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Starting Sustainable Agendas From the Class: An Effort to Deconstruct Agrarian Law Teaching in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Land governance issues are increasingly complex and involve multiple legal, political, economic, social, and ecological factors. Agrarian law education in Indonesia, nevertheless, remains centered on doctrinal and legal-formal approaches to land relations. This study analyzes how such an approach limits students' understanding of modern land governance issues and offers preliminary directions for reforming agrarian law education in Indonesia to embrace multidisciplinary perspectives on sustainable land governance. The study uses qualitative content analysis to explore eighteen publicly available Semester Learning Plans (RPS) of Agrarian Law courses provided by Indonesian higher education institutions. The analysis centers on learning outcomes, course themes, and disciplinary references. The paper finds that the identification, interpretation, and application of legal norms lie at the center of Agrarian Law courses, whereas the political economy and ecology of land governance and sustainable agrarian legal practice remain marginal. The study contributes to the discussion on reforming Agrarian Law education by arguing that the problem is not the doctrinal approach per se but rather its dominance over other approaches that recognize the complexity of land relations. As such, the reform of Agrarian Law education can start with rethinking the role of doctrinal legal studies in the curricula and promoting interdisciplinary perspectives on land governance issues. The novelty of this study lies in integrating a multidisciplinary perspective in the analysis of the Agrarian Law courses and suggesting directions for reforming this education based on students' learning outcomes and their relevance to sustainable land governance.

Keywords: *agrarian law, sustainable agendas, interdisciplinary legal studies, legal teaching.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, land governance has become one of the most pressing issues in public administration. Being at the heart of many political and economic processes in developing countries, it poses some of the most difficult questions in terms of social justice and rural development (Wahanisa et al., 2025). At the same time, the growing need for land often results in environmental degradation and social conflicts (Peluso & Lund, 2011; Hall et al., 2011). As a result, sustainable development has become closely linked to appropriate and effective land governance. The latter is now viewed in the context of political economy, emphasizing the processes of land use rights distribution, regulation, and the balance between different stakeholders' interests.

Land governance and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have once again drawn attention to the importance of the topic. Land and natural resource governance has been considered central to several of the goals that relate to gender, food security, poverty, sustainable cities, and the environment (Zhao et al., 2024). Meeting these sustainability goals requires food security and equitable access to land. According to Borras et al. (2011), land governance institutions are critical in balancing the conflicts between states, enterprises, and peasant communities. Policies that support legal frameworks for regulating land use and protecting inhabitants' interests are therefore of significant importance.

However, the eighteen curricula collected for this study show that the agrarian law curriculum remains formalistic, with universities focusing only on legal foundations, legal relations, and legal techniques. The formalistic approach, however, does not account for the complexity of land governance matters and their relationships with other phenomena. Even though doctrinal

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law provides a solid theoretical foundation for any agrarian law student, it may not be sufficient for addressing the current issues related to land governance (Benda-Beckmann, 2002). The issues of land use and tenure are becoming increasingly complex, involving not only legal categories but also power relations and ecosystems.

To adequately address the problems of land governance, it is necessary to consider not only the legal framework but also adjacent fields, such as political economy, ecology, sociology, and development studies. In doing so, students will be able to develop an integrated understanding of issues related to land use and governance. Agrarian scholars and students have a responsibility to engage in multidisciplinary studies and respond to the SDGs. Several studies have demonstrated that land governance issues are multidimensional and concern various aspects of human life, ranging from gender relations to food production and economic development (Hall et al., 2011; Li, 2014). This literature provides a solid theoretical foundation for considering land governance from the perspective of multiple disciplines.

Universities play a central role in training students and developing their understanding of the relationship between society and nature. The role of higher education is not limited to teaching current legal norms and techniques; it also has a responsibility to develop students' critical thinking and prepare them to address complex issues using an interdisciplinary approach (Pesch, 2013). Sustainability studies have emerged as an interdisciplinary field concerned with advancing scientific knowledge and developing solutions for society's most pressing problems. However, agrarian law has been left out of this field, leaving law students and scholars unaware of their role in addressing global challenges.

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As the SDGs gain increasing attention in political debates, it is essential to define their role in legal practice (Wahanisa et al., 2025). Responding adequately to the challenges of this emerging trend requires higher education institutions to rethink the teaching of agrarian law. To meet the needs of studying complex issues of land governance, legal scholars should consider interdisciplinary approaches, namely political economy, ecology, and social studies. Instruction in this field of law also has the potential to raise students' awareness of the relationships between law, power, and society. To address the SDGs adequately, the current approach to teaching agrarian law should be revised, and the most pressing issues in sustainability studies should be taken into account.

Research on sustainability has so far focused primarily on environmental governance, land administration, and legal-institutional reforms for sustainable land governance (Ostrom, 1990; Cotula, 2013; Hall et al., 2011; Bosselmann, 2017). Studies on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) have investigated sustainability competencies, institutional transformation, and higher education curriculum innovations (Sterling, 2004; Wiek et al., 2011; Lozano et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2020). However, these bodies of work have developed in relative isolation. Sustainability studies make few contributions to legal education, and legal education research rarely addresses the integration of sustainability competencies in agrarian law curricula. This study responds to this research gap by investigating the extent to which eighteen Indonesian university-level agrarian law curricula engage with the concepts of sustainable land governance.

It does so by first analyzing eighteen publicly accessible agrarian law curricula from Indonesian universities and, second, examining links with the literature on sustainable development and interdisciplinary legal education. The study therefore makes two contributions, one empirical and one conceptual.

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First, based on the study of the learning outcomes, thematic structure, and disciplinary references of Indonesian agrarian law curricula, the study offers an empirical account of their epistemological orientations. Second, based on this assessment, it proposes a conceptual model for rethinking agrarian law education for sustainable land governance. It is the combination of these three elements—the empirical analysis of Indonesian agrarian law curricula, the incorporation of sustainability-related topics, and the development of a conceptual framework linking law to land governance—that constitutes the novelty of this study.

Accordingly, the research question for this study is: *How does the current Indonesian agrarian law curriculum conceptualize sustainability, and how should it be reconstructed to respond to contemporary issues of sustainable land governance?* To answer this question, the study pursues three objectives. The first is to determine the extent to which agrarian law curricula engage with sustainability principles by conducting a qualitative analysis of the curricula. The second objective is to ascertain the extent to which the teaching of agrarian law is currently dominated by a formalistic approach. The third is to develop a conceptual framework for integrating agrarian law knowledge with sustainability perspectives to provide students with a solid understanding of the legal, social, ecological, and governance aspects of sustainable land governance.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses qualitative document analysis to explore the institutional conceptualization and educational practice of agrarian law in Indonesian higher education, informed by normative and conceptual analysis to propose a curricular orientation for education for sustainable land governance. In

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exploring the institutional conceptualization of agrarian law education, this study takes the Semester Learning Plans (Rencana Pembelajaran Semester/RPS) as objects of analysis to highlight what knowledge, skills, and perspectives are framed as pertinent in agrarian law education.

The primary data comprise eighteen RPSs of agrarian law courses in Indonesian higher education institutions (HEIs). The eighteen RPSs were selected purposively from the documents available on the websites of Indonesian HEIs. Purposive selection was based on two inclusion criteria: first, that the document comprised an official RPS or equivalent semester-level course plan for a course concerned with agrarian law; and second, that the document provided sufficient information on learning outcomes, course topics, and/or learning materials for curricular analysis. The present study does not presume that the eighteen RPSs comprise a representative sample of agrarian law courses in Indonesia. Rather, the RPSs offer a document-based body of information through which the curricular orientations in agrarian law education can be explored. Using publicly accessible RPSs also makes it possible to examine the officially institutionalized expectations of agrarian law education, as opposed to the accounts of individual lecturers in terms of the teaching practices that they pursue.

The analysis relied on a qualitative content analysis approach. Each RPS was examined at three levels of analysis: learning outcomes, substantive course topics, and disciplinary references in learning materials and recommended readings. These three aspects of curricular orientation were identified as pertinent to agrarian law education since they foreground different facets of the educational practice. Learning outcomes articulate the expectations in terms of knowledge and skills, course topics delineate the substantive problems that the

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students are required to engage with, and disciplinary references highlight the epistemological resources that underpin the understanding of those problems.

A coding framework was developed prior to the comparative analysis of the RPSs. The coding process was conducted in four stages. First, information pertinent to the three aspects of analysis was extracted from the RPSs. Second, the extracted segments of text were categorized according to the aforementioned coding framework. Third, the coded information was comparatively examined across the eighteen RPSs to identify overarching patterns, the absence of certain elements, and differences between the RPSs in terms of curricular orientations. Fourth, the discerned patterns were interpreted in light of the literature on agrarian studies, legal education, and Education for Sustainable Development. As such, the present analysis draws a distinction between the descriptive identification of the patterns and the conceptual interpretation of the discerned trends and their implications for legal education.

The findings of the document analysis are then connected to the pertinent literature to propose a model for reorienting agrarian law education toward sustainable land governance. The model is informed by the recognition that legal knowledge, particularly its doctrinal variant, comprises an indispensable analytical resource, but that it needs to engage with political economy, sociology, ecology, land tenure, distributive justice, and related perspectives to fully grasp the social and ecological dimensions of land governance.

III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Agrarian Law and Contemporary Land Governance Challenges

1. Contemporary Issues in Land Governance

Agrarian law is one of the central elements of modern land governance problems in any territory because land is the primary source of life and

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prosperity. In most cases, land is a natural-social resource with specific relationships rather than a simple economic resource (Wahanisa, 2018; Amiluddin et al., 2026). Agrarian law therefore significantly affects the distribution, management, and access to land and its resources. Land governance is a multidimensional and multi-scalar phenomenon that includes various political, economic, social, legal, and environmental interactions and institutional frameworks for the management of land resources and tenure regimes (Deininger, 2003; FAO, 2012).

Over the last two decades, land governance has undergone significant changes due to globalization, infrastructure development, the growth of extractive activities, and extensive land investments. The increasing demand for agricultural commodities, mining, and renewable energy has led to a surge in land allocations and tensions around access to land in many countries of the Global South (Cotula, 2013; Hall et al., 2015). At the same time, the concentration of resources tends to lead to the formation of new cadres of capital and power, while national law becomes increasingly dependent on external actors (Borras & Franco, 2012). One of the most discussed phenomena of contemporary land governance is the so-called "land grabbing" or "investment grab," which refers to the rapid acquisition or long-term leases of large land areas (Zoomers, 2010). The displacement of rural populations is a typical phenomenon associated with these processes, as is the justification of such displacement on economic and social grounds. Mega-investments tend to provoke significant inequalities in the land ownership structure (Borras et al., 2011).

These changes lead to increased tensions within many local communities and give rise to agrarian conflicts. The causes of these conflicts vary and depend on particular local characteristics and conditions. Most often, such disputes

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emerge from the interaction of state law with customary tenure and private property relations (Wahanisa et al., 2026). Local populations who traditionally use the resources of a particular territory suffer from the introduction of laws that establish private ownership of that land (Boone, 2014; Lund, 2016). Agrarian conflicts demonstrate the limitations of legal norms in regulating land relations.

Today, the problem of land governance is complicated by the growing impact of environmental issues and the climate crisis on land, land use, and land tenure. Land is central to every ecosystem: it sustains the survival and reproduction of flora and fauna and stores carbon. The interactions between land governance and forest, energy, and climate policies are increasingly shaped by the need to adapt to climate change and reduce emissions (Fairhead et al., 2012). However, conservation programs and the introduction of their corresponding legal norms may lead to new social conflicts if they contradict local land use practices (Fairhead et al., 2012). Land governance now increasingly involves social, economic, and ecological aspects, which are of great importance for sustainable land management.

By linking land resources and tenure to broader social and environmental issues, the SDGs provide a useful framework for understanding the centrality of land governance in society. Addressing poverty (SDG 1), hunger (SDG 2), gender inequality (SDG 5), and responsible agriculture and land stewardship (SDG 15) will require balanced social, economic, and ecological policies as well as effective land governance institutions (United Nations, 2015). In this regard, legal frameworks are an essential element of land governance, ensuring sustainable resource management while maintaining social equity and economic efficiency. Legal norms, as a basic instrument for establishing relations, are designed to ensure predictable, stable, and transparent land use.

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However, current land governance debates increasingly recognize the need to go beyond the principles of classical law.

While official legal norms establish land use relations, legal practice often fails to take into account the nuances of the socio-political realities of each community. A critical perspective on land governance emphasizes the importance of studying law not only within the framework of official normative regulations but also through the lens of power and social relations (Lund, 2016; Peluso & Lund, 2011). Land rights emerge and evolve through struggles over control of, and decision-making about, land and its resources. Land law is therefore a multidisciplinary concept intertwined with many other disciplines.

Indonesia is a clear example of how land governance issues intertwine with other aspects of society. As one of the largest agricultural producers in Southeast Asia, Indonesia is undergoing rapid urbanization and an expansion of extractive industries and plantation farming, which has led to the constant emergence of agrarian conflicts in the country. Demonstrations at both the national and international levels illustrate the large-scale nature of the problem, as Indonesia's NGOs report hundreds of land disputes in various sectors of the economy. The interactions between local communities, business representatives, and government authorities are complicated by the fact that economic development often goes hand in hand with the destruction of land resources (Hall et al., 2011).

Land governance issues are becoming pressing for many countries as they face the challenges of population growth, climate change, and resource depletion. At the same time, these problems demonstrate the importance of law in land relations as well as its limitations in the face of local particularities. Agrarian law is an integral part of the legal system, regulating some of the most fundamental relations for the existence and development of any society.

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However, the study of law as a science is unable to fully appreciate the complexity of land governance, since land governance is a multidisciplinary and multi-scalar concept. To understand the mechanisms of land governance and how it develops, one must study legal norms in the context of power structures and legal practice, taking into account the socio-political and socio-economic characteristics of each society, as well as its ecological relationships.

2. *Implications for Legal Education*

Land governance issues are becoming increasingly complicated amid contemporary social dynamics, which presents a substantial challenge to legal pedagogy, particularly in the field of agrarian law. Traditional legal studies and the underlying pedagogical discourse have been dominated by a doctrinal approach that emphasizes the systemic rationality of law and its internal methods of decision-making and argumentation. This approach has long been considered an integral part of professional legal education but has recently been criticized as ineffective tools for addressing complex social problems (Tamanaha, 2012; Twining, 2009).

Agrarian law, the subject of this research, has traditionally been taught as a doctrinal discipline, with the main emphasis on normative techniques and procedures for registering land ownership, land administration, and authority over land. Future lawyers studying this discipline are advised to develop skills in evaluating norms, examining judicial practice, and applying statutory law to typical and atypical cases. At the same time, the rigidity of the doctrinal approach to studying agrarian law leads to the dominance of formal-legal elements in the training of future lawyers, which, in turn, makes it difficult for them to take a socio-ecological approach to analyzing land relations (Banakar & Travers, 2005). This issue is relevant because, in the field of agrarian law,

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complex and multilayered conflicts arise in which legal, political, economic, and social factors are inextricably linked (Wahanisa et al., 2025; Leliak, 2025).

In addition, legal education often fails to provide students with the skills and competencies they need to address a broader set of factors related to conflicts in agrarian relations, be they customary, political, economic, or ecological (Peluso & Lund, 2011; Lobubun, 2026). A socio-legal approach that treats law as a phenomenon that exists within a complex system of political, economic, and social structures is gradually being recognized as the most promising direction in legal studies to analyze multifaceted agrarian relations (Banakar & Travers, 2005).

Legal scholars have paid considerable attention to approaches to teaching law, particularly the need to move away from the classical doctrinal paradigm and pay more attention to interdisciplinary studies. The socio-legal approach to studying law highlights the need for legal studies to consider not only legal issues but also other factors associated with the functioning of law in society, such as institutions, structures, and relations (Banakar & Travers, 2005). This approach is relevant to the study of agrarian law since the socio-economic foundations of law, especially in the field of land relations, are of great importance for understanding legal relations (Banakar & Travers, 2005). Legal norms and rules in this area are also often the result of social inequality and injustice, which means that future lawyers need to study agrarian relations using the tools of socio-legal analysis.

Scholars have also emphasized the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing complex social problems, including those associated with sustainable land governance. They note that purely legal methods and tools are no longer sufficient to understand the challenges of resource governance, while multidisciplinary studies allow for a more in-depth

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understanding of legal issues (Gibson et al., 2021; Hall et al., 2015; Peluso & Lund, 2011). In particular, the integration of economic, political, social, and ecological knowledge into the study of land relations makes it possible to understand the issues of land governance more fully.

An interdisciplinary approach is especially relevant when examining the political economy of agrarian legal relations. While the doctrinal approach examines law as a self-contained system, paying little attention to economic factors, the political economy of law examines the impact of economic processes on the evolution of legal relations and legal certainty (Borras et al., 2011; Hall et al., 2015). For example, the legal regulation of natural resources and land relations is directly related to economic processes associated with their commodification, capitalization, and marketing. The study of phenomena such as globalization and neoliberalism requires an interdisciplinary approach that considers both legal and economic factors shaping land governance (Borras et al., 2011; Hall et al., 2015).

Another factor reinforcing the need for an interdisciplinary approach to teaching agrarian law is the growing need for legal services in the context of sustainable development. With the adoption of the SDGs, many countries have pledged to achieve sustainability, which is based on three pillars: social, economic, and ecological (United Nations, 2015). The importance of an interdisciplinary approach in legal studies has also been emphasized because legal institutions need to develop and implement integrated strategies for achieving these goals. In particular, lawyers and judges need to be aware of how to shape land governance policy using legal tools with an interdisciplinary perspective (United Nations, 2015).

The issue of reforming legal education is becoming increasingly urgent in the context of the growing challenges of sustainable land governance in

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Indonesia. From the perspective of traditional legal studies, this issue is complicated by the fact that most law faculties around the world, including in Indonesia, still use the classical doctrinal approach that focuses on teaching law students the fundamentals of statutory law. This approach allows participants in the educational process—professors and future lawyers—to work within a well-defined framework that focuses on studying the exact wording of legal acts and statutes. However, the usefulness of such an approach to learning agrarian law is controversial when viewed in the context of sustainable land governance.

Agrarian law seems to be at a crossroads in terms of education, which calls for rethinking teaching approaches in the context of a new understanding of the law. First, the main goal of any legal education, including agrarian law, is to ensure that lawyers have extensive knowledge and a deep understanding of legal norms regulating land relations. Second, the study of agrarian law now requires the development and application of interdisciplinary approaches and concepts, which will allow future lawyers to take a more systemic and integrated look at the issues of land governance. Finally, legal studies require reform, which is a global issue and affects not only the teaching process but also the broader socio-cultural development of society.

B. The Dominance of Legal Formalism in Agrarian Law Education

1. Mapping the Agrarian Law Curriculum in Indonesian Universities

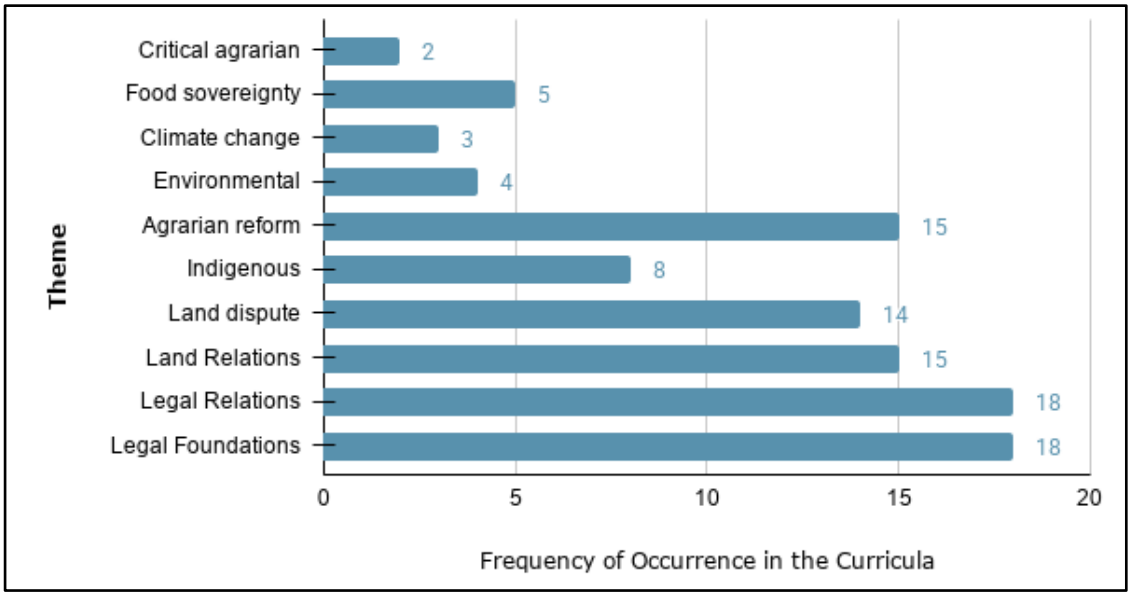
To identify the philosophical direction within which agrarian law teaching takes place at Indonesian universities, it is necessary to examine how lecturers position this issue in the official course documents. One such sources is the Semester Learning Plan (Rencana Pembelajaran Semester - RPS), which contains the basic guidelines for teaching a course. The learning objectives, topics, learning strategies, and recommended literature are usually described

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in this document. The RPS plays a particularly important role in higher education as it shapes the program's learning outcomes through specific course objectives and realizes them via the corresponding teaching plans and learning materials.

As the analysis of the publicly available RPSs for agrarian law courses shows, the framework for the agrarian law teaching practice is rather consistent across different law schools. Most of the courses outline the general learning objectives related to the understanding of the entire system of land and natural resource law, with a special focus on the doctrinal foundations of national agrarian legislation. For example, such learning outcomes as the ability to define the concept of agrarian law, classify normative acts related to land management, and qualify the legal frameworks for land administration are commonly outlined by different RPSs. In addition, most of the analyzed documents tend to put more emphasis on theoretical knowledge than on practical applications of land law.

Figure 1. Content Analysis of the 18 Agrarian Law Curricula



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The learning objectives described above are reflected in the thematic structure of the courses, in which the key concepts, such as the definition and subject of agrarian law, the development of land law before the adoption of the Basic Agrarian Law, the Basic Agrarian Law itself, land ownership, and land reform, play a central role. According to the reviewed documents, agrarian law courses are mostly structured around these topics, which clearly demonstrate the doctrinal focus of this discipline. At the same time, land law tends to cover rather narrow areas of legal studies, excluding broader socio-economic analyses of the phenomena related to land relations.

The orientation of the thematic structure toward the doctrinal foundations of agrarian law does not allow all aspects of land law to be covered, including different approaches to the resolution of agrarian conflicts, the political economy of the land, environmental governance, and land tenure. Although these topics are of great importance for a deeper understanding of the legal framework of land relations, they are largely missing from the analyzed course outlines. They are either addressed superficially or excluded from the syllabus. It can therefore be concluded that agrarian law education at Indonesian universities puts a strong emphasis on legal concepts and classifications, neglecting the need for interdisciplinary analysis of land-related issues.

These observations contribute to a better understanding of the ideological framework within which legal education is provided in Indonesia. This framework can be explained by the dominance of the so-called Langdellian understanding of law in this academic field, which focuses on the need to study the law systematically, that is, to form a complete set of legal texts. Under the influence of this idea, law is presented as a self-contained system, separated from other social institutions and phenomena (Tamanaha, 2012). Following this paradigm, legal education focuses on the study of law as a separate discipline,

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which rarely intersects with social studies. This orientation largely explains the strong emphasis on the theoretical foundations and the analysis of normative texts of agrarian law.

However, this approach makes law students rather conservative in terms of disciplinary paradigms, which limits their ability to address complex interdisciplinary issues that are increasingly important in contemporary studies of land relations (Amiluddin et al., 2026a). In this regard, the analysis of the curricular bias within the framework of agrarian law courses is helpful in identifying the conceptual flaws of legal education in general. As can be seen from the examination of the basic sources of information on land law, its teaching at Indonesian universities follows the traditional approach, which prioritizes positive law doctrines over interdisciplinary studies.

This philosophical direction within legal education, based on a strict formalistic orientation, is especially evident in the structure of agrarian law courses. The concept of "legal formalism" implies that law is a self-contained social institution characterized by a set of unique rules and principles. The key assumption of legal formalism is that the interpretation of statutes and the application of law in general depend primarily on formal legal theories (Kennedy, 2004; Tamanaha, 2012). Under the influence of this approach, legal education is dominated by the so-called "formalistic dogmatics," which focuses on the logic of law as a distinct social institution.

Legal formalism has long been recognized as one of the most prominent concepts in legal studies, which has shaped the basic understanding of law as a discipline. According to its supporters, the separation of law from other fields of human knowledge contributes to a better understanding of its unique nature and role in society. At the same time, some researchers argue that formalistic training of lawyers and judges may lead to biased interpretations of the law,

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failing to take into account important social and political contexts. This problem is especially relevant to the study of land law, since legal relations concerning land are often related to broader social issues, including natural resource management and environmental protection. Consequently, the curricular bias of agrarian law courses in Indonesia contributes to students' limited awareness of land relations.

2. *Structural Bias toward Legal Formalism*

Legal formalism's predominance in agrarian law education is determined by the structural features of the educational process itself. The modern perception of law as a formal science of a specific order was formed in a particular historical context. The Langdellian revolution of the late nineteenth century, which reshaped legal education, laid the foundation for legal formalism (Kennedy, 2004).

This approach was especially reinforced by the academic tradition of the case method and doctrinal analysis. Law in general and legal education in particular are perceived as a self-contained system, the essence and mechanisms of which can be revealed through the study of law's sources and their correlation with social life. The formalist approach to studying law is based on the assumption that law is a closed system of regulation, the sources of which are generally recognized authorities (Tamanaha, 2012).

Accordingly, for lawyers to understand the essence and specifics of regulation of each sphere of society, it is necessary to study these features in terms of their institutional and dogmatic consistency, without paying much attention to how law interacts with other social systems.

Such a structural and formal approach to legal studies shapes the perceptions of future lawyers and judges in several ways. First, legal education traditionally focuses on studying the hierarchy of norms in each regulatory

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sphere. The Constitution, statutes, and regulatory and other acts, which interact with each other, constitute a single system, the knowledge of which allows one to regulate specific areas of human activity. While this approach provides a basic understanding of how the law works, its formalist perspective is quite limited, as it does not sufficiently consider the interaction between law and other social spheres.

Second, due to its reliance on formal structures, legal education fails to consider the importance of law in the context of a changing society. According to legal formalism, the study of law should be aimed at training people in legal techniques and methods of jurisprudence. As a result, legal education pays little attention to studying land relations and the functioning of the state apparatus in the broad sense, focusing only on the formulation of property rights and obligations and ways of holding citizens to these duties (Wahanisa et al., 2026). While legal norms do regulate the relationship between the population and the state, critical agrarian studies highlight the importance of studying law in the context of political economy and sociology (Borras et al., 2011; Peluso & Lund, 2011).

Third, the teaching process in the field of agrarian law is dominated by the study of law as a system of norms, the essence and characteristics of which can only be revealed through the study of individual acts or groups of acts. Agrarian law courses traditionally do not focus enough on teaching students to understand the mechanisms of human organization, to develop their analytical and critical thinking, or to consider a single issue from different perspectives. Many of the educational methods used in the teaching of agrarian law are primarily designed to study law's concepts and norms (Peluso & Lund, 2011).

The practical component of the educational process consists mainly of training students to draft various legal documents, while the study of law from

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the perspective of other social sciences is very limited. Education in the field of agrarian law focuses heavily on the study of sources of law, theoretical foundations, and specific legal norms. At the same time, students are trained to apply their knowledge mainly through the study of legal texts, not through the analysis of real-world problems.

The structure and methods of agrarian law courses can serve as an example of how legal education shapes the approach to studying one of the most difficult areas of society's functioning. Legal norms regulating land relations develop in parallel with changes in other social spheres. The changes in the regulatory framework of land relations are primarily related to the contradictions in the functioning of the political and economic systems. The study of these phenomena is complicated by the fact that each of these spheres interacts with all the others, while legal education shapes the understanding of law primarily from the perspective of formalism.

3. The Limits of Legal Formalism

The literature on legal theory and legal education has long discussed the limitations of legal formalism in addressing complex issues of land governance. The tendency of formalism to present law as a logically consistent set of categories free from social and political conditioning has been particularly criticized. Although such an approach may well contribute to a better understanding of law, its failure to take into account the immanence of power relations, market forces, and historical tendencies in legal theory has undermined its capacity to deal adequately with politically charged issues (Kennedy, 2004).

These shortcomings can be seen in the case of agrarian law, as land relations are inevitably related to social and political aspects of society. Indeed, the issues of access to resources and their distribution are not only legal but also

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social, political, and even historical. Examining them from the viewpoint of one of these aspects, namely doctrinal law, therefore cannot lead to a complete understanding of the phenomena. At the same time, it should be recognized that critical agrarian studies often engage with the issues of accumulation, access, and appropriation at the conceptual level. From this perspective, it is possible to regard land distribution as a phenomenon that can be related to broader social and economic processes. Its patterns and advantages may depend on prevailing social systems and economic relations and vary under the influence of political and legal factors (Borras et al., 2011; Hall et al., 2015).

Another limitation of legal formalism mentioned by critics is the tendency to favor legal certainty over social justice (Lund, 2016). The pursuit of certainty is appropriate to make law accessible and predictable. However, its imposition on social policy might inflict injustice on some social groups, since certainty might be achieved at the expense of the protection and promotion of their rights. The failure of legal formalism to account for different interests might have negative consequences for the regulation of agrarian law since private and communal ownership might conflict under it. For example, the legal recognition of private ownership might undermine traditional land tenure systems, resulting in the domination of large-scale private land ownership over small-scale holding and communal structures (Lund, 2016).

It follows that legal education should go beyond the theoretical foundations of legal formalism and engage with multiple disciplinary perspectives. A critical understanding of law requires conceptual tools from political and economic sciences, sociology, and environmental studies. Such theoretical and methodological pluralism will help advance the understanding of land governance in particular and legal relations in general without undermining the value of doctrinal foundations.

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C. Reorienting the Agrarian Law Curriculum

1. Reframing the Agrarian Law Curriculum: An Urgent Need

The reform of agrarian law RPSs at universities has become a matter of great importance due to the emerging need to adjust to the new circumstances in land governance. The traditional understanding of statutory acts, particularly the Basic Agrarian Law and other regulations, as well as sector-specific laws regulating land relations, has long dominated the teaching of agrarian law at universities. Such training undoubtedly enables students to obtain fundamental knowledge of the legal framework that underpins the agricultural sector in Indonesia. At the same time, the prevalence of the legal-formalistic approach may greatly limit the ability of jurists to understand the complexity of modern land conflicts and inequalities in light of the changing conditions of land governance (Cotula, 2013; Hall et al., 2015).

The introduction of the SDGs and new realities in land governance are closely related to the need to reshape the curriculum of agrarian law. SDGs 1 and 15 emphasize the importance of social justice, natural resource management, and land governance for sustainable development. In particular, target 1.4 enshrines the right to equal opportunities in acquiring and managing economic assets, which extends to access to land resources. At the same time, targets 15.3 and 15.9 focus on the urgent need for sustainable land management and the integration of ecosystem principles into development planning (United Nations, 2015). It is therefore no longer possible to approach the teaching of agrarian law from only one perspective of the existing legal norms that regulate land relations.

Numerous empirical studies have confirmed that the root causes of land conflicts in many developing countries, including Indonesia, are deep-seated imbalances in the distribution of land, capital, and other resources, as well as

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specific characteristics of land tenure systems (Hall et al., 2011; Borras & Franco, 2012). The emergence of conflicts is often predetermined by power asymmetries among various stakeholders, such as smallholder farmers and plantation owners, national and multinational agribusinesses, and local communities and governments. Such nuances fall under the broad concept of the "political economy of land grabbing," and are rarely analyzed within the framework of a purely legal training course (Borras & Franco, 2012). As a result, future lawyers and policymakers may be unprepared to understand the complexity of individual cases of land disputes and their impact on society and the environment.

The increasing need to discuss the issue of land governance in both academic and public forums is also linked to the need to reform the agrarian law curriculum. Deininger et al. (2012) highlight that the concept of land governance is multidisciplinary, including legal, political, economic, and social aspects of regulation of land-use relations. To fully comprehend the notion of land governance, stakeholders should therefore be equipped with knowledge of different disciplines, including land administration, law, politics, and rural sociology. Students should be able to understand the system of interactions among numerous actors involved in land governance, as well as the processes that take place at different levels of governance. Agrarian law curricula should be reformed to allow students to acquire an integrated view of the legal, economic, sociological, and rural geographical aspects of land governance.

The need to reform agrarian law curricula also stems from the fact that prolonged disputes over tenure rights, both within the population and among government agencies, have recently become common in Indonesia. Such disputes often have political, economic, and social dimensions, involving a variety of actors in confrontations that frequently last for a long time after their

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initial emergence (Li, 2014; Levien, 2018). Local farming communities often come into conflict with palm oil plantation owners, developers of major infrastructure projects, and mining companies due to the limited availability of land, as well as different visions and interests in the use of this resource. Such cases demonstrate that the classical legalistic approach may be inadequate in terms of forming socially conscious lawyers who are able to analyze and resolve complex agrarian conflicts.

The reform of the agrarian law curriculum also fits into the broader context of rethinking the role of universities in society. In particular, the government of Indonesia has recently recognized the need to upgrade the education process so that it meets the needs of society in terms of coming up with effective solutions for the most pressing problems. In this vein, lawyers are viewed as key change agents, which makes it necessary to update legal studies so that graduates are capable of engaging in dynamic problem-solving processes.

The legal studies curriculum, including agrarian law, should be developed so that students are trained to adopt a scientific approach to real-world conflicts, including those related to land use policy. The role of land as a resource is changing as a result of shifts in the infrastructure development and energy sectors under Indonesia's sustainable development strategy. These trends and policy shifts have a considerable impact on the agrarian economy, which means that lawyers should be more aware of the social and environmental implications of the law to be able to drive sustainable change.

By extension, the reform of legal studies, including the agrarian law curriculum, should be conceived in the context of the broader overhaul of legal education that would enhance the role of lawyers and jurists in society. In particular, the statutory law component in the curricula should be

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supplemented with interdisciplinary insights to provide students with an in-depth understanding of the intricacies of law and governance in agriculture and associated sectors. Particular attention should be paid to cultivating their skills in socio-ecological analysis so that they can contribute effectively to high-quality land governance and promote equity in agrarian relations.

2. *Integrating Socio-Legal and Interdisciplinary Approaches*

Incorporating socio-legal and multidisciplinary approaches is one of the strategies for transforming agrarian law education. Socio-legal studies define law as a social institution that interacts with other systems within the context of broader political, economic, and cultural forces (Banakar & Travers, 2013). Accordingly, the socio-legal approach to studying agrarian law includes consideration not only of legal norms regulating land relations but also of socio-political events and processes.

The socio-legal approach is especially meaningful for agrarian law studies because it helps explain how legal norms influence social change and vice versa. For example, the failure of legal practice to consider relations of power leads to oppression and the concentration of resources among powerful social groups (Borras & Franco, 2010; Levien, 2018). Highlighting the role of law as an intermediary agent in power relations will help students critically perceive legal regulations of land relations.

Legal education in agrarian studies also requires an interdisciplinary approach to understand the complexity of land disputes and the multiplicity of social transformations associated with agrarian transitions. Agrarian studies classically combine knowledge from various fields, including political science, economics, geography, and sociology. The need for an interdisciplinary approach is explained by the fact that both traditional and modern agrarian changes are interpreted in the context of socio-economic transformations

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(Bernstein, 2010; McMichael, 2013). In other words, to comprehend the essence of agrarian law, students need to learn the interconnections between socio-economic processes and legal relations.

Interdisciplinary studies also help situate agrarian law within the context of sustainable development. Sustainable development (SD) entails the balanced combination of three components: social justice, economic growth, and environmental protection. The SD agenda defines the global priority of establishing tenure regimes and governance mechanisms for ensuring food security, economic stability, and ecosystem integrity for all people (FAO, 2012). Studying the SDGs will thus help students of agrarian law learn how legal norms can support sustainable land use.

Interdisciplinary studies, including socio-legal ones, also enable students to engage in fieldwork and gain practical experience studying real-world land disputes. Such activities help students apply theoretical legal knowledge and develop critical thinking about the functioning of legal norms and institutions (Garth & Sterling, 1998). Practical studies will also allow students to become involved in legal practice, for example, by working with local government agencies on specific land disputes (Al-Ahyani et al., 2026). The cumulative experience of interdisciplinary studies can also include the analysis of various land use conflicts and traditional tenure systems and a comparison of the theory and practice of legal norms' implementation (Cummings, 2017).

In the Indonesian context in particular, interdisciplinary studies of the relationships between land and society are essential to understand the social and ecological challenges posed by large-scale investment projects. Industrial developments such as special economic zones, coal mining, and palm oil plantations lead to extensive deforestation and land use changes in Indonesia, degrading the natural environment and causing social protests. To mitigate the

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negative effects of large-scale land investments, legal researchers and practitioners need interdisciplinary expertise to work with various stakeholders to understand multiple ecological, social, and economic factors (Rosmidah et al., 2026). Agrarian law students can analyze land use issues through the lens of socio-legal studies to understand the relationship between socio-economic transformations and legal relations.

The conceptual basis of agrarian law studies also needs interdisciplinary research, including the socio-legal approach, to provide students with a critical view of the normative base of land relations. For example, knowledge of political economy is necessary to examine the strengths and weaknesses of existing legal techniques and proposed progressive agrarian reforms (Levien, 2018). The socio-legal analysis of normative acts will allow students to go deeper into the essence of distributive justice and develop a critical understanding of the concepts of property rights and agrarian justice (Lobubun et al., 2026). Socio-legal studies also help to humanize the subject of agrarian law and pay more attention to ethical values such as social justice and sustainable development.

Interdisciplinary studies of law, including socio-legal ones, can thus improve the quality of agrarian law education in several ways. Legal education should transform the traditional mechanistic study of law by introducing students to the interactions between law and other social systems. Agrarian law, as a framework for regulating land relations, is closely related to social transformations and can be the driving force of innovation in legal studies.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Agrarian law needs to be taught as an interdisciplinary subject that deals both with legal knowledge of the interpretation and application of land-related

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legislation and with its interconnections with political, economic, social, and ecological factors related to land governance. The review of eighteen agrarian law curricula reveals that sustainability is conceptualized in a limited manner since the curricula remain largely doctrinal and legalistic, with limited links between the land-related legislation and its political, economic, social, and ecological repercussions. The main intervention point for reconstructing the agrarian law curriculum is therefore to contextualize doctrinal legal knowledge within an interdisciplinary framework for sustainable land governance.

Reconstructing agrarian law as an interdisciplinary subject should link its core legal topics with those of political economy, rural sociology, environmental studies, and development studies. This reconstruction can be achieved through a student-centered instructional design that encourages inquiry into real-world land governance issues. The redesigned curriculum will enable students to examine land-related problems from various disciplinary viewpoints and comprehend the nexus between law, sustainability, and land governance.

Reorienting agrarian law teaching toward interdisciplinary learning thus provides a curricular framework that goes beyond the predominantly doctrinal conceptualization of sustainability and connects legal knowledge with current land governance issues and Sustainable Development Goals.

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