

Networked power and resistance in agrarian conflicts: A case study from Malin Deman, Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Keywords:</i></p> <p>agrarian conflict power dynamics social networks identity struggles social resistance</p>	<p>The agrarian conflict in Malin Deman District, Mukomuko Regency, Indonesia, highlights persistent inequalities in land tenure, pitting local farmers against plantation companies and state institutions to reclaim ancestral land. Using a qualitative single case study approach, this study examines the power dynamics and social network structures that shape the conflict. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with civil society organizations involved in land advocacy and secondary sources, including agrarian reports, legal documents, and investigative news articles. Findings show that dominant actors-plantation companies and the regional government-exercise power through coercion, economic incentives, and control over legal narratives. Social network analysis indicates that the regional government has the highest degree of centrality and betweenness centrality, positioning it as a mediator and gatekeeper between corporate-government alliances and farmer advocacy groups. However, smallholder farmers remain marginalized, with limited access to information and decision-making processes. This study highlights the need for inclusive land governance and network-based mediation strategies to strengthen community bargaining power. Increasing transparency, promoting equitable policymaking and ensuring participatory mechanisms are critical to resolving agrarian conflicts in an equitable and sustainable manner. By addressing structural inequalities and empowering marginalized communities, this research contributes to the broader discourse on land rights and conflict resolution strategies.</p>

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Introduction

Agrarian conflicts in Indonesia, particularly in the palm oil plantation sector, reflect deep-rooted structural inequalities in land ownership and governance. These conflicts often arise due to overlapping land claims, weak regulatory frameworks, and power imbalances among stakeholders, particularly between local farmers, corporations, and the state (Afrizal, 2015). The Agrarian Reform Consortium (Agrarian Reform Consortium – KPA, 2024) reported 241 agrarian conflicts in Indonesia in 2023, affecting over 638,188 hectares of land and displacing 135,608 households. Indonesia accounts for 74% of all agrarian disputes in six Asian countries, positioning it as one of the most conflict-prone regions in terms of land tenure disputes.

Agrarian conflicts persist due to exclusionary land policies that prioritize corporate interests over smallholder farmers. Dauvergne (2018) argues that sustainability certifications serve as a façade for corporate land expansion, while Human Rights Watch (2021) highlights the systematic neglect of indigenous rights through opaque land acquisitions. These processes reinforce marginalization, dispossession, and farmer resistance (Tilly, 1978). Beyond local disputes, agrarian struggles are shaped by global agribusiness interests and international regulatory frameworks (Morel et al., 2023). While transnational advocacy offers opportunities for resistance, it also introduces complexities in governance and power negotiations. Bunce (2024) examines tensions in collective land tenure models, demonstrating how economic and social imperatives often clash. This dynamic is evident in Malin Deman, where farmers must simultaneously confront corporate pressures and internal governance challenges.

Dell'Angelo (2021) introduces the concept of *commons grabbing* to explain

how agribusiness corporations appropriate communal land, often under the guise of economic development or sustainability initiatives. This process systematically disempowers local communities by restricting access to land and natural resources, leading to heightened resistance and social mobilization. The case of Malin Deman mirrors this dynamic, as plantation companies expand their territorial control through state-backed policies, triggering land disputes that escalate into broader struggles over identity, governance, and resource management. International institutions increasingly mediate agrarian conflicts, adding complexity to local struggles over land governance.

In the case of Sumatra, Brad and Hein (2022) demonstrate that global NGOs and transnational agribusiness corporations play an instrumental role in shaping agrarian conflicts by lobbying for land-use policies, enforcing sustainability regulations, and facilitating corporate-led dispute resolution mechanisms. This international dimension introduces an additional layer of complexity, where local resistance movements must navigate both national and global power structures. The interplay between corporate interests, state policies, and international advocacy groups further complicates the power dynamics within agrarian conflicts, necessitating a multi-scalar analysis to understand how local struggles are embedded within broader global governance frameworks.

Kansanga (2021) provides a political ecology perspective on resource conflicts, demonstrating how illegal land acquisitions and black markets emerge due to weak governance, corruption, and international demand for agricultural commodities. His study on illegal rosewood logging in Ghana illustrates the role of political elites and transnational actors in facilitating land exploitation, which bears similarities to the

situation in Indonesia's palm oil industry. The Malin Deman conflict similarly reflects how regulatory loopholes and elite capture perpetuate land dispossession, allowing corporations to consolidate power over agricultural land while marginalizing local farmers. Understanding these political-ecological dynamics is crucial to formulating effective land governance policies that ensure equitable land tenure.

Johnson (2023) highlights how industrial mining companies in Latin America manufacture indigenous consent through strategies of *accumulation through destabilization*. These tactics, which include economic inducements, social fragmentation, and co-optation of local leaders, weaken community resistance and facilitate corporate land control. A similar pattern is observed in agrarian conflicts in Indonesia, where plantation corporations deploy similar destabilization tactics to create internal divisions among farmers and weaken collective resistance. By fragmenting opposition, corporations strengthen their influence over land tenure arrangements, making it more challenging for affected communities to secure land rights and resist dispossession.

In Malin Deman, Mukomuko Regency, Indonesia, the struggle for land ownership has evolved into a broader contestation over identity and local autonomy, as farmers resist external corporate control. The Regional Representative Council (Dewan Perwakilan Daerah – DPD RI, 2023) emphasizes that government policies disproportionately favor large-scale agribusinesses, further alienating smallholder communities. Many local farmers face criminalization and intimidation when attempting to defend their ancestral land, as land-use permits (*Hak Guna Usaha* – HGU) issued by the government often overlap with community-claimed land (KPA, 2024). This asymmetrical power structure not only fuels legal disputes

but also intensifies socioeconomic disparities and community-led resistance.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) has been widely used to examine power dynamics in agrarian conflicts. Juniyanti et al. (2021) highlight how corporations and government institutions, as highly connected actors, control land allocation, marginalizing weaker stakeholders. Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson (2018) emphasize that actors with high centrality dominate decision-making, restricting land access for less influential groups. In Mukomuko, this is evident in the Regional Government's dual role as mediator and gatekeeper, shaping negotiations between corporations and farmers.

This study integrates Actor-Centered Power (ACP) theory (Krott, 2014) and SNA to analyze power relations and resistance strategies. ACP examines how coercion, incentives, and information control reinforce dominance, while SNA maps actor relationships and governance exclusions. By combining these approaches, this research advances discussions on land tenure security, state-corporate alliances, and civil society resistance. The findings highlight agrarian governance as a contested space where social networks serve both as control mechanisms and sites of resistance, underscoring the need for inclusive land policies, transparency, and institutional safeguards.

Method

This study employed a qualitative case study approach to examine agrarian conflicts in Malin Deman District, Mukomuko Regency, Indonesia. A single-case study design was adopted, as the research focused on a specific conflict between local farmers and a company holding a Hak Guna Usaha (HGU) or land-use permit. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of power dynamics and social networks shaping the conflict (Yin, 2018). According

to Stake (1995), a single-case study was appropriate when a case exhibited unique characteristics that provided deeper insights into social structures and power relations. In this context, the agrarian conflict in Malin Deman reflected longstanding inequalities, requiring a comprehensive analysis of power structures and actor interactions.

Data collection on the agrarian conflict in Malin Deman took place from September 2024 to February 2025. This research utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with two civil society organizations: Kanopi Hijau Indonesia and Akar Foundation. These NGOs provided insights into the perspectives of farmers, local government, the National Land Agency (BPN), company representatives, and security forces, as direct interviews with these actors were not possible.

Secondary data for this study was obtained from various sources, including annual reports from the Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA), national and local media reports on agrarian conflicts, and legal documents related to land governance in Indonesia. Data collection methods involved three key approaches. First, in-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured questions to explore the perspectives of NGOs regarding the agrarian conflict (Creswell, 2014). Second, document analysis was employed to examine agrarian laws, investigative reports, and previous research on land disputes (Bowen, 2009).

Lastly, Social Network Analysis (SNA) was used to map actor relationships and power structures, drawing on information gathered from NGO interviews and secondary sources.

The data was analyzed using Actor-Centered Power (ACP) analysis and Social Network Analysis (SNA), with ACP identifying the power strategies of key actors in the agrarian conflict (Krott, 2014). ACP reveals how corporations, government institutions, and local farmers use resources and policies to either maintain or challenge land control. Findings show that dominant actors, such as corporations and government, exert control through legal frameworks and economic incentives, while farmers and NGOs rely on advocacy, grassroots mobilization, and legal strategies to assert land rights. This approach aligns with Rozak, Kartini, and Djuyandi's (2020) study on geothermal mining conflicts, which found that actors with greater legal and financial resources dominate, while affected groups resist through social movements, a framework applied to the Malin Deman agrarian conflict in this study.

SNA was used to map actor relationships and power distribution (Borgatti, Everett, & Johnson, 2018), with data collected from NGO interviews and secondary sources such as media reports and agrarian studies. The analysis, conducted using UCINET software, applied an undirected valued network approach to measure degree centrality (actors' direct connections), closeness centrality (ease

Table 1. *Research Methods*

No	Data Type	Data Collection Technique	Data Source	Analytical Tool
1	Primary Data	In-depth interviews	NGOs (Kanopi Hijau Indonesia & Akar Foundation)	Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
2	Secondary Data	Document analysis	Agrarian reports, land regulations, investigative reports	Qualitative content analysis (Bowen, 2009)
3	Network Data	Social Network Analysis	Interviews with NGOs & documents	UCINET for Degree Centrality, Betweenness Centrality, Closeness Centrality

Source: Compiled by the author (2024), based on Braun & Clarke (2006) and Bowen (2009).

of access to information), and betweenness centrality (mediators or power brokers). Harlina, Fatimah, and Setiawan's (2018) study showed that actors with high degree centrality are pivotal in decision-making and information distribution. While the SNA findings are exploratory due to limited primary data, integrating ACP and SNA offers a comprehensive view of the power structures and social networks influencing agrarian resistance and governance in Malin Deman.

Results and Discussion

Identification of actors in the land conflict

The agrarian conflict in Malin Deman highlights structural inequalities in land tenure, with various actors exerting different levels of power and influence. Social Network Analysis (SNA) reveals dominant roles played by certain actors in shaping the conflict, with the Farmers Progress Together collective striving to reclaim ancestral land rights from corporate entities. This struggle reflects the marginalization of smallholder farmers in Indonesia, where land access is often influenced by legal frameworks that favor large-scale agribusiness. Similar grassroots movements, such as the Nanggung Transformative Community Alliance (AMANAT) in Bogor (Suharto & Basar, 2019) and the Indonesian Farmers Union (SPI) in North Sumatra (Batubara & Sinaga, 2022), bolster bargaining power in agrarian disputes and challenge the legal and economic structures perpetuating land inequality.

A comparable pattern is seen in conflicts arising from palm oil expansion. Nurrochmat et al. (2020) argue that landswap and agrarian reform policies often fail to consider local land tenure systems, intensifying corporate-farmer tensions. Similarly, Engström et al.

(2022) highlight that land formalization policies in Tanzania, rather than securing tenure for local communities, often facilitate corporate land dispossession. This mirrors the case of Malin Deman, where the transfer of land management from PT BBS to PT DDP leveraged legal instruments to consolidate corporate control, leaving smallholder farmers facing bureaucratic barriers.

Globally, commons grabbing by agribusiness corporations under the guise of economic development restricts local access to land and resources, reinforcing corporate dominance while marginalizing traditional land users (Dell'Angelo, 2021). Wayessa (2022) shows how Ethiopia's sugar plantation expansion led to forced farmer displacement under state-backed agribusiness policies, pushing them into low-wage plantation labor. This parallels Malin Deman, where displaced farmers often end up as dependent laborers within the very corporate system they oppose.

On the opposing side, PT DDP and PT BBS assert land control through Hak Guna Usaha (HGU) permits. While the National Land Agency (BPN) categorized the land transfer as a business transaction with no direct government intervention, in practice, PT DDP actively negotiates disputes, reinforcing corporate dominance (Radarmukomuko, 2023). Similar cases in Tanzania show that land formalization, while framed as neutral, reinforces corporate power asymmetries over rural communities (Engström et al., 2022).

State institutions, including the Local Government, BPN, and security forces, also play critical roles in land governance. Social network analysis indicates that the Local Government holds the highest Degree Centrality, making it the key mediator and gatekeeper in the conflict. However, weak land administration and lack of transparency create opportunities for collusion between government officials and

corporations, exacerbating agrarian disputes (Sibuea, 2024). Similar trends are observed in other agrarian conflicts where regulatory inefficiencies allow corporate interests to dominate land governance (Sahnan et al., 2019).

As a counterforce, NGOs such as Kanopi Hijau Indonesia and Akar Foundation support farmers through legal advocacy, strategic resistance, and capacity-building initiatives. These organizations play a crucial role in helping farmers navigate legal frameworks and resist corporate encroachment. Engström et al. (2022) argue that when legal structures favor corporations, NGOs become essential in providing legal representation and advocacy platforms. Wayessa (2022) further emphasizes that while NGOs attempt to mobilize affected communities, systemic obstacles often hinder their effectiveness in countering state-backed land acquisitions. Their role mirrors agrarian civil society networks in other contested land cases, such as Agrarian Reform Consortium (KPA), HuMA Indonesia Association (HuMA), and Sawit Watch, which strengthened AMANAT's resistance movement in Nanggung District.

Power dynamics in the agrarian conflict (ACP analysis)

The agrarian conflict in Malin Deman illustrates how structural inequalities in land tenure persist through coercion, incentives, and information dominance, as outlined in the Actor-Centered Power (ACP) framework (Krott, 2014). Power is exerted not only through force but also via legal, economic, and informational mechanisms that influence resistance and social stratification among corporations, state institutions, and smallholder farmers. Coercion plays a key role in maintaining land control asymmetries, with corporations and government agencies using legal tools and

security forces to suppress farmer resistance. This mirrors the situation in Brazil, where the Guarani-Kaiowa people face state repression and the São Francisco River Transposition Project justifies land reallocation under the guise of development, benefiting corporate interests and exacerbating land disputes (Ioris, 2020; Santos & Ioris, 2024). In Malin Deman, similar legal frameworks obscure coercion, framing forced dispossession as neutral administrative actions instead of acts of displacement.

Incentives, while less overt than coercion, also consolidate corporate dominance. Plantation companies selectively offer employment, compensation, and infrastructure projects to farmers willing to relinquish land claims, creating economic dependencies that weaken collective resistance. Kisekka-Ntale (2024) identifies a similar pattern in Zimbabwe and Uganda, where land redistribution policies serve political ends, allocating resources to loyalists while systematically excluding opposition-affiliated communities. This selective economic inclusion fragments local solidarity, mirroring Malin Deman's experience, where some farmer groups align with corporate interests for short-term economic stability at the expense of long-term land security.

Information control is another key mechanism in agrarian conflicts, where corporate and state actors manipulate legal and bureaucratic knowledge to legitimize territorial control. In Malin Deman, Hak Guna Usaha (HGU) permits favor corporations, marginalizing farmers by restricting access to legal recourse. A similar pattern is observed in Brazil, where agribusiness interests monopolize sustainability narratives and legal frameworks to dominate land and water resources (Santos & Ioris, 2024). Kapgen (2022) further demonstrates that in Burkina Faso, knowledge asymmetries in agricultural modernization programs

enable state and private actors to control technical information, limiting farmers' decision-making autonomy. This aligns with Malin Deman, where corporations exploit regulatory opacity to maintain land tenure dominance.

The interplay of coercion, incentives, and information dominance in Malin Deman mirrors broader global trends in agrarian capitalism and state-corporate alliances. Findings from Ioris (2020), Kapgen (2022), Santos & Ioris (2024), and Kisekka-Ntale (2024) emphasize that agrarian struggles are not just about land grabs but also deeply embedded in legal, economic, and informational power structures. By framing land control as a technical or economic necessity, corporate and state actors obscure the dispossessory nature of agrarian governance, reinforcing structural inequalities. Addressing these conflicts requires not only legal interventions but also structural reforms in land governance, economic justice, and greater transparency in knowledge access to dismantle power asymmetries.

Criminalization as a form of coercion

In agrarian conflicts, one of the most direct forms of coercion is the criminalization of farmers, where legal charges, often theft accusations, are used to delegitimize community land claims. In Malin Deman, farmers were detained for harvesting palm fruit on land they claimed as their own (Kanopi, 2024), a pattern seen across Indonesia. Mongabay (2025) recorded over 3,200 agrarian conflicts between 2015 and 2024, involving more than 1.8 million families, with numerous cases of criminalization and violence. Similarly, in Mukomuko, farmers cultivating former HGU land faced police intimidation and prosecution (Infonegeri, 2023). This issue extends beyond Indonesia, as Singh (2021) shows in India, where new

farm laws were met with state repression, including legal charges and physical intimidation. The Malin Deman case reflects this broader trend, where corporations and the state use legal narratives to criminalize subsistence farming, framing farmers as lawbreakers to justify land dispossession.

Beyond direct criminalization, corporations and states use social destabilization to weaken resistance. Deo (2021) shows how caste hierarchies in India were manipulated to fragment farmer movements, making collective action more difficult. In Malin Deman, economic inequalities and social divisions are similarly exploited, preventing unified opposition. A parallel is seen in Brazil, where Conceição (2021) describes how Indigenous land defenders are labeled criminals or terrorists to justify state violence. Both in Brazil and Indonesia, agribusiness and state institutions portray land defenders as obstacles to national development, legitimizing their persecution.

At a global level, criminalization is a strategic tool for consolidating corporate control over land. Singh (2021) explains that digital agricultural reforms in India were framed as modernization efforts while eroding farmer protections, increasing their vulnerability. Similarly, in Indonesia, large-scale agribusiness projects are justified under the banner of sustainability and economic growth, masking their dispossessory impact. Conceição (2021) reinforces this, showing that legal frameworks in Brazil are deliberately structured to benefit corporations while limiting legal recourse for farmers and Indigenous communities. This legal warfare (lawfare) weakens agrarian resistance through bureaucratic and judicial means, forcing farmers into compliance with agribusiness interests.

The intersection of criminalization, economic destabilization, and legal manipulation in Malin Deman reflects a

broader transnational trend in agrarian governance. Insights from Singh (2021), Conceição (2021), and Deo (2021) illustrate that the repression of peasant movements is systematic, not isolated. Whether through legal instruments, social fragmentation, or state-sanctioned violence, criminalization is a key strategy for consolidating elite control over land. Addressing these injustices requires not only legal advocacy but also structural reforms that challenge the political and economic forces driving land dispossession.

Incentivization and the fragmentation of farmer resistance

Beyond coercion, corporations use economic incentives to weaken community solidarity, often by offering monetary compensation and employment to persuade farmers to abandon collective resistance. For example, PT DDP attempted to bribe farmers to prevent opposition (Akar Foundation, 2024). This strategy mirrors those in other agrarian disputes, where corporations exploit economic vulnerability to fragment grassroots mobilization. As Andriani (2017) notes, oil palm farmers often rely on multiple income sources, making them susceptible to corporate offers. While some farmers accept these incentives for short-term security, others remain committed to long-term struggles for land sovereignty, further deepening divisions within communities.

Globally, similar patterns emerge in land conflicts. Kimengsi (2023) highlights how land concessions in Cameroon fragment local farmers, as governments use selective incentives—such as infrastructure and financial compensation—to weaken resistance and facilitate corporate land control. Xu et al. (2023) extend this analysis to China, where fiscal pressures drive local governments to prioritize short-term revenue by encouraging farmers to

relinquish land rights. While these incentives offer immediate benefits, they ultimately undermine traditional tenure systems, increasing smallholder vulnerability.

In Ghana, Kansanga (2021) highlights how agribusiness corporations manipulate land tenure systems to control rural populations by obscuring legal processes and complicating land rights, which disempowers farmers and facilitates dispossession. A similar pattern emerges in Malin Deman, where opaque land permit regulations enable corporate land consolidation at the expense of smallholders. Economic incentives, while offering short-term relief, serve as a double-edged sword, dismantling collective resistance and reinforcing corporate dominance in land governance. This pattern, observed in Cameroon, China, and Ghana, exacerbates community divisions and weakens the ability of marginalized farmers to sustain long-term resistance to land dispossession.

Control over information and legal narratives

Beyond coercion and economic incentives, information dominance is a crucial tool for consolidating power, as corporations and government institutions manipulate legal narratives to create uncertainty about land ownership, excluding smallholder farmers from decision-making processes. Brad & Hein (2022) argue that corporations and international NGOs shape land regulation in developing countries to benefit corporate interests, marginalizing local communities. This is evident in Indonesia, where agrarian laws and sustainability standards often reflect multinational corporate input rather than local perspectives. Similarly, Chalil, Sidique, and Barus (2019) show how palm oil certification schemes, under the guise of sustainability, strengthen corporate and government control, restricting market

access and deepening farmers' economic dependency, thus weakening their bargaining power.

In a similar vein, Astuti (2021) argues that government efforts to regulate plantations are frequently obstructed by corporate influence over political institutions, allowing companies to manipulate regulatory frameworks to maintain territorial control. In the Malin Deman conflict, corporations have framed agrarian regulation as a threat to economic growth and employment, portraying farmer resistance as disruptive. This narrative manipulation delegitimizes land rights claims and positions corporations as benevolent economic actors, despite their role in exacerbating land tenure inequalities.

Social network structure (SNA analysis)

The social network analysis (SNA) of the Malin Deman land conflict, conducted using UCINET, reveals power relations and interactions among key actors. The analysis identifies the Local Government as the most central actor, holding the highest Degree Centrality (4) and Betweenness Centrality (15), positioning it as both a mediator and a gatekeeper between corporate-state alliances and farmer-NGO networks. However, this mediation remains asymmetrical, predominantly favoring corporate interests over equitable land redistribution.

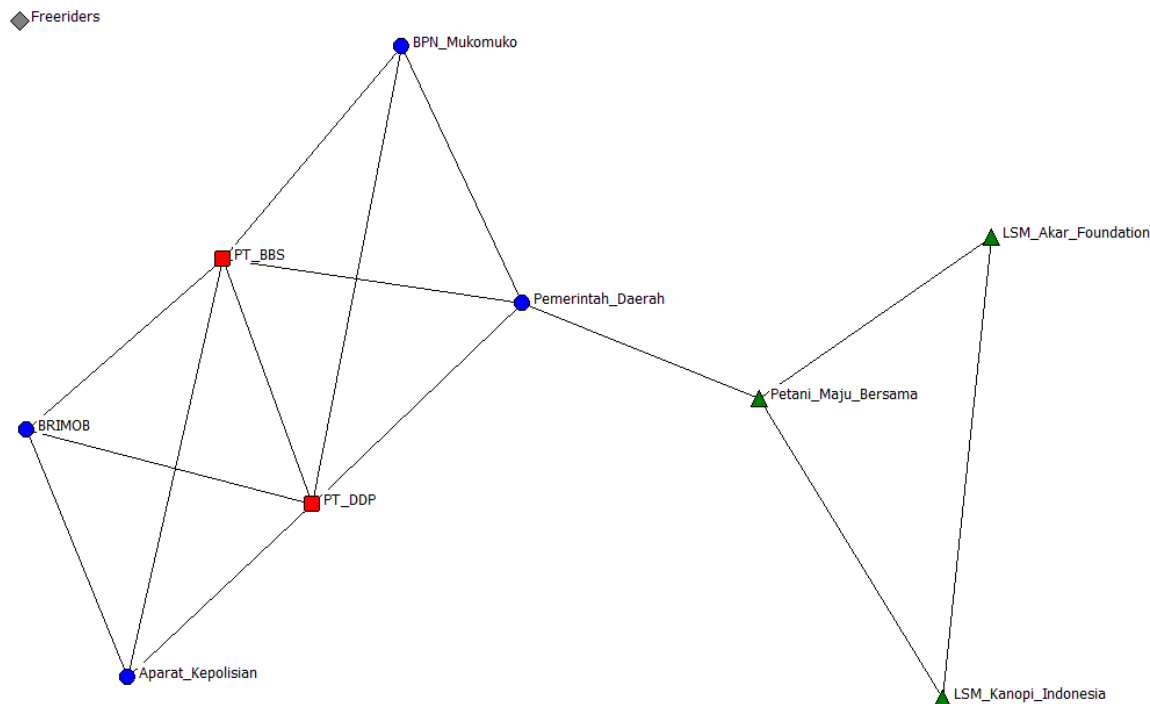
These findings align with Latupeirissa et al. (2019), who found that actors with high Degree Centrality play a strategic role in facilitating information flow and reinforcing coordination within resource-based conflict networks. In Malin Deman, the Local Government's centrality enables it to control negotiations and decision-making, consolidating corporate influence over land governance rather than acting as a neutral facilitator for smallholder farmers. Zhou et al. (2024) further emphasizes that spatial conflicts in land governance often arise from asymmetrical power structures, where dominant institutions leverage their centrality to dictate land use policies, leaving marginalized groups with limited bargaining power.

The visualization below clarifies the structural positioning of actors within the agrarian conflict network. It illustrates how central actors, such as the Local Government, PT DDP, and PT BBS, maintain dominance in the network, while smallholder farmers and advocacy groups are positioned at the periphery with limited access to direct negotiations. Figure 1 provides a clearer understanding of the distribution of power and actor relationships, highlighting the centrality of government and corporate actors in shaping land governance.

Table 1. *Results of Social Network Analysis with UCINET*

No	Actor	Degree Centrality	Closeness Centrality	Betweenness Centrality
1	Farmers Progress Together	-2	25	12
2	PT DDP	2	23	5
3	PT BBS	2	23	5
4	Local Government	4	22	15
5	BPN Mukomuko	3	25	0
6	Kanopi Hijau Indonesia	-2	31	0
7	Akar Foundation	0	31	0
8	Police	1	28	0
9	BRIMOB	1	28	0
10	Freeriders	-1	90	0

Source: Compiled by the author (2024).

Figure 1. *Visualization of Actor Network in Land Conflict in Malin Deman*

Source: Compiled by the author (2024).

The corporate-government alliance, consisting of PT DDP, PT BBS, BPN Mukomuko, the Police Force, and BRIMOB, forms a highly interconnected network, reinforcing its control over land governance. This alignment allows corporations to leverage legal frameworks and security forces to suppress farmer resistance, limiting opportunities for smallholder farmers to reclaim land rights. Similar patterns are observed in other agrarian conflicts, where corporate-state coalitions utilize administrative and security structures to consolidate territorial control (Dell'Angelo, 2021; Brad & Hein, 2022). Zhou et al. (2024) further highlights that network structures in land disputes facilitate elite consolidation by restricting the flow of critical information to affected communities.

Conversely, Farmers Progress Together, representing smallholder farmers, remains structurally marginalized within the network. Their limited direct connections—primarily through NGOs and the Local

Government—restrict their ability to negotiate directly with corporate actors or security forces. This pattern aligns with Alves, Brito, & Campos (2021), who argue that even actors with restricted access to power can influence conflicts through network-based mobilization. However, in Malin Deman, the fragmentation of farmer resistance and the Local Government's biased mediation further limit the effectiveness of such strategies. Hernández-Cedeño et al. (2021) introduce a Bayesian predictive network approach to conflict analysis, showing that actors with lower centrality in negotiation networks often experience diminished influence, reinforcing systemic inequalities in decision-making processes.

As a result, farmers increasingly rely on external actors, particularly NGOs, to amplify their claims and advocate for their rights. Given these structural constraints, alternative resistance strategies, particularly network-based advocacy, have become an essential tool in agrarian struggles. When

formal negotiation channels are dominated by corporate-state actors, civil society organizations play a crucial role in bridging the gap—not only by providing legal assistance but also by mobilizing broader social and political support. Hernández-Cedeño et al. (2021) demonstrate that in energy-related conflicts, independent advocacy groups help balance power dynamics by increasing stakeholder engagement, a strategy that can also be applied in agrarian struggles.

In Malin Deman, where farmers have limited institutional access, digital advocacy and transnational networks present emerging opportunities to challenge corporate dominance and reshape public discourse on land rights. NGOs such as Kanopi Hijau Indonesia and Akar Foundation act as key intermediaries, connecting local struggles to wider legal and advocacy frameworks. Their high Closeness Centrality (31) indicates strong accessibility, enabling them to coordinate legal aid, strategic mobilization, and capacity-building efforts. Zhou et al. (2024) and Hernández-Cedeño et al. (2021) suggest that global advocacy networks and digital mobilization tools can serve as leverage points to counteract corporate-state influence, highlighting the importance of multi-scalar alliances in agrarian resistance.

Meanwhile, Freeriders, holding the highest Closeness Centrality (90) but low Degree Centrality (-1), remain passive observers in the conflict. Their strategic position grants them access to information without direct participation, a pattern consistent with Disney (2020), who describes similar actors as opportunistic stakeholders who exploit shifting power dynamics without direct engagement. In Malin Deman, these actors benefit from institutional weaknesses, navigating the conflict without facing significant political or economic risks. The overall network structure highlights how corporate and state actors maintain centralized control, while smallholder

farmers and advocacy groups operate in structurally weaker positions. Despite these power asymmetries, the growing role of digital networks and transnational advocacy presents a potential counterbalance, offering new pathways for resistance beyond conventional legal and political channels. Hernández-Cedeño et al. (2021) and Zhou et al. (2024) emphasize that leveraging digital platforms and predictive network modeling can improve the visibility of marginalized groups and enhance strategic intervention in land disputes.

To strengthen their bargaining power, farmers in Malin Deman should expand digital advocacy, form transnational coalitions with agrarian movements, and seek independent legal support to challenge corporate dominance. Astuti (2021) underscores the role of digital activism in amplifying rural struggles, though its success relies on sustained public engagement and political will. Brad & Hein (2022) highlight that while transnational advocacy can pressure state actors, local enforcement remains a significant challenge. Future research should examine how multi-scalar advocacy networks, connecting local, national, and international stakeholders, could shift power dynamics in land governance. However, overcoming institutional inertia, regulatory capture, and fragmented farmer mobilization will be crucial to transforming these networks into effective tools for agrarian resistance.

Implications of network structure on agrarian conflicts

The findings indicate that the agrarian conflict in Mukomuko is shaped by an imbalanced social network structure, where power and access to decision-making are concentrated among corporate actors and government institutions. The Local Government serves as the primary

connector, influencing how conflict unfolds and mediating interactions between corporations and farmers. Meanwhile, Farmers Progress Together and NGOs form a tightly connected group, yet their limited access to policymakers and legal structures renders them vulnerable to suppression. The corporate sector, along with security forces, maintains a strong coalition that reinforces land ownership structures and marginalizes farmer resistance. This unequal network distribution reflects broader patterns of social stratification in agrarian conflicts, where farmers and indigenous communities struggle against institutionalized land control mechanisms. The role of Freeriders, despite their broad access to information, remains passive, further highlighting the asymmetrical power relations within the conflict network.

These findings align with Juniyanti et al. (2021), who examined how social networks shape power dynamics in plantation land disputes. Similarly, Senoaji et al. (2020) found that agrarian conflicts often escalate due to contrasting perceptions of land tenure between local communities and state institutions. In many cases, local farmers perceive land as part of their ancestral heritage, while the state applies a formalized legal framework that prioritizes corporate land ownership. This misalignment in perspective creates barriers to negotiation and contributes to the entrenchment of conflict. The Mukomuko case reflects this phenomenon, where farmers' historical land claims clash with corporate concessions legitimized by government regulations, leaving them in a structurally disadvantaged position.

Network structures shape mobilization and resistance in agrarian conflicts, as power asymmetries determine whose voices influence governance. Angst (2023) highlights how exclusionary mechanisms in sustainability governance marginalize

certain actors, a pattern evident in Mukomuko, where corporate-backed policies restrict smallholder farmers' access to institutional negotiations and policy reforms. These structural barriers reinforce farmer organizations' limited influence, underscoring how network dynamics sustain dominant power hierarchies and hinder resistance efforts.

van Leeuwen et al. (2022) further emphasize that structural inequalities in plantation agriculture create long-term vulnerabilities for smallholder farmers, where mediation and dispute resolution processes are often biased in favor of large-scale agribusinesses. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, plantation conflicts illustrate how local farmers and laborers struggle to gain legal recognition of their land rights despite ongoing resistance efforts. This pattern closely resembles the case of Mukomuko, where mediation efforts by state institutions fail to provide equitable resolutions due to the entrenched influence of corporate actors. Strengthening independent mediation bodies and enhancing transparency in land governance could help balance the negotiation process, as suggested by Anggriawan, Sutaryono, and Salim (2021).

Furthermore, Wang (2023) provides insights into how socio-cultural factors shape land governance and conflict resolution. His study on agricultural biodiversity conservation demonstrates that traditional knowledge and community-based networks play a crucial role in mediating land-use disputes. However, in cases where these networks are weak or fragmented—such as in Mukomuko—corporate and government alliances can dominate decision-making processes. Wang's findings suggest that enhancing local governance structures and incorporating cultural perspectives into agrarian policies could mitigate exclusionary tendencies within networked land conflicts.

From a socio-legal perspective, Suciati (2016) highlights that farmers are often disadvantaged both economically and institutionally, making them susceptible to exploitation in land disputes. Strengthening legal education and organizational capacity among farmers is crucial to counteracting structural inequalities. This study reinforces the need for enhanced legal literacy, access to agrarian justice, and participatory land governance models that recognize the agency of smallholder farmers. Without these reforms, agrarian conflicts will continue to reflect deep-seated power imbalances, where marginalized groups struggle against entrenched corporate and state interests.

Conclusion

The agrarian conflict in Mukomuko reflects entrenched power asymmetries, where the Regional Government, with the highest Degree Centrality (4) and Betweenness Centrality (15), acts as a mediator yet reinforces corporate dominance over farmers' rights. Meanwhile, free riders, despite having the highest Closeness Centrality (90) and extensive access to information, remain passive, further entrenching inequalities. Farmers Progress Together, representing local farmers, holds a negative Degree Centrality (-2), highlighting their exclusion from decision-making processes, exacerbated by opaque land governance and the criminalization of farmer resistance. Addressing these disparities requires strengthening legal awareness, ensuring transparency in land governance, and fostering inclusive mediation frameworks. Providing farmers with legal education, direct assistance, and participatory land registration can empower them to contest unjust land acquisitions, while integrating civil society in mediation

processes can promote fairer negotiations and sustainable agrarian justice.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is my original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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