

# Strategic Ecological Issues

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# 1 Strategic Ecological Issues: Environmental Problems in a Perspective of Regional Development in Bangka Belitung

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**Abstract.** A region's development planning should be carried out by referring to the strategic issues faced by the region. Thus, strategic issues become the basis upon which regional governments formulate their policies and work programs. This study examined how each region in Bangka Belitung Islands Province positioned strategic issues of ecology in its regional development planning. The current writers examined eight regional governments' Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RMTDP) documents; one of which belongs to the provincial government, while the rest belongs to the regency/city governments. This study found that ecological issues comprised an average 17.6% of the strategic issues in all of the planning documents, the highest of which was found in Belitung Regency's planning document. In addition, the analysis revealed that the general focus of the strategic ecological issues was environmental damage, which was reported by three of the regions as a result of mining activities. This study provides an illustration of how each regional government is committed to take ecological issues seriously and include them in the strategic issues at the regional level.

## 1 Background

Bangka Belitung is an Indonesian province with complicated ecological issues. Environmental damage is widespread both on its earth and in its ocean [1]. The contorted topography has become a sensitive issue amidst the regional government's efforts to keep its stability as a young province. Although the province is an archipelago, tin lies underneath its entire lands, making it one of the most contested regions since Dutch colonization [2].

Despite having been subjected to tin mining for hundreds of years, mining activities have never ceased to persist in Bangka Belitung. The emergence of people's mining has led to even more extensive environmental damage [3, 4]. Tin mining was no longer carried out only by legal companies, but also illegally by the people of the region [5].

It is no surprise that ecological degradation is ubiquitous, making Bangka Belitung easily identified as a region with damaged environment [6]. The increasing number of *kolong* (large pools of water formed from tin mining activities in the past) and the decrease in productive lands have made ecological issues fit to be categorized as strategic issues.

In every regional development planning document, every province, regency, and city are required to establish strategic issues as the basis on which regional leaders make development plans. In turn, these strategic issues become the consideration in formulating the steps to be done by the regional government. The planning document

is prepared every five years along the commencing leadership of a new regional head. An elected regional head should prepare a five-year plan as a foundation of his/her leadership [7]. With environmental decline happening almost everywhere, it is important to see how strategic issues of ecology are viewed and positioned in a development planning document, which is an important document for a region. Equally important is observing how regional governments make environmental issues a strategic issue.

## 2 Method

This paper reports the result of a qualitative study whose data was collected by analyzing regional development planning documents. The planning documents comprised the latest Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RMTDP) of eight regions, i.e. the governments of Bangka Belitung Islands, Bangka Regency, Belitung Regency, Pangkalpinang City, Central Bangka Regency, South Bangka Regency, West Bangka Regency, and East Belitung Regency [8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15]. Following the provisions of regional development planning document preparation, this study focused on the part regarding strategic issues of regional development.

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### 3 Discussion

Strategic issues are an inseparable component of every regional development planning document, since they help the government narrow down the focus of work. To address these issues, a regional government then outlines its vision, missions, goals, and work programs [16].

In Indonesia's regional development system, planning is carried out every five years to adjust to a regional head's period of tenure. That being said, the length of planning document preparation varies from one region to another, since it is usually in keeping with the varying lengths of regional leaderships in different regions. As a consequence, it is difficult to achieve integration of programs between different regions and different levels of government. Regardless, the central government has provided national development guidelines, most of which must be observed by the regional governments. In the regional government system, the government is divided into at least two governments, namely the provincial government and the regency/city government. Each level of governments must prepare its own regional development plan every five years, which is contained in the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RMTD) [4].

The government of Bangka Belitung Islands Province, which is the locust of this study, is a regional government that has been running since the year of 2000. Today, there are seven regional governments under the province: Pangkal Pinang, Bangka Regency, Belitung Regency, Central Bangka Regency, South Bangka Regency, West Bangka Regency, and East Belitung Regency.

With similar contours and patterns across the islands, areas in Bangka Belitung are bound to have similar problems, such as environmental damage, mining issues, low carrying capacity, and underlying problems in the sectors of marine and plantation. Therefore, this study tracked the availability of strategic ecological issues in each regional government's planning document.

The following is the result of analysis of the regional development planning documents:

**The Provincial Government of Bangka Belitung Islands**  
 The Provincial Government of Bangka Belitung Islands determined 25 strategic issues to tackle for the period 2017 to 2022. Three of them are environmental issues, i.e. (a) widespread environmental damage; (b) disaster vulnerability; and (c) inconsistent spatial planning, utilization, and control.

#### **Pangkal Pinang City Government**

The Government of Pangkal Pinang City determined 14 regional strategic issues for the period 2018 to 2023. Three of them focus on ecological issues: (a) the nonoptimal environmental management, such as issues of waste-handling triggered by the high volume of waste, which is up to 110 ton per day, the limited landfill space, the lack of community awareness, the scant effort to empower the community members to manage their environment, and the high risk of flood and inundation; (b) the low quality and quantity of public infrastructure such as green open space and city street lighting, the poor

slum management; and (c) the low optimization of integrated development and usage of Rangkui riverbank areas in Pangkal Pinang.

#### **Bangka Regency Government**

For the period 2019 to 2023, the Government of Bangka Regency determined nine strategic issues of regional development. Two of them focus on ecology: (a) controlling agricultural land conversion rate and (b) improving the quality of ecological function.

#### **Belitung Regency Government**

Belitung Regency Government determined six strategic issues, three of which focus on ecology: (a) Belitung as a strategic region, (b) sustainable environment, and (c) disaster management.

#### **Central Bangka Regency Government**

Central Bangka Regency Government determined 17 regional strategic issues of regional development for the period 2016 to 2021. Two of them focus on ecology: (a) developing renewable energy and (b) improving the quality of environment.

#### **South Bangka Regency Government**

South Bangka Regency Government determined 30 strategic issues of regional development to be resolved for the period 2016 to 2021. Out of the 30 strategic issues, two focus on ecology: (a) environmental issues, i.e. land degradation and weak law enforcement in the case of environmental damage instigation; and (b) energy and mineral issues, i.e. the need for regional authority to perform mining supervision on the existing mining business license areas.

#### **West Bangka Regency Government**

West Bangka Regency Government determined 5 strategic issues of regional development for the period 2016 to 2021. One of them focus on ecology, specifically the effort to improve the quality of the environment.

#### **East Belitung Regency Government**

East Belitung Regency Government determined 7 strategic issues for the period 2016 to 2021. One ecological issue included is the decreasing carrying capacity of the environment.

The number and percentage of ecological issues found in Bangka Belitung regional planning documents are seen in the table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Percentage of Strategic and Ecological Issues in Bangka Belitung

Government	Strategic Issue	Ecological Issue	Percentage of Eco. Issues
Provinsi	25	3	12 %
Pangkal Pinang	14	3	21 %
Bangka	9	2	22 %
Belitung	6	2	33 %
Central Bangka	17	2	12 %
South Bangka	30	2	7 %

West Bangka	5	1	20 %
East Belitung	7	1	14 %
Rata-Rata	113	16	17,6 %

The focuses of ecological issues in each region's planning document are as seen below:

**Table 2.** Focus of Ecological Issues in Bangka Belitung

Government	Focus of Ecological Issues
Province	Environmental damage, disaster vulnerability, and use of spatial planning
Pangkal Pinang	Environmental management, green open space, and management of Rangkui River
Bangka	Nonoptimal use of agricultural lands and decrease in ecological functions
Belitung	Development of maritime areas; urgency of sustainable development
Central Bangka	Development of alternative energy; greening, pollution anticipation, reducing environmental damage, conservation, and other activities that support the carrying capacity of the environment
South Bangka	Land degradation and law enforcement; mining supervision
West Bangka	Environmental damage, particularly in ex-mining areas, forests, and watersheds; Global climate change
East Belitung	The decreasing carrying capacity of the environment due to mining and oil palm plantations

As shown in the table 2 above, the focus of strategic issues generally varies due to the condition of the associated region. Out of the eight regional planning documents analyzed in this paper, three regions specifically reported strategic issues associated with tin mining. It is interesting to note that although there was a transfer of authority for the mining license issuance from regency/city<sup>2</sup> government to provincial government according to Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government, the major impacts of tin mining are still mostly felt at the regency/city level. Not only does mining affect the environment, it will also eventually impact the economy of the people at the regency/city level. Meanwhile, some other areas reported environmental damage as a unique case, while Pangkal Pinang City did not associate environmental damage to tin mining.

Referring to Table 1, we can see that an average 17.6 % of the strategic issues focuses on ecological problems. Based on the data, Belitung Regency and Bangka Regency are two regions that have the highest percentage of ecological issues, while South Bangka Regency, Central Bangka Regency, and the Provincial Government have the lowest percentage. Although the percentage information is not meant to gauge the regional government's success in ecological planning, the data presented above illustrates how serious the regional governments view ecological issues by including them in the strategic issues.

## 4 Conclusion

The findings in this study support the conclusion that every regional government in Bangka Belitung Islands Province has positioned ecological issues as a part of regional strategic issues in its regional development planning documents. From varying numbers, the current writers identified that an average 17.6 percent of the strategic issues contained in the regional five-year development planning documents were ecological issues. Additionally, the highest percentage of ecological issues were found in Belitung Regency Government's planning document, while the lowest were found in South Bangka Regency Government's document.

Meanwhile, the extensive document analysis has led to a conclusion that the ecological issues included in the Regional Development Planning are generally those associated with environmental damages, with three regencies, i.e. South Bangka Regency, West Bangka Regency, and East Belitung Regency firmly claiming that the damages are an impact of tin mining.

This study revealed that Bangka Belitung Islands Province's regional governments have deemed ecological issues crucial, considering its inclusion into the development planning's strategic issues, albeit varying in number and distribution. Incorporating ecological issues into strategic issues is essential, since these issues serve as the foundation on which policies and work programs are formulated.

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