Land Grant and Land Grab: Social Forestry as New Governmentality in West Kalimantan, Indonesia

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Introduction

Social forestry was firstly proposed by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to empower the forestry community and address deforestation. However, as it developed, social forestry has been criticized in response to more kinds of environmental crises and political economy. In Indonesia, social forestry is developed in the backdrop of expanding the palm oil industry. Through a focus on the social and political context and transformation, this article argues that ecological projects produce a new spectrum of resource closure and opportunities. On macro scale, social forestry renders problems of political economy technical for further expansion of plantation, while in some cases, gives civil organizations some space to claim for more rights at the micro-level. In order to bring about real change in the problematic land regime, civil movement should form alliances across the scales.

History of Social Forestry

- Forest management: top-down failure
- Social forestry: decentralized governance
- Crisis: expanding plantation
- Indigenous peoples: climate change
- Fulewood

The debate of Social Forestry

- Social forestry as a “spatial fix”
- Social forestry as green grabbing to fix the climate change crisis
- Social forestry as a decentralized governance
- Decentralization and neo-liberalization

Research Methodology

Policy analysis
Surveys from governments and NGOs
Open interviews with key informants including academics, consultants and staff of the social forestry
Semi-structured interviews in three villages with social forestry programs.

Abstract

Social forestry was firstly proposed by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to empower the forestry community and address deforestation. However, as it developed, social forestry has been criticized in response to more kinds of environmental crises and political economy. In Indonesia, social forestry is developed in the backdrop of expanding the palm oil industry. Through a focus on the social and political context and transformation, this article argues that ecological projects produce a new spectrum of resource closure and opportunities. On macro scale, social forestry renders problems of political economy technical for further expansion of plantation, while in some cases, gives civil organizations some space to claim for more rights at the micro-level. In order to bring about real change in the problematic land regime, civil movement should form alliances across the scales.

Conclusion

- Realistic view towards participatory environmental projects
- New political and social closure and opportunities
- Coexistence of hegemony and counter-hegemony
- Depoliticize problems
- Not to fundamentally renegotiate the structural relationships
- Shifting role of welfare state in capital society
- Lessons from multi-scalar social movement

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Arguments, evidence, interpretations

Indonesian land regime
- Violation of indigenous land rights
- State forest: 60% of the forest
- Palm oil: 33-35% of the global market
- Expanding plantation

The obligations and restrictions of social forestry

a. Ownership and usufruct
   - Belongs to state, is distributed to villages rather than households
   - Restrictions on the kinds and amounts of material to collect
   - Social forestry is used substitute radical grassroots movement
b. Required social capital
   - Decentralized government
   - Complicated application
   - Capacity building
   - Market connection
   - Fail to alleviate poverty, only providing subsistence economy

“Embedded” and “autonomous” social forestry

- Common problems in “embedded” social forestry
  - Elite captures
  - Lacking inclusion and democracy
- Ways to find “autonomy” from social forestry
  - MoU (Memorandum of Understanding)
  - Take advantage of electoral democracy
  - Precedent-setting
  - Capacity building
  - Connection with officials
  - Balance of “embeddedness” and “autonomy”