to democracy (Schulte Nordholt 2007). Customary villages constitute a parallel structure to the so-called “administrative” villages that report to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Customary village leaders were initially reluctant to take sides in the debate over reclamation. Most customary leaders felt that reclamation fell outside the bounds of their authority, which they interpreted as applying to “the realm of Balinese culture and Hinduism” (Wiranata and Siahaan 2019, 415). In contrast, many customary youth councils (*sekaa taruna-taruni*) openly embraced the anti-reclamation movement, and actively campaigned for their elders to join them (Bräuchler 2020).

Customary villages have tremendous moral authority in Bali, where religious, ethnic, and linguistic identity are highly reinforcing. Ultimately, their support was decisive in the contest over reclamation. When customary villages announced their opposition to the Nusa Benoa project, they inspired thousands of Balinese to join them in protest.

Evolution of the Anti-Reclamation Movement in Bali

Early protest against the Nusa Benoa project was small, dispersed, and uncoordinated. However, activists quickly established ForBALI, an umbrella organization that coordinated anti-reclamation activism around a shared set of principles (Bräuchler 2018). Drawing on Walhi’s coalitional capital, ForBALI united NGOs, student groups, artists, intellectuals, and others behind a frame that emphasized ecological harm to the coastal environment. The organizing work was led by I Wayan “Gendo” Suardana, an experienced activist and human rights lawyer, who had previously served as director of Walhi Bali.

In 2014, ForBALI published an anti-reclamation manifesto in the form of a list of thirteen reasons to reject reclamation (table 3). A plurality of items in the list highlighted the environmental impact of reclamation. For example, the list cited threats to coral reefs and mangrove forests, increased coastal abrasion and flooding, and ecological damage associated with sand mining and the reclamation supply chain. In addition, the list linked reclamation to corruption, inequality, and cultural “bankruptcy.” Notably, the “sacred sites” that would later become so central to the movement were at this stage a mere afterthought, included only as a subpoint to the first item.

Table 3
ForBALI’s (2014) 13 reasons to reject reclamation

1. Loss of healthy marine conservation area
2. Increased flooding
3. Heightened vulnerability to disasters
4. Destruction of coral reefs
5. Threatened mangrove ecosystem
6. Accelerated coastal abrasion
7. Ecological damage throughout the reclamation supply chain
8. Transfer of wealth from Balinese people to the investor
9. Policies corruptly favorable to the investor
10. Inequitable development
11. Investor’s misleading promises
12. Violation of the national Coral Triangle Initiative protecting coral reefs
13. Cultural and spiritual bankruptcy of the tourism sector

From the start, ForBALI employed a variety of tactics. The alliance introduced itself to the public on August 15, 2013, by means of a small protest at the Bali Provincial Assembly Building in Denpasar (*Bali Post* 2013a). That same day, ForBALI issued a letter, written in legalistic language, demanding that the provincial assembly compel Governor Pastika to revoke the project permit (ForBALI 2013). The governor complied the very next day, but also authorized a project feasibility study (ForBALI, n.d.). In response, ForBALI successfully pressured the project feasibility research team at Udayana University to issue a finding of “not feasible” (Wardana 2019).²¹

These early efforts successfully delayed, but did not derail, the Nusa Benoa project. ForBALI’s skillful legal maneuvering notwithstanding, the coalition’s emphasis on ecological health did not resonate beyond activists and coastal communities. As a result, the sizes of ForBALI demonstrations were mostly exceeded by counter-demonstrations throughout the period from 2013 to 2015. The pro-reclamation demonstrations mobilized hundreds of demonstrators on several occasions in 2013 and as many as 3,000 demonstrators on April 20, 2015, probably with support from allies of the governor such as the Laskar Bali and Forbara youth organizations (Suparta 2013; *Metro Bali* 2015; Supriatma 2016).

The pro-reclamation coalition was carefully constructed to mirror the anti-reclamation movement (Tans 2021). Pro-reclamation forces recruited—or created—groups to advocate for Nusa Benoa from the perspectives of environmentalists, coastal communities, professional associations, and cultural organizations (*Bali Post* 2016f; Muhajir 2014; Wardana 2019). The diverse composition and sizeable turnout of the pro-coalition reclamation created the impression of a closely divided public in which support for reclamation was at least as widespread as opposition.

On this basis, proponents of reclamation frequently accused ForBALI of representing “just a few individuals” (*segelintir orang*) (Metro Bali 2014; Berita Satu 2014).

As 2015 drew to a close, Nusa Benoa’s proponents appeared to have the upper hand. The pro-reclamation campaign had seemingly fought ForBALI to a draw, and an environmental impact assessment from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry was expected in early 2016 (Langenheim 2016). A favorable assessment would have cleared the project to break ground.

However, ForBALI had another card to play, because it had spent a year laying the groundwork to incorporate customary villages into the anti-reclamation movement. In late 2014, Sugi Lanus and Saras Dewi, two Balinese intellectuals, published separate essays arguing that reclamation posed a threat to Balinese culture in general, not just to coastal communities. As such, both authors concluded that customary villages were the rightful leaders of the anti-reclamation movement (Dewi 2015; Lanus 2014).

For BALI then undertook research intended to persuade customary villages to join the movement (Bali Post 2016d). Specifically, ForBALI commissioned a team of six urban planning students under the leadership of Sugi Lanus to compile a list of sacred sites (*titik suci*) in and around Benoa Bay. Sacred sites are locations with religious or mystical significance where “spiritual energies emerge,” such as temples, beaches, river mouths, sandbars, and mudflats (Bräuchler 2018, 376). To construct the list, the students interviewed local religious leaders, cultural experts, and fisherfolk who were familiar with the bay’s spiritual and physical topography. Meanwhile, Sugi Lanus searched ancient palm-leaf manuscripts for references to sacred sites.

The research team produced a list of 70 sacred sites, visualized in the form of a map (figure 2) and publicized on November 6, 2015 (Bali Post 2015). The map transformed the anti-reclamation movement, which abandoned its previous emphasis on environmental harm and instead embraced a mission to safeguard Balinese culture and religion. The new framing resonated widely across Balinese society, including among elites. Local businesses championed the new rationale (Bali Post 2016a), while customary village leaders understood the map as speaking directly to their mandate. According to Wiranata and Siahaan (2019, 417), “since their inception hundreds of years ago, customary villages were indeed formed in part to care for *parhyangan* (sacred places) as an inseparable part of the communal way of life.”

Embracing the effort to preserve sacred sites, the customary village council of Kuta reached a decision to oppose reclamation on January 23, 2016, initiating a cascade of opposition as other villages followed suit (Bali Post 2016b; Bali Post 2016e). One month later, customary village leaders led 10,000 protesters across Benoa Bay along Mandara Toll Road (Bali Post 2016c). Similarly

large demonstrations continued throughout 2016, unambiguously demonstrating massive public opposition to the Nusa Benoa project. As a result, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry issued an unfavorable environmental impact assessment, and Nusa Benoa was indefinitely postponed (Arumingtyas 2016).

In sum, the logic of defending sacred sites united coastal communities, local businesses, and customary elites under a single encompassing banner. This alliance demonstrated an enduring ability to mobilize Balinese of all classes against reclamation, forcing the government to accede to the movement’s demands and scuttling the Nusa Benoa project.

Makassar: Center Point of Indonesia

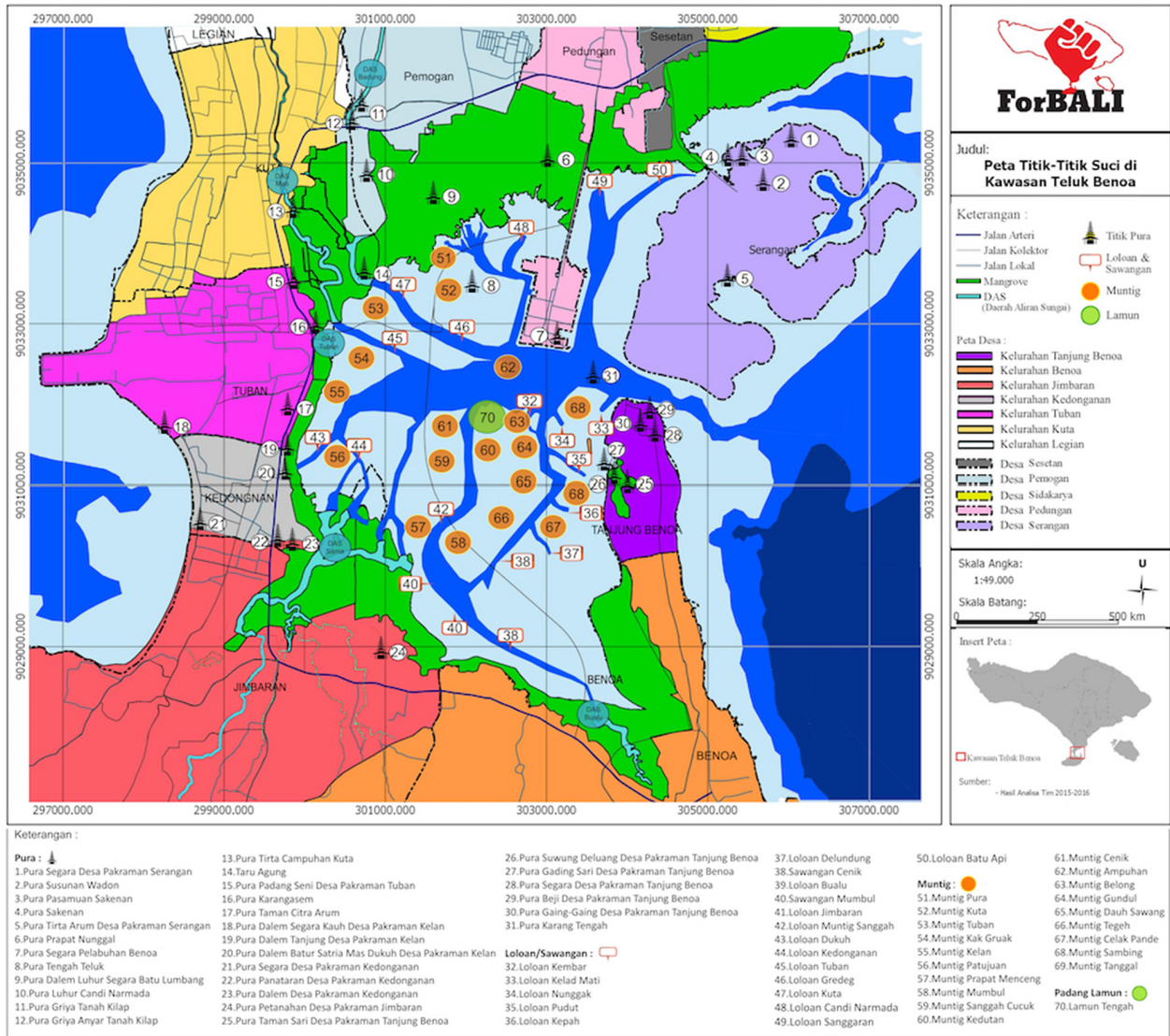
Located in the delta where the Jeneberang River flows into the Makassar Strait, Center Point of Indonesia (CPI) was a signature project of South Sulawesi Governor Syahrul Yasin Limpo, who held office for two terms from 2008 to 2018. In 2010, the government signed a memorandum of understanding with the developer Gowa Makassar Tourism Development (GMTD), and the project broke ground with the construction of a retaining wall (Fajar 2010). However, the partnership soon collapsed after the two sides failed to reach an agreement on how to share ownership of the reclaimed land (Harifuddin 2012). In 2013, the provincial government awarded the project to a consortium between Ciputra Group and a mysterious firm named Yasmin Bumi Asri with close ties to the governor (Sari 2024; Fajar 2014b). Their agreement stipulated that the provincial government would receive 50 Ha of the reclaimed land, while Ciputra would receive 107 Ha in exchange for fully funding the project (Kasman 2013; Alexander 2015).

Although it was slow to form, Makassar developed a vigorous anti-reclamation movement that closely resembled the Balinese movement. The movement was fronted by a broad alliance of environmentalist, activist, and student groups, who collaborated with coastal communities and fisherfolk harmed by CPI. In contrast to Bali, however, activists were opposed by a strong elite consensus. Local businesses supported reclamation, local officials profited from the project, and communal elites deferred to the governor, himself a member of the nobility.

Coastal Communities

CPI’s earliest opponents were the communities harmed by the project. These groups included families that lived in the delta as well as people who lived on the mainland but fished the delta. At the outset of the project, the government documented twelve households who were cultivating over 19 Ha of land in the delta (Fajar 2011c). Upon receiving the initial eviction notices, these households began to campaign for fair compensation (Fajar 2011b). Three years

Figure 2
Seventy Sacred Sites in the Benoa Bay Area



Source: BaleBengong Editors (2016)

later, when the government demolished the houses and burned the possessions of 43 households in this location, the campaign for compensation was still unresolved (Fajar 2014a; Iqbal and Akbar 2014).

In addition, CPI slowly strangled a once-vibrant fishing community centered around the Rajawali Fish Market (Rusdianto 2015; Tanahindie 2022). The project built over the delta's green mussel beds, decimating a shellfishing industry in which many women participated. The construction works polluted the water and the new land impeded urban drainage, reducing water quality and fish yields. And CPI closed off access for all but the smallest vessels, significantly reducing the fish market's traffic.

Local Businesses

Makassar's business community, by contrast, treated CPI as an opportunity for land speculation. The project triggered a rush in which entrepreneurs staked land claims, bid on construction contracts, and invested in new developments.

First, well-connected individuals, including public officials, rushed to claim ownership of land in the delta, notwithstanding the fact that the area was mostly water (Sari 2024). Once claimants had established ownership, they sold the title to a developer or developed the land themselves. Sarifuddin Sudding, National Assembly Member from Central Sulawesi and former LBH activist,

explains how local speculators transformed water into private property:

It is a long process; use rights are filed in collaboration with the subdistrict administrator. On that basis, the National Land Agency issues a certificate. Then, a title is published and the land is filled in and monetized. (Rasid and Nugraha 2013)

In 2014 alone, the police investigated eleven such cases of illegal reclamation, including a case involving mayor-elect Danny Pomanto, who was serving as senior advisor to the mayor at the time (Rasid and Nugraha 2014). According to GMTD, Pomanto held the title to a strategically located area of wetlands adjoining Trans Studio Mall. The developer agreed to reclaim the area in exchange for ownership of half of the property. However, neither party obtained a reclamation permit before undertaking the project (Fajar 2013b).

Second, local contractors earned billions of rupiah from public projects associated with CPI. During the period from 2010 to 2023, the provincial government awarded 48 CPI-related contracts worth a combined IDR 563 billion (approximately USD 45 million) to 38 different contractors (Lembaga Kebijakan Pengadaan Barang/Jasa Pemerintah 2023). These projects included roads and bridges to link CPI to the mainland, as well as landmarks including Legolego culinary district, a National Residence (*Wisma Negara*), and 99 Domes Mosque. By and large, the successful contractors for these projects were construction and engineering firms based in and around Makassar, including companies with national footprints such as Fatimah Indah Utama and Putra Jaya. At least one of the successful contractors had an apparent connection to a former provincial official (PT. Karya Mandiri Surya Sejahtera n.d.), while many others were reportedly the “collusive” beneficiaries of “Governor Syahrul’s networks” (Sari 2024, 14).

Third, local businesses profited from new development opportunities in the delta. Admittedly, the paramount developers, Ciputra at CPI and Lippo²² at Tanjung Bunga, were Jakarta-based. Nevertheless, local developers found opportunities in between these giants (Sari 2024). For example, two locally owned four-star hotels, The Rinra and Gammara, opened in 2016 on reclaimed land not far from CPI. Phinisi Point Mall, adjoining The Rinra Hotel, opened the following year with eighteen tenants (Muchlis 2017; Rachmat 2017).²³

In sum, local businesses have profited from land speculation, construction, and real estate development associated with CPI. On this basis, they anticipated positive linkages instead of fearing new competition. Zulkarnain Arief, chairman of the South Sulawesi chapter of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, articulated this point of view in a 2015 interview:

Of course, there will be sectors that will be affected. That will make a positive contribution to our economy Consider a

small example from the Sultan Alauddin area. Before McDonald’s and the others opened, the economy was not very vibrant. But look at it now There must be space and segments provided. We hope that all the commercial hubs that are constructed won’t just be dominated by outsiders. (Fajar 2015)

In these statements, Zulkarnain’s support for CPI is predicated on his expectation of spillover effects that will benefit local businesses by attracting new customers and creating new opportunities.

Communal Elites

Communal elites are active, influential, and identifiable in Makassar, just as in Bali. Aristocratic families, some of whom trace their genealogies to the historic kingdoms of Gowa and Bone, have dominated regional politics for centuries (Magenda 1989). Their legitimacy is grounded in an indigenous literature recorded in *lontara* script and exemplified in the *I La Galigo* epic (Andaya 1984). At the local level, customary village communities have a long history of political action in defense of customary lands (*tanah adat*) (Muur 2019). In addition, the growth of reformist Islam during the early twentieth century established a parallel set of institutions led by a separate class of religious leaders.

Over time, these traditions have been synthesized into a compound ethnic and religious identity. Political expedience and “popular sentiment ... encourages local politicians to emphasize the natural dominance of Muslim Bugis and Makassarese, with Javanese ‘imperialists,’ Chinese immigrants, and Christians considered outsiders” (Sutherland 2011, 806). This identity has long been politically salient, in part because it serves the interests of indigenous aristocrats who often compete against outsiders for wealth and power (Magenda 1989).

In Makassar’s recent past, communal elites figured prominently in the dispute over the redevelopment of Karebosi Field in 2007. The All-Sulawesi Community of Customary Institutions opposed redevelopment, and demonstrators wore traditional costumes and performed customary rituals. Meanwhile, “leading representatives of the royal families of Gowa and Talloq, whose ancestors had once ruled Makassar,” and many Muslim leaders supported redevelopment (Sutherland 2011, 821).

In contrast, communal elites are conspicuously absent from the story of CPI. Religious leaders and customary organizations seem to have abstained from the reclamation controversy.²⁴ However, Governor Syahrul Yasin Limpo, CPI’s biggest champion, was born to an aristocratic family from Takalar and is married to a descendent of the Sidrap royal family (Buehler and Tan 2007; Meliala and Permana 2023). Accordingly, the silence of religious and customary leaders meant that communal elites, and especially aristocrats, were associated with support for CPI.

Evolution of the Anti-Reclamation Movement in Makassar

During the fitful early years of the CPI project, opposition to reclamation was uncoordinated and sporadic. Although intense and sometimes violent, demonstrations tended to be hyper-local, staged by different communities with different agendas in opposition to different projects. Against this backdrop, the formation of ASP in January 2015 was transformational. Founded by environmentalist, student, and human rights organizations, the alliance's membership eventually grew from thirteen to at least twenty-five organizations, led by the South Sulawesi chapter of Walhi (Chandra 2016). ASP framed reclamation as a source of social injustice. In doing so, the movement appealed to communities up and down the coast that had been harmed by coastal development. Even so, ASP's agenda never appealed beyond the activists and coastal communities who constitute the natural constituents of anti-reclamation movements.

ASP opposed all of Makassar's reclamation projects, not just CPI. One of the alliance's stated goals was to end reclamation in Makassar (LBH Makassar et al. 2015). When the alliance published a poster laying out seven reasons to reject reclamation, it addressed its reasoning to 4,000 Ha of planned reclamation "involving fourteen investors" (Aliansi Selamatkan Pesisir 2015a). By and large, ASP's reasoning focused on the social injustices associated with reclamation, arguing that reclamation deprives coastal peoples of their homes, land, livelihoods, access to the sea, and culture (table 4). Notably, this initial attempt to frame the issue in a geographically encompassing way overlooked sand mining, which would assume major significance just two years later.

At first, ASP sought to limit reclamation by engaging the Makassar City Assembly in the formulation of a new zoning ordinance. In 2015, the assembly was belatedly

finalizing a draft ordinance meant to have taken effect in 2011. Throughout the process, ASP warned that the ordinance would retroactively legalize old reclamation projects and lay the groundwork for massive new ones (Marzuki 2015; *Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Makassar* 2015). The alliance conveyed its message to the chairperson of the special committee tasked to write the ordinance (Rusdianto 2015) and published an online petition demanding that reclamation zones be removed from the final ordinance (Aliansi Selamatkan Pesisir 2015b).

However, ASP's efforts to influence the zoning bill were unsuccessful. The ordinance that the mayor signed in August zoned 4,500 hectares of coastal area for reclamation (Walikota Makassar 2015). The reclamation zones spanned the full length of the Makassar shoreline, including areas slated for port development, tourism, business, and energy, among others (figure 3).

After this failure, ASP shifted to more adversarial tactics. Dozens of demonstrators protested outside the City Assembly when the ordinance passed (Hajramurni 2015). Five months later, Walhi sued to stop the project on the grounds that the provincial government failed to produce necessary permits (*Walhi vs Gubernur Provinsi Sulawesi Selatan* 2016). Notably, the government did not obtain a required letter of recommendation from the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries (*Tribun Timur* 2016). Simultaneously, ASP initiated weekly demonstrations at Losari Beach (Chandra 2016).

Despite the strength of Walhi's case, the Makassar District Court found in favor of the government on July 28, 2016. The Supreme Court later upheld the decision. Likewise, the weekly protests failed to capture the public's imagination and never attracted more than a few dozen participants. Meanwhile, reclamation continued apace.

After initiating onshore reclamation work in 2015, Ciputra undertook offshore (that is, deepwater) reclamation in 2016. To that end, Ciputra contracted the Dutch dredging firm Boskalis. The contract, worth approximately EUR 80 million, stipulated that Boskalis would construct approximately 75 Ha of land over a period of two years. To do so, Boskalis deployed a "mega trailing suction hopper dredger" to vacuum up sand from the bottom of the Makassar Strait, transport it to CPI, and spray it into the reclamation area (Boskalis 2016).

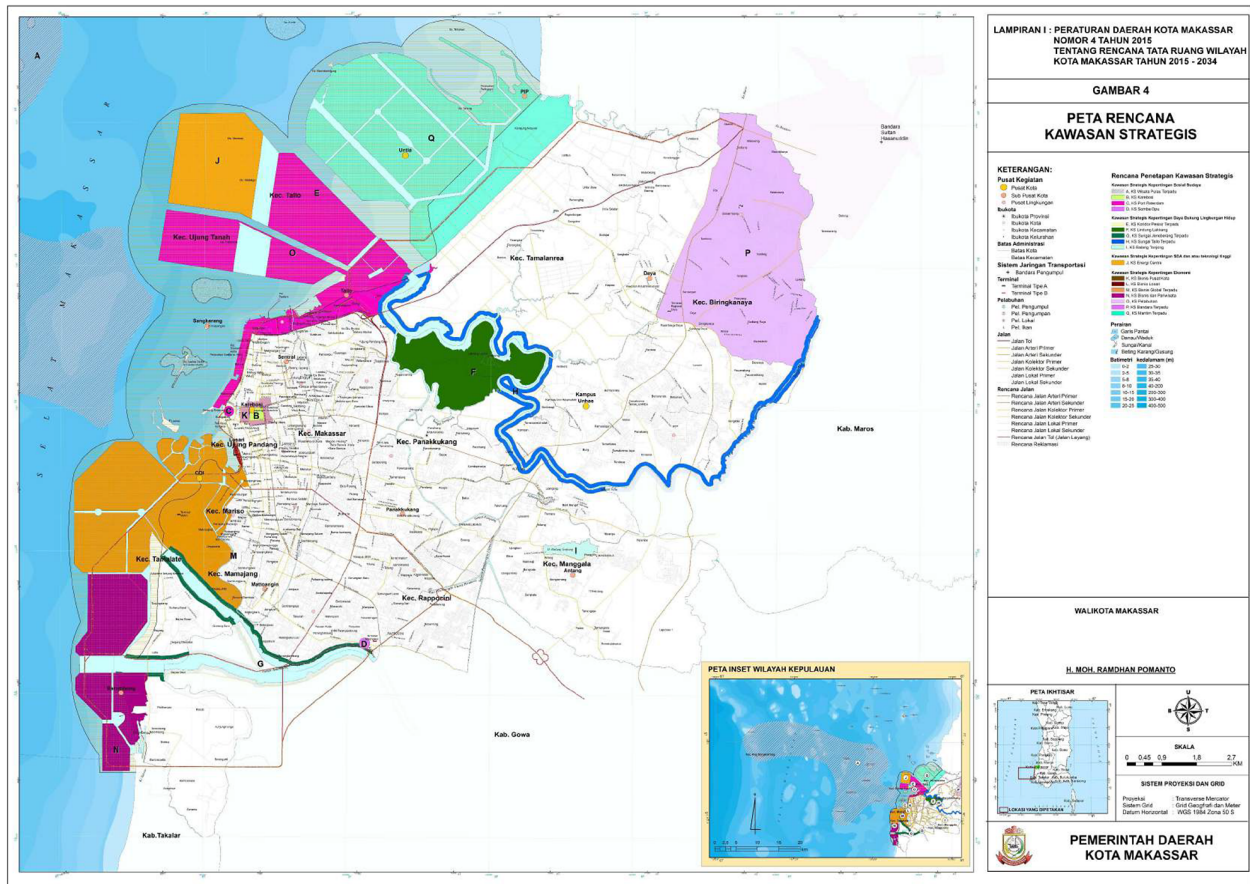
Boskalis' sand dredging activities encountered fierce opposition. A series of maritime confrontations began on May 9, 2017, when fishermen from Takalar district hijacked the KM *Bulan*, a Singapore-flagged vessel collecting samples on behalf of Boskalis. On June 15, fishermen harassed the *Fairway*, a Boskalis dredging ship, with firecrackers. The *Fairway* later resumed operations under police escort (Hardiansya, Chandra, and Gokkon 2017).

On land, demonstrations began in Takalar District on May 18 and rapidly spread to Makassar. On June 11, ASP helped to organize an anti-sand mining demonstration at

Table 4
ASP's (2015a) reasons to reject reclamation along Makassar's coast

1. Reclamation has a business orientation, not a social orientation.
2. Reclamation has evicted 45 families living in a coastal area of 10 Ha. The city plans to reclaim at least 4,000 Ha, which will threaten to evict more families.
3. Reclamation takes away the right to land, which contradicts our laws on human rights and land.
4. Reclamation destroys the environment.
5. Reclamation will change livelihoods in coastal communities and coastal traders will lose their jobs.
6. Reclamation limits the public's access to coastal areas.
7. Reclamation degrades the local culture of the coastal community.

Figure 3
Makassar City Spatial Plan, Strategic Area Planning Map



Note: Planned reclamation areas labeled E, J, M, N, O, Q
Source: Walikota Makassar (2015)

CPI with approximately 1,000 participants (Chandra 2017a). The speed with which ASP transformed its rhetoric was remarkable. During this demonstration, the anti-reclamation movement issued a list of demands focused on sand mining and marine conservation (table 5). The movement’s previous emphasis on land and livelihoods was all but forgotten.

Table 5
ASP’s evolving demands (Chandra 2017a)

1. Immediately stop maritime sand mining in Takalar District.
2. Stop the CPI project and other private sector reclamation in Makassar.
3. Stop sand dredging at Gusung Tangayya Island.
4. Stop the development of dirty coal energy that pollutes the seacoast.
5. Restore the coastal and marine environments.
6. Protect our ocean.

To the best of my knowledge, the June 11 demonstration was the largest that ASP ever mobilized. The intensity of public anger against sand mining did not escape the attention of public officials. Accordingly, the anti-reclamation movement won some concessions related to sand mining. For example, movement leaders participated in a meeting on June 22 with provincial officials, during which they extracted a promise that the *Fairway* would cease operations (Chandra 2017c). Two months later, the Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries issued a letter requesting a moratorium on sand mining off the coast of Takalar District (Chandra 2017b). And in 2018, newly inaugurated Governor Nurdin Abdullah promised to put a stop to sand mining in Takalar District (*Walhi Sulsel Official Website 2018*).

However, the concessions turned out to be empty promises. Boskalis continued mining sand until March 2018 when it had obtained enough sand to complete its contract with Ciputra. Two years later, Boskalis resumed mining the strait for a contract related to the Makassar New Port project (Chandra 2020).

In the end, anger over sand mining in the Makassar Strait offered the most encompassing frame for the anti-reclamation movement. The cause united fisherfolk up and down the coast with urban communities directly affected by reclamation. Yet for all its importance, sand mining was not politically salient outside coastal communities. Opposition to sand mining enabled the anti-reclamation movement to transcend the specific locations harmed by reclamation, but it also locked the movement into a class-based orientation.

In the opposite corner, a strong consensus existed among Makassar's elite that development at CPI was good for business. Public officials cashed in by means of strategically located land titles or stakes in government contractors. Companies who missed out on the land rush anticipated positive spillover effects on the city economy. Communal elites deferred to this consensus, their silence empowering Governor Syahrul to speak on their behalf. Glossing over the harm inflicted upon coastal communities, the governor insisted that CPI was undertaken for the benefit of all:

CPI is for the people. Where else can you get 50 hectares for the people and it's in the middle of the city, or would you rather just give [the land] to the developers who do [the reclamation]? So, this is for the people. (Chandra 2016)

Reclamation work at CPI was completed in 2018, and Ciputra is now building a high-end residential and commercial enclave.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that anti-reclamation movements in Indonesia seek allies in their struggles against reclamation. They coordinate among groups that already oppose reclamation and build alliances with new groups that do not have a direct stake in reclamation controversies. However, their opportunities to build encompassing movements are circumscribed by elite attitudes toward reclamation. If political, economic, and communal elites do not share a consensus that reclamation is welcome, then anti-reclamation activists have an opportunity to recruit them as allies in the effort to build a cross-class movement. If on the other hand elites share a consensus in favor of reclamation, then they are not available as allies, and activists will build geographically expansive but class-based movements. These differences influence the political effectiveness of anti-reclamation movements. Cross-class coalitions mobilize protest more effectively, especially when they incorporate communal elites, while class-based movements fall back on litigation, which rarely succeeds.

My argument implies that anti-reclamation movements are most likely to succeed when they deploy communal identities to mobilize large, economically diverse

coalitions. Such a strategy requires local or provincial activism in a country as diverse as Indonesia, because the salience of communal identity rarely extends beyond regional boundaries. In contrast, comparative research suggests that national or transnational social movements are the strongest advocates for the institutional reforms that would empower coastal communities to assert their interests by formal means (Almeida and Stearns 1998; Hochstetler and Keck 2007; Khagram 2004). Thus, anti-reclamation movements' immediate incentives work against the imperative of national reform.

This strategic conflict is especially debilitating in the context of Indonesia, where national politicians promote a "new developmentalism" and civil society is still recovering from authoritarian repression (Boudreau 2004; Warburton 2016). The success of the pro-democracy Reformasi movement demonstrates that it is not impossible to build national movements, but it is difficult and time-consuming, especially in opposition to infrastructure development. Meanwhile, reclamation projects threaten coastal communities with immediate and irreversible harm. Thus, it is understandable that anti-reclamation movements would prioritize local action.

Yet without national reforms, the institutional context of Indonesia will continue to favor pro-reclamation actors. Consider the diversity of formal institutions that anti-reclamation activists engage in their efforts to participate in the policymaking process. They attend public hearings, write open letters, testify before legislative committees, lobby assembly members, campaign in elections, publish watchdog reports, appeal to supervisory authorities, conduct environmental impact assessments, and file lawsuits. Yet these institutions of participatory governance consistently fail them, leaving them little choice but to mobilize protest. Protest in turn discourages consultation, compensation, and compromise between coastal communities and urban planners, placing equitable reclamation projects out of reach.

These dilemmas are especially sharp in Indonesia, but I expect them to appear elsewhere. The urban setting and private financing of coastal reclamation for waterfront development encourage governments everywhere to delegate regulation of reclamation to municipalities, provincial governments, and real estate developers. Decentralized governance in turn encourages anti-reclamation activists to organize locally. If institutions such as municipal assemblies and district courts facilitate consultation and compensation, then such contests can enhance the ability of local governments to undertake equitable climate adaptations. However, if institutions lack these capacities, then anti-reclamation movements will emerge to protest projects that threaten to make coastal communities more vulnerable to climate change.

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Notes

- 1 It is worth noting that land reclamation is associated with more than one type of development project in table 1's classification scheme. Most obviously, both airports and seaports are frequently constructed on reclaimed land. However, these projects tend to provoke less opposition than waterfront developments, perhaps because of their public orientation (Carruthers 2016). In addition, large-scale irrigation projects are sometimes referred to as land reclamation in the sense that they "reclaim" ... arid lands for human use" (History Program 2011). Thus, the politics of reclamation that I explore in this paper are specific to the recent turn toward coastal reclamation for waterfront development.
- 2 Certainly, public-private partnerships (PPP) complicate this simple framework. Yet the New Manila International Airport, currently under construction on reclaimed land in Bulacan, Philippines, highlights the continuing importance of public financing for ports, even under PPP arrangements. While San Miguel Aerocity, a subsidiary of San Miguel Corporation, is financing the project, the company has been granted income and real estate tax exemptions that will remain in place until it has completely recovered its investment (Bello 2021).
- 3 Unsolicited bids for coastal reclamation are common in jurisdictions that accept them (Mellejor 2015).
- 4 Activists in Bali staged "long marches" within Denpasar (ForBALI 2016; Suastha 2016).
- 5 Class-based movements often include students as well as highly educated activists, such as lawyers, in leadership roles. Yet I would not characterize a movement as cutting across class unless and until that small vanguard of educated activists grows into a larger community of middle-class or property-owning supporters.
- 6 It is worth noting that class-based movements have demonstrated extraordinary mobilizational power in other contexts, such as Korea (Koo 2001). However, Korean labor achieved success after decades of organizing, in contrast to Indonesia where the labor movement, though militant, remains fragmented and weak (Caraway and Ford 2020).
- 7 In contrast, political access is constant (and closed) across Indonesian provinces, political alignments are fixed by the cross-sectional nature of my comparison, and elite allies are a function of elite divisions and movement framing, as I argue here.
- 8 Note that this formulation assumes that "overlapping self-interest" is sufficient for elite consensus, which is a lower standard than the "value consensus" and "structural integration" stipulated in elite theories of democracy (Engelstad 2009, 386, 393).
- 9 This three-fold characterization of elites draws on Slater's (2010) four-part typology, which is itself a useful simplification of more finely detailed lists enumerating "governmental, business, and military leaders, as well as the leaders of political parties, professional associations, trade unions, media combines, major interest groups, and important religious, educational, and cultural organizations" (Higley 2018, 27). However, I omit Slater's fourth category of middle-classes because their size and heterogeneity make them unlikely to act coherently with respect to reclamation. Rather, the middle-classes face severe collective action problems that arguably are characteristic of non-elites. In general, I expect the attitudes of middle-class individuals toward reclamation to follow the leadership of political, economic, or communal elites.
- 10 In Indonesia, these elites, also known as *tokoh adat*, range from traditional village leaders to aristocratic nobles to royal houses.
- 11 Slater introduced the concept of communal elites to explain patterns of democratic mobilization against authoritarian regimes. According to his definition, communal elites include nationalist leaders, religious notables, and dynastic rulers, and they are "a society's primary possessors of nationalist and religious authority" (Slater 2009, 206). However, the monarchs and nationalists that shape national regimes are less salient in subnational politics. Thus, I repurpose Slater's concept by omitting nationalist leaders, retaining religious notables, and substituting customary leaders for dynastic rulers.
- 12 Note that elite allies *per se* do not necessarily create cross-class coalitions. For example, communal elites might live in the same communities and work similar jobs as movement activists. Conversely, small business owners are not elites, but coalitions that unite them with day laborers cut across class. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this insight.

- 13 For ease of reference, I refer to both metropolitan areas by their most familiar name even though strictly speaking Bali is a province and Makassar is a city. Nevertheless, the movements themselves are comparable units, because they organize across city and district boundaries in opposition to provincial reclamation projects.
- 14 In 2010, the population of Makassar was 1.3 million, and Denpasar 800,000. By including neighboring districts, the population figures increase to 2.3 million in greater Makassar and 1.8 million in greater Denpasar (Minnesota Population Center 2017).
- 15 Bukittinggi is the second-most expensive property market outside of Java. Overall, Denpasar is the fourth-most expensive property market in the country and Makassar ninth.
- 16 The coalition, which incorporated some communal elites, opposed “revitalization” on the grounds that Karebosi Field was “one of the sites where sacred beings ... revealed themselves” (Sutherland 2011, 807).
- 17 Lippo Group is owned by the Riyadi family, who are Chinese-Indonesian and Christian. In 1994, Lippo acquired a controlling stake in Gowa Makassar Tourism Development, which held the concession to develop Tanjung Bunga.
- 18 A key threat to inference in this comparison is whether any analogue to sacred sites existed in Makassar. My answer to that question is affirmative, although I cannot prove the counterfactual. I take the position that such frames were possible, but activists in Makassar disregarded them because customary elites supported reclamation. To support my position, I offer the following observations: first, that sacred sites are present at Karebosi Field, not far from CPI; second, that customary land rights are sometimes invoked in land disputes along Makassar’s coast (Fajar 2013a); third, that some activists championed cultural heritage sites as reason to reject reclamation (Fajar 2011a); and fourth, that even in Bali the anti-reclamation movement took more than two years to develop sacred sites as a frame.
- 19 For example, Bali received approximately 3 million foreign and 7 million domestic tourists in 2013 (*Buku Statistik Pariwisata Bali* 2019).
- 20 This and all subsequent translations are mine.
- 21 Wardana’s (2019, 190) outstanding study of the politics of law and development in Bali includes the fascinating detail that ForBALI prepared, but did not file, a request for judicial review of the project before the Supreme Court.
- 22 Many of Lippo’s developments at Tanjung Bunga were executed by its subsidiary Rancang Komunika Mandiri.
- 23 Phinisi Point and The Rinra Hotel are owned by Phinisi Hospitality, which in turn is owned by Wilianto Tanta. Hotel Gammara is owned by Catur Jaya, which in turn is owned by Billy Ching. Rumors, denied by the governor, allege that Syahrul Yasin Limpo owns a stake in The Rinra, which shares a name with his late son (Fatir 2017).
- 24 AMAN (Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara, Indigenous Peoples’ Alliance of the Archipelago) is an exception, but it is a national organization.

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