

## Resistance of Flat Residents to Revitalisation In Bukit Kecil District, Palembang City

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### ABSTRACT

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The resistance of flat residents in Bukit Kecil District, Palembang, is a response to the government's revitalisation policy aimed at overcoming urban slum conditions and promoting modern housing. Although the city government intends to beautify the area and eliminate negative perceptions, residents reject the plan due to structural problems. This study aims to explore the root causes of apartment residents' resistance to the revitalisation policy. Using qualitative methods and Hollander and Einwohner's resistance theory approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The use of narratives enables researchers to understand apartment residents' perspectives through their life experiences. A total of 9 informants, including residents, community leaders, and provocateurs, were interviewed to uncover the background of resistance, both individually and collectively. This study emphasises action and opposition as dimensions of resistance analysis. The research findings reveal that resistance stems from unclear administration and the existence of criminal business. Residents often lack legal proof of ownership, despite having long occupied the house. In addition, illegal activities such as drug distribution and prostitution are economically rooted in the lives of apartment residents. The study concludes that resistance is not only emotional but also a complex expression of legal ambiguity, economic survival, and distrust of authority.

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## INTRODUCTION

A house is a primary human need that functions not only as a shelter but also as a space for social interaction. In urban areas, flats (rusun) have become a standard housing solution for low-income communities due to limited access to affordable land and housing. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Social Affairs (2024, the country has over three million homeless people, ranking 11th globally.

The inability of many to access legal and secure housing reflects broader systemic issues under urban capitalism (Na'im and Sukada 2022). Responding to the data from the Ministry of Social Affairs, of course, today and in the future, every Indonesian citizen (WNI) who needs a house must struggle hard to own it because the need to own a house is an expensive asset, such as unit houses, minimalism, row houses, houses in houses, high-rise houses, and so on. In the positive law of Law Number 20 Year 2011 on Flats (UURS), elementary, stacked, row, and multi-storey houses are referred to as Flats to help people who cannot afford to live in urban centres (Agustian, Haidir, and Al Kholiq 2024).

Similar to the densely populated apartment complex in Bukit Kecil District, Palembang City, which has faced significant issues since 2006, in response to the rise of slums, the Palembang City Government, along with Perumnas (National Housing Corporation), began building flats in the early 1980s, particularly after the 1981 fire that devastated several areas in the city centre. These flats were intended for fire victims and to prevent the growth of illegal settlements. Their strategic location made them attractive not only to fire victims but also to labourers and migrants, given their proximity to workplaces and markets (Assidiq, Nurrahman, and Sholikah 2022). One of the most extensive slums in Indonesia, with a perceived slum character, is located in Palembang and was built in 1980 during the administrations of Governor Sainan Sagiman and Mayor Husni Thamrin (Prabasmara, Subroto, and Rochyansah 2020).

A major fire in 1981 destroyed several slum areas in the centre of Palembang City (22 Ilir to 26 Ilir), prompting the city government and Perumnas to build flats as a solution to relocation and slum organisation. Strategically located on Jalan Kolonel Achmad Badaruddin in the Bukit Kecil District, the apartments now consist

of 53 blocks with more than 6,700 residential units, accommodating more than 17,000 residents. Initially built as simple flats (Rusunami), the ownership became administratively unclear because many units were resold or rented out without official documents.

Over time, high population density and poor governance transformed the flats into an area characterised by disorderly living, unmanaged waste, and increasing criminal activity. This damage triggered a negative public image, which triggered flats with drugs, prostitution, and social conflict. The city government initiated a revitalisation program to transform the apartments into clean, modern housing. However, from the initial public outreach in 2006 through subsequent administrations, residents have consistently resisted, citing unclear ownership and distrust of the government's intentions. This resistance manifested in demonstrations and through covert means, such as illegal construction and the spread of rumours. On April 22, 2015, Perumnas signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Revitalisation of Flats, which was then socialised to residents as part of the revitalisation project by Perumnas as the developer, based on the Decree of the Board of Directors Number DIRUT/0904/KPTS/10/2015 dated May 22, 2015. Furthermore, on June 10, 2019, the Palembang City Government accelerated the revitalisation program through the Mayor's Decree Number 298/KPTS/DLHK/2019 after it passed the environmental feasibility test, as declared by the Palembang City Environmental Service.

However, to date, the revitalisation efforts have been met with resistance from most residents. This resistance is not limited to physical actions such as demonstrations; it also manifests symbolically through discourse and daily practices that reflect a deep-rooted distrust of government authorities. Such complexity indicates that the residents' opposition is not merely emotional but is embedded in broader socio-political dynamics that warrant deeper sociological analysis. To comprehensively understand the forms and patterns of this resistance, this study adopts the resistance theory framework developed by Hollander and Einwohner. This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant as it conceptualises resistance

through two fundamental dimensions: action and opposition, both visible and covert. By applying this framework, the study aims to explore how flat residents engage in both material and ideological resistance, shaped by structural injustice, economic survival, and contested authority.

Although several studies have explored aspects of flat Development in urban Indonesia, such as environmentally friendly redesigns (Mochammad Abdullah, 2024), stakeholder-based housing provision (Agustian, Haidir, & Al Kholiq, 2024), these works primarily emphasise **technical, architectural, or infrastructural perspectives**. They focus on how flats should be physically improved, often overlooking flat residents' lived experiences, subjective meanings, and forms of agency, especially when facing top-down policies such as revitalisation.

In contrast, urban sociology highlights the **socio-political dimensions** of space and housing. Resistance, particularly in marginalised urban communities, is not always visible or formally organised. Studies such as Lilja & Vinthagen (2018) and Brink & Wamsler (2019) have emphasised how resistance can be dispersed, everyday, and embedded within routine practices. It may manifest in silent opposition, informal claims to space, or passive defiance of state authority. Hollander and Einwohner (2004) theorise resistance not only as overt protest but also as covert and unintentional acts that challenge domination. These concepts help understand the resistance of Palembang flat residents, which takes both organised and fragmented forms, ranging from demonstrations to subtle, everyday disobedience. Moreover, Sørbye and Braathen (2022) argue that in the context of urban evictions, resistance outcomes are shaped by legal uncertainty, economic precarity, and political legitimacy. This resonates with the situation in Bukit Kecil, where flat residents lack legal proof of ownership, rely on informal economies, and distrust the state's intentions.

However, while those studies provide practical frameworks, no prior research has applied Hollander and Einwohner's theory to the specific context of resistance to flat revitalisation in Palembang. The existing literature lacks an in-depth sociological analysis of how resistance is formed, sustained, and expressed by

urban poor communities living in legally ambiguous, economically vulnerable housing environments. This study fills that gap by examining the resistance of flat residents to the Palembang City Government's revitalisation, focusing on their actions and oppositions through both material and ideological expressions. By applying Hollander and Einwohner's framework, this research reveals how resistance emerges not merely as protest, but as a complex negotiation of legality, survival, and urban belonging.

Based on the introduction outlined, this thesis aims to explore in depth the root causes of resistance among apartment residents in the Bukit Kecil District, Palembang City, to the city government's revitalisation policy. Using Hollander and Einwohner's resistance theory, this study examines the forms of action and opposition undertaken by apartment residents, both individually and collectively, in response to policies perceived as threatening their survival in the apartment. This study also aims to fill a gap in previous research, which has tended to be technocratic and has not highlighted the dynamics of structural social conflict and residents' lived experiences in the context of resistance to top-down policies in poor urban areas.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, employing a narrative strategy to explore and interpret the lived experiences and expressions of resistance among flat residents in the Bukit Kecil Subdistrict, Palembang. Qualitative methods are appropriate for capturing the complexity of resistance as a social phenomenon, involving meaning-making, lived realities, and power relations. The narrative strategy allows the researcher to trace how residents construct their resistance over time through personal stories, social interactions, and collective memory.

The study is grounded in **Hollander and Einwohner's resistance theory**, which views resistance as consisting of two interrelated dimensions: **action** (observable behaviour against domination) and **opposition** (the intention or meaning behind the action). This theoretical lens is chosen to unpack both explicit and

implicit forms of resistance in the flat community, including actions that authorities do not consistently recognise as resistance (Wigati, Yuniar, and Lestari 2023). Hollander and Einwohner view resistance as a practice that prevents the strong from prevailing by acting and building awareness as acts of opposition. The perspective of action (material) examines the basis of actions undertaken to resist. In contrast, the perspective of opposition (idea) examines the basis of consciousness as the opposing party. Each form of resistance in each context has distinct characteristics that cannot be equated, but resistance is resistance that prioritises action and opposition (Dhona, 2019). Hollander and Einwohner stated that investigating the background of resistance aims to uncover its causes, thereby understanding the origins of resistance-related actions. The background of resistance is a part that must be observed in depth to understand each resistance event. The research in this article draws on Hollander and Einwohner's resistance approach, enabling this thesis to describe Rusun residents' resistance to Rusun Revitalisation through a study of action and opposition.

This research employs a narrative strategy, narrating the subject as an individual or group involved in the problem, to collect original data on flat dwellers' resistance to flat revitalisation. This research aims to understand social phenomena from participants' perspectives. Since this research is conducted in the field, there are no restrictions on how the problem being studied can be interpreted or understood (Nurak, Dewi, and Dewi 2023). The researcher describes individuals' lives, collects stories from informants, and traces the causes and effects of the problem under study, presenting the findings in a research report (Pradipto and Trisanto 2021).

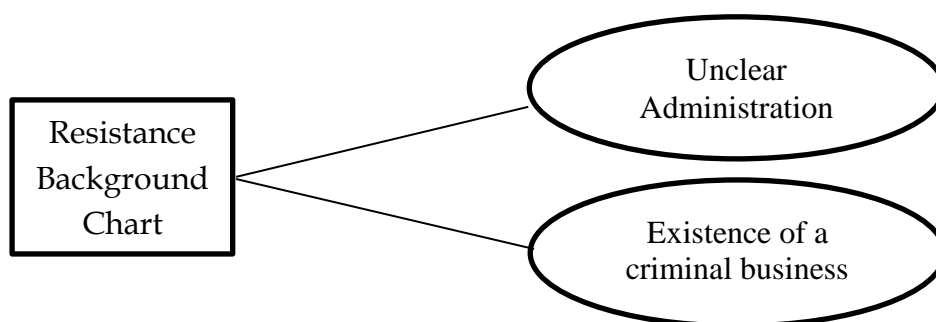
The research was conducted in **two key flat locations** in Palembang: **24 Ilir and 26 Ilir**, both located in the Bukit Kecil Subdistrict. These areas are central to the city and host the largest concentration of flat residents, whom the city's revitalisation plan has directly impacted. **Purposive sampling** was used to select **nine key informants**, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and roles related to the resistance movement: 5 flat residents who actively rejected revitalisation, two

informal leaders or "provocateurs" who influenced the resistance, and two community leaders aligned with the city administration. These informants were selected based on their long-term residence, participation in protest or opposition activities, and knowledge of the flats' legal and social dynamics. Data were collected using three main techniques: 1) In-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore individual experiences, motivations, and meanings behind resistance. Questions focused on legal ownership, perceptions of revitalisation, economic viability, and interactions with authorities. 2) Participant observation. Researchers conducted field visits to observe the physical environment, symbols of resistance, everyday social interactions, and informal discussions. These observations were rich in narrative context and offered visual insights into the site's living conditions and tensions. 3) Relevant administrative documents were examined, such as legal ownership certificates. The data were triangulated to understand the landscape in policy communication and implementation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From interviews with cross-informants, researchers identified key background factors in flat dwellers' resistance to flat revitalisation. The researcher found that the background of resistance among flat dwellers includes unclear administrative procedures and criminal activity.

Figure 1: Resistance Background Chart



*Source: Researcher's Observation Results, 2025*

### ***1. Unclear Administration***

To own a flat, each occupant must meet the administrative requirements as stated in Law Number 20 of 2011 concerning Flats (UURS). As referred to in Article 1, number 5 of the UURS, every occupant of the flat has the right to own a flat dwelling plot with the legal basis of a Flat Ownership Right Certificate. However, under Article 1, point 6, of the UURS, each flat owner automatically becomes part of the joint ownership, intended for use jointly by other residents rather than separately. This serves as the legal basis for the Certificate of Ownership of Flat Units (SHMSRS) to be recognised as an individual property right in a portion of the residential plot. Ownership of the flat is not separate from the flat unit's ownership rights. The Certificate of Ownership of a Flat Unit states that the owner of the building part automatically acquires two rights: individual rights and collective rights. Individual rights refer to the property rights of residential plots within each flat unit, whereas collective rights encompass jointly owned property and land. In short, two pieces of evidence can legally establish each occupant's official ownership of a flat. Ownership of the flat's rights must be proven by a certificate of ownership for the flat unit, as stated by Mr W, an official at the Palembang City Settlement and Land Office.

“Pemilik rusun wajib menunjukkan Sertifikat Kepemilikan yang mencakup fotokopi buku tanah, surat ukur tanah bersama, denah unit, dan bukti pembayaran sebagai syarat sah kepemilikan.”(Wawancara dengan Informan W, 19 September 2024)

*The apartment owner must present a Certificate of Ownership that includes a photocopy of the land register, a joint land measurement letter, a unit plan, and proof of payment, as required by law for ownership. (Interview with Informant W, September 19, 2024).*

Figure 2: Certificate of Ownership of a Flat





*Source: Researcher's Observation Results, 2024*

The basic administration of the Bukit Kecil Sub-district Flat in Palembang City has been problematic for its occupants. The flat's residents are unable to provide proof of repayment and, as a result, do not automatically have a Certificate of Right to Ownership. According to HER (43), a resident of the flat since 1982 who currently occupies a flat on the 3rd floor of Block 9 RT 26, the administration has been unclear since the residents moved in.

"Saya tinggal di rusun sejak 1982 dan telah melunasi pembayaran, namun hingga kini surat kepemilikan belum terbit karena status kepemilikan ganda, sementara Perumnas tak menagih atau mengusir saya." (Wawancara dengan Informan HER, 15 September 2024)

*I have lived in the apartment since 1982 and have paid the rent. As of now, the ownership certificate has not been issued due to dual ownership status, and Perumnas has neither collected nor evicted me (Interview with Informant HER, September 15, 2024).*

The same thing was also conveyed by ED (50), a resident of the flat since 1982, who lives on the first floor of Block 18 RT 18 also said that the administration of the flat was unclear because the municipal government through Perumnas did not monitor residents who sold the flat plots under the hand, aka sales that were not based on legal ties and ignored Perumnas as the manager of the flat.

"Administrasi rusun tidak jelas karena Perumnas tidak mengawasi penjualan ilegal oleh penghuni, bahkan sebelum pelunasan. Banyak unit dijual tanpa dokumen resmi, dan lemahnya pengawasan membuat status kepemilikan semakin tidak jelas." (Wawancara dengan Informan ED, 15 September 2024)

*The administration of apartment units is unclear because Perumnas (National Housing Corporation) fails to monitor illegal sales by tenants, even before the settlement process. Many units are sold without proper documentation, and weak oversight further obscures ownership status. (Interview with Informant ED, September 15, 2024).*

To date, due to unclear administrative procedures, the tenants have refused to participate in revitalisation. The residents believe they own the flat, even though many have not repaid their share. The residents of the flat feel that Perumnas, the flat manager, is negligent in managing the administration, as conveyed by Mrs OC, a flat community leader in 26 Ilir Palembang Village.

"Penghuni rusun tetap ngotot untuk mendapatkan surat kepemilikan rusun meskipun belum melakukan pembayaran, mengingat pengelola rusun Perumnas juga cuek dan tidak peduli dengan administrasi penghuni rusun." (Wawancara dengan Informan OC, 15 September 2024)

*The residents of the flat continue to insist on receiving a letter of ownership, despite not having made any payments, because they believe the Perumnas flat manager is indifferent to the flat's administration. (Interview with Informant OC, September 15, 2024).*

After reviewing the interview transcripts, the researcher observed that the flat residents resisted the revitalisation due to ongoing administrative issues. Consequently, they were unable to provide the required administrative documents, including proof of repayment and a flat ownership certificate. Flat dwellers consider the unclear administration of flats to be one of the causes of resistance to flat revitalisation. Resistance theory, according to Hollander and Einwohner, emphasises two main elements: actions and opposition. Both are indicators of the existence of resistance, both explicitly (visible and recognised by the opposing party) and implicitly (unconscious or not recognised as resistance by the dominant party).

In the case of Bukit Kecil Flats, the resistance that arises from administrative ambiguity is not only practical but also a form of ideological opposition to the authority of the state and the manager (Perumnas). When residents realised that their ownership rights were unclear despite having occupied the units for decades, a feeling of injustice emerged, strengthening the collective oppositional

consciousness. The testimonies of informants such as HER and ED highlight the uncertainty of the ownership status of flat units, which creates distrust towards the government and Perumnas. In Hollander and Einwohner's theoretical framework, this is a form of 'unrecognised resistance': it is not consistently recognised by dominant actors (the government) as a form of formal resistance, but in the eyes of the flat communities themselves, the rejection of revitalisation becomes a tangible representation of resistance to structural injustice. (Brink & Wamsler, 2019).

The unclear ownership status indicates a vacuum of responsibility between the city government and Perumnas. In Hollander and Einwohner's theory, this condition creates opportunities for resistance because authority lacks legitimacy (Lilja and Vinthagen 2018). When citizens cannot use the law as a legitimising tool, resistance grows not against the law, but against the state's failure to fulfil its legal promises.

Resistance in the form of flat residents' rejection of revitalisation, because 'they have not received a certificate of ownership even though it has been paid in full,' reveals the moral basis of their opposition. This rejection is not merely egoistic, but based on claims of justice (Sørbøe and Braathen, 2022). Based on the interviews above, it can be explained that the administrative problems with flat ownership in Bukit Kecil are not just a matter of legal technicalities but reflect structural inequality in the relationship between the urban poor and the state. When residents feel they have fulfilled their obligations to the flat unit, they may experience a sense of satisfaction. However, the state, through Perumnas and the City Government, fails to provide legal evidence in the form of SHMSRS, creating a legal vacuum that becomes fertile ground for resistance. This vacuum is not only the absence of documents but also the absence of the state as a protector of residents' fundamental civil rights.

According to Hollander and Einwohner (2004), resistance arises when an intention or action challenges domination, whether explicitly or implicitly. In this case, administrative ambiguity plays a dual role: as a trigger for explicit resistance (the rejection of revitalisation) and as an arena for implicit resistance (continuing to

live without legal status). The flat residents accept revitalisation ideologically, but because they feel they have never been recognised as legal owners, they have no incentive to submit to authorities they consider failed to fulfil their legal obligations. Compare this with the findings of Sørbøe and Braathen (2022), who showed that in the context of evictions in Rio de Janeiro, legal uncertainty strengthened residents' bargaining position to delay relocation. In these two cases, it appears that legal liminality — being between ownership and legal powerlessness — does not weaken residents but rather strengthens their resistance. In other words, legal ambiguity is not merely a passive condition but a structure of opportunities for resistance.

On the other hand, the inequality of knowledge relations and administrative control creates symbolic domination. The state and Perumnas, as the legal authorities, have failed to communicate administrative mechanisms openly and fairly. In the view of Lilja and Vinthagen (2018), this kind of resistance can be interpreted as dispersed resistance, characterised by small actions, such as ignoring the legal process or refusing to attend revitalisation meetings. In this context, residents selectively use legal language, asserting property rights when it is beneficial and ignoring formal legality when it is detrimental, thereby demonstrating strategic agency in a space of uncertainty.

This situation also shows how the state fails to build procedural legitimacy. As explained by Brink and Wamsler (2019), policy legitimacy comes not only from the state's good intentions but also from active citizen participation and inclusive legal clarity. When the revitalisation process is carried out without resolving the root of administrative problems, the state is building policies in a vacuum of legitimacy. Therefore, citizens' rejection of revitalisation can no longer be understood as mass emotion or legal ignorance, but as a form of epistemic resistance to the dominance of state narratives.

More deeply, citizens' experiences of legal uncertainty have shaped what Baaz, Lilja, and Wallgren (2024) call 'involuntary resistance'. Citizens may not consciously oppose the state, but objective conditions may lead them to act in ways that slow down or thwart state projects. In this case, administrative ambiguity is not

only a context but also a mechanism for producing resistance. When the state is absent as a legal guarantor, citizens construct narratives of ownership over time, through sacrifice and social relations, rather than through documents.

That resistance by the urban poor often arises in response to the dominance of the power structure, rather than merely as formal collective action. Residents develop a counter-logic to the state's reasoning: those who have lived in the area for 40 years are the rightful owners, and those who pay even without a receipt still have the right to claim it. This is a form of moral economy of resistance that cannot be addressed solely through legal regulation; it must be met with recognition of lived experiences as a source of legitimacy. As a note, previous technocratic studies have focused more on the technical aspects and design of vertical settlements, but have overlooked that legality and administrative inequality are the main fields of resistance for residents. Therefore, this study not only offers new data but also provides a theoretical reframing of the study of flats in Indonesia: the resistance of flat residents is not an anomaly of Development but rather a direct consequence of Development that neglects structural justice.

Thus, this sub-chapter emphasises that administrative ambiguity is not merely a background for resistance, but rather the structure of resistance production itself. Citizens' experiences of unrecognised legality have led to a resistance that is not always explicitly political but is highly effective at weakening state legitimacy. This study broadens the scope of resistance theory by demonstrating that, in the context of flats in Indonesia, resistance can arise precisely from the absence of the state as a protector, rather than from its repressive power. Therefore, citizen resistance is not a deviation from Development but rather a logical response to Development that fails to address structural justice.

## ***2. Existence of Criminal Business***

A criminal business violates the law. A criminal enterprise is illegal when it operates secretly. The criminal business in the 24 Ilir and 26 Ilir flats in Palembang is a legacy enterprise that has existed since the apartments were established and

occupied by residents from various regions in South Sumatra in 1982. Mr HJS (48), an employee at Kelurahan 24 Ilir, Palembang, explained that the level of criminality originating from illegal businesses in the flat area remains very high, particularly in the 24 Ilir area.

"Sampai hari ini masih sangat rawan terjadi kriminalitas atau menjadi bagian yang biasa terjadi di kawasan Rusun 24 Ilir termasuk blok 25, 38, 43, 44, dan 45. Ya, secara umum jaringan narkoba dan jaringan pekerja seks komersial ada di kawasan rusun."(Wawancara dengan Informan HJS, 15 September 2024)

*To this day, the 24 Ilir Flat area, including blocks 25, 38, 43, 44, and 45, remains crime-prone and serves as a hub for illegal business activities. Yes, in general, drug networks and commercial sex worker networks exist in the Flat area. (Interview with Informant HJS, September 15, 2024).*

Through this information, researchers found a trail of evidence of the arrest of a drug dealer in the flat area. Palembang Police arrested a suspect named M Emir Yuniko. The suspect was secured at Bukit Kecil Sub-district Flat, Palembang, on Monday (14/10/2024) at around 5.30 pm with evidence of 1 KG of crystal methamphetamine.

**Figure 3: Arrest of a meth dealer**



*Source: Researcher's Observation Results, 2024*

Meanwhile, PH (55), an employee at Kelurahan 26 Ilir Palembang, explained that criminality in the 26 Ilir Flat area is not much different from that in District 24 Ilir.

"Kriminalitas di kawasan Rusun 26 Ilir meliputi blok 46, 47, 48, dan 49. Masih maraknya jaringan peredaran narkoba jenis sabu-sabu,

peredaran jaringan Pekerja Seks Komersial."(Wawancara dengan Informan PH, 15 September 2024)

*Criminality in the 26 Ilir Flat area includes blocks 46, 47, 48, and 49. There is still a rampant network of methamphetamine drug trafficking, circulation of the Commercial Sex Workers network (Interview with Informant PH, September 15, 2024).*

By what was conveyed by Mr. HER (55), a resident of the Flats since 1982 who currently occupies a residential space on the 3rd floor of Block 20 RT 20, he explained that illegal businesses in the Flats are part of what is hindering the revitalization of the Flats due to conflicts of interest between several parties who are running illegal businesses in the Flats.

"Di komplek apartemen, sesama penghuni sudah mengetahui bahwa kegiatan kriminalitas merupakan bagian dari bisnis ilegal yang dijalankan oleh beberapa pihak. Bisnis ilegal merupakan konflik kepentingan, dalam hal ini dijalankan oleh preman apartemen."(Wawancara dengan Informan HER, 15 Oktober 2024)

*In the apartment complex, fellow residents already know that criminal activities are part of illegal businesses run by several parties. Illegal businesses pose a conflict of interest, as they are operated by criminals who control apartments. (Interview with Informant HER, October 15, 2024).*

Mr RIZ (41), a resident of the Flats since 1983 and currently residing on the 2nd floor of Flats Block 11 RT 24, also stated the same. The local government was already aware of the illegal business but chose to overlook it. Allowing illegal businesses in the Flats hinders residents who feel excluded from the Area's revitalisation.

"Dengan adanya bisnis ilegal di dalam kompleks rumah susun, maka hal tersebut turut menghambat revitalisasi kompleks rumah susun. Ya, sekarang kami merasa terbantu dengan adanya bisnis ilegal, revitalisasi jadi terhambat." (Wawancara dengan Informan RIZ, 15 Oktober 2024)

*The presence of illegal businesses in the apartment complex hinders its revitalisation. Yes, we now feel hindered by illegal enterprises that are impeding revitalisation. (Interview with Informant RIZ, October 15, 2024).*



Li (35) has been a resident of the Flats since 2003. She works as a Commercial Sex Worker in the Flats area. The woman with three children in Indramayu currently occupies one of the flats in the residential block. Li explained that if the Flats revitalisation occurs, the fate of the Commercial Sex Workers in the area must be considered, as it concerns the livelihoods of activists who have been working with them.

"Pikirkan nasib kami karena di sinilah kami tinggal dan menghidupi keluarga kami. Jika pemerintah benar-benar ingin merevitalisasi, pekerjaan apa yang akan kami lakukan setelah revitalisasi Rusun." (Wawancara dengan Informan LI, 15 Oktober 2024)

*Consider our fate, as this is where we live and support our families. If the government wants to revitalise, what work will we do after the Rusun revitalisation? (Interview with Informant LI, October 15, 2024).*

**Figure 4: Location of Commercial Sex Workers in Apartments**



*Source: Researcher's Observation Results, 2024*

After listening to the results of the interviews, the researchers observed that the residents of the flats resisted the revitalisation of the flats because they were helped by the existence of people who until now have been running criminal businesses in the flats area such as the network of stolen motorbikes, the circulation of methamphetamine drugs, and the circulation of the Commercial Sex Worker (PSK) network. The umpteenth illegal business hinders the revitalisation of the area, as it would likely lead to the elimination of those running the criminal business there. In the theory of Hollander and Einwohner (2004), resistance is understood as a



form of action and/or opposition to power or domination. In this context, the existence of criminal business practices in the flat area is not only a backdrop for resistance but also a hidden mechanism of structural and opportunistic resistance.

The existence of illegal business networks, such as narcotics, commercial sex workers, and the sale of stolen goods, in the 24 Ilir and 26 Ilir flats forms an unconscious or covert opposition to revitalisation. These actors have a self-interested motive: maintaining a space that supports the continuity of their illegal business.

In Hollander and Einwohner's framework, this can be categorised as 'unintentional resistance' - actions that go against the government's plan (revitalisation), but are not necessarily politically or ideologically articulated. Some actors do not consciously claim to be resisting the government, but the reality of their actions hinders revitalisation efforts.

A clear example is the statement of informant LI, a prostitute who openly stated that her survival depends on the existence of the flat. Here, resistance arises from threats to informal economic survival, not from ideological attachment to the place of residence. The actions of residents who maintain the existence of illegal business networks in the flat (both as actors and as announcers) are classified as resistance-in-action. The residents and 'flat thugs' function like autonomous actors who build their power system outside the state. In many cases, they even form a kind of 'local rule' system or 'safe territory' for illegal activities (Baaz, Lilja, and Wallgren 2024).

This is within the framework of organised resistance but not formally structured; it is a form of resistance carried out by marginalised groups that do not use official protest mechanisms (demos, letters, petitions), yet are still able to inhibit state intervention. (Ariadi & Supraja, n.d.). This resistance becomes visible (recognised resistance) from the government's perspective because, empirically, revitalisation is continually delayed by the threat of social conflict, violence, or repression from parties whose existence it perceives as threatened (Sihombing 2021).

Hollander and Einwohner note that the absence or weakness of control by the dominant actor (the government) creates spaces of resistance that grow autonomously. Here, the Palembang City Government and Perumnas failed to intervene firmly against criminal activities in the flats. Residents exploit this weakness to continue operating illegal businesses, thereby strengthening their resistance to revitalisation (Saidang, Oruh, and Agustang 2022).

The existence of illegal business networks in the Bukit Kecil apartment complex, such as narcotics, commercial sex workers (CSWs), and stolen goods, not only reflects dysfunctional governance but also operates as a hidden architecture of resistance. These criminal activities paradoxically create conditions for stability amid legal chaos, while also providing a hidden rationale for residents to reject revitalisation programs. This is where the complexity of resistance lies—it is not always born from moral claims or legal rights, but also from the logic of survival in the underground economy (informal survival economy). Within the framework of Hollander and Einwohner (2004), this form of resistance can be categorised as unintentional or even covert. Actors who run illegal businesses may not explicitly declare resistance to the state, but their practices thwart state intervention, including revitalisation projects. In other words, resistance arises not from ideological intentions but from threats to the economic ecosystem that sustains the lives of groups.

This concept aligns with Baaz, Lilja, and Wallgren's (2024) concept of involuntary resistance, specifically the situation in which marginalised groups do not consciously resist power. Still, their daily practices produce a resistive effect on the dominant system. Interviews with informants LI (sex workers) or HER (residents who know about criminal activities) show that resistance emerges not as a political form, but as a strategy to survive the economically beneficial status quo. In this case, revitalisation is understood not as a solution, but as a threat to the established informal socioeconomic order. Compare this with the study of Sørbye and Braathen (2022), which shows that the success or failure of relocation in slums is determined by the extent to which the state recognises and negotiates with informal structures at

the community level. In the case of Palembang, the state tends to ignore the existence of illegal economic structures and forces revitalisation within a legal-formal scheme, thus failing to dismantle structural resistance that is not always visible.

Furthermore, Lilja and Vinthagen's (2018) theory of dispersed resistance is highly relevant. They explain that resistance can manifest in various forms, including passive, hidden, and uncoordinated actions, yet remain effective in resisting the dominance of power. In the flats area, the existence of drug and prostitute networks not only functions as a livelihood, but also forms an alternative space of power outside of state control. When the state fails to control this space, local actors often referred to as "flat thugs" or "shadow managers" claim and regulate it. This creates an autonomous structure that serves as the basis for informal power and a tool of resistance to state intervention.

In this context, revitalisation faces resistance not because it is explicitly rejected, but because it contradicts the established logic of survival. As Ariadi and Supraja explain, resistance among the urban poor often takes the form of responses to structural domination in health, education, and housing. Rejection of revitalisation is not only about housing, but also about economic access, social networks, and control over space. It is also important to note that technocratic studies, such as those by Mochammad Abdullah (2024) and Suminah et al., failed to reveal this dimension because they focused excessively on the design and spatial functions of the flats. They ignored that behind the physical space, there is an illegal socioeconomic infrastructure that functions as a support for marginalised lives. This study shows that revitalisation without deconstructing the informal structure will only yield latent resistance, which is difficult to map using a technical approach.

In Brink and Wamsler's (2019) view, resistance to revitalisation can be read as a rejection of the severance of values and identities. Illegal economic networks are not only sources of income but also of meaning, identity, and a sense of belonging to space. When the state does not offer equal economic guarantees as a replacement, revitalisation efforts lack legitimacy, leading residents to remain in the

status quo, which is economically safer. Thus, the presence of criminal businesses in the flats area is not only a backdrop for resistance but also a structural mechanism that sustains the resistance itself. It cannot be read only as a problem of criminality, but as a symptom of the state's failure to provide a fair formal economy. Resistance here does not stem from residents' rejection of the law, but from the law's absence.

## CONCLUSION

This study reveals that apartment residents in the Bukit Kecil District's resistance to the revitalisation policy is not merely a form of rejection of physical relocation. Still, it is a form of structured social resistance that arises from two primary sources: unclear ownership administration and illegal economic structures. Both operate not only as a background for resistance but also as an active mechanism that forms resistance itself.

First, unclear administration of residential ownership has created a condition of legal liminality, an ambiguous and uncertain legal position. When the state fails to grant legal recognition to residents who have occupied apartment units for decades, resistance emerges that is not only material (the rejection of revitalisation) but also ideological: the rejection of the state's legitimacy as a protector of rights. In Hollander and Einwohner's framework, this indicates the presence of recognised and everyday resistance, in which residents use everyday actions and collective narratives to resist the state's domination, which is not fairly represented.

Second, the existence of criminal businesses such as drug trafficking and commercial sex work shows that resistance is also produced through the logic of survival in alternative economic structures. For some residents, apartments are not just places to live but economic spaces that support life. When revitalisation threatens this space, a form of involuntary resistance emerges that is not always politically intended but is effective at thwarting state policy. This confirms that resistance does not always originate from ideological awareness, but rather from objective conditions of dependence on the underground economy.

These two forms of resistance are intertwined in the context of the state's failure to build procedural legitimacy. Residents are not hostile to Development per

se. However, they reject forms of Development that ignore their lived experiences, strip away legal recognition, and dismantle the socioeconomic structures they have built. Thus, residents' resistance to revitalisation is a rational response to the absence of structural justice and the state's failure to advance inclusive policies. This study confirms that revitalisation cannot be interpreted solely as a physical project; it must be understood as a project of social relations. Without addressing the underlying informal administrative and economic issues, revitalisation will only generate new, subtler forms of resistance that are more difficult to manage. Therefore, the resistance that emerged in the Bukit Kecil flats is not an anomaly of Development, but rather a logical consequence of Development that is blind to inequality.

Based on the research findings, it is suggested that the Palembang City Government should not only focus on the physical aspects of revitalisation, but first resolve the structural issues underlying residents' resistance, primarily through a transparent and participatory restructuring of the legal framework governing housing ownership. Revitalisation also needs to be accompanied by an economic transition strategy that accommodates residents' reliance on informal economic structures or criminal businesses, ensuring that resistance is not perpetuated as a form of survival. Without a comprehensive resolution of legal and economic inequality, every Development effort risks continuing to face latent resistance that stems from distrust of the state.

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