“Soon there will be nothing left”

Living with the ambiguity of forest in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

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Abstract

Indonesia's commitment to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) continues to be permeated with ambiguity. The ambiguity of REDD+ in Indonesia is further reflected in the forest. Both are held as top priority on a government level, but seem remarkably integrated in the Indonesian business as usual. REDD+ is often enacted as the grand plan, but studies on the ground indicate implementation is not only faulty, but even lacking. Stakeholders are losing faith in REDD+, while local communities in REDD+ pilot provinces have hardly even heard of it.

Central Kalimantan on Borneo holds all the features of a frontier in the fusion of legal and illegal, conservation and destruction (Tsing, 2005). It is the location where processes of environmentalism and business as usual create collaborations, confusion and resistance. Villagers in Katingan, Central Kalimantan, are living in the intersection of forest conservation and deforestation, practically speaking. They deal with the ambiguity of forest on a daily basis, as well as changes in their local environment and community. They are adapting to an increasingly smaller number of livelihood opportunities, few of which are sustainable. As they are increasingly incorporated into the realm of capitalism through industrial logging and the palm oil industry, their perception and valuation of the forest is changing, and so do the premises for conserving the forest.

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List of acronyms

AMAN	Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara/Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago
BAU	Business as usual
BLH	Badan Lingkungan Hidup/Institute of Environment
BP-REDD+	Badan Pengelola REDD+/REDD+ Agency
CIFOR	The Center for International Forestry Research
COP	Conference of the Parties
ERC	Ecosystem Restoration Concession
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
GHG	Greenhouse gases
HOB	Heart of Borneo
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KFCP	Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership
KKN	Korupsi, kolusi, nepotisme/Corruption, collusion, nepotism
LOI	Letter of intent
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoF	Ministry of Forestry
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MRV	Measuring, Reporting and Verification
NCCC	National Council on Climate Change
NES/PIR	Nucleous Estate and Smallholder/Perkebunan Inti Rakyat
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PILAR	Agricultural research institute of the University of Palangka Raya
PNPM	Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat/National Program for Community Empowerment
PT	Perseroan Terbatas/Limited Liability Company
PT AUS	PT Arjuna Utama Sawit
PT RMU	PT Rimba Makmur Utama
PT RRC	PT Rimba Raya Conservation
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
ROSCA	Rotating Savings and Credit Associations

RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
SOB	Save our Borneo
UGM	Universitas Gadjah Mada
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNORCID	The United Nations Office for REDD+ Coordination in Indonesia
UNPAR	University of Palangka Raya
WALHI	Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia/Indonesian Friends of the Earth
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
YPI	Yayasan Puter Indonesia/Puter Foundation Indonesia

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Prologue: REDD+

REDD+ is an acronym for Reducing Emission from deforestation and forest degradation. The plus sign indicates the effort to conserve and enhance forest carbon stocks (The REDD desk, 2016). The initial framework of RED (Reducing Emission from Deforestation) first entered global climate negotiations at COP11 (Conference of the Parties) in 2005, and the scheme of REDD (with the second D for deforestation added) was set at the COP13 to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2007 in Bali (Indrarto et al., 2012). It was here that the Norwegian Prime Minister at that time, Jens Stoltenberg, uttered the optimistic phrase later symbolizing the naivety when approaching REDD:

> Through effective measures against deforestation we can achieve large cuts in greenhouse gas emissions - quickly and at low cost. The technology is well known and has been available for thousands of years. Everybody knows how not to cut down a tree. (Stoltenberg, 2007: 2)

It was established as a performance-based system, where payment was to follow demonstrable emission reduction. Ultimately REDD+ is a climate mitigation framework for reducing emission of greenhouse gases (GHG) from forest through market mechanisms, aiming to make forest just as, or more, valuable *not* cut down. REDD+ encompasses a wider range of activities, including sustainable forest management, forest conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks through reforestation and afforestation (Murdiyarso, Dewi, Lawrence, & Seymour, 2011: 1) [1]. Initially REDD+ was seen as a relatively cheap, quick, and easily achievable through reforms and global mechanisms. In addition to environmental and climate-related benefits it was thought to improve the situation for the poor, living in developing countries, through better governance and potentially financial incentives. All in all, a win-win situation (Angelsen & Atmadja, 2008: 1).

Already in the early stage it became evident that REDD+ wasn't as straightforward as initially assumed. Challenges presented both in regards to technical issues and governance, e.g. in the process of transforming carbon into a quantifiable commodity, a process requiring precise measurements and verifications of carbon emissions as well as a baseline of calculated

[1] In this thesis I will use the terms REDD and REDD+ interchangeably.

business-as-usual emissions for comparison. In addition international and national NGOs raised concerns about the possible unfavorable implications for the forest dwellers in the countries in question, calling for safeguards for local communities (Howell, 2014b). Largely due to the efforts of NGO activists REDD+ changed from a pure forest conservation initiative to "conservation-as-development", to focusing on forest dwellers rather than just the forest itself, at least in regards to policies (Howell, 2014b). A side effect of this shift in focus is that forest dwellers sometimes unwarrantedly became scapegoats of underlying reasons for deforestation, drawing attention from the real large-scale destructive agents such as logging and plantation companies (Howell, 2014a: 156).

After the COP13 in 2007, still awaiting a new global climate agreement, several REDD+ initiatives and pilot projects emerged (Angelsen & McNeill, 2012). Such projects are funded either by organizations including the UN (UN-REDD Programme) and the World Bank, private sectors (e.g. PT RMU) or through bilateral or multilateral finance agreement (e.g. between Norway and Indonesia).

CHAPTER 1
Introduction

Indonesia – a history of deforestation and forest degradation

The republic of Indonesia is an archipelago in Southeast Asia, consisting of 1,811,569 km^2 spread over 17,508 islands (CIA, 2013). It´s ranked as the fourth most populous country in the world, with more than 255 million inhabitants. Indonesia gained its independence in 1949, after Dutch colonization from the 17th century and Japanese occupation during the Second World War. Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, led the new nation through "guided democracy" until 1966. Sukarno managed to create a sense of unity in a diverse nation, but failed to bring democracy and equality, and gradually lost power and the presidency to General Soeharto during the 1960s. The following "New Order", under president Soeharto's authoritarian regime in 1966-1998, was characterized by limitations of freedom of politics and speech, anti-communism and widespread corruption. Some economic development was achieved through foreign investment, Western economic assistance due to World Bank and IMF (International Monetary Fund) political strategies, as well as oil revenues in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1998 the "New Order" collapsed after a growing pro-democracy movement and massive student demonstrations (Ricklefs, 2001).

Indonesia is a developing country and its development highly depends on the forestry and forest-related sectors such as agriculture and mining (Indrarto et al., 2012: 1). Its newer history is very much intertwined with issues of forestry. I will therefore focus my narrative of Indonesia's newer history in mainly such a context.

The period following Soeharto's resignation is referred to as reform [*reformasi*] in Indonesia, emphasizing a move towards democracy and decentralization. However old issues remain, such as the tendency of "KKN" (corruption, collusion and nepotism) permeating all levels of Indonesian society since the 1900s (Tsing, 2005: 16). Governance of forest have been especially plagued by corruption, inconsistent or contradictive legislation, a lack of clear forest and tenure boundaries, a lack of coordination between different levels and institutions, a lack of transparency and community-participation in decision-making processes (Indrarto et al., 2012: 20).

Of Indonesia's total landmass 70% (ca. 130 million Ha) is controlled by the MoF (Ministry of Forestry), defining these areas as "state forest areas" [*Kawasan hutan Negara*] (Indrarto et al., 2012: x). Noteworthy, an area can be classified as "forest area" regardless of the existence of trees or forest. The Indonesian state also includes rubber plantations in their official definition of forest, and previously attempted to include palm oil plantations as well (Howell, 2014a: 153). The number of people estimated to depend on the forest varies between 1,5-65 million. However, 30 million is an average estimate of the number of people who directly depended on forest in the mid-2000 (FWI & GFW, 2002: 3).

Tsing (2005: 16) claims: "[..] The identity of the nation became entangled with forest destruction [..]", and the rate and extent of deforestation and forest degradation have been a massive environmental issue since industrial logging began in the 1970s. It is difficult to know exactly how much forest has disappeared, but data estimate an annual deforestation rate of 1,125 million ha (Bappenas, 2010b, from Indrarto et al., 2012: 3). Deforestation is mainly a result of human action, such as legal and illegal logging, conversion to plantations, mining, swidden agriculture, and forest fires out of control. All of which are driven by a number of coinciding factors such as economic and political interests, market demands, dependence on natural resources and poor governance (Indrarto et al., 2012).

The palm oil industry has been a significant contributor to Indonesian economical growth and development, providing significant government revenues from export taxes, poverty alleviation through employment and being essential in developing the infrastructure in the rural areas (Obidzinski, 2013). Indonesia is per 2016 the largest producer and exporter of palm oil worldwide, its plantations covering more than 11 million ha (Directorate General of Estate Crops, 2014), and 40% of the palm oil is produced by smallholders (UNDP, 2015). In spite of efforts towards sustainability and forest conservation Indonesia is still expressing goals of increasing palm oil production from 27 million tons (2013) to 40 million tons (2020) (UNDP Indonesia, 2014).

The problem with monoculture plantations such as palm oil plantations is first of all that they presuppose clearing existing vegetation in order to cultivate the desired single crop, hence converting forest into crops in a large scale. This endangers biodiversity and destroys the natural habitat for local wildlife. Secondly, the nearby ecosystems also undergo changes and are exposed to contamination from, for example, pesticides. Both of these can have long-term impacts. Certain crops are also more harmful than others. For example, palm oil is known to cause significant soil erosion, pollution in water and soil, and massive CO2 emission from fires set to clear land for the plantations (WWF, 2016a). In addition to being

environmentally harmful, monoculture plantations are also socially destructive. Local farmers can rarely compete with large-scale industrial companies in terms of production, eco-labeling, and sales. Furthermore, the rights of local communities are often in danger, as the expansive nature of capitalism leads to plantation companies seizing land both in legal and illegal manners. This can cause social conflict, as well as displacement and social marginalization. Those dependent on their local environment for their livelihoods are especially vulnerable to these kinds of changes, as they are often left without options.

REDD+ in Indonesia

Indonesia's former president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono announced in 2009 an overall emission reduction of 26 % of BAU (Business as usual) by 2020, and a 41 % target with international support (Luttrell, Resosudarmo, Muharrom, Brockhaus, & Seymour, 2014: 67). Norway is one of the countries cooperating with Indonesia to reach this goal, and in May 2010 a bilateral agreement called the Letter of Intent (LOI) was signed between Norway and Indonesia. In it Norway committed to contribute to Indonesia's REDD+ efforts with 1 billion USD. Norway and Indonesia have also collaborated on environmental issues since 1990 through an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), increasingly focusing on climate and energy from 2007 (Utenriksdepartementet, 2009).

Following Indonesia's commitment to REDD+ some major political changes have taken part in shaping the progress of REDD+ in Indonesia. The "One Map Policy" from 2011 aimed to develop a central geospatial database, and marked an effort to improve forest governance. In 2014 Joko "Jokowi" Widodo was elected president and quickly merged the Ministries of Environment and Forestry. Jokowi also dispersed the REDD+ Agency (BP REDD+, established in 2013) and the National Council on Climate Change (NCCC), making them a part of the Directorate General of Climate Change under the new Ministry of Environment and Forestry (Lang, 2015a). This raised speculations of whether the already less powerful forces of the Ministry of Environment and the REDD+ Agency would be eaten alive by the Ministry of Forestry (Lang, 2015b). The major factors reducing the state's capacity to ensure effective implementation of REDD+ is hence corruption, conflict of interests among stakeholders in the state apparatus (Howell, 2015: 42), as well as technical and practical issues. The latter are challenges related to the "One Map Policy", baselines (reference levels)

and emission MRV (Monitor, Report and Verify), coordination between stakeholders and land tenure (Indrarto et al., 2012), in addition to indigenous peoples' rights.

According to the LOI between Norway and Indonesia (Solheim & M. Natalegawa, 2010) the partnership is organized in three phases. The first is a preparation for implementation of Indonesia's national REDD+ strategy and the second is a transformation phase for implementation and large-scale mitigation actions. The payment-for-verified emission reductions was supposed to begin with the third phase in 2014, but is still delayed as the required MRV from phase two is not yet completed (Jong & Parlina, 2016).

A part of the LOI is the Indonesian moratorium on new forest concessions on Primary Natural Forest and Peatlands from 2011-2015 (Murdiyarso et al., 2011), renewed for two more years in 2015 (Budiharta, 2015). Although Norwegian authorities have portrayed the moratorium as key to the success of REDD+, critical voices (e.g. among NGOs) have described it as insignificant due to its limited power and range. The moratorium is based on a limited non-legislative presidential instruction (Inpres), protecting only peatland and "primary natural forest" (Murdiyarso et al., 2011). It has no effect on previously granted concessions and excludes disturbed or secondary natural forest. If REDD+ can be described as the emperor's new clothes then the moratorium is certainly the crown jewel.

Methodology and course of action

This thesis is based on the findings of approximately six months fieldwork in Central Kalimantan from February to the end of July 2015. The fieldwork was multi-sited, as the first month was situated in Palangka Raya, the capital of the Indonesian Province Central Kalimantan, while my main time and focus was in the village Dahanen in the same province. In defense of multi-sited fieldwork Hannerz (2003) argues that: "The sites are connected with one another in such ways that the relationships between them are as important for this formulation as the relationships within them". Like Howell (2014a), I argue that this is absolutely the case in the context of REDD+. I therefor found it necessary to spend some time doing fieldwork in the city in the realm of government and NGO offices. This enabled comparison and a holistic understanding of the situation on both village and province level.

Okely (2012: 20) describes how the need to see social elements in its context is not opposed to large scale issues, and that holism is also applicable in the global. In this thesis, I aim to see how the global issue of REDD+ and climate change are experienced in a local

context and how they are interconnected and affect one another. Being in the city, my zone of study was delimited by topic. While in the village, this zone became set in a rather geographical manner, however not delimited nor defined by the boundaries of the village.

Before going to Central-Kalimantan I attended a one-month language course in Indonesian [*Bahasa Indonesia*] in Yogyakarta in Java. I got to know students from the Anthropology Department of Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM) who also participated in this collaborative study of REDD+ in Indonesia. In February I and my fellow student Henrik Jarholm from UiO visited The Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), a non-profit scientific facility based in Bogor, Java. We were invited by one of the researches, Nick Hogarth, who we met during our language course, to discuss the situation of REDD+. I attended a REDD+ seminar at UGM in February, as well as a workshop in Palangka Raya in April for the master's students from UiO and UGM studying REDD+ in Indonesia.

In Palangka Raya I did fieldwork with a fellow student from UGM, Natunia Irianto, both before settling in the village and during some briefer stays in the city. In an attempt to map out the situation of REDD+ in the province we visited several different governmental offices, such as the Institute of Environment (Badan Lingkungan Hidup – hereafter BLH) and Ministry of Forestry (Kemenetrian Kehutanan). We spoke to remaining staff at the REDD+ Agency (BP REDD+) before it was dissolved in March-April 2015. The data being presented regarding the local government is collected from informal meetings or public seminars etc., as well as official documents either presented or referred to in public contexts or given to us directly by the government employees in question. We conducted various informal interviews with staff from local branches of NGOs such as WWF (World Wildlife Fund) and Walhi (Indonesian Friends of the Earth), AMAN (Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago) and SOB (Save Our Borneo). We also joined WWF on a fieldtrip to a village in the Katingan district. It is important to note that the statements from personnel in organizations may reflect their personal opinion in regard to a subject, rather than the organization's official stand.

In addition, we visited the local UNORCID (The United Nations Office for REDD+ Coordination in Indonesia) office, PILAR (the agriculture research institute of the University of Palangka Raya), and the Sebangau administrations office Balai. Some interviews were held in English, but most communication took place in Indonesian, so in the beginning I depended on translations and discussions with Natunia afterwards. I also attended a Walhi seminar on land grabbing in March, and a REDD+ seminar arranged by PILAR/UNPAR in May.

I initially aimed to conduct fieldwork inside or in close proximity to a REDD+ project area, but since I was unable to establish contact with PT RMU or their associate NGO

Yayasan Puter Indonesia I could not do so. I chose the village Dahanen as my site of study following advice from WWF fieldworkers. WWF was vital in the process of gaining access to the village, as one of the fieldworkers not only found a place for me to live in the village, but also cleared my stay with the headman of the village [*kepala desa*] and the head of sub-district [*pak Camat*].

In the village I was fortunate enough to stay with a small family in their house. I received my own room and, mama Susanti, the mom in the house took very good care of me. She became my teacher, mom, guide, intermediary and interpreter, all to my eternal appreciation. She was one of my key informants, together with some of her relatives and friends. In the village I aimed to keep a low profile while participate as much as I could in anything I was included in. I chatted with the neighbors, participated in daily activities, attended village and NGO meetings, visited relatives and walked around. I briefly met representatives for the palm oil company PT AUS (Arjuna Utama Sawit) working nearby. They were reluctant to let me interview them without significant paperwork and permissions that I, at the time, was unable to obtain. I visited several other villages, tagging along with the village headman or NGO fieldworkers. In July I joined a fieldtrip downstream arranged by Yayasan Puter Indonesia and Jakarta based professor of Anthropology, Dr. Suraya Afiff, from the University of Indonesia. Their purpose for the trip was research about REDD+ and forest management.

In the village I focused on participant observation, and conducted frequent informal interviews and conversations. Due to mainly reasons regarding language I chose to do the most thorough in-depth interviews towards the end of my stay. During the interviews I attempted to let people speak freely regarding relevant topics, and I also asked questions and attempted to confirm or disprove what I thought I had learned. I aimed to speak to a wide variety of people, of different ages, backgrounds and educational and occupational relations etc. Long-term fieldwork was highly beneficial as it enabled me to gradually get to know the villagers, and to live in the village as the seasons changed from wet to dry.

Positioning and ethical implications

An anthropologist's position in a social setting clearly has ethical implications. I consequently attempted to position myself as neutral, but on occasion "chose sides" with the villagers to make it clear I was not a part of any NGO or other organization. Being objective is close to

impossible both in doing fieldwork and writing ethnography. Even though one aims to capture and present the informants point of view (the emic) it is important to acknowledge that one's own background and thoughts will inevitably affect how situations are perceived and interpreted. However, being aware of and open about this, objectivism and subjectivism make partners in good ethnography (Madden, 2010: 26).

It is difficult to balance the need of access and writing a genuine description with the importance of protecting people's privacy and interests. Due to this, I have chosen to make the village and the villagers in my study anonymous. The name Dahanen is not the village's real name, and it is used in agreement with Viola Schreer (former Bizard) who has previously done fieldwork in the same village. She has used the fictive name Dahanen in former publications as well as in her forthcoming PhD thesis.

Possible limitations

Possible limitations of my fieldwork mainly concern language, especially in the village where it was my main challenge. The Indonesian language, *Bahasa Indonesia*, was elected the official language in 1928, unifying a people speaking hundreds of local languages (Smedal, 1996). Nonetheless, in rural areas people mainly interact in their local language on a daily basis. Most learn Indonesian when attending school, but seldom use it except from on rare formal occasions such as particular NGO meetings. Many felt timid when speaking to me in Indonesian, especially kids and the elders. In the beginning my understanding was limited and mama Susanti often accompanied me to help me understand. During my final months there I found that by walking around alone made people were open to talking to me directly in Indonesian. To decrease the room for errors I asked follow-up questions whenever possible and approached subjects in different manners and in different settings.

There are of course other factors that might have affected my data to some degree. Being a white, western student was clearly one of those factors, giving me a certain status. This became evident when villagers hesitated to talk to me and said I should rather talk to their neighbor, who "knew more". I was often called by the name *bulé*, meaning foreigner. I wasn't very fond of the nickname, but the villagers eventually explained that being called a foreigner carried nothing but positive connotations and it was a very good nickname. Whenever I finally felt I blended in my illusion was often disrupted by someone lining up to take a selfie with me.

I often feared the locals were putting me on a pedestal. In order to counter that I sometimes found it helpful to use a naïve approach, talking as though I knew little of environmental issues when e.g. asking about the garbage in the river. I wanted to be able to learn from them and to hear their perspective without them fearing to say something wrong. A balance of blending in and being clueless (rather easy being in such an unfamiliar setting) was necessary. However, it was important for me to not mislead anyone, and I was clear about who I was and why I was there.

Another challenge and blessing was the previous long-term stay of Viola Schreer in the village. She had opened a lot of doors and had created an understanding of doing fieldwork and going around asking clueless questions. When attempting to explain my presence etc. people would often brush me off saying they already understood. The villagers were open, helpful and understanding. However, since Viola had stayed in the village for more than a year she gained far more intimate knowledge of the people and the language than I could possibly manage in the months I had available. This made people inclined to talk to me in their local language and expect me to simply understand.

A major challenge while writing this thesis has been the very limited information and literature available about the group of people with which I lived. The villagers do not define themselves as Ngaju Dayaks, ruling out most literature about the Ngaju. Viola Schreer's dissertation has not yet been published and I have only had access to a brief section of this.

Main theme and research questions

In this thesis I describe the life of a small forest community in an attempt to understand how the villagers' daily life and struggle for self-preservation are affected by the ambiguity of forest conservation and deforestation from e.g. palm oil plantations. As I frame my thesis in the context of REDD+ I aim to explore the connection between the village and different motivations and practices/policies of forest management on a higher level. I therefor start with examining certain aspects of forest conservation on a provincial level, among public employees and NGOs, to illustrate the ambiguity of the forest and the REDD+ discourse.

As my fieldwork proceeded I learned that the villagers' relation to and valuation of the forest was closely connected to the changes they experienced in their local environment. Hence my research questions are as following:

- How does a life of uncertainties and adaptions affect the perception and valuation of the forest?
- How does this change the premise for managing and conserving the forest?

I will focus on elements of change and uncertainty, and the responses to these in relation to the forest. I argue that the villagers largely lack agency and real options to act differently than they do, and that their actions unintentionally contribute to reproduce the problem of deforestation and forest degradation. I found that the villagers had little motivation for conserving the forest as such, especially if it in reality entailed reducing their chances of having a good life and taking advantage of the limited possibilities at hand (I will come back to this throughout the thesis). Ultimately, the effort to conserve forest through REDD+ was not a problem of *how* not to cut down a tree, but *why*. It then becomes interesting to see how NGOs navigate this landscape in their quest for development and safeguarding local people (here through livelihood projects) while balancing their own valuation of the forest as preservation-worthy "nature", biodiversity reserves or carbon stocks. Taken further – how to save the forest when it has no apparent value as such?

The title of the thesis "*Soon there will be nothing left*" is a combination of quotes from villagers expressing a lack of hope for the future, as well as acknowledging that current practices are leading to the villagers' gradual loss of access to land.

Theoretical background and analytical tools

Environmental anthropology initially aimed to understand how nature and culture were related. As a discipline it has developed from seeing the two as a dichotomy, to seeing the environment as determining culture, to different ways of fitting the two together (Dove & Carpenter, 2008). Dove & Carpenter (2008: 61) assert that environmental anthropology increasingly focuses on communities' connections to wider political-ecological systems through diachronic and interdisciplinary approaches. In addition, the influence of post-structural theory is seen in an increased flexibility and interest in environmental discourse. Environmental anthropology now functions as a collective term for a range of theories and methods, encompassing e.g. anthropology on climate change, ecological anthropology and political ecology. In this section I will try to place my thesis in this range of literature, and to draw out the tendencies most relevant to my study.

Kottak (2006) describes how changes in ecological anthropology reflect more general changes in anthropology. From focusing on so-called isolated and unique units such as "culture" and single communities, the new ecological anthropology increasingly recognizes the pervasive connections and high scale flow of people, information and technology, and the impact such tendencies have on a local level. Theory has become infused with political awareness often manifesting in attempts to formulate culturally informed solutions (policies) to e.g. environmental degradation. New ecological anthropology is concerned with the encounters between different *ethnoecologies* (set of environmental perceptions, a cultural model of the environment and how it relates to society and people) influenced by a global flow and new types of connections and contact (Kottak, 2006: 42). Kottak (2006) decribes sustainable development as an ethnoecological model aiming to mediate between environmentalism, developmentalism and traditional local ethnoecology, in order to achieve self-regenerating changes that are appropriate and sensitive to both culture and ecology.

Political ecology is a field of critical research that places issues such as environmental change in the context of dynamic power relations from a local to global level (Crane, Orlove, & Roncoli, 2009: 103). Anthropology on climate change further provides grounded understandings of this change through analytical focus on security dimensions, adaptation and resilience at a local level. Crate & Nuttall (2009: 12) describes anthropology on climate change as inherently a question of culture, in that intimate human-environment relations integral in culture are undergoing unprecedented change. In the context of climate change and disasters Hastrup (2009) claims that resilience in the socio-ecological system resides in people as an aspect of agency. She frames resilience in people's search for certainty in their changing surroundings, asserting that a sense of certainty through the unity of the physical and social world is vital for social life (Hastrup, 2009: 20-21).

Throughout the thesis I attempt to analyze the intersection between the ethnoecologies of environmentalism (REDD+ and other forms of forest conservation) and of a local community, as well as sustainability. I demonstrate how the villagers perceive changes (climatic and others), and analyze their responses as adaptions, resilience and creating a sense of certainty. Doing this I will briefly draw on Bateson's (1972) definition of flexibility, before I draw of Graeber's work on value (2001 and 2013) to discuss the value of the forest in relation to forest conservation.

Though there is a wide range of ethnography on Indonesia, I have chosen to focus on Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing and Tania Murray Li' ethnographies in this thesis. Tsing's (2005) ethnography "Friction" from Kalimantan is a description of cultural processes of destruction,

empowerment struggles and global connections through collaborations and interconnections during the late 1980s and 1990s. Tsing (2005: 4) defines friction as: "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference", and analyzes how zones of cultural friction produce collaboration and unexpected alliances. I will use Tsing's concept of friction when analyzing collaborations with NGOs and sustainability mainly in chapter 4, with her perspective of Kalimantan as a frontier as a base.

In "Land's End" Tania Li (2014) describes the polarizing effect experienced by indigenous communities in the highlands of Sulawesi in the meeting with modernization and capitalism. The title refers to the changed use and final enclosure of land, as well as bewilderment after reaching a dead end. I will draw on Li's ethnography mainly in chapter 3 when discussing land as a commodity in Dahanen. I am also inspired by Li's (2014) conjunctural approach as an analytic tool. This means seeing the dynamic of how different elements set the conditions for others, changing configurations creating new challenges. The elements that set the conditions for the villagers in Katingan are the provincial discourse on REDD+, NGO activities, climate change etc. all of which continue to affect how one perceives and hence acts towards the forest in regards to both forest degradation and conservation.

Structure of the thesis

In this introduction I have presented REDD+ and the political and historical background relevant for my research. In addition to methodology, I have presented the theoretical framework, analytical tools and research question for the thesis.

In chapter 2 I begin by introducing the REDD+ discourse in provincial politics and NGOs on the provincial level, Central Kalimantan. I then introduce the Katingan regency and the formal life of the village Dahanen. I focus on Kalimantan as a frontier, and the village's lack of inclusion into the Indonesian society.

In chapter 3 I discuss the changes the villagers are experiencing in their local community and environment. I focus on climate change, forest fires and the villagers' involvement in the palm oil industry and analyze these from a perspective of resilience and flexibility.

In chapter 4 I demonstrate how the villagers' valuation of the forest has changed, and how this affects the premise of conserving the nearby forest. From there I discuss sustainability in relation to palm oil, and finish with a concluding discussion on REDD+.

I close my thesis with concluding remarks and a short afterword.

CHAPTER 2
From province to village – introducing frontier living

Introduction of Central Kalimantan

The island of Borneo is divided between three nations: Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Indonesia. The Indonesian part of Borneo is by far the largest (500 000 km²) and is called Kalimantan. As one of the five provinces, Central Kalimantan covers 153,564 km². It is sparsely populated, with 2,4 million inhabitants per 2014 (BPS Provinsi Kalimantan Tengah, 2016). Most of these live in rural areas in villages by one of the province's 11 great rivers. The largest ethnic group is the Dayak, people living in the inland, interior or upstream areas of Borneo. Most of these are Ngaju Dayaks, referring to swidden cultivators in the middle courses of the series of rivers running through the province (V. T. King, 1993: 53).

Since the 1980s Central Kalimantan has suffered major environmental degradation and deforestation as a result of large-scale logging, monocrop plantations and forest fires. In the past, 80% of Central Kalimantan was covered by forest. But now, 7.27 million ha have been degraded, giving the province the highest deforestation rate in Indonesia (Institute for Ecosoc Rights, 2014: 16). One of the reasons for this was exploitation on a commercial and private level, which was facilitated by governmental policies and practice. One example of failed political initiatives was the Mega Rice land development Project, which occurred between the years 1996-1999. It was initiated by former president Suharto, and aimed to convert one million hectares of peat swamp forest into rice paddies. Only 30,000 ha of rice paddies were in fact established, but large parts of the area were extensively logged and drained. The project ultimately failed and left behind significant environmental damage utterly worsened by the severe el Niño and forest fires in 1997-98.

Based on the Indonesian-Norwegian LOI and as a response to the extensive degradation and deforestation, President Yudhoyono chose Central Kalimantan to be a pilot province for REDD+ implementation in 2010. As a result, REDD+ demonstration activities such as the Kalimantan Forests and Climate Partnership (KFCP) operating in 2010-2014 in part of the Ex-Mega Rice Project area took place (Atmadja, Indriatmoko, Utomo, Komalasari, & Ekaputri, 2014). KFCP was a bilateral partnership between the government of Indonesia and Australia aiming to reduce ongoing emissions from fires and continuous peat decomposition, rather than to sell carbon quotes. Part of the activities consisted of replanting

degraded areas, and KFCP funded planting in villages, but ultimately only 1000 out of 120,000 ha were planted (Atmadja et al., 2014). The initiative was critiqued for failing to secure local people's rights (Pearse & Dehm, 2011). KFCP was also surrounded by confusion and rumors about "handing out money to local people", and consequently creating expectations for future conservation projects to provide a direct flow of cash to local communities.

The reason why I chose Central Kalimantan as the location for my fieldwork was the province's overwhelming rate of deforestation, combined with the high presence of palm oil plantations as well as forest conservation initiatives such as the Sebangau national park and the Katingan Project from PT Rimba Makmur Utama (PT RMU). I was interested to learn about the intersection of such different dynamics in NGOs and province discourse, and in a local community in a REDD+ pilot province. It is also interesting to consider the levels of natural resources and poverty in the province. Central Kalimantan has about three million ha peat land (60% of the total peat area in Kalimantan) (Agus & Subiksa, 2008, in Afiff, 2015: 6) and is rich in natural resources. The province has economic growth above the national average, but poverty rates are high and 62 % of the villages in the area are underdeveloped (Institute for Ecosoc Rights, 2014: 18). This demonstrates the vulnerable and marginalized position of rural communities in the province, living on the edge of society and self-preservation.

In this chapter I set the stage for discussing forest related issues such as REDD+ at village level. I start by introducing Kalimantan as a frontier – in the intersection of environmentalism, business as usual (BAU) and REDD+, and discuss the REDD+ discourse among provincial politicians and NGOs. I will then bring the discussion from macro to micro level, from the perspective of the province Central Kalimantan to the regency Katingan and finally to the village Dahanen. In order to discuss the process of changes and adaption experienced in the local community I will begin by describing the formal life of the village, focusing on the lack of incorporation into the Indonesian society.

Kalimantan as a frontier

Tsing (2005: 27) describes a frontier as the creation of wilderness in interstitial spaces. Frontiers are an imaginative project capable of molding both places and processes, and happen in the collaboration and confusion between the legal and illegal, use, conservation and

destruction. Frontiers are by definition deregulated and highly unstable (Tsing, 2005: 32). This becomes apparent in Tsing's description of how Kalimantan became a frontier in a surge of resourcefulness that brought commercial logging, conflicts, fires, migration and entrepreneurship in the province during the 1980s and 1990s (Tsing, 2005: 31). At that time environmentalism had already been established, and tree plantations became the plan to restore deforested and degraded land. This resulted in areas being destroyed in order to establish restorative plantations (Tsing, 2005: 32). Tsing (2005: 30) labels monocrop plantations the flipside of the wild resource frontier, as they simultaneously call each other into existence and solve the problems caused by the other.

Thinking of Kalimantan as a frontier is helpful in understanding the social landscape forest, REDD+ and other conservation efforts are understood and managed in. In this thesis I aim to demonstrate how both deforestation and forest conservation efforts are found in-between the wild and the tame, the legal and the illegal, the concrete and diffuse. I will start to demonstrate this by presenting the discourse of REDD+ in the provincial politics and selected NGOs.

Forest and REDD+ in provincial politics

Previous studies have indicated animated talk of REDD+ in local offices, but far less action in the field (Howell, 2015: 44). I came to see that the discourse of REDD+ was not so much animated anymore, but rather characterized by resignation, confusion, distribution of blame and the enactment of optimism, while ironically not seeming to consider REDD+ as a realistic possibility. I argue that this ambiguity contributes to define REDD+ as part of the frontier Kalimantan, inhibiting real action as REDD+ becomes frozen in the in-between-quality of the frontier.

During our first meeting with the provincial Institute of Environment (BLH, government institute) in Palangka Raya, Mr. Pontas (senior officer in BLH) seemed tired and frustrated with the issue of REDD+ and he started of saying, "*Why REDD? Why REDD? Why not blue?!*". If people were already preserving forest, then why did they need REDD+? Rhetorically he asked if it could be because "people" just wanted the money? His questions were valid, even though there was no indication of REDD+ being redundant because of satisfactory forest conservation (neither planned nor de facto) in the province.

Mr. Pontas embodied the ambiguous discourse of REDD+ and forest conservation at provincial level. On several occasions, during informal personal interviews or a Walhi seminar on Peat land Management and Agrarian Conflict in March 2015, he spoke of underlying problems of forest management and conservation. He stated that without real action and comprehension of the issue at local level, policies meant nothing. In addition he expressed frustration over the forest management in the area. According to him the problems were largely due to weak governance from the state apparatus, specifically discrepancies between plans and implementations, lacking implementation and monitoring, and laws that by design facilitated breaking them while hiding behind them. He pressed the urgency of the situation and urged for preserving the peat land and forest areas that "were left".

In May 2015 the University of Palangka Raya (UNPAR) and their Institute for Landuse and Agricultural Research (PILAR) hosted a seminar in the governor's office, called "Following up REDD+ in Central-Kalimantan: In the effort of enhancing Food Security and Local Wisdom"[2]. Present were students from different universities in Palangka Raya, as well as local politicians from the governor's office and the BLH, and the PT Rimba Raya Conservation (PT RRC). The fact the event was held in the governor's office with a great number of participants and central politicians and stakeholders indicates that the issue of REDD+ was still a big topic on their agenda. However, the seminar revealed little new information, but was rather experienced as an information briefing and an act of keeping up appearances. I found it ironic how several of the attendants of the seminar held high political positions on a provincial level, but they called for action at the same time as they pointed out that the problem with REDD+ was precisely "*all talk and no action*". If not these people in powerful political positions, then who could take action? It seemed the REDD+ pessimism had become more than an excuse, but nearly a part of explanation as to why REDD+ didn't work, distributing blame and holding on to an awaiting victim-position instead of taking action. They were talking about it – publically performing REDD+, but not really doing it. As I was repeatedly told during my fieldwork, "*REDD only exist in hotels*". The idea of performing REDD+ is similar to Howell's (2015) description of REDD in Central Sulawesi as politics of appearances, where REDD was ultimately talk and rhetorical action.

During the time of my fieldwork the situation of forest management and conservation was chaotic. The REDD+ Agency (BP REDD) had been dissolved and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) integrated into the Ministry of Forestry (MoF). While undergoing these

[2] "Tindaklanjut REDD+ di Kalteng: Dalam upaya Meningkatkan Ketahanan Pangan Dan Kearifan lokal".

changes no one could really tell us how or by whom REDD+ would be managed in the times to come. Returning to the BLH in June 2015 we[3] met with several employees including Dr. Ernie (secretary of Mr. Mursid, head of BLH). Dr. Ernie came across as somewhat more optimistic about REDD+ and emphasized it was already in progress. She often referred to REDD+ as a cooperation between Indonesia and Australia or Norway, not including PT RMU's Katingan Project because it was not a government initiative. She stated Norway had done enough, now it was their own responsibility. Like other REDD+ stakeholders, Dr. Ernie repeated a phrase commonly used to describe the conservation pessimism in Central Kalimantan, "*Everything is already palm oil*". She also expressed concern regarding local people's understanding of the issue of carbon, and asserted they had been asking how many containers of carbon they could sell.

The pessimism of REDD+ combined with a forced hope was once again personified in Mr. Pontas. He claimed to always look on the bright side, and then declared REDD+ as dead, or at least delayed. Waiting has become an essential part of REDD+, creating further indignation and resignation, enabling business as usual to continue. "*We are doing this because nobody else wants to, we have the patience*." Mr. Pontas stated they were still waiting for national policies, but neither policies nor projects would have any real impact. To avoid deforestation, he called for national laws forcing a change in business as usual, as well as creating an incentive for people to preserve their forest and not sell it to companies. He claimed it was important to create incentives for local people not to deforest, and the sum of the local could indeed make a global impact. This value of forest and incentive to preserve it is what I will continue to discuss throughout this thesis, particularly in chapter 4.

This illustrates how REDD+ is found in the crossroads of "not yet" and "not right". REDD+ in Central Kalimantan is largely at a standstill, waiting for national laws, implementation and results. Meanwhile, there is certainly talk about REDD+, but as stakeholders often point out, little action. I argue that the development of REDD+ not only indicates bureaucratic and political challenges, but ultimately a lack of agency and motivation for conserving the forest on several levels. This is clearly the case at government level where deforestation and forest degradation from logging and the palm oil industry continues to generate significantly more income than forest conservation. Regardless of the potential financial or environmental benefit from REDD+, the immediate financial benefits of destruction are higher. I perceive the REDD+ pessimism as an expression of the lack of hope

[3] Me and Natunia Irianto (UGM).

and capacity to create the envisioned environmental outcome of REDD+. In the following section I will continue to discuss the provincial discourse of REDD+ from the perspective of selected NGOs.

Corruption, confusion and climate justice – NGO perspectives on REDD+

From an overall ambiguous perception of REDD+ among government employees, there was also prevailing skepticism, misconceptions and pessimism among the NGOs operating in the province. I will now highlight some of the most distinctive and perhaps representative topics in the REDD+ discourse, through the perspectives of certain NGOs. It is important to note that not all these NGOs worked directly with REDD+, but they were nonetheless involved in the provincial discourse directly or indirectly due to working with related issues, projects or areas. Here I will discuss three NGOs, namely AMAN, SOB and Walhi, based on information given by NGO workers during one or several interviews during the spring/summer 2015.

- AMAN Kalteng (Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago – hereafter AMAN) is the provincial branch of an NGO working mainly for the rights of indigenous [*adat*] people in Indonesia. They currently focus on land rights, customary law and institutions managing a sustainable community life. AMAN was established nationally in 1999, and is operating on national as well as provincial level.
- SOB (Save our Borneo) aims to secure local people's human rights, indigenous wisdom and a sustainable livelihood. It was formed in 2005, and is based in Palangka Raya.
- Walhi Kalteng (the Indonesian Forum for the Environment – hereafter Walhi) is the provincial branch of one of the oldest environmental advocacy NGOs in Indonesia, nationally established in 1980. It is part of the Indonesian Friends of the Earth, and focuses mainly on sustainable development, climate justice and social environment.

"*If angels come to earth, to Indonesia, they would probably become corrupt too*.."

The quote from an AMAN volunteer exemplify how many Indonesians perceive corruption – that it is everywhere. In the discourse of REDD+ talk of corruption was often linked to the issue of money and there was still a clear confusion regarding the REDD+ funds. According to the Norwegian Embassy in Jakarta the money will not be paid until the last phase of

REDD+, but this was not clear to all of the before mentioned NGOs. AMAN volunteers questioned why the money from Norway had not yet come, since, "the results were already there". They claimed local people already knew how to conserve forest, and that they were already doing it. Therefore AMAN urged for a community-based REDD+, working from the ground rather than a top-down approach.

Another example of confusion and suspicion in the REDD+ discourse was SOB's claim that REDD+ in Indonesia surely was a process of "greenwashing money". Greenwash is known as the use of green-based environmental schemes or images to whitewash corporate misbehavior, while operating in an environmentally destructive manner not coinciding with the proclaimed objectives. Following this logic, a greenwash of money indicates at least one of the parties (here Indonesia or Norway) is operating under a false image, and the money ultimately does not end up where it is suppose to. At the end of the conversation a SOB volunteer asked me to bring a greeting to the Norwegian Prime Minister, "*Be careful with your money, there is no one you can trust here - including me*".

Walhi was initially against REDD+, fearing that overriding market mechanisms would provide benefits for rich countries while neglecting safeguards and rights for local people. Similar to the government employees, they emphasized the problem of weak governance. They claimed the government took advantage of the lack of unified or accurate maps, in order to issue concessions without admitting deforestation, simply because the forest was untraceable in the maps. During interviews and in other local media, they still expressed skepticism towards REDD+. Walhi argued for climate justice, referring to the hypocrisy of the REDD+ scheme in arguing industrialized countries should reduce their own emissions instead of solely focusing on the significantly lesser percent (10-17%, according to UCS (2013)) of the world's total emission deriving from deforestation.

I have previously noted how the focus of REDD+ shifted from forest to the people living in the forest, and a commonly used slogan amongst NGOs was, "No Rights, No REDD". Both AMAN and Walhi emphasized the importance of securing local people's land rights, and considered building awareness, FPIC (Free Prior and Informed Consent) and participatory mapping key elements to the success of REDD+. AMAN claimed that if REDD+ provided rights to local people, they rendered it a success. So far, however, the NGOs claimed many local people had heard of REDD+, but that the concept remained unclear (see chapter 4). Similar to other civil society groups in the past (Indrarto et al., 2012: 68) several of the NGOs also claimed nothing had changed since Central Kalimantan had become a REDD+ pilot province, and REDD+ was obviously not working.

The discourse of REDD+ among NGOs and government employees demonstrates how REDD+ is experienced and recreated in the interstitials of knowledge, power, motivations, interests etc. It confirms Kalimantan being a frontier in the context of forest and REDD+ and how REDD+ seems to be at a standstill. As I will continue to demonstrate throughout the thesis the ambiguous discourse and reality of REDD+ is reflected in the ambiguity of living in the forest, in terms of changing and contradictory use and perception of the value of the forest. I will argue and demonstrate that there is a lack of incentive for conserving the forest on a local level. This is due to lack of knowledge to how and why, as well as a question of self-preservation. In order to do this I will now introduce the Katingan regency and the village Dahanen.

The Katingan regency

The Katingan regency is a part of Central Kalimantan, west of the province capital Palangka Raya. It stretches from the Jawa Sea in the south until West-Kalimantan in the north, encompassing almost 17,500 km^2 and more than 157,600 inhabitants per 2014 (BPS Kabupaten Katingan, 2016). The majority of the inhabitants live in rural areas, communities of "river people" living along one of the 11 large rivers flowing through the regency. Many of these are Ngaju Dayaks, but are now Muslim communities referring to themselves as Muslims or Dayak Katingan (or whichever river they live by). I chose to do fieldwork in Dahanen, a small village on the lowland riverbank of the 650± Km long Katingan River.

I became interested in this area due to the significant areas of palm oil plantations surrounding the villages located on the riverbank, along with the presence of Sebangau national park and the forest restoration (REDD+) area called the Katingan Project. I was eager to see how life was like in the intersection of such different mindsets and actors. In addition, local WWF workers advised me there was tension between the villagers and the palm oil company, which was operating nearby. There was also a presence of several NGOs working on different projects in the village. I therefore chose to do my fieldwork in Dahanen, a village located between the Sebangau national Park and the Katingan Project area (figure 1). As I have chosen to anonymize the village, I will not go into further detail about its location.

In the following sections I describe the life in the village Dahanen, focusing on the formal aspects such as politics, economy and livelihood. Through this I aim to create an understanding of the conditions the villagers find themselves living in and what aspects of

their lives they value more than others. I will use this understanding as a base to discuss changes affecting life in the village, and how the villagers act and adapt to these in the next chapter. I will discuss the relationship between the villagers and a large-scale system such as the state apparatus. I argue that the villagers are not fully integrated into the Indonesian society. The presence of NGOs and governmental projects could have the potential to improve this integration, but faintly do so.

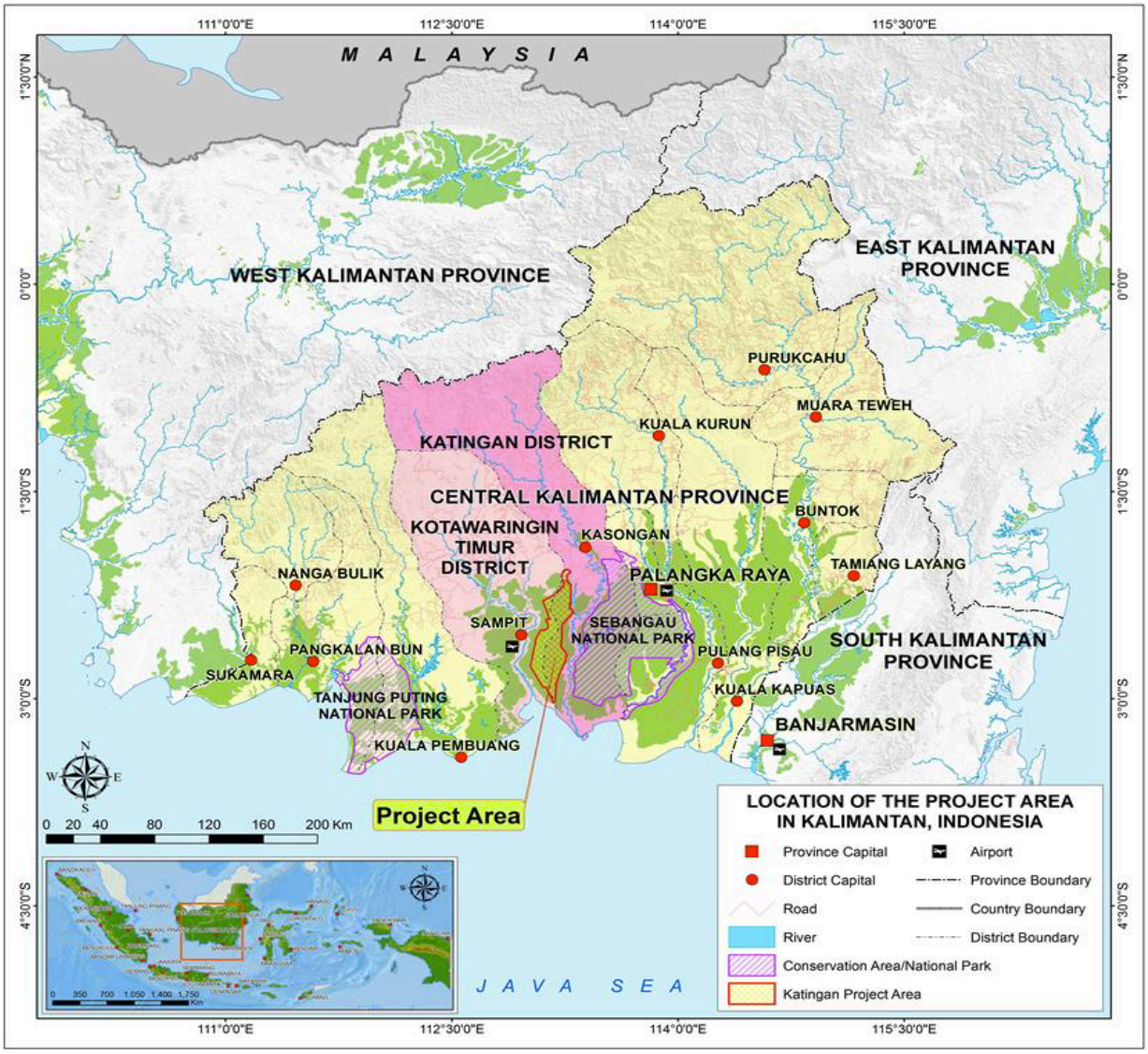

Figure 1: Map of Central Kalimantan, indicating location of the Katingan Project (see project area) and the Sebangau National Park (PT RMU, 2015b: 14).

The village – Dahanen

Everyday life in the village started at the first light of day or for some even sooner, and by 5:00AM everybody was up and about. Some bought noodles from the neighbors, or made fried fish and rice for breakfast. Others had already eaten and were heading out with their small, motorized boat [*ces*] to set traps or nets to catch fish in the river, or to go to their normal fishing spots in one of the surrounding lakes. The palm oil workers left for work at 5:00AM, most whom had been awake since 3:00AM to do yesterday's laundry and to cook a warm breakfast for their family. The chickens that had spent their nights in the trees came down to look for rice or other food on the wooden boardwalk or in the humid grass. Some of the gardens were stripped clean of grass and the only green there was grown in black plastic bags placed on the front porch or the yard. The skinny, green leaved plants were stretching for the sun, most of them carrying small chilies. Other front yards had a bit of grass growing, mixed with shiny plastic wrappers from candy or soft drink powder and mud from last nights pouring rain.

At 7:00AM the kids were already in their uniforms, sitting ready to start their day at the Elementary School. Meanwhile, many villagers were on the docks on the river washing clothes or scooping brownish tepid water from the river to poor on themselves, leaving white soapy bubbles of shampoo quickly dissolving in the stream. After completing the most pressing chores of the day, many sat on the boardwalk chatting or hanging their laundry on the cords in their garden, still wearing their colorful sarongs. As people were passing by they would naturally ask if the other one had showered yet and then commented on the weather or whether they had eaten breakfast or not. By the time this process had finished the earliest morning risers had already come back with the results of that morning's fishing. As the men then were considered having fulfilled their task, the women started cleaning the fish looking like they could do it in their sleep. The fish would be eaten immediately, or sold to other villagers. If the amount of fish was big enough it would be salted and laid out to dry on the nets by the boardwalk, a desirable target for both the chickens and the cats.

Before 9:00AM the sun was already burning, and those still gutting fish found their places in the shadow. Unless catching fish or working in the fields no one remained under the burning sun voluntarily and they would shield themselves under umbrellas, cardboard, clothing or whatever was at hand. Some people had a little shop in their living room, selling daily commodities such as sweet biscuits, medicine, washing powder, small bags of shampoo, lighters, bars of soap, cans of tuna, tea, coffee and not to mention large amounts of cigarettes.

In the corner of our living room sat trays of eggs, cardboard boxes containing at least four kinds of noodles, and big cans of gasoline and cooking oil, leaving streaks on the dark wooden floor and a stench in the air. Once empty, the kids would use the cans to float in the river, or as a pretend car – using a funnel as a wheel.

The village Dahanen counted approximately 470 people in 80 households in 2014. The villagers refer to themselves as Dayak Katingan or Muslims, and speak a version of Ngaju Dayak. Almost all of the inhabitants were Muslims, and Muslim norms and custom had replaced most of the traditional Dayak ways. Religion did not however play a dominant part in the villagers' daily lives, and it was rarely spoken of. The Mosque was a landmark in the village, and was the men's place for Friday afternoon prayer [*jumatan*] as well as the prayer during Ramadan. In addition to the Mosque the village also had a Preschool, Elementary School and a village management office. Public healthcare offers were a healthcare center and a village birth center, as well as a paramedic/nurse and traditional and modern midwife [*bidan* and *dukun bayi*].

All houses in the village had an electrical pump providing ground water for consumption and washing purposes, in addition to several large water tanks placed throughout the village by the authorities. The village is one relatively short boat ride and a four to five hour drive away from Palangka Raya (the road was finalized in 2011). It has cell phone signal, and since January 2013, it has electricity most parts of the day and night. The houses were all made of different kinds of wood and stood elevated on poles. They were placed in two rows on each side of a wooden boardwalk – one by the riverbank and the other boarder-lining the forest.

I will now take a closer look at the formal and social life of the village, to understand the frames the village is situated within. I aim to see how the village is connected to the outside world, and to see how parts of their lives are, and are also a result of, a flux. By this I mean a fusion of old and new that is used to interpret and manage changes, as well as being a result of these changes. I will discuss the fusion of modern and traditional medicine, use of languages, change in livelihood etc.

Livelihood and economy

Several institutions and actors were involved in developing and improving livelihood options in the village. In the final part of this chapter I will discuss these engagements in terms of

government projects as well as certain WWF projects. First I will introduce the livelihood of the village in relation to economy and the environment.

The Katingan River is the main artery of the regency and a main source for everyday life. It provides a means of transportation, source of food and livelihood, functioning as a waste disposal system and a bathroom – all at once, practically speaking. From time to time there were enormous amounts of timber floating down the river, all tied together and accompanied by a number of smaller boats. Once in a while there would be larger boats functioning as grocery or furniture stores selling mattresses, big arm chairs or tall glass cabinets with colorful hand painted motives of Hello Kitty or Mickey Mouse displayed on the deck of the boat. The salesmen were never in a hurry and often sat down to smoke and chat with the villagers like old friends. Boats were always seen going up and down the river. They were most commonly loaded with merchandise from the city, students going back and forth to secondary or high school, workers on the way to the palm oil field, or people fishing.

The livelihood of the village was mainly based on fish, and the importance of fish was easily discovered. Walking through the village one couldn't avoid seeing the numerous nets stretched out between poles alongside the boardwalk, with heaps of fish lying to dry in the sun. Since electricity was somewhat undependable and limited there were many practical limitations to storing fresh fish. Immediate consumption or salting and drying the fish were the most obvious choices. Nearly every family was involved in fishing somehow. While working on the river or the lakes people would mainly use different types of traps, cages and nets, mostly made by themselves. They also used fishing poles made from bamboo sticks or whatever type of material suitable for the purpose, e.g. a flip-flop. Some had floating fish cages placed in the river for the fish they were breeding, while other had fish pools with the same purpose on land (often results of agreements with different NGOs and the government).

Figure 2: Drying fish on top of fish breeding cages on the river (photo: author).

The village is situated in the lowland, at five to eight meters above sea level, and the soil in the village area mainly consists of tropical peat-swamp forest and secondary swamp (Bizard, 2013: 7). The inhabitants of Dahanen traditionally lived from swidden agriculture, fishing, rattan harvesting and collecting tree bark, and had cultivated vegetables, rattan and dry rice close to the river on the organic soil or very shallow peat (Bizard, 2013: 7). Rattan was an important livelihood for the inhabitants during the 1970s and 1980s, but the prices and hence the activity plunged after the government banned the export of rattan raw material in 1986 and then of semi-finished products in 1988. The income from rattan was largely replaced by logging from the mid-1990s-2006. Bizard (2013: 9-11) claims that, although the majority of the households possesses rattan gardens, the level of replanting and opening new gardens has

been extremely low in the period 2009-2013. During my time in the village this pattern seemed to continue. Apart from specific and limited NGO projects I rarely heard of anyone actively working in their rattan gardens. Most gardens had been reclaimed by the forest and were inaccessible without a machete. People explained the prices had dropped so low there was no point in working with rattan, so they waited for the prices to rise again rather than waste their time. They complained the rattan quickly grew big and dried out, so when the prices rose they had to cultivate again, but by the time it could be harvested the prices had once again slumped. Bizard (2013: 14) describes how approximately half of the inhabitants in Dahanen possessed rubber gardens in 2013. The younger gardens were established with the support of WWF. Due to frequent flooding the inhabitants often chose to cultivate the trees in higher and less fertile areas (Bizard, 2013: 13). During my stay in the village I saw relatively new rubber trees planted in the outskirt of the forest behind the houses. Many told me they had productive trees ready to be tapped at any time, but that once again the low prices made it detrimental.

In difficult times some people would choose to migrate to find employment in other areas, normally at palm oil plantations or small-scale gold mines (Indriatmoko, 2014: 325), although few seemed to do so in Dahanen. Times were hard as the competition for jobs was fierce in the cities, especially for those without high school or college degrees and family connections on which to rely. Many of the children in the village had worked alongside their parents in rattan working or fishing since they were young, and family ties were strong. Those who left would typically come home frequently or only migrate periodically. A villager who had migrated to work with coal in another regency, told me he had been unemployed for a long time before deciding to periodically migrate. Another man had left to work in gold mining downstream and he spoke optimistically about the prospects of earning good money, but the work was demanding and he was happy to be home with his family whenever he could. In addition there were also a few who lived in the village while working as middlemen for different villages and community empowerment programs (e.g. PNPM - National Program for Community Empowerment).

Most of the villagers alternated between several chores or jobs, and split their time between fishing, cultivating, teaching, being a housewife etc. One income was seldom enough, and the yield of a long day in the forest or on the river varied. As the prices (for rattan and rubber) also fluctuated, it was vital for the villagers to be flexible and master most tasks. Villagers would often work together as a family, taking care of the family plot of palm oil or other crops, going out fishing together or collecting firewood or food for the cattle.

Everybody was expected to participate, and those who seemed to contribute less than others were often subjected to gossip.

Parents occasionally stated the kids were now lazier than before. Mama Ridha said that when she was a kid her parents used to bring her with them to work in the rattan field after school, but now very few did that. The kids just wanted to play PlayStation and watch TV, and they asked for money to spend at the market. A member of the village administration once joked about the village being global, but the presence of tendencies like these and items such as PlayStations suggest the village take part in the global world in a larger degree than they are aware of.

Another determinant regarding the distribution of workloads and tasks was gender. The division is naturally not rigid and variations happen. Nevertheless, tasks requiring transportation with boat was often done in a group or by the men, while the women would typically do chores closer to the home, such as collecting fallen branches for firewood, medical plants, care for the garden etc. Men would normally go fishing or hunting for wild poultry and the women took care of the prey once brought home. In a time when people still remembered headhunters vividly there was clearly a safety aspect of the men working alone outside of the village. The small shops or food stalls in the village were mainly managed by women, while salesmen coming from other areas were all men. Raising kids, cooking, and doing laundry were typically done by the women in Dahanen – "*it's just the way it is*", they would tell me[4]. Typically the men performed the physically heavier tasks, such as logging (see chapter 4) and building houses.

There was also a clear gender inequality in terms of political administration[5]. Although there had previously been women in the village administration in Dahanen there had never before been a woman as head of village. During my stay in the village all the members of the village management were men. Men also dominated in presence during village meeting or meetings and interaction with NGOs. Women sometimes chose to sit and listen from the outside of the village office, where they could come and go more freely and keep an eye on their kids at the same time. During meetings with NGOs the women normally served tea, coffee and some sweet bread. In the next chapter I will show how such a gender divided labor is also clearly exemplified in the palm oil company, where the women cleared

[4] Although they claimed the distribution of household chores such as laundry was different in other villages they knew of.

[5] In May I participated in a meeting concerning the construction of a new road through the district, and significant majority of participants and political leaders were men.

the fields and the men carried the seedlings etc. I will also demonstrate how gender affected their possibilities of getting employment contracts in the company.

These gender divisions of tasks, I suggest here, are clearly not fixed and the women in the village are strong and hardworking. Sitting in her living room floor drinking sweet tea and killing ants that ran across the floor, Mama Idris told me about her days as a rattan worker. "*They thought I was crazy*" she said, "*climbing the trees and dragging the heavy bundles of rattan home all alone, even when I was eight months pregnant!*" However, she admitted the work was hard and dangerous, and she had once had a miscarriage after a fall while being four months pregnant.

"*We are all siblings*" – the sense of community

Walking through the village my "village mom" would frequently say, "*That's my sibling(s)* [*saudara*]". I eventually felt it necessary to ask how many siblings she actually had and was told that she also called cousins, second cousins, brothers- or sisters-in-law and even some distant relatives or friends' siblings as well. "*We are all siblings here*", she said. In this section I demonstrate how this sense of community and belonging was actively recreated in the daily life, especially through the arisan, creating a sense of safety in an otherwise changing reality.

Kinship was not an important organizational structure in Dahanen. The community was organized according to an egalitarian principle, and kinship did not seem to influence political positions or social organization to any significant degree[6]. Relatives were spoken of in broad terms as family without specifying belonging to either matrilineal or patrilineal lines, indicating cognatic or bilateral kinship classifications. There was no tradition for having or inheriting parents' last name, but rather the opposite. It was custom to call mothers and fathers by their firstborn child's name (regardless of gender) rather than by their birth name, identifying them as primarily "Pira's mom" or "mom of Pira".

Furthermore, being a small community, many were indeed related by blood or marriage. Marriage ceremonies were based on Muslim custom. The exogamic norm of entering into marriage outside ones particular social group or kinship group kept extending the bonds of loyalty and commitment outside of the village, and most people had "siblings" in

[6] I have little data on kinship from my fieldwork, and I have therefore chosen no to go into further detail on the subject.

other villages in the area. Marriage was said to be a free choice, but I was told arranged marriages still occurred. Young marriage was commonly practiced in Dahanen, and both boys and girls could marry from the age of 13. This often resulted in a loss of educational opportunities[7], but some claimed they got married young because they couldn't afford to go to school anyway. Since many wished to keep living in the village later on they didn't see how education would benefit them. This can partially be explained by the lack of inclusion in the broader Indonesian society (discussed throughout this chapter) preventing them from looking outside the village for a livelihood, and reduce the influx of new knowledge to the village – both of which contributes to keeping the village at a standstill, unable to create new possibilities. The norm for settlement after marriage was matrilocal, as the newlyweds became part of the wife's household before they became able to form their own separate household.

In large parts of Borneo the housing traditionally used for permanent settlement was the longhouse [*rumah panjang/betang*] (Persoon & Osseweijer, 2008: 11), while Ngaju Dayaks traditionally lived in so-called great houses for extended families, also called *rumah betang* (V. T. King, 1993: 54). In Dahanen the villagers had lived in individual houses approximately 50 years, but the front porches and the boardwalk created the same kind of connection and sense of community living and functioned as an extension of a *rumah betang*. The boardwalk was an elevated road of planks, some still intact while others would make you fall flat on your face if stepped on incorrectly. It stretched from the cemetery in the lower end of the village, connecting all the houses and reaching out to the lake behind the village. In the upper end of the village the boardwalk reached a dead end disappearing into the water. The boardwalk and people's front porches were places for gossip, news, relaxation, and food – a place to meet and connect while doing daily chores. In other words, these were places where much of the social life connected, and a sense of community and friendship was continuously created and experienced.

There was a strong sense of cooperation and community within the different kinds of groups in the village. Such groups could be a loosely connected group consisting of ones closest neighbors, the people mostly visiting to buy supplies, siblings and their families, or the social groups tied together by the arisan. People would join forces to prepare for gatherings in their houses, and the relationships within the groups were clearly reciprocal. Before events such as the arisan the women met to cook and prepare. They would work together until the

[7] Villagers claim Indonesian authorities has prohibited child marriage, so if children get married before finishing high school they are not allowed to finish their education.

event had ended and the very last plate had been washed and the remaining food had been evenly divided between them.

The arisan was a microcredit scheme arranged like a lottery, arranged by fixed, stable groups of women. Every participant was obliged to contribute with a certain amount of money each time and at the end of the event the money was given to one of the members, determined by randomly choosing a note with a name from a bottle. Once a person had won their name would be removed from the bottle until the circle was complete, making it a null sum game where you would eventually gain exactly as much money as you had invested, a money saving system. Arisan is the Indonesian name of what Lollo (2011: 3) calls Rotating Savings and Credit Associations (ROSCA), one of the oldest prevailing saving institutions in the world. It is an informal microcredit scheme providing credit to the participants, particularly popular among farmers and poor households. In Dahanen there were also ways to obtain loans through middlemen or to use a micro credit scheme to support your business, but the banks were not accessible for most people and it was much easier to handle ones' own money at lowest possible risk. The frequency of the lottery and the relatively small and flexible amount of money invested makes it manageable, while the social element makes it fun and desirable. It was evident the social part of the arisan was highly valued, as the "winner" had to spend a certain amount of the money in order to host the next event, making it a balancing act between accumulating financial values and sustaining a social network. The arisan represented a predictable, safe and social element in an everyday increasingly undergoing changes and a sense of insecurity. It was a social institution that was reproduced every week.

There was clearly a strong sense of feeling safe and secure in the village. The kids moved freely and doors were rarely locked. It was common to get groceries on credit, and people helped each other whenever necessary. Friends and family formed a fundamental and social safety net, and the physical proximity made it easy to respond in case of emergencies. One of the smaller boats, filled to the brim with food, goods and people sunk like a rock in the river next to the village on an otherwise quiet day on July. Within seconds neighbors responded and managed to get everybody to safety, and not even a piece of lettuce was lost to the river. Joining forces and a display of unity did not always seem to happen and to a large degree seemed to depend on the context and the problem being dealt with. The trust displayed horizontally between the villagers seemed far greater than the down-up faith placed on the village administration and larger actors such as the palm oil company.

Village politics

The administration of the village [*aparat desa*] is structurally set by the national government, and the unit is called village government [*pemerintah desa*]. The head of the village [*kepala desa*] is elected by the villagers amongst a group of nominated candidates every five years, and the elected headman can then elect the rest of the members in the village government. The village administration consists of the village head [*kepala desa*], village secretary [*sekretaris desa*], government kaur [*kaur pemerintah*] and developmental kaur [*kaur pembangunan*]. The village is further organized and managed through the system of neighborhood units [*rukun tetangga*], each with a chairman. All of these are considered employees of the state, and receive a quarterly salary according to their position.

The village administration was responsible for managing the money flowing from the central or regional government and to the village, and money and potential corruption were popular subjects in daily conversations in the village as well as on a provincial level. Tania Li asserts (2014: 163): "[In Indonesia] Corruption among district, sub-district, and desa-level [village] administrators is so routine it barely merits note." In Dahanen corruption was described as widespread to such a degree that it resembled a norm, or something expected. Corruption was mentioned in different settings, often in an indirect way through gossip, rumors[8] or expressions of discontent. Very few made concrete accusations and seemingly no one took formal action or confronted anyone. Rumor had it the village administration was spending more money than they were formally being paid by the central government and this money was given to them in secret by the palm oil company. Such rumors typically appeared when someone suddenly had enough money to fix their house, travel frequently to the city, buy a laptop etc. The result of these rumors was distrust between the villagers and the village government and uncertainty to whether or not they were protecting the rights of the villagers or selling them out to the palm oil company[9].

I wondered why these possible violations were silently allowed to continue? Part of this might be the desire of keeping the peace and quiet between friends, family, and long-term neighbors. Social ties were stronger than the usefulness of aimless accusations. I came to wonder whether people left the system alone subconsciously hoping one day it would benefit

[8] Rumors tend to live a life of their own, but are here included to exemplify how the villagers thought about certain topics, and why.
[9] Palm oil companies are in fact known to actively use the state apparatus in order to secure land rights (Institute for Ecosoc Rights, 2014: 80) in Central Kalimantan.

them as well? The administrative positions were only held temporarily and such a position could benefit not only the holder but also their family members. This idea came to mind after a casual conversation in the village regarding the cost of building houses. It was mentioned one of their neighbors had built their house while one of the household members was part of the village government. It was simply stated the house had been expensive and had been paid for in cash, something financially impossible for most people.

The village administration largely functioned as the channel between the village and the province and the rest of Indonesia. Apart from this there seemed to be a lack of connection. The villagers rarely travelled outside the nearby area and did not partake in national or provincial undertakings, organizations, unions etc. Few had university degrees, bank accounts, or any significant interaction with larger actors apart from the palm oil company and NGOs. Some had family members in nearby cities or villages and visited them on occasion, but travelling required access to cash or means of transportation. Travelling out of the area mainly occurred when absolutely necessary, by pressing health issues or the desperate need of commodities, whilst returning to the village as quickly as possible. Medical treatment in the city was very expensive and could mean financial ruin or simply be impossible for many, even for those with health insurance. What connected the villagers to the outside were national laws or policies (such as environmental conservation, stretching down to the local level through e.g. projects, funding or price fluctuations), TV, the Indonesian language, and increasingly NGOs. Television and smartphones with very limited access to Internet were an important source of information and communication, enabling the villagers to keep track of news, trends and happenings. However most preferred to watch Indonesian talent shows and soap operas.

Apart from regional NGOs, there were rarely outsiders visiting the village. I was apparently the fourth foreign (or western) person ever visiting the village and therefore subjected to a lot of curiosity and fascination. Their curiosity spanned a very wide field of topics, resulting in odd situations. For example, I found myself being asked about my hair while sitting mourning at a wake. The most surprising question though, was whether or not we also used hair straighteners (or curling irons) like they did, making it clear the village was becoming globalized to a much greater degree that first seemed to be the case.

The way that the inhabitants of the village have been exposed in different degrees to the global society is hence largely through the village administration, commodity goods, Internet and technology, phones and TV, and family members. In the next chapter I will discuss how the emergence of mono crop plantations such as palm oil has forced the villagers

to take part in the global world in a very direct way. The companies represent both possibilities and hope, but also threats and insecurities the villagers are forced to deal with.

"We have no culture here"

> *"I have heard that anthropologists study culture? Then why did you come to this village? We have no culture here."*

We were four women sitting on the kitchen floor eating a coconut dessert with sweet sauce, fresh out of the cooking pot. Mama Udin simply stated they had no culture. She explained they had no dances, plays or traditions anymore, no traditional costumes or music and Islam had officially replaced the old religion Kaharingan and old Dayak customs. Some in the village spoke of this loss, how they didn't want to learn the old dances from their grandparents when they were kids, and now it was too late. Those who knew the old performances had passed away or were unable to recall or teach them to others.

I later found a similar situation was occurring again. Several older men and women in the village were familiar with the use of forest plants in traditional medicine. The plants and herbs of the forest were said to cure or lessen a wide range of illnesses, from dry eyes to diabetes. Mama Idris still collected and used plants for such purposes and had written a detailed account of her knowledge. Her grown children explained that although some still used traditional medicine many preferred modern medicine, and they also found it difficult to read their mom's old-fashioned writing. Dayak tradition is known to be oral and little has been written down in the past, making it highly vulnerable. This is also known to be the case in tenure rights, as indigenous groups such as the Dayaks often lack formal recognition of their land rights. But as this case illustrates tradition and culture is not exempt from extinction even though it is written down. The point is that only what is perceived as worth saving, will be saved – as I will demonstrate is the problem of forest conservation at a local level.

Other parts of their existing culture was their language, as well as myths and taboos. Growing up the children learned the local language at home and Indonesian at school. In an everyday setting the villagers used their local Dayak language, while Indonesian was heard on TV and used in more formal settings such as certain NGO meetings, handling official business, or communicating with foreigners [*bulé*] or others who did not understand their language. In Dahanen most adults were fluent in Indonesian, although some of the elderly

were uncomfortable using it. I argue the relationship between the villagers and the Indonesian society is manifested primarily through their languages. Indonesia is known for its multitude of languages, but nonetheless people are expected to master Indonesian. I have previously argued what connected the villagers to Indonesia and the rest of the world was the village government, television and also *bahasa Indonesia*. Overall, being a villager was far more essential than being Indonesian, and almost all of their significant and meaningful relations and institutions were found exclusively at a local level. Their limited inclusion in the Indonesian society had allowed the villagers to function well in the past, but through the more recent involvement in the logging and palm oil industry, and interaction with NGOs, Indonesian became vital. The unease many villagers felt when speaking Indonesian can also contribute to understanding the gap between the them and the outside world.

The local language was also part of and maintaining the villagers' culture. It formed part of a fellowship that kept them together by enabling communication and signalizing belonging and outwards exclusion. A part of local languages are traditions of songs, myths, prohibitions etc. In Dahanen there was a saying reflecting on the balancing act of using fire in their daily lives, "*If you play with fire your parents will die*".

In Dahanen there was still a certain belief in ghosts and spirits. The forest was rarely spoken of in a mythical context, but some claimed there were spirits living in some of the oldest and largest trees. They were not considered to be of any great importance however, and when I asked what happened to the spirits if the trees disappeared they just laughed at me for being so clueless and said, "*Then the spirits go away too.*.". People related to and spoke of these spirits differently. Some spirits were used to scare the children and merely invoked laughter. Others were spoken of in quiet voices, such as the one said to be involved in the death of a young girl giving birth shortly before I arrived in the village. This belief in supernatural entities such as ghosts or spirits can be seen in the context of the villagers' relation to the Indonesian society through the use of traditional and modern medicine. As mentioned many preferred modern medicine over traditional medicine and spoke of modern medicine as a relatively easy solution to chronic diseases such as diabetes. Nonetheless, by denying modern medical explanations (such as bleeding out during childbirth) they held it at arms' length. This demonstrated how they adopted the aspects of modern medicine matching their beliefs and lifestyle (medicine as a cure), while refusing parts of the premise of this medicine (diagnoses etc. based on the modern science of medicine). Their belief in ghosts and spirits together with their understanding and use of medicine shows how a mixture of old and new is still valid, both as an explanation and a method, a fusion that might help them to

interpret and manage changes in their society and influences from the outside in a time of uncertainty.

"Soon there will be nothing but projects here"

The provincial government and certain NGOs took part in the lives of the villagers in the area through the presence of development projects and programs. In this section I aim to see how the villagers in Dahanen and another village downstream related to these projects and why. The involvement and initiatives from the government and NGOs illustrates fragments of the relation between the village and outside world.

The government projects aimed to create new livelihood options for the villagers and would often focus on planting trees or other vegetation. While visiting a village downstream we could see the results of such projects throughout the village: Cultivated plots standing out from the surroundings, a sudden appearance of small trees or bushes covered in protective netting and some informative governmental sign with big colorful letters. Around the plot was scarcely cultivated land with cows and chickens walking around freely. Local people didn't speak optimistically about these plots, rather expressing expectation of failure or apparent indifference. They shrugged their shoulders and laughed at our optimistic questions. They said the government didn't know what could work in their areas, accentuating a distance between themselves and the authorities.

The projects were often experienced as temporary, easy sources of benefits. They were easily manipulated and taken advantage of. Few spoke of realistic long-term benefits from such projects and said they were used to seeing projects come and fail. Faulty follow-through of projects was spoken of as a norm rather than an abnormality. While visiting other villages we were told it was a popular strategy to take part in a project during the initial phase to get access to the benefits, preferably money, tree or fish seedlings etc. They would then abandon the project, neglecting to follow up and hence letting the prophecy of failure come true. Another strategy used in tree-planting projects was to collect the money or material for the job and then only partially use it for its' intended purposes. So instead of replanting an entire plot one could create the illusion of a completed task by merely planting around the edges. Villagers claimed that if there happened to be an inspection the inspecting officer would normally take their word for having finished the job, or the inspectors could be paid off. Villagers were acting from their anticipations and previous experience from such projects,

reproducing the pattern of failure and corruption and at the same time creating an illusion of forest. Travelling down the river it would look like the riverbank was heavily forested, but a closer look revealed that behind the singular line of trees bordering the river was nothing but empty land or cultivated palm oil fields. This demonstrates how villagers in a sense rejected the authority of the government as project initiators and inspectors. They neglected the project's intended purpose or task by simply ignoring it or transforming it into something benefitting them more easily, directly and immediately. The illusion of forest symbolized the villagers' rejection of the government's authority.

Sabotaging government projects like this can also be seen as an act of everyday resistance towards the authorities, in the terms of Scott's "Weapons of the weak" (1985). Scott (1985: 29) refers to a constant struggle between the powerless and the powerful (the peasantry and those who exploit them), where relatively powerless groups of people use their weapons of resistance such as desertion, foot dragging, pilfering, sabotage, slander, deception etc. These were ways to defend the powerless' own interests, while avoiding direct confrontation with the authorities (Scott, 1985: 29). Villagers in the Katingan who would take the authorities money, and at best plant trees in a neat square around the intended garden, were clearly ridiculing the authorities while securing their own immediate benefits.

Governmental programs and projects had become so present and taken for granted that if implementation lacked or was delayed there was quiet talk of the government not fulfilling their job and failing the village. New projects were expected to appear, whether people wanted them or not. Normally it seemed the government itself initiated the projects, while NGO projects to a larger degree were results the villagers own initiative, at least through cooperation and dialog. Nonetheless, both projects from the government and NGOs had varying degrees of success.

The reasons villagers in the area displayed such reluctance are manifold, but I questioned why the villagers lacked motivation for governmental projects to succeed. Part of the explanation is the relationship of distrust between the village and the political authorities, as well as a lack of communication. Having projects forced on them without previous communication and consultation can create an experience of intrusion and paternalism. Also villagers often failed to see how the project would benefit anyone but the government, and they didn't see the benefits in for example planting trees for the government. This failed to create good relations and motivation. In foreseeing the failure of the projects there would simply be no reason to put more effort in than necessary, and many then took advantage of the benefits available to them, namely money or tree seedlings for their own properties. These

projects illustrate and also contribute to the gap between the government and the village, as well as a lack of understanding planting as conservation or investment (I will come back to this later).

The title of this section is a quote from a villager in Dahanen, illustrating the experienced dimension and powerlessness of projects being more or less imposed on them, one after the other. In addition to government based projects there were a variety of initiatives or projects from NGOs such as WWF and Yayasan Puter Indonesia (YPI) in the area. NGOs have been present in the area for at least a decade and their presence and projects often ran parallel to government projects. In chapter 4 I will focus on YPI's and WWF's involvement in Dahanen in regards to forest conservation efforts, but in this section I will briefly discuss some WWF projects aimed to improve village livelihood conditions in order to comprehend the extent of projects in the village.

WWF Indonesia aims to conserve the country's biodiversity for the well-being of people through sustainable use of natural resources, promoting and advocating for conservation ethics, policies and law enforcement, and facilitating multi-stakeholders efforts towards this (WWF Indonesia, n.d.-b). WWF Indonesia Central-Kalimantan (hereafter WWF) is involved in the Heart of Borneo (HOB) initiative and the Sebangau National Park. Sebangau National park was founded with the help of WWF in 2004, and consists of 568,700 ha of mainly peat swamp forest adjacent to the east of the previous Mega Rice Project area (WWF Indonesia et al., 2014: 4). Previously, the area was production forest managed under 13 logging concessions for 25 years (1970-1995) and subsequently raided by illegal logging activities in 1995-2004 (WWF Indonesia et al., 2014).

WWF started working in Dahanen in 2008 and had since then supported and/or initiated different fish based projects (mostly fish breeding in cages in the river or in pools on the shore) with differing results. Projects were organized in groups of voluntary villagers, while WWF contributed with some materials, fish seedlings, fish food, and technical advice for the groups to carry out the projects in a profitable manner. The villagers' involvement in WWF projects differed widely. On paper many had taken part in a project one time or another, but not that many actively participated on a daily basis or even spoke of it. Tasks and benefits were often unevenly distributed by and among the villagers, and previously mentioned expectations of failure were also present here to certain degree. There were disagreements to whether or not these projects were a success. Some claimed the projects were a failure, because the fish in the river cages were often dying inexplicable deaths, or the groups claimed they hadn't been given enough funding or fishfeed, it was the wrong kind of

fish, there were problems working together in groups, and most importantly –there was rarely sufficient income. Others argued the failure was due to personal reasons such as poor management and little involvement, but also environmental and technical or practical causes such as the poisonous river or diseased fish seedlings. Afiff (2015: 2) claims that local people's perception of developmental projects shape and are shaped by the way such projects accommodate e.g. their economic interests (and that these perspectives might change over time). This became evident in the narrative of villagers seizing project funding for themselves, as they considered that more financially logical than planting trees. Similarly, fish projects in Dahanen were welcomed to a larger degree, as they were expected to bring income. Hence, both government and NGO projects represented some link to the outside world, and whether or not this was welcomed or rejected largely depended on the villagers' perception of what was beneficial for them.

Concluding remarks – A frontier living

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the discourse of REDD+ and the villagers' relationship to the authorities are parts of what makes Kalimantan a frontier. The discourse of REDD+ and forest is often ambiguous and framed by terms of enclosure, land rights and land grabbing, confusion, corruption and overlapping borders and regulations. As I will continue to demonstrate, the villagers in Dahanen live in the interstitials of these ambiguities that come from frontier living in the forest of Kalimantan.

The villagers are not fully integrated into the Indonesian society, and they live both on the inside and outside in terms of national policies, language and economy. They are living on the edge, literally in the intersection of deforestation and forest conservation. The villagers are molding their lives and exploring the limited number of opportunities available to them. When doing this they are balancing between the wild and tame (e.g. the domestication of fish in fish pools, and the planting of trees), legal and illegal (e.g. logging and sabotaging government projects), passion and indifference, inside and outside. The villagers' acts of adaption and rejections, and their relations to outside actors are affected by the position in this space in-between, and this continues to affect the way they manage for example politics and livelihood projects.

CHAPTER 3
Facing the uncertain

In this chapter I will examine how the changing socio-ecological situation and the presence of palm oil affect the life in the village and how people act and adapt to these changes. Building on the empirical data from the village and surrounding area, I argue that continuous changes bring about a degree of uncertainty and sense of insecurity, in some cases even a sense of powerlessness and resignation. However, it also reveals resilience and flexibility in their ability to adapt. In this chapter I will demonstrate how the villagers ultimately have very limited choices and alternatives in regards to e.g. livelihood, and overall a limited degree of agency. Nonetheless, within this scope of action they display flexibility and persistence and an ability to create certainty.

In this chapter I will focus on changes in the villagers lives due to climate and the inclusion into capitalism through the palm oil industry, and see how livelihood strategies are constantly adapting to these ever-changing conditions, especially regarding fish and forest. I will do so by demonstrating how they spoke of and acted towards these changes. Doing this I will use a Hastrup's (2009) theory on resilience, Bateson's (1972) definition of flexibility, and Scott's (1985) concept of "Weapons of the weak". Furthermore, I will use Li's (2014) ethnography from Indonesia, Affif's (2015) insight on Katingan, and Howell and Lillegraven's (2013) perspective on the indigenous Malay group Chewong.

Too much or too little - adapting to the unpredictable rain

When I first arrived in the village Dahanen in March, it was rainy season. Midday the sun was burning hot and the air was heavy and humid. The clouds grew together and formed a dark horizon that burst into pouring rain, trembling thunders and lightening in the afternoon. Some houses were fairly new and had solid corrugated roofs that kept the rain out and the heat in. It crackled under the hot sun creating the illusion of rain. Others had wooden roofs with large holes in them, letting the water enter and then flow out through the gaps between the wooden planks in the floor.

The rainy season was both a blessing and a curse, predictable and unpredictable. The rain kept the rivers high, securing access to the lakes and the fish and it left a fresh and

cooling air. It kept the peatland moist and reduced the danger of forest fires. It provided fun for the children, who ran cheerfully, screaming in the pouring rain. The problem with the rain these days was that it had become more difficult to predict. Several villagers from the area claimed it had been easier to tell when the rainy season would start in the past, although they said the seasons still followed quite a set pattern. The main problems were to predict when the rain would start, if it would follow the presumed seasons and how heavily it would fall, and if it would cause floods or how big these would get. In this section I aim to demonstrate how the unpredictability of climate and weather affected the villagers' lives and the way they made decisions regarding their daily life and livelihood.

The front yards in the village normally contained many more plastic wrappers than plants. In fact, grass in the front yards was considered a sign of neglect and most took pride in keeping the yards free of grass regularly, removing it with big, curvy knives. What could often be found, however, were plants grown in small, black plastic bags. These were mostly chili plants, a vegetable used for nearly every meal in the village. Others planted herbs or vegetables in these plastic bags, or large bushes with colorful flowers in all shapes and sizes. A lot of the flowers were edible and used in traditional medicine to cure a wide range of illnesses or discomforts.

Along the boardwalk and around the houses were large fruit trees. The trees carried mangoes, durian, star fruit, bananas, oranges, rambutan, jackfruit, guava, and "forest grapes" etc. They were a source of nutrition and joy and villagers often sat together on the boardwalk sharing big piles of fruit. The children in Dahanen occasionally pointed to the trees and told me what fruit the trees would grow, when it would blossom and which ones were their favorites. The villagers often told me family members had planted the trees there long ago, but they themselves had not planted any fruit trees. They said it wasn't necessary for them to plant any trees yet, because the trees were still providing them with fruit. With the exception of chili plants and some cassava, very few grew vegetables themselves in Dahanen, especially during the rainy season.

My naïve notion of living in the rainforest included a vision of a livelihood based largely on subsistence farming making people self-sufficient to the extent that they did not rely on the city and particularly not food from the city. This vision of abundance or sufficiency turned out to be an illusion, as the villagers very much relied on supplies from the outside, especially food. Especially during the 1980s and 1990s frequent flooding and fires on the vulnerable peat created a lack of fertile soil for food production. In Dahanen swidden cultivation hardly contributed to the villagers' food security anymore. Most depended on a

small group of people regularly going into the city to buy vegetables and groceries, such as pieces of soy and chicken. The groceries would be sold from a food stall [*warung*] or food cart pushed through the village, providing a small profit for the vendor family. The same group of people often sold processed food from their carts as well, such as warm noodle, chicken or meatball soup. Others would sell colorful candy and little sausages and they all sold soft drink mixed in small, transparent plastic bags.

In June I visited two villages further down the river, and I found their front yards were cultivated to a notably larger degree. The most common crops were long bean, maize and cassava together with sugar cane and chili. There was no obvious reason why people in nearby villages would grow more vegetables than the inhabitants in Dahanen, however there might be both ecological and economical reasons for this. Dahanen is one of the oldest villages in the area and it might be possible that newer villages founded at a later time were built on higher ground by the riverbank to reduce the risk of floods destroying the crops. The villages downstream were also more isolated and travelling back and forth from the city on a regular basis would very time-consuming and expensive. Also, many living downstream were involved in the gold mining industry in the nearby rivers, an industry causing environmental as well as possible socio-economical consequences. The men working in mining were often working and living outside of their villages for longer periods of the time. This consequently placed more of the daily responsibilities (caring for the children and providing food) on the women, making them more homebound. The results of gold mining in the area was described as somewhat unstable and while some succeeded others acquired great debts. Those who succeeded had sufficient financial means to take risks and were able to cultivating to a larger degree than others. The mining also generated rumors in the area that mercury from the mining had negative impacts on the river and the fish, but both fishing and mining continued as normal.

Rice was bought from the province capital or the surrounding cities. The price of rice steadily increased and as people's diets were mainly based on rice, their cost of food grew. The villagers had previously cultivated rice themselves (mainly dry rice on fields), but didn't consider this as a viable option anymore. Cultivating rice is a very work intensive activity and it requires a certain degree of social organization and cooperation people didn't see as profitable or maybe even possible anymore. They villagers explained that the water supply for the rice paddies had been problematic, and drought and flood threatened the crops, along with vermin such as mice and monkeys. The long wait from cultivation to harvest and profit also made rice paddies unattractive. In addition, the preconditions for growing rice had changed.

As the seasons had become unpredictable and it was riskier to spend so much time in something that could eventually be swept away by the river. The villagers described it as too much work for little gain.

The ecological conditions in the area were continuously changing, but through changing their livelihood practices the villagers could take advantage of opportunities when they presented themselves. The villagers were used to adapting and organized their lives around seasonal changes and maximized their profit accordingly. During the logging boom people in the district had, for example, taken advantage of the flood to be able to extract timber in canals in the forest (flood logging). However, as the peat lost it ecological function the canals contributed to the problem of the drying peat and its vulnerability to forest fires (Bizard, 2013: 7).

In Dahanen most livelihood activities centered around fishing in the river and the lakes during the rainy season, while this option was drastically reduced in the dry season. By the end of my fieldwork in July, as the dry season had started, the lake behind the village had dried out and caused hectic activity. This happened every year and many were eager to take advantage of it. As the water levels shrunk the villagers were fishing, trying to clean out the lake before the fish were left on dry land. At the same time others started clearing the land by ripping up weeds and roots and burning them in large piles. For some time, it seemed like the entire village gathered at the lake, the men fishing and clearing the field with the women and the kids running around and cows grazing. There was activity from morning till night, the sky turning orange as the afternoon sun was fading through the scattered smoke and people took refuge from the mosquitos. Whatever land someone cleared was the land they would cultivate and everybody knew their spots by heart as they went on. The most dedicated spent all their time there growing many different types of vegetables to secure food for themselves and create an opportunity to make money selling future produce to plantation workers and villagers who hadn't cultivated themselves. Mama Ridha stressed the sooner they sowed the sooner they could harvest and she hurried to take advantage of the once-a-year opportunity.

Figure 3: Fishing and clearing land in the drying lake (photo: author).

These practices demonstrate a flexibility and adaption to the natural environment and climate. In addition to adapting to a lack of rain they also adapted to excessive rain and flood. Visible adaptions to the wet season were the structure of the houses and the boardwalk. They were both elevated on stilts to keep them above the rising river. Villagers were very aware of which kinds of wood would be able to withstand years of water and heat. The fact that most of their plants were grown in portable plastic bags also indicates a prediction of flood as the bags made it easier to move the plants out of the way when the water climbed too high. Floods were often described as a part of normal life even when the water flooded people's houses. Annual floods were still considered the norm, but in the latest years (mainly after the logging began) the floods had become more fluctuating and unpredictable. The villagers claimed they could no longer read the signs from nature.

As I have started to demonstrate, there were significant differences in the living conditions in the wet and dry season. When I arrived in the village in March during the wet season the ladder which connected the dock on the river to the riverbank boardwalk only counted 2 or 3 steps. By the end of July, the dry season had only lasted for about a month. Already the grass in the front yards was dying and the small rivers creating access to the fertile lakes had dried out, effectively blocking any access. The Katingan river had shrunk so

much that the ladder of 20 steps was insufficient and the last meters down to the river had to be maneuvered by balancing on wooden planks sliding in the mud before jumping onto a plank connecting the dock and the riverbank. The higher part of the riverbank mud had completely dried up, leaving big ripping scars in the hillside. The chickens came there to look for food, searching through the garbage that had revealed itself when the river withdrew, alongside part of boat wreck exposed like a skeleton in the sun. Some docks with fish cages got stuck in the hillside when the river sunk to fast, hanging slantwise with most of the cages on dry land. Floating houses had to be pushed out to the middle of the river, looking like they were about to make a grand escape down the river.

The dry season also affected the village's water supply. The ground water level sunk drastically and the pumps provided less and less water. Available water was shared, but eventually the pumps were moved down to the river. The river water was suitable for washing clothes etc., but not for drinking, forcing the villagers to buy potable water. During the rainy season crossing the river required a couple of minutes by boat [*ces*], but according to the villagers the dry season eventually made it possible to cross the river on foot, wading in the water. To me all of this seemed like a drastic change, but it was a situation no one even mentioned. It was life as usual.

Don't inhale

The title of this section refers to a CIFOR article on the toxic haze hanging over Kalimantan in October 2015, describing carbon monoxide levels 30 times higher than normal (Anderson, 2015). Forest fires represent an imminent danger to inhabitants, habitats and wildlife in Borneo during the dry season, further intensified by the periodical El Niño. Ministry data shows Central-Kalimantan had 12,327 registered hot spots in September 2015 alone (Soeriaatmadja, 2015), and large parts of the Katingan regency were covered in smoke for months.

Most forest fires in Kalimantan are intentionally set to clear land for plantations. This is largely done by palm oil companies, but also smallholders and local communities engaging in swidden agriculture (Vander Velde, 2015). Fires easily escalated due to continuing deforestation and forest degradation, especially in peatland areas. Peat moss can be several meters deep and when dry the fire can smolder underground and continuously spread to new areas, making it very difficult to extinguish. Forest fires often burn for months.

Villagers in Dahanen often described the fires as a result of recklessness, people illegally burning new fields during the dry season or carelessly smoking cigarettes while working in the forest. They themselves rarely opened new plots anymore and claimed they would only burn garbage and the grass in their own gardens. They also pointed out that they were less able to keep an eye on the forest as they rarely entered it anymore.

The people living in the provinces were the ones mostly affected by the fire and haze, and many still lacked the possibility or the knowledge to protect themselves from the toxic air. Significant parts of villagers' daily lives were necessarily spent outside and their houses provided little protection from the haze as they were built for circulating air rather than blocking it out. I was told some used masks when living in the haze, but many were not bothered or could not afford to, or the masks were simply not available. Villagers claimed they were used to living in the haze – it had become normal. Forest fires were described as a regular phenomenon, something inevitable they expected to happen. The only uncertainty was to when and where.

The degraded forest in the surrounding area stood as a strong reminder of the situation in which they lived. The photo below was taken on the way from the village and into the city, a journey of an endless display of deforestation and forest degradation. Vast areas of grey dead bushes dominated the scene and black tree stumps were sticking up from the newly grown green grass. Hour after hour with bare landscapes, only interrupted by oil palms and wasteland left behind from the search of gold or precious stones. The sight had become familiar and it was neither worked on nor discussed when passing through it, as if it had long before been declared dead.

Introducing anthropology on climate change I introduced Hastrup's (2009) perspective on resilience and how a sense of security is vital for social life. I argue that the adaptions I have described illustrate a way of producing spaces of security within continuously changing circumstances the villagers have little or no control over. However, speaking of disasters such as forest fires and floods as normal are not only signs of resilience but also factual descriptions of the situation for many vulnerable local communities in Central Kalimantan where fires and floods are indeed regular phenomena. Adapting to these is both a necessity and a continuous choice and like Hastrup (2009), I consider resilience to be an aspect of agency, and hence part of a social process. Bateson (1972: 505) describes flexibility as "uncommitted potentiality for change", and from this Hastrup (2009: 28) sees resilience as a fundamental element of any working society. To explain an ideal distribution of flexibility Bateson (1972: 506) uses the analogy of an acrobat on a high wire. The acrobat relies on

moving from one position of instability to another in order to remain on the wire. In a similar manner the villagers in Dahanen fluctuate between different modes of instability and changes, but are able to manage and make the best of these and consequently the village community remain functional in a state of self-preservation.

Figure 4: Degraded landscape in Katingan (photo: author).

Local perceptions on climate change

One of the villagers of Dahanen had just learnt that I was there to study forest, and stated, *"The forest in Borneo is the lungs of the world you know*.." He had heard the statement at a NGO meeting, but couldn't quite tell me what it meant. Climate as a term was not generally used in Dahanen and few understood what it meant. The villagers rather spoke of particular phenomena such as flooding or rain. They described floods and rain as unpredictable, the dry season drier, and the patterns and signs of seasons and water as unclear and difficult to read.

Global warming was a phenomenon known only to a few villagers who made sense of it in different ways. Yanel explained he had seen on TV that fires caused a lot of smoke that caused global warming. He said it was evident that this was already in progress, because "*Jakarta was sinking*". He based his knowledge on a combination of scientific reports on TV regarding rising sea levels and the large number of floods in Jakarta, without connecting it to his local environment. Another villager had heard about global warming in a meeting with PT RMU, but he didn't really think people understood it and it wasn't spoken of in the village. He didn't really know what it was either, he admitted. The most precise account of global warming came from a man previously living some years in the city. He explained that it was warmer in the city than in the village because there were fewer trees to absorb the pollution from cars, motorcycles and factories in the city. He had heard about global warming and used the Internet to learn more about it.

Marino and Schweitzer (2009) describe how using the term climate change while doing fieldwork among the Inupiaq in northwestern Alaska merely resulted in informants summarizing information they had heard from scientific sources. In contrast, questions regarding change and their local environment lead to elaborate, personal accounts. As described so far in this chapter, this was also largely the case in Dahanen, where questions of climate led to speculations or summaries of what they had heard or read rather than their own experience of change. Only the man referring to forest and the temperature in the city and the village used his knowledge of global warming to explain his own personal experience, whereas it was usually talk of flood and rain that permitted actual insight into the villagers' own experienced situation. Based on my findings, I agree with Marino and Schweitzer's (2009) argument that there is a disconnect between perceptions of local change and "climate change" as a discourse and generalization that exist mainly outside of the local.

A similar tendency can be seen regarding the villagers' perception of REDD+. In chapter 4 I will demonstrate how the concept of REDD+ was not grounded in a personal comprehension of local conditions, but rather intertwined with or based on the information meeting with PT RMU.

Palm oil – "the sure thing"

PT Arjuna Utama Sawit (PT AUS)[10] was one of the palm oil companies operating between the PT RMU reforestation area and the villages in the Katingan area. PT AUS became the villagers' direct introduction to the palm oil industry, as they held their information meeting [*sosialisasi*] before establishing the plantations nearby. Since then the company has grown and in July 2015 they had palm oil fields and a distillation factory under construction. The presence of palm oil and PT AUS has gradually become more established in Dahanen, increasingly affecting the life and livelihood of the villagers. In this section I focus on the relationship between palm oil (mainly the palm oil company and the Plasma scheme) and the villagers, and analyze how the villagers related to and actively took part in the sector.

In Dahanen the villagers approached the issue of palm oil differently, in accordance with factors of financial and physical capacities, plans and hopes for the future etc. Some chose to work for the company, while others grew palms or seedlings in their front yards, or kept their own field of palm oil – making oil palms visibly present on a daily basis. I argue that the perception and experience of palm oil has changed. Even though it was still largely perceived in terms of hope and prosperity in being a new livelihood option in a time of change and insecurity, it held elements of insecurity. These elements manifested themselves through experiences of powerlessness and rumors of land grab and corruption and eventually evoked resistance and the creation of spaces of security.

Mama Ridha stated, for her, palm oil was an investment for the future. We had crossed the river to clear the land around the palm trees she and her husband had planted there two years prior. It was about three ha of land they had cleared themselves, an open plot between the line of trees along the river and the dense forest, partially covered with oil palm trees. She told me they had previously also cultivated vegetables, rattan and rubber trees there, but the vegetables were destroyed in a flood and since the prices were so low there was no point in growing rattan and rubber anymore – palm oil was the future. "*Previously no one understood why we planted oil palms, but now everyone wants to do it!*" she said. "*People don't think ahead, you know? They just want profits here and now, but we also have to save up till we are old!*" Mama Ridha embodied the palm oil optimism, which, to a large degree characterized the palm oil sector in Katingan. Some perceived oil palms as a source of tremendous potential and in order to take part in it some risked everything by investing heavily. Oil palms are much

[10] Further information about the company is unfortunately impossible, due to lacking official information available.

more work intensive than for example rubber trees and the ground needs to be kept clean of weed and other vegetation by using manual labor and preferably also pesticides, keeping the workload and cost of production relatively high. For larger groups or families, the investment was more manageable and the risk smaller as it was divided between a larger number of people contributing with money and labor, but those were not the only ones hoping to profit from the palm oil boom.

Mama Titi used to live a good life. Her husband had been a teacher and she a housewife and every day after school they would go fishing together. When she became a widow with three small children she was given a one-time payment as compensation for future income as custom had it for state employees in Indonesia. In the midst of the palm oil optimism she decided to invest most of the money in establishing an oil palm field on a plot of land she owned. The labor was mainly done by paid helpers, to clear land, plant, fertilize etc. Being alone with three small children she was unable to maintain the field herself, and eventually the money for workers and pesticides ran out. Eventually the palms got pests, and were left standing like ghosts amongst the surrounding vegetation growing uninhibitedly.

During my fieldwork it was still too early to determine if anyone had profited from their smallholder cultivation of palm oil, since most of the palm trees were still too young to carry fruits. To further understand the experience of palm oil and how the villagers' daily lives and labor became incorporated into the realm of palm oil I will now continue to discuss the scheme of Plasma.

Plasma – land grab and rumors

Acciaioli (2008: 94) draws on Brookfield, Byron & Potter (1995: 89ff) when explaining Plasma through the NES/PIR (Nucleous Estate and Smallholder or *Perkebunan Inti Rakyat*) program. In this program local farmers have a double role as plantation workers on first government-owned property and then as smallholders tending their own cash crop gardens located around the nucleus estate. These smallholdings around the nucleus estate were referred to as Plasma, fitting to the cell metaphor (Acciaioli, 2008: 95). Along the Katingan River various villages were included in such a smallholder scheme through an agreement between the PT AUS and a cooperative formed by inhabitants of 8 adjacent villages. The cooperative was called *Koperasi Harapan Sejahtera* – roughly translated to Hope of Prosperity. The agreement ideally provided opportunities of income, work and land for the

villagers, as they could work as laborers for the palm oil company, get their share of income from the Plasma and eventually gaining ownership over the Plasma plots (4 ha per head of household). Through this program PT AUS undertook the role as a guarantor for the loan the cooperative took up to finance the Plasma plot, and used and managed the funds to develop the Plasma area, while gaining areas for cultivating themselves. The cooperative was under obligation to sell the palm oil fruits to the company and the profit would be used to pay the credit loan to the bank and to pay the cooperative members. The agreement was signed in 2008 and lasts until the land no longer provides any yield or for 25 years. During my time in the village the divisions of the different areas within the Plasma were not yet settled and the divisions were cultivated at different times. The arrangement had initially created enthusiasm and hope, but the nature of Plasma turned out to be slow, confusing and unpredictable, even unproductive and unsuccessful. Some villagers expressed hope mixed with desperation, saying, "*There has to be results sooner or later*". The villagers were envisioned a flow of income after three to five years[11], however the crops continued to fail and the discontent was increasing and manifested itself through gossip and rumors.

While talking about Plasma people largely expressed doubt and insecurity and some even suggested the company (PT AUS) were lying to the people to keep the profit for themselves. Some claimed to have seen large fruits on the palms in the area and suspicion arose to whether the crop was really failing again. They wondered whether written reports and what was told to them coincided. The arrangements of the agreement were unclear to many, and some speculated the company may be bankrupt, since they kept asking the villagers to undertake new loans from the bank. "*Maybe they are just fooling us, we don't know..*".

Reports indicate that palm oil companies in Central-Kalimantan use Plasma as a strategy to gain additional land for their plantations, corporations grabbing community land with or without compensation on a voluntary basis or through coercion – "land grabbing" (Institute for Ecosoc Rights, 2014: 76). In some cases, people's lands are first destroyed, making it easier for them to let go of it and easing the process of compensation, as people will demand less for degraded land or be grateful for receiving any compensation at all. Without knowing if this was the case in Dahanen, it provides a helpful perspective to understanding the general distrust towards the company. In a cooperative meeting in March 2015, the company requested to switch their core [*inti*] fields with areas of Plasma. To make their case the company presented photographs of degraded and/or unused land, arguing that no one was

[11] Oil palms begin to produce after three to four years.

using the areas they requested anyway. In other photos representatives from the company were standing, smiling side by side with members of the village administration. The cooperative members in Dahanen denied the company's request.

In addition, there were detailed rumors about a land grab. Allegedly PT AUS had moved property lines and used land belonging to the village without paying the promised compensation, at least not officially. This rumor specifically linked the palm oil company to the village administration by insinuating they might have received the compensation "under the table". It demonstrates how the villagers' relationships to the village administration and the palm oil company were characterized by distrust and gossip. Rumors often centered around misuse of money and power and indicated a sense of powerlessness from a lack of agency in dealing with these actors. In general, some villagers openly supported the company (mostly those working there), while others were outspokenly negative, superficially dividing the village into two groups. Initially it seemed like the villagers failed to unite and to pick up the battle with the palm oil company, as there were little formal protests against the land grab. However, I argue the lack of open protest in Dahanen did not mean injustice was simply tolerated, but rather that they protested in a more indirect way through rumors and gossip. I consider these to be examples of weapons of the weak (Scott, 1985), expressions of resistance.

Li (2014: 151) refers to Scott's (1976) argument that laborers and other landless people normally tolerate a high level of inequality and do not openly participate in direct revolts. As long as their subsistence minimum is provided for they are simply not desperate enough to revolt. The villagers in Dahanen do live on the edge of subsistence lines, but in contrast to Scott's argument that such peasant are "risk adverse" the villagers of Dahanen (and the Lauje highlanders from Li's ethnography) are not afraid to make use of the chances that are presented to them. They are not focused on immediate profit, but rather survival. Due to their changing conditions they are forced to be flexible and take risks. As I have previously described the villagers did react towards injustice through everyday resistance, but they were indeed not desperate enough to openly revolt.

This is not to say that open protests did not occur, but rather that it was the exception to the rule. There had in fact been a protest against the alleged land grab as several villagers had gone to the company's office to demand them to take responsibility. After my fieldwork, there was also another act of collective resistance, as a group of villagers protested against the palm oil company's request for more land. This was initiated and carried out by the villagers alone without the support from any NGO.

Land grab is a common problem in Indonesia. Indigenous people have typically been careful to take formal action towards transgressions against their village's borders, or in any way challenge the authority associated with the company. Companies are operating from concessions issued by the government and often have ties to the local government as well. In addition, local communities often lack land certificates and means and knowledge on how to proceed. Acts of resistance occurred most frequently amongst those who had no relation to or were dependent upon to the company. I suggest the villagers employed by the company were maneuvering in a slightly different situation and also acted somewhat different. Most made it clear to me they only worked for the company because they had to [*terpaksa*]. They had no choice. However, they also spoke of their work in rather positive terms, particularly describing it as "safe".

Creating safety

The palm oil presented several possibilities for the villagers through the Plasma scheme, for smallholder cultivation and also employment. The palm oil company was for many the best option when looking for employment, being located close to the village while providing steady and secure cash inflow without requirements of education. A number of villagers took on full-time wage work at the palm oil company although the numbers were steadily decreasing (mainly due to the harsh physical strain). Some worked in the offices in administration, cooking or cleaning, or in the field as fieldworkers, supervisor or chauffeurs. Positions in the administration were considered ideal for those holding a college degree, having a secure income while working close to the village in air-conditioned offices. The majority worked in the field doing physically heavy and gender-divided tasks. The men performed the most demanding jobs, such as carrying the seedlings and small palms from one area to another, loading them onto trucks etc. The women cleared the fields with big knives and sometimes pesticides. There was a certain workload to be completed on each workday. If the task had not been completed in a satisfactory manner they had to redo it, or they would not get paid. The workday started early and followed a set routine and schedule. The only flexible element the villagers seemed to enjoy was the possibility of working quickly so the task was finished before time, enabling them to relax the rest of the day before returning home.

It struck me that everybody kept describing the work at the palm oil company as "safe/secure" [*yakin*]. I found the description of safe/secure to be surprising as I learned most of the workers lacked contracts and safe working conditions. There were a limited number of contracts available, and steep competition. According to the villagers the contracts in question were time-limited and only given to men. Employees in the administration received payment per month (including national holidays etc.), while fieldworkers (KL) were paid per working day. The employment agreements were unclear to most of the fieldworkers, who told me they had previously signed some documents, but they didn't know what they contained. Although some former employees expressed frustration and claimed they had resigned after being repeatedly denied contracts, most fieldworkers expressed trust and a sense of security regarding their job. They often explained this by saying that getting paid for the work they did made them feel safe that their work would pay of, as opposed to e.g. fishing. They also repeated that they were promised a job in the future, even if the location of the plantation were to be moved (even though few were actually willing to move their place of work).

Reports from Central Kalimantan indicate the same tendency of "loose" management with a lack of social security, and claim that poor state governance enables the practice of exploitation and insecurity, and downright violations of the human rights (Institute for Ecosoc Rights, 2014: 11). Social security was clearly lacking for the workers from Dahanen, both in formal rights and practical safety measures. For example did the company not provide fieldworkers with protection gear, and those working with pesticides had to provide their own equipment such as masks. The consequences for working with the chemicals were largely unknown among the villagers, but rumors abound, especially when fieldworkers fell ill. Before my arrival in the village a middle-aged women working with pesticides had suffered a stroke and had become partially paralyzed. No one knew for sure, but speculated if it was due to the chemicals.

I argue the fact they refer to something ultimately being quite unsafe as safe says something about the general lack of safety in the community. The feeling of insecurity in the village was due to changes in their local environment and community that were difficult or impossible to understand, predict and control. These were changes in seasonal patterns, floods, the perception of forest (see chapter 4), capitalistic and global fluctuations and national laws affecting their livelihood possibilities in rattan, rubber, logging etc. Palm oil as an element of insecurity was just the cherry on the pie. It could initially have brought security to the villagers through a positive incorporation into the palm oil sector, but it has rather intensified the villagers' perception of powerlessness and insecurity. In this context a job in

the palm oil company, however the working conditions, was as safe as could be. I interpret the categorization of work in the palm oil company as safe as a demonstration of the lack of safety becoming the norm, the unpredictability being the only thing predictable. By this I mean the villagers had become so used to living in a continuously changing situation that as a response they created a sense of certainty or safety by broadening that particular category. Certainty was rare, so, whenever possible, it was created. By safety I refer to a state of being able to make sense of things, a way to make every day more livable and understandable with a higher degree of certainty. I consider this a form of resilience.

Based on fieldwork in West Kalimantan Pujo Semedi (2014: 235) refuses to victimize Indonesian farmers. He disagrees with McCarthy (2010) who describes the involvement of small-holding farmers of Sumatra in the palm oil industry (through the Plasma scheme) as adverse incorporation. Adverse incorporation is "entrapment into low-asset poverty, low incomes and vulnerabilities through political, social and cultural processes" (Semedi, 2014: 234). In the case of Dahanen I disagree with Semedi, and I suggest that the villagers' involvement in the palm oil business bears resemblance to the situation McCarthy describes as adverse incorporation. McCarthy (2010: 826) describes oil palm as a "rich farmer's crop" that requires extensive input and consequently hinders the inclusion and success of smallholders. Also "[..] the state policies that introduced palm oil production offered increased opportunities for value-adding for some farmers without reducing the barriers to access that blocked the majority" (Hickey & du Toit (2007) in McCarthy, 2010: 826). Smallholders also depended upon access to oil palm mills, as fresh palm fruit needs to be processed within 48 hours. This process of inclusion into the palm oil sector was a means to alleviate poverty, but simultaneously initiated a process of increasing class differences between groups of farmers – those that were able to successfully partake in the new market, and those who weren't (McCarthy, 2010: 826). In Dahanen the inclusion into capitalism through the palm oil sector (mainly Plasma) had not yet created different layers of farmers economically speaking, but I suggest that it has done little good for the village in terms of being a community, financial prosperity, or otherwise. It has given some individuals a certain sense of hope through ultimately insecure income, but mainly the Plasma scheme is spoken of in terms of powerlessness, lack of options, doubt, mistrust and inequality.

“What will they do later, those who no longer have land?”

Based on fieldwork among the Lauje highlanders in Central Sulawesi Tania Li (2014) claims people often participate in capitalism for survival, not due to an ideal of profit. In this section I will similarly argue the villagers in Dahanen do, in fact, express a desire for improvement, but this ultimately is overrun by the need to endure. This, as I have previously described, leads them to welcome an inclusion into capitalism. By this I refer to the active participation in the palm oil sector and selling land. I aim to see how land becoming a commodity can lead to a new and harsh reality as the one described by Li for the Lauje highlanders.

In a time where people saw no results, didn’t trust the palm oil company and needed quick income many chose to sell their membership in the cooperative. They thereby excluded themselves from the prospect of acquiring income and the land property rights they would eventually have acquired from the scheme. The memberships were bought by the company (PT AUS) or wealthier individuals from mostly other villages. Selling memberships was most often the result of acute financial needs or believing that Plasma wouldn’t ever provide any income. Some hoped for a future profit from the scheme and also reflected on what people would later do if they had no more land left (indicated in the heading of this section). Others didn’t dare to hope for any outcome from the Plasma scheme, but still kept their membership in fear of running out of land later on, or fearing to lose control over the surrounding area. Bapak Erma explained that he would rather hold on to his land to avoid the company gaining control over the entire area later on. Although recognizing the land would probably be barren after growing oil palms on it for a certain time, it would at least be his rather than being subjected to new use by new concessions in the future.

Villagers not only sold their membership in the cooperative, but also their individually owned plots of land. The land in question was mainly acquired some years previously and was located in the outer area of the village. Land would typically be sold due to acute financial problems, or because villagers saw no use of it. There was often talk about selling land, but rarely about acquiring it. I asked if they weren’t scared they would eventually run out of land? Some answered they might risk running out of land in the future, but it didn’t scare them much. Many spoke of their concerns about their current situation, but not so much about the future. Some expressed a sense of powerlessness resulting in passivity; simply stating they surely would run out of land (“*habis, pasti itu*”), also because corporations would be granted concessions for the land regardless of a community [*masyarakat*] using it. And when that happened the communities believed they had no means to fight these decisions.

The fact so few expressed fear over losing control over their immediate area made me think they may not be aware of the consequences they are facing if they end up in a situation like the Lauje highlanders described by Tania Li (2014). Li (2014) describes how the Lauje highlanders from Central Sulawesi considered selling land as a welcomed, but temporary solution to a desperate situation. Many land-short highlanders didn't quite grasp the fact that land had come to an end and still expressed hope to require new land. However one highlander recognized the possible scenario of running out of land as a disaster waiting to happen (Li, 2014: 92): "*If they sell it all they will end up living suspended in the air. […] They will have to hang from a tree*."

So, why did the Lauje highlanders lose their land? Li (2014: 14) explains how the relative isolation of frontier spaces make sources of alternative income harder to find and that the high need for cash to send the children to school etc. is hard to generate. Their situation was also affected by certain immobility caused by a lack of education and language skills and their relative isolation (Li, 2014: 170). The highlanders' food crops were vulnerable to especially drought, but also attacks from monkeys, birds and pork. Being Muslim ruled out the choice to hunt for pork (Li, 2014). Many reached a point where they couldn't grow enough food for their families, and they were forced to try to maximize the return from their plots to get cash. Under these circumstances the highlanders saw the appeal of planting low-maintenance cacao trees, and as they began trading cacao they also started borrowing money from cacao merchants. By that time land had become private property and highlanders used it to secure their debts. When prices of cacao and rice fluctuated, many failed to pay their debt and therefore lost their land. The prolonged drought of El Niño in 1997 also contributed to a polarizing effect, creating failed food and cacao crops, followed by a famine and crises of production, employment and income, after which many sold their land in desperation (Li, 2014: 136).

Li (2014: 14-15) describes how the legal vacuum created by overlapping laws and weak leadership is actively taken advantage of by powerful people (e.g. village officials, resourceful villagers) to grab land and claim ownership, buying land that might not even be for sale. The appearance of the long-desired road to the highlanders area also had a negative effect as it enabled richer outsiders to grab or buy land, increasing financial value of the land turned into cash crops (Li, 2014). In addition to this the provincial government set aside large areas for plantation use and forest conservation, and forest boundaries became more strictly enforced (Li, 2014: 169). Li argues that the highlanders' sensation of lacking proper housing, roads, schools and clothing, elements equated with a modern life, functioned as a catalyst in

their society. The desire of such led them to welcome incorporation into the state and to make the choices that caused an economical, political and cultural change, and the final enclosure of land (Li, 2014: 13).

Many of the tendencies described by Li could also be seen in Dahanen. Particularly relative isolation and immobility with an increasing inclusion into capitalism and a global world, combined with a desire and hope for a better life with education, roads and access to resources. Up till the end of my fieldwork in July 2015 there was no road leading up to the village and most transportation was done by boat and thereafter car etc. Plans to construct a new road were underway, and the villagers had requested it to be built as closely as possible to their fruit gardens behind the village. Most villagers expressed an enthusiasm and hope due to the coming road. A few hoped the process would also result in land certificates, as had previously happened when another road had been constructed some years previously. Mostly there was hope the road would bring more people and business to the village, wishing for their food stalls [*warung*] to prosper. However, I argue the villagers' actions and statements indicate that the desire to improve became somewhat overrun by the need to endure, with a growing feeling of lacking choices and power. The villagers of Dahanen had little to lose by entering the world of palm oil, and they were obliged to make the best of the options they had. In addition, their continuous expressions of gaining more land in the near future indicated a similar tendency to the Lauje highlanders – they hadn't quite realized that access to land had indeed run out. Also, if land was seen as abundant there would be no pressing need to protect it (Li, 2014).

The feeling of powerlessness facing new realities can further be understood by Li's (2014: 3-4) analysis on what she calls a mundane process of enclosure of land, in which the indigenous people became dislodged from their own land and part of the world's population unable to sustain itself. The decision to plant tree crops placed the Lauje highlanders of Sulawesi in the capitalist realm through individualized land rights and a new set of conditions of survival based on competition and profit. Maneuvering in this new reality the highlanders' actions were guided by a lack of choices, a situation of not being able to stay still nor go back to the way things were. Unable to grow their own food they were forced to buy, and for that they needed cash and hence a job, but the jobs were scarce (Li, 2014). The issue of survival was not yet pressing in such a degree in Dahanen due to the remaining availability of fish. However, if the environmental and socio-economical tendencies in the village were to proceed, the villagers will quickly be left with even fewer choices and less land and not to mention food security. In a similar manner to the Lauje highlanders the villagers of Dahanen

participated in capitalism through the Plasma scheme and selling land for survival, not necessarily for profit. If the current tendencies continues to play out, I fear the villagers in Dahanen will end up in the same situation as the Lauje highlanders – not only at land's end, but at a dead end (Li, 2014: 180). This is also implied in Siun Djarias' (former Regional Secretary [*Sekda Prov*]) statement during the REDD+ Seminar in May 2015: "*Without land there is no future for local people*".

Fish as food security

> *"Even if I get a salary from the palm oil company I haven't secured food on the table. If there is no fish to be bought, what do I need the money for? So I might as well fish instead."*

When asked why he had only worked for the palm oil company for one month, bapak Yanel expressed a feeling of insecurity that partially explained why he had gone back to fishing instead of earning a monthly salary. Fishing had been the villagers' most stable "rice bowl". bapak Yanel statement indicated he saw fish as providing a higher degree of safety than cash labor, but in the village fish was a necessity spoken of with a different sense of security. Before discussing the ambivalent status of fish, I will now take a closer look at the development of food security for the inhabitants of Dahanen.

Villagers in downstream Katingan have long depended on food through market purchases, especially in Dahanen (Bizard, 2013). In the beginning of this chapter I demonstrated how the villagers in Dahanen now cultivate their own food, due to ecological and socio-economical conditions. In addition, the villagers' diets were affected by religion and taboos. In times of holidays and festive gatherings chicken were killed and eaten, while there were large ducks walking around in the uttermost peace. There was a taboo against eating them, as many believed it would cause skin diseases. Although some had dared to defy the beliefs and were eating duck, others chose to trust their ancestors, saying: "*If they didn't dare, how could I*?". Also, according to their Islamic belief they were not to eat pork.

Nowadays, the villagers mainly made a living mainly from palm oil wage labor and fishing. For a long time, fish had been a safe alternative they could always come back to, it had been the constant factor while other livelihood options kept changing. Many stated they would fish if there were no other jobs in the future, presenting it as a nearly eternally viable

option. Others expressed concern and bewilderment over the varying fish stock in the area. In addition to rice, every household in Dahanen largely depended on fish as their staple food and scarcity of fish therefor presented a potentially serious problem. The fluctuations of the seasons set aside, the villagers observed: "*the fish in the river was dying*". By this they meant that now there were less fish to catch, they had diseases and frequently died in the fishing pools in the river. No one knew for sure why the fish kept dying, but they claimed it had been going on for about seven years. Some speculated if it could be because of the emission of mercury from the gold mining sites in the area, or pesticides or factory waste from the palm oil industry in the area[12]. Bapak Mira explained the death of the fish in relation to changing water levels: "*When the river is high it is clean, but when it is low it's filthy*". He attributed the problem mainly to the industrial waste becoming more concentrated when the water level sunk, rather than problematize the fact that the river functioned as a dumping ground for the waste from the village. The lack of a proper system for garbage disposal presented a threat to both the fish and the forest, as garbage was either burnt or dumped in the river. Overall, the villagers didn't express concern about the garbage affecting the fish. Many argued they had been dumping the garbage there for a long time. Previously it might have been the case that the waste didn't affect the ecosystem of the river, but an increasingly modernized lifestyle now generated significant amounts of non-organic waste. During the dry season the extent of the problem became visible, as the shrinking river exposed large piles of plastic cups, bags and wrappers, glass, batteries, shoes, forks, aluminum cans etc. Nonetheless, garbage was not a non-issue and some had observed how members of WWF avoided throwing garbage in the river, but instead brought in back in their pockets.

As discussed, the villagers are affected by the ecological situation in the area, meaning climate and seasonal changes, in addition to industrial waste and garbage. The changing environmental situation created a certain sense of insecurity, and the villagers expressed ambiguous opinions regarding the river and the fish. Many reflected that "*the fish were dying*", at the same time as they still expressed optimism about the future availability of fish.

[12] Reports indicate the palm oil industry have greatly contributed to polluting rivers in Central Kalimantan (Institute for Ecosoc Rights, 2014: 98), causing diseases among humans and creatures in the river.

Concluding remarks – Searching for the "Good Life"

In concluding this chapter, I argue the choices and strategies the villagers make are part of a process of adaption and an attempt to stabilize their reality to coincide again with their ideals of a good life. They expressed desires of a "modern" lifestyle, and the good life had become a hybrid version with the best of the past and the future. The villagers became incorporated into a world they only partially could participate in, but not in a satisfactory manner. Many wished their children could become well educated, but they lacked the funding to do so. People had televisions they could use when the power and satellite dish allowed. They had cellphones but lacked descent signal and Internet. Modern medicine was available, but expensive. Being employed by the palm oil company interfered with their ideal of planning their own day, but it enabled them to buy rice instead of having to grow it themselves. Those who could no longer fish or harvest rattan could sell commodities from small stores or their houses, providing a modest income, but reducing their freedom to move around to a certain degree. They had kerosene ovens, but had to go to other villages to buy kerosene if they had money.

Mama Udin stated they had previously depended more on nature than now, and they may have to live from nature again if the option of palm oil disappeared. She defined living from nature as working with fish and rattan, in contrast to working with palm oil. The separation of palm oil from "nature" can be explained by the way the villagers related to it indirectly through the bonds of capitalism, hence the palm oil company. Palm oil was one of the ambiguous features in their transition to a modern lifestyle and entailed both hope of prosperity as well as insecurity. Reports (Institute for Ecosoc Rights, 2014: 82) suggest "[…] the expansion of oil palm plantation industry has brought a new culture that has changed the people into individualists and materially oriented. Life as a community is fading." In the case of Dahanen, I don't agree that life as a community was fading. Moreover, the palm oil industry is just one of several global and capitalistic affairs attributing to fundamental changes in local communities in Central Kalimantan, together with e.g. industrial logging. The palm oil industry also contributed to the villagers' integration into the Indonesian society and the realm of capitalism, although in some cases in negative terms (adverse incorporation). Participation in the palm oil sector had become a necessity to uphold community life, providing a rare opportunity of cash income.

The appeal of palm oil was relatively quick results and the perceived certainty of wage labor. Instead the villagers were rather subjected to exploitation and increased vulnerability in relation to loosing land, health and hope. Their inclusion into capitalism further increased

their marginalized position, balancing on the edge of self-preservation. However, they did have a degree of autonomy and agency they expressed in forms of direct and indirect resistance to the palm oil company, and some still hoped to be able to emerge victorious from the business of palm oil. The optimism of palm oil was clearly in opposition to the pessimism or disregard of government projects, which were considered failures from the outset. But, as the palm oil through Plasma scheme turned out to be another element of insecurity, the optimism was decreasing.

Uncertainty was clearly a part of normal life. Mama Udin recognized many of the village's sources of income as uncertain, but specified that conditions such as the price of rubber would always fluctuate both ways. She said some didn't see the point of cultivating rubber or rattan while the prices where low, but she believed they should be ready for when the prices went up again. She was one of few villagers asserting the importance of looking ahead even though times were bad. She said she had to work hard, and hoped the situation would improve. Like mama Udin's view on prices some elements were considered to be certain even though they themselves were or uncertain by nature or contributed to cause uncertainty. This demonstrates how uncertainty was the one thing they could count on. The changes were certain by being constant.

The villagers' lacking ability or desire to plan is not merely a response to uncertainty, but also an expression of an immediate return society. This can be seen in the Chewong society in Malaysia described by Howell & Lillegraven (2013). The Chewong valued an egalitarian social organization displayed through the sharing of all jungle produce, a subsistence economical practice and ideology of immediate return or immediate consumption. Through a process of "modernization" and monetization, new labor practices emerged, and previous livelihood patterns and use of the rainforest suffered from the new drive for earning money to purchase food and consumer goods (Howell & Lillegraven, 2013). Immediate consumption became immediate spending of cash, and although certain moral sanctions worked against individual accumulation there was inevitably some amassing more cash than others, potentially threatening the future social equilibrium. However, Howell & Lillegraven (2013) argues the drive for immediate spending was one of the cultural features preventing any significant accumulation of money or the ability to save up or invest, hence inhibiting the development of Chewong entrepreneurs.

In Dahanen there were certain individuals who had managed to amass more wealth than others, mainly through trading consumer goods and food between the city and the village, but to a modest degree. With the exception of the arisan, money was largely spent

immediately by purchases or paying debts. Overall, the villagers of Dahanen displayed an apparent lack for planning the future. The future was spoken of in terms of optimism, indifference and uncertainty all at once. When they saw something as profitable they took advantage of any opportunity to prosper, but they lacked the incentives, means and knowledge on how to create *new* opportunities on their own. This was partially an effect of being an immediate society return, and of the sense of insecurity when realizing previous livelihood possibilities had become impossible. Li (2014: 154) describes the feeling of bewilderment of one Lauje highlander: "*His old way of living had become impossible,* he explained, but a new one had not taken its place".

CHAPTER 4
REDD+ on the Ground, Sustainability and the Value of the Forest

The issue I would like to examine is how one can possibly save the forest when it has no apparent value to the stakeholders living in it? The apparent value I mention is a result of my own misconceptions and assumptions while watching the forest disappear, and the need to understand how the villagers saw the forest in relation to their ideas of a good life. In order to discuss value as an element of motivation, I will first outline some theoretical ideas on value and from there reflect on the value of the forest from the villagers' perspective. I argue this sense of value has changed as a result of altered uses of the forest, as well as changes in their local environment, and immersion into larger systems and institutions like the global market (e.g. through the timber or palm oil industry), and the sphere of environmentalism.

I will then discuss strategies (as part of livelihood projects) aiming to ultimately saving the forest and nearby ecosystems and give a few perspectives on how these are conceived and met at a village level. These are PT RMU's and YPI's livelihood projects (including plans for carbon trade) through the Katingan Project (REDD+), and to livelihood initiatives from WWF. I argue these strategies aim to evoke a sense of value intended to create incentive for the villagers to conserve their local environment. I aim to demonstrate how friction is an inherent part of the forest discourse and practice; in creating both collaboration and tension. In the last part of this chapter I aim to discuss the concept of sustainability in the context of palm oil, NGO strategies and REDD+ and how this contributes to the understanding and conservation of the forest.

Value

Graeber (2013: 219) notes how the anthropology of value has been considered problematic in thinking of value or values as something that organize and steer human feelings, desires, actions etc., a term that can seemingly mean anything. In arguing for social worlds to be seen as "a project of social creation" – being made and remade in a collective manner, value become a key issue (Graeber, 2013: 222). Graeber outlines five aspects that form what he calls "Chicago value theory", which provides a way for me to further analyze value in the

context of forest. The aspects I will elaborate on are Graeber's own ideas which he has mixed with Terence Turner's notion of Marxian Anthropology, based on Engels' and Marx's notion of "production" as a social process that ultimately produce human beings (Graeber, 2013: 223). Graeber claims that Marx's theory on production indicates a distinction between labor as value-making activities; wage labor and so-called reproductive-labor (housework, child care etc.). Both produce a kind of value, but different kinds of value in different ways. This leads Graeber (2013: 224) to suggest a distinction between value and values as a solution to anthropology's bewilderment with the notion of value. Graeber (2013) defines *value* as the qualities and merits of a commodity available on the market, e.g. labor or items. *Values*, on the other hand, are our ideas of what is ultimately important in life; such as beauty and justice. Such values cannot or shouldn't be measured, precisely compared or converted into money due to their uniqueness. Money is a demarcating feature in that value is comparable and equivalent to certain amounts of money, while values are not. Earlier in his work Graeber (2001: 1-7) described the idea of "values" that influence choices as derived from a sociological standpoint, while the economic "value" is based on the idea of a maximizing/economical individual acting economically rational in minimizing output while aiming to maximize the outcome.

I suggest the notion of value(s) can be used in understanding how the villagers in Dahanen evaluate what a good life is for them. Value in terms of the economic individual has often been rendered problematic in explaining human behavior in traditional societies. This is demonstrated by Malinowski's (1922, in Graeber, 2001: 6-7) ethnography on the Trobriands, who consciously work and produce excessively, beyond the point of financial rationality. In a similar matter I have suggested that my findings indicate the villagers of Dahanen treasured non-financial values (e.g. safety, belonging, sense of community etc.) rather than financial values in striving for a good life, but that these needs go hand in hand. It became apparent to me that financial gain through e.g. labor-work to a larger degree had become a prerequisite to maintain these cherished values, as money was needed to e.g. pay debts or to host social events to maintain the social networks and the sense of community and safety.

Secondly, Graeber (2013: 225) claims that value(s) (according to Turner) are always comparable, and different values can be compared in different ways, money being only one of these. Ultimately, an object represents and embodies the value of certain creative activity, and simultaneously generate the very power it embodies (Graeber, 2013: 225-226). This means that e.g. tokens of being hardworking embody the value of working hard, while one works hard in order to obtain such a token. Following this one can claim to understand what people

value through investigating what people strive (or don't strive) to achieve. In this chapter I will examine how sustainability (being an effort, ideal or certificate) creates value in different ways to different actors and the effects of this.

In talking about commodities in this chapter I follow Appadurai's (1986: 3) definition of commodities as "objects of economic value". The process of transforming objects, people, ideas etc. into commodities for sale is referred to as commodification. Although not assuming commodities to be a solely capitalist phenomenon, I explore the circumstances where trees and forest become commodities and show how their value change mainly due to capitalistic activities such as the introduction of timber trade and palm oil plantations.

Commodification of nature can also be considered using Tsing's (2005: 28) concept of "resource frontiers", appearing where actors "[..] were able to disengage nature from local ecologies and livelihoods, "freeing up" natural resources [..]" to reap its rewards. In a similar manner Li (2014: 13) claims that lack is not the only central feature of frontiers, but rather considers frontiers to be zones of desire and potential where land and forest are seen as resources waiting to be exploited. Persoon & Osseweijer (2008: 11) names one underlying cause of deforestation in Borneo – the tendency of seeing primary forest as empty land [*tanah kosong*] – ready to be turned into more profitable use. This is a good example of how forest on the resource frontier is seen as valuable in its potential to change; in becoming a commodity. With this in mind I will now present some aspects of the villagers' ways to valuate and relate to the forest.

Worthless forest and the myth of "illegal logging"

"Everybody used to work in illegal logging before.."

Bapak Irham was explaining the magnitude of the previous logging in the area. Although being somewhat generous in his estimates, many indeed talked of the glorious days of logging and sudden flow of money. From the 1970s large areas of primary forest in Borneo were selectively logged in commercial logging, and during the logging boom in Katingan in the 1980 and 1990s (Persoon & Osseweijer, 2008: 12-13) many villagers throughout the district took part in the logging; as well as logging companies and migrants. New logging roads created possibilities for villagers to access markets they had previously been isolated from. In Dahanen some villagers had been employed by logging companies operating in the area,

while others logged independently and sold the timber to companies or middlemen. Motorcycles and chainsaws eased their work, and rivers or man-made canals and ditches mainly provided the transportation of the logs, simplified by heavy rainfall and floods.

Tsing (2005: 15) describes how the industrial logging in the 70s created a new way of seeing the forest, both in seeing financial profit over biodiversity, but also how "[..] the rainforest was magnified in importance, simplified, and mischaracterized as a sustainable resource". In addition, the use value and the perceived value of the forest changed. From being a source of livelihood and representing safety, the forest was transformed into a commodity, and its value manifested through exchange. The trees became dollar signs, and their value could only be accessed by being chopped down and distributed to other parties, linking the village to the rest of Indonesia and the world through a global market driven by supply and demand. The value changed into a financial and monetary value, each tree's value concretized by prices, a new kind of value imposed from outside the village.

The illegal logging in the Sebangau national park area didn't come to a halt until 2006. Frequent raids, arrests, and a high presence of park rangers eventually scared the villagers from logging in the area. The establishment of Sebangau national park and the logging ban in the area led to a strained relationship between certain villages and WWF, demonstrating how forest conservation certainly entails friction (not only in the positive terms of Tsing). I was told there had been resentment in various villages concerning WWF's involvement in the establishment of the park. Many held WWF responsible for keeping people away from their rightful livelihood by associating them with the park rangers who were involved in enclosing and protecting the park. A fieldworker from WWF recalled how the inhabitants of Dahanen had wanted nothing to do with them the very first time they visited the village: "*They pushed our boat back out on the river*".

While talking about logging in the village it struck me that everybody referred to it as "*illegal logging*". The villagers had a very limited or no English vocabulary at all, but the term "*illegal logging*" was consistently used, regardless if one was referring to actual illegal logging or just logging per se. It seemed the words had been so heavily imprinted in their minds during the process of eradicating logging in the area, that they had now become the new way of referring to logging, illustrating the global influence in the discourse of forest conservation. The utilization of "*illegal logging*" as all-encompassing and statements like "*they worked in illegal logging before it became illegal*" made it difficult to understand who had actually been working illegally after the prohibition and who had logged legally. From the logging commenced lines and boundaries became blurred, lines between legal and illegal,

property tenure, concessions etc. – a typical trait of the frontier Kalimantan. Most were vague about the location of the logging that had taken place, and some claimed innocence due to ignorance or confusion. There can be several explanations for this, such as poor communication between stakeholders. Tsing (2005) points to a general tendency of unclear lines between public, private and criminal, a confusion that contributes to making a frontier deregulated and on the edge. Both practically and geographically: "[..] illegal logging [..] became the systematic adjunct of legal exploitation. Illegal extractions proceeded as scaled-down versions of legal ones."[13] (Tsing, 2005: 17).

Throughout my months in the village I came to see how villagers seldom spoke of the forest as a resource without describing deforestation – if they couldn't clear the land they claimed their potential use of the forest was very limited. People still collected firewood from the forest, but due to access to gas and kerosene they no longer relied on it so heavily. In addition, they gathered roots, buds, bark, leaves and other non-timber forest products used for food or medicine. Previously they hunted for birds and deer, but this was now rare, and regarded as much uncertain and unpredictable. The villagers claimed it was better to work instead of hunt; to make sure their efforts would pay off. The only remaining logging activity done by the villagers seemed to be small-scale private logging for housing materials and the like. The logging was done close to the village in an area where the villagers believed they were allowed to log, although they admitted the borders and regulations were unclear to them [*tidak jelas*].

Neither planning nor planting ahead

During a fieldtrip down the river Dr. Afiff explained how it was custom in Jawa to plant trees as a form of investment, and she suggested it might be a good alternative for the inhabitants in Katingan. Talking to the villagers along the Katingan river it became evident that few considered planting trees as a possible or attractive investment opportunity. Some recognized the possibilities for future income, but accentuated that the benefits would appear too far into the future. People often spoke in terms of; "we can't", "there are too many rules and regulations", "it's not possible", and "there is no point".

[13] The illegal logging *modi operandi* differs e.g. according to type of forest; In conservation or protective forest without permits, or in production forest through permit violations (Kompas, 2010b, from Indrarto et al., 2012: 6).

Returning to the village I was keen to figure out if this was also the case in Dahanen, and why. After speaking to men and women of different ages, I couldn't find anyone saying they had planted any trees themselves, with the exception from rubber trees. Several people stated: "*We don't plant, now we are just taking [ambil]*". They told tell me they still had everything they needed; trees to build houses and fruit from the wild forest or from trees their ancestors had planted. Few considered it a viable option to grow trees themselves, it was considered expensive and unnecessary, and they insinuated they simply didn't have to do it. Few reflected it could provide realistic future benefits for their family and successors, and no one seemed too eager about it. They dragged their shoulders and listed all the potential problems and reasons for not planting trees; shrugging at my concern for the forest. Those who saw the potential to plant trees, and expressed a wish to do so, claimed there wasn't enough capital to do it. Similar to the villages downstream, they argued areas suitable for such agroforestry initiatives were situated too far from their village, and it would be expensive to get hold of the seedlings necessary. Mama Ridha described the forest as a valuable resource given the precondition that one already had money to cultivate or manage [*mengelola*] it, but if not there were no benefits to be drawn from it.

Bapak Edie claimed people simply didn't think ahead, they only wanted results immediately. Again I argue that the reasons for this are similar to the reasons for selling land and for not cultivating food crops – the sense of powerlessness and uncertainty created by political conditions as well as environmental circumstances prevented them from looking ahead and believing in long-term benefits. Why would they plant trees if they were likely to burn in the next forest fire or subjected to concession for palm oil plantations? The world they lived in seemed too unstable to believe in a long-term investment like agroforestry, and quick results were considered safest. As seen previously their way of life was not based on planning ahead as much as immediate spending.

After the logging was banned the problem at the village level has not been how villagers use the forest, but rather how they experience that they cannot use it anymore and therefore neglect to keep it under their care and/or ownership. This can be seen in the way they talk about the forest and how they actually use it, or rather don't use it. The harvest of non-timber forest products provide them with some daily supplies, but could nowhere near generate such a cash income like the logging. The villagers stopped seeing the forest as anything but valuable trees prohibited for them to take advantage of. The forest became a place of divergence, an enormous source of wealth close enough to touch, but still completely out of reach.

Changing perspectives on value

Both before and during the logging boom the forest represented a financial value for the villagers. But onwards from the boom an external force (the market) set the value of the trees, rather than by the villagers themselves, in the same way that external forces removed the value of the forest by banning the logging. At the same time as the logging came to a halt several parallel tendencies occurred in Indonesia and came into expression at local level. Environmental NGOs and the palm oil industry had established their presence in the area, competing for land rights, resources, power and attention, and they became important stakeholders in the context of forest. Concessions for logging were replaced by concessions to establish industrial palm oil plantations. The business practice of palm oil greatly contributed to altering land management structures in Central Kalimantan, transforming land that used to be a source of livelihood into a commodity to be bought and sold (Institute for Ecosoc Rights, 2014: 77).

After being excluded from the wealth of the trees the villagers witnessed the forest being wiped away by the palm oil companies operating with concessions from the same government who told them to stop cutting down trees. The villagers were not ignorant of what had happened and felt cheated and frustrated. They expressed powerlessness towards the decisions of the government and the actions of the company, saying, "*It is forbidden to chop down the forest, the government won't let us, but then the palm oil companies come and chop it all down*. *They even cut down the small trees. They take everything. While when we were logging we only took the big ones and left the small ones.*" The villagers claimed they would never exploit the forest in such a way as the palm oil company anyway, even if the logging hadn't been banned. They positioned themselves in opposition to the palm oil company and the state.

Palm oil developed to be important also for the villagers, and they were given promises of opportunities and wealth through the Plasma scheme. The forest held value again, but the forest in question now consisted of plots of oil palms. Seeing this development of perceived value of the forest for different actors, and the degree of exclusion from income it is comprehensible that villagers recognize little value in forest per se, and rather see the possibilities in palm oil. For them, there's no saying what will happen or what the authorities have planned, so planning does not seem fruitful or even worthwhile. From such a perspective the tendency of taking advantage of whatever comes one's way and not plan for the future makes perfect sense.

I have now attempted to demonstrate why it is legitimate to fear that a new, harsh reality of the Lauje highlanders described by Li (2014) might also become realized in Dahanen, mainly through the loss of access to, and control over, land. Politics and environmental changes have reduced the perceived value of the forest for those living in it and rather created a sense of injustice and powerlessness. This has created a lack of desire to care for the forest and keep land under their protective ownership; hence generating challenges and negative effects for the people in the forest and ultimately also for conservational forces. Few expressed concern for losing the forest, because getting rid of the forbidden forest meant gaining possibilities though e.g. palm oil.

The potential found in frontiers can be considered a form of value. I have now demonstrated how the potential described by Li (2014) has shifted from being forest as a source of livelihood, to the commodification of trees through logging, land for sale, and finally oil palms. The authorities enable the companies' exploitation of the area and its inhabitants, and the villagers repeat the destructive pattern of deforestation and forest degradation by selling their land and omitting to replant; cutting down forest and planting palm oil in an attempt to keep their heads above the water. A villager joked that they couldn't see clearly, there were too many trees in their way. They couldn't see the value of the forest for just the trees. To them the forest no longer translated into livelihood, value and security. Following such logic, it is comprehensible why many villagers see no reason to save the forest or the trees, because doing so no longer has any value for them, and because they, in reality, face very limited options of action.

Perspectives on strategies for reintroducing value to the forest

The current challenge for the conservationists is that the oil palm trees have become the only trees valuable still standing (except for rubber trees to a certain extent). Deforestation in this context does not signify loss for the villagers, but rather cash income from sale of timber or land, or participation in monocrop plantations such as palm oil. To be able to gain local support for preserving the forest they are forced to recreate or reintroduce a perception of value for forest. This is my starting point for discussing how corporations and NGOs attempt to save the forest by creating a sense of value through e.g. livelihood projects.

Tsing (2005: 7-8) considers environmental politics as being universally mobilizing, but assert that an universalism becomes practically effective and gaining force and particular

content through friction. This is a useful insight into understanding how environmentalism move from the realm of corporations and NGOs to local communities through e.g. projects, and how these are met on a local level. Overall, livelihood projects are examples of how friction can create favorable collaborations (Tsing, 2005). The NGOs might have other goals than the villagers, but can nonetheless fulfill the villagers' needs (fish) as a means to be able to fulfill their own goals (conserving forest). I will now take a look at how different stakeholders strive to remake and enhance the sense of value connected to the forest. I will focus on value through livelihood options through REDD+ and carbon trade by PT RMU and YPI, and value through non-timber forest products (fish and honey) from WWF.

PT RMU – Carbon trade & REDD+

Indrarto et. al (2012: x) describes REDD+ as "introducing a new value for forests (i.e. carbon)". This is one of the goals of the Katingan Peatland Restoration and Conservation (REDD) Project (hereafter the Katingan Project), an ecosystem restoration initiative based on a peat swamp forest area of 149,800 ha in Central-Kalimantan (PT RMU, 2015b: 11). The Project operates from an ERC (Ecosystem Restoration Concession) license issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry in October 2013. It is a 60-year concession license, extendable to 100 years (PT RMU, 2015b: 39). The ERC prohibits logging, and activities within the given areas aim to reforest, protect and rehabilitate existing forest[14]. Main economical activities are related to extraction of non-forest products and ecosystem services, such as carbon trade (Afiff, 2015: 3). Previously, the area was formally zoned as 88% production forest and 12% production forest for conversion (Hartono, 2013), managed through various logging concessions up to 2002 (Indriatmoko, 2014: 310).

The Katingan project is founded and managed by the private Indonesian company PT Rimba Makmur Utama (hereafter PT RMU) based in Jakarta (PT RMU, 2015c). PT RMU works in collaboration with NGOs, e.g. Yayasan Puter Indonesia (hereafter YPI), a non-government and not-for-profit organization based in Bogor. YPI conducted much of the communication and consultations between villages and PT RMU, and was involved in organizing livelihood development programs and activities such as participatory land-use mapping and REDD+ awareness building (PT RMU, 2015b: 28).

[14] Two ERC (Ecosystem Restoration Concession) licenses were granted for Central-Kalimantan in 2013, PT RMU and the Rimba Raya Biodiversity.

The motivations behind the Katingan Project are business oriented, aiming to develop a new business model based on the idea that forest conservation can be profitable e.g. through the sale of carbon credits (PT RMU, 2015a). In 2014 they were still in the processes of carbon validation (Indriatmoko, 2014) and had not yet initiated carbon trade, during the time of my fieldwork. The Katingan Project is formally categorized under the REDD+ umbrella in focusing on avoided reforestation and peat drainage (PT RMU, 2015b: 30), following Indonesian REDD+ National Strategy. It is the first REDD+ effort in Katingan, and one of the first from the private sector to implement REDD+ in Indonesia (Indriatmoko, 2014). I will now continue to connect the village Dahanen with REDD+ and carbon via the Katingan project.

Arriving in the village Dahanen I was unsure if I would be able to find any REDD+ activities, but on my fourth day in the village I was invited to join the signing of a MOU and livelihood agreement between the village and PT RMU. Dahanen is one of 13 villages in the project zone (PT RMU, 2015b). These villages have been actively included in the Katingan Project through meetings, community activities, MOUs and partnership agreements.
The MOU stated anticipation that the village would develop more environmentally friendly livelihoods accordingly to the ecosystem restoration principles of the Katingan Project.

The signing of the MOU didn't seem to have the effect I was hoping for at the meeting. When asked about PT RMU the villagers mainly mentioned the fish livelihood project, and months after the signing most had never seen the agreement and didn't know what it contained. All of those I spoke to denied the MOU would in any way affect the way they managed their forest, "*the project isn't about forest, but about fish*" they said. Many didn't care for politics and didn't take interest in asking the village management about the agreements after they were signed. They were simply waiting for "another project" to appear.

In the context of value, it is safe to say that PT RMU, as a corporation, aims to make financial profit (Graeber's financial value) from carbon quotes. This is what Howell (2014a: 155) refers to as seeing "nature as profit", by reconceptualizing and reproducing nature in terms of market processes. Hence nature becomes commodified as a result of market logics being introduced into environment policy. In order to do this, they must ensure the villagers' livelihood in the project area is protected and thereafter environmentally friendly. They can do this by promoting and working towards financial values; such as food security by establishing livelihood projects for the villagers, founded on values of security and "the good life" (or simply survival). So instead of undermining indigenous peoples' values by extracting financial value (trees or palm oil), the company is aiming to secure peoples' financial

resources (value) and values and from here create financial value for themselves. Both the villagers' values and the global market's "green values" make it possible for the company to utilize the REDD+ discourse of "doing good" in order to do business – *conservation creating financial value through the sale of carbon quotas*. This is a new idea (that REDD+ is based on) opposed to the Business as Usual scenario where resource exploitation creates financial benefits for the minority; while causing insecurity and financial crisis for the majority (here the forest dwellers) that further affects their abilities to live according to their values (security, the good life). In doing so they are aiming to prove that conserving forest can be profitable, and therefore appeal for a change of the Indonesian business as usual currently distinguished by deforestation, degradation, exploitation and corruption. The questions that remains unanswered – is this possible? And, how can it be done? In order to be able to discuss this, it is necessary to elaborate on how the villagers understood the question of REDD+ and carbon.

Village perspectives on understanding REDD+ and carbon

I will now examine how PT RMU, REDD+ and the question of carbon was understood in Dahanen, and how this is a part of their perception of the value of forest. I will examine the relation between Dahanen and the Katingan Project, and the villagers' knowledge of REDD+ and carbon.

The question of REDD+ and carbon mainly caused mainly confusion among villagers in Dahanen. Some had participated in the information meeting [*sosialisasi*] with the PT RMU, but the majority had not and afterwards there was little talk of the issues; a common tendency in the REDD+ initiation stage (Howell, 2014b). Among the participants there were many who didn't fully understand the matter, and most heard about carbon for the very first time during the meeting. Being asked about REDD+ in an open manner, many mentioned forest and some kind of gases. Some vaguely connected the issues and proclaimed, *"That REDD is selling oxygen"* [*REDD itu menjual oksigen*]. In most cases however, the confusion was striking. Firstly, there was confusion about REDD+; what it even was. Some described REDD as a tangible stakeholder such as a government organ or an NGO, and rhetorically asked, "*Who these people might be*?" Bapak Edie claimed he had once been warned about "REDD" by AMAN. This caused confusion and distrust, since it later turned out that also "*AMAN was working with these REDD-people*" in a meeting in another village. The link between REDD+ and PT RMU was also unclear, and some claimed that, "*RMU had bought the area, but then*

REDD came and closed it off". I was also given the contradictive statement that REDD was welcome in the village, but that PT RMU was not.

In an effort to understand the villagers' relationship to REDD+, I asked specifically about the meeting with PT RMU. First of all, it was difficult to find someone in the village who even remembered being in the meeting. It seemed to have been just another meeting that no one talked about afterwards; so conversations about REDD+ were rare. Hardly any villagers initiated talk about REDD+, in fact they seemed quite reluctant to discuss a subject they knew so little about. They would tell me to talk to a neighbor instead, or someone who knew more about the subject. Those who remembered attending the meeting and agreed to tell me about it mainly spoke of it indirectly in terms of trees, such as Udin explaining, "*If you burn forest, there is something ascending to the sky*". She added few were burning new fields nowadays anyway, and most people had permanent gardens now. Gases or carbon was rarely mentioned in connection to the meeting, and the most precise statement was that PT RMU had claimed they shouldn't cut down trees because they gathered up or stored gas, "*some kind of biogas*". One villager explained that REDD+ planted trees so the forest could store carbon, which was good for the humans.

The discrepancy in understanding REDD+ and carbon can be understood by thinking in terms of distance. By this, I refer to a sense separation between the different actors and spheres of knowledge. Gaps have often been used in discussing REDD+, in describing the gaps between local communities and REDD+ policy makers etc., gaps between the authorities alleged intentions and actual practices, and the gap between desire and reality (Howell, 2014b). Tsing (2005: 13) describes how friction is part of collaborations and how "globally circulating knowledge creates new gaps even as it grows through the frictions of encounter". The meeting between the PT RMU/YPI and the villagers seemed to be a case where such gaps expanded and contributed to making meaningful collaboration challenging.

Many had never heard of global warming and carbon before the meeting and told me the children didn't learn about this at school. More importantly, the majority did not see how these issues related to their everyday life. The conversations I had about the PT RMU meeting of REDD+ demonstrated the villagers mainly remembered the elements of these matters that related directly to themselves – they were not to burn down the forest. The rest was largely forgotten. Since the villagers largely felt most of these issues concerned them, the meeting resulted in confusion and indifference rather than meaningful knowledge and action. Typically, such *sosialisasi* meetings taking place in introducing REDD+ have been criticized as being very top-down meetings where the local residents are spoken *to*, rather than spoken

with in a more egalitarian manner. Howell (2015: 41) calls this longstanding Indonesian practice of communication "making speeches"; a part of the legacy from the totalitarian regime of president Suharto. She argues this is not suitable in the context of REDD+ where one of the requirements is Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Nonetheless, REDD+ *sosialisasi* meetings continue to expand the gap between villagers and other REDD+ stakeholders.

I was told the attendance in the meeting with PT RMU had been low, and people had different explanations as to why. The meetings were often held at midday, a time when e.g. the palm oil workers were still working in the fields. Workers in the YPI said that the low interest and attendance was due to the fact they didn't pay people for attending meetings as opposed to other NGOs operating in the area. They preferred people to attend because they were interested in the topic and not the money. Others stated they didn't always care to attend NGO meetings, because they expected the outcome of the meeting or the project to be insignificant. Women often claimed they didn't attend because they hadn't been invited directly, making them uncertain to whether or not their presence was required or even desired.

There was a distance not only to the topics revolving PT RMU's projects, but also to the spatial location of the concession area and the staff itself. Those arranging the meetings were largely unfamiliar to the villagers, spent little time in the village, and spoke of grand and incomprehensible issues. Some claimed they weren't really involved in the village, and only held the meetings and disappeared without really talking to the villagers or getting to know the village. Notably, YPI was present in the village on a daily basis through their village representative, but as I have demonstrated, many associated the NGO with fish, not carbon.

In comparison, the perceptions of REDD+, carbon and the PT RMU didn't seem much clearer in other villages inside the Katingan Project zone[15]. Villagers claimed they were encouraged to attend meetings but they didn't see any reason or benefits in participating: "*There's often meetings, but nothing is happening, there's too many regulations*". "*They make reports and take photographs*". No one mentioned carbon or forest, but similarly to Dahanen focused on fish.

I have now demonstrated how the issue of fish usually took precedence over forest and carbon, and that the MOUs mention of forest and environment went unnoticed. I argue the fish projects might increase food security and give the villagers an incentive to preserve the lakes and the river, but many fail to see the connection between land use (deforestation,

[15] Based on conversations during a short visit in June 2015, fieldtrip arranged by YPI and Suraya Afiff.

selling land) and the dying fish. Hence the MOU with the PT RMU seemed to have affected the villagers' perception and use of the forest to a minimal degree, at least in Dahanen. The gap between REDD+ and the Katingan project was too great to influence the villagers' assessment of the value of the forest, and the vision of a valuable live forest remained in the realms of global REDD+ discourse, lost in translation somewhere between the PT RMU and the village.

WWF – Reintroducing value through honey and fish

In chapter 2 I presented WWF and the Sebangau National Park, and I will now build on this and WWF initiatives in Dahanen to comprehend how WWF seeks to protect the forest and ecosystem in the national park and its buffer zone. WWF as an organization focus on both people and wildlife, and the growing number of dying fish in the river presented a concern to both of these. Previous to my fieldwork, they had started the process of measuring the level of pollution in the river, worrying mainly about chemical waste from gold mining and palm oil. WWF was funding several livelihood projects in Dahanen, many based on fish breeding in cages places in the river or in pools on land, so the polluted river presented a direct threat to their investment and village livelihood. WWF also aimed to protect and develop the village's lakes. The lakes were located on the outskirts of the village, close to the Sebangau buffer zone. WWF anticipated the lakes would become an even more important source of income for the villagers, considering the problems with the fish in the river. A WWF fieldworker claimed it was necessary to change people's mindsets in order to create and secure a sustainable livelihood. To do this, they wished to create incentives for preserving the lakes and the forest through developing alternative livelihood of fish and honey.

WWF pursued a minimal invasive approach, and was hoping to sow seeds of ideas that could succeed and develop further under the care of the villagers. In May I tagged along to a neighboring village where WWF fieldworkers were sharing knowledge on how to harvest honey from forest bees. Many had gathered in the village (indeed only men), eager to learn. They participated in the conversations and the practical work of making a sort of beehive [*tikung madu*] and placing it in a tree behind the village.

By facilitating subsistence fishing and eventually introduce the possibility of selling fish outside of the village, WWF was hoping to make the villagers see the actual and potential value of preserving the lake, and from there secure the future of the lakes and the surrounding

ecosystems. During the time of my fieldwork WWF was promoting fish and fish products as a trading item in the Katingan district, and in July they administered a test project of building a floating house of bamboo and plastic, technically tested by UNPAR. They aimed to create a safe and relatively cheap place to dry fish in a quick and hygienic manner. A volunteer from the village provided the materials, while WWF fieldworkers contributed with the technology and knowledge, and helped constructing the house alongside villagers from several villages. One of the WWF fieldworkers claimed bamboo was the ideal building material for these kinds of projects, being resistant, strong and fast-growing all over the district. Also, research indicated that the ability to store carbon in bamboo was poor compared to other kinds of trees. The plastic and netting was easily accessible in the area, cheap and only needed to be replaced every two years. WWF wished to provide something the villagers could manage on their own, while making them aware of the potentially significant income opportunities from the river.

There was little fuss in the village while the plastic house was being built, and neither the project, nor the presence of WWF workers attracted much attention. Those who wished to participate or observe gathered on a dock on the river in the lower part of the village. Bapak Erma was a resourceful man who frequently travelled to the city for business. He usually brought back food, clothes or other goods to sell in the village. He financed the materials for the plastic house, making him the owner of the house and beneficiary of any results. The village men who participated in building the house were among those who often took part in village and NGO activities, such as meetings and projects. They were in their 30's, strong, committed and most of them already a part of some WWF livelihood project. They took great interest in building the house and talked freely with the WWF fieldworkers, being accustomed to their presence. In general, the villagers were used to both NGO workers and projects, and were patiently (or pessimistically) waiting for the results rather than anticipating tremendous success and income. A group of women had been sitting up on the shore with the kids, observing the construction of the house. They brushed it of as just another example/attempt [*contoh*], and said they wanted to see how it worked out before predicting whether more people would want such a house in the future. Some also said it seemed too expensive to make such a house. Later, it was mentioned that constructing a plastic house was too expensive for most of the villagers, indicating it would just be an option for the wealthiest ones. If that was the case the plastic house would in fact contribute to increase social differences in the village.

Conservation – from enclosure to value making

Both national parks and other conservation areas can create difficulties for local people through imposed restrictions of uses of the area, even exclusion from the forest. Nonetheless Afiff (2015: 2) presses one cannot assume land enclosure, in general, displaces local people, but rather that it produces different forms of inclusion and exclusion processes. This is the case in both the Katingan Project and the Sebangau national park, both exclude and include local people in different manners through regulations and projects.

If not blocking villagers' access to areas vital to their livelihood forest conservation may contribute to food security, in securing sources of livelihood and creating incentives for protecting and developing these. The administration of Sebangau national park aim to create new livelihood options for local communities through ecotourism, and WWF Indonesia (n.d.-a) argues that this will provide community empowerment and a sustainable economy. However, ecotourism is criticized for commodifying both nature and indigenous cultures (D. King & Stewart, 1996). Commodification accompanied by claims to protect nature does not only happen through ecotourism in national parks, but also through carbon trade. Tsing (2005: 51) states commodities must appear as untouched by friction. Following this, I argue this apparent lack of friction is what makes sustainability so attractive, in ecotourism, carbon trade and palm oil. Carbon trade is the epitome of both commodification of nature and using the lack of friction to create financial value. In the following section however, I aim to demonstrate how a sustainability certificate does not free a commodity from its inherent friction, especially not palm oil. Hence, sustainability is also used as a strategy, namely greenwashing.

Sustainable palm oil – destroying the forest in the name of sustainability

Sustainability as a term and theoretical framework evolved between 1972-1992 through various international initiatives and conferences. Sustainable development as a term became popularized and accepted by the United Nations General Assembly through the 1987 report "Our Common Future" – also known as the Brundtland report (Drexhage & Murphy, 2010: 7). It defined sustainable development as fundamentally " [..] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland & Dahl, 1987: 42). The term was intended to encompass the complex

interconnection between environment, society and economy, but has often been compartmentalized as an environmental issue (Drexhage & Murphy, 2010: 16). The flexible term has become nearly universally adopted as a guiding principle by governments, international institutions, businesses, NGOs, and civil society (Drexhage & Murphy, 2010: 9).

After living in the Katingan area for a while, I failed to see the connection between palm oil and sustainability, how palm oil production could possibly be sustainable and what consequences sustainability certifications had. The previously discussed PT AUS refrained from saying more than that the company didn't have a certification as a sustainable producer at that time, and such certification would not be necessary before their processing factory was up and running. For these reasons, I continue to discuss sustainability in more general terms.

Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) is a not-for-profit voluntary organization based in Malaysia. It aims to unite stakeholders in the palm oil industry in order to make sustainable palm oil the norm (RSPO, 2016a), and provids the RSPO eco-label to certified members[16]. Nesadurai (2013: 509) claims the possible advantages of this versatile commodity palm oil is undermined by its role in e.g. climate change and deforestation, especially when the oil palms are planted in peat areas. Palm oil ironically plays a significant role in food security, being cheap and nutritious, especially in the developing world, but it is greatly jeopardizing the food security in the areas where it is produced (Nesadurai, 2013: 508-509). There have been several issues and case studies raising questions about the real effects of the RSPO certification, and the fundamental criticism, according to Nesadurai (2013: 507) is that: "[…] the RSPO simply legitimizes what is at root an unsustainable agricultural model of large-scale monoculture plantation". Likewise the NGO Down to Earth (2004) dismisses sustainable palm oil as "mission impossible", and sustainability as "greenwashing". Similarly, I find the connection between palm oil and sustainability questionable in the case of Indonesia, especially when seeing the rate of expansion of palm oil plantations and the seemingly disregard of sustainability. I also find it problematic how any sustainable use of deforested land presuppose deforestation, if not deforested the area could not be subjected to any kind of plantation. Palm oil companies continue to clear new land, and also companies operating with a sustainability certificate have most likely taken part in deforesting. It is practically impossible to have palm oil plantations, sustainable or not, without first having deforestation.

[16] WWF is a founding member of the RSPO, and work to support it through e.g. providing training, fuelling the demand for certified sustainable palm oil and monitoring the palm oil industry (WWF, 2016b).

The members of local communities situated in the middle of the palm oil plantations had differing thoughts about sustainability and palm oil. As demonstrated, many realized the connection between the palm oil plantation and the dying fish in the river, but few saw the connection between forest degradation and palm oil. In relation to Plasma people expressed hope in receiving land-holding titles but not many reflected on the condition of the soil after it had nurtured oil palms for many years, and few had concrete plans to what they would use the plots for once they had it.

Local NGO workers expressed concern that sustainability certifications would contribute to exclude smallholders from the industry. Similarly to Nesadurai (2013: 507) I indicate that such exclusion and increased insecurity does little to enhance food security for local people. NGO workers continued to describe sustainable palm oil certification as a strategy to gain money in further monopolizing the market and oust the smallholders. They stated sustainability had become a trend, creating favorable public images of doing business in the name of sustainability, although mostly enacting sustainability – a form of "greenwashing". Thus, the certification could have severe consequences for local farmers. But how does it relate to the global market? Nesaduai (2013: 515) underscores that whatever affects can be achieved through eco-consumerism "green" markets are confined to a limited part of the palm oil market, namely western part of Europe, North America and the Australia-New Zealand region. Numbers from RSPO (2016b) claim that 21% of the global palm oil was RSPO certified in March 2016, indicating a relatively low global impact so far.

So, how does palm oil and sustainability relate to the villagers' perspective on the value of the forest? Sustainability clearly expresses green values of securing both biodiversity and the rights of the people cultivating whatever is sustainable, however in this case sustainability doubtfully does the local farmers much good. It might contribute to improve the working conditions for workers in large corporate plantations, but that alone is hardly sustainable development. Also, money makes the wheel spins faster, and the big money is still in non-sustainable palm oil production, where most rural Indonesians make their living and sell or lose their land to. Green values clearly create income, but mainly for large corporations, and far less for smallholders and forest dwellers.

I argue that however one envisions sustainability it needs to contain realistic and tangible incentive for smallholders, ensuring their opportunity not only to partake, but also to benefit. Sustainable development can benefit all stakeholders in the long run, but as I have demonstrated the long run matters little when the fish are dying today, and e.g. palm oil companies take land from local people. I suggest that along with sustainability certificates it is

necessary to make greater efforts to empower and strengthen the rights of local communities, and to secure and improve the foundation for food and knowledge.

Discussing incentives for sustainability, or forest conservation if one may, is where REDD+ comes back into the picture, as another means towards the goal. REDD+ and sustainable palm oil have in common that they end up serving the good of large-scale stakeholders such as the authorities and larger corporations. Li (2014: 169-170) claims that neither forest conservation nor palm oil generates much employment, and that both are ways of losing land through enclosure. REDD+ might contribute to improve small-scale livelihood conditions through livelihood projects, but the problem is that by the time REDD+ is implemented there will be no forest left. Villagers' forest is converted into Plasma, or the like, long before REDD+ arrives. Most things labeled environment or sustainability moves slowly in Indonesia, but palm oil concessions and money move fast.

Concluding remarks – REDD+: Saving all in 1?

In this final discussion I wonder – where all else have failed, can REDD+ save all in 1 by reintroducing value to the forest? How can one make REDD+ and forest conservation more attractive than destruction?

Discussing village projects, bapak Irham commented, "*Those who succeed do it alone, those who get help fail*". He pointed to an important factor of success, namely motivation and drive to improve one's situation. It's clearly simplifying to claim that motivation alone achieves victory or failure, but it's undeniably an important part of the process. I argue that ensuring local communities to benefit from forest conservation, as well as creating awareness as to *why* forest conservation is valuable for them is essential for REDD+ to succeed.

As a result of socio-economical and climate change the conditions for subsistence farming and other sustainable use of the forest has declined and left local communities such as Dahanen without any incentive to preserve the forest. One cannot ignore that marginal communities have a very limited scope of action and agency, and quite frankly have other things to worry about than conserving the forest. Certain projects initiated in the village are partially attempts of creating such incentive, although they are not part of REDD+. For forest conservation to progress local communities need to be involved to a much larger degree than what is the case in Dahanen. Also it is time for rights to be transformed from rhetoric and strategies to actual policies, action and effects before it is too late and the damage is

irreversible. In order for REDD+ to succeed on a local level, it needs to provide real, beneficial and sustainable livelihood options for those on the ground. Forest conservation has to become more beneficial than deforestation, also on a local level.

A NGO worker in Palangka Raya claimed REDD+ couldn't work in Indonesia, because, "*REDD+ is an answer to a global problem, while in Central Kalimantan there are only local problems*". He asserted the solutions to the local problems were so small-scale they couldn't contribute to solve global problems. This demonstrates the importance of building awareness of sustainability and the connections between the small and the big scale.

As REDD+ has largely come to focus on people and their rights, the question is, if saving the forest means saving local people's livelihoods? Is it possible to save the forest *by* saving people's livelihood, like WWF and PT RMY/YPI were attempting to do? I argue it is at least a step in the right direction. And if the people on the ground cannot benefit from not cutting down trees, can they instead benefit from planting trees? A villager asked me, "*Why can't the government pay people to plant trees*?" Ironically, the Indonesian authorities have attempted to do so, but these attempts have largely failed to create awareness and incentive for local communities. Indonesian authorities claim to valuate REDD+, while their actions indicate the financial value of palm oil overrides their consideration of sustainability as a value. At the same time villagers place little value on REDD+ and conservation – both in terms of financial values and value. The villagers in this study largely lack the agency, knowledge and the motivation to make sustainable options. All in all, for REDD+ to work it needs to become more valuable, both in terms of financial value and sustainable values, than deforestation.

Concluding remarks

This thesis is situated in the context of REDD+. I have seen how REDD+ in Indonesia has undergone a transition in terms of political management and focus, but the old challenges of weak governance, corruption, slow bureaucracy and a disregard of peoples' rights are still present. Throughout the thesis I have demonstrate how pessimism, hopelessness and fatigue, mixed with odd hope and confusion, is extensive in the discourse of forest conservation the frontier of Central Kalimantan in Indonesia.

Based on a study of the village Dahanen in Katingan I aimed to understand how a life of uncertainties and adaptions affect the perception and valuation of the forest. I have demonstrated how the local community is undergoing continuous changes in terms of socio-economic conditions as well as climate and forest. I found that in spite of having a very limited agency and scope of action, the villagers display flexibility and resistance when facing these changes. They actively take advantage of the changes and make the best out of the frames within which they live. Their lives are largely built around the changes, and an example of the resilience they are demonstrating is their ability to make the unsafe safe, and acts of everyday resistance. They place high value on social aspects of their community life, and although they desire to prosper, their actions are mainly and necessarily directed at self-persistence.

The villagers' perception and valuation of the forest has largely been affected by their inclusion into capitalism through the logging boom and the palm oil industry. The forest initially held value for the villagers in being a source of livelihood, but was transformed into a financial value as the industrial logging initiated in the 1980s. The logging was banned around year 2000 and the value of the forest became off limits for the villagers, before logging companies claimed the value of the forest and the land by removing the forest and planting palm oil. The entry of palm oil, especially, has worsened an already difficult situation for the villagers, as the conditions for subsistence farming deteriorated, the fish in the river were dying and their potential source of income was replaced with palm oil. Initially the palm oil industry brought hope of prosperity, but eventually it merely became the best out of a small number of options.

I further aimed to understand how this would change the premise for managing and conserving the forest. My findings indicate that the changes that are happening in the Katingan have led to a lack of sustainable livelihood options and income for the villagers.

This led to the villagers' participation in destructive practices such as palm oil. They have also increasingly started to sell land and memberships in arrangements (Plasma) that could provide future access to land. Apart from using trees to build houses they no longer see any value in the forest as it is. They state that if they cannot remove the trees to plant something else, the forest is of no use or value to them. They also display a lack of knowledge about REDD+ and climate related issues such as carbon, as there is a gap between the villagers and the mentioned topics and the stakeholders which are involved. This demonstrates their lack of incentive and realistic opportunity to preserve the forest. For them to see this as a realistic option it is necessary to first protect their basic rights and provide realistic sustainable options for them.

I have argued REDD+ has proven to be a very ambiguous term. By this, I mainly refer to the gaps between rhetoric and action, the value of palm oil versus the value of sustainability, and hope and pessimism. The same ambiguity is found in the villagers' relation to the forest, as they are witnessing other actors exploiting the resource to which they are denied access. They are witnessing the forest extinguished by logging, palm oil companies and forest fires, while they are told they themselves should not cut down trees. I have finally suggested that for REDD+ to work it needs to become more valuable than deforestation. The premise for the success of REDD+ lies in the core of its solution; namely money and motivation. On a government level the values and motivations of sustainability need to take precedence over financial interests. Additionally, it is vital REDD+ provides incentive and knowledge for local people for conserving the forest, accompanied by real sustainable livelihood options.

Epilogue

"*It's totally normal. Everybody arrives here being so optimistic, and leaving feeling like you do now*". After some time in the forest I didn't see much hope for the forest and the villagers living in it. The WWF fieldworker's statement made me realize how hopelessness had become the norm in Indonesian forest conservation. The villagers rarely spoke in terms of hope, but more so in terms of choices and opportunities. A villager once stated there was no hope in forest conservation, only in gold and palm oil. However, after I left the village I was told most of the workers had abandoned their jobs at the palm oil company and started searching for gold. They asked me if I knew if the mercury would harm the fish. I felt devastated; and to quote a villager, "*There is no hope here*".

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