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**Protection Forest governance in
East-Kalimantan: inside-out**

Exploring the gaps between discourse and reality

Promoter : Prof. Dr. M. BREUSERS

Second reader : Prof. Dr. C. PANG

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Lien IMBRECHTS

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Abstract

This research paper explores issues of governance in Protection Forests in East-Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo. Starting from a conceptual framework rooted in critical anthropology, an empirical analysis of the governance situations in two forests – Gunung Lumut and Sungai Wain Protection Forests – is made. This framework is built on the concepts of power and authority, class and hierarchy, capitalism and neoliberalism, and the dynamics between all of those. The analysis is partly based on literature review and partly on ethnographic fieldwork, and focuses on what happens in the twilight zones between forest governance discourse and the forest governance realities. In doing so, it seeks to find out how the processes in this gap can produce a counter-productive arena in which governance remains fuzzy and ambiguous. Yet it also attempts to prove how the same processes can cause for governance to sprout forth within this arena. The used empirical analysis brings issues to an abstract and conceptual level, but it also allows for an extension beyond traditional oppositions and categorisations, thereby forging connections which may otherwise go unnoticed. Its value lies in a combination with on-the-ground, interdisciplinary study.

All phenomena are naturally uncreated.

They neither abide nor cease, neither come nor go.

They are without objective referent, signless, ineffable, and free from thought.

The time has come for this truth to be realised!

Our impermanent environment will be destroyed by fire and water,

The impermanent sentient beings within it will endure the severing of body and mind.

The seasons of the year: summer, winter, autumn and spring, themselves [exemplify] impermanence.

Grant your blessing, so that disillusionment [with conditioned existence] may arise from the depths [of our hearts]!

- *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*

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Glossary

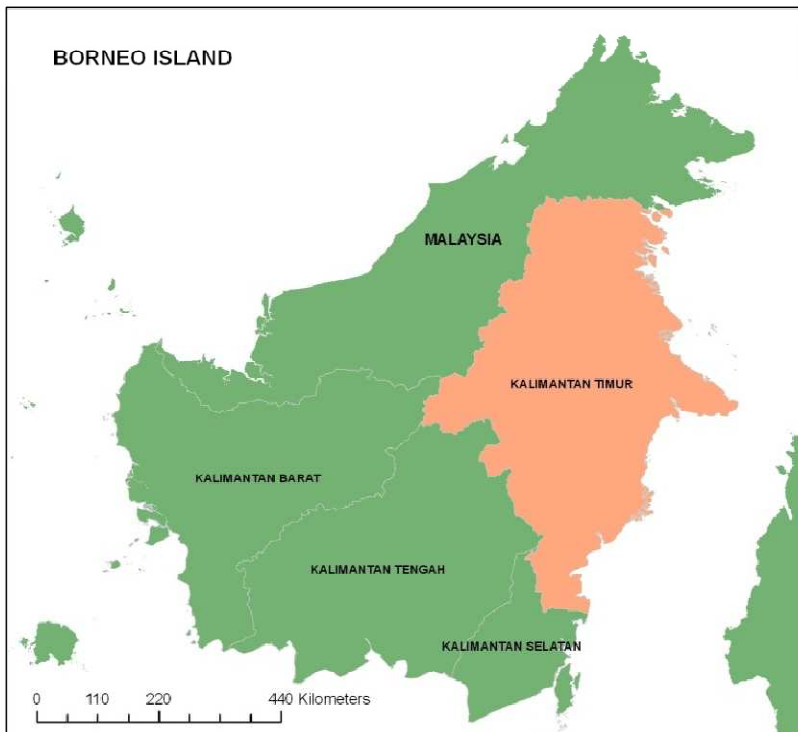
Adat	customary
Banjir kap	'flood of logs', the timber frenzy between 1967-1970
Bugis	ethnic group originating from South-Sulawesi
Bupati	district head
Daerah	region
Dayak	general name for all indigenous peoples from Kalimantan
Etische Koloniale Politiek	Ethical Policy Period, the revised Dutch colonial regime
Gubernur	governor, the head of the provincial administration
Hutan	forest
Hutan Konversi	forest land which can be converted for other land uses
Hutan Tutupan	Closed Forest
Kabupaten	district
Kecamatan	sub-district
Kepala adat	customary leader
Keresidenan	resident, the seat of the local Dutch administrator
Konservasi	conservation
Kota	city or municipality
Kretek	cigarettes made from tobacco mixed with cloves
Kultuursysteem	Culture System, Dutch colonial regime
Ladang	swidden rice field
New Order	Suharto's regime from 1967 to 1998
Orang	person or people
Orang asli	native person or people
Putra daerah	'son of the region' or native political figure
Reformasi	reform
Taman Nasional	National Park
Walikota	mayor

List of names and acronyms

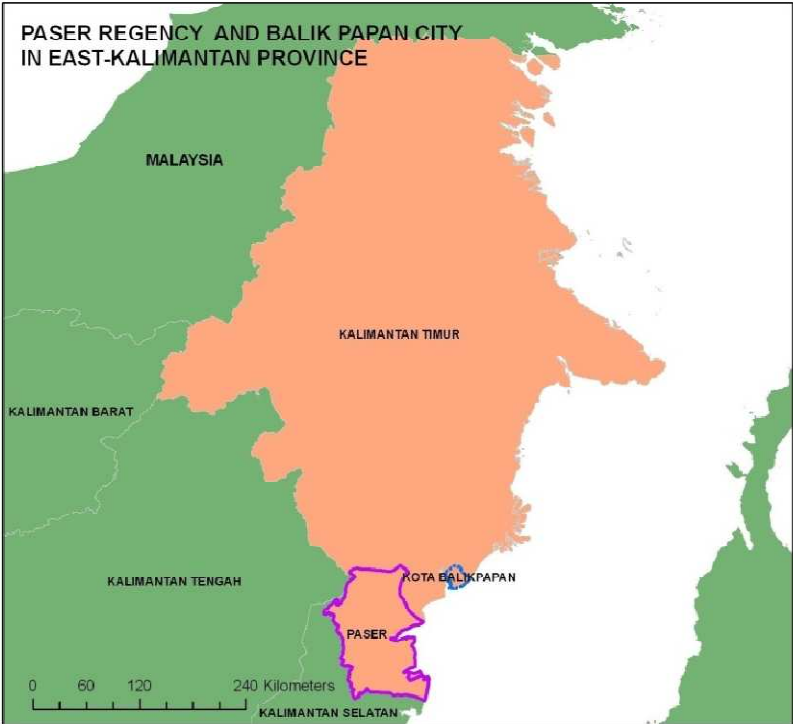
Badan Lingkungan Hidup	Environmental Office in Balikpapan
Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam	Provincial Nature Conservation Office
BFL	Basic Forestry Law
BPHLSW	Sungai Wain Protection Forest Management Body
DAS Manggar	Manggar Watershed (Protection Forest)
Gepak (Gerakan Pemuda Asli Kalimantan)	Movement of Indigenous Youth of Kalimantan
Golkar (Partai Golongan Karya)	Major political party
HL (Hutan Lindung)	Protection Forest
HLGL	Gunung Lumut Protection Forest
HLSW	Sungai Wain Protection Forest
HP (Hutan Produksi)	Production Forest for timber extraction
HTI (Hutan Tanaman Industri)	Industrial Production Forest or forest plantation
HTR (Hutan Tanaman Rakyat)	People's Plantation Forest
IPPK (Izin Pemungutan dan Pemanfaatkan)	Regional small-scale logging permit
Konsorsium (Agenda 21 Balikpapan)	Consortium of local NGOs in Balikpapan
NRM	Natural Resource Management Campaign by USAID
Operasi Wana Lestari	'Operation Everlasting Forest', raid against illegal logging organised by the Ministry of Forestry
PDAM (Pemerintah Daerah Air Minum)	Balikpapan Water Management Office
PKK (Pemberdayaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga)	Family Welfare and Empowerment, village organisation in Swan Slutung
PNPM (Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Masyarakat)	National Community Empowerment Programme
RAL	Regional Autonomy Laws
TBI	Tropenbos International
UP-HLSW	Sungai Wain Management Implementation Unit
UP-KWPLH	Recreation and Education Centre Sungai Wain
VOC	Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or Dutch East-Indies Company

RESEARCH LOCATION MAP

EAST-KALIMANTAN IN INDONESIA



RESEARCH LOCATION MAP



1 Defining the landscape

Introducing East-Kalimantan's forests

Indigenous peoples have the strongest interest and motivation to protect their forest and territories in order to preserve their sustainable livelihoods. They live a low carbon lifestyle. [...] They have their own traditional knowledge and institutions passed down from generation to generation that preserve their environment. They have their own system of land use and land allocation. They develop diverse cropping patterns, maintain sustainable communal water management and practice sustainable agriculture and agro-forestry. They talk and sing to the trees, the mountains, the rivers, the animals and plants. These are the people who are protecting the Earth.

(Abdon Nababan, secretary-general of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago – AMAN)¹.

The article above was written shortly after the United Nations launched the International Year of Forests, 2011. This declaration intends to put the world's forests in the spotlights and specifically *forests for people*. The UN's interest in forests spans a multitude of concerns regarding biodiversity loss, climate change and their respective consequences. Furthermore, it fits the UN's commitment towards sustainable development as a means to eradicate worldwide poverty, but also to safeguard resources for tomorrow. Next to all this, almost a quarter of the world population depends directly on the forest for their livelihood (UN, 2011). Plenty of reasons to '[raise] awareness at all levels to strengthen the sustainable management,

¹ As written by Basorie, W.D (2011) 'Fixing forests for the people' in *The Jakarta Post* [OPINION], February 22, 2011.

conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests for the benefit of current and future generations' (UN, 2011).

It is obvious that Sustainable Forest Management remains a hot topic in the global community. It is accorded a very central position in climate change mitigation and moderating natural disasters. It also provides opportunities for closing the ever-widening gap between rich and poor and for assuring the future of humanity is not jeopardised. Lastly, specific emphasis lies on the notion that it needs to acknowledge and include communities who live in and from the forest as they see their daily lives affected.

1.1 Research purpose and question

The concept of Sustainable Forest Management seems to entail high expectations. These expectations are generally projected on specific forest situations, yet it can be questioned whether this approach is really the appropriate one to reach these ambitious goals. Many anthropologists, researchers and academics have drawn attention to the discrepancy which exists between forest management discourse and actual forest management situations. They urge to abandon a strict focus on the constituting principles and concepts for Sustainable Forest Management, and how these can subsequently be materialised in a local context. Politics, whether they take place in a forest or elsewhere, are hardly ever a pure reification of a foregoing ideology. They are endlessly dynamic processes in which projects, positions, practices and the relationships between all of those shift, twist and turn in an attempt to counterbalance extremes (Li, 2003). If they are right, it becomes more interesting to dive right into this maelstrom and turn back the gaze towards the discourse itself – to understand how it can be dragged into the current, or miss the boat completely. Starting from here, the main research question for this paper can be defined:

*Which processes bridge the gaps between forest management realities and forest management discourse **from the inside-out**?*

The purpose of this research project is to make an empirical analysis of forest governance as it unfolds in two Protection Forests in the province of East-Kalimantan, Indonesia. This purpose can be broken down into two elements of focus:

- a. How can these processes obstruct the emergence of forest governance? Do they contribute to the creation of so-called governance frontiers – spaces in which the elements determining said governance are especially ambiguous?*
- b. How does forest governance emerge, and how can it later on be maintained through these processes?*

By doing so, I intend to build on the hypothesis that it is precisely this disconnection of forest governance discourse which allows for very diverging interpretations and unpredictable outcomes of actual forest management. This is because the ‘government rationality’ that accompanies these processes as they appear, ranges from self-regulation to non-regulation and everything in between (Li, 2003:5121). Hence, it is expected to make way for a myriad of social identities, positioning, power struggle and representation.

1.2 Forest in East-Kalimantan

East-Kalimantan is one of Indonesia’s 33 provinces, located on the Indonesian side of Borneo Island. Ever since the explorations of Alfred Russel Wallace in the 19th century, Borneo has been perceived as a “Mecca of biodiversity”; often associated with images of wild, mysterious forests, intersected by countless rivers and inhabited by fascinating plants and animals as well as fierce

indigenous peoples, notorious for their involvement in tribal and ethnic wars and even head-hunting². As a matter of fact, East-Kalimantan has been an important hub in international trade for several millennia (Muller, 1992). This implies that the forests and their inhabitants may be a lot less pristine than initially considered. The trade, first in forest products from the hinterland, evolved according to changes in demands of the foreign traders (Muller, 1992). East-Kalimantan is one of the most resource-rich areas of the archipelago, covered in massive rainforests, but also holding oil, coal, gas, diamonds and valuable minerals in its soils. The East-coast cities, mainly Balikpapan and provincial capital Samarinda, are Western-style metropolises thriving on the natural riches of the region. Administratively, the province is further divided into ten *Kabupaten* or districts, and four *Kota* (municipalities).

1.2.1 The forest of Gunung Lumut

The Protection Forest of Mountain Lumut (*Hutan Lindung Gunung Lumut*)³ is located in Paser, the southernmost district of East-Kalimantan. It measures a total land area of roughly 35,000 ha or 56.3 km in length, and 8.3 km in width (TBI, n.d.). The forest of Gunung Lumut is defined as tropical lowland to sub-montane and montane rainforest, most of which is in an old-growth or primary state. Less accessible areas of the forest contain an original fauna and flora composition, whereas other parts – especially close to settlements – have suffered deforestation in varying degrees. Still, Gunung Lumut is one of the last refuges for the huge biodiversity

² Kalimantan's indigenous people are all named '*dayak*', although this generalisation disregards the huge varieties and differences between numerous groups.

³ 'Lumut' is Indonesian for 'moss', as the top of the mountain is entirely covered in a thick layer of moss.

once found on Borneo and several communities still depend (partly or entirely) on this forest for their livelihood. (TBI, n.d.)



Photo 1 A small sign next to the logging road reads ‘The Protection Forest area of Gunung Lumut embodies watershed regulation and biodiversity conservation’.

One way to get to Gunung Lumut is to take a long logging road westbound from the town of Simpang Lombok in Long Ikis. First this logging road passes through a field of old, decaying oil palms. The fresh green saplings have already been planted between the orange-brown seniors that will soon be gone. Next comes a large area of productive oil palms, and the harvests are continuously being piled up alongside the road. As it then climbs higher onto the hills, the road enters an ex-Telaga Mas site. PT Telaga Mas used to be the main logging concessionaire in the Gunung Lumut area, but their activities have been ceased for a while. The already logged-over site is now planted with oil palms and explorations for future coal mining

projects are conducted as well. This area is subsequently bordered by an abandoned nickel-mine⁴, behind which the road takes a sharp turn left and climbs steep. The panorama over the landscape below reveals neat rows of palm trees as far as the eye can see. A few kilometres further ahead, a sign and an empty station post mark the entry to another PT Telaga Mas logging zone. There is no sign of any logging activities, only patches of forest, interspersed with tiny settlements or individual houses with agriculture plots. The logging road soon passes a notice board indicating the border of the Protection Forest.

Gunung Lumut became a Protection Forest in 1983, a year in which more than 20 million ha of forest land was declared protected. This decision fit in the fourth five-year plan (1982/83-1986/87) of the *New Order* Government, which contained a strong focus on forest management for the first time in the young state's history (Gunarso, 2009). There was the establishment of the Ministry of Forestry as a separate entity⁵ and the Third World Parks Congress – held in Bali in 1982 – was followed by the designation of 36 new *Taman Nasional* or National Parks (Gunarso, 2009). Yet even before all of this, the government had already had a strong impact on the forest. Right after taking over presidency in 1967, Suharto opened the country to foreign investment and capitalism, mostly aimed at natural resource exploitation (Peluso, 1995). The Basic Forestry Law (BFL)⁶ was issued in the same year Suharto took power and formed the foundation for Indonesia's forest management system as a whole (McCarthy, 2000). Although the government already controlled all forest lands as outlined in the Indonesian Constitution, the BFL

⁴ By the time I finished my research, the nickel-mine seemed to have started up again.

⁵ Forestry was a subdivision of the Ministry of Agriculture at first (Gunarso, 2009).

⁶ UU no. 5 / 1967

intended to further consolidate state authority in order to guarantee access to those forests and enable the commercialisation of the available resources (Peluso, 1995; McCarthy, 2000; Gunarso, 2009). This literally meant that communities living in and from forests would henceforth be obliged to ask government permission to use these lands (Bakker, 2009).

One such a community is Mului. It lies close to the 65th kilometre mark on the logging road, surrounded by steep forest-covered hills and slopes. Mului is the only village located within the borders of the Protection Forest, although it is difficult to tell where these boundaries precisely lie⁷. The name Mului refers to one of the four rivers that flow from the mountain and which also delineates the *adat*⁸ territory of the *Orang Mului*, the Mului people. At first Mului was not an actual ‘community’ as the people lived in individual households dispersed over the land, moving from place to place according to needs and demands (TBI, n.d.; Bakker, 2009). During the early *New Order* years, Gunung Lumut was classified as *Hutan Produksi Terbatas* (Limited Production Forest); conceded to the earlier mentioned logging company PT Telaga Mas⁹ (Yuwati, 2010; Murniati et al., 2006). Mului’s *adat* land formed part of this concession as well, hence their village was relocated and their forests logged over during the 1970s and 1980s (TBI, n.d.). Further disturbances were caused by the 1979 Village Government Law. The peoples of three rivers – Swan, Slutung and Mului – were asked to join together in a new village called Swan Slutung, a proposal that was largely rejected by the Mului people.

⁷ Different maps (f.i. the provincial maps versus the central government’s maps) contain different information regarding the protection forest’s borders and the precise location of the various villages in the area (Yuwati, *pers. comm.*).

⁸ *adat* refers to all kinds of customary practices and systems

⁹ Such concessions are formally known as HPH (*Hak Pengusahaan Hutan* or Forest Concession).



Photo 2 Gunung Lumut, the mountain after which the Protection Forest is named, rises up from behind Mului's *ladangs*.

Bakker (2009) explains that Mului's ancestors had been the first to settle in Gunung Lumut, hence *adat* tradition attributes them a dominant position in the local hierarchy; a position they would lose in the new village. The *Orang Mului* thus established their own, unrecognised village at a short distance from Swan Slutung. Tension mounted when Mului constructed a school and asked the government for teaching staff. The request was denied because of the villagers' earlier unwillingness to cooperate in the government plans. In protest, the Mului people then moved their village even further away into isolation (Bakker, 2009).

In the early 1990s, Swan Slutung became the centre of a transmigration project, as industrial forest plantations (*Hutan Tanaman Industri* or HTI) were developed around the village (Murniati et al, 2006; Bakker, 2009). Javanese, Bugis and other migrants moved in to work on these plantations and the government provided them with housing and other goods and services. Keen on receiving similar provisions, Mului announced they too wanted to join modern society, yet they still refused to let go of their

independence; ‘an uncompromising attitude [which] initially earned them a reputation among government officials for foolhardy stubbornness in clinging to a ‘primitive’ way of life doomed to disappear’ (Bakker, 2009:174). By the end of the decade, however, Mului’s stubbornness paid off: a Balikpapan-based indigenous rights-NGO called Padi guided Mului in an application for assistance from the East-Kalimantan provincial government (Bakker, 2009). This was also when Suharto’s *New Order*-government had started to crumble down, and the radical change in politics allowed for a revitalisation of local authority, *adat* and tradition. The governor approved the application and passed on the decision to the Paser Welfare department. About 50 houses were built on Mului’s current location, alongside the logging road which connects them to Swan Slutung – still the administrative superior for the village – and the town of Simpang Lombok. Unfortunately neither the governor, nor the Paser welfare department or the Mului people themselves were aware that the new village was built within the borders of a protection forest – where human habitation is strictly prohibited according to the Forestry Law. (Bakker, 2009)

After the 30 years of authoritarian *New Order* rule, Indonesia aimed to drastically reform its governance system and started a rapid decentralisation of government administration. The decentralisation laws of 1999 placed the Protection Forest under the official authority of the Paser district government. The strong Ministry of Forestry, however, was reluctant to hand over the full authority over forest lands. Consequently, the rights and obligations were ill-defined and responsibilities towards natural resource management were equally unclear (Yuwati, 2010; Moeliono et al, 2009). For the forest of Gunung Lumut, decentralisation actually meant invasion: a hunt for the available riches of the land. The district government – from then on responsible to generate most of its own incomes – issued a large

number of small-scale logging permits¹⁰ around the Protection Forest. The vague regulations concerning these permits soon entailed conflicts and discussions between the Ministry of Forestry and district Forest Service Offices. Consequently, logging companies started arranging deals with local communities directly, rather than taking the official government path. (Bakker, 2009) These small-scale logging deals proved to be a valuable source of income for the villages around the Protection Forest (van der Ploeg & Persoon, 2006). However, illegal logging within the protection forest's boundaries also intensified (Yuwati, 2010; Slik et al, 2007), mainly by non-local loggers working for large companies or illegal sawmills in nearby towns (van der Ploeg & Persoon, 2006).

Yet Mului was always different. The village was determined not to allow any logging in their forest, because they believed outsiders would only bring damage and (financial) trouble in the long run. Given their dependence on the forest, Mului would put their own future at risk if they allowed logging since '[t]he forest is, as the assistant *adat* leader called it, the community's 'insurance' for when disaster strikes and a direct supply of resources is needed' (Bakker, 2009:177). This forest is their ancestral land, their home, their life and their future. They open *ladangs*¹¹ based on communal decision-making and customary tradition, and forage the forest for honey, fruits and medicinal plants. They grow their own vegetables, and they sell rattan, rubber and birds caught in the forest for cash. The message Mului brings is clear: *Gunung Lumut's forests are better protected when we are here to guard them.* This message appealed to conservationists and indigenous rights' groups alike, and travelled way beyond the mountain slopes through researchers' and NGOs' attention which the village has been receiving for over a decade. The

¹⁰ IPPK or *Izin Pemungutan dan Pemanfaatan* is a forest license for small-scale timber harvesting, issued on a regional level (Moeliono et al, 2009).

¹¹ swidden rice fields

Paser government even declared themselves to be *Kabupaten Konservasi*, a conservation district. All of this, however, has had little influence on Mului and how the people go about their lives. The village still sits in the Protection Forest, aside the logging road, keeping a close eye on who comes in and who goes out.

1.2.2 The forest of Sungai Wain

Roughly 90km north-east from Gunung Lumut lies *Hutan Lindung Sungai Wain* (Protection Forest of the River Wain) within the municipality of Balikpapan. Sungai Wain currently covers about 10,000 ha, an area encompassing the basins of two rivers called Wain and Bugis. According to Fredriksson & de Kam (1999) the protection of the Sungai Wain forest has a clear functional purpose in guaranteeing the safety of a water-catchment area, which supplies the necessary freshwater for the city and the local oil processing industry.



Photo 3 The small entrance gate to the Protection Forest of Sungai Wain.

The importance of the forest was recognised as early as 1934, when the sultan of Kutai¹² declared a large part of the current protected

¹² Kutai is one of the sultanates between which rule over East-Kalimantan used to be divided. After Indonesian independence in 1945, their autonomy

area to be *Hutan Tutupan* – Closed Forest. The *Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij* constructed a reservoir and pump installation in the Wain basin in 1947 and these were later taken over by national oil company Pertamina. They use the water for drinking, electricity (steam turbines), oil pumping and cooling of the refinery equipment. This history of company involvement largely explains why Sungai Wain is free from human inhabitation today, besides some encroachment (a few hundred people) on the east side of the forest, next to the Balikpapan-Samarinda highway. One village, which is also called Sungai Wain, was relocated outside of the forest by Pertamina in the 1970s. (Fredriksson & de Kam, 1999) A *Hutan Produksi* or Production Forest (PT Inhutani I Batu Ampar) neighbours the protection zone from north to west. The south-western corner of Sungai Wain Protection Forest almost touches an unprotected mangrove forest, which in turn borders Balikpapan Bay. South- and eastwards the forest is surrounded by small-scale agriculture catering the city.

Sungai Wain has been a research hotspot ever since the 1980s, serving as a biodiversity fieldwork location for several research institutes and students, and making it an unusually well-documented area. But in March 1998 these researchers found their forest going up in flames. The El Niño oscillation had been causing unusual droughts in Indonesia and man-made fires raged out of control all over Kalimantan and Sumatra. The burning forests produced such a thick smoke that the entirety of Southeast-Asia was covered in a haze. Sungai Wain was not spared as more than half of the area was destroyed by fierce fires and smouldering coal seams (Cleary, 2008; Fredriksson, 2002). The core of the Protection Forest was saved due a rescue mission set up by the researchers, their staff and the locals

was gradually dismantled, and the region officially became a province in 1957 (Wood 1986, Muller 1992).

they employed (Frederiksson, 2002). The forest did retain its biodiversity value, but the gravity of the fires demonstrated the inadequacy of the forest management in Sungai Wain. More importantly, the fires also proved that the government was clearly powerless in actually *protecting* the Protection Forest.

Nonetheless, from the ashes arose new opportunities for Sungai Wain: the heroic fire rescue was widely described in the press and the faith of the forest attracted people's attention. A forest lobby group was formed and they were soon given a kick start with the help of USAID. After the widespread fire disaster, USAID decided to develop an elaborate Natural Resource Management Campaign (NRM) based on social training. From this campaign emerged *the Group for Sungai Wain*, a multi-stakeholder initiative funded and facilitated by NRM. The Group subsequently continued to raise local awareness about the value of Sungai Wain; to generate broad public support for a conservation strategy for the forest. The campaign was designed to be entertaining and celebrative, including a puppet show and a song about the forest. The positive approach proved successful and the municipality government's attitude towards the protection of Sungai Wain changed. This change coincided with the issuance of the 1999 decentralisation laws, which brought the responsibility for Protection Forests under authority of Balikpapan municipality government. Hence, the Group could negotiate directly with the local government about a conservation strategy for Sungai Wain.

On March 15, 2001 an elaborate list of stakeholders signed the *Deklarasi Sungai Wain*, thereby committing to the conservation of the Protection Forest,

We, all parties present at the Working Meeting of the Sungai Wain Protection Forest Management on March 15, 2001 in the Office of the Mayor of Balikpapan, hereby declare that we agreed to protect the Sungai Wain Protection Forest with all of our capacities combined.

(Badan Pengelola Hutan Lindung Sungai Wain dan DAS Manggar, 2009:2)¹³

In this context, the committed parties started preparing a management framework for the forest, which resulted in a book called *Portret of Sungai Wain* and a finished concept for the management body. The Group for Sungai Wain thus managed to convince the Balikpapan government of the importance of the Protection Forest for the city. Guaranteeing a freshwater flow for the Pertamina refinery undoubtedly played a central role in this recognition, although the strong commitment of the new Mayor candidate Imdaad Hamid should not be underestimated either. He launched a political campaign to promote Balikpapan as a “Green City” centred on the conservation of Sungai Wain¹⁴. The city subsequently donated the necessary funds for the establishment of the management board (named *Badan Pengelola Hutan Lindung Sungai Wain* or BPHLSW), a whopping annual two billion Rupiah for starters.

¹³ ‘Kami semua pihak yang hadir pada Rapat Kerja Pengelolaan Hutan Lindung Sungai Wain pada tanggal 15 Maret 2001 di Aula Kantor Walikota Balikpapan, mendaklarasikan bahwa kami sepakat untuk melindungi Hutan Lindung Sungai Wain sesuai kapasitas masing-masing.’

¹⁴ After Pak Imdaad won the elections, Balikpapan’s city slogan became “Green, clean and healthy”.



Photo 4 Malayan sun bear statues decorating the mayor's office's front yard.

With the funding secured, BPHLSW set out to materialise its responsibilities as a management body (Falah et al, 2007). First, a *Strategic Plan Team* was established to draft blueprints for the implementation of their programmes. Second, a *Recruitment and Selection Team* was set up to find the right personnel for the Implementation Unit (*Unit Pelaksana-HLSW* or UP-HLSW) or the operational wing under the management body. A third *Regulation Drafting Team* was installed to design the proper (local) legislative framework for the management body. Last but not least the *Team Illegal Logging* was created, which would carry the difficult task of stopping illegal logging and possible fires in the protection forest. (Falah et al, 2007)

This initial phase was followed up with the final formulation of the strategic planning through multi-stakeholder workshops and programme sessions¹⁵ in 2002. The Recruitment and Selection Team also finalised their personnel search and the Implementation Unit (UP-HLSW) started working. (Falah et al, 2007) At the very beginning, getting the support of local people proved to be tricky business. The situation even turned feisty for a moment when the Tree Spiking Programme was launched. Tree spiking is a method to prevent illegal logging; nails are slammed into the stem, which doesn't harm the tree itself, but which irreparably damages the wood and hence affects its timber value. The conflict with illegal loggers climaxed on a public consultation on the regulation drafts for Sungai Wain. Many illegal loggers were present and they clearly voiced their discontent about the new authoritarian presence in the Protection Forest. They were, however, literally silenced by Mukmin Faisyal, the (then) vice-mayor of Balikpapan. Faisyal was also the local chairman of Golkar (*Partai Golongan Karya*), one of the biggest political parties in Indonesia, and enjoyed a very high status – especially among Bugis people, where his own roots lie. Many of the illegal loggers were Bugis as well, hence the vice-mayor addressed them directly – using their own language and a stern tone – telling them the situation would never go back to the way it was before, whether they liked it or not. On this note, the discussion was closed¹⁶.

¹⁵ Such as the preparation for the allocation of central government funds for reforestation and the construction of the management infrastructure.

¹⁶ I asked Pak Satria, who told me this story, what happened to the illegal loggers afterwards. He answered smilingly that they probably went to Kutai to continue their logging activities there. Kutai Kertanegara is Balikpapan's neighbouring district, notorious for its disastrous forest management and rampant illegal logging.

a militant group which strives for the rights of indigenous people (albeit not always for kosher reasons) – mostly focussed on land rights and claims. The conflict has been dormant for a while now, but the resettlement remains a touchy subject, especially for people who do not benefit in any way from the forest management, such as the encroachers next to the highway.

All in all, however, the condition of Sungai Wain's forests is excellent, because of the efficient management, but probably even more so because of the broad public support for the forest. 'Clock-round monitoring is not necessary anymore', UP-HLSW director Purwanto explains, 'because entry to the forest is a lot harder since the logging road has been closed. And people know that this is a Protection Forest which they should not enter, and this is respected.'

1.3 Two Protection Forests in perspective

Gunung Lumut and Sungai Wain are located at short distance from each other in the province of East-Kalimantan. Despite their geographical proximity, the two forest areas seem to be ill-comparable. The story of Mului and Gunung Lumut fits almost perfectly in the ideal forest management picture as it is described in the newspaper quote at the start of this chapter. Mului holds on to customary practices and swear to a lifestyle in harmony with their natural surroundings. They turn down every investor whose plans go against their principles, no matter the amount of money offered. And they are even partly responsible for the commitment of the district government to forest conservation. The story of Sungai Wain presents an approach to forest protection which is a lot less romantic. Although the management of Sungai Wain was established through widely praised multi-stakeholder processes, this aspect faded after UP-HLSW started functioning. The management of Sungai Wain depends entirely on, and is accountable only to the government of

Balikpapan. Yet people knowledgeable of both forest situations would always point to Sungai Wain as having the best management and a guaranteed future. In fact, the case of Sungai Wain is often used as an example for the management of forests elsewhere in Indonesia, whereas the situation in Gunung Lumut causes serious concerns.

Hence both forests form interesting entry points to the complex world of forest management. Forests are not merely tree-covered lands. They form what Olivier de Sardan (2005) calls *arenas* in which various struggles unfold, alliances made, ties broken and strategies tested. Each arena witnesses the continuous emergence dynamic constellations within and between communities, government institutions, NGOs, companies and other individuals. Analysing all these relationships would be a true herculean task, especially since the rules of the game are constantly subject to change. The forests and their resources are tightly woven into this whole, implying that their management or protection cannot simply be abstracted or even imposed.

Therefore I decided to approach the two forests described above with a well-defined, preconceived conceptual framework. This framework combines the findings, theories and recommendations of several anthropologists and other academia, and serves as a starting point for the critical analysis of the management situations in both forests. The analysis is twofold; on the one hand it is based on a thorough review of available research data on both Gunung Lumut and Sungai Wain and the wider context, gathered over several years by researchers from many different countries and disciplines. On the other hand it is based on ethnographic fieldwork, to directly observe and personally experience the various aspects I chose to build this research project on. Ideally, the research results will indicate whether the used framework is a suitable one for forest governance analysis.

All of this is still quite the ambitious venture, which can only be accomplished because it fits in a broader context. Tropenbos International Indonesia, the NGO research institute who facilitate this research project, have been active in Gunung Lumut and Sungai Wain for many years and generated an enormous amount of knowledge about both forests and their wider contexts already. Furthermore I was able to join one of their current programmes, a PhD-research project by Tri Wira Yuwati on co-management options for Protected Areas in Kalimantan¹⁷, for which she uses Gunung Lumut as a case-study.

This research also links to a second project to which I was invited by Laurens Bakker. Bakker wrote an elaborate book on ‘law and authority in post-*Reformasi* Indonesia’, largely based on anthropological fieldwork in Gunung Lumut¹⁸. Today he is part of a project in full development on the relationship between resource governance and social capital in Conservation (Sub-) Districts¹⁹. Paser, as a *Kabupaten Konservasi*, is one of the research sites of interest and this gives me access to a broad range of knowledge and experience.

The rest of this research paper is hence structured as follows; the second chapter explains the used methodology, starting with an overview of the recommendations and conclusions of academics and scholars and the resulting conceptual framework, which forms the

¹⁷ Yuwati, T.W. (in press) *Integrating Local Land-Use Systems in Collaborative Management of Protected Areas*. Leiden & Wageningen: FSW Leiden University & Tropenbos International.

¹⁸ Bakker, L. (2009) *Who Owns the Land? Looking for Law and Authority in Post-Reformasi Indonesia*. Nijmegen: Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen [PhD dissertation].

¹⁹ Acciaioli, G. (2009) [Research Proposal Title] *Social Capital and Resource Governance in Indonesia: Conservation Districts and Subdistricts in Sulawesi and Kalimantan*. Crawley: Anthropology and Sociology Dept, University of Western Australia.

core of the approach. The chapter then continues with a critical discussion of the ethnographic fieldwork methods, in general as well as per case-study. The third chapter presents my findings for both the research data review and the ethnographic fieldwork ordered per research location. To have a more complete understanding of the situations as I encountered them, I first extend outwards to place certain findings in a broader context. This contextualisation takes the form of a genealogy, for instance a regional or national historical context or a quick analysis of forestry and other relevant legislations as they apply *in situ*. The fourth and final chapter contains my personal conclusions on both forest governance situations, as well as the opportunities and limitations of the used research framework. It also includes some recommendations for further research, for TBI Indonesia and other professionals interested in Sustainable Forest Management, and of course for anyone involved in Sungai Wain or Gunung Lumut.

2 Approaching the forest

Developing a research methodology

[...] the fact of being torn between two kinds of language, one for expression and one for criticism; and within the latter, among many variants, the word of sociology, that of semiology or psychoanalysis – but I also realised that I, unsatisfied as I was after all about all of these languages, opted for the only certainty I was carrying with me (no matter how naive it may have been): the unstoppable resistance against systems that attempt to pin everything down with a label, because every time I would try such a system for a little while, I could feel a language take form, which would then inevitably sink to abasement and patronisation, so that each time I would sneak out and try again elsewhere: I changed the language.

(Roland Barthes, *La Chambre Claire*)

2.1 Preliminary literature study

The first phase of this research project consisted of an extensive literature review, which started from the moment my research internship with Tropenbos International Indonesia had been confirmed (in March 2010). From then on, I attempted to centre various course subjects and assignment themes on Forest Conservation and Forest Resource Management, in particular within the context of the proposed research location in Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo. In doing so, I started to familiarise myself with forest management discourse, principles, goals, ideas, problems, trends, objections and contestations. A first interesting observation

turned out to be the realisation that ‘forests’ are a widely researched subject among social sciences. In one essay²⁰ I wrote,

The way forests are perceived depends on what humans need and expect from them. For the adventurer in me, they mean recreation, peace and patience, a place detached from regular life where one can escape to, and relax. For the conservationist in me, their beauty and splendour is so magnificent it should be preserved in all its glory, like a piece of art in an open air museum. For the environmentalist in me, their existence is so vital other species like ourselves cannot live without them, and their rapid disappearance makes me worry about the future of the planet. But no matter how many different views I can take to forests, they are never an intrinsic part of my life. Forests, and nature in general, are [to me personally] a mental concept completely separate from the concept of culture.

Nevertheless, to billions of other people, forests are a natural self-evident fact of their livelihood, like water to fish or cities to us, thereby rendering obsolete the dichotomy between nature and culture as we know it. There are people that depend entirely on forests for their survival. Others see the forest as a financial opportunity: trees mean wood, timber, paper, and a source of energy and capital. There is a category of people that perceive them as undeveloped infrastructure – when cleared up, they are the excellent location for other kinds of activities, such as oil drilling, or cash crop plantations – and then all sorts of categories in between. All these different people project their equally different expectations on one single forest. Whose will win the plea depends solely on the socio-political play unfolding

²⁰ *Ethnographic Fieldwork*, Prof Dr. P. Devlieger (2010).

onto each patch of forest, making them a very interesting subject of study for a social scientist after all.

This realisation continued to be a central theme throughout the entirety of the research project, sometimes as an inspiration, sometimes as a burden. Most importantly, it opened the door for significant insights to be obtained from various social science and anthropology scholars, academics, experts and researchers. I eventually subtracted four main concept groups from all the insights I encountered in the course of the preliminary literature study, which together formed the conceptual framework for the actual research. This framework is based on the aspects of *power and authority, class and hierarchy, neoliberalism and capitalism, and dynamics and interactivity*; all of which are discussed more in detail next.

2.1.1 Power and authority

Governmentality

Tania Murray Li uses Foucault's concept of governmentality to explain that any form of government 'seeks to govern or regulate the conditions under which people live their lives' (1999:296). This implies that the people who are the subjects of this purpose have to be able to imagine this government as the director of their lives' conditions. In other words, governmentality appears when the governed subjects internalise the performed governance and accept it as logic. This obviously does not necessarily mean that the actual content of the government needs agreement; it merely needs the assimilation.

Lemke further remarks that governmentality simultaneously connotes "to govern" and "mentality" and this 'indicates that it is not possible to study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them' (2000:2). This notion

is particularly important when government is perceived as the regulation of a population – as opposed to a territory – and is hence expected to define what is “best” for said population (Hunt & Wickham, 1994; Li, 1999). Yet this rationality is at the same time undermined by the clear realisation that no government can ever truly provide the “best”. Consequently, it is a cyclical, never-ending project in which new interventions are always required (Ferguson, 1994; Li, 1999). Furthermore, governmentality in its very essence requires ‘governable subjects’ (Li, 1999:295) which at the same time implies that governance is not limited to the domain of politics or administration. ‘Foucault defines government as conduct, or, more precisely, as "the conduct of conduct" and thus as a term which ranges from "governing the self" to "governing others"' (Lemke, 2000:2).

Authority can thus not be seen as the simple domination of one actor over another one, or – in similar lines – a political administration exerting control over a society of subjects. Rather, authority *emerges*, as a ship sailing the waves, mastering and perhaps even triumphing, but at the same time still being dependent on and to a certain extent subjected to as well.

Furthermore, when authority can no longer be perceived as a duality, it is necessary to look beyond standardised oppositions, such as “the state and community”, “agency and constraint”, or “conformity and contestation”. Power prevails throughout societies in their entirety, not only in certain defined institutions. Hence the main questions do not immediately concern who has authority, or how this authority is used or abused. Rather they should aim at how authority eventually manifests itself - including the rationale, strategies and technologies that allow for this manifestation.

Power and discourse

Power relations are a tricky subject to study, although the strong ties between power and discourse do provide an opportunity. Foucault argued ‘that there is a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies’ to establish or maintain authority (Foucault, 1979:100, quoted in Bakker, 2009:43). In other words, the developments in, and successions of discourses can be *indicative* for power relations and how they materialise in a specific situation. The terms and conditions of what Henley (2008) calls government as a ‘social contract’, are determined by this discursive play. Hence it is through discourse, that a sovereign government – carefully balanced between control and responsibility – can be formed. Bakker (2009) adds that control of discourses is also essential for the justification of authority, as it determines what will be perceived as “truth” and by extension what is “best”.

Yet from this simultaneously follows that counter-surges and critiques against authority constellations are rooted in discourse as well. To understand where counter-claims or revolts come from, it can be useful to try to reconstruct a historical context around such power struggles (Li, 2007a; Biezeveld, 2009). A wide array of diverging and conflicting interpretations of historical events may be deployed years later on, in an attempt to trigger a desired change. Which elements from the past become crucial in present circumstances, is just as unpredictable as the outcomes they could lead to.

2.1.2 Class and hierarchy

Individualised hierarchies

Human relations and interactions inextricably involve inequalities, even in the most seemingly harmonious communities (Agrawal &

Gibson, 1999; Taylor 1982). Class and hierarchy are themselves complex matters which can be approached from very different perspectives. Bottero (2004) notes how methods for class analysis have changed and evolved over the years, thereby creating a new need for class theory and understanding. Agreeing with Savage (2000), she writes that the multitude of research approaches risks to neglect the concept of class itself and what it is supposed to represent today. For the new school of analysts, class is perceived to emerge – similar to Foucault’s governmentality – from cultural processes and socio-economic practices (Bottero, 2004). This view differs from the clearly distinguishable, opposable and fixed categorisations of earlier perceptions of class (Savage, 2000; Bottero, 2004). Furthermore, the relationship between class and identity has become less obvious as particular class identities do no longer seem relevant. Nonetheless inequalities do prevail; hence Bottero (2004) concludes that these should be addressed within a different analytical framework which she calls ‘individualised hierarchies’ or ‘social stratifications’. This allows for a case-specific analysis which extends beyond the traditional concept of class and class identities towards a broader understanding that includes positions, processes and practices, as well as their accompanying discourses.

Social identity and discourse

As the direct relationship between class and identity is blown up, the idea of consciously constructed and collectively experienced social identity becomes difficult. Rather social identity will concretise through differentiation – or a process of *différance* in semiotic terms. This means that identity cannot be named directly or characterised in detail, but can be negatively distinguished from *other* social identities (Raey, 1997; Savage, 2000; Bottero, 2004). This process of differentiation is highly discursive as well, hidden in everyday aspects of discourse such as morals, ethics and values, only to become relevant within each context of comparison (Bottero, 2004).

Nonetheless, collective identities do still exist, but rather as meta-identities enveloping individualised hierarchies in an artificial unified layer. Anderson (1991) uses the term ‘imagined communities’ to describe the sense of belonging, kinship and relation characterising a national (or ethnic) cultural identity. Returning to the Foucauldian understanding of ‘truth’, such a collective identity is created by a discourse produced through ‘a formalised high culture’ (Bakker, 2009:45) expressed in different media; newspapers and television, but also in the social construction of history (Acciaioli, 2001). According to Acciaioli, this history creation tends to go a long way back ‘to ancestral time when the basic values of national character were already nascent’ (2001:2). The process of history construction requires certain elements or events to be singled out and elevated as ‘essential’ for the national culture – while others are marginalised. This process obviously involves the creation of a certain exclusivity and normative validation, creating social forces that demand conformity and subordination of all diverging elements (Acciaioli, 2001; Bakker 2009).

2.1.3 Neoliberalism and capitalism

In an introduction to a symposium on ‘The neoliberalization of nature’, Heynen and Robbins (2005:5) write that ‘neoliberal capitalism drives the politics, economics and culture of the world system, providing the context and direction for how humans affect and interact with non-human nature and with one another’. McCarthy and Prudham subsequently define neoliberalism as ‘a complex assemblage of ideological commitments, discursive representations, and institutional practices, all propagated by highly specific class alliances and organized at multiple geographical scales’ (2004:276). Moreover, they add, neoliberalism presently has some sort of untouchable status; perceived as the “endpoint” on an evolutionary

timeline – indeed a *condicio sine qua non* (McCarthy & Prudham, 2004; Heynen & Robbins, 2005).

Capitalism, on its turn, forms a stage on which processes and projects are created, dramatised and improvised on a discourse of artificially enhanced risks, returns, failures and new opportunities (Tsing, 2000), embedded in the attempt to attract ‘capital’ or even just a simulation of capital. In his famous philosophical treatise called *Simulacres et Simulation*, Baudrillard argues that it is capital which is the ultimate *simulacrum*. Because of the ‘extermination of all use value, all *real* equivalents of production and wealth’ (1981:40, emphasis added)²¹, capital no longer has a referential base but itself²². This explains why capitalism allows for a frenzy of production – to produce as much as possible before the imagined value evaporates. ‘That is why *this “material” production itself is hyper-real today*. It retains all the characteristics, all of the discourse of traditional production, but it is nothing more than multiplied refraction’ (Baudrillard, 1981:41, emphasis in original)²³. The only option left is to dig deeper and explore for other ‘discoveries’; with

²¹ ‘[...] l’extermination de toute valeur d’usage, de toute équivalence réelle de la production et de la richesse, [...]’

²² De Saussure’s classic structuralist theory of the linguistic sign (1989) makes it easier to understand Baudrillard’s theory. Each sign is constituted by two components, the *signifiant* or signifier and the *signifié* or signified. The first component (the signifier) addresses the physical aspects of the sign, for instance what a word looks and sounds like. The second component (the signified) is the mental image this word creates in one’s mind upon hearing or reading the word. The creation (or construction) of the sign lies in the combination of the two components together. The sign refers to an object in reality: the referent – this is the sign’s reason for existence. What Baudrillard means is that the distinction between the sign and the referent has vanished. The sign has *swallowed* the referent and has become its own reason for existence.

²³ ‘C’est pourquoi *cette production «matérielle» est aujourd’hui elle-même hyperréelle*. Elle retient tous les traits, tout le discours de la production traditionnelle mais elle n’en est plus que la réfraction démultipliée.’

an ever-increasing vigour and energy, yet directing it inward, like a storm gaining strength only to become its own wind-still eye. This process, Baudrillard writes, is very violent, but the violence is *implosive*; generated by retraction and saturation, with a sucking energy that drains its entire environment.

Nature Commodification

Baudrillard's arguments provide some insight in the relationship between neoliberalism, capitalism and natural resources. Structural reforms towards neoliberalism in the governance of natural resources entailed overall drastic alterations in the relationships between humans and nature. These processes are steered by a reconfiguration of agrarian relations; more often than not accompanied by struggles and conflicts (Li, 2001), giving rise to what Anna Tsing (2003) calls 'resource frontiers'. On resource frontiers, she describes vividly, neoliberalism arrives as a cataclysm entailing hope and despair, order and wilderness, and authoritarianism and deregulation all at the same time. The 'landscape itself appears inert: ready to be dismembered and packaged for export' (Tsing, 2003:5100). Yet when a natural landscape becomes a commodity or rather a set of commodities, it automatically becomes subjected to the woes of commodification processes and practices. Indeed, a commodity is not a stable entity either; it emerges from the ongoing negotiations in a certain social context, which it why it can also become – suddenly or slowly – irrelevant again (Appadurai, 1986; Kopytoff, 1986).

It is also in this regard that Henley (2008) speaks of 'the tragedy of the future', alluding to the infamous 'tragedy of the commons' (or 'tragedy of open access'); which poses that depletion of natural resources is unavoidable if their access is not restricted (Hardin, 1968). What Hardin means is that natural resources receive the same treatment of mass production as any other commodity at the height of its social life, yet the rhythm of their reproduction (renewal)

cannot ever be increased. Hence, the only solution is to change the mode of production (extraction) of natural resources by limiting the access. Henley argues that the tragedy lies in the fact that natural resources may need a lifetime (or several generations or even thousands of years) to renew, whereas the commodity is always needed in the present – and all that is known for sure about future needs is that we ourselves will not need them, because we will all be dead. Ultimately, the mode of production is not changed, because of desperation, ignorance, or indifference, or any combination of these (Henley, 2008). In the case of desperation, the condition of peoples' lives forces them to over-exploit, because there are no other options available for survival. In the case of ignorance, over-exploitation exists because the problem of renewal is unknown or goes unnoticed. This differs from the case of indifference, where the knowledge exists, but the present commercial value simply wins the plea. This attitude is only possible in a context where different commodities can emerge when old ones are no longer available; a system driven by 'deplete-and-switch' (Jessup & Peluso, 1985, quoted in Henley, 2008:275).

2.1.4 Dynamics and interactivity

It may seem quite clear already that the elements discussed above all coexist and reinforce each other. They form what Li (2007) calls an arena or an 'assemblage'²⁴, a space where discourse and reality intersect, spaces under permanent construction. For instance, neoliberal processes may be expressed in government practices and strengthen certain positions in social hierarchies; intentionally or not. The scope is all-encompassing, 'a geographic space, a social space, a sociological space or a space of services, although it may attach itself

²⁴ Following what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari expand upon in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.

to any or all such spatializations. It is a moral field binding persons into durable relations. It is a space of *emotional relationships* through which *individual identities* are constructed through their bonds to *micro-cultures* of values and meanings' (Rose, 1999:172, emphasis in original).

Strangely enough, the assemblage is hardly ever perceived as such. Rose et al. (2006) refer once again to Foucault to explain why this is the case. Since liberalism came to the fore, there is 'the assumption that human behaviour should be governed, not solely in the interests of strengthening the state, but in the interests of society understood as a realm external to the state. In liberalism, [Foucault] suggests, one can observe the emergence of the distinction between state and society' (Rose et al. 2006:84). It is therefore that Tania Li urges for an empirical analysis of forest governance that '[moves] beyond the limited optic of power and resistant others, virtuous peasants and vicious states, or "stakeholders" bearing fixed interests, identities and ideologies' (Li 2003:5127). Because of their resource wealth, forests are 'localities of value', reined by a 'fuzzy logic' which cannot simply be categorised as negotiations are never-ending (Bakker et al, 2010).

2.2 Research and ethnographic fieldwork

[T]he challenge I have set myself is to make the landscape a lively actor. Landscapes are simultaneously natural and social, and they actively shift and turn in the interplay of human and non-human practices. Frontier landscapes are particularly active: hills are flooding away, streams are stuck in mud, vines swarm over fresh stumps, ants and humans are on the move. On the frontier, nature goes wild.
(Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, 2003:5100)

2.2.1 Literature review

Most of my 8 month-stay in Indonesia was spent in the city of Balikpapan, where Tropenbos International have their head office. From there I had unlimited access to an extensive range of existing knowledge on Sungai Wain and Gunung Lumut from different academic and disciplinary sources. I learnt about the forests' biodiversity values, fauna and flora species, natural forest growth and rehabilitation after forest fires. I also explored socio-economic conditions, the economic value of non-timber forest products, the potential for ecotourism and customary traditions. I discussed with researchers and professionals who had worked in East-Kalimantan's forest and who were generous in sharing their knowledge. By bringing all of this existing knowledge together, I tried to create a complete image of these forests; what was known, expected and wanted from them. I also looked for gaps, changes, inconsistencies and ambiguities within this vast collection of knowledge. Slowly but steadily, an image of what is actually at stake began to form itself.

2.2.2 Research locations and fieldwork strategies

The case studies presented in this research paper were chosen both because of practical and theoretical reasons. Sungai Wain is located in Balikpapan; hence access to and information about the forest is very straightforward. Gunung Lumut forms the subject of other research projects to which this one interlinks. Theoretically, the forests are interesting exactly because of their very different forms of governance – one having a highly formalised management system, whereas the other has not – and their equally distinct historical and genealogical contexts. Following Agrawal (2001), I believe that a dual case-study approach can significantly improve insights and bring perspective in the individual findings for each case. Nonetheless, the research approach can hardly be called

‘comparative’ as each case will be approached with different research focus. Rather, it is ‘complementary’, based on a juxtaposition of the two research locations. Multi-sited fieldwork (Boas, 1920; Marcus, 1995) allows for one to break through traditional dichotomies between macro-level theories and their micro-level expressions. One conceptual framework is used to analyse the processes which attempt to link actual forest governance to forest governance discourse. These processes can play out in a myriad of forms, as there are different options for identity creation and strategic positioning within each arena.

Case 1: Hutan Lindung Gunung Lumut, Paser District, East-Kalimantan

Hutan Lindung Gunung Lumut was assigned to me as a research location by Tropenbos International Indonesia. They have been working on various research projects in the Protection Forest for over a decade, as well as actively engaged in the facilitation of multi-stakeholder meetings (on district-level) for the development of a sustainable forest management system. When I arrived in Kalimantan (in January 2011) they had two research projects running in Gunung Lumut. The first one aimed at customary rights and land claims, and the extent to which both could be included into formal spatial planning processes (Hunggul Yudhono). The second project relates to the first one, focusing on how local land use systems can be integrated in a co-management institutional design for Protection Forests (Tri Wira Yuwati). My research in Gunung Lumut forms part of and builds on the latter.

The first focus research question (a) is applied in the Gunung Lumut case, namely:

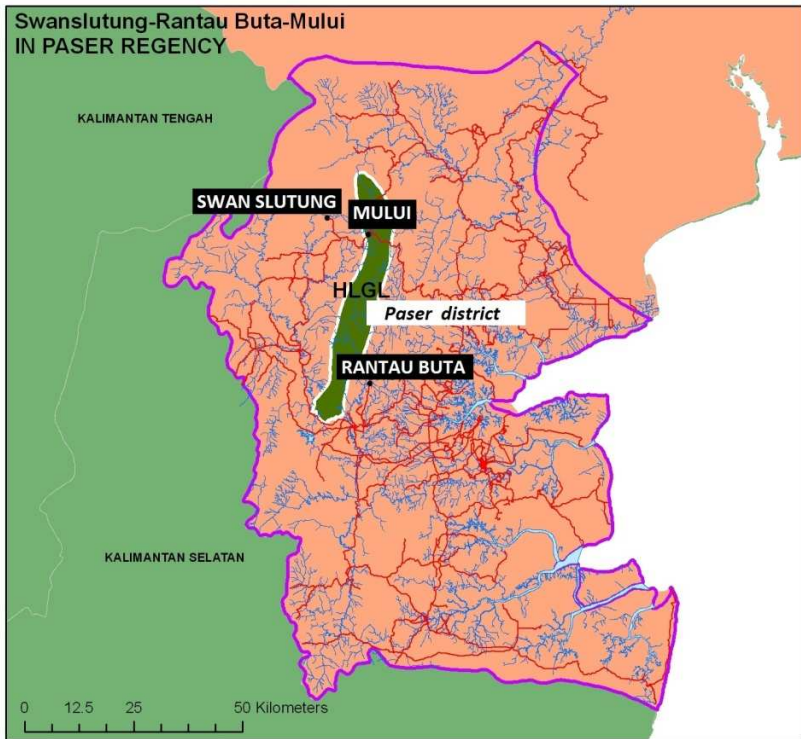
How do the processes between facts and discourse obstruct the emergence of forest governance? Do these processes contribute to the creation of a governance frontier in Gunung Lumut?

At first, I was advised to start my research from Mului, already having a renowned reputation for being a researcher's hotspot. This is first and foremost for its location inside the Protection Forest area (convenient for any study of the forest), but also because of Mului's strong dedication to *adat* practices and beliefs. However, after my first stay there in January 2011, I found that despite them perhaps being the strangest and most exotic community living around Gunung Lumut, they could hardly be considered representative for the entire area²⁵. Therefore I decided to include two other villages in the area, namely Rantau Buta and Swan Slutung. Rantau Buta is a small village of about 30 families located all the way on the other side of the Protection Forest, close to the border with South-Kalimantan. The village is similar in size to Mului and the population is also largely native Paser (with a very limited few outsiders married in). Swan Slutung, the village to which Mului forms a part in village government administration, is the third location. Swan Slutung is a transmigration village, artificially created and with a population brought together through government programmes. Swan Slutung can thus be expected to present a completely different reality, but just as real as Mului's and Rantau Buta's nonetheless. Last but not least, I spent one day in Tanah Grogot, Paser district's capital, to talk to government officials to gather more information on their programmes in Gunung Lumut. I managed to talk to the district facilitator for PNPM, the National Community Empowerment Programme. I spent more than an hour waiting for the head of the forest management unit of Gunung Lumut Protection Forest in the district's Forestry Office, but unfortunately he did not show.

²⁵ Pak Jidan, the *kepala adat* or customary leader of Mului told me the same after he returned from a conference in Yogyakarta. He remarked that he could only present Mului's view on the matter. 'I don't know what the other communities think', he said shaking his head, 'but I doubt it even comes close to what we want' (see also chapter 3.2.3).

RESEARCH LOCATION MAP

PASER IN EAST- KALIMANTAN



time frame	location	research strategy
January 27-31	Mului	Introduction, getting acquainted, first observations.
April 5-12	Rantau Buta	Introduction, getting acquainted, first observations, group discussion, semi-structured interviews.
April 12-20	Mului, Swan Slutung	Semi-structured interviews, observations; Swan Slutung (incl. Mului) village data collection, introduction, getting acquainted.
July 2-6	Rantau Buta	Observations, semi-structured and structured interviews, village data collection.
July 6-13	Swan Slutung	Observations, semi-structured and structured interviews.
July 14	Tanah Grogot	Paser district data collection and semi-structured interviews.

Table 1 Research locations visited and strategies used within each fieldwork time frame in Gunung Lumut.

a) Participant observation

A large part of my fieldwork consisted of observing how life develops itself in these villages around Gunung Lumut. All three locations are fairly isolated and hard to reach, have no mobile phone reception let alone internet, and electricity is only available in the evenings (provided by diesel generators). Their lives, however, are not in the least disconnected from the wider context, resulting in a sometimes strange mix of practices, ideas and priorities. To understand how this works, I tried to tag along on their lives whenever I had the opportunity. I sat in huts on *ladangs* for hours, on watch for birds and boars hungry for the produce on the field (generally they would be chased before I even noticed them), helped to harvest some rice (not a lot I should tell you in all honesty), learnt to cook (MSG is commonly used even in these villages), swam and bathed in rivers (with or without a trail of kids), followed hours of conversation, sitting on a front porch with my head in a cloud of *kretek* cigarette smoke (mostly not knowing what the conversations were about, as they would hardly ever be in Bahasa Indonesia) and

inevitably got hooked on Indonesian television drama series. All of this helped me get at least a touch of what life in and around Gunung Lumut feels like. My stays were never long enough to have a proper understanding, or to really take part in village life and activities. However, it did prove to be a good introduction and definitely made it easier to have individual conversations on deeper and more personal levels.

b) Group discussion & observation

In Rantau Buta, I took part an open group discussion (set up by Tri Wira Yuwati) about the village. The topics for discussion were:

- 1) History of the village;
- 2) Transect of the used surrounding natural resources;
- 3) Seasonal calendar of land uses;
- 4) Analysis of trends and changes in land and resource use;
- 5) Relationship with external actors;
- 6) Village strategies in dealing with problems/issues.

A group discussion is one way of organising participatory research, allowing for interactive data gathering which bypasses a few ethical problems, such as the imposition of western concepts, or irrelevant land use categories or resource divisions. However, it should be considered that such a research approach has its limitations too. Strategic answers or an avoiding of sensitive elements can be expected, whereas internal hierarchies can also play a decisive role. Therefore, I decided to observe how consensus about each topic was reached throughout the group discussion, which questions were tough to answer and who participated actively and who did not. To make this easier, the discussion was videotaped to be able to review everything afterwards²⁶.

²⁶ Unfortunately the discussion was not taped in its entirety, as the (unaccompanied) camera had stopped filming at some point. The material we did get was very helpful nonetheless.

Participatory research also essentially means the disruption of the villagers' regular life, and the abandonment of their regular activities for the research project. The motivation, willingness, openness and interest from the informants are essential to say the least. Overall, however, the group discussion turned out to be a very relaxed evening, with unlimited refills of (ridiculously sweet) tea, piles of cookies, and a good balance of seriousness and hilarity.

c) Interviews

Most of the information was gathered through in-depth interviews focused on qualitative data gathering. I used two types of interviews, namely semi-structured interviews and structured interviews. For the first, I would prepare keystone questions and let the actual interview naturally develop around these. For the second type of interviews, I used a standard questionnaire with coded answers which enabled me to weigh the qualitative information with some baseline data²⁷ on:

- 1) Participation in the community;
- 2) Community decision-making and development processes;
- 3) Relationships with government actors;
- 4) Natural resource conservation and management;
- 5) Socio-economic standards;
- 6) Community capacity and agency.

Ideally, all interviews should be conducted with diverse types of people in the sense of class, economic activities, age and gender. This, however, turned out to be easier said than done. In Mului, many people do not understand or speak even a basic Bahasa Indonesia, which made me decide to limit myself to semi-structured interviews with certain key informants from the village. In Rantau Buta, finding women and youngsters to participate was fairly easy,

²⁷ I used an excellent finished questionnaire, written in flawless Indonesian and already tested for loopholes and problems (see also Acciaioli, 2009).

but in Swan Slutung this was a lot harder. I only managed to include a few, together with their husbands or fathers. Even then it was sometimes hard to engage them in the interview, which I tried by directly aiming certain questions at them.

The difficulties of language in general were an important factor I had to work with. Although I was able to master a decent amount of Bahasa Indonesia during my stay in East-Kalimantan, it is only the nation's official language, and not the native speech of most Indonesians. Sometimes I had trouble explaining what I was looking for, and sometimes I did not fully understand their answers either. Hence, there lie some flaws and missed opportunities.

Case 2: Hutan Lindung Sungai Wain, Balikpapan Municipality, East-Kalimantan

Including Sungai Wain as a research location for this project was very obvious. The forest is well-known for having a clearly regulated and implemented management system. This made me wonder why this institutionalised system is possible in Sungai Wain, and not in Gunung Lumut. The forests are – after all – located in the same region within the same country, yet how each is governed could not be more different. The research focus (b) for Sungai Wain hence lies on *the processes through which this forest governance emerged*. This also includes *the processes through which that governance is currently maintained*, as well as *those processes which pose limits to that governance*.

a) Observation through participation

Via Tropenbos International, I automatically became part of a larger community involved in activities on forest conservation and management. Right from the start, I followed meetings of *Konsorsium Agenda 21 Balikpapan*, which joins the forces of several local social and environmental NGOs together – including Tropenbos International – and is backed up with support from the

Balikpapan city government and private companies. As a participant in this community, I also took part in a number of events (directly or indirectly) related to Sungai Wain and its management. Those events proved to be a good gateway into the political realm of the forest management. They gave me the opportunity to meet certain people who would be difficult to reach otherwise. More importantly, however, it provided me a taste of the atmosphere in which Balikpapan’s socio-political arena unfolds.

Date	Event
January 15	Tree planting event ‘500 Pohon untuk Bumi’
January 20	Public Consultation on Spatial Planning Balikpapan
April 4	Release of a rescued sun bear in Sungai Wain
June 22	Photo exhibition ‘Sungai Wain’ and interactive dialogue ‘Hutan Penyangga Kehidupan’ (following World Environment Day).

Table 2 Public events (related to Sungai Wain) attended during the research period.

b) Semi-structured interviews

Most crucial were the interviews I conducted with people in any way involved in Sungai Wain and/or its management. First, I had several discussions with Purwanto, the director of the Sungai Wain Management Implementation Unit (UP-HLSW), as well as the general representative of the Management Body (BPHLSW). Another essential source of information was Satria, director of the Education Centre (UP-KWPLH). Both of them were involved in the establishment of Sungai Wain’s management from the start. I also talked to several civil servants in *Badan Lingkungan Hidup* (Balikpapan’s Environment Office), researchers (most importantly Stanislav Lhota and Gabriella Fredriksson) and BPHLSW employees. Furthermore, I managed to have a brief exchange with the vice-mayor Rizal Effendi, who was elected Mayor during the fieldwork period, and Tandya Tjahjana, who is the head of the provincial Nature Conservation Office (*Balai Konservasi Sumber Daya Alam*) in Samarinda. Lastly, I had a short but insightful

discussion with a group of people at the Balikpapan district Water Management Office (*Pemerintah Daerah Air Minum*).

2.2.3 Some personal reflections

This research project was definitely not an individual accomplishment. It is embedded in a research internship for Tropenbos International, a Dutch NGO that have been working on forest research in different countries around the world since 1986.

Working within the framework of a NGO entails of course certain opportunities and limitations. It means that the research will be situated within a certain ideology, working method, and experience. According to Tropenbos International, large-scale deforestation forms a dramatic problem for nature, but also for the local and global population. They are convinced that poor policy making, implementation and evaluation leads to poor forest resource management. They also hold on to the principle that generating and distributing knowledge about the problems can improve the situation.

Soon after finding out that my research location would be Mului, I was told to step into the field with caution, because the relations between Tropenbos International and Mului would not be excellent. When Tropenbos International started their activities in Gunung Lumut, and thus Mului, they were not the first NGO to be present. Padi, an indigenous rights' NGO based in Balikpapan as well, had been advocating for the community on provincial and national levels. Somewhere along the way, something must have gone wrong between the two²⁸, leaving Padi offended and disgruntled. The troubles that exist between them have never been sorted out, and occasionally catch fire, mostly through Mului. Next to all this, the

²⁸ I was given so many different reasons for the troubled relations that I personally believe neither party actually remembers when, why and where the problem started.

Mului community often wonders out loud what advantage they actually get from accommodating all of the researchers arriving through Tropenbos International. They complain that the research never actually improves their situation. This made them decide to ask a fee for the village treasury from any researcher passing by. My first arrival in Mului was a bit uneasy and tense, and a long negotiation between Sariman²⁹ and Mului's *kepala adat* Jidan followed. My presence was eventually accepted after Sariman and I (spontaneously) worked on cleaning the local school's sewers – which were so clogged with earth that the school flooded after each rainfall – together with a large bunch of children.

Furthermore, there were colleagues, other researchers and experts in my immediate surroundings, and wanted to incorporate the richness of their knowledge and experience. I used and built on existing methodologies, and made joint field trips to Gunung Lumut with Tri Wira Yuwati. This positively influenced the amount and quality of the data obtained. Moreover, the language barrier I faced – with a developing vocabulary of Indonesian and no knowledge of Paserese at all – was partly broken down. However, I also noticed that when I did fieldwork on my own, people were less shy to approach me; hence I am happy to have had the chance to do so as well.

Many of the members of the *Konsorsium* in Balikpapan provided essential information for both case-studies; first and foremost (former) president Yulita Lestiawati and social-environmental law expert Rahmina. Other crucial data and critical questions were provided by the sharp minds of Ishak Yassir (Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation) and of course Petrus Gunarso, the director of Tropenbos International Indonesia. Bernaulus Saragih of Universitas Mulawarman Samarinda kindly shared his knowledge, and gave me

²⁹ Sariman is one of Tropenbos' drivers and has come and gone to Mului since the very beginning; he is in fact the only permanent Tropenbos actor in their relation with Mului.

crucial advice for fieldwork. I was also fortunate enough to work together with Laurens Bakker (Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen en Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), and received fatherly advice from Gerard Persoon and Hans de Iongh (Leiden University), as well as Gregory Acciaioli (University of Western Australia). Last but not least is the very essential information and practical tips I obtained from Moira Moeliono and Cecilia Luttrell (Center for International Forestry Research).

Anthony Cohen (1992) stresses that a healthy balance between the “Self” and the research project in its entirety is required; this means that the researcher needs to be conscious of his or her own Self in receiving and processing information. Next to this there is an equally important role for the Selves of the informants in their providing of data. This may have been the most difficult challenge during this research project. Throughout my entire stay in Indonesia, I battled mutual culture differences, stereotypes and misconceptions. Sometimes I wondered whether I was supposed to represent Tropenbos International or merely myself. On other moments I ended up in rather difficult situations, stirring up the question whether I was always responsible, simply because I was someplace where I essentially do not belong. And of course, there was the crucial notion of what my priorities actually are, and whether I can and should justify these towards everyone I am including in this venture. My ideas, opinions, enthusiasm, frustrations and loyalty (both on the project and the situations I was researching) fluctuated as the research progressed. Overall, however, I feel that I managed to keep the ball somewhere in the middle fairly well.

3 Immersing in the forest

Discussion of the research results

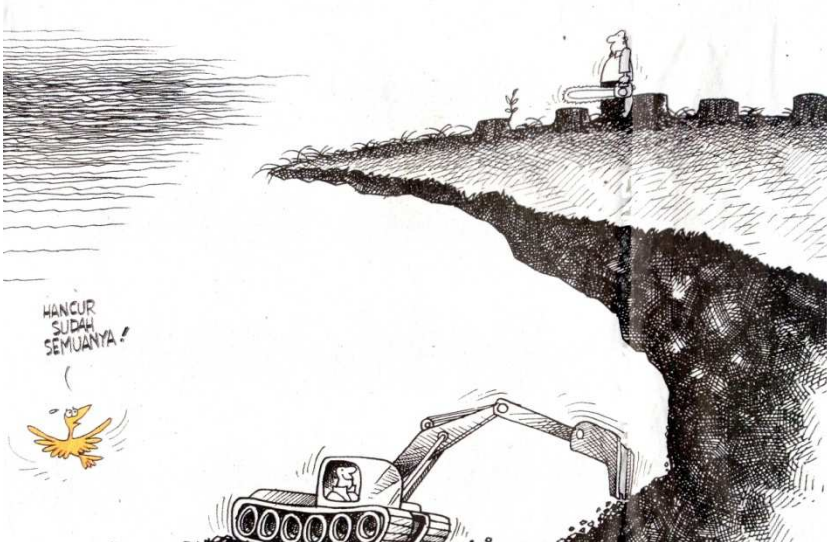


Figure 2 'Everything already ruined!' Indonesia's forest as represented by cartoonist Gesigoran in *The Jakarta Post*, March 3, 2011.

3.1 The forest context

Exploring forest resource management in East-Kalimantan, as it turns out, can be quite the adventure. It takes the multilayered complexities of a heavy and bureaucratic government system, adds it up with the opportunities and constraints of natural resource wealth, and mixes it in the tumultuous context of Indonesia's history.

3.1.1 Creating 'Indonesia': a quick genealogy of governance

a) Colonialism

Gimon's (1996-2001) extensive timeline demonstrates how the natural riches of the archipelago attracted foreigners as soon as the first century AD, a time when the different islands housed kingdoms, sultanates, individual villages and nomadic tribes. Indian migrants

had brought Hindu culture and religion to the islands of Java, Sumatra as well as Kalimantan. Through trading relationships with Indian and Chinese kingdoms, Hinduism and Buddhism further spread over Indonesia for many hundreds of years. From the 12th century onwards, Arab traders found their way to Indonesia as well, bringing along Islam, which seeped in starting from the North of Sumatra. The Portuguese would be the first Europeans to arrive in Indonesia by the end of the 15th century. They established themselves strategically in the port of Melaka (now Malaysia), from where they largely controlled the spice trade³⁰ – a very lucrative business. The European presence brought along Catholicism, to be mixed in with other present religions and beliefs. Yet the largest change would be brought about by the Dutch, who broke the Portuguese-Spanish hegemony in the South-Pacific around the start of the 17th century³¹.

The Dutch East-Indies Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, henceforth VOC) – the very first multinational corporation – set sail for the Indies, backed up with an extensive arsenal and large ambitions (Gimon, 1996-2001). The VOC was different in the sense that it was not a mere commercial venture; they had ‘the right to rule’ (Li, 2007b:32). Partly for practical reasons, the Dutch States-General had provided the VOC with the authority to govern as a sovereign in their territories in the East-Indies (Gimon, 1996-2001). However, this authority did not accompany any specific *will to govern*; rather, it aimed at ascertaining maximum profits at all times. This minimum-input-maximum-output attitude lies at the base of the VOC’s system of *indirect rule*. In this system, already prevailing power structures were simply superimposed with another

³⁰ Pepper, cloves, nutmeg, etc.

³¹ The Netherlands broke free of Spanish occupation at the end of the 16th century, but Portugal (and its colonies) was annexed in the same period. By then, the British had also started venturing in the South-Pacific (Gimon, 1996-2001).

layer of governance, and local elites were moulded to the VOC's advantage through the use of incentives and bribes. (Li, 2007b; Wollenberg et al, 2009). The greediness of the VOC would ultimately lead to its demise in the early 1800s³², and the Dutch government subsequently took over control in the East-Indies³³.

From then on, the Dutch governance became more intense, aiming to solidify the territory they controlled, including its population (Li, 2007b). Various schemes were devised to discipline the natives and enhance their conformity, to indeed become one population. Land tenure became an exclusive state matter, and agricultural lands were simply leased back to the local communities at a high price, as one fifth of all harvests went directly to the Dutch administrators (Winchester, 2003). The system, which was called *Kultuursysteem* or Culture System, cut deep. Subsistence production was abandoned for cash crops such as coffee, tea and indigo, and the eventual results were grave poverty and famine (Gimon, 1996-2001; Li, 2007b). Moreover, Breaking down this predominant centralised state ownership of vast portions of land is still one of the biggest challenges Indonesia faces today.

The strategy of the Dutch changed towards the end of the nineteenth century when the Culture System cracked and fell apart³⁴. From then on the colonisers aimed to ““intellectually and morally advance” the

³² ‘It paid stockholders an average of 18 percent per year for two hundred years (1602-1800)’ (Li, 2007b:32).

³³ During the 4th Anglo-Dutch war at the end of the 18th and beginning of 19th century, control over large parts of the East-Indies shifted back and forth between the British and the Dutch. ‘The Treaty of London in 1824 was intended to divide the Indies between British and Dutch control. Many of the boundaries defined in this treaty would later become boundaries of the Republic of Indonesia (Gimon, 1996-2001).

³⁴ Winchester (2003) remarks that is probably no coincidence this happened shortly after Multatuli's *Max Havelaar* was published, in 1860.

indigenous East-Indians'³⁵ by introducing them to a proper religion (Christianity), a proper economic system (capitalism) and a proper education (Bertrand, 2007:115). This Ethical Policy period (*Etische Koloniale Politiek*) translated in a mission to solidify the colonial territory and organise in-depth social and political control; a project in essence not so different from other European imperialist ventures (Lindblad, 1989). Yet it did entail an explicit demarcation between “indigenous” and “white” people; a relationship in which the former needed to learn to embrace the dominance of the latter, rather than resist (Li, 2007b; Bertrand, 2007).

b) Colonisation in East-Kalimantan

The Ethical Policy period had its largest impact on “the Outer Islands” (those located further away from Java), as the colonial grip in those areas drastically firmed compared to earlier years. In 1903 the Dutch drafted the *Decentralisatiewet*, a first law through which a *keresidenan*³⁶, assisted by a regional council, was established to represent the colonial government in these far-away places as well. The idea was two-fold: decrease the administrative task of the central colonial government, but simultaneously increase government control (Matsui, 2003; Moeliono et al, 2009). East-Kalimantan’s coasts had been ruled by sultans, and the coastal populations thrived on the trade of forest products coming from the Hinterland (Bakker, 2009). In 1889, oil was found in the Sultanate of Kutai, and production started from 1901 onwards (Peluso, 1983). In 1907, Royal Dutch Shell was created and performed its activities in East-Kalimantan under the name *Bataafsche Petroleum Maatschappij*, and would later become part of the state energy company Pertamina (Wood, 1986). The oil drilling marked the start of Balikpapan’s

³⁵ ‘1’ “avancement intellectuel et moral” des indigènes des Indes orientales.’

³⁶ ‘*Keresidenan* was the seat of the local Dutch administrator (resident), who, in Java at least, shared the rule with the naive regent(s) or *Bupati*’ (Wollenberg et al, 2009:19).

existence (Balikpapan, 2008) and would of course play a very significant role in the protection of Sungai Wain's forest up until today. As the oil revenues flowed in, the Dutch aimed to tighten their control on the East-Kalimantan region, thereby bypassing the Sultans (Peluso, 1983). This implies that the Protection Forest of Sungai Wain was actually created by the Dutch in 1934, to safeguard the water catchment area for their oil industry. Still, the oil enhanced the position of the Kutai aristocracy among their peers. 'Though the origins and genealogy of their sultanates were unimpressive, the oil royalties had substituted for their poor dynastic background and had placed them in the forefront of the sultanates of the [Netherlands East Indies]' (Magenda, 1991:43).

Paser was in those years of much less interest for the Dutch. '[It] had always been under the tripartite influence of the Buginese, the Banjarese, and the Kutai sultanate. Only after the consolidation of Dutch power was it given its own ruler,' Magenda (1991:17) writes. He further adds that the small sultanate functioned as 'buffer kingdom between the Kutai sultanate and the Banjarmasin domain, from which the Dutch could manipulate either one of these two rival groups at any particular time. [...] Paser's³⁷ aristocracy was a Dutch-created one which the Dutch used and manipulated in accordance with Dutch interests' (1991:42). The aristocracy ruling Paser was an ethnic mixture of non-natives, and the hinterland *dayak* groups had little involvement in their politics. They did, however, have trading relations in forest products, including timber, with Bugis traders and Chinese exporters (Peluso, 1983). The Dutch also organised some administrative services in the hinterland, such as (very) basic education and medical care (Muller, 1992). The inland *dayak* groups

³⁷ A few years ago the local government decided to change the district's name from 'Paser' to 'Paser', which is believed to be the original spelling.

were thus definitely not unaware of what was happening in their wider surroundings.

c) World War II, Independence and Suharto's New Order

The Second World War marked the start of the end of the Dutch colonisation in Indonesia. The Japanese swiftly took over the oil wells and refineries, such as the one in Balikpapan, but the Allies were unwilling to let go of the valuable city without a fight. 'Balikpapan, with seven piers, a big oil refinery and two airfields, was the scene of some of Borneo's fiercest fighting' (Muller, 1992:37). The trade in forest products and timber was largely halted, and for the inland populations the war years were rough (Peluso, 1983). The Allies did regain control, but in Java, Sukarno was already taking substantial steps towards independence for Indonesia. Four years later, in 1949, the Dutch finally recognised the federal republic and the lives of all people in East-Kalimantan inevitably changed. 'To summarize, Indonesian Independence brought not only freedom from Dutch colonial rule, but also the replacement of traditional systems of local government by a new "democratic" style of regulation. The effects of this new system were felt particularly at the village level' (Peluso, 1983:170).

The charismatic first president, Sukarno, embarked on a difficult mission to create one nation out of the myriad of ethnicities and cultures within the archipelago. But the new nation would not be very different from the former, as 'European racial domination mutated as Indonesia's educated, moneyed, and aristocratic elites replaced the Dutch' (Li, 2007b:51). Indeed, the colonial foundation never really disappeared, turning the entire administration into a two-faced construction. *Adat* law and rights were formally recognised, but were practiced only 'for resolving local disputes among "lower class, mainly rural Indonesians"' (Li, 2007b:51). Sukarno's efforts were eventually rendered obsolete by a severe economic and

governmental crisis. The situation spun out of control and the military, supported by the United States (on a worldwide anti-communist raid), intervened violently. Thus started the *New Order*; a new style of government under the supervision of Suharto and his military allies. The *New Order* devised development schemes to catch up its “delay in economic progress”. The country was opened up for foreign investment (and natural resource extraction) in which the rich and powerful became more rich and powerful. This reality was overlaid with a discourse ‘replete with phrases that assimilated development to stability, orderliness, and strength. [Suharto] blended populist rhetoric – declaring development to be from the people (*rakyat*), by the people, and for the people’ (Li, 2007b:57). This style of communicating still prevails in Indonesia today.

For East-Kalimantan’s forest, the early *New Order*-years (between 1967 and 1970), meant the start of ‘*banjir kap*, meaning literally “flood of logs”, [the] popular term coined to describe the first three years in the timber boom of East Kalimantan. Not only was there a flood of logs, but also a flood of labor, investment speculation high profits and prosperity for nearly all participants’ (Peluso, 1983:177). All of a sudden, everybody had an interest in the formerly sparsely populated forests of the province. The government reacted to the frenzy by tightening control: the more efficient and profitable small-scale logging was prohibited, and concessions would be granted by the central government to large companies for areas measuring 50,000 ha minimum (Peluso, 1983).

d) Reformasi and regional autonomy

An intense process of decentralisation was put in motion after Suharto’s fall in 1998, as the central government in Jakarta started to pass on administrative authorities and responsibilities to the regional governments (i.e. the districts and municipalities). The aim was to create a new, democratic and prosperous Indonesia after decades of personal rule and autocracy, and more importantly perhaps, a

massive economic crisis (Bakker, 2009). The 1999 Regional Autonomy Laws (RALs) were the first concretisation of the central government taking a substantial step back. One of the most remarkable aspects of the RAL lies in the power division between provinces and regions. Whereas the former used to largely control the latter during the New Order, they were now reassigned to a mere evaluative position³⁸ (Bakker, 2009). This balance tipped back in 2004, when the central government decided that more structure in the regional governance system was indispensable. Henceforth, provinces and regions were to share authority, but once again the terms were vaguely described. Many district and municipality offices continued their relations with the Central Government as they were already established (Bakker, 2009). Power struggles (or responsibility avoidance) between *Bupatis*, *Walikotas* and *Gubernurs* would also regularly emerge. The new regulation did allow for increased democracy though, as it installed a system of direct election of the Region Head by the local population, rather than an appointment by the regional parliament (Bakker, 2009). Moreover, the decentralisation entailed a true revival of ethnic pride. Political campaigns became dominated by *putra daerah* – sons of the region – stressing the fact that ‘thinking locally’ would unavoidably become the new mantra. However, Jakarta’s retreat from regional governance was reluctant, and this can still be felt today.

3.1.2 Governing the forest: the rules of the game

According to the constitution, control over all of Indonesia’s forest lands belongs to the state, but it was the *New Order*-regime which specifically determined how that control would materialise. In 1967, the Basic Forestry Law was drafted by the Ministry of Agriculture,

³⁸ Article 9 describes the tasks as inter/supra-regional governance, authorities that cannot (yet) be taken on by the regions and representation of the central government whenever necessary.

which would, for the first time, demarcate forest lands and categorise them according to land use. The regulations determined in the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960, which recognised some customary rights, did no longer apply to the “Forest Estate” (Li, 2007b; Bakker, 2009). Based on large mapping ventures³⁹, 143.8 million ha of land were placed under jurisdiction of a brand new Ministry of Forestry⁴⁰. (Peluso, 1995; McCarthy, 2000) Forests were en masse conceded to large foreign companies or Suharto’s cronies⁴¹. All of this obviously happened regardless of the millions of people who were living, cultivating or depending on these lands. These were not oblivious to the capitalist interest for the wooden gold though. It all accumulated to the earlier mentioned *banjir kap*, a frenzy of timber extraction, especially on the Outer Islands such as Kalimantan. Regulation tightened, and the Ministry of Forestry stood firmly in control until its hegemony was broken by *reformasi* at the end of the millennium (Bakker, 2009).

Decentralisation, after Suharto’s fall, allowed for a new *banjir kap*, as districts and provinces found new authorities (and an important source of income) in issuing small-scale logging permits. Local communities saw an opportunity to reclaim the lands they had “lost” during the *New Order* (Barr et al., 2006; Moeliono et al., 2009). The Ministry of Forestry did not wait very long to take back control (recentralisation indeed), as it drafted the regulation which forbade small-scale logging permits in 2002, followed by a demonstration of its power through raids against illegal logging (called *Operasi Wana*

³⁹ See Peluso (1995) for a sharp analysis of these mapping projects, as well as a critical discussion of mapping activities in general.

⁴⁰ The exact amount of forest land continues to be the subject for heated debate.

⁴¹ The most famous one probably being Bob Hasan, who “owned” over 2 million ha of forest land and exerted extensive control over the entire Indonesian timber industry (Barr, 1998).

Lestari or Everlasting Forest Operation). Ever since, the Ministry of Forestry has not been very popular⁴². For instance, the regional concessions were all abolished, while the national ones could continue undisturbed. Furthermore, for all authority that remains on regional levels, the Ministry always seems to retain at least a certain level of control. An example is a fairly recent regulation which delineates how Protection Forests – which fall under regional authority – should be managed.

Currently the Ministry of Forestry has dedicated itself to “give back” 5 million ha of forest “to the people”⁴³. The initiative fits in today’s discourse which centres on community-based forestry and customary rights. At the same time, the Ministry of Energy and Mining has issued a decree which allows for mining in Protection Forests, thereby making clear that the Ministry’s authority is limited to Forestry affairs (Bakker, 2009). An even more recent presidential decree makes mining in Protection Forests even less difficult, by introducing an option for ‘land swaps’; hence literally proposing that a Protection Forest can be opened up for mining if it is ‘moved’ to another location (The Jakarta Post, May 25, 2011). Indeed, the Ministry of Forestry may have control over more than 100 million ha of land, but very often, as it turns out, this control only exists on paper.

⁴² Or, in Moira Moeliono’s words, ‘everybody hates the Ministry of Forestry’ (*pers. comm.*)

⁴³ The initiative is undertaken under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Awang from Universitas Gajah Mada in Yogyakarta, a social forestry expert whom I briefly met after a big meeting on the subject in Banjarmasin.

3.2 The fuzzy governance in Gunung Lumut

3.2.1 Swan Slutung: A social identity marked by poverty and isolation

When approaching the village of Swan Slutung – after taking a turn right at km 90 from the big logging road through Gunung Lumut – the landscape changes drastically. The lush, green mountains surrounding Mului (at km 65) are nowhere to be seen; they have been replaced by stretches of rather empty grassland and monoculture tree plantations. Swan Slutung was created in 1979 after



Photo 5 Sign marking the border between the PT Telaga Mas concession area and the HTI area of PT Taman Daulat Wanayasa in Swan Slutung.

the Village Government Law was issued (see also chapter 1.2.2), yet its history properly begins in 1992, when it became a transmigration village. The leftovers of what used to be a Production Forest were cleared⁴⁴, and *meranti* (*Shorea* family) tree plantations were developed instead. People from various Indonesian ethnicities – Javanese, Sundanese, Bugis, Banjarese and Toraja among others – joined the local Paserese population in search for a place to make a living. Each family was given a house (on a plot of 15x15 m), a piece

⁴⁴ The village head of Rantau Buta, Pak Asran, actually used to work as a bulldozer operator for one of the companies involved in the HTI development.

of land for gardening and subsistence rice production (1.25 ha each). Today, Swan Slutung houses about 190 families with a total of more or less 700 inhabitants⁴⁵, the majority of which are non-indigenous (a 40-60 ratio). They all live in similar wooden houses organised evenly alongside straight dirt roads.

Making a living in the new village turned out to be easier said than done. Initially, the industrial plantations (HTI) provided enough work in planting and maintaining the seedlings. After all this was finished, however, the HTI company (PT Taman Daulat Wananusa, a sub-contractor of the earlier mentioned logging company PT Telaga Mas) retreated and left the villagers to find their own ways to make a living; in a very isolated location far away from markets or other economic activities. To make matters worse, big forest fires between 1996 and 1998 destroyed the rubber gardens, taking with them the main source for alternative income. Indeed, when *reformasi* arrived at the turn of the millennium, for the villagers of Swan Slutung it literally meant starting all over once again. The harsh economic situation drove many people to move out again and search for work and a place to live elsewhere. Some joined family or friends who were more successful in other locations, many tried different villages across the district where more job opportunities prevailed, and very few returned home to where they initially came from.

More than a decade later, infrastructure to and in Swan Slutung is largely inexistent, limiting the population's options for development and market access. To buy everyday supplies, or even to go to school or see a doctor, they need to travel long distances on dodgy roads. The National Community Empowerment Programme (PNPM) has started developing some basic facilities in the last couple of years,

⁴⁵ These numbers include Mului, which administratively forms part of Swan Slutung.

but many people still feel as if the village is truly “backwards”. When discussing their economic situation, it is often mentioned that the vast majority of the village lives below the national poverty standard. Some people even wonder out loud whether they may possibly be *the poorest people in the world*. Whether they truly are has little relevance, because the idea in itself says enough: survival is the everyday concern. Many families have to ask help from neighbours or relatives for their daily survival, although it should be remarked that just as many return the favour whenever possible. The standard explanation is that the community is still searching for a way to build its own economy. Furthermore there is a clearly expressed need for government-initiated development projects. Most people state that the development initiatives already undertaken by the government are most essential for the community. Those who give more negative comments do so because they feel the result should be even better than it is, or because there is simply insufficient initiative to begin with.

Yet to be able to make ends meet, the village has organised itself in impressive ways. The vast majority of the families actively take part in at least one of the three savings-credit organisations present. The two most important ones, *Pemberdayaan Kesejahteran Keluarga* (PKK, Family Welfare and Empowerment) and *Yasinan*, are both exclusively women organisations⁴⁶. The president of PKK tells me that the Indonesian government stimulates credit organisations to be run by women, because those are supposed to entail better repayment rates. PKK representatives also attend village meetings and are a driving force in the implementation of village decisions and the organisation of events.

⁴⁶ Although I also met one man who follows the meetings of PKK and Yasinan in name of his wife, who runs a little shop outside the village and hence cannot attend.

a) *Poverty, isolation... and forest management?*

However, the women do not play a very prominent role in the village government otherwise. They assume humble positions in their households and generally prefer to let their husbands take the word when it comes to discussing life in Swan Slutung. ‘We don’t know anything about those things you want to know,’ they apologise. Their husbands are most willing to share their time and thoughts about the village’s economy. But their answers become less confident when discussing matters concerning natural resources and their protection. ‘You better talk to *orang asli*, the natives know more about these things’. Gunung Lumut’s forest is well-known, but the protected area is located far from the village, all the way in the northwest of their almost 50,000 ha large village territory. ‘Perhaps the people who live up there on Gunung Lumut [Mului hamlet] depend on the Protection Forest for their survival,’ some people remark, ‘but not here in the village.’⁴⁷ Hence they also answer negatively, and without hesitation, to the question whether the presence of the Protection Forest inhibits their own development. *It hardly seems to matter that the Protection Forest is there.*

Nonetheless, most people in Swan Slutung assure that they agree with the protection of forests in general. ‘Of course it will all be gone soon if it is not protected,’ some chuckle mockingly. This leaves one to wonder what ‘protection’ then means to the people living in this little village (with a huge territory though). Something very concrete, and which has little to do with administrative borders. The people here need the forest which directly surrounds the village, not the Protection Forest far away. In these forests (currently classified as Limited Production Forest or Production Forest) they search for deer, birds and construction timber. Here, they preserve specific trees,

⁴⁷ Even though they officially form part of Swan Slutung, Mului is clearly perceived to be a separate village.

such as the honey trees planted over many generations to attract bees. It is also forbidden to catch fish by using electricity or poison, because those methods kill every living organism in the water (and the latter poses serious health threats for those who consume the catch too). Certain birds are not to be touched, especially swallows that build nests from their saliva – a delicatessen in Chinese cuisine and an important source for cash. And of course the selling of timber, they say in a hushed tone, feverishly waving hands and looking uneasy, *'itu nggak boleh; that is not allowed!'* Some trust me enough to tell me that not everybody follows the rules exactly, or point out that it is hard to control what outsiders do (which can sometimes be understood as an indirect way of informing that insiders are not always innocent either). Quite remarkably, the English term 'illegal logging' is understood perfectly throughout the village (so are the words 'chainsaw' and 'sawmill' by the way). In 2004 and 2005 the Ministry of Forestry launched nation-wide raids against illegal logging (*Operasi Wana Lestari*), which had a huge impact on Gunung Lumut. People all around the Protection Forest were arrested, fined, or even jailed. Although no one in Swan Slutung was caught, the message delivered was clear. Even more than five years after the facts *'tidak ada yang berani; nobody dares to anymore'*. This applies to both the illegal selling of wood, and the mere discussion of the subject.

Despite the clarity of the rules, whoever is actually responsible for the protection of the forest within their territory seems a lot vaguer. Some point to the *kepala adat*, who is supposed to know most about the natural environment and how it should be managed. Pak Aripin himself, however, remarks modestly that the task is too big for him to handle on his own. *'Sendirian saya juga nggak bisa,'* he says, 'all the local leaders [religious, spiritual, customary and administrative] should work together with the community.' In fact, the general opinion is that all governance in general, including the forest, should

be coordinated from the community towards the other government departments.

Surprisingly, there is no mention of companies active on their lands (by national government concession) when it comes to the management of the forest. The HTI-plantation recently became active again under the supervision of a company called PT AMP (once again related to PT Telaga Mas, although the terms of the connection seem – also once again – unclear). A limited few villagers have already found new employment with the company, but everything still finds itself in a starting-up phase. The relationship with the company seems to be strictly one-directional, with the village waiting on the receiving end with amazing patience and careful hopes. When the first HTI-company, PT Taman Daulat Wanayasa, retreated, they left without paying their workers the severance pay they deserved. More than ten years after the facts, one villager shows me the list of signatures of all workers involved in the company at the time, together with a letter demanding the payment. He has not actually sent the letter yet, but assures me he will not wait much longer. ‘We were loyal employees for over ten years, we deserve this,’ he says, ‘besides, most of us could *really* use that money.’

b) From the margins, shamelessly

The story of Swan Slutung is has little resonance in an image of forest communities being all about tradition, *adat* and natural harmony. It represents migration and resettlement in an artificially created village, comprised of an internally diverse population brought together in an isolated and degraded landscape. Perhaps it is exactly this context which makes that the situation of poverty is almost *accepted*: it is a consequence of “outside factors” to which the population itself merely “fell victim”. Poverty simply happened to them (it is noteworthy that Swan Slutung is not significantly poorer

than Rantau Buta or Mului). Swan Slutung is what Gupta and Ferguson call ‘borderlands’, which is ‘an interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject’ (1992:18). What they mean is that all perceptions of space are always constructed within a certain context, which ‘[refers] both to a demarcated physical space *and* to clusters of interaction’, hence ‘the identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces with its cultural construction as a community or locality’ (1992:8).



Photo 6 A farmer checking his rubber trees in Swan Slutung.

The positioning in Swan Slutung seems to be partly determined by a perceived need for development, assistance and progress. It is thus not surprising that the village has a high priority-position on the PNPM list. At the same time, their dependence is balanced with substantial initiative and agency, allowing them to maintain relatively high levels of involvement and control in the development initiatives. Li (2000) notes that this balance is important, as it marks the difference between paternalism

on the one hand and opportunism on the other. Richards (1993) too states that it is precisely this skill, this capacity and creativity to solve problems which is most crucial, and not immediately the social identity an sich. People in such ‘frontier’ areas are living in between over- and non-regulation, neglect and over-protection, and progress

and decay; they simply have to be *entrepreneurial* to survive (Tsing, 2003).

3.2.2 Authority over forest land and resources in Rantau Buta

Rantau Buta lies all the way on the other side of Gunung Lumut Protection Forest, 12km off the Trans-provincial road towards South-Kalimantan. The village currently numbers about 30 families (for a total of 109 people at the time of research), and has been located alongside the Kesungai river for a very long time. Since the road improvements they requested were performed by the *Kecamatan* government (Batu Sopang sub-district) in 2008, the village has been managing to keep up a decent pace of economic development. They have expanded their rubber gardens and introduced small-scale oil palm plantations, with seedlings provided by the same government. However, the road is still bad enough to give them lots of trouble and headaches. To market their produce, they depend on outsiders who have a truck or a four-wheel drive vehicle to pick up the available goods. Especially for the oil palm production this is a cumbersome venture, as the kernels need to be processed within 48 hours after harvesting. They use mobile phones to arrange the transaction with their middleman from the *kecamatan* whenever enough fruits are ready to be harvested. The system works, but the inconvenience is substantial, especially given the fact that there is no mobile phone reception in most of the village either. ‘Last month we had so many *rambutans*⁴⁸,’ someone tells me, ‘but we couldn’t sell them, so they were just rotting on the trees. That’s such a shame.’

⁴⁸ A lychee-like type of fruit



Photo 7 The infamous road from *Kecamatan Batu Sopang* to *Rantau Buta*.

a) Sustaining village economy through agrarian control

When discussing the economic conditions in the village, many people explain that their standard of living has not declined, but neither has it increased over the last decade. Many are poor, but they do not perceive themselves to be totally hapless. In fact, the village seems to be quite enterprising and creative in creating their economy. This, however, was not always that straightforward. Before the national government established the Protection Forest, several logging companies were active on their forest lands (which measure 16,546 ha according to Hakim, 2001) since the 1970s. Back in those days, they had little say in these matters, and the commercial logging severely damaged their rattan gardens. *Reformasi*, however, presented itself with opportunities to take back some control over their traditional territory. The East-Kalimantan governor issued a regulation which obliged concessionaires to make retrospective compensation payments towards local communities for the timber they had been extracting since the 1990s (Barr et al., 2001). Furthermore, those communities started playing more active roles in negotiations for economic activities on their lands. The Paser district government also issued a regulation which enabled communities to take part in timber extraction with a *Izin Pemungutan dan Pemanfaatan Kayu* (IPPK or Wood Utilization Harvesting Permit). There were a few conditions, such as the fact it was only allowed 'on land owned by the community, or that fit the following criteria: At least 0.25 ha, with more than 50 percent crown cover, and/or a minimum of 500 first-year trees, not growing in formally designated

state production forest' (Colfer, 2005:264). The regulation intended to include local communities in the profit-sharing of the timber extraction, but that goal was never truly attained. Revenues flooded back to the district government, amounting to more than US\$ 1.5 million or 87 percent of the district's total income (Adnan et al, 2002 in Colfer, 2005). The villages consulted middlemen to broker relations with the government and to deal with the administration. They also heavily relied on the logging companies for equipment and knowledge to process the timber. These elements caused a distortion in the profit sharing, with the local communities losing out (Saragih, pers. comm.). Nonetheless, it still did provide them a significant rise in revenues.

Rantau Buta made claims to their traditional territory in 2000 (Colfer, 2005). Such recognition would enable them to get small-scale logging permits for those community lands. In practice, however, it meant that a small-scale logging company would actually extract the wood and then compensate the owner of the extracted territory. Small-scale logging permits could cover areas up to 50,000 ha (Moeliono et al, 2009), a very substantial amount of land and thus also a substantial amount of money. This situation caused a conflict between Rantau Buta and its neighbouring village Sungai Terik over the borders of their lands⁴⁹, a conflict that still lingers today. When discussing it with a villager, he points out that the conflict is actually ridiculous, because the borders have long been determined and fixed in Dutch colonial documents. Usually, *adat* territories are defined by natural markers, such as trees (specifically *pohon pinang* or betelnut

⁴⁹ Colfer (2005) writes that that the conflict occurred between Rantau Buta and another village called Kesungai, but I believe there has been a mix-up of names. The relations between Kesungai and Rantau Buta are very tight and the village leader of Kesungai is the older brother of the village leader in Rantau Buta.

trees) or rivers⁵⁰, but this obviously does not mean that other administrative categorisations become totally irrelevant. Such notions indicate that contested power is not automatically dismissed or deemed irrelevant, quite the contrary (Li, 2007a). It also indicates that imposed boundaries, such as those of a Protection Forest, can become accepted if they entail a specific advantage, or if they do away with a specific disadvantage.

When logging company PT Wanatanu applied for an extension of their concession in the early 2000s, the community protested fiercely ('all of our timber would be taken!') and the extension was never effectively approved⁵¹. Shortly after, in 2002 the Ministry of Forestry issued a decree that abolished all small-scale timber harvesting (Yuwati, 2010). Rantau Buta experienced a serious income-drop, but retained its strengthened position in the agrarian relations concerning their lands. They now have substantial leverage in negotiations with companies and investors, enabling them to demand corporate social responsibility in exchange for access to their land and resources. The timber companies have since been replaced by mining companies, but there are also the individuals who want to harvest non-timber forest products in the community forest and who would not dare to do this without the villagers' permission.

b) Blessed and burdened by a Protection Forest

The designation of the Gunung Lumut Protection Forest in 1983 meant that at least a part of Rantau Buta's territory was removed from the hands of very powerful and all-controlling companies. Thirty years later, the relations in the entire forest arena all have

⁵⁰ "Rantau" means "straight river" and "Buta" refers to a specific type of tree in the local language.

⁵¹ Although the fact that there was a dispute between PT Wanatanu and PT Telaga Mas on overlapping concession areas may have played a more crucial role in this (Colfer, 2005).

drastically changed, but in Rantau Buta there still is a strong support for the protection of the forest. The *kepala adat* explains that the village arranged their lands accordingly; with the First and Second Forest (which is forest that can be opened for *ladangs* in the current and the future generations respectively) outside the Protection Forest, and the Third Forest (closed forest which can never be opened) within. However, that the government should necessarily mingle in and determine the terms and conditions of this protection is less understood today. 'Of course we protect our forest', one man tells me, 'we simply have to protect the lands and resources we need for our own future. We've *always* done this'.

Yet it immediately seems clear that their definition of protection does not entirely match the one used by the government or the international community. For instance, one person in the village, a migrant from South-Kalimantan, is involved in some illegal logging activities (which I coincidentally found out, as they all assured me that there no longer is any illegal logging). Some people are involved in explorations for coal, although these would only take place on the land which falls outside the Protection Forest boundaries. They point out, in awe, the brand new oil palm field alongside the road to the kecamatan, which is owned by 'a very rich *orang Banjar*'. The *kepala adat* tells me that in the future, the village wants to have better roads and facilities '*seperti kota di sana*, like the city over there'. It seems clear that Rantau Buta will not allow any limitations to be imposed on them because of this Protection Forest or any other conservation discourse. Despite arguments otherwise, a naturally and historically harmonious marriage of protection and socio-economic development becomes hard to imagine in this context. Henley (2008) argues that forest protection as it is defined today simply does not comply with agricultural activities (nor does it go with large-scale extraction, which is a far bigger threat). A minority of anthropogenic forests does exist, he writes, but 'it is clear that [Indonesia]'s

perhumid rainforests have always been its most sparsely populated and least man-made environments' (2008:283). Indeed, tiny forest communities⁵² largely determined their own lives on vast lands in the margins of power and administration (which started more or less in the 13th century). This inevitably changed when logging roads and industrialisation expanded and intensified the realm of that power (Tsing, 1993). The anthropogenic forests that may have existed in Paser have since then largely disappeared; those that were have mostly been replaced by small-scale capitalism (rubber, oil palm) operating in a large-scale economy. Indeed, when analysing the forest arena, it quickly becomes clear that those people living in the forest are *rational, political and commercial actors* just the same. Categorising them as mere 'stakeholders', 'resource-users' or 'co-managers' creates positions which are irrelevant or, at most, conceptually limited (Pannell and von Benda-Beckmann, 1998; Li, 2007b).

3.2.3 Mastering the dominant discourse in Mului

It is logging season on my last field trip to Gunung Lumut. At regular intervals, heavy trucks loaded with massive trunks thunder down the earth road. At some point, I notice a smaller truck parked on the side; smaller logs, sawn in planks, are being loaded in the back. Once, someone told me that is how you can recognise illegal logs: they are always squared and bear no registration numbers. It would be the first and the last visual evidence for illegal logging I ever personally encountered in East-Kalimantan. The magnitude of the problem seems to have simply scaled down together with the timber sector as a whole.

⁵² See also Knapen (2001) on population development history in South-East Borneo.

A few hours later I am sitting in Pak Jidan's house (actually his mother's, as he is still a bachelor, which is rare for a *kepala adat*), and receiving an update on what has been happening in Mului since my last visit. Upon discussing the current logging season, Jidan shakes his head and tells me they have had to intervene again a little while ago. '*Tran* people⁵³,' he says, 'they say they use the timber to build houses, but they take five cubic [meter], use one tenth of it and sell the rest, that's what they do! And they were taking *ulin*⁵⁴, but there is not a lot of *ulin* in our forests! Not like there is *meranti*!' With agitation and determination he tells me that they had confronted the village head in Swan Slutung about the problem and it had led to a small conflict. Jidan explains that the village head had subsequently threatened to take the matter to kecamatan or kabupaten if Mului really wanted to start a fight. 'So I said, then we will go straight to Jakarta!' he adds proudly, 'You know we have all of our NGO and researcher friends there!'

a) *Blessed and burdened by a social identity*

His story reminded me to ask how his trip to Yogyakarta in April had been. Padi, the earlier-mentioned indigenous rights' NGO, had facilitated Jidan to go to a conference organised by the Ministry of Forestry. The conference aimed to ease the relationship between the Ministry and forest communities, and fits in their current strategy to convert more than 5 million ha of degraded forest land into *Hutan Tanaman Rakyat*, or People's Plantation Forest (HTR). Clearly overwhelmed by his memories of the event in Yogyakarta, Jidan is rendered speechless for a little while. 'It was *huge*', he finally says,

⁵³ *Tran* is short for *Trans-HTI* or the commonly used name for Swan Slutung.

⁵⁴ One of Kalimantan's most wanted tropical hardwoods also known as Borneo ironwood. Ulin is currently marked as 'vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List, and Indonesia has forbidden all export of the species (see also <http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/31316/0/full>).

‘and I was supposed to represent all of Gunung Lumut. But you know what? I can only speak for Mului! I don’t know what the other communities think. I doubt it even comes close to what we want.’ All that Mului wants, and what they have been asking for quite a while already, is that their *adat* land is officially recognised. The community allows for little compromise in this demand. In 2008, they joined protests in Tanah Grogot against the proposal to change Gunung Lumut’s status from Protection Forest to National Park. Supposedly, the district had lodged the application to withstand the pressure from companies interested in exploiting the forest (Yuwati, 2010). As a National Park, Gunung Lumut would fall under the national government’s authority, whereas a Protection Forest appeals to regional responsibility⁵⁵. Moreover, as a National Park there are some more options for human inhabitation and utilisation. Mului does not protest the protection of the forest altogether, but rejects the fact that these decisions are made without consulting the communities first. This implies that boundaries are imposed upon them, regardless of how the territory is being used or divided traditionally.

However, there was a time when things were different. During the *New Order* years, people from the hinterland were easily classified as *masyarakat terasing* (isolated society), which had a strong negative connotation. These were the people in need of advancement, development; the people who were stuck in the past and needed to be resettled to become a part of Indonesian society. (Li, 2000, 2007) It is in this framework of the 1979 Village Government Law that the *orang Mului* were obliged to move into one village with the people from the rivers Swan and Slutung (see also chapter 1.2.1). Mului

⁵⁵ In fact, all of this sometimes forms the subject of debate. It is still solely the Ministry of Forestry which designates protected areas. Moreover, the extent to which the regions are responsible is another fuzzy matter (Yuwati, 2010).

always refused, but it was not until *reformasi* that this positioning worked to their advantage. Moreover, when they resettled to their current location – the abandoned log yard accidentally located inside the Protection Forest – they wanted to partake in modern Indonesian society (for which they needed the help of the government), from their *adat* lands (which they need to protect and care for until the end of time) (Bakker, 2009). They converted to Islam, and started buying motorbikes and diapers. Their identity is not a consciously designed “strategy” but rather comes to the fore from a combination of forces and influences, some of which are internalised whilst others are rejected (Li, 2000).

b) When the discourse wanes...

Mului are neither the first nor the only community to make claims to land based on customary rights. In fact, many communities have been blamed to be opportunistic or selfish in their demands for recognition, and sometimes they would not even deny this (Li, 2007b). Mului’s lands were logged over by PT Telaga Mas, and in those years there was nothing they could do about it. Their *adat*, which had always been so powerful in the local hierarchy, was rendered obsolete and ‘when indigenous institutions lose their power to define rights of access or control over communal poverty, deterioration of the natural resources occurs’ (Appiah-Opoku, 2005:118). The revitalised attention for customary practices allowed Mului to believe in the strength of their *adat* again. Nonetheless, it remains a fact that, despite all efforts, *adat* still does not have full acknowledgement, especially not in agrarian relations.

Pak Debang is a retired school teacher in Long Ikis, and has been striving for the recognition and protection of Paserese customary practices for many years. When I ask him whether he believes that *adat* is still as strong as it used to be, he shakes his head with a sad expression. ‘Even in Mului [which is supposed to be an example of

customary tradition] they're opening *ladangs* close to the river now, which their *adat* specifically prohibits'. Mului is indeed not the same Mului it used to be, and that is only normal. Yet it seems that the only way in which they can hold on to their "illegal" lands, is when they stick to their story at all costs. In other words, they should remain as exotic and traditional as possible (i.e. not buy motorbikes or diapers?), otherwise their claims are simply not considered to be valid. So far they have not been expelled.

While we are sitting in Pak Debang's house, there are demonstrations organised by Gepak and other *dayak* organisations in Balikpapan. For several days the entire city is blocked and taken over. The protests are aimed at *orang Bugis*, who 'have been stealing our lands and our jobs'⁵⁶. Word of the protests had quickly reached Mului too, and Pak Jidan was heard exclaiming passionately, 'we were not invited, but if they ask us, we're ready!' Mului seems to be hoping for another revolution, another chance to finally get what they have been striving for, before it is too late.

In Tanah Grogot there are some whispers that the Ministry of Forestry plans to open up Protection Forest Gunung Lumut. Supposedly the mountain is full of gold.

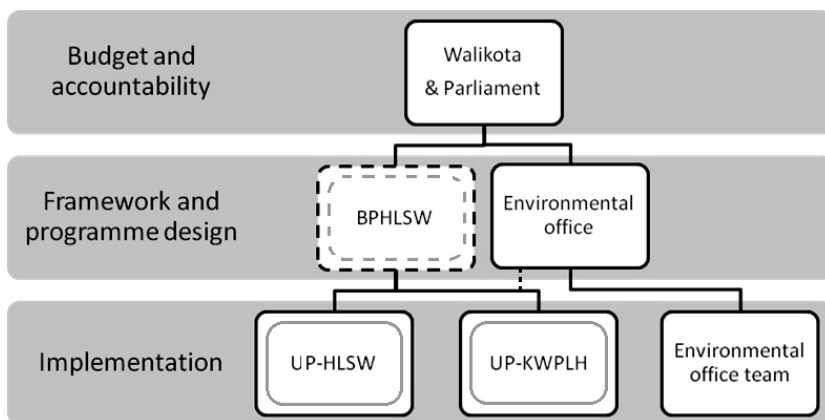
3.3 Establishing governance in Sungai Wain

Sungai Wain's forest management is regularly cited as a (quite unique) example for good forest governance in Indonesia. Their impressive reputation is reflected in the management offices, which are located a few hundred meters off the highway between

⁵⁶ Bugis settlements have been scattered all over Indonesia, including East-Kalimantan, since several centuries actually, as they were very active traders (Peluso, 1983).

Balikpapan and Samarinda. The buildings are made up from *ulin*, in a beautiful style reminding of *dayak* architecture and ornaments. The office complex also includes a site for recreation and environmental education about the forest (called *Kawasan Wisata Pendidikan Lingkungan Hidup - KWPLH*). Top of the hill is an enclosed sanctuary for five Malayan sun bears (*Helarctos malayanus*) which were rescued from captivity, but unfortunately too estranged to return to their natural habitat in the forest. Since 2001, the sun bear has been Balikpapan's city mascot, and the enclosure hence enables visitors and inhabitants to observe these shy animals in a semi-natural environment.

3.3.1 Sungai Wain's complex politics



The management of Sungai Wain is a complex semi-independent political structure secured in local government regulation⁵⁷. First there is the multi-stakeholder Protection Forest management body

⁵⁷ Perda Kota Balikpapan no. 11/2004

(*BPHLSW dan DAS Manggar*⁵⁸), which is headed by the vice-mayor and further made up of members from several government instances, NGOs and private companies. The budget for the management body – currently amounting to three billion rupiah or roughly 250,000 euro per annum – is determined by the municipality parliament and provided by the city mayor (*Walikota*). Hence it is also the Walikota to whom the management body is directly accountable. It thus seems obvious that the management body of Sungai Wain cannot be considered an independent entity, but in practice the situation is more complicated.



Photo 8 Vice-mayor (now mayor) Rizal Effendi discussing the coal mining surrounding Sungai Wain with other members of BPHLSW.

The actual management activities are executed by two implementation units, one for the recreation and environmental education aspects (UP-KWPLH which includes the Sun Bear Sanctuary), and another for the actual forest management (UP-HLSW). Ever since these two implementation units started functioning, the management body's own role decreased and a few active key persons carry out the role today. They do receive assistance from the city's Environmental Office (*Badan Lingkungan Hidup*), whose tasks include the protection and

⁵⁸ DAS Manggar is the second (and last) Protection Forest located within Balikpapan's borders; also a water catchment area for the city's population.

conservation of natural resources – indeed also Sungai Wain. Although it is not specifically stated as such in official documents⁵⁹, the Environmental Office is currently the one to set the framework and outline a programme for the management of Sungai Wain. The two implementation units independently fill in the content of this framework with management activities as they see fit. Their independence is further enhanced by the fact that neither of the two units are a government instance, nor does their personnel form part of the civil servant corps.

In the Environmental Office, a careful remark can be heard that it could perhaps all be a bit more convenient if Sungai Wain's management simply formed part of the government structure. The office finds itself a bit on the sidelines when it comes to the Sungai Wain management, although the relations are not problematic. The disparity may be widened by the wage gap that exists between the personnel of the two instances, as it is widely known that civil servants in Indonesia receive notoriously low wages⁶⁰.

3.3.2 Governance in Sungai Wain

a) Sungai Wain's momentum

While deconstructing the history of Sungai Wain's current governance (see also chapter 1.2.2), a few interesting and crucial phases can be distinguished. First, the very important initial steps towards the creation of the management were initiated by a group of "outsiders" (researchers) who mobilised a group of "insiders" (Sungai Wain villagers by hiring them as employees) for the forest

⁵⁹ In BPHLSW documents there is no mention of the Environmental Office and vice versa.

⁶⁰ Civil servants receive the same fixed wage throughout all of Indonesia, regardless of their living costs, which in Balikpapan are significantly higher than elsewhere in the country (see also <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2008/08/30/balikpapan-most-expensive-city-indonesia-survey.html>).

fire rescue. The move from the outside-in soon extended outwards again, channelled towards a wider community (Balikpapan citizens) by the press. This allowed for the emergence of a certain *momentum*, which enabled a smooth access into the second phase: the multi-stakeholder NRM programme initiated by USAID soon after the fires. The atmosphere at the time explains why the Group for Sungai Wain which sprouted from the NRM social campaign training included an unusual amount and variety of actors with an unusual amount of dedication towards the conservation of the forest. And when the Group subsequently applied their social campaign training in practice, they were successful in *extending the momentum* for the protection of Sungai Wain. Their success was topped with the decision of a prominent political figure – Walikota candidate Imdaad Hamid – to make use of that same momentum for his election campaign. After he also managed to win the elections, the third phase, namely the factual *institutionalisation* of the conservation spirit, became possible.

b) Sungai Wain as a prestigious political project

Near the end of my stay in East-Kalimantan, I received an invitation from the Sungai Wain management to attend a televised interactive dialogue themed ‘Forests for Life’. The event, organised to commemorate the International Day for the Environment, focused on urban planning, conservation and law, and more precisely how all three could be integrated for an optimised management result. The dialogue is introduced by Pak Purwanto, the director of UP-HLSW, and Pak Sofian, the head of the Environmental Office. Sungai Wain, they explain, is a unique forest, a primary forest located *within* a city. Moreover, it is one of the last coastal rainforests of the region and has an extensive biodiversity and fascinating wildlife. The discussion then continues on what makes the forest so special, and how they wish to enable everyone to enjoy this to the fullest. There is the Sun Bear Sanctuary and, in the future, the Botanical Garden which is

currently still in full development. Sungai Wain entered the political arena as part of an election strategy; one that turned out to be very successful indeed. Since then, the forest's elusive management has become demonstrative for the government's commitment towards creating a 'green, clean and healthy' city for all its citizens. One lady in the audience raises her hand and asks what would be the purpose of all these projects. 'It's a *Protection Forest*,' she stresses, 'not an ecotourism site. That is simply *not the point!*' Pak Purwanto assures her that Sungai Wain is not the property of the Balikpapan city government, but of its entire society (*masyarakat Balikpapan*).



Figure 4 The Malayan sun bear in the city logo.

Indeed, Balikpapan seems to be committed to the conservation of the forest with a certain determination. For instance, within the municipality borders there is also a no-mining and no-palm oil policy. Nonetheless, it seems that the government is still perceives a certain pressure to justify why Sungai Wain is actually protected by them. It is unclear whether the pressure is really there, but many mechanisms have been put in place

to deal with it. By using the sun bear as a mascot, the city attempted to incorporate the forest in its very own identity⁶¹. Furthermore, learning about Sungai Wain is part of the study curriculum of all high school students within the municipality. The cherry on the cake is the current development of a Botanical Garden, for which 309 ha of the forest has been allocated. The plan is to collect all tree species native to Borneo Island in an ex-situ conservation programme. Certain questions can be raised here; such as the use of destroying part of the Protection Forest to make space for new trees, or the biodiversity value of ex-situ conservation. Allocating (degraded)

⁶¹ The idea for this was proposed by researcher Gabriella Fredriksson.

land bordering the Protection Forest would be more sensible, but seems a lot harder administratively. The process would be lengthy and difficult, and, as remarked in the Environmental Office, they do not have the time to wait as species disappear rapidly. The project requires a large investment and will have its first results in over a decade. It is thus a very ambitious *political project*, and hence only adds to the political value of Sungai Wain.



Figure 5 Map of Sungai Wain and DAS Manggar Protection Forests in Balikpapan. ‘Kebun Raya’ indicates the Botanical Garden area (source: *SungaiWain.org*).

3.3.3 Companies lurking in the shadows

This, however, does not mean that all in Sungai Wain is peace and quiet. Serious threats to the forest still prevail and these generally lie outside of Sungai Wain and Balikpapan’s borders and also beyond UP-HLSW’s authority. Logging, mining and other corporate

activities encircle the forest, closing off natural fauna and flora migration tracts and isolating the area. With PT Singlurus, a mining company working in the Kutai Kertanegara border, UP-HLSW did manage to reach a memorandum of understanding. Certain development initiatives entail tricky situations as well, such as the logging corridor for a logging company (PT Itci Hutani Manunggal) in the HTI-area, and their wood-processing partner (PT Kutai Chip Mill). Such roads, Pak Purwanto notes, ease the access to the forest, which is now carefully closed off. Many of such developments are not halted by the government, and it is to be questioned whether they could even if they wanted to.

Pertamina, who so intensely depend on Sungai Wain's forest for water, have an ambiguous position in the entire management too. Before, Pertamina did contribute specific Payments for Environmental Services to the Balikpapan government, but '[the] system broke down [after decentralisation] because of conflicting national legislation forcing simplification to a minimum no. of transactions' (IFCA, 2008:79). Pertamina do still pay their general water levy to the local government, but according to BPHLSW, this contribution could be enhanced. On their website it reads, 'until recently the government only charged taxes for surface water. It would however be very reasonable if the City of Balikpapan demanded compensation for the environmental services provided by Sungai Wain's reservoir to Pertamina. If this can be realised, then the management of Sungai Wain Protection Forest would no longer be a burden budget, but quite simply an environmental services compensation fund paid by Pertamina' (SungaiWain.org, 2011)⁶². So

⁶² 'Sehingga sangat wajar jika Pemerintah Kota Balikpapan menuntut kompensasi jasa lingkungan dari pengambilan air waduk sungai wain kepada Pertamina. Jika hal ini bisa terealisasi maka untuk pengelolaan Hutan Lindung Sungai Wain tidak lagi menjadi beban APBD, cukup hanya

far, this has not happened, although the company did provide BPHLSW a brand new terrain car to use in their management activities (so did PT Singlurus).

However, it cannot be said that Pertamina is a burden to Sungai Wain's forest. Quite the contrary, it seems that the state company has played a big role bringing the Protection Forest to the forefront position it currently holds⁶³. DAS Manggar is the other Protection Forest located in the Balikpapan municipality, but the forest has been gravely encroached and converted into agriculture. Nonetheless, this forest is also a watershed area; a very important one too, as the entire city population depends on it for their water provision. In the Balikpapan Water Management Office (*Pemerintah Daerah Air Minum* or PDAM), one officer repines that BPHLSW better be paying more attention to DAS Manggar (which also falls under the management's authority). 'They should plant more trees and resettle the people,' he says, 'because their trash spoils our water. Besides, if they stay there, they will have children and grandchildren, and then the situation will only get worse!' Yet it seems clear that, for now, BPHLSW's priorities lie elsewhere.

3.3.4 The limits to power: maintaining governance

It is clear that the Balikpapan government supports this management and makes it possible, and no one else. This complete dependence means that the government should be pleased at all times, and political changes could drastically alter the forest's future as well. Hence the temptation to prioritise short-term initiatives and prestigious, show-off projects over the forest's general well-being is

dengan menggunakan dana kompensasi jasa lingkungan yang dibayarkan oleh Pertamina tersebut.'

⁶³ It is responsible for a substantial part of the national oil production after all (Fredriksson & de Kam, 1999)

always there. Moreover, this entails that BPHLSW tries to avoid conflicts as much as possible, which can be unfavourable to Sungai Wain and its condition. For example, a part of the Protection Forest close the Samarinda highway has been encroached. Rather than resettling those people (again), the area has been allocated as *Hutan Kemasyarakatan* (HKM or People's Forest). This was initially a temporary solution, but revoking the usage rights would undoubtedly cause conflicts, hence the situation is left as it is.

One of the biggest threats to Sungai Wain is a highway construction plan (called *Pulau Balang*) of East-Kalimantan province. The plan to connect the entire province with a new road has been casting shadows over the forest for more than a decade already. As it is currently projected, the highway would closely border the Protection Forest from the south all the way around to the northwest. This would entail further encroachment on almost all sides of the forest. It would also mean the destruction of the mangrove forest which connects Sungai Wain to (and protects it from) the salt water of Balikpapan Bay. The project actually seems to be quite a risky venture as a whole, given the outdated, poor-quality feasibility studies. Two bridges would be constructed to span the bay, connected by a little island for which the highway needs to be detoured through swamps and steep slopes. Across the bay, the road would land in another wilderness of mangroves and swamps. Besides environmental concerns, it would also be outrageously costly and difficult to construct and maintain a road on (or over) such an unstable soil. However, the *Pulau Balang*-discussion has turned into a gimmick over the years, symbolising power struggles between the Province and the Municipality and other peers.

As a matter of fact, the modest positioning of mayor Imdaad in the Pulau Balang-discussion seems to indicate how politics are a determining factor. 'I'm almost retiring now,' he told Konsorsium-

president Yulita Lestiawati, ‘I don’t want to start a fight about this *now*.’ Hence it is the same Konsorsium (of local NGOs), not the government, which is lobbying against the construction of the road. The forest may be valuable, but that does not necessarily mean it is worth a political suicide.

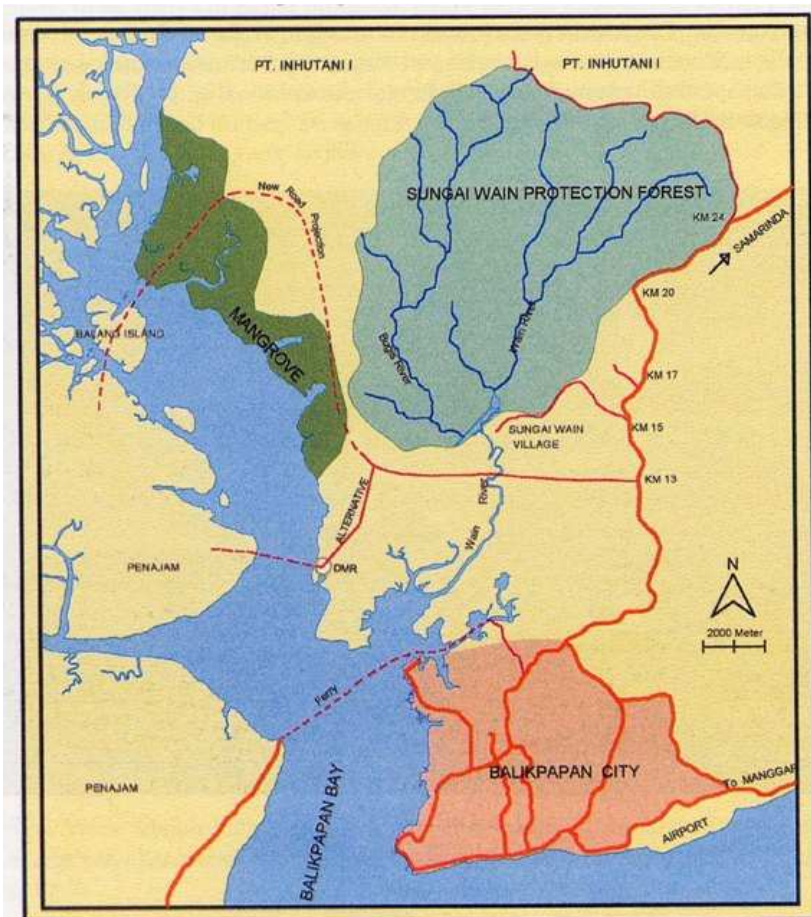


Figure 6 Map showing the Pulau Balang road projection (dotted) and the proposed alternative (solid) (source: Fredriksson & de Kam, 1999).

Another political issue is the proposed enlargement of Sungai Wain's protected area. As mentioned before, between the Protection Forest and the Balikpapan Bay lies a mangrove forest, which is an ecosystem connected and complementary to Sungai Wain. To the north of the forest lies the HTI of state forestry company PT Inhutani I, which is also a roaming area for the sun bears and other species in Sungai Wain. The expansion of the protected area would allow for a substantial enlargement of 'the local spatial scale' of the entire conservation project (Cleary, 2008).

Yet the application process is difficult. Control over the Production Forest (HP) falls under authority of the Province, whereas the designation of a Protection Forest expansion lies in the hands of the Ministry of Forestry. To make matters worse, the relations between the Ministry and the state forestry companies (PT Inhutani I and PT Inhutani II) are very cool at the moment. The political value of Sungai Wain is indeed limited to the realm of the authority of the Balikpapan government (and by extension the realm of the forest's momentum). When I ask Pak Purwanto whether the proposed expansion will eventually fall through, he replies thoughtfully that it will be very, very difficult. Then he gives me a broad smile and says, 'but I am an optimist!'

4 Leaving the forest, and looking back

An overview of conclusions and recommendations

Returning to the newspaper quote at the very start of this research paper, I have to admit that, during those eight months in Indonesia, I never came across any community in which people talk to mountains and sing to trees. The forest is not a place for fantasies and dreams; there are simply too many mosquitoes, parasites and other hungry creatures. Analysing the forest as a *social landscape*, as I tried to do for this research paper, did not change this perception. It remains a harsh and merciless place, where survival of the fittest gets a very literal meaning. Those projects for survival take many forms – from having enough to eat, to defending ancestral lands, to making it alive to the other end of a political arena. The strategies depend on the circumstances, sprout forth from improvisation, and success determines which ones are the ones to stick to. The gaps between forest management discourse and forest realities may indeed be wide, but they are far from empty. ‘What happens in these gaps?’ formed the main question in this empirical analysis of governance in Protection Forests in East-Kalimantan. A concise overview of what I found in two case studies, Gunung Lumut in Paser and Sungai Wain in Balikpapan, is presented here.

4.1 Bridging the gaps

4.1.1 Through power and authority

Formalised governance is largely absent inside Gunung Lumut Protection Forest, but this does not mean that the government can be disregarded entirely. In each of the three research locations – Mului, Swan Slutung and Rantau Buta – similar expectations from the government prevail: it needs to provide a framework which enables

the communities to develop their lives optimally. All of them have an engagement with the government, who is perceived to be a *pater familias* with their best interests at heart. What “the best” exactly is, remains to each of them to define by themselves, hence the definitions vary. Swan Slutung is, as a transmigration village, a government creation in its very essence; it is thus not surprising that their dependence and reliance on that same government is very strong. In Rantau Buta, government rules such as those regarding the Protection Forest are neatly incorporated in their (customary) practices, but they expect the government to take the necessary actions to provide them a framework in which they can advance economically. In Mului, on its “illegal” location inside the Protection Forest, the government is deemed essential for their future too. It is the only instance which can ensure they remain an integral part of the Indonesian society *despite* that location.

These observations are good illustrations of Foucault’s concept of governmentality, which allows people to be presented as governed subjects, who have accepted the exerted governance as logic. Governmentality prevails even when the notion of *pater familias* is sometimes hard to find or when government practises are heavily criticised. This, however, also implies that it becomes difficult to imagine forest governance *without* a government. Even more so, in the words of one expert, ‘if you don’t have the government on your hand, forget about it!’

Yet power and authority cannot simply be identified by the government alone. In Sungai Wain Protection Forest, governance emerged through a horizontal alliance of the Balikpapan government with NGOs and companies right in the turbulence of *reformasi*. The resulting forest authority is strongly rooted, and hence less likely to be dismissed or deemed irrelevant. Yet at the same time, creating vertical connections that can extend outwards to the broader

landscape in which Sungai Wain is embedded, is a lot harder. It is of course there that the biggest challenges to the Protection Forest lie.

4.1.2 Through class and hierarchy

The Indonesian archipelago is a highly stratified society, and its class differences have played crucial roles throughout its entire history. These hierarchies can take many forms though, depending on the view that is taken. Mului, for instance, holds the most prominent position when it comes to *adat* in Gunung Lumut because they were “the first” to be there. At the same time they are almost pitied by their peers because they are “stuck in the past”. Their political positioning, however, allows them to forge relations that go far beyond their immediate surroundings, and they are very much aware of this. Swan Slutung, on the other hand, almost obediently assumes a marginal identity in society’s hierarchy. By positioning themselves as “the poorest people in the world”, they nonetheless gain the right to demand help and assistance. Rantau Buta in their turn found itself in a position subordinate to logging companies, but as soon as the circumstances allowed for it, they grabbed the chance to get rid of the biggest competitor that threatened to take away their timber resources. Up until today, they have been fairly successful in maintaining the extra leverage they have won back then. Such social identities are not the result of careful strategic planning, but simply come to be within a certain context.

Nonetheless, identities can also be constructed and used consciously. In Balikpapan, a ‘green, clean and healthy’ image has been created for the city to be identified with. The forest of Sungai Wain plays a star role in this collective social identity and has hence become a “tool” for strategic positioning. The government may to a certain extent be forced to take a submissive position in the face of other government levels – such as the province or the Ministry of

Forestry– but they are not afraid of attempting to improve their position. For example, the city is currently developing a large Botanical Garden in the Protection Forest; an ambitious venture which will hold species of the entire island of Borneo, and which will put the city on the map (even more). This implies that Balikpapan could have much to gain with a Protection Forest in which the stakes have a directly identifiable high value.

4.1.3 Through neoliberalism and capitalism

The VOC was the very first multinational corporation in the world, and it could actually be said that capitalism as we know it today started in the Netherlands East-Indies. From this follows that capitalist and (neo-) liberalist arguments intertwine with Indonesia's history. East-Kalimantan was always a sparsely populated province, but it was never isolated from international trade. At the end of the 19th century, oil was discovered, which caused the Dutch colonisers to tighten their grip on the regions. It also meant the start of Balikpapan's history as a city, as well as the very reason why Sungai Wain is a Protection Forest. It assures the quality of a water catchment area, which is crucial for the refinery of national oil company Pertamina.

At the start of Suharto's *New Order*, the riches of East-Kalimantan's forests were made available to foreigners and other outsiders for exploitation. What followed was an enormous influx of fortune seekers, the population boomed and the local communities did hesitate to join the timber frenzy. This *banjir kap* was finally put to end because of capitalist interests: the big companies were losing out to the small logging ventures. The government subsequently centralised the jurisdiction over more than 140 million ha of forest land in a big Ministry of Forestry, regardless of who was living on or using those lands. The forest of Gunung Lumut was also logged over

in the 1970s, until its designation as *Hutan Lindung* in 1983. Decentralisation brought more options for forest access and commodity extraction after the fall of Suharto at the end of the millennium. Regional governments and local communities did not wait for the opportunity to pass them by, and a second *banjir kap* occurred, similar to the first one, but perhaps with more sophisticated tools. It was the Ministry of Forestry that took action to bring an end to the depletion. It affirmed its authority by organising raids against illegal loggers, which were not easily forgotten by the local populations such as those of Rantau Buta and Swan Slutung.

Nonetheless, timber does no longer seem to play a very important role in the forests. Big logging concessions do still exist, but today, palm oil development and coal mining have a more prominent position in the spotlight. Together with this switch (-after-depletion), the interest has shifted from the trees to the land on which the trees stand. Whether Gunung Lumut Protection Forest will be spared remains a big question.

4.1.4 Through dynamics and interactivity within all those

It may seem clear that the elements described above are not singular events; they always link to each other and are embedded in a wider context. For example, the earlier mentioned *banjir kap* could only occur because of a regime change, supported by the United States in fear of Communism, a globalising of capitalism, rapid industrialisation and a whole lot of other elements accumulating into a fuzzy whole. The governance in Sungai Wain as it exists today emerged out of economic crisis, severe forest fires, political destabilisation and a NRM campaign by USAID among other contextual elements. It would be very hard, if not impossible, to always grasp “the complete picture”. This is not necessarily problematic though, as social landscapes are dynamic in their very

essence. Arenas of governance know no endpoint or final goal, at least not as long as humanity walks the surface of this earth.

4.2 Conclusions on the used framework

The framework I used for this critical analysis of governance in Protection Forests was built on the theories, findings and recommendations of several academics and researchers. It has certain advantages, but definitely some constraints as well. First, it helped me to step into an arena with a perception and understanding that could move beyond traditional divisions, oppositions and preconceptions. The framework helped me to observe the interconnectedness and magnitude of certain events, simply because they are approached from a different viewpoint. At the same time, however, I experienced that it is very hard to step away from the traditional forest management discourse, and even impossible to completely disregard it. This is partly because the discourse is ingrained in self-representation of the various actors, for instance communities, governments and companies. The distinctions between those entities may not be black and white, but they are still perceived as such, and hence form a truth which cannot be dismissed. At the same time, the discourse is also ingrained in me and how I understand the world. For example, I limited my research to the forest-category known as *Hutan Lindung* (Protection Forest) which is in itself a discursive standard that I challenged in this research paper. If these two forests had never been designated as such, I may neither have heard of them nor be interested in them.

Another difficulty I encountered with the framework is the fact critical analysis can be immobilising if not handled with care. It is, metaphorically speaking, fairly tempting to “criticise everything to death”, to break everything down until there is nothing left to further build on. I hope I managed to find a balance there with this research

project and paper. The framework also brings matters to a fairly abstract and conceptual level. It can play an essential role as a coordination strategy in a multi-disciplinary research approach, but when used on its own for dealing with concrete matters, it would risk to be floating somewhere above the problem, like a kite torn loose, or at most just scratching the surface. Hence I believe the best results would be achieved if the critical analytical framework can be married to the normative and prescriptive discourses, to get a balanced result which is not completely disconnected from the way matters are perceived.

4.3 Some recommendations

Both Gunung Lumut and Sungai Wain have been popular and well-known locations for research since more than a decade. Because the forests are so well-documented, it would be most interesting to simply continue this multi-disciplinary documentation as an ongoing research project. When doing so, however, it would be good if the already produced knowledge could somehow be brought together and classified in a database. This would ease the access to information on both forests and would avoid double work, but also allow one to build up on what has been found before. For instance, Tropenbos International conducted a large Biodiversity Assessment a few years ago, while CIFOR organised an Adaptive Collaborative Management project based on Participatory Action Research. Both ventures produced very interesting results (although both of them are sometimes hard to find) and it would be immensely interesting to follow up on them.

Another research opportunity lies in the complexity of Indonesian law, which in all its fuzziness still has a big influence on forest and other arenas. Starting from a limited spatial scale, one may find overlaps or contradictions in policy, because it becomes easier to extend beyond Forestry legislation to other departments or

government levels. In my modest opinion, there is no immediate need for new policies, but rather a revision of the existing ones. The myriad of legislations currently forms an arena of its own, in which no clear authority has emerged as of yet. I am convinced this situation allows for abuse, misuse and injustice of law with regards to both forests and people.

Last but not least, for all those concerned about the sake of the forests and the people, it may be healthier not to have too high expectations or too big a plan. Keeping a solid focus on what is the desired change while not allowing for too much distraction will allow one to actually *move* within the arena.

You pick your target. You brace yourself and, without looking back or hesitation, you go in. And you fight, with all the strength and means you have.

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* All maps were provided by Yuli Nugroho, TBI Indonesia, unless mentioned otherwise.

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