

Rimba Raya

Contextualizing Community Responses to the Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve

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Rimba

Raya

*Contextualizing Community Responses to the Rimba Raya
Biodiversity Reserve*

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Abstract

The Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve is a private sector REDD+ project (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) in Central Kalimantan in Indonesia. Karandang is one of nine villages close to the conservation area, and they were initially negative to the project. The people in Karandang have experienced dramatic environmental and social change in a few years, connected to three external projects competing over control of the forest surrounding the village. Due to logging, conservation and conversion to palm oil plantations, individuals in Karandang have experienced exclusion, persecution and marginalization, resulting in decreased flexibility for adapting to change. Disputes over land with the palm oil companies are frequent, and while many have taken on wage work in the plantations, there is resentment that most of the profits from the production leaves Kalimantan. This is the context within which they interpret Rimba Raya.

There is a risk that the Rimba Raya project will intensify pressure on land, and villagers in Karandang remain sceptical. Discussions about Rimba Raya are dominated by fear of exclusion and lack of accountability. The project proponents are perceived as outsiders, and integrated into a narrative of historical exploitation and corruption. The Rimba Raya facilitator tries to respect local decision-making traditions, personified in the Village Head, but his role is also contested. At the interface between project and village power and knowledge is negotiated with sometimes unexpected results. In the midst of allegations and intrigues, there are attempts at negotiating the project and ensuring full and effective participation of the community. Women are severely under-represented in the project discussion. However, there are careful hopes that the project may strengthen the village economy, and their position vis-à-vis the palm oil companies.

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Acronyms

AMAN	Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara
BAU	Business As Usual
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CER	Certified Emissions Reduction
COP	Conference of the Parties
FFI	Flora & Fauna International
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
HKM	Hutan Kemasyarakatan
HTR	Hutan Tanaman Rakyat
IUPHHK-RE	Izin Usaha Pemanfaatan Hasil Hutan Kayu – Restorasi Ekosistem
KKN	Kulia Kerja Nyata
LoI	Letter of Intent
MoF	Ministry of Forestry
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Products
OFI	Orangutan Foundation International
ORCP	Orangutan Research and Conservation Project
PDD	Project Design Document
PNS	Pegawai Negeri Sipil
PT	Perseroan terbatas
PT RRC	PT Rimba Raya Conservation
PT. GBSM	PT. Gawi Bahandep Sawit Mekar
RED	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation
REDD/REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SekBer	Sekretariat Bersama
SUM	Centre for Development and the Environment
TNTP	Taman Nasional Tanjung Puting
UGM	University of Gadjah Mada
UN-Orcid	United Nations Office for REDD+ Coordination in Indonesia
UN-REDD	United Nations REDD programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VCS	Verified Carbon Standard
VCU	Verified Carbon Unit
WE	World Education
WWF	World Wildlife Fund for Nature
YCI	Yayasan Chakrawala Indonesia

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Prologue: REDD+

REDD+ is an acronym for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. The plus signifies the added elements of conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. It is a climate mitigation framework for reducing carbon emissions from forests through market mechanisms. Forest-rich developing countries should get economic incentives to protect or rehabilitate their forests, rather than developing them for industry or agriculture. Put simply, it should be as valuable, or more, *not* to cut down a tree. The idea is that countries can experience economic growth without destroying valuable natural resources and contributing to climate change.

The “Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change” (Stern 2007) recommended curbing deforestation as a highly cost-effective way to reduce emissions, and the carbon storage role of forests was emphasized as a valuable ecosystem service. The framework entered the international climate negotiations in the shape of RED (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation) in 2005 at 11th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The Norwegian Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg’s presentation of REDD¹ in COP13 in Bali in 2007 contributed to its popularity as a concept. He explained, *“the technology is well known and has been available for thousands of years. Everybody knows how not to cut down a tree.”* (Stoltenberg 2007) To demonstrate that industrialized countries were ready to ‘put money on the table’ he committed up to 3 billion Norwegian kroner to REDD-related projects per year. Norway remains an important proponent of REDD internationally. In a time where the negotiations for a new agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol have been slow, REDD+ has been a source of hope for progress and cooperation within international climate policy. In an attempt to progress in spite of the standstill in the official negotiations, REDD+ “pilot projects” were launched by individual countries, the UN (UN-REDD), the World Bank, international organisations, and private enterprises. (Lahn 2013; Angelsen 2012)

There are two sources of funding possible for REDD+ projects. Many of the currently active projects are funded through aid organizations or bilateral and multilateral finance agreements. One example of these is the Norway-Indonesia partnership. In 2010 the two countries signed a

¹ REDD became REDD+ after the Cancun Agreement. (UNFCCC 2011) In this thesis I use the terms REDD and REDD+ interchangeably.

Letter of Intent, outlining their collaboration. The other potential source of funding is that the project is integrated into a carbon markets², either a cap-and-trade compliancy market or a voluntary market. The Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve that is the focus of this thesis is an example of the latter, it produces credits to be sold on the Voluntary Carbon Market, usually to corporations as a part of Corporate Social Responsibility programs. (McNeill 2014)

Private sector REDD+ emerged out of a more general shift towards “neoliberal conservation”, especially after the financial crisis of 2008 and together with the parallel neoliberalization of the societies that traditionally have funded conservation. Privatization and the ‘rolling back’ of public administration made it more difficult to obtain public funding for conservation and other climate mitigation efforts, and proponents looked towards new sources of funding. (Brockington and Duffy 2010, 258)

At the core of REDD+ is results-based payment for avoided carbon emissions from the forests in developing countries. Carbon stored in the ground and in the trees must be transformed into a quantifiable commodity. This requires measurement and verification of carbon emissions that can be compared to a calculated baseline of how much *would* have been emitted in a non-REDD+ scenario. In this sense it is a highly technical conservation model, requiring specific technological tools, but also bureaucratic adjustment

REDD+ seemed like an easy option for taking action against climate change through results-based funding. However, it has evolved from what first seemed like a simple solution to carbon emissions, to a transformational effort directed not only at reducing emissions, but also at maintaining biodiversity, poverty reduction, and people’s rights and livelihoods. While these are important goals in themselves, they are also seen as co-beneficial and mutually reinforcing. The rights of local populations have become a core issue, at least on the policy level. Safeguards are employed to ensure the participation and free, prior and informed consent of the communities affected by REDD+ projects. (Howell 2014; McNeill 2014)

² In this thesis I refer to these market-based projects as private sector REDD projects.

Introduction

REDD+ is a global framework emerging from the need to mitigate a global problem; climate change. Pilot programs and pioneer REDD-projects are now being implemented in several countries around the world to protect the carbon stored in forests and reforest degraded areas. The lessons learnt from these early efforts should ideally feed into policymaking resulting in programs that are better and more efficient.

My thesis is a part of the project 'REDD in Comparative Perspective: Local and National Government Issues' led by Professor Signe Howell at The Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo, in collaboration with the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) and the University of Gadjah Mada (UGM) in Indonesia. Master's students from both countries have conducted fieldwork in Indonesia, producing case studies of how REDD unfolds 'on the ground'. Ethnographic fieldwork in the places, together with the people whose livelihoods are dependent upon the very forests to be protected with REDD, can afford valuable insights into the successes and failures experienced in REDD readiness and implementation. These are also the people who may well have the most to gain, or to lose, from REDD. The long duration of the fieldwork together with the emphasis on participant observation can offer a level of detail and closeness to place and the people. This is an advantage social anthropological research enjoys over other academic, donor or civil society efforts to evaluate implementation of projects, which in my experience in Indonesia is normally limited to days or at the best a few weeks in the field. As such, anthropologists can meaningfully contribute to the study of global ideas like REDD with a focus on how it is perceived and experienced by those who are directly involved.

The focus of this thesis is on one private sector REDD project in Central Kalimantan in Indonesia; the Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve. The owners of the project are the Hong Kong-based company InfiniteEARTH, and the Indonesian company they started to manage the project, PT. Rimba Raya Conservation (PT. RRC). PT. RRC is responsible for implementation together with the non-governmental organisations (NGO) World Education (WE) and Orangutan Foundation International (OFI). The Rimba Raya project is the first REDD project in Indonesia to generate carbon credits, and it is the largest REDD project in the world to have

its emissions reductions verified under the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS). When I arrived in Central Kalimantan in February 2013 it was recently decided that the largest REDD project in Indonesia at the time, the Kalimantan Forest Conservation Partnership (KFCP), would be discontinued several years before planned. KFCP has received much attention from the academic community, among them several master's students from the research project I partake in. I was motivated to focus on an area and a project that had not been studied before. Most of the REDD projects in Central Kalimantan are funded by foreign donor agencies or international organizations. Rimba Raya, being a private sector initiative approved for international carbon markets, differed from the rest of the projects in the region. In the media it was hailed as a "*Landmark Forest Protection Project*" (Reuters 2012a) and "*the world's flagship REDD+ project*" (mongabay.com 2012).

In the Rimba Raya "Project Design Document" (PDD) published by InfiniteEARTH in 2011, poverty, exclusion, hunger, disease, and lack of adequate shelter were listed as root causes of deforestation. By addressing these issues they would create a 'social buffer' that together with a guarded 'physical buffer' should protect the reserve. There were plans to "support community participation in all aspects of the project" (InfiniteEARTH 2011, 203). "[G]enuine participation by multiple stakeholders" (Satgas REDD+ 2012) is emphasized in Indonesia's national REDD+ strategy. The initial goal of my research was to explore what is meant by 'participation' by the different stakeholders, and how it is practiced.

The news that Rimba Raya was approved and ready for implementation would prove to be premature, and what met me in the field was far from the plans of collaboration and community participation described in the Project Design Document. When I arrived in the Karandang³ village where I intended to stay for the majority of my fieldwork, there had been no communication between the people living there and InfiniteEARTH, PT. Rimba Raya Conservation, or World Education for more than one year. The project would be approved later that year, followed by the return of a World Education team that set up office in the sub-district capital Telaga Pulang, and resumption of project activities. However, the months with no communication with Rimba Raya prompted me to shift my focus away from seeing REDD+ as an isolated process, and towards other simultaneous landscape-altering projects in the same geographic location. The study of other conservation efforts, large-scale both legal and illegal logging, conversion of forest to palm oil, and the environmental, social and economic change

³ Karandang is an alias for the village.

intimately tied to each of them, were essential to understanding the relation between the village and the forest. Experiences from each of these projects formed a frame of reference for the people living in Karandang that was central when meeting the returning proponents of REDD.

Main research questions and arguments

In this thesis I am concerned with the political and environmental context REDD+ is introduced in, as it is experienced for the people in Karandang, a village within Rimba Raya's project zone, and how the Rimba Raya project is interpreted in the light of this context.

1. How is environmental change experienced in Karandang, and how is it connected to the political economy of the forest?
2. To what extent is the reaction of different categories of local people in Karandang to Rimba Raya based on these experiences, and in which ways do Rimba Raya diverge from or conflate with other environmental projects in the imagination of the people in the village?

I argue that environmental degradation is intimately experienced in Karandang. This is exemplified in the diminishing fish stocks, which has prompted an economic and social transformation of the village with a partial move towards wage labour in the palm oil plantations. Drawing on Bateson (2000), I discuss the diversified income strategies in Karandang in terms of flexibility, and argue that to take work in the plantation does not represent a clear break from traditional livelihoods, but is combined with fishing, agriculture, forest products and new market opportunities are used to increase flexibility. Environmental degradation, land disputes with the palm oil companies, and conflicts with the forest police and other perceived representatives of the national park is interpreted in a narrative of historical injustice, and with feelings of aggrievement. This aggrievement is manifested in corruption charges towards members of the village administration, and, even more pronounced, towards 'outsiders' arriving with promises to help. Karandang was the village most sceptical to Rimba Raya, and initially rejected the project. To understand the reactions towards the Rimba Raya project in Karandang, I argue that this must be seen in relation with their earlier experience with projects competing for control of the forest and the internal politics and intrigues in the village. I use Long's (2001) concept of social interface to analyse the negotiation between Rimba Raya and Karandang. Basing my discussion on Dove (2011) and the experiences from Karandang I discuss how REDD+ fits into the larger context of resource extraction and the production of marginality in Kalimantan, and give some

examples of how Rimba Raya can increase villagers' flexibility and protect the forest on the local people's terms.

Theoretical background and analytical tools

The focus on results-based payment in REDD+ is what separates it from other development and conservation projects. Some REDD+ projects closely resemble aid in funding and implementation (see for example Andersen 2012). As a private sector REDD+ project the Rimba Raya *raison d'être* is conservation, and more specifically conservation of carbon stocks and rehabilitation of degraded forest with the goal of increased carbon uptake. There are social and biodiversity aspects of Rimba Raya that share traits with other development projects, they are contingent on profit made from the conservation of forest. Analysing Rimba Raya as a particular environmental project I draw on literature from environmental anthropology and its critique of the discursive and epistemological basis for conservation. Finally, I present thick description and social interface analysis as two important analytical tools that I employ throughout this thesis.

Environmental anthropology

Environmental anthropology can be used as an umbrella term covering a diverse range of anthropological methods, theories and research interest, united by a common focus on the impact of the environment on human lives and vice versa. Yet there are some recurring and evolving themes that draw the field together. Here I will focus on two central problems that are relevant to my research: The anthropological critique of the term 'nature', and the social impacts of protected areas.⁴

The word 'nature' is problematized in anthropology and several alternative terms have been suggested in an effort to overcome some of its implicit assumptions. The nature-culture dichotomy involves a conceptual separation between categories of nature and categories of culture, often with an underlying narrative that culture, i.e. people, necessarily threaten and degrade nature. Parks must be clearly separated from people, a problem I will return to below.

⁴ For a more extensive review of the history and development of environmental anthropology see Haenn and Wilk (2006) and Dove and Carpenter (2008).

'Nature' is sometimes substituted by 'natural resources'. Scott (1998) identifies this as a part of a utilitarian discourse focusing on the aspects of nature that have potential use-value for humans, and illustrates how this is related to a reclassification of species into diametric categories such as timber-underbrush and game-varmints. Alternative terms that are used are 'environment' and 'surroundings'. Vaccaro, Beltran, and Paquet (2013, 255) bring the social and political into the natural by defining environment as "an arena where different social actors with asymmetrical political power are competing for access and control of natural resources." Carrier (2004, 1) however, criticizes the term environment in that "natural states and processes are understood as those that would exist without conscious human intervention, and arguably without any human intervention at all." He emphasizes that this is at best a hypothetical standard or ideal state, and suggests instead the wider term 'surroundings'. This encapsulates not just what is sometimes described as the 'natural environment' as in the description above, but also landscape, as it is studied by anthropologists and other social scientists as "revolving around the ways that people understand and portray their material surroundings, as shaped by but not as wholly constituted by it" (2004, 2), and the built environment. The latter aspect may seem counter-intuitive when discussing conservation, but once created, the built environment constrains us and has to be made sense of in much the same ways that the natural environment and landscape do. Surroundings, then, becomes the world around us "that we, as human beings, have material, intellectual, and symbolic access to and that we work to alter and make sense of through our daily actions." (West, Igoe, and Brockington 2006, 252) In this thesis I use the terms interchangeably, while self-consciously aware of their respective connotations. (M. Dove and Carpenter 2008)

A central theme in environmental anthropology is the study of the social effects of protected areas on, on the one hand, the people living inside or close to the area and those that are displaced because of its establishment, but also NGO-workers and government agencies that create, maintain and manage the protected areas. 11%⁵ of the world's land areas are categorised as protected areas, after a sharp increase in the past 30 years. The establishment of protected areas necessarily involves land-use rights. Displacement and criminalization of local people may be the most controversial, but not uncommon, outcome. In their comprehensive review of the

⁵ West, Igoe, and Brockington 2006, p. 252. Per 2005. This figure only accounts for state activity. Adding private reserves such as Rimba Raya, which make up the majority of the protected areas in some countries may result in a significantly higher number.

anthropological literature on protected areas, West, Igoe, and Brockington (2006, 257) found that the “overwhelming impression protected-area creation leaves is of restricted access and use for rural peoples through legislation, enforcement, and privatization.” To make management and policy-making easier, simplified categories are used and “[t]he social is made to seem less complex so it can fit into the new spatial productions of conservation” (West, Igoe, and Brockington 2006, 264) and descriptively intended categories become prescriptive for activity. These categories are usually aligned with the nature-culture dichotomy discussed above, and can cause native people being denied access to historic hunting and grazing grounds. People themselves are sometimes placed into categories by how ‘close to nature’ they are. In Sulawesi, Indonesia, Li (2005 in Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner; Li 2007) found that NGO-workers and state agents envisioned a clear distinction between the people who were indigenous and those that were not, and that to what extent people were able to articulate their indigeneity was paramount in the questions of access. On the other hand she criticized the trope of ‘virtuous peasants’ and a ‘vicious state’ that ignores complex relations and agendas within small-scale communities and bureaucracies alike. (see also Moore 1998) However, conservation, being imposed from the outside based on western nature-culture thinking, becomes more than a system of classification. It also becomes a means for understanding and experiencing places, conceptualized as nature or environment. Carrier and Miller (1998, 5) identifies this as a virtualizing vision: “to see the world in terms of idealized categories, a virtual reality, and then act in ways that make the real conform to the virtual.” We (in urban western capitalist society in particular) try to understand the world by making conceptual abstractions, but as nature (or the economy) becomes increasingly disembedded from society and other aspects of our lives, we mistake the imperfect descriptions of ‘what is’ as prescriptive of what the world ought to look like. Protected areas “have become a new cosmology of the natural—a way of seeing and being in the world that is now seen as just, moral, and right.” (West, Igoe, and Brockington 2006, 255)

Environmental anthropology’s critique of western ideas of nature as antithetical to the social and their influence on the visualization and management of protected areas have inspired new ways of studying people in their surroundings in anthropology as well as other disciplines and is highly relevant when studying REDD+.

Thick description

Geertz (1973) emphasizes that ethnography *is* thick description in the ethnographer is “faced with... a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or

knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which he must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render.” (1973, 374) Using thick description in anthropological writing is to make the ‘thickness’, or the complexity and multi-layered meaning, of social action and interaction the object of analytical scrutiny. Description must include not just a superficial photographic view of a situation, but capture the emotions, thoughts, and motivations of the actors. It is more than amassing details; it is attention to context and meaning. (Ponterotto 2006)

There is also a methodological element to this. By using thick description throughout this thesis I also aim to show my own learning process, and the network of informants and contacts that I interacted with. Ethnographic fieldwork is highly situated, and cannot be replicated in the same manner as quantitative methods. By showing ‘the ethnographer’s path’ it is possible to obtain a higher level of objectivity, understood as specification of the research circumstances and exposure of possible bias. (Stewart 1998)

Social interface

A social interface is a critical point of intersection between lifeworlds, social fields or levels of social organisation where social discontinuities, based upon discrepancies in values, interests, knowledge and power, are most likely to be located.

(Long 2001, 258, emphasis in original)

Norman Long (2001) uses social interface as an analytical tool to elucidate the particulars of people’s ‘lived-in worlds’ by documenting “the ways in which people steer or muddle their ways through difficult scenarios”. (2001, 14) It is founded on an actor-oriented approach that takes agency seriously, in reaction to the more structural-oriented theories of Modernisation and Political Economy in the development literature. Individuals have knowledge and capabilities that they use to process social experience and cope with life even in unexpected adversity. Groups, for example NGOs, capitalist enterprises, or farmers groups, can also be social agents. The analytical concept of interface allows us to examine experiences of the different actors involved without reducing their motivations and expectations into reified units, even though the actors themselves might base their understanding upon reifications.

Interface situations are complex and multiple, but by focusing on the discontinuities it is possible to elicit the negotiation of power and meaning, and transformation of knowledge that takes place between actors in an encounter. I use the concept of social interface in chapter 3 to investigate a series of encounters between an NGO and villages in Seruyan.

Methodology

This thesis is based on fieldwork in Central Kalimantan in Indonesia for seven months in 2013, from February until August, and during one month in January 2014. The first month I was in the provincial capital Palangka Raya, focusing on NGOs and government agencies connected to REDD+. I then travelled south to the town Pangkalan Bun, where one NGO involved in the Rimba Raya project has their office, as well as most of the bodies pertaining to the national park bordering the reserve. From there I travelled to the village Karandang, but I returned to Pangkalan Bun several times. During my fieldwork I took three trips into the Tanjung Puting National Park (TNTP), and two trips to the national capital Jakarta to meet with the owners of the project, InfiniteEARTH, the central office of their main partner in the community aspect of Rimba Raya, World Education, and with the Norwegian Embassy. I participated in two workshops in Indonesia, one at the University of Gadjah Mada (UGM) in April in Yogyakarta for anthropology students from Indonesia and Norway studying REDD and representatives of the Indonesian civil society, and the Clinton Climate Initiative Partnership Forum in May in Bogor.

I used participant observation as my approach both in the village and with the NGOs, whenever possible, complemented with informal interviews. In Palangka Raya and Pangkalan Bun I was allowed to work from the office of first Walhi (The Indonesian Forum for Environment) and then of OFI. Working on my fieldnotes and research in the same space as them, drinking coffee together, talking with others who stopped by the office, and a few times following on field trips, became an important part of the urban part of my fieldwork. I tried to trace the inevitable digital paper trail that NGOs leave, though largely unpublished, using reports, old power point presentations, statistics, and photographs from field trips to complement my understanding of what had happened before my arrival and to compare to oral accounts. In the Karandang I often started the day walking through the village until someone called on me to stop by, or until I found someone to join in their activities. I travelled extensively by motorbike and boat to follow people to where they were when they were not in the village: to the gardens, plantations, gold mines, market towns, an NGO guard post, and to relatives in other villages and towns.

Throughout the fieldwork I took on many different roles together with being a researcher, depending on the many contexts I found myself in.

Multi-sited ethnography

REDD+ is a global project, but it is produced, negotiated and resisted in local places. As such, it cannot be accounted for ethnographically through investigation in a single site. Multi-sited ethnography, as defined by Marcus (1995, 3) is a “mode of ethnographic research self-consciously embedded in a world system, ... [that] moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space.”

The majority of my fieldwork took place in Karandang, a small village, and thereby resembling conventional ethnographic fieldwork with the focus on a location with a group of people that know each other. But I sought out other people identified as stakeholders to the project. I tried to follow the conflict over access to the forest. And so I came to study people who emphasized different parts of the same place, people who respectively wanted to control and exploit carbon, timber, soil, or fish.

One important critique of multi-sited fieldwork is that it prevents the researcher from getting in-depth knowledge in one location. I attempted to solve this by extending my fieldwork with several months, so that I did spend a total of about four months in the village. I intended to combine the merits of long-term research and focus on a small-scale community in a single site, with the multi-sited ethnography that can follow the connection among sites that are tied together by an interest in this specific forest.

When researching in different places and with very different people, I took on different roles. Marcus identifies this as being a circumstantial activist, and treating “the political as personal, but in this case it is the political as synonymous with the professional persona and, within the latter, what used to be discussed in a clinical way as the methodological.” (Marcus 1995, 98)

Main informants

In Palangka Raya the main focus of my student research team⁶ was to gain an overview of the different REDD+ actors and projects in Central Kalimantan. Instrumental for this was the Joint Secretariat (*Sekretariat Bersama –SekBer*), an office set up to facilitate cooperation between the REDD+ Task Force and the local government in the period before the establishment of a national REDD+ Agency. We interviewed Pak Migo and Pak Bambang about their impressions of current developments in the region. They worked with getting an overview over all REDD+ activities in the area and of conflicts involving overlapping concessions, a widespread problem in Indonesia. There is an active NGO community in Palangka Raya working with issues related to REDD+. Especially important for my research were Walhi, Pokker SHK and Yayasan Chakrawala Indonesia (YCI)⁷. In Pangkalan Bun the most important NGO for my project was the Orangutan Foundation International (OFI).

In the cities, my main informants were the people working for various NGOs and the people they associated with. In Pangkalan Bun I became a part of a group of young NGO-workers, journalists and people working with tourism in the national park. They were brought together by their common concern for the local environment and orangutans, and often met in the NGO office or coffee shops to discuss politics, gossip, drink coffee and smoke. I joined one of the tour guides to visit the Tanjung Puting national park, where I was allowed to work as an assistant tour guide on two occasions. To establish myself as different from the tourists I ate and slept in the hull of the boat with the rest of the crew, and I stayed in the back of the group with the park rangers and guides most of the time while the tourists stood in the front trying to catch a photograph of the orangutans.

In Karandang my informants were plantation workers, farmers, housewives, high school students, public officials, fishermen, gold miners, or any combination of these. I lived on both sides of the river at different times, and tried to talk with everyone in the village. I frequently met with the people who had moved to the plantations. I became especially close with the family of Acil Haji, where I always felt welcome to eat with them and join them in what they were doing, and to see the village from inside a household. Her daughter, Ida, became my Banjarese teacher

⁶ Larastiti Ciptinangrat and Yetty Oktayanty from the University of Gadjah Mada.

⁷ We also met with and interviewed the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Aliansi Nusantara Masyarakat Adat (AMAN), the UN Office for REDD+ Coordination in Indonesia (UN-Orcid), Teropong and Flora and Fauna International (FFI).

and took it upon herself to make sure I was informed about all of the events in the village. When the World Education (WE) team returned to Karandang, I spent time at their office, and followed them on a trip to four villages to meet the village administrations.

I attended the 19th COP held in Poland in 2013. While I was there as an activist and not as a researcher, I nevertheless gained important insights from how REDD+ designed at this scale, which prompted questions that I brought back to Central Kalimantan in January of 2014.

Reflections on doing collective research

I conducted the first part of my fieldwork in a student team together with two Indonesian master students from the University of Gadjah Mada, Laras and Yetty. While we ended up focusing on very different projects in different regions, we shared valuable discussions before, under and after the fieldwork. We met a few times during the individual part of the fieldwork, and to discuss and compare our findings turned out to be a valuable analytical exercise. We helped each other with languages, we spoke in Indonesian during the day so I could learn, and English after sunset while we were reading and discussing reports and anthropological literature. In the first few Indonesian language interviews their help was invaluable, as we compared notes and discussed the content afterwards.

In Oslo and in Yogyakarta I was involved in networks of students researching REDD. Extensive discussions and comparison of projects with Norwegian and Indonesian students researching forests and people in Indonesia contributed to shaping my research plans and subsequent analysis. The work of master's students at the University of Oslo who had done fieldwork about REDD in Indonesia and elsewhere aided me in my preparations, and as comparative cases after my return. Especially important were the theses of Sara Hansen (2012) from Sulawesi in Indonesia and Ingvild Andersen (2012) from Zanzibar in Tanzania.

Ethical reflections and possible limitations

When I arrived in the village I originally hoped to stay with a family, and I was offered a room in the house of people that kindly took me in when I arrived. However, I met them through an NGO-worker who explained in no uncertain terms that he was afraid that if I stayed in their

house and something ‘happened’, he expected that he would be blamed and that it would hurt his and his family’s relationship with the village. I saw no other option but to look for a place to live alone. I lived with the family who had invited me to stay with them for a few days until I could find my own place, and they seemed sad and slightly offended when I declined their offer. For the first month I rented a *kos*, one of several small flats in a house that were rented out to single workers or small families. This was just outside of the village, but still in walking distance from East Karandang. Afterwards I was allowed to stay in the village office on the other side of the river, a large empty wooden house on the riverbank that was not in use. My neighbour lent me a mattress, and there was a desk and a chair that I could use. Without a kitchen⁸, I usually ate in the small *warungs*⁹ that served food, or with my neighbours.

The fact that I lived alone, and I was indeed the only young person in the village that did, affected my relationship with the other villagers. I did visit others in their homes almost every day, and sometimes slept there for a few days, and so I did get the chance to learn about their domestic lives. When I returned in 2014 I lived in the house of a family for two weeks. There were also possible advantages to living alone, in that I could move freely around the village and between the village and the city.

It is difficult to integrate into a foreign society and negotiate between the sometimes-contradictory expectations to a guest and a researcher. Briggs (1970) underlines how the relationships between an anthropologist and her hosts is dynamic rather than static, and that rapport is not something you can gradually work towards until you achieve it and can check it off the list. Even though I lived alone for most of my fieldwork in the village, I had to adhere to some of the same expectations as other unmarried girls. I was not allowed to go out alone after dark or into the forest by myself. Other expectations I continually negotiated, for example to be alone to write, or to be able to speak with men without a guardian. A part of integration into a foreign community is the process of ‘unlearning’ one’s own culturally specific understanding of certain roles. This is a demanding process. Adjusting my clothes and to act helpful and docile in the house was relatively easy. But the continuous stream of comments on how I should sit, when I should bathe, and not to exhaust myself by walking felt like an intrusion of privacy and attack on my independence. While it was meant to be caring (at least some of the time) and other

⁸ I did however borrow a small stove and bought some utensils so I could cook simple meals for myself during the month of Ramadhan.

⁹ A *warung* is a small Indonesian shop. It is often in the front room of the owner’s house, and sell groceries and other goods, or serve food.

women my age received similar commands, particularly the last point, that I should not exert myself, was difficult to combine with the role of the researcher. To prove a point I started jogging every morning before sunrise and told everyone that in Norway we feel good if we move our bodies. And whenever possible I insisted in joining people who were walking to the shop or to their gardens, saying how much I loved to go walking. Eventually I had a breakthrough. After three weeks in the village I was sitting in the front room in the house of a family I knew well. A group of teenagers were going to the docks, and I asked if I could join them. A visiting woman quickly interjected that they should not take me with them. It was too hot and I would only get tired. That was when the mother of the house told her that it was no problem, I actually liked walking –I even went jogging.

Being a woman also had some definite advantages in that I, like Briggs, am physically unthreatening. I could move between women and men's spheres on formal occasions (except for those in the mosque), and I had access to informants of both genders and all ages. Still, I never quite fit into a 'daughter' role, and was rather placed in other roles familiar to the community: sometimes student, friend, other times exotic foreigner, stranger or simpleton. I always introduced myself as a student. The student doing fieldwork is a well-established role in Indonesia. *Kuliah Kerja Nyata* (KKN) is a mandatory activity for all bachelor's students across all disciplines, based on fieldwork or practical work engaging with local communities and institutions. It provided a suitable local category for me in many contexts.

Being a foreigner always drew a lot of attention. There are very few foreigners in Seruyan, and fewer still that speak Indonesian. Also in the cities I became an attraction more often than I would like. Many people explained that I was the first person from another country they had ever talked with. On the one hand, it helped me gain access to people and places I would likely not have otherwise, and many people were incredibly patient as I slowly learnt the language, asked stupid questions and made one social faux-pas after the other. On the other hand, it was a disadvantage that I always seemed to draw too much attention whenever going somewhere new. Being a foreigner created limitations, but also opportunities in my research.

Being a Norwegian was significant during the part of my fieldwork in the cities. Almost every NGO I encountered was somehow connected to Norwegian funding in the present or in the past, either through the Norwegian Embassy, the Rainforest Foundation, or Norad. I frequently explained that I had no power over Norwegian funding. After an informal dinner in Pangkalan

Bun organized by some visiting people from the Clinton Climate Initiative together with local NGO employees and a few researchers and students, the highest-ranking person in the Clinton Climate Initiative stood up and jokingly thanked me for the dinner –they were funded by Norad. While this was in good humour, I tried to be careful not to give anyone false expectations.

In Pangkalan Bun and Karandang it was important for me not to be seen as a representative of Rimba Raya, Orangutan Foundation International or World Education, and it was something I had to specify and explain every time I spoke with someone new about topics related to them. Yet, I once overheard someone describing me on the phone as the “Rimba Raya girl”. I cannot be sure that there were not people who censored what they would tell me because they believed I reported back to any of these. When I met with representatives of Rimba Raya or their partners I tried to be careful to only speak about the village in general terms, and on some occasions when they directed the conversation towards topics I thought were too sensitive, such as details about the gold mines, I explained that I could not talk about it.

Researching in a small village poses many challenges for anonymisation. The name Karandang is itself an alias. In this thesis I use aliases for all of my informants in the village. For the people I spoke with in the cities, I use their full name if we met while they were in official capacity. If not, I have altered my writing to more general terms. Changing a name is not always sufficient, and so for some of the people who could be recognizable I have altered some central characteristics when it does not affect the context, or even divided them into two aliases.

Informed consent is one of the most important principles in ethnographic research, and something I tried to keep as a standard at all times. This was not always easy, because many of the people I talked with, in the city as well as the village, seemed to find it unbearably boring. I arrived in the field with a small speech I had prepared in Indonesian explaining who I was and what the data would be used for, anonymisation and do-no-harm. While this lasted only for a few minutes, to my frustration, the person I was speaking to often changed the topic. I tried instead to treat informed consent as a process, and to resume my explanation at a later time, and to ask explicitly if I could use the information for my thesis when we discussed particularly sensitive information.

There are additional ethical aspects that must be considered as I touched upon several illegal activities during my research. I experienced and learnt about corruption on different levels, it is a

part of the Rimba Raya story that cannot be excluded. In addition there is the case of illegal mining, in the term used in the city, or “community mining”, as one person I talked to who works with it described it. The village also has a long history of illegal logging that I found highly relevant. While illegal, these activities are far from secret, and I doubt my observations will surprise anyone who is familiar with my field. I have however tried to take extra care when it comes to explaining my project and acquiring informed consent from actors involved in illegal activities, especially in the case with illegal mining, and to be careful to make my informants anonymous, both in my fieldnotes in the case they should fall into wrong hand, in my writing afterwards.

Language

I attended an Indonesian language course for six weeks before starting my fieldwork. I did almost all interviews and informal conversations in Indonesian, but looking back at my notes, there was a lot I did not understand in the first few months. During the first month in Palangka Raya I did most meetings together with the two Indonesian students doing research in Kalimantan, and I often relied on discussing the parts I did not understand with them afterwards. However, I worked hard to improve my language skills to the point where I could do interviews in Indonesian independently and take detailed notes.

In the village I met a new challenge in that the everyday language was not Indonesian but Banjarese. In the beginning, I therefore relied heavily on talking with the people who could speak fluent Indonesian, and I noticed a clear bias in that most, though not all of these, either had higher education or originally came from Java. To avoid this bias, I began learning Banjarese. Though not fluent, I was able to learn enough to understand when talking with someone directly. However, I still found it difficult to follow group conversations. Most of my main informants were fluent in both Indonesian and Banjarese, and often helped me if there was something I did not understand.

Translation from Indonesian or Banjar to English is not unproblematic, as these languages do not use grammar to signify temporality the way that English does. Unless the speaker specifies the time that is referred to, translation partially becomes guesswork. In Banjarese a statement out of its context such as “*Ulu nu kar iwak*” can be translated as “I have bought fish”, “I bought fish”, “I am buying fish” or “I will buy fish”. In my translations I try to use the tense that best

fits the context, and if it is unclear I include the original text. In this thesis I mark Indonesian and Banjarese words in italics.

Structure of thesis

I begin by introducing Indonesia in REDD+ in more detail. I offer a review of some important historical and political issues that are relevant for my research, and present some relevant regional ethnography. I present the Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve, their main partners, and the safeguard framework that they use.

In chapter 1 I introduce the Karandang village, and discuss village organization and the experience of environmental and social change with references to flexibility.

In chapter 2 I discuss the political economy of the area that is now the Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve. I focus on three significant landscape-altering projects; logging, conservation and palm oil production.

In chapter 3 I discuss the Rimba Raya project in more detail by following their partner, World Education, which is facilitating the project in the villages. I discuss relations between Rimba Raya and Karandang in terms of “corruption talk” and a historical processes of exploitation in Kalimantan, and some ways the project may contribute to strengthen or undermine the flexibility of the Karandang.

I conclude the thesis with some final remarks drawing my findings together.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia and REDD+

Indonesia is an archipelago of 13 667 islands and the fourth most populous country in the world. The majority of the country's more than 250 million people inhabit the central island Java, where the capital Jakarta is situated. The largest island is Borneo. Borneo is divided between three countries, Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia, and the name of the Indonesian part is Kalimantan. The Indonesian language, Bahasa Indonesia, was elected the official language during the conference of Bandung in 1928, to unify a people speaking more than 600 regional languages. (Smedal 1996)

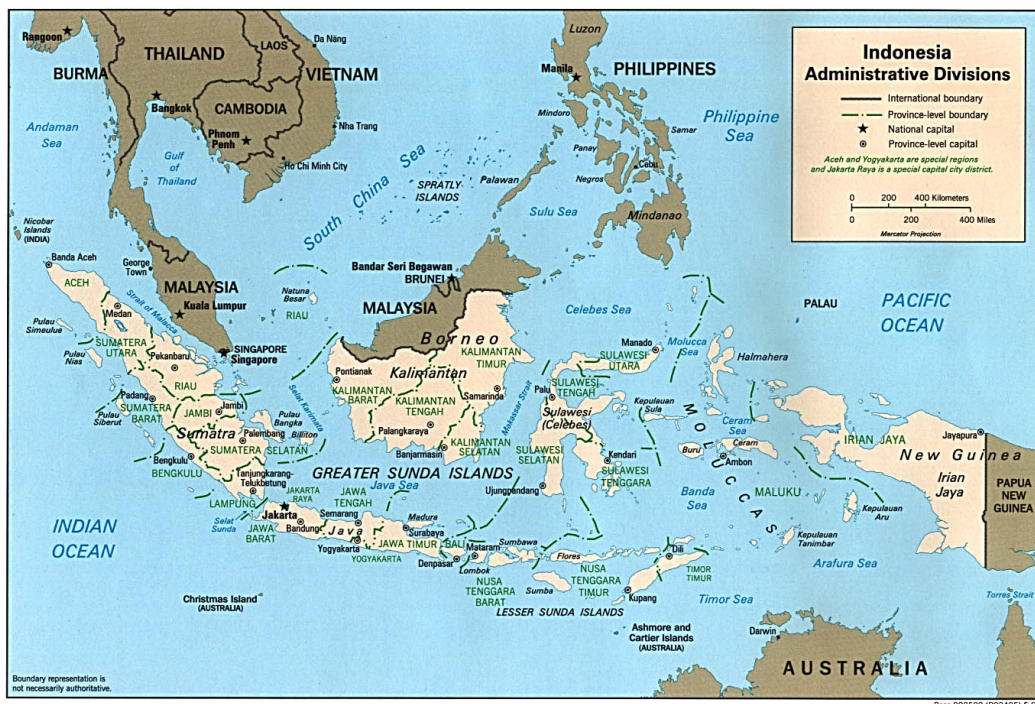


Figure 1: Map of Indonesia (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency 1998)

Indonesia has the third largest rainforest in the world, most of which is in Kalimantan and West Papua. The forests are rich in biodiversity and home to many endemic species, among them the orangutans of Kalimantan and Sumatra. However, pressure from the palm oil industry, logging, mining and agriculture has led to the loss of 20 000 ha of forest every year. (Amianti 2014)

In this chapter I will present an introduction to some central historical developments and political themes that are relevant for my research, and discuss some of the regional ethnography about the social impact of forestry and conservation in Indonesia. I will then present my field of study: a REDD+ project in Central Kalimantan. I introduce Rimba Raya project, their main partners, World Education and Orangutan Foundation International, and discuss the safeguards and standards that apply for this project.

History and politics

Humans and our ancestors have inhabited the Indonesian islands for 1-1.8 billion years. The Dutch began colonizing the islands in the 17th century, but long ignored Kalimantan. During the Second World War Japanese forces occupied the country. Indonesia finally gained independence in 1949. Under the first president, President Soekarno, the country experimented with “guided democracy” and nation-building. In the 1960s General Suharto gained more power, and eventually seized the presidency.

“The New Order” (*Orde Baru*) is a term used to characterize the period of Indonesian history under President Suharto from 1966-1998, coined by the President himself to differentiate his rule from the “old order” of President Soekarno. Suharto was committed to economic development and political control, strongly anti-communist and welcoming to foreign enterprises, which gained him the political and economic support of the United States of America. Indonesia adopted policies encouraged by the World Bank and IMF in return for Western economic assistance. In the 1970s-1980s they experienced strong economic growth and the emergence of a new middle class, largely due to revenue from oil. The majority party was Golkar, and from 1973 only two other parties were allowed to participate in parliamentary elections, under strict terms set by the government. Political adversaries were violently oppressed,¹⁰ and freedom of speech severely limited with fear of being accused of being a communist. During the New Order the power of regional governments were strictly limited, and the central government appointed local, district and regional leaders. Reporting directly to Jakarta, the military was closely involved in the regional economy and politics. Eventually many

¹⁰ In the anti-communist killings of 1965-1966 conducted by paracommandos, youth groups and thugs backed by the regime left at least half a million people dead. The perpetrators escaped with impunity until this day. (Ricklefs 2001)

of the regimes original allies turned against it, and the pro-democracy movement grew, peaking with massive student demonstrations. In 1998 the New Order collapsed, and President Suharto was forced to resign. (Ricklefs 2001; N. L. Peluso and Vandergeest 2011)

The period following Suharto’s three decades in power is known as *reformasi* (reform) in Indonesia. During this period there has been a move towards stronger democracy and greater freedom of speech, but many of the problems from the New Order remain. The Ministry of Forestry has fought to maintain its power over forest areas. As a part of decentralization reforms, direct elections were introduced at the local (city/village), regency and province level. REDD projects have to engage with legal framework and political context on all levels of government. This is an overview over the political organization in Indonesia:

Administrative unit	Leader
Province (<i>provinsi</i>)	Governor (<i>gubernur</i>)
Regency (<i>kabupaten</i>)	Regent (<i>bupati</i>)
District (<i>kacamatan</i>)	Head of district (<i>catan</i>)
City (<i>kota</i>) / Village (<i>desa</i>)	Mayor (<i>walikota</i>) / Village Head (<i>kepala desa</i>)

Figure 2: Table of political levels in Indonesia

Decentralization has opened spaces for positive change, that NGOs take advantage of to shed light on topics that were avoided in the past, for example rights of indigenous peoples. However, the legacy of the New Order remains on different levels of governance, including capture of resources by local elites, problems of accountability, and corruption. (McCarthy 2004)

Forestry

Logging has been seen as an ideal way of earning money for the state since the 1960s, and decades of “crony capitalism” and generous concessions has devastated large areas of land. In Kalimantan local peoples were frequently displaced from their homes. In 1981 the worst forest fire in recorded human history broke out, which burnt for two years. Approximately 60% of the country’s current emissions are caused by deforestation, forest degradation and peat land destruction. (Madeira et al. 2010, 30)(Ricklefs 2001)

After independence there was an attempt at introducing a land reform to alter the colonial land law to better conditions for the rural poor. However, it was severely contested, adding to existing political unrest. In 1967 president Soekarno was overthrown. By classifying 73% of Indonesia's land area as state forest, the new president Suharto reformed land administration in favour of domestic, state-owned and foreign business interests, rather than the rural poor. During the New Order the central government had complete control of the issuing of forest concessions through the Forest Concession Rights (*Hak Pengusahaan Hutan, HPH*), often using this to issue rights over forest production to public corporations, branches of the military, and Jakarta-based corporations with close ties to Suharto. During *reformasi* some of this authority was decentralized to provincial and district administrations. (Morishita 2008; N. L. Peluso and Vandergeest 2011; Clarke, Mackenzie, and Suntana 2010)

Corruption

A survey conducted by the Abu Dhabi Gallup Center (2011) found that 91% of Indonesians perceive that corruption is widespread in government, and 86% that it is widespread in business. Indonesia has been identified as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. While there are signs of improvement after anti-corruption efforts in the past decade, it remains a major problem. (Morishita 2008)

During the New Order the central government was openly corrupt, and President Suharto greatly enriched himself and his family. His wife, Mrs Tien, was nicknamed Mrs Ten Percent. The Ministry of Forestry is identified as the most corrupt ministry, and there have been many scandals¹¹. The decentralization reforms have been criticized for their vagueness on the issue of corruption, and because their delegation of authority to districts have encouraged “strong-man politics” and new opportunities for local corruption. (Ricklefs 2001; Bubandt 2006)

Regional ethnography

While there is not much anthropological literature specifically on REDD in Indonesia yet, the literature on other social aspects of forestry and conservation efforts in the region is substantial.

¹¹ I discuss this in more detail in the context of Seruyan in chapter 2.

Knowledge and power, marginalization and property rights are some central themes in the literature on conservation and development in Indonesia. The selection I will present here are limited to authors that are particularly relevant thematically and regionally, and that have influenced my fieldwork and the writing of this thesis.

Particularly relevant for my research is the anthropology on relations between forest-dependent communities and NGOs, the state and other development actors. Tanya Murray Li bases her book “The Will to Improve” (2007) on fieldwork in Sulawesi, but gives a thorough account of the history and logic of improvement schemes in Indonesia, including conservation efforts. These improvement schemes are created in specific power constellations, and thus that “the claim to expertise in optimizing the lives of others is a claim to power, [is] one that merits careful scrutiny” (Li 2007, 5). Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing (1993; 2005) done extensive research in South Kalimantan about the relations within Meratus Dayak communities, in political and environmental projects. Her approach to marginality as “an ongoing relationship with power” (Tsing 1993, 90) in state-making and place-making informs my thesis. She argues for an understanding of processes of marginalization in Indonesia in light of centre-periphery relations.

Michael Dove (2011) writes about the historical relation between smallholders and regional elites and the Indonesian state. He discusses commodity production and the connection between material wealth and political marginalization in Kalimantan, with references to power structures linking the centre and the periphery. Nancy Peluso has written about the role of forests in the Indonesian state-making projects in Java (1992) and in Kalimantan (Peluso and Vandergeest 2011; Peluso 2012), especially with references to the use of science and violence in an effort to “tame” the jungle and the people there. She has also written about property rights (2003), where she discusses the production of meaning in relation to the landscape. A central point is that property must be seen as process, rather than a product of institutions, social structures and rights.

Paige West’s “Conservation Is Our Government Now” (2006) draws on fieldwork from Papua New Guinea, but is highly relevant for Indonesia as well. She discusses a “conservation-as-development project”, and argues that a contract was established between the Gimi people and the “outsiders”, conservation planners and practitioners, which was interpreted in very different ways, sometimes leading to misunderstanding and disillusionment for both parties. West continues to describe the process of commodification of the Gimi environment and their social

relations, and how this altered the notion of personhood among them. I suggest that these points can be useful when examining REDD+, and especially the dynamics between the different stakeholders.

Pujo Semedi (2012) has written about the “Dynamics of Swidden Agriculture” in the northern part of the Seruyan principality, and found that smallholders’ practices were based not on romantic notions of tradition, but were rather rational and calculating, combining swidden agriculture with other livelihoods.

Field of Study: REDD+ in Indonesia

In 2009, President Susilo Bambang Yodhyono stated that by 2020 Indonesia will voluntarily reduce its carbon emissions by 26% on its own or 41% with international support and funding. (Madeira et al. 2010, 30) In the absence of a new Kyoto agreement, Indonesia has entered into bilateral agreements with donor countries, among them Norway. In 2010 Indonesia and Norway signed a ‘Letter of Intent’ (LoI). An important part of this was letter was the commitment that Indonesia would impose a moratorium, ensuring a 2-years suspension of forest concessions for the conversion of forest and peat land. The moratorium was finally enacted in May 2011, five months after the date initially agreed upon. It represents some opportunities in Indonesia, but also many challenges. In the Letter of Intent signed with Norway it was decided that Indonesia should choose a pilot province for REDD+. Central Kalimantan was chosen.

Central Kalimantan

Central Kalimantan (*Kalimantan Tengah*) is one of five provinces in Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo. It is the third largest province in Indonesia, but with 1.8 million¹² people, it is also one of the most sparsely populated regions. The regional capital is Palangka Raya.

Bordering the province in the north is the Schwaner Mountains, while tropical and peat land forests largely characterize the central and southern parts. Many of the regencies stretch through the province from the north to the south following the many rivers, which are of great importance for communication and transportation.

¹² Based on a census from 2000 produced by Centre for Statistics (*Badan Pusat Statistik*) reproduced in Morishita 2008, p. 99.

The focus of my research is on the village Karandang (marked on the map below) that lies within the Rimba Raya project zone. The Rimba Raya project is in the Seruyan principality in Central Kalimantan, stretching along the west side of the Seruyan River. West of the project zone is the Tanjung Puting National Park, while palm oil plantations dominate the areas immediately to the north and east.

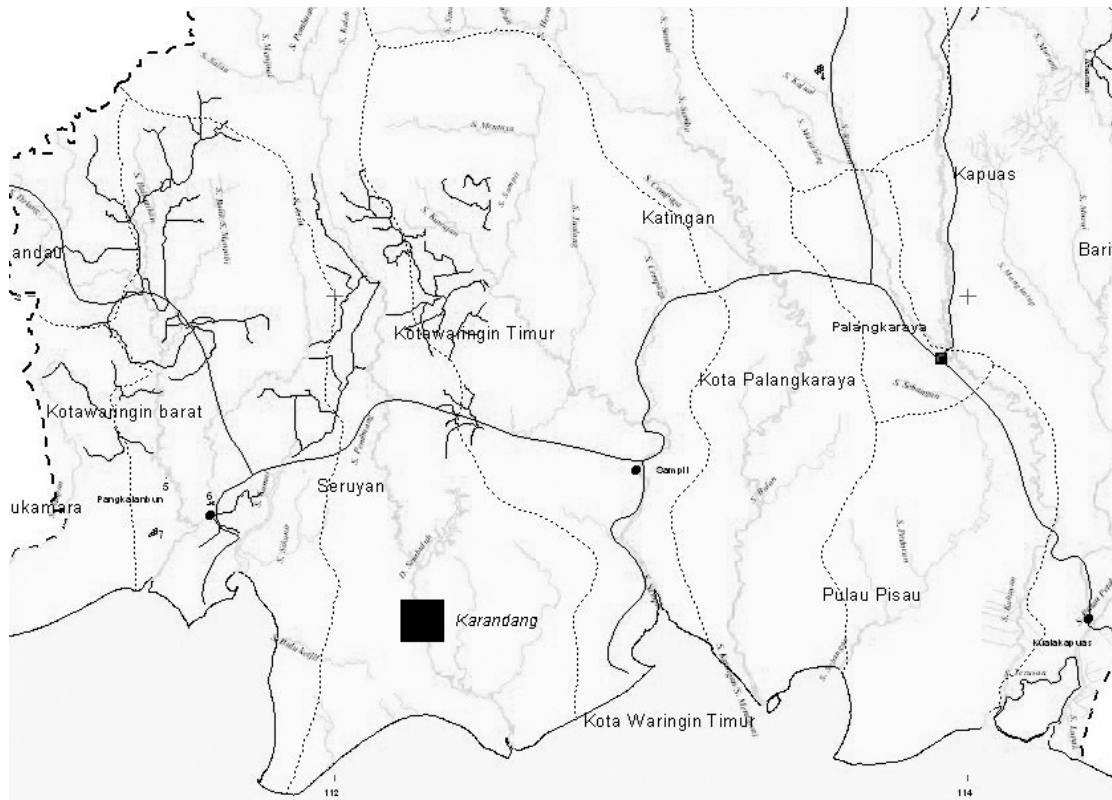


Figure 3: Map of the southern part of Central Kalimantan¹³

The Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve

The Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve Project (from now on called Rimba Raya) is a private sector REDD+ project to reduce carbon emissions by avoided deforestation in an area originally zoned for conversion to palm oil. Rimba Raya was developed by InfiniteEARTH, a company based in Hong Kong with an American founder and Chairman, Todd Lemons, and Managing Director Jim Procanik. The project is run through the Indonesian registered PT. Rimba Raya Conservation (PT.RRC), with a board of directors based in Jakarta. From June 2013 an office

¹³ Adapted from <http://loketpeta.pu.go.id/peta/irigasi-provinsi-kalimantan-tengah/> (Accessed: 08/11/14)

was established in Pangkalan Bun, sharing location with Orangutan Foundation International (OFI).

Rimba Raya begun in 2008 as a CER-project (Certified Emissions Reduction) under the CDM (Clean Development Mechanism)¹⁴. This means it would be a tradable credit within the Kyoto Protocol's cap-and-trade scheme. Post-Kyoto the credits can still be sold, but on the Voluntary Carbon Market. By 2010 Rimba Raya was rearticulated as a REDD project, and an extensive Project Design Document (PDD) was submitted for validation for the Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) standard. They achieved validation in 2011, with gold level for "Climate Change Adaptation Benefits", "Exceptional Community Benefits" and "Exceptional Biodiversity Benefits", and verification in 2013. Of the around 40 REDD+ pilot projects in Indonesia Rimba Raya is unique in Indonesia in that it has a government license, and have been validated and verified to achieve the Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB)¹⁵ Standard and Verified Carbon Standard (VCS). The VCS allows InfiniteEARTH to sell one Verified Carbon Unit (VCU) for every ton of CO² that is not emitted into the atmosphere, as long as they can demonstrate that reduction would not have occurred under a "business as usual" (BAU) scenario. The Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve is the first REDD project in Indonesia to enter the carbon market. They pre-sold credits to get the necessary funding to start the project to the Russian Energy giant Gazprom and German insurance company Allianz. The former invested over \$1 million in the project. (Scientific Certification Systems 2011; InfiniteEARTH 2011; Reuters 2011; Reuters 2012b; Angelsen 2012; CCBA 2013)

Rimba Raya were active in the villages in Seruyan in 2007-2010, as they prepared the project design and worked through the process needed to acquire a license from the Ministry of Forestry. However, in 2011, authorities distributed the land to palm oil companies instead, and expanding the area of the Tanjung Puting National Park in such a way that it would be impossible to manage a REDD+ project in this area. Rimba Raya focused all of their attention on resolving this on a national level, and pulled their employees back from Kalimantan, and ended the contracts with their partners. After the project design had been validated and

¹⁴ The Clean Development Mechanism is a framework for offsetting carbon emissions. Parties to the Kyoto Protocol were given a "cap", an emissions quota. To increase a country's maximum allowed emissions, it is then possible to buy credits from a project that reduces emissions compared to a without project scenario, and offset the equivalent tons of CO² from the national calculations.

¹⁵ Awarded by the Carbon, Community and Biodiversity Alliance. The Rainforest Alliance, CARE, The Nature Conservancy, Center for Environmental Leadership in business are among the member organisations.

extensive communication with the villages in the area to obtain their approval, Rimba Raya disappeared, and there were no news until the middle of 2013.

After years of bureaucratic struggle, in April 2013 Rimba Raya got an ecosystem restoration license¹⁶, for an area of 36 331 ha. In addition there is a joint management agreement with the bordering Tanjung Putting National Park for 18 000 ha, and a commercial agreement with the company PT Best for the lease of land while awaiting the change of land status. In total the project zone is 63 000 ha. Of this area, just over 47 000 ha is the actual Carbon Accounting Area. (SK. 146/Menhut-II/2013)

9 villages lie within the Rimba Raya project zone.¹⁷ This area is meant to serve as a social and physical buffer zone, protecting the forest in the carbon accounting area and the national park. The physical buffer will be guarded by a network of guard posts, community-based patrols, and a fire brigade, funded by Rimba Raya. The provision of social services and employment opportunities is expected to discourage illegal activities in the protected areas, and provide a social buffer. To help achieve these two functions, InfiniteEARTH works in partnership with two NGOs. (InfiniteEARTH 2011)

The Orangutan Foundation International and World Education

The Orangutan Foundation International (OFI) is based in the town Pangkalan Bun in Central Kalimantan, about 6 hours by car from the village where I did most of my fieldwork. Dr Birté Mary Galdikas, one of the world's leading experts on orangutans, founded the Orangutan Research and Conservation Project (ORCP), which later became OFI, in 1971. The focus of the NGO is research and conservation of orangutans. Central to their work is the establishment and management of the Tanjung Putting National Park (TNTP), which borders on the Seruyan forest. They were included in the Rimba Raya project because of their long experience in the area. Formally, their role is first and foremost in technical and practical expertise with the forest and orangutans. In practice, it seems they are much more important than that. Rimba Raya and OFI share an office, and OFI has a history with many of the people and communities in Seruyan. However, whenever I tried to ask anyone involved in the NGOs and Rimba Raya, I got the well-practiced statement that “World Education works with the communities, OFI works with nature”.

¹⁶ *Izin Usaha Pemanfaatan Hasil Hutan Kayu Restorasi Ekosistem (IUPHHK-RE)*

¹⁷ “The project zone” is the whole area of the Rimba Raya license and the immediately neighbouring villages.

World Education (WE) is an international NGO with their headquarters in Boston, USA, and their country office in Jakarta. They have been working in Indonesia since 1974. They have worked in Tanjung Puting National Park from 2003, mediating between OFI and the local communities, later expanding into Seruyan with fishery and agriculture programs. In 2010 they began working with InfiniteEARTH in Seruyan. Several of their staff lived and worked in Seruyan, spreading information about Rimba Raya and organizing the community consultation process. I met with the WE staff in their Jakarta office in March 2013. Throughout my fieldwork in the village I had contact with one of their ex-staff living in the same area, and he became an important informant. In July a WE team went to Seruyan to continue information work about Rimba Raya, and I was able to follow them on one trip to four villages included in the project zone.

Safeguards

REDD+ safeguards are “a set of norms or *institutions* that guide expectations surrounding social and environmental outcomes associated with the reduction of carbon emissions in developing countries.” (Jagger et al in Angelsen 2012:303, emphasis in original) There is no set of sanctions for failure to comply, but they are thought to influence the expectations of donors and private sector investors. REDD+ safeguards are a part of the negotiations of the Conference of the Parties (COP). As a part of the Cancun Agreement negotiated at COP16 in 2011, UNFCCC calls on all Parties to adhere to a set of seven safeguards. At COP19 in Warsaw it was further decided that countries should provide summary reports of how the safeguards agreed on in Cancun are being addressed. This means that national governments need to collect aggregate information from all REDD+ projects and activities to be submitted for scrutiny. However, the decision on safeguards summary has been criticized for being too weak; neither complying with safeguards or reporting how they are being addressed is obligatory, and there is no mechanism to ensure the accuracy of these reports. (UNFCCC 2011; Lang 2014a)

Laws, standards and practices pertaining to safeguards can help bring rights of local populations from the level of international climate negotiations to the national level. The Indonesian “REDD+ National Strategy” places the responsibility for formulating and evaluating the country’s safeguards with the newly established REDD+ Agency. However, until there is an agreement on REDD at the UNFCCC level, REDD-projects such as Rimba Raya will have to

rely on independent certification schemes, one of which is the Climate, Community & Biodiversity Standard (CCB) (Steni 2012; Satgas REDD+ 2012; Lang 2014b)

Climate, Community and Biodiversity standard (CCB)

Rimba Raya uses two standards to ensure the quality of their carbon credits for stakeholders such as investors and higher-level government officials. These are the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) and the Climate, Community & Biodiversity standard (CCB). The former control and verify the project developer's carbon offset calculations, which determines the carbon credits they can sell. I will focus on the latter, which audits and verifies the social and environmental impact of the project.

The Climate, Community & Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) aims “to stimulate and promote land management activities that credibly mitigate global climate change, improve the wellbeing and reduce the poverty of local communities, and conserve biodiversity.” (CCBA 2013, 1) It is a partnership of five international non-governmental organizations: Conservation International, CARE, Rainforest Alliance, The Nature Conservancy and Wildlife Conservation Society. By November 2013 when the third edition of the CCB standards was published, 15 projects had achieved verification out of the 130 projects that were planning to use these standards. One of these was Rimba Raya. CCB standards are applicable to a variety of efforts aimed at reducing carbon emission, including Afforestation, Reforestation, Revegetation projects (ARR), Improved Forest Management projects (IFM), and REDD.

The CCB Standard covers most aspects of the lives of the people impacted by the project. They cover the safeguards negotiated in the Cancun Agreement, but also include a wide range of other criteria that arose in a multi-stakeholder process organized by CCBA. As the name implies, the standards are separated into three categories; social, climate and biodiversity impacts. In the CCBA Social and Biodiversity Impact Assessment (SBIA) Manual for REDD+ Projects, social impacts are defined broadly as: people's way of life, their culture, their community, their political systems, their environment, their health and well-being, their personal and property rights, and their fears and aspirations. The details provided for each of these categories make it clear that they span most aspects of a person's life, ranging from the quality of the air they breath, civil liberties, and aspirations for the future of their children. (Richards and Panfil 2011, 5)

Independent auditors are responsible for evaluating each project to determine if they achieve the standard. There are two stages to the CCB Standard, first *validation* of the project design. The next stage is *verification*, which is meant to ensure that the project follows the project design in

practice, and that has to be undertaken within five years at the most after validation or the previous verification. It is possible to validate and verify a project even if there are shortcomings or if something is unclear. The auditor will then attach comments to the evaluation document, and the project management is responsible for replying with the measures they are taking to resolve the issues. All of these documents are public and made available on CCBA's website.

In contradiction to the seemingly ambitious demands to be able to achieve CCB verification, the application of the CCB standard has been criticized for being weak and inconsistent. In a study of four CCB validated projects, Eklöf (2013) found that auditors approved projects in spite of knowing about grave shortcomings with regards to meeting some of the indicators. Furthermore, he identified a lack of guidelines for operationalization for some of the main concepts, such as FPIC and benefit sharing, and indicators for biodiversity that are so weak that it is virtually impossible for a REDD-project *not* to fulfil them¹⁸. He concludes that CCB certification should not be taken as an assurance that communities benefit from the projects, or that FPIC and local tenure rights are respected. (Lang 2014b)

¹⁸ The biodiversity indicator is that there should be net gain in biodiversity. Any REDD project where the without project scenario is continued deforestation, this indicator will automatically be achieved. (Eklöf 2013)

CHAPTER 1

The Village: Karandang

The day starts early in the village. I have been observing the river since 4:30 am, before that I had already heard one *oes*¹⁹ passing by my house. I am sitting on the back porch of my house on the western side of the Seruyan River, with a view over the passing river traffic and East Karandang. The house is a large wooden building on the edge of the river. In this season it is two meters above the water, balancing on thin wooden stilts. A rough staircase leads down to my dock, made of large floating logs.

I know that a lot of people on this side of the river work in the palm oil plantations on the other side, and I have set out to observe and document the morning traffic on the river. It is an average Wednesday morning. It is still too dark to see how many people are in each boat, but the *oes* are easily identifiable by sound of the motors. It is more difficult to spot the silently gliding *jukung*, wooden boats that are between 1.5 and 4 meters and driven forward by one wooden paddle.

By 6:05 am 58 people have crossed from west to east, and 23 the other way. A man ties his long wooden boat to my dock to fish for shrimp. He uses a fine string that he lets out of the boat and slowly pulls back in again, using *cacing*, maggots, as bait. He lets out four strings into the water before starting to pull them in again. After some minutes I ask about his catch, but he has not gotten anything yet. He explains that he can usually get between 1-5 kg in a day, depending on the season. Before he could get up to 7 kg. The shrimps are sold for \$3 per kg²⁰ for the small ones, and \$6 for big ones. Unless it is the cheap season (*musim murah*) then even the big ones only go for about \$4 per kg.

¹⁹ Narrow wooden boats between 3-5 meters with a motor.

²⁰ All amounts given in dollars in this chapter are converted from Indonesian rupiah based on the exchange value in November 2014 and rounded to the nearest round number.

The shrimp like to live in a place where there is a lot of wood under the surface, such as under my dock. Before, there was so much shrimp that he could go home at 10 in the morning. Back then a lot of people caught shrimp in the morning, and he pointed to the furthest point of the river in the north and south, the river was full of fishing boats from here to there. As far as I can see, today it is only him who is out fishing. Now he goes out in the morning, goes home for a break around midday and then continues again until the afternoon. He had to build a small roof on his *ces* because it gets too warm when he is working long days. Before (*dulu*), he never needed one.

He points at another boat moving downstream. He is also looking for shrimp, but wants to go to a place two hours downstream. There are more shrimp there, and he can use a net to get them. But the fisherman says he thinks it is too much time wasted going back and forth. There is also a good place upstream, about an hour away.

When I ask for how long he has been working with shrimp he laughs, and explains that he has always done it. His wife runs in a *warung*. After about an hour he has gotten one big shrimp and four small ones. He moves the boat two meters downstream and continues. *Harus sabar kalau cari udang*, he says. You have to be patient if you are looking for shrimp. At 7:15 am the sun has climbed quite high in the sky, and the traffic on the river is lighter.

Karandang is a village in the Seruyan district in Central Kalimantan, and it is located within the Rimba Raya project zone. About 270 households live in wooden or concrete houses, divided by the wide milky brown Seruyan River at the point where it meets the smaller black Karandang River. Between the houses in the village are fruit trees, sugar canes and cassava. Along the rivers are small vegetable and fruit gardens, providing an extra income when sold to neighbours, in local markets or in nearby towns. The description above illustrates the economic and environmental transformation the village is undergoing, by showing two ways this change is experienced on a day-to-day basis; the steady stream of people flowing out of the village and towards a new life as wage workers in the large palm oil plantations, and for the people who stay,

the changed interaction with their surroundings, in this case manifest in the reduction of fishermen and the need shield oneself from the sun as the morning turns to midday without enough of a catch to go home.

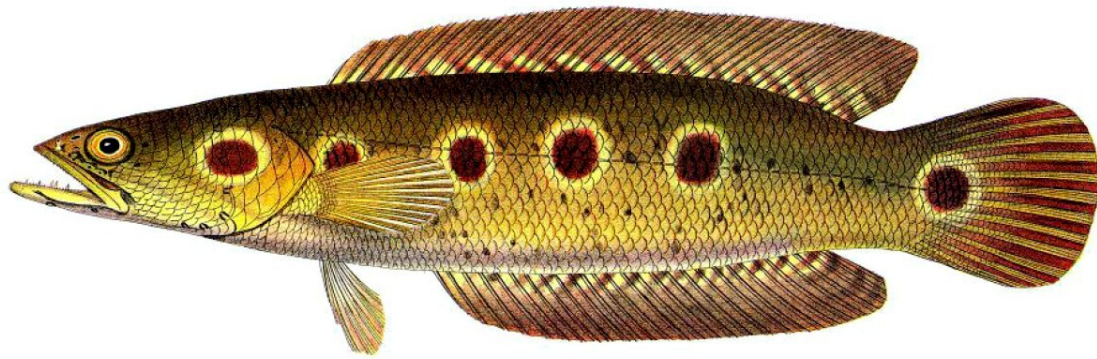


Figure 4: The Kerandang fish (*Ophicephalus pleurophthalmus*)²¹.

In this chapter I introduce the village Karandang. Using a description of the important ritual of the communal meal *selamatan* I discuss some central aspects of the social organization of the village, focusing on religion, ethnicity and gender. I present the formal political organization, and some important practical political divisions within the village. Palm oil and fish are the key sources of income in Karandang, but agriculture, forest products and the sale of export commodities are also important. I discuss agriculture and property rights in more detail, finding that a disagreement with palm oil companies over land is a major source of conflict. Finally I draw on Gold (2002; 2003) to use memories and oral history to discuss environmental and social change in Karandang, and on Bateson (2000) to examine related social changes in terms of income diversification and flexibility. I argue that the shift towards wage work in the palm oil plantations should not be seen as a clean break from the past, and from “traditional” livelihoods. Rather it can be interpreted as a continuation of diversified livelihood strategies, for the individual or for the family. However, the parallel processes of conversion to plantations and exclusion because of conservation do encroach on the range of opportunities available to the community, leading to a discourse of insecurity and aggrievement.

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“Community” should not be seen as a natural unit or scale. It has been important in the history of anthropology, but not so much as a theoretical concept as a methodology of long-term fieldwork with people with frequent interaction within an imagined bounded group. However the adoption of the term community by development and conservation organizations is often problematic, and has been followed by substantial anthropological critique (see West 2006; M. R. Dove 2006b; M. Dove and Carpenter 2008). Community evokes associations of stability and equilibrium, and can disguise different abilities to access power. In my discussion I use the word community when exploring “a kind of social conglomeration produced over space and time... a more complex social configuration.” (West 2006, 36) It does not inspire a homogenous discourse, but rather “shifting, multi-stranded conversations in which there was never full agreement.” (Tsing 1993, 8) As an alternative, though not an unproblematic concept either, I often resort to using “the village” in my description and analysis in order to distance myself from the discursive and practical distinction community / nature (*masyarakat / alam*) used by the actors promoting the Rimba Raya project. This should however not give any illusion of unity in what is at times a socially turbulent atmosphere.

The village

The wide Seruyan River divides the village into two, and forms an important part of the region’s infrastructure. Almost every day the *longboat*²² passes by Karandang, connecting the village to the towns Kuala Pembuang and Pembuang Hulu, and the Sembuluh Lake. West of the village is forest and swampland, the area included in the Rimba Raya project area. Northwest and east of the village there are several palm oil plantations, one of which is administratively located on the village land. There are overland roads going through the vast palm oil plantations connecting the village to the Trans-Kalimantan road, with the closest cities being Sampit and Pangkalan Bun.

The oldest part of the village Karandang is on the western side of the river. The official name is Karandang 1. It is placed just where the Karandang River runs into the Seruyan River. The characteristic black peat water pours into and mixes with the pale chocolate-coloured water of the river Seruyan. The wooden houses balance on narrow stilts. On this side there is only one private house built using cement, and only for the first floor; the ground floor is made from

²² A privately owned ferry, called by its English name.

timber. A wooden bridge stretches along the two rivers in an L-shape, connecting 103 houses. It branches off about halfway on each side, and the two roads cross each other about a hundred meters inland where the school building lies. The bridge raised a meter above the ground, which is flooded in the wet season every year. There are no roads out from West Karandang. To get around the village, people walk, and to walk the entire length of the wooden bridge takes no more than 10 minutes. The mode of transportation to go anywhere else is by boat. There are many empty houses on this side of the village, with boarded windows and padlocks on the doors. Several of them are falling apart, with broken windows and missing doors. One house is nearly completely swallowed by vegetation, green vines making their way through every crack in the floor, and three walls missing. When I asked the neighbours what happened to the people living there, I was explained that they moved to the other side of the village or to the plantations.

East Karandang, or Karandang 2, is connected to the closest other village, the plantation, and through that to the rest of Kalimantan by an overland road. The partially asphalted road leads from the dock and up a small hill to where the next village begins and their shared junior high school and high school is built. Most of the houses are built along this stretch of road. From the dock there is also a wooden bridge along the river with houses on both sides, giving the village a distinct T-shape. East Karandang is located on higher ground than West Karandang, and does not have a problem with flood other than for the houses closest to the river, which are built tall over the ground as on the other side, as well as a few *rumah pelanting*, floating houses built on thick logs following the water level. Further into the village, wooden houses are still built a few centimetres above the ground, but there are also many cement houses resting directly on the ground. The sound of motorbikes can be heard from early morning until late in the evening, as well as the heavy trucks coming to pick up and deliver plantation workers morning and afternoon.

Many villagers have moved to the company housing provided inside of the palm oil plantations. I visited the one closest to the village, Mega, several times, as well as Kupi, which is two hours upstream through the Karandang River. Some of the people from Karandang have also moved to the housing complex next to the palm oil factory, Bahandep. The main housing complex at Mega functions as a village in its own right. There are about 100 housing units, side by side in several long houses made of concrete, each typically representing one household. The company village has two small shops, selling snacks, cold drinks, soap, rice and other household products, as well as two canteens serving food. The most frequently discussed feature of company village

life was that, contrary to the village Karandang, they have electricity. There is also running water. There is a mosque and a small clinic, and every other week there is an outdoor night market with vendors coming in from the village and from Sampit, the nearest town. Buses transport the children of the plantation workers back and forth to the school in the village every day.

Social organization and religion

The people living in Karandang identify varyingly as Banjar, Dayak or Javanese. The former is the name of the ethnic group²³ that forms the majority in South Kalimantan. It is used both for the Banjar-speaking people that come from South Kalimantan; a few families in the village have close relatives, but also for the Banjar-speaking²⁴ people from Seruyan. Dayak is a label for more than fifty different socio-linguistic groups usually identified as the indigenous people of Kalimantan (Tsing 1993; Cleary 1997)

A young woman in the village described the historical relation between Dayak and Banjar:

Before, we were Dayak. But people came and converted us to Islam and taught us their language. We changed our traditions to follow our religion. We became modern. Now, Dayak people who convert to Islam are still called Dayak. But I think that we are the same, it is just that we converted so long ago, maybe a hundred years, two hundred years, so they forgot that we are also Dayak.

The relationship between the Banjarese and Dayak, who both see themselves as the native people of Kalimantan²⁵, and the Javanese newcomers is complex. Systematic migration from Java to Kalimantan has continued for more than forty years, first through the transmigration program during the New Order, and then because of employment opportunities in the palm oil industry. Many of the first migrants who arrived were young men who married local Dayak or Banjar women. Now intermarriage is not uncommon, and everyday interaction is unproblematic. However there is tension under the surface. While the Javanese are a minority, they occupy many

²³ In this thesis I use the terms "ethnic group" and "ethnicity" the way it was used by people in the village, as categories of people with a shared language, religion and geographic ties. For a more nuanced discussion on ethnicity in Kalimantan see (Tsing 1993; Cleary 1997; M. R. Dove 2006a).

²⁴ The Banjar dialect in Seruyan is similar to the Banjar Kuala dialect in South Kalimantan, but with some differences in vocabulary and use of vowels.

²⁵ However, only Dayak people are usually referred to as indigenous.

of the prestigious public servant positions (PNS²⁶), triggering resentment among some of the other villagers. In 2000-2001 a surge of ethnic violence between Dayaks and people from the Javanese island Madura struck Central Kalimantan²⁷, and while Karandang remained at the periphery of the violence, it is a part of the recent history of the island that is spoken of with sadness by most villagers, but with excitement by a few. Aside from this, ethnicity is present in the way people speak to each other, often adjusting the way they refer to each other. For example, one would normally refer to a man older than oneself as *Amang* (uncle in Banjarese) if he was Banjar, *Om* (uncle in the local Dayak dialect) if he was Dayak and *Pak* (father in Indonesian) if he was Javanese.

Everyone in Karandang is officially Muslim, and religion is present in everyday life in Karandang through the calls to prayer five times per day and during religious festivals and celebrations. There are two mosques, one on each side of the river that are used for prayer and special events. Banjar people are invariably Muslim, while Dayak can be Muslim, Christian or Kaharingan²⁸. It is important to note that in Indonesia everyone has to have a religion, which is registered on his or her identity card. While it is possible to convert to another religion and register the change, but by default one is assigned the same religion as one's parents. There is therefore an important conceptual difference for many Indonesians in the villages as well as cities between being religious, and being spiritual or pious. Indeed, the religious piety of the Banjar people in South Kalimantan has been an important characteristic and source of political mobilization and distinction from not only the Dayak, but also the Javanese. A number of Javanese people live in Karandang. Most of them travelled from Java to Kalimantan, up to 40 years ago, searching for employment. Moving people from the densely populated islands Java and Bali to the other islands, transmigration, was a national project from the 1970s up until the 1990s. The migrants would receive land and economic support from the government upon arrival, fostering resentment from many of the people who already lived there. (Tsing 1993)

²⁶ Pegawai Negeri Sipil (PNS) are public servant positions in government institutions and administration. They are highly sought after because of the secure wage and benefits, including a pension.

²⁷ In 1999-2001 ethnic violence broke out between Dayaks and Madurese²⁷ in several areas in West and Central Kalimantan, including in Seruyan, then a part of the Katingan regency. At least 1200 people were killed, most of whom were Madurese (see Morishita 2008). The centre of the violence was the city Sampit, and Karandang was only at the margins. Reportedly there was only one person from Madura in the village, and other villagers were proud to explain that they helped him escape.

²⁸ Seen as the 'traditional' religion of Kalimantan, Kaharingan is a term applied to all Dayak non-monotheist religious practice. All of the official religions in Indonesia are monotheist, and Dayak animist cosmologies are sometimes called Hinduism. For a discussion of the development of Kaharingan as a modern religion see (Baier 2007)

When a new house or boat is built, the owner sometimes hosts a *selamatan*, a communal meal that is opened with reading from the Quran. It can also be held after a successful harvest from a family's garden, when a new business is started, or in other occasion to celebrate or pray for good luck, and it is a part of more elaborate rituals marking weddings, the eight month of a woman's pregnancy, the ceremony for cutting the hair of a new-born, circumcisions, funerals and death anniversaries. During the time I spent in Karandang there was at least one *selamatan* every month. To understand the significance of the *selamatan* in Karandang I will describe in more detail one the occasions I attended.

Amang Dak had bought a new boat, a narrow vessel of about three meters with a diesel engine, commissioned from a craftsman in a neighbouring vessel. To bless it and ask for good luck so that the boat would not sink he invited all of the neighbours as well as some friends from the other side of the river to a *selamatan*. It was to be held in his house, which like most houses in West Karandang is over the river and connected to the rest of the village by their porch and a wooden bridge. The women in the family started cooking the day before, stirring a massive pot of rice set up over a bonfire in front of the house. Their daughters and nieces help cut garlic and shallots. The next morning the male guests arrived first together with the religious specialist in the village, and the ritual began with a reading of the Quran in the front room of the house and asking for God's blessing²⁹. I stayed with the women and children in the kitchen in the back of the house, finishing cooking and preparing individual plates of two dishes, *soto* and rice with beef cooked in coconut and spices, as well as a sweet desert made from coconut. After the formal part of the ritual was over in the front room, the women and some of the men in the family began to serve the food. More guests arrived, both women and men. Most of the guests sat in a circle on the floor in the front room, others on the front porch, and several women joined us in the kitchen. After finishing their plates, the guests excused themselves and left, and new ones arrived. The house was filled with everyday conversations, laughter and gossip and people coming and going. There was no mention that I could hear of the object that prompted the ritual; the boat. The meal ended when the flow of guests stopped, but there were always people

²⁹ I was not invited to join in the reading of the Quran, and stayed in the kitchen with the women or arrived afterwards. The description of this part is therefore based on the conversations with male attendees afterwards.

hanging back and helping to clean up, and the leftovers were distributed among the remaining women, and sometimes men.

Geertz (1976) describes *slematan* as a core ritual in the Javanese *abangan* religion for protection against spirits and restoring social equilibrium. He identifies the shared meal as the most important component, and the way that everyone is treated the same and no one feels lower than the other person. Aside from the incense, the formal high Javanese speech, and the “*polite, embarrassed, muted manner*” that Geertz refer to in the Javanese counter-part, the ritual is very similar in Karandang. However, seeing it from the kitchen I would argue that, at least for women in Karandang, the shared work is as important as the shared meal. Another important divergence is that I did not experience any references to spirits. Rather, the pronounced goal of the ritual was to show thankfulness (*berterima kasih*) and to pray for good luck. Some of the women I discussed it with also made it explicit that the *selamatan* is important to avoid jealousy when a family was doing well.

Being a good Muslim is frequently referred to in everyday life, in particular on the topic of holding grudges. A shopkeeper explained this to me in the context of a person on the other side of the river who had bought on credit for a value of 10 million rupiah (\$800) and then avoided the shop for more than a year, even though they had a steady income. She explained that she was not angry with this person, and would not attempt to persuade them to pay her back, because she knew that when they died God will judge them (however the topic came up regularly in gossip with other customers). The same argument would sometimes be used for corrupt politicians.

Formal political structure

The formal political structure in Karandang consists of a village administration led by the Village Head, who is elected through direct elections. When I arrived in Karandang the current Village Head had been the only candidate, and chosen by default. The Village Head chooses a Village Secretary, and three heads of different fields.³⁰ In addition the village chooses a Village Representative (*Rukun Warga*) and three Neighbourhood Representatives (*Rukun Tetangga*). There is a Village Council (*Badan Permusyawaratan Desa*) consisting of a chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and two members.

³⁰ Head of government management (*kepala urusan pemerintah*), Head of building (*kepala urusan pembangunan*) and Head of general affairs (*kepala urusan umum*).

The village administration formally employs 14 people. The Village Head sketched out the formal structure and chain of command, and explained who the different people were and what they did, while we were sitting on the floor of his home in Karandang, in an impressively structured diagram. While discussing each of the posts with him and others, the real political organization of the village seemed much less straightforward. It was difficult to identify the structure within the constant negotiation of power and political influence that took the shape of intrigues, rumours and latent conflicts. None of the 14 people involved in the administration have that as their only source of income. Some of them are only required to work a few hours per year, and receive a small compensation for this. Others had larger positions, but still did very few hours of actual work. The Village Head complained that several of the people he himself had appointed were unwilling or unable to work, but that if he tried to replace them they would become upset with him and try to hinder his work by getting more people to oppose him. To avoid conflict he preferred taking on a much larger workload than actually delegated to his position. It seemed to the Village Head that other members of the village government constantly worked against him, influencing people's opinion of the cases he supported, especially on the other side of the river. He expressed that he felt like the people are working against him, that he has little power in the society or even within the village government. With no hope or wish to be re-elected and being overworked as it was, he was reluctant to take on any of the high-profile projects that the people want, such as infrastructure for electricity.

In discussing village politics there was often a line drawn between the people who supports the Village Head and those that do not. There is a socio-economic and gendered element to this divide. As mentioned above, there were people on the other side of the village, in West Karandang, that publicly opposed him, and a general resentment often emerged in casual political conversation when he was not there. The Village Head had family in the west, but rarely visited. The East sees West Karandang as the poor part of the village. There are large differences between the households, but some of the poorest are in the west. In East Karandang the opinion seems divided, but he has the loyal support the women in a large and influential family, and they frequently defend him. The husband of one of these women explained that in his opinion, the Village Head took too much for himself; he was corrupt and did not care about the

community³¹. But there was not much he could do as long as his wife and the other women supported him.

The Village Head is chosen by direct election. In Karandang he was elected by default because there were no other candidates. There was an election of a Village Head in another village in Seruyan. It was held in a large empty government building in the middle of the village. To be eligible to vote one had to be registered beforehand. All of the people who wanted to vote sat in the sun on plastic chairs outside of the building, or hung around in shadow of the *warnings* close by. The candidates were the sitting Village Head, and his nephew. The people waited until their names were called, and then they could come inside to cast their vote. More and more people showed up, and by the time the ballots closed the building were full, and a crowd of people stood in the doorway and looked in through the windows. Each vote was closely examined, and the results counted on a large poster that could be seen by everyone. After three quarters of the votes had been counted it was obvious that the sitting Village Head would win, and the other candidate stood up and announced that he forfeited and congratulated his uncle. A round of applause spread in the building and among the people outside. To my surprise, the event was not over. The counted votes were put back into the ballot box, and a member of the election committee smilingly picked up the box and shook it deliberately. The crowd pushed closer. The committee member picked a voting slip from the ballot box and read a number from it. Two other people from the committee looked in a large book, and found the corresponding name. The crowd burst with applause and cheers, and one person made his way to the middle of the room. The committee ceremoniously presented him with a mobile phone, new in a plastic box. The crowd dispersed.

The suspicion and lack of trust in formal political leaders is central to the political discussion in Karandang. As the description above shows this can manifest itself in a low voter turnout, to the point where the election committee decided to make it into a lottery to attract voters. However, this must be seen in relation to the political developments after the collapse of the New Order regime. As discussed in the introduction, during this period any criticism was harshly struck down. Corruption charges and political conflict within Karandang may therefore not be a sign that the situation is getting worse, but rather that the community is using their newfound freedom of expression.

³¹ I elaborate on these corruption allegations in chapter 3.

Economy

As the opening of this chapter shows, there used to be many more people working as fishermen, but now there is too little fish outside of the season and one has to travel far, making it difficult to combine with for example keeping a garden. Until 2006 the sale of timber was an important source of income in the village. Most people now work in the palm oil plantations, but fish, rubber, vegetables and export commodities are also central to the economic life in Karandang.

Every morning, before the first light, the plantation workers begin crossing the river from west to east, and gather in the road close to the dock. Around 5.30 am, three large trucks of the kind that are usually used to transport the palm oil fruit from the plantation arrive. The workers climb onto the back, standing close together and only just peaking over the tall rim of the sides. Some of the workers have motorbikes, and drive to the plantations or factory with a friend sitting in the back. At 3 pm the trucks drive the plantation workers back to the village. In the plantations they work with handling the poison and fertilizer, clearing the grass around the trees, and picking the fruits. Six villagers work in the nearest factory for refining palm oil. For one day's work the plantation workers receive \$4.4 dollars. The pay is low, but at least it is fairly stable. The factory workers receive a significantly higher wage, but if there is little fruit, such as in the low season, their salaries are cut. Both women and men can work in the plantation, but only men worked in the factory. The workers are organized in a strict hierarchy. One woman from Karandang had risen to the position of foreman (*mandor*) in the closest plantation, but no villagers occupied any of the better-paid and higher status jobs in the administration and laboratory.

Fish is, together with rice, the most important part of the daily diet. The Village Head estimated that about 5% of the population currently works with fishing. However, many more people say that it is a hobby, and the waterfront is often lined with people fishing. Dry season is fish season, and as the water level drops by several meters, narrow straits form where fishing nets catch the fish swimming downstream. Wooden fish traps are placed in every little stream and channel close to the gardens, and several meter long fish traps line the Seruyan River just outside of the village. Several of the houses close to the river have *keramba*, wooden cages submerged in the water. *Keramba*-owners buy fish fry from Sampit and feed them every day with store-bought fish feed or with small fish that can be caught with a hand net. When the fish have grown large they can be sold in bulk. All though few people live off fishing alone, it is still an important addition to many families' diet and economy.



Figure 5: Fish trap made with net in the dry season

Palm oil and fish are the most common sources of income, but Karandang is also involved in a number of national and international commodity networks. Rubber gardens line the road into East Karandang and parts of the Karandang River. Four tall swallow nest houses tower over the village, and the collected white goo is sold to a travelling collector that passes the village every month. After switching hands numerous times they end up in China to be sold as medicine, soft drinks or snacks. These houses are expensive to build and involve risk –one cannot be certain the swallows will arrive and build their nests. Yet several more were under construction. Working groups, usually consisting of close relatives, pump sand from the river floor to sell for road construction, mine for gold to be sold in the nearest city, or collect a tree bark (*gembor*). *Gembor* can be sold to factories in Java that produce mosquito repellent. There are also groups that collect timber and firewood to sell in the village.

Large investments such as a motorbike, or in the extreme, a swallow nest house, necessitate access to credit from outside of the village. Motorbikes are commonly paid in monthly instalments, with high interest rates from the companies. Everyday goods for consumption such

as coffee, sugar, soap, cigarettes, dried fish, and gasoline, are sold in *warungs*, small shops in the front room of the house in several places in the village. Here there is also a system of credit, and few people pay everything in cash. Every month after payday in the plantation, the *warungs* bustle with activity as the workers come to pay off their debt for the month. Failure to pay debts is one important source of intrigue and gossip.

The Village Head and some other men complained that the spirit of *gotong royong*, mutual assistance or community labour, was disappearing from the village. While I was sitting on the porch with the Village Head one day, he pointed over to his neighbour's house. The house was unfinished and the neighbour and one other man were working with wooden boards and building the support for the roof. He said that in the old days (*jaman dulu*) the whole village would come together to build a house, or to construct a road for the village. The owners would prepare food for everyone and they would eat together. Now that they were becoming modern people would not do this anymore, instead you had to hire workers. Another person later explained that a strong man could get paid 70 000 rupiah (\$6) for one day's labour helping a neighbour, significantly more than working in the plantations. Bowen (1986) traces the term *gotong royong* as a basis for political discourse concerning Indonesian authenticity and the relation between the village and the state. It is an opaque concept with Javanese linguistic origin that is found on many of the Indonesian islands as well as the neighbouring Malaysia. Presented as the essence of peasant life and the foundation of the Indonesian state, Bowen argues that it is an ideal example of selective tradition³² used to ensure the cultural continuity of the state. During the New Order regime it was frequently used to extract forced labour in villages for development projects. Gotong royong in Karandang then can mean both "a general ethos of mutual assistance (the "spirit" of the community)" (Bowen 1986, 558) and a part of a shared history, or a local category based on a mistranslations of local terms for reciprocity used to refer to labour demands by the state and its representatives.

³² Selective tradition is defined as "an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present" and "more than an inert historicized segment; indeed it is the most powerful practical means of incorporation" (Williams in Bowen 1986, 558)

Agriculture and property rights

Most families own the area where their house stands, and fruit trees or small vegetable gardens often grow around the houses. Some families have plots of land outside of the village, usually along the Seruyan or Karandang River, or close to the road. These are forested, or used as gardens (*kabun*) and smallholder rubber plantations. While land is privately owned, rights to use it is often granted by the owner, for finding firewood or small amounts of timber on forested land, or picking small amounts of fruit when they are in season. However, if it is not arranged beforehand, it is spoken of as theft. There is a village use plan that lists the forested area surrounding the settlements as village forest. The Village Head is responsible for distributing this to households, or to use it for communal purposes.

Shifting agriculture is practiced in Karandang alongside semi-permanent gardens. To make a garden (*kabun*) or field (*ladang*) first the land has to be opened (*membuka lahan*). In the past it was usually done by fire (swidden agriculture, slash-and-burn agriculture³³), but the forest police, national park management and government have struck down hard on this practice due to a history of serious forest fires. The village government insists that the burning of land to open fields and gardens no longer takes place, and I did not meet anyone who openly admitted to doing it, but there was anecdotal evidence and rumours that it still happened in the village. Unlike in Europe, in tropical forests such as in Seruyan the nutrients lie not in the soil but are quickly recycled to the layer of biomass on top of it. This ecological dynamic can be exploited through swidden agriculture. (Dove and Carpenter 2008)

In May 2013 I visited a garden area upstream from the village. Five gardens lay side by side along the riverfront. We walked through them and stopped by the small huts that were set up in each garden, and I had the chance to do short informal interviews with three of them. In the five gardens there were four women, one with a young daughter, and a man with his young son. All of them had houses in the village, but they came to the gardens every day even outside of the planting and harvesting season to guard the vegetables and fruits from monkeys and other animals. Sometimes they spent the night in the garden. The simple huts were made from thin logs and plastic covers, with a small cooking place. They had cultivated their gardens here between two months and two years, and they were only accessible by boat. When I asked if we

³³ The term slash-and-burn is problematic due to negative association, and I will here use the term swidden agriculture. For a more extensive accounts of the politics and ecology of swidden agriculture in contemporary Borneo see Tsing 2005, Doolittle 2011 and Dove 2011, and for the anthropological defense of swidden agriculture see Dove and Carpenter 2008.

could walk back to the village through the forest, the young man that had brought me there insisted that it was impossible. Not only is the forest full of mosquitoes, it is physically impenetrable without a machete. The gardens were separated by small channels, and enclosed with wooden fish traps of varying sizes. We passed eggplant, chillies, cassava, cucumber, green beans, tomatoes, watermelon, *belungka batu* (a type of pumpkin), banana, corn, and a plant with large green leaves that is used for medicinal purposes. In the first garden the man in the hut showed us around and explained how he varied between planting tall plants like green bean and corn with smaller ones that requires more shade like cucumber. After the last garden we came to a plot of land with tall trees, about the same size as the other gardens. There was no one there but the neighbour explained that they had only just started opening the land. They had begun by cutting the underbrush and small trees. They were going to take down the large trees and then the land would be ready for planting.

Gardens in Karandang are generally built on principles of multi-cropping, with many different crops being planted interchangeably. The exception is rubber gardens where the land is cleared and trees planted in neat rows. It takes 6-7 years for before the rubber trees are ready for tapping. There was one very mature rubber garden close to the village with trees more than 10 meters tall, and there the ground was not maintained anymore so that a new forest grew between the rubber trees.

A survey commissioned by Rimba Raya by Daemeter in 2008 found one land dispute between a family from Karandang and one from the next village. There were however several disputes between villagers and the palm oil companies, in 2008 as well as during my fieldwork in 2013-2014. Until recently there was no written formal documentation of land ownership, but the villagers knew each other's borders. The palm oil companies did not require a land certificate when buying land, and there were stories of how after a property was sold, other people laid claims to the same area, and that is what caused the companies not to pay the agreed-upon amount in some cases. Land certificates³⁴ are now more common, because of the need to defend oneself in a dispute with the companies. The Village Head is responsible for issuing land certificates and solving land conflicts within the village.

³⁴ *Surat Keterangan Tanah* (SKT)

I was explained that when a young couple marries it is common for them to first move into the house of either of their families, unless the families are wealthy and can afford to build a new house for them. It is not uncommon for one house to be shared between several generations, or siblings with their respective families. However, many of the newlywed and young families I met rented a small house in the village, or moved to the company housing in the plantations.

Environmental and social change

While walking through the market in Telaga Pulang, a man called for me from one of the small shops. The middle-aged shopkeeper smiled broadly and shook my hand. He had heard about a foreign student who was writing about nature in Seruyan. “You have to tell them. You have to tell the world what is happening here. I don’t think they know. Have you seen the river? All of the poison from the palm oil plantations. Now the fish is disappearing, what will we eat?”

(May 2013)

Changes in the environment are a frequent topic of conversation in Karandang. On the one hand were the seemingly mundane observations central to everyday conversation; of the current water level, if it looked like the rainy season would start soon, that it is particularly hot or cold that day, and which fruits and fish were in season. On the other hand were the more dramatic accounts like in the event described above, pertaining to unpredictable seasons and changing landscapes. Transformation, or change, is here not seen as one static situation turning into another static situation, but rather as a process, influenced by a multitude of human actors in both intended and inadvertent ways, entangled in shared landscapes and non-human processes.

Change is and has been central to the life of people in Karandang. As shifting cultivators change is a necessary part of life, and organized in different cycles. The river, one of the most important sources of food and extra income, also changes, altering the landscape completely. In the dry season it is sometimes almost possible to walk across from one side of the village to the other, but in the rainy season the water level raises by several meters sometimes flooding the houses, but also opening new paths into the forest. However, unpredictable seasons and rainfall made it difficult to know when to plant crops. There were discussions about changes in fish stocks after

a palm oil plantation expanded into the peat swamp and dammed up an area of small streams well known as a spawning ground.

In this section I will discuss the way the people of Karandang speak about themselves and their surroundings, relying mainly on oral history and memories. These are not reproductions of the past, but nevertheless offer insights into social change as it is experienced and used in various contexts. “Memory is a vehicle for learning how people come to understand and articulate their experience” (Robbins 2003, 279) and I take the framing of environmental change as a starting point for understanding the lived experience of socially and politically produced nature. Gold and Gujar (2002) and Gold (2003) use memories and oral history from Rajasthan in India to elicit the dialectic themes of “the good old days”, expressed with “complexly nuanced ecological nostalgia” (Gold 2002:79), and “the bad old days” through memories of oppression. To say that there is no more forest, or culture, are extreme statements. Gold (in Tsing 2003) identifies these as “totalizing statements”, that can be ways of adjusting, “...people see their worlds changing so quickly that in their imaginations they seek to internalize rather than resist the changes.” (Gold in Tsing 2003, 186)

“There is no more forest here”

When I first arrived in Karandang and explained to the people I met that I wanted to study the relation between the community and nature in the village, I was surprised to hear the statement “there is no more forest here”. Could Rimba Raya’s Project Design Document with its satellite images, tables and percentages be wrong? Was it too late? Or did the people I meet not venture across the river into the wild jungle envisioned by the REDD project management? Several people suggested that I travel further upstream where they still have culture (*budaya*) (i.e. where they have not converted to Islam) and forest. To say that there is no more forest, or culture, are extreme statements. Gold (2003, 186) identifies these as “totalizing statements”, that can be ways of adjusting, “...people see their worlds changing so quickly that in their imaginations they seek to internalize rather than resist the changes.”

The most prominent change in the environment in Karandang is the conversion of forest, gardens, fields, swamps, streams and bush into plantations with neat rows of oil palms.

Following the only road on motorbike or in a car, the monotonous plantation landscape begins a few minutes outside of the village and lasts for two hours before seeing anything else. This also

means that for anyone who does not travel by boat, and who stays in East Karandang, it will look as though all of the forest really is gone.

Large areas that the people in Karandang could access in the past are now off limits with severe sanctions, or have been completely transformed. Almost all land on the eastern riverbank has been converted into palm oil plantations. Following the Karandang River upstream into the forest on the western side, there is a National Park where villagers are not allowed to take anything without a permit, and then more plantations. This loss of land and resources leads to increased pressure on the remaining land. For example it is much more difficult to find firewood in the west. Trees grow along the river, and many people still collect firewood from these, but they complained that this was a thorny tree that gave skin rashes. To collect the preferred firewood that used to grow by the river, it is now necessary to go further into the forest by boat. This is too time-consuming for many people, and so groups of men have begun to make an extra income by cutting down trees that can be sold as firewood in the village. In the past it was more common to collect dry fallen branches, and this is still seen as a woman's task.

One sign of environmental degradation that provoked the most emotion whenever it came up in conversation, which it often did, was the disappearing fish. While the difficulty of finding firewood was discussed as an inconvenience, the problems related to fish was spoken of as a more fundamental challenge to their way of life. Old and young people speak of Karandang as essentially a fishing village, even as they list the multitude of other livelihood strategies and commodity chains they are involved in. Fishing is spoken of as good work, where one can be independent. As described in the opening of this chapter, a good catch can bring in a decent income. Fish, together with rice, is the quintessential food. I often had dinner at Acil Haji's house, but if she had not cooked that day her daughter would always say "there is no fish in the house," the cue that we should make noodles or go to the *warung* to eat. A typical meal consists of rice, fish, *sambel* (spicy sauce), and sometimes vegetables:

Asie's kitchen was dark, with only the light from two oil lamps made out of old tin cans. A mattress covered by a mosquito net took up most of the room, her aunt sleeps in there. Asie and I ate the food that was prepared by her family. The others had already eaten. Fried *iwak biowan*, a small fish with characteristic black spots on the side, fried in palm oil until crispy so it can be eaten whole, bones

and all. With it we of course had rice, and *sambel terasi*, a spicy dipping sauce made of small chillies, leeks and shrimp paste.

After Asie had put away the plates and the rest of the food, I turned towards her mother and grandmother again. Her grandmother prepared another mouthful of *pinang*; tobacco, *pinang* nut and chalk, carefully wrapped in a *siri* leaf. Her mouth was still bright red from the last dose. The aunt was in her bed under the mosquito net, but continued to call out comments to our conversation every once in a while. I asked Asie how often they eat fish. She raised her eyebrows and replied, “every day, miss. If there is any.” Her mother confirmed, if they can, they eat fish. But they don’t get it every day. Asie continues to explain that she knows that some people eat chicken, maybe they are trying to be like the Javanese people, but it is fish that is most important for people from Kalimantan.

(May 2013)

Fish is not only important for its nutritional value or culinary qualities; it is one of the things that separate Kalimantan people from the Javanese. While there is scholarly debate over the etymological origins of the name Kalimantan, it is widely believed to come from the word *kali* meaning “river” and, its full meaning was explained to me in Karandang as “the land of a thousand rivers”. The village itself has taken its name after a fish endemic to the rivers and swamps of Kalimantan. While the Karandang fish is still plentiful in the area, the fish that are caught are usually smaller than in the past. Fishing is the most important “hobby” in the village, and all who enjoy the activity gather at the docks or travel upstream in the high season to catch fish for consumption, or if they get enough, sale.

Three concrete reasons for the disappearance of the fish are interchangeably presented. First there is the poison from the plantations. While the companies insist that they treat the waste from the palm oil production (*limbah*) appropriately and do not dump it into the river, few people in the village believe their claims. Furthermore, the poison sprayed directly on the trees and the ground is carried by rainfall into the rivers. Secondly, there is the encroachment of the plantations on the fish spawning grounds. The plantation upstream from Karandang expanded outside of its concession, and in the process dammed up small rivers and marshland that villagers and staff from the Orangutan Foundation International identify as essential to the river ecosystem. Third, and this seemed to be the preferred explanations by some parts of the NGO-

community in Pangkalan Bun, is overfishing, and especially fishing with electricity. This is a method where a portable battery is used to electrocute an area of the river. There are reports that this has been employed in Karandang in the past, and rumours that some people still do it. During the time I spent in Karandang, I never saw equipment for fishing with electricity. The practice was however openly used during the night on the river close to Pangkalan Bun. Both NGO-workers and the community strongly criticize the use of electricity for fishing because it kills all of the fish, also the small ones, and can harm the reproductive system of fish that are far enough from the site not to be killed by the electrical shock.

The water level in the Seruyan River changes dramatically with the seasons, flooding the houses and the trees. During the rainy season it is possible to travel by boat to pick fruits and flowers from the treetops, and the strong current moves the border between black water from the Karandang river and reddish brown Seruyan river out, so it is easier to get the black water for cleaning and bathing. Black peat water is considered healthy, and one man explained that he preferred to drink it over well water, saying that this is what keeps people from Kalimantan people strong. In the dry season it is more difficult to get water from the river, the mud banks under the houses are revealed and the River becomes narrow and far from the houses. The water level had a direct impact on the workload of the women³⁵ and ease of travel for all, and thus was a frequent topic of conversation, but when I enquired about whether there were any changes in the level I received conflicting answers. The same woman who answered, during the rainy season, that there were more frequent floods now, insisted, in the dry season, that her fruit trees were less bountiful because it never flooded like it used to in the old days. The answer to my perhaps naïve question is that it floods *both* more, and less, than before. The flood arrived later than expected, but it continued raining for several months as we waited for a dry season that never arrived. More than describing absolute variations in flooding, these varying answers reflect the fundamental insecurity that based on recent environmental change. Changes in rainfall and seasons together with loss of access to land, are central reasons to why many people choose to find work in the palm oil plantations.

³⁵ Especially doing laundry became more difficult when the water level was low. For the people who did not have a well, there was also the added work of transporting water for cooking, doing dishes, etc. There is also an important sanitary element to this, as all of the toilets in West Karandang and some in East Karandang are constructed above the river, and when the water level is very low, waste is not carried away by the stream.

Income diversification and flexibility

Most people in Karandang work in the palm oil industry. However, few people *only* work in the palm oil industry. Most households in the village, and even many individuals, practiced diversified economic activities, ensuring economic flexibility. A possible constellation include a woman working in the plantation, while her husband mined for gold one week of the month, went fishing in the dry season, and helped the neighbours with odd jobs for the rest of the year. One of the richer households ran a small *warung*, did aquaculture, raising fish for sale, had two gardens and a fruit orchard for consumption and sale in their shop, owned a swallow nest house, and one of the family members was a PKN. Bateson defines flexibility as “uncommitted potential for change.” (2000, 505) He discusses social flexibility as a precious resource that can be spent, if necessary, on change. In the example above, if the crops fail one year in one garden, the family still has three sources of food, and four other sources of income. If the water quality in the river deteriorates to the point where it is impossible to practice aquaculture, or if they were to sell the land where their gardens are to the palm oil companies without acquiring new land, what they are losing is their ability to adapt to changes. All of the most successful families in Karandang demonstrated this kind of diversification.

In West Karandang there are many empty houses. Most of the people who used to live there have moved to the other side of the river or to the plantations. However, as I understood while looking for a house myself, most of the houses are not abandoned. A few families come back to their old houses two or three times per month to fish, or to set up a small shop selling things they acquired at the plantation market. Others rarely come back but are unwilling to sell or rent out their houses. One woman explained that she wanted to keep her house if she ever loses her job at the plantation. By keeping one leg in the village, even as the plantation housing has everything they need, it is possible to maintain some flexibility.

By discussing the different livelihood strategies in Karandang with reference to flexibility, it is also possible to see the movement of people from “traditional” or smallholder modes of production towards wage work in the plantations not as a clean break from the past. In the Rimba Raya project, a clear distinction is made between those who depend on the forest; farmers, fishermen, collectors of *gembor* or other forest products, and the plantation worker, who by extension, do not rely on the forest³⁶. I argue that this is an inappropriate dichotomy in the

³⁶ I elaborate on how this distinction is used the Rimba Raya project in chapter 3.

context of Karandang. The flexibility of individuals and households rely on crossing, or the potential to cross, this divide. Decreased flexibility is connected to decreased resilience for individuals and the community as a whole to environmental, political and economic pressure.

Environmental and social change is fundamental to the lived experience of villagers in Karandang. Insecurity and unpredictability of the seasons impact the flexibility and resilience of the village. Given the changing material conditions that follow from environmental change, it is imperative for people in Karandang to retain flexibility in their livelihoods in order to adapt to changing circumstances. This is apparent in the diverse sources of income that are maintained in Karandang, both for individuals and households.

Speculation as to the causes behind environmental degradation and economic inequality is common; it must be attributed to someone. This is expressed in feelings of aggrievement, of being victims of an unfair process outside of the control of the individual. Sometimes these feelings are directed inwards within the community, and expressed as jealousy and corruption charges towards privileged individuals or groups, and connected to perceived structural inequalities along ethnic lines. Other times, the aggrievement is directed outward, based on experiences of exclusion by palm oil companies, conservationists and the government. I now turn to three projects that are identified in the village as crucial historical forces in shaping this exclusion, and their struggle over access and power to transform the landscape of the Seruyan forest.

CHAPTER 2

The Forest: Logging, Conservation and Palm Oil

Behind the village on the western side of the Seruyan River is the forest that will be managed by Rimba Raya. This is a tropical peat swamp forest, flooded by dark, reddish-black water. Thick bush grows between the trees, making it practically impenetrable by foot. The only way to enter the forest is by the narrow wooden boats used in Karandang, but canals have to be maintained so they don't overgrow. In addition to peat swamp forest, there is also freshwater swamp, lowland Dipterocarp forest, kerangas forest³⁷ and marshy swamp. As well as being a place for villagers to obtain resources needed for everyday life, such as firewood, timber for their houses, wild game, "jungle rubber" and fish, this forest has been transformed by other regulated and illegal activities. In this chapter I will discuss three different environmental projects preceding and to varying degrees coexisting with Rimba Raya; logging, conservation and palm oil. I begin with some clarifications of what a forest is and who has the rights to use it. I then discuss logging, conservation and palm oil production respectively, focusing on the lived experience from the point of view of people in Karandang. I argue that these inter-related historical processes of access and exclusion are crucial to understand the reactions in to Rimba Raya in Karandang. I draw on historical sources, official reports, memoirs, interviews with public and company administration, observations, and conversations with members of the community, and tie it to the lived experience of each of these projects by individuals in the village.

Forests have been one of the main sources of income from the Indonesian government since the colonial time. Under the Suharto's national development program, large logging concessions were granted from the 1970s. The companies often talked about gaining permission from the local people and promised development and jobs. However, no real permission was required when they held government permits, and together with token payments to local officials, companies had free reins. In 1971 Dr Biruté Galdikas arrived from Canada in what is now

³⁷ Tropical heath forest found on poor, typically white-sandy soils and is characterized by medium-sized trees.

Tanjung Puting to establish a research station to study orangutans. She founded Orangutan Foundation International, and her personal engagement together with other persons in the organization were crucial for the establishment of the Tanjung Puting National Park in 1981. Dr Galdikas and others involved in the conservation of Tanjung Puting continually struggled with logging companies as well as individual loggers. Concession logging continued until the early 1990s, but illegal logging practices continued until around 2006. From the mid-1990s the establishment of large-scale oil palm plantations began in Kalimantan, and companies have expanded over the northern borders and into the national park and the area originally intended to be a part of the Rimba Raya project. (Galdikas 1995; Wadley and Eilenberg 2005; Steni 2012)

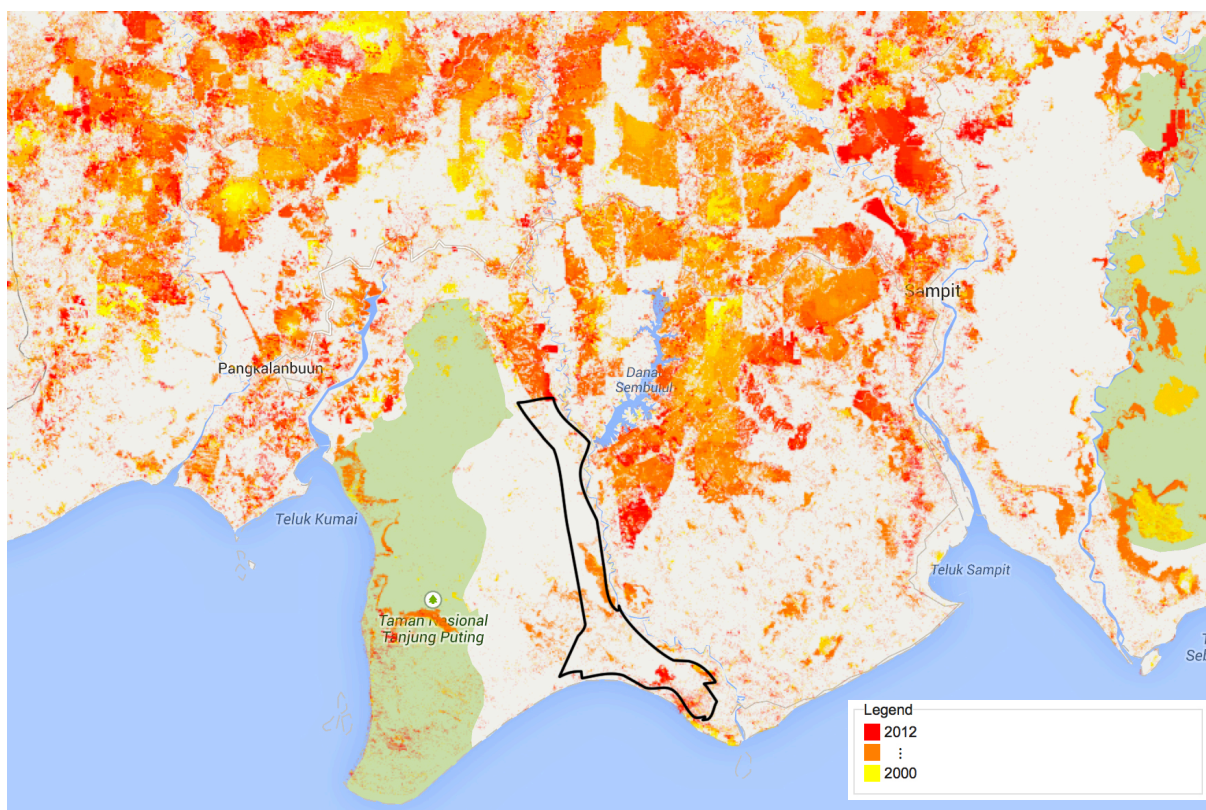


Figure 6: Overlay of Rimba Raya project zone on time-series analysis of landsat images of forest loss³⁸ 2000-2012 (Hansen et al. 2012)

REDD is a particular kind of environmental project. Greenough and Tsing define environmental projects as assemblages of landscapes and communities “*in which rhetorics and practices come together in finite moments of politically persuasive and materially effective configuration.*” (Tsing 2003, XX) It is however not inscribed on a blank slate, but rather on top of several different previous and still active environmental projects. They can be shaped by the state, by science and

³⁸ Forest loss is here defined as either stand-replacement disturbance or change from forest to non-forest state. Trees are defined as all vegetation taller than 5m. Forest is defined as areas with vegetation taller than 5m in height.

social movements. Following Greenough and Tsing, I use the term “projects” here in a rather wide sense: As clusters of ideas and practices that together form an apparent historical undertaking. Environmental projects can be studied through their practical enactments; tree planting, meetings with the village head, ceremonies and demonstrations. The meeting of these projects may happen in various degrees of contradiction or alignment, both of which may lead to unexpected results.

What is a forest?

There are particular political implications to categorizing an area as forest, and I do it here somewhat reluctantly. What I refer to as “the forest” is the area west of the Seruyan River that has not been transformed into palm oil plantations. In Karandang this area was sometimes called forest (*butan*), but usually just “upstream” (*bulu*) and “upland” (*darat*) for the dry area in the north.

In the context of REDD+ each country is free to make its own definition of what a forest is. CIFOR (Moss 2013) reported that using the international FAO definition of forest in the context of Indonesia leaves out emissions of as much as 200 million tons of CO² in comparison with a nationally appropriate definition that takes the locally specific landscapes such as peat swamp into account. This caused controversy when the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry (MoF) introduced a definition of forests that included palm oil plantations. Opening for this meant that Norwegian funding for REDD+ could potentially be used to convert natural forest to monoculture plantations. Under pressure from civil society and the Norwegian government MoF retracted their suggestion. (NRK 2011)

Tenure rights in forests is a contentious topic in Indonesia. Authority over licenses and concessions in forests has shifted in recent decades. During the New Order (1967-1998) the central government leveraged this right to generate revenue for the state. In 1999 as a part of the policy of increased regional autonomy this authority was transferred to district and provincial governments. In 2002 it was transferred back to the central government and the Ministry of Forestry (MoF). However, district and provincial governments can issue licenses for land use that affect forests such as agriculture and mining. While contested by legal experts, the Ministry

of Forestry can claim mandate over as much as 70% of Indonesian land areas³⁹, based on the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960 that classified all land without titles as state land (*Tanah Negara*). This law recognized three categories of forest; state land, land with rights, and customary land. The New Forestry Act of 1999 recognized customary land, but classified it as state land, and added to this that all forest zones⁴⁰ and forest products are controlled by the MoF. Individuals, communities or companies can obtain lease rights or management rights over these areas, but they remain state land. In the example of palm oil plantations, the land in question first needs to be released by the MoF, and then the district government gives the concession. As a prerequisite for REDD the REDD+ Task Force have worked on the OneMap project, an initiative to try to reconcile the different maps used by different ministries and provincial and district governments. In the lack of a shared map there are problems with multiple overlapping concessions, licenses and land titles. (Steni 2012; Resosudarmo et al. 2014)

For communities to gain *de jure* rights over forest zones it is possible to grant licenses for Community Forests (*Hutan Kemasyarakatan –HKM*), Community-based timber plantations (*Hutan Tanaman Rakyat –HTR*) or Village Forests (*Hutan Desa*)⁴¹. It is difficult to apply for these formal licenses, but communities can claim *de facto* rights with references to historical land use by demonstrating active land management. One important strategy is to plant rubber and other culturally significant trees to indicate ownership. This is the basis for much of the tenure rights in Karandang.

Logging

*Uangnya seperti angin. Uang banyak, tapi hasilnya tidak ada.
The money was like wind. There was a lot of money, but it left no results.*

³⁹ The rest of the land is classified as Areas for Other Uses (*Areal Penggunaan Lain*) and are administered by the National Land Agency.

⁴⁰ Areas classified as forests, regardless of whether or not they are actually forested.

⁴¹ There is also a license for Area with Special Purpose (*Kawasan Hutan dengan Tujuan Istimewa*), but this is excluded because it has only been granted once on another island per March 2013. (Resosudarmo et al. 2014, 70)

Karandang is a relatively new village. Some accounts claim that it was but a small hamlet with a few houses, and only grew into a village with the influx of money from the logging industry. Other, like the man quoted above, claimed that the money disappeared as quickly as it flowed in – while many villagers were involved in the operations, the bulk of the money went into the hands of outsiders who arrived in the village to export the timber from Kalimantan. Before going to Karandang for the first time, an employee in an environmental organization who had visited the village several times explained that the people there were troublesome, and that “100% of the people there do illegal logging,”⁴² and that this was why they had rejected Rimba Raya. The Village Head refuted this, but they were open about the fact that logging had been an important part of their economy in the past.

From the 1970s the Suharto government granted large timber concessions in the forests in Kalimantan. In the name of ‘national interest’ and following the Basic Forestry Law of 1967, the concessions ignored local claims to land and forest. Timber production peaked in the late 1990s, when deforestation due to logging reached 3.51 million hectares per year (Steni 2012, 5), earning Indonesia a place in the Guinness Book of Records for the fastest forest destruction rate in the world. Around 2006 there was an apparent decline in illegal logging, following logging moratoriums and increased law enforcement efforts leading to many arrests. However, while there was a significant decline in Kalimantan, there soon proved to be a sharp increase in demand in other areas, particularly in West Papua. Outside of the country, Papua New Guinea and Myanmar also experienced increased illegal timber exports. Common strategies for conducting illegal logging in Indonesia now is through bribery of local government officials to obtain a permit, or for palm oil companies to the land outside of their concession area in order to use the income from timber sales in the start-up phase. Estimates of the value of timber from illegal logging in Indonesia have been up to \$8.7 billion per year⁴³. (Wadley and Eilenberg 2005; Nellemann and INTERPOL Environmental Crime Programme (eds) 2012)

⁴² The English terms ‘illegal logging’ and ‘illegal mining’ were more often used than attempts at translating the concepts.

⁴³ Much of the profits from illegal logging are laundered and difficult to measure. Interpol use estimates ranging from \$600 million to \$8.7 billion per year. (Nellemann and INTERPOL Environmental Crime Programme (eds) 2012, 13)

Logging in Karandang

In the 1980s and 1990s there were at least two companies that gained timber concessions in Seruyan, PT Bina Samktha and PT Mulung Basidi. After a period of selective logging in their concession areas operations seized in the year 1998 and 2000 respectively. However, other actors moved in to continue logging in Seruyan and parts of the Tanjung Puting National Park after the large companies left. In the year 2000, timber of an estimated value of 70 billion rupiah (\$8 million) was illegally logged per year in the Tanjung Puting National Park in Central Kalimantan and exported. (EIA and Telapak Indonesia 2000, 19) Local journalists, and domestic and international environmental organization have traced the operations to Abdul Rasyid, a timber businessman. He was however never apprehended, and his family is now one of the richest in the region, and live in the biggest residential house in Pangkalan Bun. In 2003 there was a joint operation involving military, police and forestry officers. Illegal timber amounting to around 20 000 m³ was confiscated from 29 boats in the western part of Tanjung Puting National Park, and logging camps were destroyed. Central figures in the district government and forestry police were implicated and profited from the illegal export of timber, which was described to me as a mafia-like structure with the big bosses in Kuala Pembuang, Pangkalan Bun and abroad. Illegal logging continued around Karandang until 2007. In 2011 there were still signs of logging operations in the southern part of the Rimba Raya project zone, but in according to World Education the CCB audit in 2014 showed that these activities have now ceased in the area close to Karandang. (InfiniteEARTH 2011)

Most of the families in Karandang had been involved in the timber trade in some way. Some of the older women told stories about when the first Javanese loggers arrived to work in the forest. They had no money and no relatives, and slept outside. There was a village discussion, where they decided that all able families should take in one or two workers, feed them, and let them sleep in their house. Later, several of the men in the village found work in the forest cutting trees, navigating the labyrinth of small rivers and canals that had been 'cleaned' and maintained for easier travel. Most of the men at some point worked with timber, some for contractors, others independently, selling their timber to someone else for export. From Karandang, large boats floated the timber to sawmills downstream, and to Kuala Pembuang. From Kuala Pembuang timber was exported to Java and Malaysia, and from there to the rest of the world.

Galdikas (1995) writes of an experience from the 1970's. The local communities had actively logged inside of the reserve. She and her husband worked with the local people for years to

make them understand the purpose of the nature reserve and refrain from cutting trees inside this area. Gradually the traffic on the river, where people had used to float the logs they took out of the reserve to transport them to the village for sale, became scarcer. One day she met a surveying team from a large logging company, and learnt that they were contracted by a consortium of military officials from Java. When asking the people living close to the reserve about it, she learnt that the reason the small-scale logging had been stopped by the government because the central forest directorate had given out a concession to the area, and prosecuted independent loggers.

Extraction of timber to be used in the village should now be organized through the Village Head. A person who wants to cut down trees for wood boards to make a new house, or repair their old one, should go to the Village Head first to ask for permission. The Village Head then issues a recommendation letter (*surat rekomendasi*), which they can bring with them into the forest. He then reports it to the nearest forest police office (*kantor polisi kebutanan*), so that they have an overview over the total amount of timber that has been issued for the village. If the people who go into the forest for timber meet with forestry officials or police they can produce the letter from the Village Head as proof that they have permission. However, not everyone reports to the Village Head before cutting trees. One middle-aged man who sometimes sold timber to other villagers explained that even when they have the letter from the Village Head, the forest police officers they meet would often ask for “cigarette money” (*duit rokok*), small bribes to maintain good relations. Even if they do not have the letter they can usually make an arrangement with the officials.

Rules over whether or not it is allowed to use natural resources at times seem arbitrary. People from Karandang used to find timber and other forest products inside of the nature reserve for use in the village and for sale when market opportunities arose. When they were excluded from the national park, they were told to find timber outside of its borders closer to Seruyan. State-licensed companies arrived and logged heavily in the area. When they disappeared other actors took their place and organized the export of timber, employing local people to do some of the heavy work. From 2003 the government struck down hard on illegal logging in the area, particularly on the people doing the work in the forests. Due to corruption and bribery however, it was possible to avoid the police if one had money, something the more central actors to the trade benefitted from, while on-the-ground loggers were arrested and heavily fined. Whenever discussing the sale of timber from Karandang, I was told that they are not brave enough to log

anymore. Now, people in Karandang only cut trees for building and repairing the village, which they are allowed to if they carry a letter of approval from the Village Head. Until a few years ago OFI had a field office by the Karandang River close to the village, located so that they could inspect all boats coming from the forest. The area is still policed, and some people complain that even though their papers are in order and they follow the rules they still have to pay if they meet with forestry officials. Much of the legal uses of the forest therefore happen in secrecy. The ultimate expression of the arbitrariness of state-approved forest management is that simultaneously as local communities quit logging after years of persecution, the palm oil companies arrived and cleared vast areas around the village for plantations.

Logging for export no longer takes place around Karandang, but the memories of persecution by the forest police together with the continued practice of corrupt police have impacted relations between Karandang and the government, and how they view the state. In spite of talk of saving the environment, the management of the forest is conceived as based on bigotry – local communities are excluded for the benefits powerful extra-local actors who do much more damage.

Conservation

Tidak boleh tebang pohon atau merambah hutan

Tidak boleh memburuh satwa

Tidak boleh ambil flora atau fauna

You are not allowed to cut down trees or clear forest

You are not allowed to hunt wild animals

You are not allowed to take flora or fauna

(Billboard marking the eastern border of
Tanjung Puting National Park)

The Tanjung Puting National Park is a protected area in the principality Kotawaringin Barat, west of the Karandang village. The size and status of the park is contested and is still changing.

The colonial administration gave wild game reserve status (*suaka margasatwa*) to parts of the forest of the Tanjung Puting peninsula in 1937 under the name Suaka Margasatwa Sampit. With this status only the animals were protected, not the trees. In 1982 it gained status as a national park, and the area increased to more than 300 000 ha, all though its borders are still contested. Three important uses of the national park now are for research, the release of ex-captive orangutans and for tourism.

Dr Biruté Mary Galdikas is an almost mythical figure in Kalimantan. She was a part of a trio sometimes referred to as “Leakey’s Angels” together with Jane Goodall who studied chimpanzees and Dian Fossey who studied gorillas, under their mentor Dr Leakey. Dr Galdikas arrived in Kalimantan in 1971 to study the elusive red primates, and made it her life’s work to protect the orangutans and the Tanjung Puting forest. In the NGO community in Pangkalan Bun she is often just called *Ibu*⁴⁴. Both there and in the villages in Seruyan she is often called *Ibu Professor* (Mrs Professor, or Madam Professor). Everyone I met knew about her. In Karandang she was often called *bini Pak Bohap* (the wife of mr Bohap), referring to her husband, who is famous in his own capacity as a member of a Dayak royal family. While she is widely respected for her life-long devotion to the orangutans of Kalimantan, she also serves to underline the foreignness of the concept of conservation.

By their very existence, ex-captive orang-utans help to protect the primary rainforest. The plight of the Penan of northern Borneo and other peoples who have been evicted from their forest homes is tragic. But on some level we know that, if worst comes to worst, people can find other places to live and other ways to live. Geographic and cultural relocation is neither easy nor desirable in most cases, but it is possible for humans. Orangutans, however, live and die with the forest. Without intact untouched tropical rainforest there can be no wild orangutans.

(Galdikas 1995, 377–378)

As discussed in the introduction, Western ideas of the nature-culture divide are inherent in the idea of having protected areas. However, people are absolutely a part of the Tanjung Puting National Park. Every year the park welcomes thousands of tourists in the northern areas, and there is an active research community. Tourists travel into the park in houseboats, stopping on feeding posts along the river where ex-captive orangutans gather. To get to the first feeding post,

⁴⁴ Honorific term used for women in Indonesian, literally “mother”.

the tourists have to walk past a small graveyard - some dozen colourful tiled graves, partially hidden from view from the path by thick vegetation. This is what remains of the Sekonyer Village. After several years of pressure from Dr Galdikas and others the Sekonyer Village voluntarily moved to the other side of the river some years ago. They had been inside of the reserve area, and it was problematic that people gathered firewood, hunted and cut timber for their houses. All the houses were rebuilt on the other side of the river, and the villagers changed from dry-rice cultivation to wet-rice cultivation due to the different soil. They refused to move the graves, and so the village made an agreement with the national park that their ancestors could continue to rest within the reserve. While the move was voluntary and initiated by the villagers themselves, it is frequently presented as one of the victories of OFI in protecting the park.

Surrounding communities are allowed to harvest non-timber forest products from some zones in the park, and there are some successful partnerships with villages for the collection of *gembor*, a tree bark that can be sold to factories in Java. Two people from Karandang had attended a course about the application method for accessing resources from the park, but most people in Karandang interpreted the rules as expressed in the sign quoted in the beginning of this section.

Guarding the forest

OFI employs most of its staff from the surrounding communities, mostly from the area around Pasir Panjang where their orangutan clinic is located, but there are also a few people from Seruyan. In Karandang there was one person employed in a guard post, one who had previously worked as a forest ranger for the organization, and one person who sometimes helped with transportation during larger survey trips, such as with the audits for Rimba Raya. The three of them were from the same family, and the ones who were most positive to Rimba Raya. I visited the OFI post closest to Karandang to learn about how their relationship is with the village.

My neighbour had agreed to use his boat to take me to the OFI post. It took us just over two hours. The water level is low, so the shortcut to the lake is dried out and we had to drive around. The post is soon after the large sign warning that we are entering the national park. The post is a white and blue house with the sign informing us that this is an Information Conservation Post. Next to the house is a high wooden tower, and around it there is a pineapple field and some trees.

Pak Adi and his wife come to greet us and invite us into the house. He has worked for OFI a few years. It was lonely before he married, but he likes his job, even if he would like to move around some more. But OFI prefers to keep him there, he knows the area in and out. We sit on the floor of the front room of the house. There are some maps on the walls, otherwise undecorated. There is a desk in a corner with a crackling radio. The noise is broken by bird sounds, and Pak Adi explains that some of the other guard posts are far from other people, and the people who work there sometimes stay alone for months. But everyone has a radio so they can communicate with each other, and some of the guards use it to whistle bird song.

We discuss logging and mining, and Pak Adi says that the forest police arrests people who enter Tanjung Puting for illegal activities. “If someone wants to enter the forest, I say fine, go ahead, but we [OFI] are not responsible if you get caught by the police,” he explains. He does not want the role of policing the forest, they just want to give information. But OFI can also act if they see illegal activities.

Pak Adi brings out a map showing where the nearest company has planted outside of their concession. According to the map they have cleared at least 80 ha of the area that will be managed by Rimba Raya. The company said they bought the land from the communities, but many people claim the land was taken from them. They had come with bulldozers and excavators to people’s fields, and one time they even bulldozed a rubber garden! The Village Head was in on it. Either way it is illegal, and in Pak Adi’s opinion the area should be taken back and divided between the people in the community.

(August 2013)

Aware of the resentment people feel for the forest police, OFI is trying to distance themselves from them, for example by painting all of their posts white and blue so they can be clearly distinguished from the green posts of the of the forest police. Furthermore, OFI usually avoids direct conflict with villagers even though they can stop people attempting to take something out of the park, preferring a method based on dialogue. But they are required to report illegal activities to the forest police, and many villagers do not differentiate between them.

Many people in Karandang admire the work and devotion of Dr Galdikas, and recognize the need to protect the forest, all though the orangutans are rarely mentioned as a reason. However, the story of conservation as it is remembered by people in Karandang is also one of exclusion. A few villagers openly criticize the national park for prioritizing orangutans and tourists over the communities who have lived in this forest for thousands of years.

Palm oil

The oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) produces a fruit a little smaller than a chicken egg, ranging in colour from yellow and red to black. The fruit grows in heavy clusters close to the stem of the palm tree, and the flesh and pit can be processed to make palm oil and palm kernel oil. The oil palm is in the same family as other useful species such as the coconut palm, rattan palm, and date palm. The oil palm can grow to over 20 metres, but it is actually a type of giant grass; not a tree. The oil palms have a profound presence in the landscape and lives of the people of Seruyan, and indeed large parts of all of Kalimantan. Indonesia produces more than half of the world's palm oil, most of which is produced on the islands Sumatra and Kalimantan. In Kalimantan palm oil plantations cover an area of 53 834 600 ha. (Carlson et al. 2012; Rival and Levang 2014)

The oil palm is the centre of a polarized debate, being promoted as a “miracle plant” by the agro-food industry and some rural development planners, at the same time as it is seen as equal to deforestation by many NGOs. Nutritional value, environmental impacts and human rights are central to this debate, “which has come to symbolize the conflict between the conservation of natural spaces and development.” (Rival and Levang 2014, 2) The oil palm gives exceptionally good yields compared to other industrial vegetable oil crops, and it has a wide range of uses. While 80% of palm oil usage is in the food industry, especially as cooking oil, it is also used in cosmetics, soaps, agrochemicals, paint, and biodiesel. The crop is biologically limited to the tropics, which has caused controversy as it is planted in “biodiversity hotspots” in the areas of the large rainforests in the world; the Amazon, the Congo Basin, and Borneo. There is a direct link between deforestation and palm oil production and deforestation in Kalimantan. (Carlson et al. 2012; Lee et al. 2014)

I include a section about palm oil in a study of a REDD project because of its role in the transformation of the landscape in Karandang, as well as the regional and national political landscape. There are five multinational companies that run active plantations in the vicinity of Karandang, and the Rimba Raya project is founded on avoided deforestation by taking concessions that were originally given to palm oil companies. The presence of the plantations and the social ties between villagers and the palm oil companies strongly impacts relations between villagers and Rimba Raya.

The Plantations

Most of the people in Karandang work in the palm oil plantations. However, most of the people working in the palm oil plantations are not from Karandang. They are migrants coming from Java, Sulawesi, other parts of Kalimantan, Flores and other islands, with the promise of work and a wage. These places are melting pots of languages, religion and ethnic affiliations.

I visited three palm oil plantations and one palm oil mill. The plantation Mega, run by the company PT. Mega Ika Kansa, was closest to the village and on the eastern side of the river. After driving through Mega there is the plantation Bahandep, run by the company PT. Gawi Bahandep Sawit Mekar, which also has a palm oil mill, usually just referred to as “the factory” (*pabrik*). On the western side of the river about two hours upstream from Karandang is the plantation Kupi or Harisma (from the old name of the company), owned by the company PT. Wanasawit Subur Lestari. Of these plantations only one falls within the administrative borders of the village Karandang. However, it is the only one not directly connected by road to Karandang. To get there one must drive a *ves* upstream on the Karandang River for about two hours, and then walk for half an hour, or take the daily longboat to a village further north that is connected to the plantation with a narrow path. Therefore, all of the people from Karandang working in Kupi lived in company housing inside the plantation. Mega and Bahandep are about 30 minutes away from the village by motorbike. The people from the village working at these two plantations and the factory are divided between those who live in company housing and those who have chosen to stay in the village. Some people moved from the village to the company housing or from the company to the village during the time I spent in Karandang. Many of the people living at the plantations came in to the village to meet their family and friends, or for the weekly night market in the next village. Some of the young people living in the village visited friends and family in the company housing, especially for charging their phones, watching TV and playing videogames – all the company housing complexes had electricity.

Plantation work

There are a few different positions available to the people from Karandang. The majority of the people work as day labourers (*buruh harian lepas*) in the palm oil plantations with tending to the oil palms.

The plantation workers fill different tasks of tending to the trees and the ground between them. One of the tasks is to spray the trees with poison from tanks carried on the back (*menyemprot*). One person can cover about 1.5 hectare in a day. Another task is to spread fertilizer around the trees (*memupul*). Other tasks include to use large knives, tied to sticks if the oil palms have grown tall, to cut down the palm oil fruits, or to clear the area around each palm tree of other vegetation. All of these tasks involve hard physical labour, usually in the burning sun. Most of the workers, but especially the women, wear clothes covering their arms, legs and head to protect themselves from the sun. Some wear facemasks at work as protection from the sun, dust and poison. The wage for day labourers is Rp 54 000 – 60 000 per day, \$4.4-4.9. Most have one task they specialize in, or they have a few different tasks that they do on different days.

The people who live in the village leave at about 5 in the morning, and come back around 3.30 in the afternoon. The workday is seven hours including breaks. Significantly, two of the women that spoke most enthusiastically about working in the plantation were women who were single or the head of their household. As men and women alike did plantation work, it provided them with a valued opportunity to obtain cash income. One of them explained to me that the best thing about working in the plantation is that they get certain tasks every day, and if they finish they can relax or even sleep. The only thing is that they cannot go home before the working hours are over.

The plantation workers are organized into teams⁴⁵ with responsibility for a specific section (*afdeling*) of the estate. The team leader is called Assistant (*asisten*). Under the Assistant there are four Foremen (*mandor I, mandor panen* and two *mandor rawat*) who help him record and administer the work of the team. There are two office clerks in the team (*kerani buah*). The bulk of the team consists of 30 tenders (*karyawan rawat*) and 34 harvest workers (*karwayawan panen*). Out of all of the people from Karandang working in the plantations there was only one who had risen to the

⁴⁵ This description is based on information from PT. GBSM, but similar to descriptions of other companies.

position of Foreman. In order to be an Assistant it is necessary to hold a bachelor's degree (*ST*). Each company had a management and laboratory, and the palm oil mill had its own office and management. To the best of my knowledge, no one from Karandang or the other surrounding villages were employed in the management or laboratory, positions requiring university education.

Ten people from Karandang worked in the palm oil mill tending to the machines, with the status of regular employees (*karyawan harian tetap*). Their wages were usually higher than that of the plantation workers, but based on a system of a set wage per month plus bonuses that could be as large as half their monthly pay. However, if they had a bad month with little palm oil fruit they did not get the bonus, regardless of their own work efforts.

Other than these positions directly related to the production of palm oil, several men from Karandang were employed as security guards, a position better paid than the ordinary plantation workers and enjoying relatively high status in the village. Some women made an income from working in the company housing complexes, running small shops and cafeterias, and taking care of the children of families with both parents working in the plantation⁴⁶. Employees have access to some welfare services from the companies, such as childcare and medical assistance.

Doing the math: Companies and their Profits

The asymmetry between the large international corporations that own the palm oil plantations and the villagers that are employed there often emerges in everyday discussion.

One afternoon soon after I arrived in Karandang for the first time I sat on the floor with a group of people. There were two young men who worked in the plantations, an older farmer couple, a teacher, and some other people who sat in the door opening or came and went throughout the conversation. The day before I had been to see the plantation, including a large field in the process of being cleared of trees. I asked what happened with the timber. One of the young men told me that they were not allowed to take it, the company would come and pick it up. However, he smiled, sometimes they take it anyway. He smiled. They can go there in the night and get the

⁴⁶ This service was paid for by the palm oil companies for families living in the plantations. One woman with a newborn baby explained that she stayed at home for the moment, but intended to go back to work when the child was two years old.

wood, and he knew someone who had done it. We continued to discuss working in the plantations. He continued to explain that he makes 54 000 rupiah (\$4.5) per day, which is not enough to survive. It is barely enough to make the payments for his motorbike. He did not understand why they got so little. He knew how many trucks with palm oil fruits that they sent from the plantation every day. He leaned forward and used his fingers to draw up imaginary equations on the floor. He had heard how much each truckload of palm oil fruit was worth. Subtract the wage for the number of people who worked to fill up the truck, the result was that a very small portion of the profits from the truck went to the people living and working here. Where did the rest of it go? He knew that very well, the company takes it for themselves thinking that the villagers are stupid. But they are not stupid; they know they are being paid too little.

Even as they work for the palm oil companies many villagers talk about the way it is managed as fundamentally unfair. They see that all of the good positions in the company are taken up by “outsiders”, usually Javanese men with a background in forestry from Universities on Java or Sumatra, while villagers are only eligible to do the hard physical work and as security guards.

The Village Head and the Companies

The Village Head acts as a mediator between the palm oil companies and the village. Before a company can establish a new plantation they must “socialize” the project in the villages that encompass the land they wish to use. This is a rare chance to negotiate the terms for the relations between village and company. The company begins by contacting the Village Head to introduce themselves. They usually also employ his help in finding people who would be fit to work for them. As the company depends on the cooperation of the Village Head to begin development, he can ask for additional benefits for the village. The prime example that was cited for me on several occasions was a strong Village Head in the neighbouring region who refused to let the company begin the work before they were ensured that there would be *plasma*⁴⁷ for each and every household. If there are no additional benefits from the company the Village Head is said to be weak or corrupt.

⁴⁷ Plasma is a part of the plantation designated for smallholders, and contentious issue in Indonesia for NGOs working with community rights *versus* palm oil companies.

Whatever the outcome, these discussions take place behind closed doors between company representatives and the Village Head and perhaps a small council. These are fertile grounds for rumours, and many of the people opposing the Village Head in Karandang believed that the palm oil company was allowed to start production after putting money into the pocket of the Village Head.

The Village Head is also mediator between village and company in future communication and if there are any conflicts. In early 2013 there had been a demonstration at KUPI. There had been several disputes over the land surrounding this plantation with not just Karandang but also other villages, and the company had aggressively expanded outside of their concession area by buying or taking land. This area is a swamp (*rawa*). In order to prepare the land for oil palms the company fills in small rivers, disconnecting them from the Karandang River. These small rivers are important spawning grounds for fish, and thus the villagers were angry at the company for infringing their right to the river (*hak masalah sungai*). (See chapter 1)

A fisherman who had participated in the demonstration told me that they were a hundred villagers, mainly from Karandang, who went upstream to KUPI in January of 2013. The Village Head was with them. They were ready to let the company know that they would not just let them destroy their rivers and their livelihoods. However, when they arrived at the plantation to confront the company, the Village Head was invited into the office alone. The confrontation did not go as well as planned. Instead of confronting the angry crowd, the company approached the Village Head alone, and no one knew what they agreed to behind closed doors. When he came out everyone was told to go home. “The company keeps the Village Head close” (*Perusahaan dekat dengan kades*).

(June 2013)

For outsiders, such as a palm oil company, the Village Head represents the village. Thus, if they include the Village Head they can say that they include the community. In the cases where a village has a “strong” leader who puts the village’s interests first and cares about the community (*peduli sama masyarakat*) this can be a good system. However, in cases such as Karandang where trust in the Village Head is weak, he can be perceived as the local voice of the companies serving to further aggravate tension.

Access and Exclusion

*Waktu jaman illegal logging kita cuman ambil pohon-pohon besar.
Perusaban habiskan semua.*

In the era of illegal logging we only took the big trees. The companies clear all of it.

When logging, conservation and palm oil production is analysed as historical undertakings competing over the same area, some connections become poignant. Logging cleared ground (figuratively and literally) for the establishment of palm oil plantations in Seruyan, and together with conservation that arose as an alternative project to preserve the forests, the people in Karandang were marginalized. What remains is mainly low-paid work in the plantations.

Tsing (1993, 22) argues that marginality “has a particular significance in Indonesia, where state rule has been seen as emanating from the concentrated potency of “exemplary centers” which extend toward more and more unruly peripheries.” The Seruyan forest and the people are a part of the periphery in the Indonesian context, organized through concessions. Forests are not just ecological configurations; they are also political, and politicized, zones. Peluso and Vandergeest (2011) discuss the forests of Kalimantan as “theatres of insurgency” central to Indonesian state-making. When the state began handing out concessions in Kalimantan in 1967, many of them went directly to branches of the military or companies that were connected to military leaders. During this period Kalimantan experienced a violent rural reform, with Chinese and Chinese-Indonesians evicted from their land. Insurgents hid in the “jungle”, defined as areas outside of state control.

Counter-insurgency helped normalize political forests as components of the modern nation-state and spatially and institutionally differentiated forests and agricultural areas. In the process, counter-insurgency operations laid the groundwork for newly racialized and nationalized forests and citizen-subjects.

(N. L. Peluso and Vandergeest 2011, 254)

The militarized nature of forests remains in Seruyan, albeit in new forms. This is visible in the form of transfer of military technologies to the Ministry of Forestry and the forest police. In an

orangutan release combined with a formal ceremony celebrating the anniversary of the cooperation between OFI and the MoF, the Ministry arrived in helicopters and around 100 uniformed men from MoF, the forest police, the district police, and the army. As described above the people in Karandang also have experiences of violent encounters with police protecting the forest. Another side of this is the birds-eye view of the forest as consisting of distinct zones, which was the basis for the division of the forest around Karandang. While ethnic conflict was more pronounced in West and East Kalimantan, it provided justification for extensive state intervention in the landscape of the whole island. At the same time FAO promoted “forest-for-development”, a model for professional forestry that practically often meant evicting local populations, except for as cheap labour. Removing troublesome people and establishing large-scale resource extraction for the state was a civilizing mission for the state. (N. L. Peluso and Vandergeest 2011)

The current arguments of the need to “protect the orangutans” and “develop the land” do not resonate well with the experiences of people in Karandang. However, they are not clearly for or against any of the three environmental projects discussed in this chapter. Both old and young people talked about the need to protect the forest, especially with reference to the disappearing fish and game. However, some of the men especially, asserted their right to profit from their forest. Individuals previously involved in the timber trade complained about being made villains, when all they had done was to take the big trees. In comparison the palm oil companies literally bulldoze the forest and dam up the rivers. The absurdity of state discourse that supports conservation on one side of the village and palm oil on the other is interpreted in terms of both projects representing “outsiders”, foreign interests, attempting to take as much as they can from the Seruyan villages.

An important practical consequence of this is a preference for secrecy in dealing with the forest because of distrust in police and government. Closed meetings between powerful outsiders and distrusted local leaders are fertile grounds for rumours, and Karandang was ripe with rumours of corruption for anyone who seemed to gain more than the rest of the community on these projects. Any attempt to register what they are doing and what they are taking from the forest is interpreted as an excuse to demand “cigarette money” or worse. This was also a frequent concern with Rimba Raya; that they would want to control the villagers’ use of the forest and then demand shares, or prohibit villagers’ activities. In the next chapter I turn towards the

encounters between the Rimba Raya project and Karandang, and see their interactions in the light of experiences from logging, conservation and palm oil production.

The three projects discussed in this chapter have fundamentally transformed the landscape and the ways in which people in Karandang interact with their surroundings. The political economy of the forest is dominated by what is perceived to be strong and distant actors, whether they are multi-national agriculture businesses or a Canadian scientist who wants to help protect one of the remaining habitats for wild orangutans. The experience of persecution for their participation in logging activities while central actors got away, has made a lasting impression on people in Karandang. To discuss the forest in Karandang, the injustice and aggrievement that is perceived to be central to historical competition over resources should be assessed first.

CHAPTER 3

The Project: Rimba Raya

A lot of people in Karandang didn't agree to Rimba Raya. Bhaskoro and Dony guessed that it was between 60-80%. We were sitting on the floor of Bhaskoro's flat in the plantation, both him and his wife worked there. The people had been asked to write down whether they agreed or disagreed and their reason. Dony had helped collecting the votes and writing up the data. The main reasons that people agreed were that they wanted to protect the forest for their children and grandchildren. The main reasons people disagreed was that they were afraid that they would not be allowed to take resources from the forest anymore. At that time a lot of people worked with the forest, now it is only about 20%, the rest work in the palm oil plantations, Bhaskoro explained. They were afraid that they would no longer be allowed to get timber for their houses, rubber, *garuh*, *ratan* and fish, or that there would be a permission process that would be too difficult to get through. They have seen what happened with Tanjung Puting; now the community is not allowed to get anything from the forest there. If they as much as try to enter the area, they are caught and get fines (*sanksi*). However, if there are significant benefits for the community and if they are ensured that they may continue to take from the forest, maybe they will agree.

(July 2013)

Even in a small village like Karandang there are a myriad of interests and opinions on Rimba Raya. A REDD+ project is not applied to a blank canvas, the actors involved have complex relations and agendas that influence interpretations and reactions, and the landscape is transformed by multiple layers of competing environmental projects. Rimba Raya depends on getting “community support”, but it is somewhat unclear what this means. In 2009 the Village Head signed a letter on behalf of the community giving their support, but the year after a survey showed that the majority of the villagers opposed Rimba Raya.

In this chapter I will turn to the details of the Rimba Raya project. I will discuss my second research question in two parts, (a) to what extent is the reaction of different categories of people

in Karandang to Rimba Raya based on the experiences of the three environmental projects described in the previous chapter, and (b) how does the Rimba Raya project diverge from or align with these projects? To assess the former, I will discuss the social interface between Rimba Raya and Karandang, focusing on the encounters between World Education and villagers. I argue that the way they interact with different groups in the village evoke associations to the other environmental projects, and that this is the reason why the villagers originally opposed the project and remain sceptical. For the latter I will first discuss the way “corruption talk” is used to articulate social conflict and as a lens for seeing the world, and then how Rimba Raya may impact flexibility for individual households and Karandang as a village.

During the 20th century there has been an explosion of the number of Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in development work and environmental conservation. Rimba Raya has entered a partnership with two NGOs for the preparation and implementation of the project, and plans several more as they progress. NGOs potentials for delivering welfare services, facilitating democratization and participation, and as implementers of development projects has been celebrated, at times indiscriminately⁴⁸ even as their origin, organization, methods, and connections to state, international agencies and target populations, vary significantly. There is a need for detailed ethnographic studies of what is happening in particular places, and at the interface between organization and community.

Social interface

The idea of interface is useful to describe practices and processes of construction and negotiation of knowledge and power. Here I will examine the role of World Education as an “interface broker” between Rimba Raya and Karandang. As explained above, NGOs can take on multiple roles in environmental conservation, and World Education fulfils a triple role in the Rimba Raya. First, they are engaged by Rimba Raya to facilitate a flow of information between the villages and the project management, as a part of their efforts to achieve full and effective participation.⁴⁹ Secondly, they are the implementers of planned community livelihood

⁴⁸ For a more extensive review of research and criticism of NGOs see Fisher 1997.

⁴⁹ Full and effective participation means “meaningful influence of all relevant rights holder and stakeholder groups who want to be involved throughout the process, and includes access to information, consultation, participation in decision-making and implementation and Free, Prior and Informed Consent.” (CCBA 2013, 19)

programmes, and several of the members of the WE team have a background in agriculture. Third, they should ideally achieve community support in all of the villages.

Re-introducing Rimba Raya

The World Education team returned to Seruyan in July 2013. The team consisted of four men between 25 and 60 years old. All of the men were from Java and had a university degree, but had worked in Kalimantan before. In Karandang they stayed in a house in East Karandang, and spent their first few days meeting with the Village Heads in the area and looking for a place to set up an office. They spent a lot of time inside of the house planning their strategy, and when I after a week asked the youngest member of the team if he had made any friends in the village, he replied that he had not really had time. Their first activity would be to travel to all of the villages in the project zone to introduce themselves, get the contact information of the Village Heads, and to start planning open meetings in each of the villages. I followed them in their meetings in four villages to see how they work.

I waited at my dock until the *oes* picked me up. The team were waiting, and I saw that Ari and Edy were already equipped with bright orange life vests, and there was an extra one for Hastu. Subani did not wear one. The drivers were two men from Karandang. I spoke briefly with them in Banjarese, and our driver smiled and said he assumed I did not need a vest.

The life vests are interesting in that their bright orange colour broadcast to everyone we passed that these were not people from Kalimantan. To the people in Karandang who swim in the river every day from they are children, and are comfortable crossing the river in much smaller and consistently leaking wooden boats, the life vests looked absurd. Hastu and Subani made a point out of not wearing it; they had both worked in Kalimantan for several years. This was the first and only time I saw anyone wear a life west in Kalimantan. Just as much as my blond hair, the life vests were an obvious marker broadcasting foreign-ness to the villages we visited, and set them apart from our drivers, but also the Javanese staff who had more experience from the region.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Many of the Javanese villagers were afraid of the water, and reluctant to cross the river to the other part of the village. In the beginning of my fieldwork I had to prove that I could swim on several occasions before I was allowed to travel to the other side of the river and to visit the gardens upstream. While the Javanese inability to swim was sometimes the butt of jokes, it was also a very real concern –one Javanese man in the next village drowned after

In each of the four villages we visited, Pak Subani approached the first person we met and asked if the Village Head was at home. He had visited all of them before on missions for WE and knew some of the people we met, but this was several years ago and some of the villages had since elected new persons to office. If the Village Head was not available, he asked for the Village Secretary, and then for any other member of the village government. We met with the Village Head in two of the villages. Then WE asked them to invite any others that were interested in talking about Rimba Raya. In the two villages where we met with someone other than the Village Head, they did not invite others to join them, but rather had a private conversation. Everyone who joined the four meetings were men, except in one meeting where two women sat in the doorway to the kitchen with a young child. All of the meetings followed the same basic formula. We sat in a circle on the floor, and Pak Subani explained that Rimba Raya wanted to come back, and so World Education also came back. He made it clear that they were not the same as Rimba Raya, they were there to help, and so they could talk openly. The rest of the WE team introduced themselves, before looking at me so I could explain what I was doing there. The team patiently asked whether they knew about Rimba Raya, if they remembered the meetings the last time, if they understood what Rimba Raya wanted to do, explaining anything that the others seemed uncertain about and answering more questions that came up. Even though some of the questions were very critical of Rimba Raya, they were well prepared and answered clearly. Interestingly they avoided using the term REDD all together unless someone else brought it up, preferring simpler analogies to explain why the forest and carbon was important to Rimba Raya and the world. Then they enquired about the village, how many percent work in the plantations, what did the village use the forest for, and did they support Rimba Raya the last time. Before leaving they asked what would be a good time to set up a community meeting, and was it necessary to invite the people working in the plantations. They asked for the phone number of the Village Head to make arrangements for meeting with him at a later date.

What can be drawn from these meetings is first of all the centrality of the Village Head and the village administration. The Village Head can negotiate who can be included in these small meetings, and the larger village meetings to be held in the future. By asking for his help World Education also enters into a sort of partnership with the Village Head. To gain access to the villages they have to go through him. WE tried to establish themselves as on the side of the

falling out of his boat fishing alone. Several other similar tragedies were recounted to me from the recent past. I had to prove that I could swim when I first arrived in the village.

community (without being in opposition to Rimba Raya). Most of their explanations were well thought through and lucid. However, through their meeting cultural difference is produced with the value connotations of centre-periphery common in Indonesia. Another example of knowledge producing difference in the encounter between World Education and the villages is the use of language. All of the meetings were held in Indonesian, the official language, instead of the everyday languages in the area of Banjarese and Pemuang Dayak. Two of the members of the WE team understood Banjarese. On the one hand there is an element of ceremony to this use of language; Indonesian is the language of the official, and by using it the encounters are lifted from the mundane. (Tsing 1993)

World Education in Karandang

I was not able to participate in a meeting between World Education and the Village Head in Karandang, but I had ample opportunity to explore the context around their encounters. In Karandang as in the other villages, WE relied on help from the Village Head for arranging meetings, acquiring maps, and his official support.

After introducing Rimba Raya to the villages in Seruyan the first time, World Education helped arrange the public comment period⁵¹ in Karandang. In the survey mentioned in the opening of this chapter, they found that the majority of the villagers opposed the project. They had a second round, and still found that the majority were against Rimba Raya, especially in West Karandang. In 2010 WE set up public comment boxes so that anyone could give feedback to the project, anonymously or with signature. In spite of the resistance to the project they only got positive feedback. A closer examination of the results however shows that they only received five comments. Of these, one was anonymous, three were members of the village administration, and one was a WE staff.

The Village Head and the village administration are central to World Education's interaction with the communities. They depend on maintaining good relations with the Village Head; if they do not have his support they do not have the support of the village, even if the majority may be in favour. However, by relying on the Village Head to organise open meetings and letting him decide who should attend, they are giving him a lot of power. In Karandang this is problematic

⁵¹ This is a mandatory part of Rimba Raya's project design validation for the Carbon, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) standard, where anyone who wants to can contribute with feedback to the project. The Project Design Document was made available on the CCB website, and translated into Indonesian for use in Seruyan.

when he is alienated by half of the village. There was much confusion about the Village Head's position on Rimba Raya. A few people who were positive to Rimba Raya complained that he had been against it. However, World Education claimed he had given his support. The Village Head himself explained that he wanted to support Rimba Raya, he thought it was good for the village, but other influential local people put pressure on him to say no. It then seems what happened is that the Village Head signed the letter of support needed to proceed to get permission for the project at the regional level, while saying to the other people in the village that he did not support it.

Women participated in other political meetings, for example during the political campaigns before the election of *bupati*, the district-leader. They were usually not in the front, but still attended and discussed it afterwards. The WE team admitted that it was difficult to engage with the women in Karandang, even if they had tried to hold all-women meetings in the past. While discussing the trip described above with one of their neighbours, a middle-aged Banjar woman. At this time they had lived next-door to her for almost two weeks.

- Have you talked to the WE people yet?
- Me? No. I am scared of Javanese people. (*Nggak, takut sama urang Jawa*)
- Why? (pause) They speak Banjarese too!⁵²
- I do not know them. (*balum kenal*)

She was married to a Javanese farmer. *Urang Jawa* was often talked about not just in reference to geographical ties, but also in terms of differences in education, access to good jobs, knowledge, and power. While discussing this further with other women, one woman explained that they were embarrassed because of their language and in case they made a mistake and did not know something.

By focusing on the Village Head to the extent that World Education has done, requires him to take on an active role for the other members of the community to be able to participate in the project in a meaningful way. In Karandang this has not happened, and many people in the village are excluded or exclude themselves from meaningful participation in the project. It is a problem that World Education fails to engage with a significant portion of the people who live in the

⁵² All though I had known this woman for several months it was only recently that we could have fluent conversations when we were alone as my Banjarese improved.

village, and that it is particularly women, people from West Karandang, and people who do not speak Indonesian who are excluded. I discussed this at length with the World Education team, they were aware of the imbalance.

REDD as a virtualizing vision

In the meetings with World Education in the villages in Seruyan, one of the of the recurring questions was how many percent of the villagers work in palm oil, agriculture, fishing, etc. The first time I interviewed the Village Head in Karandang he begun citing these percentages to me. When he was done he looked down on my notes, added up the numbers, and seeing that it did not match, directed me so I could change some of them so it added up to one hundred. During my fieldwork it became increasingly clear that these percentages that were used in NGO reports, in meetings and by Village Heads were somewhat arbitrary. First of all, it was never specified if the percentages referred to just men, all adults, or households As explained in chapter 1 it was common for a household to rely on several different sources of income, or even for an individual to combine livelihoods depending on season or demand. Many women in Karandang worked in the palm oil plantations or with other occupations, but there were also a significant number who stayed at home raising children, cooking and cleaning, and this was never a category in these surveys. Grouping people into simplified categories can provide some relevant insight, to get some idea of the most important sources of income. However, when these imperfect categories are imposed on real people it becomes problematic. It becomes a virtualizing vision where people's messy and complex realities must try to conform to a simple map. For World Education and Rimba Raya, dividing the population of the village into clean categories based on livelihood had many advantages. The most important aspect of this that emerged from our meetings with the other villages was that they were investigating whether the people labelled "plantation workers" could be excluded from the public meetings. This was not in order to single them out, but an effort to focus on the people with direct interests in the area included in the project. Within the vision of a divided village where 70% worked in the agroindustry and by extension no longer relied on the forest, it made sense to divide the village in meetings and the negotiations of Rimba Raya. However, unlike some of the criticized conservation projects discussed in the introduction, World Education did consult members of the local governments in each village instead of imposing what they conceived as a logical division on their meetings. Everyone they asked replied the same, even if many villagers work in the plantations now, they have to be included in the negotiations over what will happen to their forest. The situation described here is a very specific way in which REDD can have a virtualizing

effect. As a top-down model, it is unavoidably also an attempt at enforcing the virtual reality of project managers, auditors, and economists on people and landscapes in Seruyan. However, as in this case, participation can be key to avoid externally imposed categories. (Carrier and Miller 1998)

Local facilitators

World Education is Rimba Raya's "on the ground" team in the villages. For InfiniteEARTH they are the local facilitators. However, as I have discussed here, in Karandang they were often seen as foreigners. The descriptions above are taken from the first two months after they returned to Seruyan. When I returned six months later, several people had complained to me that Rimba Raya should rather have facilitators from the area, who spoke the language and knew the people.

The Village Head insisted that it would be easier if they followed the "Team Success" (*tim sukses*) model used before the election of *bupati*, that would consist of local people who were known in the area and could promote Rimba Raya. He estimated that 80% of the villagers would quickly decide to support Rimba Raya if they felt like their voice was heard and they had someone familiar in the NGO. On the one hand, World Education has been active in the region for ten years, and yet they chose to use a team of only Javanese people. On the other hand, the system that the Village Head proposed is also problematic. The Team Success had come to Karandang before the regional election a few months earlier. They held a meeting on each side of the river, distributed gifts, free clothes, and money: A total of Rp 4 million, or \$330, in cash. The people in Karandang came to the meetings, accepted the gifts and money, and wore their clothes. After they left several people confessed to me that they had no intention of voting for this candidate, he was widely recognized to be corrupt and had gotten rich from investments in palm oil plantations that had evicted local people with force. In West Karandang the other candidate received 70% of the votes.

While a local team might have better access to a wider portion of the population, they would also be already integrated into the complex web of intrigues and politics in Karandang. In order to discuss how the experiences from other environmental projects have shaped villager's perception of Rimba Raya, I now turn to a topic that has been latent through this thesis; corruption.

Corruption allegations

There was money for the village, but look at his big stomach, he ate it. Look at his new house, he finished it in only one year! My children are skinny.

“Corruption talk” is frequent in Karandang. By this I mean rumours and speculations about people in the village that were thought to be profiting by immoral means, discussions of corruption in the central government that frequently dominated the news, jokes and ironic comments, and complaints of the powerlessness of the village in the face of wealthy crooked outsiders who could buy their way. It could be used as a threat, I once heard a woman scold her three-year old that if she did not stop crying the police would come and ask for her money and arrest her. It is talked about with the loan-word *korupsi*, as eating money (*makan duit*), or putting something into someone’s pocket (*masukkekan kantong*). I will focus here on corruption talk involving accepting bribes. As described in chapter 2, many of the villagers have experienced giving bribes in the form of “cigarette money”, but then they describe themselves as victims of the system.

Corruption is not often the focus of ethnographic studies in Indonesia⁵³, in spite of its pervasiveness, especially in the forestry sector. In their anthology about anthropological perspectives on corruption Haller and Shore (2005) argue that this is a field that merits closer attention because of its ubiquity, as a “social fact” in the classical Durkheimian sense. In India, they found that stories of corruption were a central topic in daily conversation in rural areas, more frequent than the state of their crops. On all continents there is compelling evidence that corruption is central to how many people make sense of the state. In this section I make no attempt to examine the “reality” of corruption allegations, but rather how corruption talk has become a narrative of villager’s lack of confidence in their political leaders, public institutions and powerful outsiders, and how it is used to make sense of social difference on different scales.

The World Bank has defined corruption as the abuse of public office for private gain. Development studies and popular media representation often take a structural approach to corruption with moral overtones recalling colonial discourse, as a characteristic of the “Other” belonging together with poverty, irrationality, and ignorance. To counter universal claims such as

⁵³ One notable exception is Bubandt (2006).

the definition of the World Bank, Blundo (2007) suggests an alternative definition for use in anthropological research. Corruption is deviance from conceptions of what an uncorrupted system should be, with *“normative judgements on the appropriate nature of politics.”* (2007, 28)

The quote opening this section is by a woman talking about a member of the village government who had been responsible for the money for a development project granted by the district administration. She did not need to see the accounts for the project, she could deduct that his children were healthier than hers and his house was bigger than what should be possible on a normal village wage. The person who was accused was aware of the allegations, all though I heard about anyone who accused him directly. He complained that his house was not finished, some of the walls inside were still not painted, because he earned too little. By talking about corruption as “eating money” she expressed that corruption gives an unfair advantage in a zero-sum game; one person’s enrichment means that her children go hungry. Corruption talk became poignantly relevant for the Rimba Raya project with allegations directed towards the Village Head and one of the World Education staff. I will recount a conversation about the latter here.

Pak Subani was a former employee of World Education (WE). He was originally from Java, but had lived in different places in Kalimantan for the past couple of years. When I first met him he was unemployed, and did not know whether WE and Rimba Raya would come back. They lived on his wife’s public servant (PNS) salary in a small rental apartment with their one child. While still working for WE he had started building a house for his family. It was one of the largest in the village. After losing his job he could no longer afford the materials to complete the house, but he continued working on it where possible to fill the days. Originally a farmer, he made a small garden around the house, with cassava, small chillies (cabe), green beans, eggplant and other crops, mainly for their household needs.

One morning sitting on the floor of their office sipping hot ginger milk, he explained that he knew that the people in the village were suspicious of WE, and especially of him, thinking that they were trying to profit from Rimba Raya themselves (*mengambil keuntungan sendiri*). He knew that they talked about his house. He reached out his hands palms up, frustrated saying “the house is the result of my own labour, not Rimba Raya money!” But the family also had close

friends in the village as well who helped them feel welcome. When he started working for WE to facilitate Rimba Raya again the accusations became worse, and more frequent.

One young man who was particularly sceptical to Pak Subani explained his reasons. He had heard how much money Pak Subani got per month from WE. And his salary was much higher than the average palm oil plantation worker. It was just unfair, why could not one of the people from the village get his job? In his eyes, living in the village and accepting a salary like, he was corrupt.

This case demonstrates two things; how corruption is used as a narrative for understanding the world, and to vocalize social conflict. First, corruption is a particular kind of talk, which can be used to express aggrievement over something that is perceived as unfair and one's own situation, whether or not the accused has abused their position in line with the World Bank definition above. Seeing the differentiating signs such as a big house or a big belly is enough evidence. Secondly, corruption allegations are a method to vocalize social conflict. In a small community such as Karandang, social conflict is emotionally and historically dense. Using the definition of corruption as deviance then, the uncorrupted village would be one where no one took more than their fair share. However, allegations such as the one described here were not made towards other members of the community who were better off than the rest. They could be accused of being greedy, but not with the same passion and frequency as corruption charges. The Village Head and the WE staff were both figures of authority, and responsible for protecting, managing, or distributing, something that was to be shared between villagers, whether it was land as in the case of the demonstration described in chapter 2, or imaginary gains from REDD+.

The World Education team has a difficult role in Karandang. While they are there as facilitators, they also come to represent Rimba Raya for the villagers, and have to be careful of what they say so as not to give false expectations. Rumours start easily and can potentially damage relations. When I returned to Karandang in 2014, one of the young men in West Karandang had news he wanted to tell me about. He had read an article about REDD online, and found out how much money they really had. They were rich, they earned billions of dollars from the Indonesian forests! What they were planning to give to the village was pocket-money in comparison, they should just divide the number evenly. Looking at the article, it was about the REDD Agency (*Lembaga REDD*) and the total sum available for all REDD activities in the country. It was

however interpreted as that Rimba Raya was trying to keep it a secret how much the carbon in the forest really was worth. The contracts established between NGOs and small-scale communities are often interpreted differently, and can lead to disillusionment on both sides. (West 2006)

The secrecy and trickery seemed to be the most serious violation of trust. In discussing the Village Head, several people mentioned the name of a person who had the office before. He had been corrupt but honest. “He would say one third for me, and two thirds for you [the village]. But that was okay, because at least we knew how much he took! Who knows about this one.”

In Karandang avoiding jealousy is a crucial part of everyday life. In chapter 1 I discussed the *selamatan* ritual and its equalizing effect through the communal meal and shared work. And the persons who experienced the most serious corruption charges were the ones who stood out. They had the largest houses in the village, and managed resources for the whole community. To add to this, both were “foreign”, they were Javanese. The accusations and talk of corruption in Karandang must be seen in the larger context of resource exploitation and marginalization in Kalimantan.

Historical exploitation

Rimba Raya must be analysed in the context of historical exploitation of resources in Kalimantan. The essence of private sector REDD is the commodification of carbon stored in forests, and the logic is that forest carbon stocks need to be removed from the realm of the commons and into the market in order to be protected. A common narrative of resource exploitation and forest degradation in Borneo is that resources are degraded because people are impoverished. Dove (2011) insists that the opposite is true; people are impoverished because of the degradation of resources by extra-local actors. This inversion puts the blame firmly on local peoples, thereby legitimizing outside intervention. However, the *"problem is not that forest communities are poor in resources, therefore, but that they are politically weak; and the problem is not that the forest is environmentally fragile, but that it is politically marginal."* (2011:213)

Some resources are too valuable and attract problematic attention from the outside. Dove (2011) uses the parable of The Big Stone and The Small man from contemporary smallholder miners of diamonds in South Kalimantan to demonstrate how “[g]reat riches, especially for the politically marginal, can be a curse rather than a blessing.” (M. Dove 2011, 35) The parable tells of an ordinary “small”

man that comes upon a large diamond. However, he is unable to sell the diamond through the ordinary market channels, it is simply too valuable for the usual buyers. Soon enough, when the “big men” of the regional or national capital hears about the large diamond, they will try to take it, in the name of the nation, for example saying that they will bring it to a national museum. It often ends up in the hands of state elites.

Logging, conservation and palm oil have all been dominated by powerful outsiders. While the people in Karandang have at times been allowed to take on smaller roles, and their resistance or negotiation of the projects, these are a part of the historical marginalization of “small people” in Kalimantan. The question remains if REDD will become another valuable resource attracting powerful outsiders that ultimately leads to further exclusion.

As a result of all these multiplying and overlapping ways of valuing local tropical forest landscapes, more and more natural resources are potential "big stones"... These represent even more numerous possibilities for the disenfranchisement and disempowerment of the local "little people".

(M. Dove 2011, 252)

Dove claims that even small investments in smallholder agriculture would “pay enormous dividends” (M. Dove 2011, 258), but that even that does not directly deal with the problems of resource appropriation and marginalization of local peoples. What is needed is in effect a stronger gate, meaning a strengthening of smallholders' means to keep their land. The threat of appropriation is the main issue. This may be two issues where REDD has the potential to play a significant part on the local or national level. Rimba Raya can apply more pressure on the remaining land if they exclude villagers. On the one hand there are hopes that Rimba Raya will support local smallholders, especially that they will provide access to jelutong trees, a highly valued commodity that can be added to their diversified income strategies. On the other hand many expect them to claim what they see as their land, as the plantations did, further limiting their opportunities. I will now turn to some opportunities for Rimba Raya to limit or expand Karandang flexibility.

Rimba Raya and flexibility

In chapter 1 I discussed how villagers employed diversified income strategies, or a *potential* to choose from a diverse set of income strategies. Depending on how Rimba Raya is implemented, it can strengthen or weaken flexibility in Karandang. In order to make a profit and continue as a project, Rimba Raya has to protect the carbon stored in their carbon accounting area. If they attempt to do this by excluding villagers from the forest to prevent illegal logging or the opening of land for agriculture, much like the national park has done, they will effectively remove a large part of the potential sources for income in Karandang that are used today.

People in Karandang also have hopes for Rimba Raya. Jobs and better access to the forest are most often mentioned as possible positive outcomes. These are opportunities to increase flexibility for households and the village. In negotiation with the village administrations, it seems a possible method for benefit sharing is to channel a part of the profits into existing village budgets. While not unproblematic in light of the corruption discussion in this chapter, if it is done in a transparent manner, it may contribute to strengthening democratic practices. When discussing possible good outcomes from Rimba Raya, planting of *jelutong* was the most common reply. I will look closer at this as an example of how Rimba Raya can affect flexibility in Karandang.

Jelutong

The forest in the Rimba Raya project cone is partially degraded after logging activities, encroachment by palm oil plantations and forest fire. Planting new trees is therefore a part of the project. Jelutong is an interesting alternative for two reasons; it has strong symbolic and political value in Karandang, and the way it is exploited is easily combined with other income strategies.

Jelutong (*Dyera costulata* and *Dyera lowii*, *pantung* in Banjarese) is sometimes called ‘jungle rubber’ or ‘wild rubber’ and produces latex, which is used in industry for products such as chewing gum, cellophane and cable coating. Unlike the common rubber tree it was said to grow well in the wet areas of the peat swamp forest. Sale of latex from karet or jelutong can provide a helpful extra income for families. One man explained to me that if he could have 100 rubber trees, it would be enough for him to quit his work in the palm oil plantation and make a living from it. While latex was the characteristic usually mentioned when discussing the prospects for planting jelutong in the area, the timber can also be used for plywood and furniture. (Williams 1963; Widayati and Suyanto 2013)

Jelutong and rubber trees are evidence of right to land through active management. To draw the latex from grown trees they have to be cut in a pattern so the resin gathers in a cup, which has to be emptied regularly. The trees can be clearly distinguished even if they grow in a forest. Of all of the stories of violations of people and landscape committed by palm oil companies, the story from a neighbouring village of how the company had bulldozed a person's grown rubber garden, was frequently recounted with the greatest gravity. This was a severe transgression over the symbolic value of rubber trees of tying people to a specific plot of land. The symbolic becomes political when the jelutong trees are used in the negotiation over access and exclusion. It takes 6-7 years for the trees to become mature enough to produce resin, but after that they can be productive for up to 30 years. It is common to keep other vegetation down in the beginning, but as the trees grow larger underbrush and forest can spring up between the rubber trees. An admired strong man in Seruyan reportedly planted a border of rubber trees around a forested where there was a land dispute between him and a palm oil company.

When Rimba Raya returned to Seruyan in 2013, a portion of the forest in the northern part of their concession had been converted to palm oil. The palm oil company claimed that they had the right to 80 hectares of what was now Rimba Raya land, and they had already planted 40 hectares of oil palms. After an intense conflict with a palm oil company Rimba Raya reclaimed the land with excavators. When I returned to Karandang in January 2014, Rimba Raya had begun a reforestation project in the northern part of the forest. They had decided to plant jelutong in the area with the cooperation of the nearest village.

Conservation and reforestation projects have been criticized for often choosing species that are useless for traditional forest users. Robbins (2012) shows how the planting of an introduced scrub tree, *Juriflora*, in the in the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Reserve in Rajasthan, India, grew out of control for not only the local inhabitants, but also the state. In what he calls a classic case of conservation and control, an enclosure was created to protect the forest and wildlife, while other areas were set aside for social forestry. Research into historical land use in the area showed that 'traditional forest use' was accompanied by commercial and industrial extraction, utilizing heavily extractive methods leading to the scarcity of important tree species. Through extensive interviews while following people as they worked Robbins found that the people in the area relied much more on wild species and materials from the reserve and the surrounding forest, not only for subsistence use or emergencies in the case of hunger and drought, but for inputs for

capitalized production. Restricted access following the creation of the reserve lead to a direct decrease in yields and margins for most of the families. Furthermore, herders from other places who usually used this area for grazing were not considered to be stakeholders to the project and effectively excluded, leading to increased pressure on the remaining land.

This brings me to my second point. By planting trees that are valued in the community and provide a stable extra income for households, it is possible that instead of practicing conservation and control like in the example above, effectively excluding forest users, it is possible that Rimba Raya can help increase villagers flexibility. Through its symbolic, political and economic role, *jelutong* may be a tool for local people for resisting palm oil encroachment. But for that to happen Rimba Raya must trust that local people can be active managers of a forest that is social and political as much as it is natural.

People in Karandang have experienced exclusion, persecution and marginalization, even as they work creatively to use opportunities that arise in the environmental projects competing for control over the forest. Rimba Raya is largely interpreted through this, and it is especially feared that the villagers will be excluded from the forest, or that Rimba Raya and its partners will make promises they have no intentions of keeping, and by the time it is too late, they will be gone and not held accountable. World Educations' perception of the village, at least when they first returned in July 2013, is largely based on interactions with local elites, particularly the village government, and women are practically excluded or exclude themselves from the process of negotiating the project. These are problems that they work to overcome.

With their claims to the forest backed by the Ministry of Forestry, and meetings with the Village Head that are perceived as secret, Rimba Raya act in a fashion similar to the palm oil companies. With this in mind, villagers are highly sceptical to their assurances and promises. Many people in Karandang as well as the other villages also expressed apprehension or fear that Rimba Raya would become like Tanjung Puting, effectively excluding the communities from using the forest. The frequent corruption charges can be seen in the light of general distrust in political leaders and institutions, which has made this a socially acceptable way of expressing aggrievement or vocalizing social conflict. The resistance to Rimba Raya demonstrated in Karandang must be seen in relation to the internal village politics and distrust of the Village Head as well as the larger context of resource exploitation in Kalimantan, and experiences from logging, conservation and palm oil.

In 2010 the village opposed Rimba Raya. While most people were still sceptical, there was also hope for the future. Since then fish stocks have declined drastically, much fewer people are able to make a living from fishing as their main source of income, and more have taken work in the plantation. Looking at the encroachments of palm oil companies on the Seruyan forest together with the government plans, it seems certain that without the project this whole area will be converted to palm oil plantations. These experiences may have contributed to making villagers more positive to the project than they were in the past.

Final remarks

Environmental change is intimately experienced in everyday life in Karandang. The most dramatic example is the disappearing fish, which is interpreted as a threat to their very way of life. Eating fish every day and swimming in the river are two characteristics that distinguish the Karandang people from the Javanese newcomers. Unpredictable floods and seasons together with increased pressure on land are among the reasons why the majority of the people in Karandang have chosen wage work in the palm oil plantations. However, working in the plantations does not mean that people stop relying on the forest. Many individuals and most households have diversified incomes, often combining wage work with fishing, gardening, services, collection of forest products, and sale of commodity production for international markets. Even the people who have moved to company housing in the plantations maintain close ties with the village: Some families keep their old house in case they lose their job or if it becomes more attractive to work in the village. People adjust their livelihoods according to the seasons and new market opportunities, for example with *gembor* and gold. Looking at environmental change in terms of Bateson's (2000) concept of flexibility, this movement between wage work, fishing, and other livelihoods contribute to the ability of individuals and households to cope with change. Increased pressure on land and environmental degradation reduces their flexibility, and has led to insecurity that is expressed in aggrievement and allegations against individuals in the community who seems to prosper while others suffer.

Before the Rimba Raya project the people in Karandang navigated within a political economy of the forest dominated by three historical undertakings, shaping landscapes and knowledge. During the time of the state-licensed timber companies from the 1970s and the illegal logging until 2007, much capital flowed through the village, and almost everyone were involved in some way. Government officials and police who benefitted from bribes oversaw the practice. However, the majority of the profits went to powerful outsiders who organized the trade in the region. During the fierce anti-logging operations from 2003, the actual loggers, and among people from Karandang, were persecuted, arrested and fined, while most of the central actors who had become rich from export of timber escaped with impunity. Parallel to the timber boom, the Tanjung Puting National Park was created, its border two hours from the village. In an attempt to halt illegal logging within the protected area, local communities were to adhere strict

regulations. People from Karandang were excluded from the park, but forestry police often looked the other way for substantial bribes. From 2006 palm oil companies established plantations in the area around Karandang. However, they have planted in significant areas outside of their concessions on land bought or taken from local communities, and land disputes between companies and villagers are frequent. The absurdity of how the state first encouraged timber exploitation, then excluded villagers from the national park to protect the forest, and persecuted local loggers, only to open up massive areas for conversion to palm oil plantations, has led to a fundamental distrust of outsiders who want to regulate forest use. Proponents of each of these three previous environmental projects have come to the village with noble intentions and/or promises that the village will prosper, but there have been many broken promises.

REDD+ is, similar to the three examples above, a top-down improvement scheme, promoted by outsiders. Expectations for gaining “community support”, and simplified ideas of what kind of people make up a village is challenged in encounters with sceptical villages marked by internal political divisions. The project resembles the crackdown on illegal logging and the national park in its need to monitor and regulate activities in the forest. The way they communicate with the village and their promises of prosperity are very close to the methods employed by palm oil companies. In an effort to respect local decision-making traditions, which are practices established during the decentralization reforms from 1998, communication between Rimba Raya and their partners World Education are largely channelled through the Village Head, and there are plans for benefit-sharing by adding parts of profits from the sale of carbon credit directly to local government budgets. In a best-case scenario this can improve transparency and empower communities. In Karandang, the village is divided, and many people, especially from West Karandang, oppose the Village Head. There are corruption allegations against him, and speculations about how much he profited personally during similar meetings with palm oil companies. The social interface between World Education and Karandang is largely negotiated by local elites and the village administration. These are individuals with complex relations to other villagers and agendas of their own. The result has been that the majority of the villagers are left out of the negotiation of Rimba Raya.

“Corruption talk” has become a narrative of villager’s lack of confidence in their political leaders, public institutions and outsiders arriving with promises of development, and a lens for seeing and interpreting the motivations of extra-local actors. Comparable to witchcraft as it has been

studied by anthropologists, allegations of corruption can be used to verbalize emotionally and historically dense social conflict. On the other hand, it offers a mode of explanation of difference in terms of historically extractive policies transferring wealth from the periphery to the centre. (Douglas 1963; Haller and Shore 2005; Dove 2011)

To actually realize the ideals of full and effective participation and free prior and informed consent, World Education and Rimba Raya need to engage with the whole community. As it is now, women are a target group for activities, but are not included in the discussion about what REDD should be in Seruyan and whether or not it should be there. If only a few individuals in they risk designing and implementing benefit-sharing in a way that does not benefit the whole community. Exclusion also breeds suspicion, and can weaken trust in the project.

The Rimba Raya project has presented some opportunities in Karandang that differentiates them from the other conservation projects. They have demonstrated that they are willing take villagers' preferences into account in the implementation of the project, and that while some parts of the project are decided from the top, it is possible to negotiate the implementation of the project with regards to the villages. An important example is the planting of *jelutong* trees as a part of reforestation efforts, a tree that can be harvested for resin and sold. *Jelutong* trees are privately owned and managed, and World Education has expressed that the reforested areas may be divided among villagers for management. This is a tree of local symbolic and political significance, as it is used as proof of ownership used in land conflicts with palm oil companies. The villagers in Karandang remain sceptical to Rimba Raya, but there are hopes that the project will bring opportunities and become an ally against palm oil encroachment.

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