



# The Suku Laut View of the Settlement Program in Lingga Regency

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**Abstract:** *This research analyses the views of the Suku Laut on development policies that have resettled them from a nomadic life at sea to a sedentary life on land. The top-down development approach often does not actively involve the Suku Laut, leading to various responses. The research method used was descriptive qualitative, with in-depth interviews and observations of 10 informants of the Sea Tribe in the Riau Islands. Peter L. Berger's social construction theory analyzed how social change occurs through externalization, objectivation, and internalization. Based on the research results, two main views of the Suku Laut towards development policies resulted from social construction. Both views reflect the complex dynamics of identity, access, and interaction with the new social environment. Firstly, some felt that development was not inclusive because it threatened their cultural identity, access to resources, and lack of involvement in decision-making. Secondly, some Suku Laut consider the policy sufficient to fulfill their basic needs, such as education, health, and protection from extreme weather. These different views are influenced by their living patterns, whether they are still nomadic, settled on the coast, or land. This article shows that the change from nomadic to settled life results from social construction created through the interaction of the Suku Laut with external society.*

**Keywords:** *Suku Laut; development policy; social construction; nomadic; inclusivity*

## A. INTRODUCTION

Development is an effort to change from an underdeveloped condition to a developed one by improving economic, political, cultural, social, and infrastructure life (Todar, 2000). Top-down and bottom-up approaches are used in planning development in an area. Governments or organizations usually undertake top-down development with greater authority and resources, making decisions and strategies that are then implemented downward. This approach is often called policy-centered (Sabatier, 1986). Meanwhile, bottom-up development is carried out by the community, where the community makes decisions and strategies that are the needs and culture of the community. This approach also criticizes the top-down approach

ten, ds to ignore the role of bureaucrats at the lower level and the target group. The development will be realized if the target group is involved from the beginning of the policy formulation process to its implementation (Kasmad, 2018). Development in Indonesia uses a top-down or centralized approach and a bottom-up approach. The top-down approach creates four problems: firstly, it assumes that the most influential actors in development are policymakers, forgetting that failure can be influenced by other actors such as frontline bureaucrats, target groups, and the private sector. Second, the top-down approach is challenging when no dominant policy or actor exists. Thirdly, frontline bureaucrats and target groups tend to distort the policy direction in their interests. Fourth, the policy cycle is often clear-cut, thus opening up space for frontline bureaucrats and target groups to influence and negotiate during policy formulation (Secondary data from the Lingga Regency Social Service, 2024)

A top-down development approach is often implemented in Indonesia. Lack of bureaucratic infrastructure and inadequate resources as active actors in the development process are the causes. Other problems also arise when development plans lack sociographic knowledge, communication networks, and the culture of each group, thus sharpening the societal gap. The centralized and 'top-down' nature of development encourages linear development from traditional to modern. Functional structuralists influence development so that modernization indicates a country's success. It is not uncommon for modernization plans in Indonesia to erode the cultural identity and rights of indigenous peoples (Beckford, 2018). Observes the degradation of trust and knowledge in Indigenous communities, making it difficult to maintain local culture and intergenerational knowledge transmission.

One of the top-down development programs carried out by the Indonesian government targeting citizens who are considered isolated (Colchester, 1986; Mubyarto, 1995; Wee & Chou, 1997) is the remote community welfare program (PKMT) development. From 1970 to 1980, it was implemented and briefly continued under a different program, the Community Social Welfare Improvement Program (PKSMT) (Colchester, 1986; Lenhart, 2002; Yanto, 2019). One of the recipients of the PKMT and PKSMT programs are sea nomads. Sea nomads live nomadically from a canoe/boat. Sea nomads live in hunting and gathering groups. They live in groups of between 10 and 50 people and strongly depend on the natural environment (Lenski, 1984). Sea nomads have several names, such as Orang Laut, Suku Bajau, and Moken. Sea nomads are spread in several regions of Indonesia. The Bajau tribe is generally spread in central and eastern Indonesia, such as the east Kalimantan region and Sulawesi. Orang Laut is identified in western Indonesia, such as in Riau, Jambi, Riau Islands, and Bangka Belitung. Based on statistical data, the largest number of Orang Laut resettled through the PMKT and PKSMT programs is in Riau Islands Province, with 28,387 people. (Kajang Foundation, 2022)

Various names are known as Orang Laut in the Riau Islands; some identify as Suku Laut, Suku Duano, Suku Asli, and Suku Akit. There are 36 distribution points of Suku Laut in the Riau Islands (Benjamin & Chou, 2002). Until 2024, there are still increasing locations of Suku Laut in the Riau Islands, namely 44 locations (Elsera, 2019). The increase in the area of the spread of Suku Laut indicates that more Suku Laut communities are being settled (Elsera & Adhayanto, 2022). After the government gradually resettled Suku Laut (Elsera et al., 2021), it caused many changes in their lives. Changes in settlement patterns (Elsera et al., 2021), economy (Faisal et al., 2019),

livelihoods (Elsera et al., 2024; Marisa et al., 2023), beliefs (Elsera et al., 2023; Elsera, Rahmawati, et al., 2022), health (Syafitri et al., 2023) marriage, family to social and cultural.(Elsera, Hanim, et al., 2022).

The program to resettle the Sea Tribe in Indonesia was initially forced. They did not live in the houses built by the central government. Over time, however, more and more of the tribe agreed to be resettled. There are two responses to the government's program to resettle the Suku Laut: a voluntary response to resettling and a semi-nomadic response at sea. The Suku Laut's acceptance of being resettled was due to the intervention of the government's religious and traditional leaders. These interventions took the form of social assistance and mentoring. It is this varying acceptance of government programs that is of interest to research to understand the needs and aspirations of the Suku Laut, investigate their perspectives and help formulate strategies that support cultural preservation, and encourage decision-makers to involve Suku Laut participation in creating and evaluating more inclusive and equitable policies. Based on the above background, this article will describe the views of the Suku Laut community towards the government program that landed the Suku Laut.

## **B. METHOD**

The method used in this research is qualitative. According to Bogdan and Taylor, the qualitative method is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and behavior that can be observed (Afrizal, 2014). This research on "Orang Laut's View on Development" uses descriptive research. The descriptive approach is directed at the individual's background as a whole or as a whole so that with this qualitative method, the researcher can describe and explain Orang Laut's view of development. The selection of informants was carried out using the purposive sampling technique, where the author has set the criteria for informants as follows: Orang Laut who have lived in the Riau Islands for at least 10th years, Orang Laut who have experienced being sea nomads, Orang Laut who are representatives when taking care of administrative matters in the village.

The data obtained are primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through interviews and observations. Interviews were conducted with ten informants. Observations were made by looking at the lives of the Suku Laut, their emotional and social reactions, the impact of environmental changes, and the specific needs and expectations of the Suku Laut related to the program. Secondary data was obtained from documentation (books, journals, internet sites). Data analysis was conducted through three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman A.M, 1992)

## **C. LITERATUR REVIEW**

This research uses Peter L Berger's construction theory to analyse the views of the Suku Laut community towards the government's program to land Suku Laut. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, in their book 'The Social Construction of Reality,' define views as social reality formed through social interaction and maintained through the process of social construction. Social norms, values, and experiences influence human views of reality. Social reality is the result of

construction that occurs through continuous social interaction. Social construction focuses on social reality being formed and maintained by individuals in society through social interaction. This theory explains how humans create, maintain, and change social reality through social construction. Peter L. Berger's social construction theory is relevant in understanding how humans live in a physically existing world and a world that they socially create. It helps us know that many aspects of what we perceive as 'reality' are actually the result of social processes and, therefore, subject to change as social interactions change. The theory shows that our social world results from human activity that constantly creates and shapes reality through externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation.

#### 1. Externalisation

This is how individuals express their ideas, notions, and behaviors to the outside world. Through their actions and interactions, humans create the social environment around them. For example, when a group agrees that something is true or important, they externalise that belief into social reality.

#### 2. Objectivation

Once ideas and notions are expressed and repeated through social interactions, they are accepted as an objective reality outside the individual. This social reality, although the result of human interaction, is perceived as something that already exists and is objective. For example, social norms or social institutions such as law or religion.

#### 3. Internalisation

Individuals then internalise this objective reality into their consciousness. Through socialisation, they learn to understand and accept the objectified social reality so that it becomes part of how they view the world. This is how externally constructed social reality becomes part of an individual's identity and thinking.

Social norms are an example of social construction. They are created through social interaction and then become objective realities that govern the behavior of individuals in society. Institutions such as education, law, or family result from social construction. They are created through social interaction and are perceived as established and objective structures, although they are essentially the result of social processes.

### **D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Suku Laut lived nomadically in groups at sea, living on Kajang, unfamiliar with technology, and making a living from fishing. After the PMKT and PKSMT programs, Suku Laut began to be housed by the government. A modernisation perspective was used in the development of the Suku Laut. Modernisation is a form of social change that is directed and planned (social planning). Societies that experience rapid social change cause their citizens to lose their identity. The more modern a society becomes the more the intensity and extensiveness of the category of social disorganisation increases. Neglecting traditional cultural heritage often causes fundamental uncertainty in norms and values. (Arsal, 2024). The development of Suku Laut has caused problems for Suku Laut (Elsera, 2019). This paper will discuss two views of the Suku Laut in the Riau Islands on the program to resettle Suku Laut. The first view is that post-landing development is not inclusive. The second view sees development as sufficient to fulfill the needs of the Suku Laut.

## 1. Thinking of Development as Inclusive

Noninclusive development does not involve or consider all social groups' interests, needs, and participation, especially those vulnerable or marginalised. Some Suku Laut feels that development does not consider environmental and cultural sustainability. The development in question was a government program that landed them but was not accompanied by a follow-up program that empowered the human resources of the Suku Laut themselves. Landing programs threaten the traditional way of life that has been lived for centuries. Aggressive and non-inclusive development threatens the sustainability of their communities. In addition, they often feel ignored in development planning and decision-making processes, so their needs and aspirations are not always met. New modernization scholars refer to this kind of development approach as centralised and top-down, pushing the direction of development linearly from traditional to modern. Functional structuralists often use this nature of development to influence development so that modernisation indicates a country's success. Some of how Suku Laut perceives development are not inclusive: *Inequality in Accessibility*

The Suku Laut faces difficulties in accessing essential social services. Living in remote areas means they often lack access to education, health services, and basic infrastructure. This inaccessible geography is exacerbated by inadequate transport, hampering the government's efforts to provide social services. In addition, the uncertainty of the ownership status of the land and sea they inhabit also adds to the complexity of delivering social services, given that they often do not have official legally recognised documents. These factors contribute to the low quality of life and welfare of the Suku Laut, who still lag far behind other communities.

Suku Laut still lives in poverty. Their average daily income is only Rp 25,000-Rp 50,000 per day when the wind is calm. They usually have difficulty earning income if the stormy wind and the waves are big. Those who work in the charcoal kitchen can still earn an income, but it will be challenging for those who only utilise sea products to fulfill their daily needs. Because they are landed on small islands that do not blend in with local Malay settlements, Suku Lauts have difficulty accessing some of the facilities provided by the government, such as education, health services, economic opportunities, and infrastructure. It is not uncommon for them to live in debt to middlemen.

The lack of proper schools or educational facilities and qualified teaching staff makes it difficult for Suku Laut to get adequate education. To attend school, Suku Laut in Kampung Baru must cross the island by canoe/Kajang. There is one elementary school and one junior high school in Tajur Biru village, and it takes 5-7 minutes to cross by canoe. Meanwhile, one must go to the district capital, Daik Lingga, to continue to senior high school. It takes 1-2 hours by sea.

In addition to access to education, the Suku Laut also experiences inequality in access to health. The lack of access to adequate health services exacerbates the impact on the health of the Suku Laut. Hospitals only exist in Daik, the center of the Lingga district, while Puskesmas are often very far from the islands occupied by the Suku Laut. When sick, they usually seek treatment from traditional healers or wait for assistance from the Kajang Foundation.

"I am often entrusted with medicines by Suku Laut when I go down to their houses. So usually, besides food, we bring medicine too. Because there are places where Suku Laut lives that are far from anywhere. So it's not because they don't want to see a doctor, but sometimes it's because of the distance," said Kajang Foundation Manager, Mrs Densy (interviewed on 12 January 2024).

Iyam, a Suku Laut in Pulau Senang, Temiang Village, Temiang Pesisir Sub-district, made a similar statement. Iyam contacted her brother, a friend of the Kajang Foundation, to bring her medicine if needed. They cannot access the Puskesmas because the distance is quite far.

"Waiting for medicine brought by relatives or mum (Densy). It's like a toothache that hasn't healed for two weeks, so we just take medicine," explained Iyam.

The distance between Suku Laut settlements and health facilities varies. The 2794 people of Suku Laut, spread across 32 Suku Laut settlements, 15 villages, and nine sub-districts in Lingga Regency, have different experiences accessing health facilities the government provides. Some have close access to health facilities (10 minutes away), while others are far from health facilities (2 hours away). This condition causes Suku Laut's participation in accessing health facilities to vary. Based on the confessions of informants, Suku Laut is dependent on external assistance. The Suku Laut community often relies on external aid, such as the Kajang Foundation, to obtain basic needs, including medicines. This suggests that Suku Laut's access to health services is minimal. Because the Suku Laut live in remote and hard-to-reach areas, accessing medical services is difficult. This is not because they do not want to receive medical treatment but because distance and accessibility are the main barriers.

Organisations such as Kajang Foundation are essential in assisting the Suku Laut community. They provide not only food but also medicine, which is much needed by these isolated communities. The above statements indicate that infrastructure and public services in the areas where the Suku Laut live are still severely lacking. The absence of nearby health facilities exacerbates their situation. The initiative to bring medicines when visiting the houses of Suku Laut shows an attempt to overcome this lack of access. It also reflects the concerned parties' awareness and concern for the health conditions of Suku Laut. Therefore, it is necessary to improve access to health services for the Suku Laut community through infrastructure improvements and increased distribution of health services to remote areas. It also emphasizes the important role of non-governmental organisations in supporting the well-being of underserved communities.

According to informants, Suku Laut is dependent on external assistance. The Suku Laut community often relies on external aid, such as the Kajang Foundation, for basic needs, including medicine. This shows that Suku Laut's access to health services is very limited. Because the Suku Laut live in remote and hard-to-reach areas, accessing medical services is difficult. This is not because they do not want to receive medical treatment but because distance and accessibility are the main barriers. Organisations like the Kajang Foundation are important in providing the necessary assistance to the Suku Laut community. The Kajang Foundation provides food and much-needed medicine to the Suku Laut community. The Informant's statement above indicates that infrastructure and public services in the area where the Suku Laut live

are still very inadequate. The absence of nearby health facilities exacerbates their situation. The initiative to bring medicines when visiting the houses of the Suku Laut demonstrates an attempt to overcome this lack of access. It also reflects the concerned parties' awareness and concern for the health conditions of Suku Laut. Therefore, it is necessary to improve access to health services for the Suku Laut community through infrastructure improvements and increased distribution of health services to remote areas. This also emphasizes the important role of non-governmental organisations in supporting the welfare of underserved communities.

In Peter L Berger's view, inequality is not just a practical problem (such as physical distance or infrastructure) but a product of social constructions that create and reinforce inequalities between groups of people. Understanding inequality is in the context of how society constructs its social reality. Berger emphasizes that social reality does not form naturally but results from human construction through a dialectical process involving three main stages: externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation (Berger, 1966). Externalization is seen from the Suku Laut, which creates and expresses knowledge, policies, and social structures that show the inequality of access they face. The presence of health services far from Suku Laut suggests that development policies that are more land-centered and accessed by permanent residents may reflect a bias against nomadic communities such as Suku Laut.

## **2. Marginalisation of Suku Laut**

Suku Laut feels marginalized in various economic, social, and cultural factors. The Orang Laut thinks of economic marginalization in terms of employment opportunities. The lack of formal employment opportunities or access to labor markets means alienated communities often rely on informal or subsistence work. In addition to working as fishermen, some of the Suku Laut work as laborers in charcoal kitchens. Seafarers rarely have formal employment opportunities; a small proportion can only find informal work with low wages and uncertain working conditions. The skills the Suku Laut possess are generally related to marine life and subsistence activities such as fishing and do not always match the needs of the modern labor market, which demands more technical and professional skills. Government and non-governmental organization programs for economic empowerment and job training often do not effectively reach Suku Laut communities. The lack of appropriate and sustainable interventions makes it difficult for them to upskill and secure better jobs. This is expressed by Ta, the informant, as follows:

“We want to send our children to school, but where do they work after that? It is difficult to find a job with a Sea Tribe family background. There are no relatives who can help. The government also does not intervene. Finally, when the children finish primary or junior high school, they help out at sea or look for wood for the charcoal kitchen” (interviewed on 19 July 2024).

Based on the informant's statement above, marginalization is felt by the Suku Laut when they do not get the same opportunity to find a job because they are born into a Suku Laut family. This reality is what (Berger, 1966) calls externalization. Society and government create social structures, policies, and norms and externalise those beliefs into social reality. In the context of the Suku Laut, externalization is seen

in the policies or views of society that indirectly exclude or ignore the existence and rights of the Suku Laut. Economic and social development policies often center on the majority living on land. The government may focus on building facilities on land, while the marine nomadic lifestyle of the Suku Laut is ignored, resulting in no specific programs to address their needs. The policies and 'rejection' of the Malay community indirectly exclude or ignore the existence and rights of the Sea Tribe.

Another marginalization is felt by the Suku Laut when interacting with the local Malay community. They feel less accepted by the local Malay community, and this treatment is evident when they come to the Malay village. This was recognized by Abah, the Suku Laut informant, as follows:

"When we went ashore, the people (Malay community) saw us a bit differently. It was different, like they were avoiding us like they were afraid, and so on. Even though we are not doing anything. We just want to buy the things we need. We also know and are self-aware that people outside the community don't like us Suku Laut people. That's why we sometimes go up to the big islands, reluctant to be with the general public" (interviewed on 20 July 2024)

Informants feel socially marginalized local communities may consider Suku Laut to be 'backward' or unnecessarily denied the same access as land-based communities. This becomes an objective reality accepted by most people. Stereotypes of the Suku Laut as 'primitive' or 'uncivilized' may emerge, reinforcing their marginalization in access to education, health, and the economy. (Berger, 1966) calls the externalized reality something 'real' or 'objective.' The values, norms, and policies created are truths that cannot be questioned. The marginalization of Suku Laut is objectified as 'normal.'

### ***Social, Political, and Legal Injustice***

Suku Laut appears to be systematically ignored by government policies and societal norms. Socially, they are often perceived as 'primitive' or 'backward,' leading to their lack of access to public facilities. Politically, the Suku Laut are hardly represented in government structures or decision-making that affects their lives, further compounding the injustice. Meanwhile, in a legal context, their rights to the land and sea that provide their traditional livelihoods are often ignored, with many losing access due to regulations that favor the exploitation of resources by outsiders. Local society and the government create a social construct that considers the Sea Tribes as a group outside modern society's structure (externalization). This then becomes a widely accepted 'objective reality' (objectivation), where the Suku Laut are considered to be marginalized and do not need the same rights as other communities. This process is then internalized by the Suku Laut, who begin to accept their position as natural and unchangeable. As a result, the social, political, and legal injustices they experience continue and become increasingly difficult to question or change as they are considered part of an inevitable reality.

### ***Minimal Development Participation***

The sea tribes, as a vulnerable and marginalised group, are not involved in development planning, decision-making, and implementation. As a result, their voices and needs are often ignored. The following is a statement from Senah, The Suku Laut informant:



“We are not involved in village meetings; RW also represents us if we want to take care of something, such as assistance from the government” (interviewed on 19 July 2024)

The informant's statement confirms that not involving the Suku Laut in development planning means they do not have adequate access to the government's infrastructure, education, and health services. The resulting policies are often irrelevant to their unique needs, such as fulfilling rights to living space at sea and access to flexible mobility.

Through Peter L. Berger's social construction theory, the lack of participation of the Suku Laut in development can be understood as a result of the process of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation of social reality. The Suku Laut perceive that the government considers development to be relevant only for mainland communities, thus ignoring the needs of the Suku Laut (externalization). This concept is then objectified and taken as the truth that the Suku Laut does not fit into the modern development model (objectivation). Finally, when local communities and the Suku Laut internalize these social constructions, they accept these conditions as part of an unchangeable reality and feel no need to participate in the development, resulting in their marginalization.

### **3. Resettling is sufficient to fulfill the needs and rights of the Suku Laut**

Suku Laut has a unique and complex perspective on development. While they often face challenges from development activities that are not inclusive or sustainable, there are also aspects of development that they favor and appreciate, especially when considering their needs and rights. Here are some reasons why Suku Laut could favor being resettled:

#### ***Protected from Extreme Weather Threats***

During their nomadic lifestyle, the Suku Laut relied on the sea for their livelihood with Kajang boats. Extreme weather and high sea waves often become obstacles and threats to living in Kajang. At least twice a year, the Suku Laut must survive the north wind and south wind seasons. The Kajang, which the Suku Laut use as a means of transport and a house, is often carried by the wind and even overturned if the wind is strong. In the end, during the north and south winds, the Suku Laut will take refuge on small islands that are pretty safe from the threat of the wind. During the south and north winds, the Suku Laut cannot fish. They only utilize the spare food that has been stored in the Kajang. If they are lucky, they can get food from the forest. These conditions occur for the duration of the north wind and south wind and may vary depending on geographical location and specific weather conditions. These seasonal wind patterns can affect the fishing season and alter the times and places where target species can be found. Meanwhile, Suku Lauts relies heavily on weather patterns to plan traditional activities and may experience difficulties due to increased weather uncertainty.

The Suku Laut conditions are made worse by weather anomalies, which are weather conditions that deviate or differ from the normal weather patterns that usually occur in an area within a certain period. These can be unusual changes in temperature, rainfall, wind, or other weather phenomena compared to historical or average data. Conditions that have been felt by the Suku Lauts in the Riau Islands include extreme temperature changes and changes in wind or storm patterns that do

not match predictions or normal patterns. Various factors, including global climate change, human activity, or other natural phenomena, can cause weather anomalies. The extreme weather at sea makes the Suku Laut feel safer and more comfortable if they are housed. Some settlements were built on the coastal edge, but the threat from sea weather began to diminish. Most of the Suku Laut accepted the government's program to resettle the Suku Laut. As explained by Edi below, an informant from the Suku Laut:

"We are starting to adjust to this place. My friends and I feel the change very much. Everyone here has a TV and mobile phone, but not everyone has one. Nowadays, the canoes use dumplings, so they rarely use paddles, but there is still a sail and a Kajang roof on the canoe" (Interviewed on 12 January 2024)

Tamin also expressed the same thing as follows:

"It's more comfortable here (at home; we don't need to go to the sea all the time. We only go to the sea if we are looking for fish, even in the calm wind season. Nowadays, it's the south wind season, with high waves and strong winds. It's not very tasty", said Tamin (interviewed on 19 July 2024).

Baim, a member of Suku Laut, also expressed the same thing:

"I felt different when I first moved to the house and met things unusual when I was in the canoe. When I lived in the canoe, I could do it immediately if I wanted to fish or spear. However, when I settled in my house, fishing or spearing requires distance and time to go to the middle of the sea."

The women of Suku Laut also feel more secure when they have settled down. Salemah, a woman from the Suku Laut, recalls the days when she and her family still lived nomadically on a Kajang boat. She expressed her relief after moving to a settled life on land. She recounted the difficulty of finding shelter when a storm came in the middle of the sea. The Suku Laut had difficulty finding an island to pull over. Living on a Kajang boat is far from comfortable in extreme weather conditions. With only makeshift protection, they are forced to build makeshift roofs that do not provide total safety. As the wife of Suku Laut, Salemah doesn't have to worry about her husband going to sea because now he can only go to sea for one or two nights, not weeks or months like in the nomadic past.

"We don't have to worry like we used to when it's stormy; it's hard to find an island to pull over. We were uncomfortable during storms in the Kajang, so we found a makeshift shelter using only a roof. I don't want to experience that again," said Di, the Suku Laut informant" (interviewed on 19 July 2024).

The informants' statements above imply that the Suku Laut experienced significant changes in their lifestyle. The change in lifestyle from nomadic to sedentary meant that the tribe needed to adjust to new social dynamics and build stable relationships. They can experience two different and more comfortable lifestyles. The difference between nomadic and sedentary lifestyles is that there are two realities. The first reality is the nomadic reality experienced by the Suku Laut initially. The second reality is the settled reality experienced by the Suku Laut after being given housing assistance from the government. The two realities are

interpreted differently depending on changes in social interaction. When the Suku Laut initially interacted only with fellow Suku Lauts who lived nomadically, they assumed that life at sea was better and suited them. However, once they landed, the Suku Laut interacted with external Suku Lauts and thus experienced the social process. The Suku Laut also experienced the process of externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation. Informants then considered the sedentary lifestyle carried out by the Malay community as a better form of reality than the previous nomadic lifestyle they had gone through.

The change in lifestyle from nomadic to sedentary can be seen as the result of social construction described by Peter L Berger as a form of interaction between the Suku Laut and external society. What was previously considered a 'normal life' for them (nomads) was then reconstructed through social processes until they saw sedentary life as a better form of reality. (Berger, 1966)

### *Meeting Basic Needs*

The project to land the Suku Laut is one of the efforts to fulfill basic human needs. Basic needs include essential aspects required for survival and well-being. The main components of basic needs are food, clothing, housing, health, education, clean water, security, social and emotional needs, and a decent environment. The Suku Laut is no longer utterly dependent on marine products; it can also purchase foodstuffs in the local market. The Suku Laut that have been landed have more appropriate clothing. In terms of health, the Suku Laut can now get health services, either from the local health center or the nearest hospital. Meanwhile, their social and emotional needs are better met with more intense interaction with the broader community and community support. The following is a portrait of a Suku Laut child dressed in school uniform:



**Figure 1. Suku Laut Crossing To Their Settlement After School**

### *Easier to Buy Food*

The Suku Laut, who have moved from nomadic to sedentary life, have experienced significant changes in their access to food. Previously, as a sea-dwelling community, the Suku Laut depended on sea catches and surrounding natural resources to fulfill their daily food needs. However, after being resettled, it is now easier for them to buy food because they are closer to markets or shopping centers. Settled life has allowed them to access diverse and stable foodstuffs, compared to the uncertainty of sourcing food from the sea, which depends on seasons and natural conditions. This change has also made them more open to more modern consumption patterns so that food needs can be met more practically and efficiently. Salemah recognizes this:

"It's more convenient now; if you want to buy rice, just go to the other side and get it from Aping. You can exchange it with the produce from fishing. Sometimes, we sell dried seahorses, sell them there, or exchange them for rice. It was a bit difficult in the past because sometimes we were far from land" (interviewed 19 July 2024)

The Suku Laut needed to adapt to the Malay community and be accepted. The Suku Laut felt the positive impact of development and could attend school, see a doctor, receive social assistance, and enjoy entertainment. This was recognized by Tamin, 50 years old, as follows:

"It's more pleasant here (at home); we don't need to go to the sea all the time. We only go to the sea if we are looking for fish, even in the calm wind season. Nowadays, it's the south wind season, with high waves and strong winds. It's scary, too", said Tamin (interviewed on 19 July 2024).

Salemah, Tamin's wife, made a similar statement. According to her, life on land is much better than at sea. In addition to natural challenges, the ability to fulfill daily needs is much better if done on land. As the wife of a Suku Laut, there is no need to worry if her husband goes to sea because after being landed, Suku Laut only goes to sea for 1-2 nights, not weeks or months.

"We don't have to worry like we used to when it's stormy; it's hard to find an island to pull over. If you live in a Kajang, it's not very comfortable during a storm, so you find a makeshift shelter using only a roof. I don't want to experience that again", said Salemah (interviewed 19 July 2024).

Based on the statements of the Suku Laut informants above, there are two perceptions of development programs for the Suku Laut Tribe. The first perception is that Suku Laut's development is not inclusive. Suku Laut, who has experienced the negative impacts of development, then took recourse. Some Suku Laut felt that they were only used as objects of policy rather than subjects. The approach to development for the Suku Laut is seen as partly centralised and top-down, and the development direction was linear from traditional to modern. Functional structuralists often use the nature of development to influence development so that modernisation indicates a country's success. It is not uncommon for the modernisation planned for Suku Lauts to erode cultural identity and Indigenous rights. Suku Lauts have cultural, social, economic, and political characteristics that are different from those of the established societies in which they live, and they are now experiencing the degradation of the beliefs and knowledge that are the source of their livelihoods (Beckford, 2018). Due to globalization, some Suku Lauts find linking local culture and intergenerational knowledge transmission challenging. The second perception is that the Suku Laut considers development capable of fulfilling their needs and rights. Some Suku Laut feels helped by government policies that landed the Suku Laut. Although they have not been able to prosper, at least the Suku Laut feel more comfortable living on land and can fulfill their needs.

### 3. Analysis of the Tribe's Views on Development Policy

The development policy to resettle the Suku Laut resulted in two views from the Suku Laut. The first view is that the tribe considers the resettlement policy and assistance provided to them uninclusive. This view is due to the government's lack of seriousness in empowering the Suku Laut. This can be seen from the inequality of access, marginalization, and injustice for the Suku Laut. Development policies for the Suku Laut tend not to involve their participation. They are used as objects of development rather than subjects of development who participate in determining the direction of development policies and the empowerment of the Suku Laut.

The second view is that the Tribe of the Sea considers resettling and assisting the Tribe of the Sea as a sufficient policy to fulfill their rights and needs. During their nomadic life, they were haunted by the threat of extreme weather at sea, lack of basic needs, and difficulty obtaining food. Therefore, after the Suku Laut experienced a settled life, they could judge that life on land was safer and more comfortable than nomadic life at sea.

The two views of the Suku Laut on development above can vary depending on their living patterns with nomadic, coastal sedentary, or land-based sedentary characteristics. The first characteristic of nomadic living is found in Kampung Baru, Tajur Biru Village. The government built three houses but was abandoned by the Suku Laut to return to nomadic living in the Kajang. These three families only return home when the north wind or south wind. However, they do not go up to the house; they take shelter under the floor of the house. These nomadic Suku Lauts tend to feel that development is not inclusive enough, as they see modernisation as threatening their traditional sea-dependent way of life. They feel marginalized, excluded from the development process, and deprived of access to the natural resources they depend on.

**Table 1 Aspects that influence the views of the Suku Laut on development policies in terms of Nomadic, Coastal, or Land-based settlement types**

Aspect	Nomads	Coastal	Land
Cultural Identity	Maintain	Lost	Lost
Economic	Marine Resource	Marine Resource and Forest	Marine Resource and Forest
Participation in Development	Object	Object	Object
Access	Minimal	Minimal	Cukup Baik
Adaptation to new culture	Unabel	adjustment	adaptability
Safety	extreme weather	weather	weather
Interaksi sosial dengan tempatan	very limited	limited	limited

Source: field analysis results, 2024

The second characteristic is that of coastal-dwelling Suku Lauts. This type of Suku Laut has a more diverse view. Some feel that development has benefited them by providing basic infrastructure such as access to clean water and education. Still, they also think that development is sometimes inadequate, especially regarding environmental management, which threatens their livelihoods as fishermen. The third characteristic is the Suku Lauts living on the mainland. They generally feel more positive about development. They have better access to public health, education, and security services. Settling on land has also allowed them to adapt to modern society and be more socially and economically integrated, although some still long for the freedom of life at sea. For more details, please refer to the following chart, table 1.

## **E.CONCLUSIONS**

Tribal views of development policies vary depending on the aspects of their lives that affect them most. Some Suku Laut view development as non-inclusive due to unequal access, marginalization, social, political, and legal injustices, and lack of participation. Governments and local communities create policies focusing on the mainland population, which is then perceived as the 'objective reality,' thus ignoring the Suku Laut and their specific needs. Ultimately, this condition of marginalization is accepted as normal by all parties, including the Suku Laut themselves, thus reinforcing their injustice and marginalization in development and other fundamental rights.

On the other hand, some parties consider that development is sufficient to fulfill the needs and rights of the Suku Laut from the threat of extreme weather, fulfillment of basic needs, and ease in purchasing food. The government and community were able to create policies that the Suku Laut could internalise as the 'objective reality' of the mainland lifestyle. The adaptation process begins with the interaction between their indigenous culture and the prevailing social structure on the mainland. The Suku Laut actively expressed new needs and customs. They began to adopt new practices such as settling down, working in the informal sector, or participating in local development programs, albeit as objects of development. In the externalization process, the Suku Laut attempted to adjust to the new reality without abandoning their cultural identity as a marine community.

Once social construction occurred, Suku Laut began to see a sedentary lifestyle on land as an inevitable part of reality. New practices such as living in permanent homes or participating in economic activities on land became accepted social realities. Outsiders also began to see the sedentary Suku Laut as part of the wider local community, although differences may still exist. Furthermore, the Suku Laut began to internalise their new reality as mainlanders. They accept the sedentary way of life as part of their new identity, although they may still retain specific traditional values. In this process, the Suku Laut and the mainlanders accept this condition as natural and normal. For the Suku Laut, this internalization process can change how they view their cultural identity, a combination of heritage and adaptation to life on land.

These two contrasting views are the result of social construction. Peter L. Berger views social reality as being formed through externalisation, objectivation, and internalisation. The Suku Laut's adaptation to mainland settlement is not merely a physical or economic change but a social process in which their identity and values are reshaped through interaction with the new social environment. This adaptation

shows how new social realities are shaped, accepted, and internalized by the Suku Laut in their efforts to survive amidst significant social change.

These two contrasting views emerge due to the social constructions created by the dominant group. The non-inclusive view of development arises because the Suku Laut is semi-nomadic and lives in settlements that are difficult to access from the center of the crowd. Meanwhile, the view that development is sufficient to meet the basic needs of the Suku Laut is perceived by those living on the mainland and coastal areas close to crowded centers, with easy access to public facilities.

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