

Workshop Report: Central Kalimantan in the Year 2030: Natural Resources, Social Justice, and Sustainable Development

Kristina Großmann

► Großmann, K. (2018). Workshop Report: Central Kalimantan in the year 2030: Natural resources, social justice, and sustainable development. *Austrian Journal of South-East Asian Studies*, 11(2), 231-233.

The one-day kick-off workshop that took place in Palangkaraya – the provincial capital of Central Kalimantan, Indonesia – is part of the transdisciplinary research project “FuturEN: Governance, Identities, and Future along Categories of Differentiation: The Case of Coal Mining in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia”.¹ This project explores environmental conflicts, especially those related to coal mining, focusing on the nexus between ethnicity, gender, and status in Central Kalimantan.² The aim of the workshop was to elaborate on diverging future visions regarding coal mining on an intersectoral expert level and to find correspondences between different scenarios. The workshop organizers – Kristina Großmann, Alessandro Gullo, Pinarsita Juliana, Marko Mahin, Semiarto Aji Purwanto, and Meta Septalisa – invited representatives of relevant groups on the provincial level, including representatives from the government, the business sector, universities, and civil society organizations.³ In the further course of the research project, Kristina Großmann plans to conduct a series of workshops in Murung Raya, the northernmost district of Central Kalimantan, where coal mining is prevalent. The closing workshop is again to be held in Palangkaraya.

During the workshop, two discussion groups were formed and discussed the following four guiding questions relating to Central Kalimantan:

- How is the status quo regarding the social, political, ecological, and economic situation?
- What will the future look like in 2030? Describe utopias and dystopias!
- How do we get there? Describe pathways towards utopia and dystopia!
- Who might be relevant actors? Point out actors, their relationships, and their power relations!

1 The workshop was conducted on 20 March 2018.

2 The three-year project (2017-2020) is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and led by Kristina Großmann.

3 Alessandro Gullo works as a student assistant in the project. Dr. Semiarto Aji Purwanto is associate professor of anthropology at the University Indonesia (UI) in Jakarta. Dr. Marko Mahin is professor of anthropology at the Universitas Kristen in Palangkaraya, a protestant priest, and head of an indigenous peoples' rights organization. Pinarsita Juliana and Meta Septalisa have both worked for several international and national civil society organizations in the field of environmental transformations, gender, and community development in Palangkaraya.

We applied Actor-Network Analysis to identify and map out actors and to estimate each actor's influence in the field. About 30 participants from universities, civil society organizations, the local newspaper, and two government officials attended the workshop and avidly discussed Central Kalimantan's future.

Status Quo and Future: Environmental Degradation, Land Conflicts, and the Loss of Local Knowledge

All participants described the current and future situation as increasingly worrisome (*semakin memprihatinkan*). Deforestation and environmental degradation were interlinked with increasing social injustice, a loss of culture and local knowledge (*kearifan lokal*), and a declining local economy. All agreed that Central Kalimantan is rich in natural resources (*sumber daya alam*) but performing poorly with regard to social, political, and economic development. The low level of development was related to a weak government dominated by companies resulting in a poor level of implementation and application of state policies and laws as well as low tax revenues. Conflicts in the last decades had arisen mostly as the result of changes in the status of land use (*peralihan fungsi tanah*) and of a loss of access, control, and management of land (*pengelolaan tanah*). Other difficulties stated were the lack of means of production and financial capital as well as dependencies on the global market and low prices for local products.

Participants particularly stressed the intertwinement between environmental degradation and a loss of culture. A central point was the ongoing discrimination, exclusion, and loss of local knowledge, local identity, and local economy. These aspects, however, were considered important for maintaining local livelihoods and a sustainable use of natural resources in the light of an increasing domination of and competition with global market players.

Road Maps, Actors, and Power: Strengthening Civil Society Organizations

Participants argued that the civil society is (still) weak because community members and activists are excluded from relevant processes. Women's rights activists condemned the lack of women's influence due to their underrepresentation in decision-making. Participants described not only the marginalization of opposition as a problem, but also the strong profit-seeking mentality and lack of courage among politicians, villagers, and members of civil society organizations. Politicians and members of the village elite have not spoken out against companies as they continued to receive bribes. Participants mentioned that some activists were hesitant to reveal information about the socio-ecological damage caused by companies due to the lack of legal support by their organizations. Moreover, most participants expressed strong disappointment with the government: "If we were to trust the government it would lead us into a nightmare-like situation". Also government representatives stated that they have too few capacities to respond to all complaints they receive from villagers.

Participants saw opportunities for change in the establishment and strengthening of civil society organizations, which should challenge, control, and change the executive and the legislative branches of government. Foremost members of environmental

and human rights organizations were very specific in formulating concrete steps. They suggested to educate the young generation and people in remote areas in order to improve awareness and knowledge. Further steps included taking action in the form of advocacy, hearings, audits, demonstrations, and land reclamation to increase the self-determination of the local population and to push for a functioning auditing system.

Concrete programs that were mentioned in order to enhance social justice and sustainable development and to improve the local management of natural resources were social forestry and the agrarian reform program, recently launched by the current president Joko Widodo that aims to reduce land conflicts and land deprivation by mapping land, distributing land certificates, and acknowledging customary land rights. The representative of the indigenous land management scheme *Dayak Wake Up (Dayak Misik)* promoted this scheme, while other participants criticized it for being less effective due to overlapping land rights, legal insecurity, and the lack of measures to prevent deforestation. All agreed that for a strong civil society it would be necessary to improve synergetic cooperation among networks to assure knowledge transfer, to mutually support (*gotong royong*) each other, as well as to place critical people in the political realm in order to increase influence, and to establish “agents of change” in the communities.

Impacts of the Workshop: Networking and a Space for Critical Discussion

The discussions at the workshop were lively, open, and constructive. Participants profited from a space for exchange and networking, which might otherwise have not been possible. Some revitalized old networks and, at the same time, established new connections. Thus, for all participants the major positive outcome of the event was networking for future collaborations and mobilization. The workshop also enabled joint reflections, discussions, and a shared understanding of current and future socio-ecological conflicts and potential solutions to them.

The main weakness of the workshop was the absence of powerful stakeholders, as only two state representatives and no representative from the business sector took part. Consequently, major conflicts and potential solutions could not be addressed in the way originally intended by the organizers. Therefore, a next step would be to invite relevant actors to take part in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) of a maximum of ten participants to hopefully be able to elaborate on more disputed topics.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kristina Großmann is assistant professor at the Chair of Comparative Development and Cultural Studies with a focus on Southeast Asia at the University of Passau, Germany. Her main research interests are environmental transformations, dimensions of differentiation in ethnicity and gender, and civil society organizations in Southeast Asia.

► Contact: kristina.grossmann@uni-passau.de