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# Renewable Energy Transition Activism and Fighting Environmental Pollution

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#### Abstract

The climate change agenda needs serious attention from every global society. Responsibility for human activities that have the potential for climate change is a shared responsibility. The solution to the problem of climate change can be traced to the roots of the problem. Environmental pollution is one of the causes of climate change problems. Handling environmental pollution can be done by transitioning from fossil energy to clean and renewable energy. The energy transition must be carried out as a whole by the whole society. This energy transition can be pursued through social movements. This study aims to analyze the activism of the Bersihkan Indonesia's Coalition in efforts to fight against environmental pollution through renewable energy transition solutions. Based on research results, the activism of the Bersihkan Indonesia's Coalition is a new social movement that aims to achieve a renewable energy transition. Activist activity in conveying the issue of the renewable energy transition through equal public space channels free of intervention. The Bersihkan Indonesia Movement proceeds in the political discourse of deliberative democracy. Equal citizen participation is part of the principle of inclusiveness in the renewable energy transition.

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

Social phenomena related to new social movements (NSMs) are emerging on social media in the current digital era. New social movements use social media channels (such as: YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok) as a place to develop their existence. The issues raised are very diverse, ranging from issues of group identity, gender equality, human rights justice, environmental pollution, and other issues that concern the livelihood of a community group. The dissemination of discourse through social media is considered to provide an idea for ordinary people to be in solidarity and agree with the attitudes of activists on social media.[1], [2].

Many social science studies related to new social movements have been carried out in the contemporary era. There are several characteristics of new social movements that differentiate them from old social movements. Old social movements tend to have a hierarchical-centralized structure, while new social movements are decentralized-autonomous and loose in nature. The old social movements brought issues around the tensions of the degraded bourgeoisie and proletariat, while the new social movements brought various issues concerning the right to live in prosperity for humans at large.[3], [4], [5], [6]. The issue of environmental pollution is one representation of the disruption of human rights to live in prosperity. Environmental pollution takes away people's living space and basic needs.

Environmental pollution is the entry of substances or particles into environmental standards due to human actions [7]. Several types of environmental pollution include: land pollution, water pollution, air pollution. Soil pollution causes the natural composition of soil to change. The quality of the soil reduces in fertility. Human activities that can cause soil pollution include excessive use of chemical fertilizers, illegal dumping, industrial waste absorbed into the soil, chemical storage

accidents, and inorganic waste.[7], [8]. Water pollution results in the contamination of clean water used by humans. The natural properties of water also change[7]. Clean water is a basic human need to fulfill their survival. Polluted water in irrigation canals, rivers, ditches, springs and in the soil reduces its quality and usefulness for the survival of humans and the ecosystem within it. Air pollution is caused by the entry of pollutants into the free air space (atmosphere) resulting in changes in the proportion of the natural composition of air elements in nature.[9]. Human activities cause air pollution such as the use of aerosols and refrigerants containing CFC gas, livestock which produces excess methane gas (CH4) and massive use of fossil energy.

Fossil energy has a tendency to produce carbon emissions. Carbon emissions that are released freely into the atmosphere cause a greenhouse gas effect, resulting in global warming. The global warming process causes the melting of polar ice and increased evaporation of sea water. As a result of the melting of ice at the Poles, the average sea level rises. Excessive evaporation of sea water causes changing seasonal conditions in various parts of the world [10]. This affects agricultural production which relies on weather conditions.

The impact of air pollution is felt by the entire world community. This condition requires joint responsibility between related elements. There needs to be a joint commitment between policy makers, business actors and the community. The global community has agreed on the Kyoto Protocol Agreement and the Adoption of the Paris Agreement. This commitment aims to control the rate of increase in surface temperature so that it remains below 1.5 degrees Celsius(International Panel on Climate Change(IPCC), 2022). Furthermore, the government ratified the global policy into national policy. Business actors are changing their production models to become green companies that are environmentally friendly. Adaptation of national policies to people's lives needs to be implemented fairly

However, conditions in the field are not yet fully compatible with climate change adaptation. There are still government policies that do not accommodate climate change adaptation with the aim of facilitating development investment programs[12], [13]. There are still many total annual emissions released by the industrial sector into the atmosphere[14]. According to the UNEP report, Indonesia ranks 4th out of the 7 largest global emitter countries[15]. This reality requires control and monitoring from society that is free from state and market hegemony. Society seeks this through the arena of democratic civil society. The community can equally participate in the policy determination process[16].

Organic intellectuals as political actors in informal society. These political actors in the realm of civil society form civil society groups. Clean Indonesia as a combination of civil society groups fighting for political goals, namely a world with minimal pollution by means of an energy transition. Currently, energy production is strongly influenced by the state, power generators and mining entrepreneurs. Civil society groups are resisting state and market hegemony. The struggle of civil society groups is a form of social movement. In this research, the Clean Indonesia Coalition performs a function in the deliberative democracy ecosystem when controlling and monitoring commitments to fight environmental pollution which can result in worsening the impacts of climate change. Monitoring community movements regarding policy decisions is crucial for people's lives because it can reduce corruption, political manipulation and ensure accountability[17].

Rahayu et al., (2022) examines the Clean Indonesia Movement in building a public agenda. This research seeks to examine the communication strategy carried out by the Clean Indonesia Coalition to bring the discourse of renewable energy transition to society. The results of this research show that the Clean Indonesia Coalition in building the Clean Indonesia Movement used communication strategies through social media, focus group discussions (FGD) to the government, visits to the DPR RI. However, this research has not yet emerged as a movement strategy at the local community level and a discourse on gender inclusivity.

Through Habermas's deliberative democracy perspective, this research seeks to explain the sustainability of the activism of the new Clean Indonesia social movement in contributing to policy decisions on the renewable energy transition in Indonesia. Deliberative in a political context means consideration which is familiar in Indonesian society as deliberation for consensus[19]. Habermas provides procedural logic to the mechanism for absorbing aspirations in the political decision-making process. As written by Hardiman, the process of forming aspirations results from discourse in the public space. The role of the public sphere is as a discoverer, interpreter, and explainer of sociopolitical problems to the center, namely a political system consisting of political parties, the judiciary, parliament and the executive, as a consideration in decision making. Public space also controls the continuity of democracy. Public space is a place to build a discourse agenda, while civil society is a discourse development process. Starting from the public sphere, private aspirations are fought for in order to gain legitimacy as public aspirations[19]. Private aspirations are mediated in the arena of civil society with rational considerations carried out by society through equal communication. The civil society arena then gives rise to public aspirations which present the aspirations of society[17], [19]. This deliberative democracy does not accommodate public participation in quantity like participatory democracy, but accommodates political decisions that represent society[20].

#### 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research with a case study model to explain the specifics of a social movement[21], [22]. The data comes from primary data and secondary data, where the primary data collection method is through an in-depth interview process with several key informants from the Clean Indonesia Coalition network at national and regional levels. Secondary data was obtained through digital observation of the official website and social media of the Clean Indonesia Coalition and coalition members which were published since joining the coalition. Data analysis uses Miles and Huberman interactive analysis techniques. This technique consisting of data reduction, data display and concluding drawing/verification [23]. This research discusses the social movement carried out by the Clean Indonesia Coalition in the national and local work networks.

## 3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

# 3.1. Renewable Energy Transition Activism

Clean Indonesia is a social movement initiated by the Clean Indonesia Coalition. This coalition began in 2018 at the time of the 2019 election. The coalition's membership is based on non-governmental organizations operating in litigation cluster, anti-corruption cluster, anti-pollution cluster, education and people's organizing cluster, financial cluster, and renewable energy cluster. The Clean Indonesia Coalition's working network areas are at the local (grassroots and local communities), national regional and global levels. The main aim of this movement is to urge the realization of a transition to the use of renewable energy that is democratic, inclusive, accountable and just. This is because energy production in Indonesia still depends on fossil energy which causes environmental pollution through the pollutants produced. This issue is in line with the global climate change adaptation agenda by reducing all human activities that worsen the impacts of climate change.

The ongoing activism of the Clean Indonesia Movement pays attention to equal participation between citizens[24]. This is in line with the principle of inclusive transition. This principle of inclusivity provides a safe space for vulnerable communities affected. Many women activists have participated in realizing the renewable energy transition. The protection of women's rights, the rights of the elderly, the rights of the disabled and the rights of other marginalized communities cannot fail to be a concern when organizing at the national and local levels. This is because women, the elderly, people with disabilities and other marginalized communities are often targeted by officials or hired thugs for discrimination and intimidation.

This movement views the energy production chain in economic, social, political, environmental and agrarian terms. Through the economic sector, *Bersihkan* Indonesia has one of the programs "Clean Your Bank". This program invites bank customers who finance the fossil energy production chain to urge banks to stop the financing program. Clean Indonesia also urges global investors to stop investing in the construction of fossil-powered power plants and high-risk energy.

The energy production chain does not start from the power plant, but starts from the source of raw materials for electricity production, one of which is coal mining. Coal mining causes a lot of deforestation. It is not uncommon for mining areas to be involved in agrarian conflicts[25]. The conversion of forest land into mining has resulted in a decline in biodiversity[26]. Excavated mine holes that are not reclaimed then result in floods, landslides and road damage. The state budget for post-mining reclamation is not balanced with the environmental damage that occurs[27].

Many coal mining locations are in areas outside Java which are far from power plant locations. Coal needs to be transported to the power plant location. Generators on the island of Java are transported using sea transportation. Meanwhile, for plants that are still within the same island area, coal distribution uses land transportation. Transport by sea is prone to causing water pollution due to coal spills into the sea, thereby disrupting fishermen's economic activities. Power plants burn coal, resulting in pollutant emissions that harm the health of local residents because they pollute the air they breathe [28]. This then distorts people's movement and living space.

Electrical energy production and distribution are completely controlled by the state through the State Electricity Company (PLN) Persero. The sale and purchase of electricity between PLN and power plant developers is through a take or pay scheme so that PLN is obliged to purchase and absorb it according to the Electricity Purchase and Purchase Agreement (PBJL).[29], [30]. Production in 2022 will experience an excess production of 6 Gigawatts from the availability of existing generators, and the amount of excess production will increase in 2023. PLN has the responsibility to pay for excess production of electrical energy that is not needed by the community. This is detrimental to the state's financial burden because it has to cover it with the APBN. The community also suffers because one of the taxes paid as a source of the APBN is allocated to PLN's finances.

Indonesia's electrical energy production cannot be separated from the influence between the state and corporations. Based on a research report submitted by the Clean Indonesia Coalition, public officials who make policies have close ties to the coal mining business[31], [32]. This shows a conflict of interest, which is prone to a transparency crisis.

The Clean Indonesia Coalition views that the new energy and renewable energy (EBET) policy still offers false solutions by including coal derivative products such as coal bed methane, gasified coal and liquefied coal. Apart from that, wood pallet biomass as an alternative fuel for PLTUs has the potential for forest deforestation. This EBET policy hinders efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fully transition to renewable energy.

The issue of environmental pollution from the electrical energy production process is disseminated through the realm of public discussion, academic research, member institutions' social media and official social media. Actions at the national level directly target objects that are symbols of the continuation of policies that hinder the energy transition. At certain moments they merged with the labor and student movements. By acting at the local level, they are trying to build critical awareness of the community through the process of education and organizing communities that are directly affected by the electrical energy production process. This issue was also brought to urban community groups that were far away as a form of support for the affected communities. This relationship forms a relationship between village communities and urban communities.

Movement activism cannot be separated from resistance efforts. Resistance efforts were taken because of tension in the field. Community resistance has the function of providing pressure against decisions that are not in accordance with community expectations. A society that stands firm against decisions that are not in accordance with the wishes of the people, tries to defend what it has and believes in, such as agricultural land and livelihoods, living space, natural resources and socio-cultural wisdom. This tension represents the tension between the state-corporation and society. State-corporations have an interest in building PLTUs, while society has an interest in maintaining aspects of their lives. Resistance takes place using various methods, such as resistance to new energy solutions that have high risks, community organizing to reject the construction of PLTUs, resistance through trials.[33].

Social movements motivated by public protest often receive threats from opposing parties. Activists often receive threats of intimidation via telephone from unknown people when tensions escalate. When protests take place, activists are vulnerable to being criminalized so that the power of community protest is reduced. In the context of Indonesian democracy, this reality harms the spirit of post-reform democracy. The achievement of guaranteeing freedom of expression of opinion in public as mandated by the constitution has experienced setbacks.

# 3.2. Activism in Deliberative Democracy

Citizens live their daily lives with social and political goals. The socio-political goals of each citizen are different for each citizen. The interests of citizens can conflict with the interests of the state and corporations. Then this will find a condition of resistance if citizens firmly fight for socio-political goals in their lives. The influence of individual citizens is less powerful in influencing state political decisions. This condition requires a combination of citizens to have a strong influence in determining the country's political decisions. Social movements are one manifestation of the combination of citizens in political attitudes. The forum for uniting citizens in a community is more closely related than the forum for political parties. Citizen communities have autonomous management and are not centralized like political parties. Political party decisions are still largely determined by party officials, so they are considered to lack the political representation of citizens.

The Clean Indonesia Coalition is a forum for citizens who want a just renewable energy transition that can be participated in and accessed equally by every citizen. The renewable energy transition is an effort to reduce carbon emissions which have long polluted people's living environment. This goal metamorphosed into a political attitude in the form of the Clean Indonesia Movement.

Civil society organizations play an important role in bringing private opinion into public opinion. Every citizen has their own perception of renewable energy development policies implemented by the state. Citizens have reasons to reject or support. Each reason has different importance for the lives of citizens, for example rejection because of health reasons or rejection because of environmental pollution. Citizens form communities of citizens who move in an organized manner to resist and resist. The community of citizens is intertwined with the activists of the Clean Indonesia Coalition. In this condition, the Clean Indonesia Coalition as a combination of civil society organizations plays a role in uniting public awareness and opinion that supports stopping the operation of Steam Power Plants (PLTU) which pollute the environment.

Public support for the cessation of PLTU operations is fostered, maintained and fought for through various activities. Growing public awareness is carried out through social media campaigns, education and community organizing at the grassroots level. Maintaining public opinion is carried out by routinely conducting research efforts and providing information regarding the progress of the energy transition policy program. Public opinion is continuously broadcast in people's memories. Efforts to struggle for opinion through demonstrations and

struggle through formal procedural channels such as the courts. These various activities are not temporary, but are continuously ongoing.

Social media, which is a place for spreading issues, is a political public space. Social media has become a space where there is little state and market intervention. Citizens from various classes and elements of society can participate and express their opinions[34]. Through social media, discourse battles are developed continuously in order to achieve mutual understanding in determining political attitudes. Conveying the issue of the renewable energy transition via social media is one of the steps taken by the Clean Indonesia Coalition to advocate for the issue. The content developed is adjusted to the current momentum.

Discourse development through political public space becomes a place to mediate public issues to achieve political goals. The issue of energy transition is the main solution in efforts to combat environmental pollution that has occurred. The transition from fossil energy to renewable energy aims to stop many cases surrounding fossil energy production, for example agrarian cases, health, and forest and environmental sustainability. The issue of energy transition has gained legitimacy in public discourse because it goes hand in hand with other interests such as funding for the international partnership Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP).

Equality in participation in the realization of the renewable energy transition in procedural deliberative democracy can be represented in the public sphere. This participation takes into account gender equality, class, group and religious background. All interests of affected elements of society are accommodated. Through public space channels, the principle of inclusivity in the renewable energy transition process can be achieved. Implementation of the principle of inclusivity must not only be through conveying public opinion, but needs to continue until the renewable energy transition is complete.

Community protests in Habermas' perspective are considered a form of citizen disobedience. The community protested against the state policies that had been decided. In the ideal deliberative democratic procedure, the accommodation of individual aspirations in the realm of the public sphere, but in Realpolitik this does not happen ideally. The relationship between the center and public spaces often does not run smoothly. Majority-based decisions do not rule out the possibility of political manipulation. The majority principle as the basis for determining public decisions leads to majority dictatorship[19].

Minority voices need to be fought for again outside the principles of the constitution. Residents fight through citizen protest mechanisms. Habermas provides limits regarding citizen non-compliance which are deemed necessary. Citizens' disobedience must be based on moral reasons, not just religious beliefs or individual private interests[19]. Habermas's view does not want citizen protests to take place with violent riots, as he criticized student demonstrations in the 1960s which took place with violence and riots. Habermas also limits citizen protests to violations of rules that must take place without violence and in critical conditions. Citizens' disobedience is the final step for the opposition's voice to exert influence publicly.

Community protests against the continued development and operation of power plants that have dirty energy and high risks are a violation of morally based citizens. This citizen protest is not a political pathology worthy of criminalization. As long as minority arguments can be interpreted as public arguments that can be universalized, citizen protests are not political pathology. The issue of energy democratization is an issue that can be universalized because it is included in the global climate change agenda.

Citizens' disobedience to Habermas' principles of deliberative democratic morality is something that has its own special side. If citizen disobedience occurs, it is necessary to introspect the channels of public space as a place to gain legitimacy from public opinion[19]. Conflict resolution or decision making in the political realm needs to proceed through a fair communication process. Resistance to citizen protests through intimidation and threats of

criminalization is undesirable in deliberative democratic procedures, which prioritize discursive processes in problem solving.

## 4. CONCLUSION

The Clean Indonesia Coalition seeks the Clean Indonesia Movement as a form of new social movement (New Social Movements). The Clean Indonesia Movement raises the issue of renewable energy transition as a form of resistance to environmental pollution in the climate justice agenda. Activism is a means of fighting for the rights of people who sometimes experience disruption. Humans have the basic right to live a healthy and prosperous life without being disturbed by air pollution or other pollution.

Political life must take place democratically. Public decision-making needs to pay attention to public efforts in the struggle to gain legitimacy when proceeding in civil society. Public policy does not just prioritize the majority, but pays attention to the rights of marginalized groups who are vulnerable to oppression. Decision making through the procedural mechanism of deliberative democracy is the state's effort to empower its people in the political sector.

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