

Cultural Leadership and Conflict Resolution: Sultan Hamengku Buwono X in the Lempuyangan Land Dispute

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ABSTRACT

Land disputes in Indonesia frequently involve tensions between formal legality, historical legitimacy, and social justice. While the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) and the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF) provide important analytical tools for understanding policy conflict, limited attention has been given to the role of culturally embedded authority in shaping mediation and conflict de-escalation. This study examines the role of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X in mediating the Lempuyangan land dispute between PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) and local residents in Yogyakarta. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, this study analyzes media-based data collected from national and regional news sources published between 2020 and 2025, enhanced with articles published in the 2020-2025 period, with particular focus on the peak conflict period from April to July 2025. Data were collected through media scraping and analyzed using thematic coding informed by ACF, PCF, and concepts of cultural leadership. The findings identify two competing advocacy coalitions structured around fundamentally different belief systems regarding legality, fairness, and historical rights. The conflict intensified due to divergence of policy positions, perceived threats, and unwillingness to compromise. However, the intervention of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X as a culturally legitimate policy broker contributed to conflict de-escalation by facilitating dialogue, reframing the dispute through cultural values, and increasing trust between competing actors. This study contributes to policy process literature by integrating cultural leadership into the analysis of policy conflict. The findings suggest that symbolic legitimacy and culturally embedded authority can play significant roles in mediating high-intensity conflicts in governance contexts where traditional institutions remain influential.

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1. Introduction

Land disputes remain one of the most persistent and complex policy challenges in many developing countries, particularly where legal uncertainty, overlapping claims, and unequal power relations intersect. In Indonesia, land conflicts are frequently prolonged because formal legal mechanisms often fail to reconcile competing claims of legality, legitimacy, and historical entitlement. As noted by Berenschot & Saraswati (2024), communities involved in agrarian disputes frequently rely on customary legitimacy and informal mediation rather than formal legal procedures. Similar tensions between formal governance and culturally embedded legitimacy have also been identified in international studies on indigenous land conflicts and environmental governance, where local authority and participatory legitimacy play critical roles in conflict management (Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Yakovleva et al., 2023).

Recent studies further demonstrate that land conflicts are rarely limited to technical disputes over ownership, but instead involve broader struggles over recognition, justice, and authority. Bakker (2023) argues that prolonged land conflicts in Indonesia are often sustained by competing interpretations of customary rights and state authority, creating enduring tensions between communities and formal institutions. These dynamics are strongly reflected in the Lempuyangan land dispute in Yogyakarta between PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) and local residents.

The Lempuyangan dispute is particularly significant because the conflict was not merely a disagreement over land ownership, but a broader contestation involving legality, historical settlement, cultural legitimacy, and social justice. Unlike many land conflicts in Indonesia that remain trapped in prolonged confrontation or litigation, the Lempuyangan case highlights the intervention of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X as both a formal political authority and a cultural leader embedded within Javanese traditions.

Scholarship on Javanese political culture emphasizes the enduring role of the Sultan as both a political and cultural authority. Previous studies describe the Sultan as *dewaraja* and moral exemplar whose legitimacy extends beyond formal governance into symbolic and spiritual domains (Triwahyuningsih et al., 2019; International Symposium on Javanese Culture, 2023). In Yogyakarta, this cultural legitimacy enables the Sultan to mediate conflicts not only through formal authority but also through deeply rooted social trust and symbolic influence. This cultural dimension became highly visible in the Lempuyangan dispute through the emergence of the slogan "*Pejah Gesang Nderek Sultan*" ("live or die, follow the Sultan"), which reflected residents' belief that the Sultan possessed the ultimate moral authority to determine legitimate outcomes.

To analyze the dynamics of the dispute, this study employs the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) and the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF). ACF explains how policy actors form coalitions around shared belief systems and compete within policy subsystems, while PCF focuses on the dynamics of conflict intensity, particularly divergence in policy positions, perceived threats, and unwillingness to compromise (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). These frameworks provide important analytical tools for understanding how policy conflicts escalate and how competing actors mobilize narratives and resources.

However, existing applications of ACF and PCF primarily emphasize institutional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of conflict, with limited attention to the role of culturally embedded authority in shaping mediation and conflict resolution. At the same time, studies on Javanese cultural leadership often focus on historical or symbolic dimensions without systematically integrating them into contemporary policy process theories. As a result, there remains limited research that explicitly examines how cultural leadership operates within modern policy

conflicts, particularly in Southeast Asian contexts where traditional institutions continue to influence governance processes.

This study addresses this gap by examining how Sultan Hamengku Buwono X exercises cultural leadership in mediating the Lempuyangan land dispute and how this role can be understood through the combined lenses of ACF and PCF. Specifically, this study aims to: (1) identify and map the advocacy coalitions involved in the dispute, (2) analyze the dynamics of conflict intensity, and (3) examine the Sultan's role as a cultural leader and policy broker in facilitating conflict de-escalation.

This study contributes to the policy process literature in two ways. First, it extends the application of ACF and PCF into a culturally embedded Southeast Asian context characterized by strong traditional institutions. Second, it introduces cultural leadership as an analytical dimension that complements existing policy conflict theories, demonstrating how symbolic legitimacy and cultural authority can shape conflict trajectories and mediation outcomes in ways that formal governance mechanisms alone cannot achieve.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Leadership in Javanese Context

Leadership is shaped not only by formal institutional authority but also by cultural values and societal expectations. House et al. (2004), through the GLOBE Study, argue that societal culture strongly influences perceptions of legitimate leadership, including trust, authority, and expectations toward leaders. Similarly, Stephan and Pathak (2016) emphasize that cultural leadership is closely connected to collective values and symbolic legitimacy rather than merely organizational practice.

In the Javanese political context, leadership is deeply embedded within cultural and spiritual traditions. The Sultan of Yogyakarta is often conceptualized as *dewaraja* (divine king) and *insan teladan* (moral exemplar), whose legitimacy extends beyond formal political authority into symbolic and moral domains (International Symposium on Javanese Culture, 2023). This conception positions the Sultan not only as a governmental leader but also as a cultural guardian responsible for maintaining harmony between society, authority, and the broader social order.

Previous studies further highlight that the Sultanate of Yogyakarta represents a distinctive form of cultural leadership within the Indonesian governance system. Triwahyuningsih et al. (2019) argue that the Sultan's legitimacy is sustained through the integration of political authority, cultural symbolism, and social trust. Ritual traditions and symbolic practices within the Kraton also reinforce this legitimacy and strengthen the Sultan's position as mediator during periods of social tension.

Historically, cultural leadership in Yogyakarta has frequently been associated with conflict mediation and political stabilization. Earlier studies and symposium proceedings describe how Sultan Hamengku Buwono IX played important roles during periods of political crisis and national transition, reinforcing the perception of the Sultan as a protector and mediator in times of uncertainty. These historical narratives contribute to the persistence of public trust toward the Sultanate in contemporary governance conflicts.

Beyond Indonesia, studies on indigenous governance and culturally embedded leadership similarly demonstrate that symbolic legitimacy often plays a crucial role in conflict management. Castro and Nielsen (2001) show that conflict mediation in indigenous governance systems frequently depends on collaboration between formal institutions and

traditional authority structures. Likewise, Yakovleva et al. (2023) emphasize that legitimacy, participation, and cultural recognition are central to reducing tensions in land and resource conflicts involving local communities.

These perspectives suggest that cultural leadership can function as an important governance mechanism in contexts where formal institutions alone are insufficient to manage highly contested conflicts.

2.2 Policy Conflict Theories: ACF and PCF

Policy conflicts are frequently shaped by competing belief systems, institutional interests, and perceptions of legitimacy. The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999), explains how actors form coalitions based on shared beliefs and compete within policy subsystems to influence policy outcomes. Within ACF, policy actors are not solely motivated by material interests but also by normative commitments and ideological orientations.

Previous applications of ACF in Indonesia demonstrate its relevance in explaining land-use and governance conflicts. Alamsyah et al. (2019), for example, show that policy disputes in Indonesia often involve coalitions structured around competing interpretations of legality, fairness, and authority. Cairney (2019) further explains that ACF is particularly useful in understanding how ideas, beliefs, and authority shape policy processes under conditions of uncertainty.

While ACF focuses on coalition structures and belief systems, the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF) emphasizes the dynamics of conflict intensity. Weible and Heikkila (2017) argue that policy conflicts escalate when actors exhibit divergence in policy positions, perceive threats to their interests or values, and demonstrate unwillingness to compromise. These cognitive dimensions are expressed behaviorally through protests, lobbying, litigation, framing contests, and other forms of political action.

Recent empirical studies confirm the usefulness of PCF in analyzing high-intensity conflicts. Heikkila and Weible (2017) demonstrate how conflicts in environmental governance evolve through recurring episodes of escalation and negotiation, while Schoderer & Ott (2022) highlights how policy conflicts are sustained by deeply embedded perceptions of threat and legitimacy.

However, both ACF and PCF primarily emphasize institutional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of conflict. Limited attention is given to how culturally embedded authority structures influence mediation and conflict resolution. This limitation becomes particularly relevant in contexts such as Yogyakarta, where symbolic legitimacy and traditional leadership continue to shape governance dynamics.

2.3 Land Conflict and Informal Legitimacy

Land conflicts in Indonesia are often characterized by tensions between formal state authority and informal or customary legitimacy. Berenschot & Saraswati (2024) argue that communities involved in agrarian disputes frequently rely on informal mediation and social legitimacy because formal legal mechanisms are often perceived as insufficient or unfair.

Similarly, Bakker (2023) demonstrates that prolonged land conflicts in Indonesia are sustained not only by disputes over ownership but also by competing interpretations of legitimacy, historical rights, and authority. These conflicts often persist because communities and state institutions operate within different normative frameworks regarding land governance.

Studies on urban relocation and spatial conflicts in Indonesia also reveal similar dynamics. Research on street vendor relocation in Malioboro by Septian (2022) shows that resistance frequently emerges when policies are perceived as threatening livelihoods, identity, and social justice. Such conflicts are intensified when communities perceive decision-making processes as exclusionary or lacking legitimacy.

These findings indicate that land conflicts cannot be understood solely as technical or administrative disputes. Rather, they involve broader struggles over recognition, authority, and justice, making mediation processes highly dependent on legitimacy and trust.

2.4 Cultural Framing and Conflict Mediation

Conflict escalation is often influenced by symbolic narratives and collective identity. In the Lempuyangan dispute, residents adopted the slogan “*Pejah Gesang Nderek Sultan*” (“live or die, follow the Sultan”) as a cultural expression of resistance against eviction. This framing reflects that the conflict was not merely about material loss, but also about legitimacy, identity, and moral authority.

Hauk and Mueller (2015) argue that cultural leaders frequently become focal points in identity-based conflicts because they possess symbolic legitimacy capable of influencing collective behavior. Depending on how such legitimacy is mobilized, cultural authority can either intensify conflict or facilitate mediation.

In Yogyakarta, the Sultan’s role transformed cultural symbolism into a resource for mediation rather than confrontation. This study therefore positions cultural leadership as a bridging concept that complements existing policy conflict theories. While ACF explains coalition structures and PCF explains conflict intensity, cultural leadership provides additional explanatory power for understanding how mediation becomes possible in culturally embedded governance contexts.

3. Conceptual Framework

3.1 Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) provides an analytical lens for understanding how policy actors form coalitions based on shared belief systems and compete within a policy subsystem (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1999). According to ACF, policy conflicts are not merely technical disagreements but are rooted in normative beliefs, values, and interpretations of legitimacy.

Within a policy subsystem, actors who share similar beliefs tend to coordinate their strategies and mobilize resources to influence policy outcomes. These coalitions may include state institutions, community groups, civil society actors, and political elites. Policy change occurs through processes such as policy-oriented learning, negotiation, and external shocks that alter the balance between coalitions.

In the context of the Lempuyangan land dispute, ACF helps explain the emergence of two competing advocacy coalitions. The PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) coalition emphasizes legal ownership, infrastructure modernization, and state authority, while the community coalition emphasizes fairness, historical settlement, and social justice. These competing belief systems shape how each coalition frames the conflict and responds to mediation efforts.

ACF also highlights the importance of policy brokers, actors who seek to reduce conflict intensity and facilitate compromise between coalitions. In this study, Sultan Hamengku

Buwono X is analyzed as a policy broker whose legitimacy allows him to mediate between competing actors.

3.2 Policy Conflict Framework (PCF)

While ACF explains coalition structures and belief systems, the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF) focuses on the dynamics and intensity of policy conflict (Weible & Heikkila, 2017). PCF conceptualizes policy conflict as a dynamic process shaped by both cognitive and behavioral dimensions. Unlike many policy process theories that treat conflict as a secondary element, PCF positions conflict as the central unit of analysis, emphasizing how interactions among actors evolve across episodes of escalation, negotiation, and de-escalation.

Figure 1 illustrates the general flow of the Policy Conflict Framework as proposed by Weible and Heikkila (2017). The framework explains that policy conflict emerges through interactions between actors operating within a policy setting, where cognitive factors influence behavioral responses and ultimately shape the intensity of conflict.

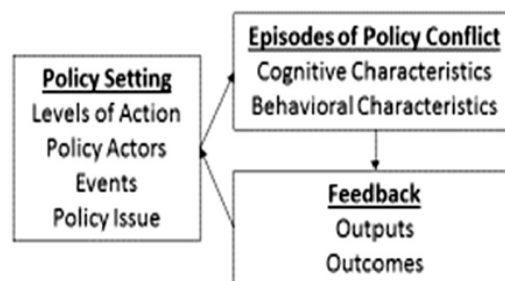


Figure 1. Flow diagram of the Policy Conflict Framework (Weible & Heikkila, 2017)

As shown in Figure 1, policy conflict is influenced by three primary cognitive dimensions:

1. Divergence of policy positions
Differences in policy preferences, goals, and interpretations among actors.
2. Perceived threats
Perceptions that policies or actions threaten actors' interests, values, identity, or survival.
3. Unwillingness to compromise
Resistance to negotiation or adjustment of policy positions.

These cognitive dimensions are expressed behaviorally through demonstrations, lobbying, litigation, media framing, coalition mobilization, and public confrontation. The interaction between cognitive perceptions and behavioral actions determines how conflict evolves over time.

In the context of the Lempuyangan dispute, the framework helps explain how eviction policies triggered strong perceptions of threat among residents, intensified resistance, and produced repeated negotiation deadlocks. Residents perceived eviction not only as loss of housing but also as a threat to identity, historical legitimacy, and social justice. Meanwhile, PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) maintained a legalistic and modernization-oriented policy position, resulting in sharp divergence between coalitions.

PCF further conceptualizes conflict as occurring across varying levels of intensity. Figure 2 presents the conflict intensity scale developed by Weible and Heikkila (2017), illustrating how

conflicts may shift from low-intensity disagreement toward highly adversarial confrontation depending on actor interactions and perceptions.

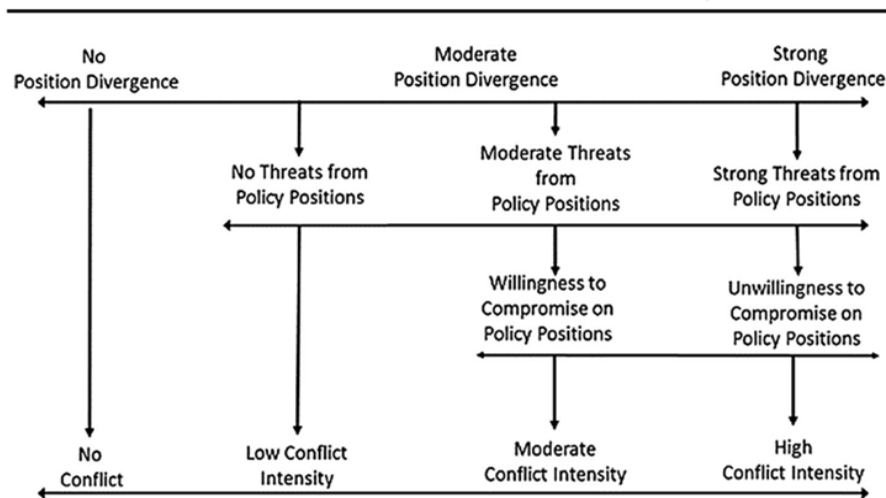


Figure 2. Policy Conflict Intensity (Weible & Heikkila, 2017)

Figure 2 is particularly relevant for understanding the escalation of the Lempuyangan dispute between April and June 2025. During this period, conflict intensity increased as divergence between coalitions widened, perceptions of existential threat intensified, and willingness to compromise declined. These dynamics were reflected behaviorally through public demonstrations, media campaigns, symbolic resistance such as the slogan “*Pejah Gesang Nderek Sultan,*” and repeated negotiation failures.

However, the framework also helps explain processes of de-escalation. By July 2025, mediation efforts involving Sultan Hamengku Buwono X contributed to reducing conflict intensity through dialogue facilitation and cultural reframing of the dispute. Although differences between coalitions remained, the conflict gradually shifted from confrontation toward negotiation, illustrating how conflict intensity within the PCF framework is dynamic rather than static.

Thus, PCF provides an important analytical tool for understanding not only why policy conflicts escalate, but also how mediation and symbolic legitimacy may contribute to conflict transformation in culturally embedded governance settings.

3.3 Cultural Leadership and Symbolic Legitimacy

Although ACF and PCF provide important explanations of coalition dynamics and conflict intensity, both frameworks pay limited attention to the role of culturally embedded authority in conflict mediation. This study addresses this limitation by incorporating the concept of cultural leadership.

Cultural leadership refers to forms of authority that derive legitimacy from shared cultural values, historical continuity, symbolic meaning, and collective trust rather than solely from formal institutional power. In the Javanese political tradition, the Sultan of Yogyakarta is widely perceived as both a political authority and a cultural leader whose legitimacy extends into moral and spiritual domains.

Previous studies emphasize that the Sultan’s authority is reinforced through symbolic practices, historical narratives, and social expectations regarding harmony and collective order (Triwahyuningsih et al., 2019). This legitimacy enables the Sultan to function not only as a

governmental actor but also as a mediator capable of bridging competing interests and reframing conflict narratives.

Beyond the Indonesian context, studies on indigenous governance similarly demonstrate that culturally embedded authority structures often play critical roles in conflict management and mediation processes (Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Yakovleva et al., 2023). These perspectives suggest that symbolic legitimacy can become an important governance resource in highly contested policy conflicts.

3.4 Integrated Analytical Framework

This study integrates the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF), and the concept of cultural leadership into a single analytical framework to explain the structure, dynamics, and mediation of the Lempuyangan land dispute.

Figure 3 illustrates the integrated analytical framework developed in this study. The framework demonstrates how advocacy coalitions, conflict intensity, and cultural leadership interact within the policy conflict process.

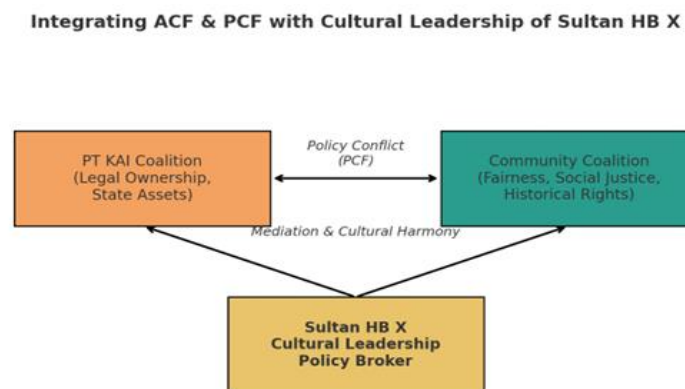


Figure 3. Conceptual Framework: Integrating ACF & PCF with Cultural Leadership of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X

As illustrated in Figure 3, the conflict begins with the emergence of two competing advocacy coalitions identified through the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) coalition is structured around beliefs emphasizing legal ownership, modernization, and state authority, while the community coalition is organized around fairness, historical settlement, and social justice.

The interaction between these competing coalitions generates policy conflict dynamics analyzed through the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF). Conflict intensity increases when divergence of policy positions widens, actors perceive threats to their interests and identities, and willingness to compromise declines. These cognitive dimensions are expressed behaviorally through demonstrations, media campaigns, symbolic resistance, and negotiation deadlocks.

The framework further illustrates the role of cultural leadership as a mediating mechanism within the conflict process. Sultan Hamengku Buwono X functions as a culturally legitimate policy broker whose authority derives not only from formal governmental position but also from symbolic legitimacy embedded in Javanese political culture. Through values such as

hamemayu hayuning bawono (maintaining harmony) and *golong gilig* (unity between ruler and people), the Sultan reframes the conflict from confrontation toward negotiation.

Unlike conventional applications of ACF and PCF that primarily emphasize institutional and cognitive dimensions, this integrated framework introduces cultural leadership as an additional explanatory dimension. The framework therefore demonstrates that conflict mediation in culturally embedded governance contexts cannot be fully understood without considering symbolic legitimacy and culturally rooted authority structures.

Thus, Figure 3 not only summarizes the relationship between ACF, PCF, and cultural leadership, but also represents the central theoretical contribution of this study.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the dynamics of policy conflict in the Lempuyangan land dispute. The research focuses on how competing actors framed the conflict, how conflict intensity evolved over time, and how cultural leadership contributed to mediation and de-escalation.

A qualitative approach was selected because the study seeks to interpret narratives, symbolic meanings, and actor interactions rather than measure causal relationships quantitatively. The research also adopts a case study orientation, as the Lempuyangan dispute represents a context-specific conflict shaped by institutional, cultural, and political factors unique to Yogyakarta.

4.2 Data Sources and Collection

Data were collected through media scraping using ParseHub, a web-scraping application that enables systematic extraction of structured information from online news platforms. Media reports were selected as the primary data source because they capture public narratives, actor statements, symbolic framing, and the evolving dynamics of the conflict. Media coverage also provides valuable insight into how policy actors construct perceived threats, frame competing claims, and communicate policy preferences, making it a useful proxy for analyzing belief systems and conflict narratives.

The dataset was compiled from both national and regional media outlets to ensure variation in perspectives and reporting styles. National media sources included Kompas.com, Detik.com, and Tirto.id, while regional media sources included Harian Jogja, Radar Jogja, Kedaulatan Rakyat, and SuaraJogja.

The search process used combinations of keywords related to the dispute, including:

- “*sengketa lahan Lempuyangan*”
- “*PT KAI Lempuyangan*”
- “*penggusuran warga Lempuyangan*”
- “*Pejah Gesang Nderek Sultan*”
- “*Sultan HB X mediasi Lempuyangan*”

Searches were conducted through Google News and directly through media websites to maximize coverage of relevant articles.

4.3 Time Frame and Dataset Construction

The dataset covers media reports published between 2020 and 2025 to provide broader contextual understanding of the dispute. However, analytical focus is placed on the period between April and July 2025, identified as the peak phase of conflict escalation and mediation. Media allows temporal analysis to understand conflict dynamics.

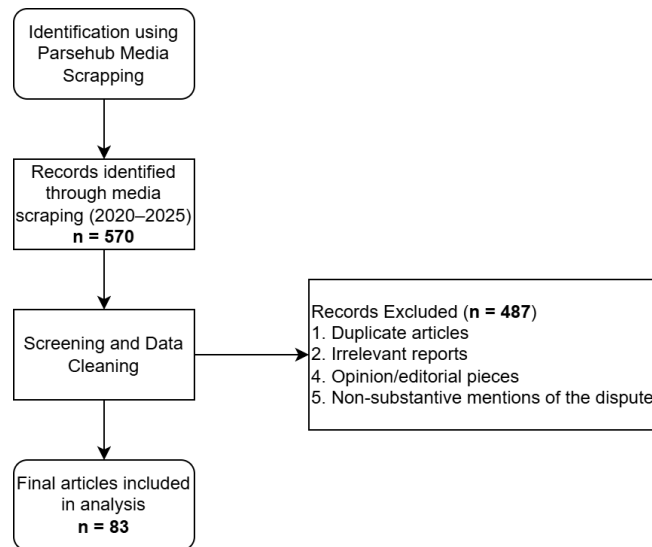


Figure 4. Dataset Screening and Selection Process

The initial search and media scraping process generated 570 media records collected from national and regional news platforms. The records were subsequently screened to remove duplicate entries, irrelevant reports, opinion pieces, and articles that only mentioned the dispute without substantive discussion of conflict dynamics or mediation processes. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria and conducting data-cleaning procedures, 83 articles were retained for analysis. These articles constituted the final analytical corpus used for thematic coding and conflict mapping. The dataset screening and selection process is summarized in Figure 4.

As shown in Figure 4, the dataset underwent multiple stages of screening and cleaning to ensure analytical relevance and consistency. Only articles containing substantive information on conflict dynamics, mediation efforts, and key actors involved in the Lempuyangan dispute were retained for analysis.

The selected period is analytically significant because it captures the emergence of eviction policies, escalation of community resistance, intervention by Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, negotiation deadlocks, and subsequent mediation efforts leading toward partial de-escalation.

Table 1. Distribution of Articles by Media Source

Media Source	Number of Articles
Detik.com	25
Tirto.id	8
Radar Jogja	8
SuaraJogja.id	7
VIVA Jogja	3
Tempo.co	3
Ayo Bandung	3

Media Source	Number of Articles
Kompas.com	3
Other media outlets	23
Total	83

The dataset consists of articles from a diverse range of national and regional media outlets. Detik.com contributed the largest share of coverage (25 articles), followed by Tirto.id and Radar Jogja (8 articles each), and SuaraJogja.id (7 articles). The use of multiple media sources was intended to reduce dependence on a single editorial perspective and enhance coverage of conflict narratives across different platforms.

4.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure analytical consistency and data relevance, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied.

Articles were included if they:

1. Explicitly discussed the Lempuyangan land dispute,
2. Mentioned at least one core actor (PT Kereta Api Indonesia, local residents, or Sultan Hamengku Buwono X),
3. Contained substantive information regarding conflict dynamics, negotiation processes, mediation efforts, or policy responses.

Articles were excluded if they:

1. Were duplicate publications,
2. Consisted primarily of opinion pieces or editorials,
3. Mentioned the dispute only briefly without substantive discussion,
4. Were unrelated to the dispute despite containing similar keywords.

This filtering process ensured that the final corpus reflected meaningful representations of policy conflict and mediation processes.

4.5 Data Cleaning and Organization

Data cleaning was conducted to improve analytical reliability and consistency. The process included:

1. Removal of duplicate articles based on metadata and textual similarity,
2. Exclusion of irrelevant or non-substantive reports,
3. Standardization of publication dates and metadata formatting,
4. Organization of articles according to publication date, actor prominence, and thematic relevance.

The cleaned dataset was subsequently organized into a coding matrix to facilitate thematic analysis and conflict mapping.

4.6 Coding Scheme and Analytical Procedure

The analysis employed thematic coding informed by the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF), and concepts of cultural leadership.

The coding scheme consisted of four analytical categories:

1. Actor Identification

Used to identify the main actors involved in the conflict, including: PT KAI; residents; Sultan Hamengku Buwono X; government officials; and civil society actors.

2. Narrative Frames

Used to identify dominant policy narratives:

- a. PT KAI: legality, modernization, state assets,
- b. residents: fairness, historical rights, social justice,
- c. Sultan: mediation, harmony, cultural legitimacy.

3. Conflict Dimensions (PCF-Based)

Used to assess conflict intensity: divergence of policy positions; perceived threats; and willingness or unwillingness to compromise.

4. Forms of Political Action

Used to identify behavioral manifestations of conflict: demonstrations; media campaigns; negotiations; public statements; and mediation efforts.

Each article was coded systematically according to these categories to identify patterns across actors, narratives, and conflict episodes.

4.7 Example of Coding

To illustrate the coding process, a headline such as:

“Warga Lempuyangan menolak penggusuran dan siap bertahan”

was coded as showed in Table 2.

Table 2. Example of Coding

Analytical Category	Coding Result
Actor	Residents
Narrative Frame	Fairness / historical rights
PCF Dimension	Perceived threat
Political Action	Resistance

This procedure helped maintain transparency and consistency throughout the analytical process.

4.8 Operationalization of the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF)

The intensity of policy conflict was operationalized using the three core dimensions proposed by Weible and Heikkila (2017):

- 1. Divergence of Policy Positions: Identified when actors expressed fundamentally opposing claims regarding land ownership, rights, compensation, or policy direction.
- 2. Perceived Threats: Identified when actors framed policies or actions as threatening livelihoods, identity, legitimacy, or survival.

3. Unwillingness to Compromise: Identified through reports of negotiation failure, rejection of mediation proposals, or persistent policy deadlock.

The frequency and interaction of these dimensions across the dataset were used to interpret changes in conflict intensity over time.

4.9 Reliability and Analytical Consistency

To ensure analytical consistency, coding procedures followed predefined analytical categories derived from the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) and the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF). The coding framework was refined iteratively through repeated reading of the dataset and cross-checking of coding decisions.

To enhance analytical validity, a subset of the dataset was independently reviewed by the co-author to assess consistency in the interpretation of actor categories, narrative frames, and conflict dimensions. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus. This process complemented the iterative coding procedure and strengthened confidence in the analytical findings.

In addition, findings were compared across multiple national and regional media sources. Themes were considered analytically significant only when they appeared consistently across different media outlets and reporting perspectives. This cross-source validation helped reduce the influence of isolated reports and strengthened the credibility of the analysis.

4.10 Limitations and Bias

This study relies primarily on media-based data, which may introduce framing bias and selection bias depending on editorial orientation and reporting priorities. Media narratives may also emphasize certain actors or events more prominently than others.

To reduce these limitations, the study incorporated multiple national and regional media sources to ensure variation in perspectives and reporting styles. Nevertheless, future research could strengthen the analysis through triangulation with official documents, archival records, or interviews with key actors involved in the dispute.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

This study relied exclusively on publicly available media reports and did not involve direct interaction with human participants. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not required. Nevertheless, the study adhered to principles of responsible research by accurately representing media sources, avoiding selective quotation, and ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the available evidence.

5. Findings / Results

5.1 Media Coverage and Timeline

The media dataset indicates that coverage of the Lempuyangan land dispute intensified significantly during April–July 2025, marking the peak phase of conflict escalation and mediation. Although the dataset includes articles published between 2020 and 2025, earlier coverage was relatively limited and sporadic. By contrast, the 2025 period was characterized by rapid increases in media attention, public resistance, and political intervention.

Table 3. Distribution of Articles by Publication Period

Period	Number of Articles
2020–2024	7
April 2025	27
May 2025	14
June 2025	27
July 2025	8
Total	83

The distribution of articles demonstrates that media attention intensified considerably during the peak conflict period. Coverage increased sharply in April and June 2025, with each month contributing 27 articles. This pattern supports the identification of April–July 2025 as the primary period of conflict escalation, negotiation, and mediation. Table 4 summarizes the major phases of the conflict and dominant narratives during the peak period.

Table 4. Timeline of Conflict Dynamics in the Lempuyangan Dispute (April–July 2025)

Period	Major Events	Dominant Conflict Dynamics
April 2025	Eviction notices and emergence of public resistance	Escalation of conflict
May 2025	Sultan HB X publicly calls for dialogue	Mediation framing emerges
June 2025	Repeated negotiation deadlocks	High conflict intensity
July 2025	Government involvement and compensation agreements	Partial de-escalation

As shown in Table 4, the conflict evolved through distinct phases of escalation, confrontation, negotiation, and partial de-escalation. These phases closely reflect the dynamic conflict episodes emphasized within the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF), where actor interactions continuously reshape conflict intensity over time.

5.2 Actor Visibility and Coalition Structure

Media analysis reveals that the dispute was dominated by two primary actor groups: PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) and the Lempuyangan residents. Sultan Hamengku Buwono X appeared as a distinct mediating actor positioned outside the two competing coalitions.

Figure 5 shows that PT KAI and residents received the highest levels of media attention throughout the conflict period, reflecting their central roles within the dispute. Government actors appeared less frequently and were primarily associated with mediation or administrative coordination. Meanwhile, Sultan Hamengku Buwono X occupied a unique position as a symbolic and mediating authority rather than as a direct coalition actor.

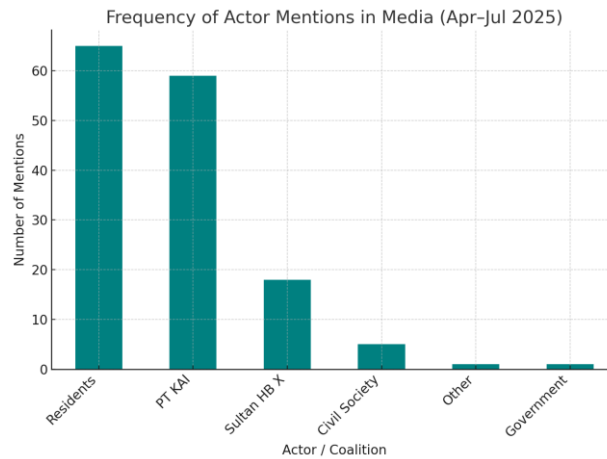


Figure 5. Frequency of Actor Mentions in Media (April–July 2025)

The distribution of actor visibility supports the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), which conceptualizes policy disputes as contests between competing coalitions structured around shared beliefs and policy objectives.

5.3 Advocacy Coalition Dynamics (ACF)

The analysis identifies two clearly defined advocacy coalitions with competing belief systems and policy narratives.

1. PT KAI Coalition

The PT KAI coalition framed the dispute primarily in terms of legal ownership, state authority, and infrastructure modernization. Media narratives associated with this coalition emphasized the legality of railway land management and the necessity of relocation for development purposes. Representative narratives included: protection of state assets; infrastructure modernization; administrative legality; and compensation procedures.

2. Community Coalition

The community coalition framed the dispute around fairness, historical settlement, social justice, and cultural legitimacy. Residents consistently emphasized long-term occupation, moral entitlement, and perceived injustice associated with eviction policies. Representative narratives included: historical rights; social justice; livelihood protection; and cultural legitimacy.

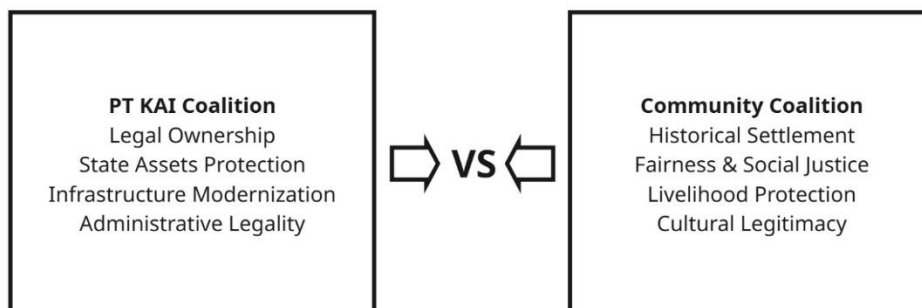


Figure 6. Advocacy Coalition Structure in the Lempuyangan Dispute

Figure 6 illustrates the relationship between the two opposing coalitions and their dominant belief systems. As shown in the figure, the conflict was not merely administrative or technical, but represented a broader contestation over legitimacy and authority.

These findings align with ACF assumptions that policy conflicts are shaped by normative beliefs and competing interpretations of justice rather than solely by material interests.

5.4 Conflict Intensity and Escalation (PCF Analysis)

Applying to the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF), the Lempuyangan dispute demonstrated characteristics of high-intensity policy conflict, particularly between April and June 2025. Three dimensions were especially prominent:

1. Divergence of Policy Positions

PT KAI maintained a legalistic and modernization-oriented policy position, while residents rejected eviction without recognition of historical settlement and social justice considerations. These fundamentally different policy positions created persistent confrontation between coalitions.

2. Perceived Threats

Residents framed eviction as an existential threat to livelihoods, identity, and community continuity. This perception was reflected in residents' public statements reported in the media. One resident emphasized that the community would continue resisting relocation until a mediated solution was reached, while the slogan “*Pejah Gesang Nderek Sultan*” (“live or die, follow the Sultan”) became a collective expression of trust in the Sultan’s authority and rejection of unilateral eviction policies (Detik.com, 9 April 2025; Kabar Terdepan, 16 April 2025). The slogan represented not only resistance to eviction but also recognition of the Sultan as the ultimate source of legitimate authority.

3. Unwillingness to Compromise

Media reports repeatedly highlighted failed negotiations and persistent deadlock between actors, particularly during June 2025. Both coalitions maintained rigid policy positions, limiting opportunities for compromise.

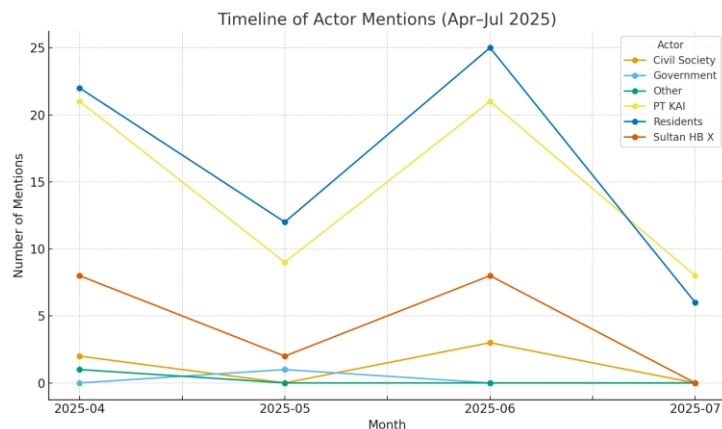


Figure 7. Conflict Intensity Dynamics in the Lempuyangan Dispute

Figure 7 demonstrates how conflict intensity increased during the escalation phase and gradually declined following mediation efforts involving Sultan Hamengku Buwono X and government actors.

The findings confirm PCF assumptions that conflict intensity increases when divergence, perceived threats, and unwillingness to compromise interact simultaneously.

5.5 Cultural Leadership and Mediation

Amid escalating conflict, Sultan Hamengku Buwono X emerged as a culturally legitimate mediator capable of bridging competing coalitions. Unlike PT KAI or resident groups, the Sultan did not operate as a direct coalition actor but functioned as a policy broker within the conflict process. Media narratives consistently associated the Sultan with dialogue facilitation; calls for harmony; mediation efforts; and conflict de-escalation. The Sultan’s effectiveness derived not only from formal political authority as Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, but also from symbolic legitimacy rooted in Javanese political culture.

Media reports also highlighted the Sultan’s preference for negotiated settlement rather than confrontation. According to Tempo.com (13 April 2025), Sultan Hamengku Buwono X instructed GKR Mangkubumi to facilitate communication between PT KAI and residents, emphasizing the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding. This intervention positioned the Sultan as a mediator rather than a direct participant in the conflict.

The Mediating Role of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X in Lempuyangan Land Dispute

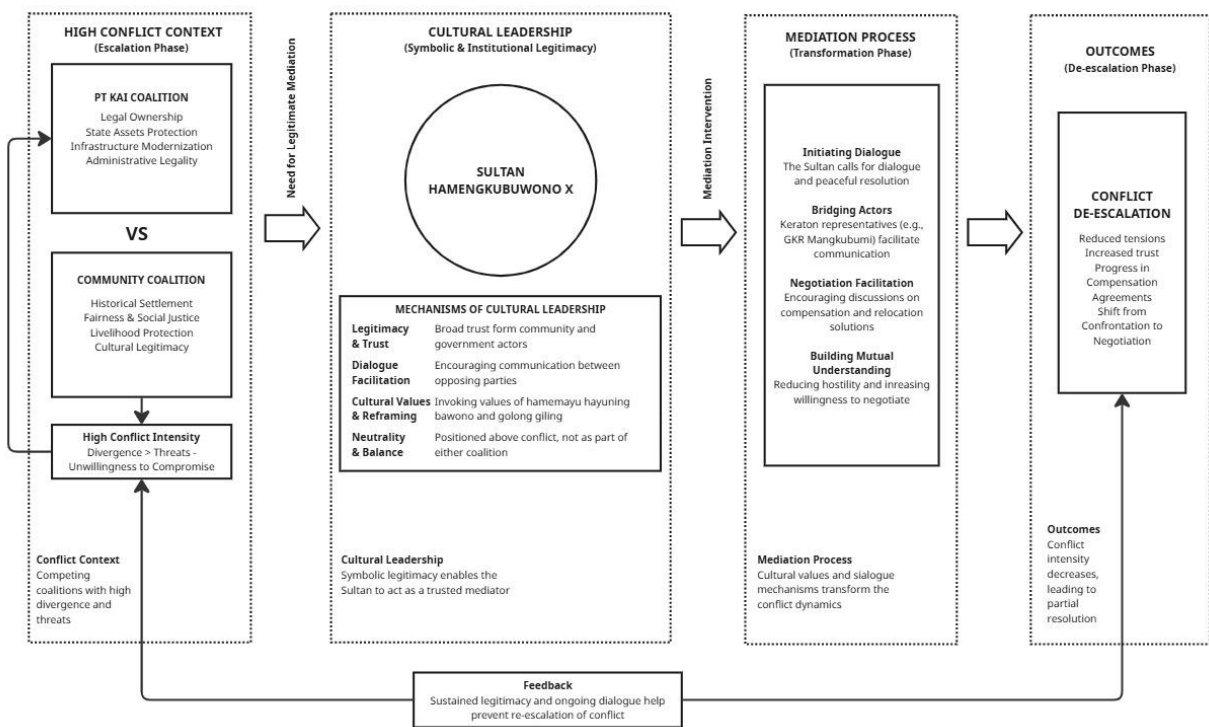


Figure 8. Role of Cultural Leadership in Conflict Mediation

As illustrated in Figure 8, the Sultan’s intervention altered the dynamics of the conflict by reframing the dispute from confrontation toward negotiation. Cultural values such as *hamemayu hayuning bawono* (maintaining harmony) and *golong gilig* (unity between ruler and people) became important symbolic resources for mediation.

The mediation process also involved Kraton representatives, particularly GKR Mangkubumi, who facilitated communication between PT KAI and residents. This intervention helped transform compensation discussions from adversarial negotiation into more culturally acceptable dialogue.

5.6 Conflict De-escalation

By July 2025, the conflict showed signs of partial de-escalation. Media coverage increasingly emphasized mediation efforts, negotiation progress, compensation arrangements, and government coordination. Although disagreement between coalitions remained, the conflict gradually shifted from direct confrontation toward negotiated settlement. By May and June 2025, discussions increasingly focused on compensation mechanisms and relocation arrangements. Radar Jogja (14 May 2025) reported that GKR Mangkubumi framed the process as “*ganti untung*” (mutually beneficial compensation) rather than “*ganti rugi*” (compensation for loss), reflecting efforts to reduce adversarial perceptions. Similarly, Viva Jogja (19 June 2025) reported that Sultan Hamengku Buwono X encouraged all parties to pursue a solution through institutional dialogue, contributing to a gradual reduction in conflict intensity.

The July 2025 agreement did not constitute a formal legal settlement of ownership claims. Rather, it represented a mediated arrangement regarding relocation and compensation facilitated by the Yogyakarta Palace. Under this arrangement, residents occupying Sultan Ground expressed willingness to relocate through a negotiated agreement involving PT KAI and the Palace. In return, residents would receive “*bebungah*” and financial assistance as part of the relocation process. Although the arrangement did not fully resolve underlying differences regarding historical rights and legality, it reduced immediate confrontation, increased trust among actors, and created conditions for continued dialogue.

This transition indicates that cultural leadership contributed to reducing conflict intensity by:

1. increasing trust between actors,
2. reframing conflict narratives,
3. facilitating communication,
4. reducing perceptions of existential threat.

These findings suggest that symbolic legitimacy can function as an important governance resource in culturally embedded policy conflicts.

5.7 Summary of Findings

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Lempuyangan land dispute evolved through distinct phases of escalation, confrontation, negotiation, and partial de-escalation. The conflict was structured around two competing advocacy coalitions with fundamentally different belief systems and interpretations of legitimacy.

The Policy Conflict Framework explains how divergence of policy positions, perceived threats, and unwillingness to compromise intensified the dispute, while cultural leadership explains how mediation became possible despite persistent conflict between coalitions.

Most importantly, the findings indicate that the intervention of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X introduced symbolic legitimacy into the conflict process, enabling mediation and reducing conflict intensity in ways that formal institutional mechanisms alone were unable to achieve.

6. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Lempuyangan land dispute represents more than a conventional disagreement over land ownership. Rather, the conflict reflects a broader contestation involving legality, historical legitimacy, cultural authority, and social justice. By integrating the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF), and cultural leadership, this study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how policy

conflicts evolve and how mediation becomes possible in culturally embedded governance contexts.

From the perspective of the Advocacy Coalition Framework, the dispute was clearly structured around two competing advocacy coalitions. The PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) coalition emphasized legality, infrastructure modernization, and state authority, while the community coalition emphasized fairness, historical settlement, and social justice. These findings support previous studies showing that policy conflicts are shaped not only by material interests but also by normative beliefs and competing interpretations of legitimacy (Alamsyah et al., 2019).

However, the findings also suggest limitations within conventional applications of ACF. While ACF effectively explains coalition formation and belief systems, it provides limited explanation regarding how mediation becomes effective in contexts where authority is strongly influenced by symbolic legitimacy and cultural trust. In the Lempuyangan case, neither coalition was able to dominate the policy process despite persistent confrontation and strong mobilization.

The Policy Conflict Framework (PCF) further explains how intensity of conflict evolved throughout the dispute. The findings confirm that divergence of policy positions, perceived threats, and unwillingness to compromise significantly intensified the conflict between April and June 2025. Residents perceived eviction not only as administrative displacement but also as a threat to identity, historical legitimacy, and livelihood continuity. This perception was reinforced symbolically through the slogan “*Pejah Gesang Nderek Sultan*,” which transformed resistance into a culturally embedded expression of legitimacy and collective identity.

These findings are consistent with previous studies emphasizing that land conflicts frequently involve struggles over recognition and legitimacy rather than purely technical disagreements (Berenschot & Saraswati, 2024; Bakker, 2023). Similar patterns have also been identified in international studies on indigenous governance and environmental conflict, where culturally embedded legitimacy plays an important role in shaping conflict dynamics and mediation outcomes (Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Yakovleva et al., 2023).

The most important finding of this study concerns the role of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X as a culturally legitimate policy broker. Unlike conventional policy brokers described in ACF literature, whose authority is generally derived from institutional position or technical expertise, the Sultan’s legitimacy is rooted in symbolic authority, historical continuity, and cultural trust embedded within Javanese political culture.

This form of cultural leadership allowed the Sultan to mediate between competing coalitions despite the high intensity of the conflict. The findings suggest that symbolic legitimacy functioned as a governance resource capable of reducing hostility, facilitating dialogue, and reframing the conflict from confrontation toward negotiation. Through cultural values such as *hamemayu hayuning bawono* and *golong gilig*, mediation was framed not merely as political compromise but as restoration of social harmony.

The findings therefore extend existing policy conflict literature in several ways. First, this study demonstrates that policy conflict in culturally embedded governance contexts cannot be fully explained through institutional or cognitive dimensions alone. Second, the study shows that cultural leadership can function as an additional analytical dimension, complementing ACF and PCF. Third, the findings suggest that the effectiveness of policy brokers may depend not only on neutrality or formal authority but also on culturally embedded legitimacy and collective trust.

These contributions are particularly relevant for Southeast Asian governance contexts, where traditional authority structures continue to influence contemporary policy processes. The

findings also reinforce broader arguments in governance literature that conflict resolution mechanisms are more likely to succeed when mediation processes align with local cultural norms and legitimacy structures.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the role of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X in mediating the Lempuyangan land dispute between PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) and local residents. Using media-based qualitative analysis informed by the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), the Policy Conflict Framework (PCF), and concepts of cultural leadership, the study identified several important findings.

First, the dispute was structured around two competing advocacy coalitions characterized by fundamentally different belief systems and interpretations of legitimacy. PT KAI emphasized legality, modernization, and state authority, while residents emphasized fairness, historical settlement, and social justice.

Second, the conflict demonstrated characteristics of high-intensity policy conflict. Divergence of policy positions, perceptions of existential threats, and unwillingness to compromise intensified confrontation and prolonged negotiation deadlock.

Third, and most importantly, the intervention of Sultan Hamengku Buwono X played a critical role in facilitating conflict de-escalation. The findings indicate that the Sultan's effectiveness derived not only from formal political authority but also from symbolic legitimacy rooted in Javanese cultural leadership traditions.

This study therefore concludes that cultural leadership remains an important mechanism for conflict mediation in contexts where legitimacy is strongly shaped by historical continuity, symbolic authority, and collective trust. In Yogyakarta, the Sultan's position as both political leader and cultural authority enabled mediation processes that formal institutional mechanisms alone were unable to achieve. This study highlights cultural aspects that may still exist in the modern era, providing different meanings to resolve the complexities in the dynamics of human life.

7.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study contributes to policy process literature by integrating cultural leadership into the analysis of policy conflict. While ACF explains coalition structures and PCF explains conflict intensity, this study demonstrates that cultural leadership provides an additional explanatory dimension for understanding mediation and de-escalation in culturally embedded governance settings.

The study also extends existing applications of ACF and PCF into a Southeast Asian context characterized by strong traditional institutions and symbolic legitimacy structures.

7.2 Practical Implications

Several practical implications emerge from the findings.

First, effective conflict mediation requires not only formal institutional authority but also legitimacy and trust across competing actors. Second, culturally resonant mediation strategies may reduce hostility and facilitate negotiation in highly polarized conflicts even in modern civilization. Third, policymakers should recognize that land conflicts frequently involve

identity, legitimacy, and historical recognition rather than merely technical or administrative disputes.

The findings further suggest that mediation approaches grounded in local cultural values may be particularly effective in regions where traditional authority structures remain socially influential.

7.3 Limitations and Future Research

This study relies primarily on media-based data, which may introduce framing bias and uneven representation of actors or events. Although the use of multiple national and regional media sources helped reduce these limitations, future research could strengthen the analysis through triangulation with interviews, official policy documents, or archival materials.

Future studies could also compare similar disputes in other regions to examine whether cultural leadership plays comparable roles in different governance contexts. Additionally, further research may explore how digital media amplifies symbolic narratives and legitimacy claims within contemporary policy conflicts.

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Data Availability

No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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