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Letters to editor

students felt abandoned and academics of the diaspora felt not only uprooted but a regret, maybe even guilt, at leaving.

What is amazing though is the kind of academic work that went on at least in the social sciences despite the tensions and insecurity.

The first murmur questioning the applicability of Keynesian Economics to underdeveloped countries starts in the early 1940s in a classroom at the University; contributions to *Indian Economic Journal*, *Indian Journal of Economics*, *J K Review* of this period give ample evidence of research in economic theory and empirical subjects. Desai talks of location of industries; in 1944 A K Dasgupta points out the attention this matter deserves in any scheme of post-war planning in India (A K Dasgupta, 'Location of Industries', *Investment and Finance*, Annual, 1944).

That was almost 60 years ago. Like Ashok Desai I too feel joy at the progress we have made, at the opportunities, choice, sense of freedom, and confidence we have achieved since then. Yet there is a sense of regret and failure. The raging fire from the lumbar yards of Mahim in January 1993 seemed alarmingly like an extension of similar scenes in Dacca of 1945-46. Subsequent events unfortunately did nothing to dispel this fear.

The crucial expression in Desai's article is 'social consciousness' but not just at the level of CEOs and managers. It must percolate down to the individual at the grass roots level. And again, not for altruistic reasons but for her own gain; she must realise that the garbage dumped in front of the neighbouring house will only ricochet the pollution and germs back to her; that lighting the lamp outside her home can result in positive externalities that are actually more than just a convenience to passersby. In a multicultural society, which most of the world is today, social harmony and concern go towards building of social capital, an essential ingredient for economic growth.

I am reminded here of the two masterpieces of 14th century frescoes by Ambrogio Lorinzetti in the Sienna Town Hall where the windows are tightly shut and people go by without interaction, the trees are bare, the fields are dry; there is an overall feeling of death and decay. The scene opposite depicts a society where windows and doors are wide open with breeze flowing in, children play in the parks, neighbours chat, gossip and work; there is a general air of camaraderie. Here the fields are green, trees full of fruits and flowers and people are happy.

It has indeed been a journey in time – time changing at every turn, exciting, depressing, challenging. If we 'act together', another vital expression used by Desai, we may be able to drop the 'depressing' part and get on with the business of building the nation.

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Situating Resource Struggles
Concepts for Empirical Analysis

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Situating Resource Struggles
Concepts for Empirical Analysis

To analyse resource conflict, this article proposes a conceptual framework which operates at two levels: a conceptualisation of power in terms of sovereignty, governmentality and politics; and a repertoire of terms (projects, practices, processes, positions) that enable the empirical examination of particular sites of struggle. The framework is applied to conflict over a national park in Sulawesi, Indonesia.

Tania Li

In Indonesia since the fall of Suharto in 1998, resource conflicts have generally been classified into two types: 'vertical' conflicts that pit rural people against the state or state-sponsored corporations, and 'horizontal' conflicts that pit one social, ethnic or religious group against another. This classification is problematic on many counts. Vertical conflict invokes a model of 'virtuous peasants' versus 'vicious states' [Bernstein 1990] that neglects to specify the diversity of 'peasant' interests, and positions peasants as pure subjects resisting power from the outside. It does not account for the diversity of state projects, many of which are not intentionally vicious but aim to bring about some kind of 'development' or improvement. The concept of horizontal conflict takes differences between social groups as given, rather than inquiring into the processes through which identities are constructed and oppositions formed. Government policies and programmes often play a role in creating conflicts between groups, usually as a by-product of projects that had 'improving' goals: vertical relations are implicated in horizontal conflicts in ways that binary classification obscures.

The concept of 'stakeholder' appears to offer a way into the complexities of resource conflicts, but it too has limitations. It takes the positions that people hold and the projects they pursue as given, and abstracts them from the practices in which they engage, and the processes in which they are embedded. This article proposes a framework that makes projects, processes, practices and positions the focus of analysis. It then applies this framework to the analysis of a resource conflict in the uplands of Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, in which farmers have occupied the corner of a national park.[1]

Governmentality, Sovereignty and Politics

Conflicts over natural resources are situated rather obviously within the logic of capitalism, as various parties struggle to control the means of production. They are situated within the logic of sovereignty, or rule by command, where the landlord-state [Coronil 1997] assumes the right to use, allocate and profit from resources, and exercises coercive control to that end. But they are also situated within the field of power Foucault labelled governmental, in which experts in and out of the state machinery attempt to enhance the quality of the population, rearranging landscapes, livelihoods and identities according to techno-scientific criteria [Foucault 1991, Gordon 1991]. The bounding of territory into zones designated for farming or conservation, the resettlement of populations from one place to another, and efforts to 'develop' rural livelihoods are interventions of a governmental kind.

As Foucault recognised, governmental rationality does not displace but rather coexists with the logic of sovereignty. In Indonesia as elsewhere, the state-as-sovereign allocates land and other natural resources as gifts to the regime's favoured clients. The interweaving of the logics of profit seeking, sovereignty, and governmental rationality creates a complex field of power. State patronage is key to gaining access to resources for private profit, and governmental projects described as improvement are always tainted with the suspicion that they are masks for elite gain.

Governmental rationality is antipolitical: it seeks to displace the political process of debating, and struggling over the question of how to live by applying techno-scientific rationales and managerial procedures. Yet in practice, governmental interventions politicise [Moore 1998]: at myriad, particular sites where governmental projects collide with layered formations of landscape, livelihood and identity, a space opens up for people to challenge the truths in the name of which they are governed. Practices of patronage also politicise, still more so when they contradict the claim to rationality and improvement. So too do the tensions and pressures set up by processes of capital accumulation and displacement which are refractory to the apparatus of planning. The identifications around which people mobilise are correspondingly complex, situated, contingent and relational, as people form communities or connect to ideologies (be it nature-loving, indigenism, 'development' or radical Islam) that help them make sense of their situation [Li 2000].

Projects

Drawing from the conceptual scheme outlined above, projects can be classified into three kinds. First, there are governmental projects, which seek to rearrange landscapes, livelihoods and identities according to technical criteria and the logic of improvement. Besides government agencies, many so-called non-government organisations are engaged in projects to 'conduct the conduct' of others, contributing to broad assemblages of knowledge and power. Second, there are economic projects aimed at gaining control over resources for private gain. These range from the efforts of farmers to secure access to resources for current and future livelihoods, to appropriations aimed at capital accumulation on a large scale. In both cases, but especially the latter, access often routes through the authority and coercion of state apparatus. Third, there are political projects, intended to contest the logic of government or the reality of resource appropriation, questioning the hegemony of these overlapping

fields of power. Political projects also have varied proponents, including rural producers rich and poor, activists and intellectuals, and dissident members of the ruling apparatus. They are manifested in words and actions, including debates over custom, the practice of cutting or planting trees, and mass rallies among others.

Positions

In keeping with the dynamic nature of projects outlined above, it is useful to consider people as taking or being assigned positions, rather than fixed identities. Identities, as Stuart Hall argues, 'come from somewhere, have histories. But far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power' [Hall 1990:225]. They are 'unstable points of identification or suture ... Not an essence but a *positioning*' [Hall 1990: 226]. History is crucial since, as I indicated earlier, there are no subject positions outside the reach of power, only positions within its 'continuous play'. Positively asserted on the one hand, positions are also limited and prefigured by the 'places of recognition' which others provide [Li 2001]. The formation of alliances and the making of connections depend crucially upon assuming or filling positions assigned. Note too that the term position usefully signals the spatial dimension of identification: people occupying particular kinds of landscape are expected to behave in 'appropriate' ways, and their actions are evaluated accordingly.

Practices

Practices follow from projects and positions, making them concrete. They need to be examined ethnographically. Governmental projects, for example, are associated with practices of research, planning, the implementation of specified procedures, evaluation and so on. But they are also associated with the practice that I have elsewhere described as compromise: the tacit agreement to look the other way when rules are broken, the failure to gather information that contradicts the premises upon which an intervention is planned, the construction of data to demonstrate unerring 'success' [Li 1999]. These are observable practices crucial to the longevity if not the performance of projects, and although they are external to the formal plan they too have significant effects. Economic projects come associated with practices that can be read in multiple ways: is a person who cuts down a tree making a garden, degrading the environment, or stealing timber revenues from the forest department? Political projects also unfold through practices that become routinised and recognised. In Indonesia, activists seeking to challenge relations of rule engage in policy critique, legal drafting, advocacy, facilitation, and 'accompanying' rural people engaged in direct conflict. The political practices of rural people include making links with activist supporters, staging demonstrations, seeking media coverage, writing letters and statements to officials, occupying land, blockading roads, burning buildings, and many more.

Processes

Processes highlight the unplanned effects of numerous, uncoordinated projects and practices as they unfold across time and space. The most notable process is, of course, the uneven accumulation of capital and resources that we gloss with the name capitalism. The price of commodities on international markets, the demand for land or labour, the influence of the media on patterns of consumption and desire, a family illness that stimulates a land sale and eventual impoverishment: these are processes that emerge independently of projects, although they intersect with them in particular ways. They form the complex terrain with which governmental rationality is always engaged, as it seeks to reorder and improve 'men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with all its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc; men in their relations to…customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking, etc; lastly, men in their relation to…accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc' [Foucault 1991:93].

In Foucault's formulation, governmental rationality is not a project of total control or social engineering. It recognises that society – like the economy – is hugely complex and largely self-regulating. The 'art' of government lies precisely in devising ways to intervene 'with economy' – working upon and through existing social and economic processes, setting the conditions so that people will be inclined to behave 'as they ought'. In relation to capitalism in particular, governmental rationality has sought not to halt the process of accumulation and displacement, but to counterbalance its more negative effects through ongoing management and adjustment, so that idle populations are set to work, revolutions averted, and resources optimally deployed. Such interventions have come to be understood as the responsibility of the state as 'trustee' [Cowen and Shenton 1996:x] and are currently shared among numerous agencies assembled into national and transnational 'development regimes' [Ludden 1992].

A Central Sulawesi National Park

Guided by this framework, I will try to explain how and why conflict emerged over a national park in Sulawesi, and explore its particular forms and significance. The need to trace relevant links across time and space will produce a narrative that is not linear, although it is loosely organised around the categories outlined above. Beginning with a description of contradictory projects, later examination of practices and processes will draw the reader towards a deeper understanding of positions and the 'continuous play' of culture, history and power in resource conflicts.

Projects

In June 2001, 1,030 households occupied the corner of Lore Lindu national park, and began to cut trees. They claimed to be landless, and argued that their intention was to establish a new farming settlement. Each household would clear two hectares for that purpose. Their project was thus primarily economic. It had, however, a political edge, because they argued their entitlement to land based on a critique of a governmental programme designed for their 'improvement'.

Three decades earlier, they had been defined by the government as 'backward and isolated communities' (*masyarakat terasing*), because they practised shifting cultivation in hilly terrain inaccessible to everyday government monitoring and control. Positioned as subjects in need of state-sponsored supervision and 'development', they had been removed from their hamlets and resettled in three villages in a valley area supposedly suited to

'modern' wet rice agriculture and accessible to education, health, transportation and other facilities. In practice, however, they had not been given the two hectare land allotment promised to each family, and even the land assigned was not of good quality: it was prone to flood, and could not be irrigated. To meet their livelihood needs, they had planted coffee under the forest canopy behind the resettlement site, an arrangement that had worked well until the forest was designated as part of Lore Lindu national park. Thereafter, the park authorities permitted them to harvest the coffee they had planted within the new park boundaries, but not to clean or extend the coffee groves, which were expected to die out, gradually extinguishing the farmers' claims. Farmers were also forbidden from collecting rattan and other forest products they had used for subsistence purposes and to supplement their incomes. Exclusion from the park was thus a second point of contention, and the occupation of park land for farming can be read as a political critique of a conservation agenda pursued at their expense.

The action of the farmers group was supported by several NGOs based in the provincial capital, Palu. They highlighted both the livelihood needs of the farmers, and the political significance of the occupation as a protest against government policies of imposed resettlement and conservation. They argued for a more democratic approach in which the 'target group' would have the opportunity to debate and negotiate both the purpose and the terms of any programmes designed to transform or 'improve' their lives. At a minimum, park borders and land use zoning should be established through a participatory process that takes into account existing claims and uses, as well as anticipated livelihood needs. They challenged the entire park-based conservation model which they labelled 'eco-fascist'. It was, they said, an inappropriate import that had also devastated livelihoods in its original site, Yellowstone [Sangaji 2001].

The NGOs supporting the farmer occupation had a track record of supporting communities in conflict with the park, including several located within the park borders that had been threatened with compulsory resettlement. Their arguments had emphasised the communities' claims as indigenous people whose relationship with the land and forest was governed by ecologically benign, customary resource management systems. These claims were supported by a set of maps and documents that carefully delineated the traditional wisdom of the 'indigenous' groups, and their deep knowledge of, and attachment to, their landscape. Faced with the combination of organised protest by villagers rejecting resettlement, and documented proof of their conservation-compatible practices and commitments, the park manager declared these communities 'an inseparable component of the park management system', with the right to continue to live and farm in their customary ways [Sangaji 2001]. In so doing, he had gained national attention as an 'ecopopulist', a government official who could work with communities and NGOs and forge new democratic practices for conservation suited to the post-Suharto era of reformasi.

The land occupation in question, however, posed the park manager with a new dilemma: the farmer group did not fit into the 'indigenous' slot. They had no ancestral claims to the land they had occupied, nor could they supply evidence of eco-friendly traditions. The park manager could not simply extend to them the recognition he had extended to the three 'indigenous' cases. These were ordinary farmers, not very special people with deep knowledge of a unique ancestral landscape.[2] Thus there were,

in his view, no grounds for recognition [WALHI 2001a]. For the supporting NGOs, on the other hand, the farmer occupation presented an opportunity to expand their political project from indigenous rights advocacy to advocacy on behalf of all poor people whose resource rights had been abrogated by the government. The park manager, they said, should not discriminate: whether or not they qualified as 'indigenous', all 60 villages surrounding the park had problems with way the park was established and contested its boundaries. The conservation model needed a radical overhaul, not just a concession to accommodate a few, apparently unique villages. The farmers' group had an additional claim, because they had been doubly victimised by government policies: resettled on inadequate land, and then excluded from the adjacent forests on the grounds of conservation [Sangaji 2001, WALHI 2001a].

Opposition to farmer occupation came from two main sources. First, there was the government apparatus, including the provincial governor, the district regents, and the park authority, each concerned to assert their authority. The occupation posed a direct challenge to their right to determine who should live where, and how resources should be used and distributed. The park manager, concerned to retain his 'eco-populist' credentials, argued that the occupied land was a key catchment area for the surrounding valleys including the Palu valley, notoriously dry. Concern for the people required, in this case, consideration of the impact of deforestation upon the livelihood and well-being of the population on a larger scale.

The governor and regents agreed that the farmers needed land, and proposed to find an alternative resettlement site. They threatened to call in police and military forces to expel the farmers' group should they refuse to move to the new site. Government responses thus sought to defend and confirm the role of the state as sovereign power and technical administrator, granting the gift of land, and managing population and territory for purposes of security and improvement. Continued occupation exposed the incapacity of the 'landlord-state' to assert its sovereignty or fulfil its managerial responsibilities.

The second group challenging the occupation was assembled around the banner of conservation. It included a US-based, international conservation organisation with an office in Palu dedicated to protecting the national park, and other NGOs working directly with them or affiliated through a coalition called the Partnership Forum for Lore Lindu (FKTNLL). This group had been alarmed by the park manager's recognition of the three 'indigenous' communities whose territories were wholly or partially inside the park boundaries. They feared that, bowing to pressure from the communities and the 'radical' NGOs, he was losing control over the park: other groups would claim the same entitlements. His populist inclination had already extended beyond those three cases to another concession affecting all 67 border villages. Modifying the previous rule that limited border communities to harvesting their coffee located within the park, he granted them permission to clean around the coffee plants. This concession created an unanticipated transformation of the landscape, as people removed the forest canopy covering their old coffee groves, replaced dead stock, and intercropped their coffee with the new boom crop, cocoa. A few scattered coffee bushes in the undergrowth became the justification for clearing the land between them. Border villages had, in view of the Forum, taken advantage of the park manager's populist inclinations to increase the extent and intensity of 'agricultural encroachment'.

For the Forum, the farmer occupation was further evidence that farmer designs on the park had to be stopped if conservation was to have a future. The sight of fallen trees on both sides of the road in the occupation zone was dramatic provocation: a statement that conservation had lost, and farmers had won. This scene was captured on video by one of the protagonists, and circulated through the activist network in Java.

The NGOs supporting the occupation regarded the FKTNLL with suspicion: its members were opportunists, concerned mainly to profit from donor support for conservation. Significant donor funds had been dedicated to improving farming techniques and devising alternative income sources for farmers in the park border zone. Projects included a 32 million dollar loan from the ADB, intended to divert farmers' attention from the park and compensate them for lost incomes. But, argued the pro-farmer NGOs, these donor efforts had been utterly ineffective: experiments with butterfly breeding, honey extraction, fish ponds or eco tourism, and the handout of fertilisers and seedlings to people who had no land, had made scarcely a dent on the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people in the border villages. The tactics of diverting, persuading, 'helping' and educating villagers so that they would understand and appreciate the 'importance of conservation' failed to address the fundamental issues of land rights and democratic process in defining conservation zones or objectives.

The FKTNLL found an ally in a rights-oriented NGO centrally concerned with indigeneity. This NGO argued that the farmer occupation not only threatened the conservation and catchment function of a forest that should be protected, but had also trespassed on the territory of the indigenous group associated with that land. In contesting the boundaries the park, the farmer's group had neglected to ask the permission of the true indigenous owners whose claims long preceded the establishment of the park. Like the park authorities, the farmer group was accused of making a unilateral land grab. The farmers' group had added insult to injury by seeking to legitimate their occupation with a ritualised feast, to which their NGO supporters and the media were invited. By this act they had attempted to assimilate their cause to that of indigenous people, calling upon their ancestors for blessing, and creating a media show. But neither they nor their ancestors had any claims to this land. Moreover they had not provided any data to support their claim that they were indeed landless, 'victims' of the resettlement scheme [Laudjeng 2002].

Conflicting perspectives created a bitter divide within the NGO movement in Palu and beyond. The NGOs now divided into pro-farmer versus pro-conservation-and-indigenous rights factions had previously seen these as inseparable struggles, and had worked on campaigns together. The pro-farmer NGOs had envisaged the occupation as a protest against the government and the park: a 'vertical' conflict. They did not anticipate that it would cause, or be interpreted, as a 'horizontal' conflict between one impoverished group – landless farmers – and another, claiming the indigenous slot. They did not deny the indigenous claim, but they did question the timing and spatial logic of the 'indigenous' protest against the occupation. They argued that the indigenous group should focus on contesting the park's appropriation of land directly bordering their own villages, rather than contesting a farmer occupation on the fringe of their domain, some 20 km away. In turn, the NGO promoting the indigenous case accused the pro-occupation faction of bad faith and opportunism: supporting conservation and indigenism strategically, as

vehicles for political activism, rather than for their intrinsic significance. Farmers who need land should take it from government officials and corporations, not from indigenous people, a group already severely marginalised.

The divide extended to the networks of the Palu NGOs in Jakarta, Bogor and Bandung, centres for national advocacy [Nababan 2001]. It threatened alliances that had drawn together broad constituencies by downplaying tensions between contending platforms. To simplify, one group clusters around conservation and indigeneity, arguing that indigenous people have environmentally sound practices and internationally recognised rights of a special kind. Their hope is that indigenous groups to whom the right to manage their lives and resources have been restored will later negotiate with other 'local people' and migrants in a spirit of generosity and mutual respect. The other group is clustered around the concept of land reform, and highlights the problem of landlessness caused by unjust appropriations by state agencies or state-backed corporations. It includes indigenous people as one among many groups whose resource rights were trampled during 30 years of Suharto's New Order rule. This group also hopes for peaceful settlements between indigenous and migrant groups, but they place fair access to land higher on the list of priorities. Emphasising the areas of overlap, these two political agendas are often pursued in tandem, and many individuals and organisations would barely distinguish between them. The occupation of Sulawesi's park, however, fractured the 'wish laden middle ground' [Conklin and Graham 1995] in which conservation, indigenous rights and economic justice can all be achieved simultaneously.

Practices

To further understand the dimensions of this conflict and how it unfolded, I now explore some of the practices that accompanied the various projects outlined above. Some of these practices were explicitly enunciated as part of a formal plan. Many of them are better understood as a kind of habitus, taken-for-granted modes of acting in the world. Some practices, notably those of the farmer group, were self-conscious, intended not only to accomplish economic goals but to symbolise and communicate a particular positioning.

I have already noted that the farmer group organised a ritual land-blessing celebrated with a feast, which included the sacrifice of four head of cattle. They put up banners stating 'Give us Land, Peace in the National Park' (*Beri Kami Lahan, Taman Nasional Aman*). At one stage they were reported to have put up road blocks to vet passing vehicles [Sargeant 2001]. They held several demonstrations in Palu before and after the land occupation, petitioning for the recognition of their right to land. On site, their labour process was also intended to communicate. They claimed to be organised into groups to work collectively on clearing blocks of land that would then be distributed among the families, two hectares per household. They stated their intention to formulate their own rules, enforced by strict sanctions derived from and legitimated by the customary practices of the three constituent ethno-linguistic groups. These would include a sanction on anyone who sold timber for profit, or sold land. Cut timber would be used only for building houses and public buildings such as places of worship. Declaring these restrictions was crucial to establishing the legitimacy of the occupation as a movement driven by the need for land to farm, and not by an opportunistic search for

quick profit. At one of their demonstrations in Palu, they brought bundles of freshly harvested corn and cassava to the parliament building, emphasising the link between land and livelihood. Thus they tapped into the symbolic fields associated not only with the life of a farmer but with traditions many Indonesians view as 'indigenous': a commitment to collective action, mutual well-being, democratically agreed and community-enforced discipline, and an orientation to subsistence and sustainable resource management.

The practices of the government agencies were remarkable mainly for their omissions. Crucially, it should be noted that although they threatened to violently expel the farmers' group, so far they have not carried out this threat. In previous years, when smaller groups had attempted to occupy the same site, they had indeed been expelled by the park patrol backed by police and military, with the participation of the FKTNLL. On this occasion, however, the occupation was well organised and on a much larger scale, and the group very quickly began to change the landscape by clearing land, building huts, and planting corn and cocoa. When the threat of violent expulsion seemed imminent, demonstrations, media coverage, and the support of various organisations for the farmers' position expressed through public statements and letters made it very clear to the authorities that harshness (kekerasan) would make the government look very bad. Practices that were normal in the Suharto era were now being severely scrutinised within the province and beyond. The art of ruling through the exercise of governmental rationality does not eliminate the exercise of the sovereign's right to rule by force, as Foucault appreciated, but when such force is used it exposes failures of government: precisely the conundrum confronting the provincial apparatus in this instance.

The solution the provincial government proposed was to find an alternative resettlement site that was acceptable to the farmer group. But this they were unable to deliver. Their failure exposes some of the core contradictions in the resettlement programme, and exposes the weakness of the government's claim to have either the technical or operational capacity to rearrange populations and environments, still less to improve them. According to the farmers' group and their supporters who had inspected the proposed sites, they were inaccessible: they could be reached only on foot, one of them requiring more than a day's walk and the fording of 18 rivers, some of them deep. The irony was intense: it was the inaccessibility of their ancestral, hillside hamlets that had caused these farmers to be resettled into the valley in the first place. Further, the land in the proposed sites was already densely settled and farmed: placing newcomers there would cause 'horizontal conflicts'. Moreover, the land was steeply sloped, and farming it would cause environmental damage. It could not produce secure and sustainable livelihoods. Thus the official solution to the farmer occupation was deeply flawed, and flawed precisely on the 'official' techno-scientific grounds usually arrayed to justify state initiatives to reorder landscapes and move people around.

Corrupt practices connected with official resettlement schemes were also exposed. A significant portion of the land in the original resettlement site (175 of 600 hectares) had been appropriated by a former provincial governor. Other officials connected with the resettlement process that taken land for themselves, or sold it off to outside buyers. In this province and beyond, there are numerous examples of resettlement projects carried out in the name of the poor being used by government officials for private

gain. With this history, the farmer group would be foolish to give up the land it had occupied to put its future back in the hands of the resettlement programme. The usual compromise through which a certain amount of corruption is tolerated so long as the target group also obtains some benefits would no longer suffice. Corrupt practices associated with resettlement were no longer just a public secret: they were openly being called as such. Having been misled by promises of security and improvement once before, the farmer's group insisted that the alternative site had to be at least as accessible, fertile and promising as the site they had occupied, and the two hectares allocation free of competing claims, or they would not move.

The practices of the NGOs supporting the farmer group also merit scrutiny. Indeed, they were thoroughly scrutinised by the FKTNLL. The Forum accused the pro-farmer NGOs of creating the farmers group, and provoking them to break the law in order to gain attention, demonstrate their heroic support for popular justice, and advance an irresponsible, anti-conservation agenda. In this critique they echoed the official government line. During the Suharto era and since, NGOs were often accused of manipulating gullible, uneducated masses for their own purposes, provoking and exaggerating conflicts for media effect. In addition, critics from within and outside the ruling apparatus often hint that NGOs who present themselves as being on the side of the people are actually pursuing economic gain. In the case of this land occupation, it was suggested that the farmers' group and their supporters were in league with timber barons seeking to rob the park for profit.

The pro-farmer faction responded that had they merely supported and 'accompanied' (mendamping) the farmer group in a struggle the farmers themselves both led and initiated. The practice of pendampingan (offering assistance and solidarity) is part of the habitus, the routine behaviour and positioning of Indonesia's NGO movement. It locates NGOs not as the vanguard of the people, but as their associates, ready to offer help as needed. This might be help on technical matters such as agroforestry or mapping community lands, or help in organising community meetings, mass demonstrations, or negotiations with government authorities.

The line between accompanying, educating and leading is obviously a fuzzy one. Some of the critics of the role of the pro-farmer NGOs in this conflict seemed to accept that an NGO should indeed be an educator, leading and guiding rural people, 'conducting' their conduct in governmental fashion, but argued that the goal should be to teach them respect for the law and conservation. When it became clear that some members of the farmers' group were indeed selling timber for profit, one critic stated that the NGOs had failed as guides and tutors of their dependent subjects, their masyarakat binaan [Anon 2002]. The term warga binaan is usually used by the department of social affairs to refer to the waifs, strays, prostitutes, and 'isolated and estranged' people (masyarakat terasing) under its paternalistic care and tutelage. Recall that the farmers' group had themselves once been warga binaan of the department of social affairs. The suggestion was that they are still backward, still misbehaving, and the NGOs that have set themselves up as tutor and guide have failed to do their jobs. The agency, indeed the adulthood, of the farmer's group, their capacity to analyse their own situation, to further their interests, and to understand that much of what passed for conservation or 'improvement' was inept and unjust, was thereby denied.

Proof that timber from the occupation zone was indeed being sold for profit was, needless to say, a major embarrassment for the NGOs that supported the farmers group, a betrayal of the political and economic goals of the occupation. It is not clear how many farmers were involved in this practice, but the leader of the farmer group – the one who had made all the brave statements about customary sanctions and livelihood priorities – was implicated. There could be many explanations for why this practice emerged. For critics of the occupation, timber stealing had been the motivation all along. A defender of the occupation might argue that the farmers were only human and some, indeed, had made mistakes. Besides, they were not the only ones involved in illegal logging: government officials were also implicated.

Stepping back, it is possible to see the practice of timber selling in a different perspective. If the land had not been classified as a national park, and the farmers had not promised to use the timber only for their own needs and refuse the cash offered to them by the timber merchants daily prowling the site, the practice of selling the timber would not have occasioned any comment. Indeed, selling timber is part of the normal procedure of land clearing for cultivation on the forest frontier. Owners of chainsaws negotiate with a farmer to cut the timber on the intended farm plot. The farmer's land is cleared 'free of charge' and he or she receives half to a third of the timber for personal use, or the equivalent in cash. The cash helps the farmer survive until the first food crop, usually corn, can be harvested. The timber is used for building a dwelling. Establishing a new farm plot and timber harvesting are symbiotic practices. But in this particular 'war of positions', the farmers had to present themselves as pure subjects, exempt from the need or temptation of ready cash. One could also argue that the continued uncertainty about the future of the occupation made it entirely sensible to sell off timber during the open season, and not invest too much in building houses or planting cocoa seedlings that could very well be bulldozed or burned by the army and police.

One more set of practices needs to be highlighted: the routine involvement of park, forest department, police and army personnel in logging the park and other protected forests [Laban 2002, Sangaji 2001, WALHI 2001b]. This is another public secret. The 'authorities' whose job it is to devise orderly plans for managing population and environment are thoroughly implicated in systematic theft and pillage. If this practice punctures the idea of the governmental state that operates according to techno-scientific rules and plans, it also muddies the state versus people divide. The conduct of illegal logging draws together a complex assemblage of individuals, institutions and ideologies. High level officials sign the papers to get truck loads of timber through the check points. Staff manning the check points are paid off, but they are also armed, should anyone try to bypass what is effectively a toll booth. The headman of the village within whose boundaries the forest falls must also be complicit, and is sometimes directly involved in recruiting labour. The labour force for logging is drawn from the villages, but is often loyal to a particular labour boss, creating factional splits and rival gangs, sometimes armed. This is another example of how vertical ties – in this case ties of patronage – can stimulate 'horizontal' conflicts [cf McCarthy 2000].

The practice of illegal logging looks still more complex when ideological elements are added into the mix. Villagers who believe in protecting their forests for purposes of conservation or the future of their children often protest illegal logging, but

cynics easily dismiss them as rival factions concerned only to get their share. 'Empowering' villagers to manage and protect their forests, an important platform of the community-based resource management agenda, and also of the park manager's ecopopulism [Laban 2002], amounts to expecting or requiring villagers to confront powerful outsiders, including government officials, and to confront their co-villagers who are directly involved in logging on the front line. Observers also highlight the (ab)use of populist ideologies: when caught, labourers drawn from villages can always claim to be impoverished folk, seeking only some timber to repair their house, or a small patch of land to plant some crops. Poverty is a commodity. From one perspective, it was precisely the commodity on sale by the 'farmer group' in the park occupation. From another perspective, the poverty of the farmers was both the mechanism for elites to profit from illegal logging, and a convenient cover for their own involvement.

Processes

The projects and practices outlined above are not occurring in a vacuum: they are occurring within a time and space shaped by a set of processes with diverse logics that are, for the most part, refractory to planning. Here I tease out just four distinct processes from the many at work in this conjuncture.

One process, already noted, is the continuous rebalancing of the equation between the exercise of a sovereign's right to violence, and the educative and organisational strategies associated with governmental rationality. Rather than seeing the relationship between sovereignty and governmentality as a unilinear trajectory in which the former is progressively folded into the latter, Achille Mbembe and others argue that the 'arbitrariness and intrinsic unconditionality' and the 'regime of impunity' that were the 'distinctive feature of colonial sovereignty', were inherited intact by post-colonial regimes [Mbembe 2001:26, 42]. In Indonesia, the sovereign's right to kill was all too apparent in the massacres that initiated Suharto's New Order rule and the state violence that continued for the next three decades, resulting in about a million dead [Anderson 1999]. Governmental strategies also have a long history in the colony, beginning in the early 19th century [Schrauwers 2001]. Particular conflicts take their form at the unstable conjuncture between these two modes of rule.

The farmers' group did not challenge the right of the state apparatus to define who lives where and how, only their capacity to bring about the promised landscape and livelihood improvements. Faced with this challenge, the state apparatus stopped short of using brute force. The NGOs supporting the farmers argued that the state's demonstrated incapacity to govern the relations between population and environment according to its own criteria of efficiency indicated the need to return rights and responsibilities to 'the people'. To their critics, these NGOs have gone too far: trusting the people to govern themselves, they have endorsed popular anarchy and environmental destruction, and undermined the apparatus of planning, regulation, and the rule of law through which security and improvement can be attained not just for some groups, but for the population as a whole.

A second process running through this conjuncture was capitalism. In 1997, as the Asian economic crisis caused the Indonesian currency to plummet, the price of cocoa designated in dollars increased by a factor of 20. The result in Sulawesi, which had begun producing cocoa a decade previously, was to cause

a rush among smallholders for access to land on which to plant this brown gold [Li 2002b]. Precisely because it recognised the urgency of the demand for land, and the promise of cocoa production to dramatically improve the lot of ordinary smallholders, the park authority could not concede to the farmer occupation. Hot on the tracks of smallholders making livelihood claims would be the land brokers, offering ready cash. Since it became accessible by paved road in the mid-1990s, lots of people, including the provincial elite and government officials at all levels of the hierarchy, had become interested in taking or buying a piece of the park for cocoa.

A further process set in motion by the cocoa boom was smallholder immigration: in some of the villages bordering the park, including the resettlement villages that had been home to the farmer group, up to 50 per cent of the population comprised of Bugis migrants from south Sulawesi who had arrived in droves in the period 1997-2001. Prospective migrants had rented buses and toured the highlands of Central Sulawesi looking for suitable land, and making deals with land brokers, government officials, and individual farmers for its acquisition. Many relatively impoverished farmers, tempted by the quick cash and not yet recognising the potential of cocoa, had sold up and found themselves landless or land poor, looking on as the migrants began to prosper.

To understand why farmers would sell up their already meagre land resources, it is necessary to locate the process of land accumulation and displacement in the context of the unintended effects of an array of government programmes and interventions already layered into this landscape. The farmer group now occupying the park was not the only group that had been relocated by government fiat – so too had almost all the residents in the park border villages. In the period 1910-40, the Dutch had forced many groups out of the hills into the adjacent valleys, and others had scattered from centralised settlements to the forest edge to plant coffee to pay colonial taxes. People moved again during the Japanese occupation and in the first decades after independence when regional rebellions brought violence, famine, forced conscription or religious conversion. As a result of this unsettled regional history, the populations around the park are heterogeneous, and they maintain connections to various ancestral homelands near or far. If they are displaced from their present location, or they sell up, they hope to begin again and prosper somewhere else.

For many people in the border villages, a tenuous sense of belonging to their current village location is compounded by their fragile tenure security. The provincial government does not recognise customary land claims, and has designated what it claims to be 'state land' for use by corporations, for resettlement sites, and the national park. NGOs have identified seven corporations controlling more than 13,000 hectares in the vicinity of the park, most notoriously Hasfarm, the enterprise of Suharto crony Bob Hassan [WALHI 2001b]. On a smaller scale, and especially in the context of the cocoa boom, village headmen have often sold co-villagers' customary land to incoming migrants. Faced with the risk of arbitrary appropriation, selling land to a migrant or broker offering cash makes sense. In these ways, capitalist processes of uneven accumulation, sovereign appropriations and the effects of governmental initiatives intersect. They shaped what happened, where and how.

Finally, it is worth stating the obvious: that trees once cut down will take a long time to grow again. The process of landscape transformation initiated by the farmer group cannot easily be reversed. The site of the occupation is no longer a biodiverse forest, but de facto a farming settlement planted with corn and cocoa seedlings. In this state, it evokes the anger of conservationists, and concerns about downstream droughts and floods. Practically speaking, however, the crop cover and eventual cocoa canopy will fill the void more quickly and surely than the eviction of the farmers and a replanting effort that would be continuously sabotaged. Arsonists have already destroyed park offices, information centre and guesthouses in the adjacent village [Anon 2002]. At the intersection of processes of landscape change, the realignment of government, and capital accumulation, efforts to enforce park boundaries are weak and lacking in legitimacy.

Positions

In the context of the polemics surrounding this case, positions assumed by or attributed to the various parties to this conflict were made quite explicit, described in 'position papers', and widely discussed in the media and activist newsgroups. Unfortunately but perhaps inevitably, simplified and often binary classificatory schemes came to the fore. Government officials, NGOs and villagers positioned themselves or were positioned as pro or anti conservation, populist or fascist, corrupt or sincere, effective or inept, consistent or opportunist.

The emergence of numerous coalitions, fronts, alliances and instant NGOs issuing statements and claiming to represent one constituency or another complicated the field and identification was sometimes difficult. Who are you and who do you represent was a frequent refrain in the e-mail correspondence. To speak in the name of someone else (*mengatasnamakan*) is a practice that is frequently scrutinised. There was a maverick e-mailer who commented continuously on the ecological damage at the site and the complicity of the farmers and NGOs in illegal logging, but refused when challenged to reveal his (or her?) identity. The controversy within the NGO network was so heated at one stage that there was a moratorium on internet communications, and also on the practice of *pendampingan*: all the NGOs were to stay away from the occupation site while the farmers' group and surrounding villagers worked out their own agreements. Challenged to make its position on the occupation clear, the international conservation NGO argued that its role in relation to the park was purely technical, and it had no mandate to become involved in 'politics', a stance immediately critiqued for its implicit *antipolitics* [Ferguson 1994].

The positions attributed to the farmer group were especially complex. Were the members of the farmers' group victims of government policies; heroes of democratic politics; model farmers bent on modest, equitable, sustainable, community-based livelihoods; cunning pretenders exploiting the gullibility of their NGO supporters; greedy profit-seeking opportunists; forest destroyers; illegal squatters; criminals; ignorant folk vulnerable to the persuasions of timber merchants; or dependent wards mislead by enthusiastic but irresponsible tutors?

Perhaps they were all of the above, in different measure. One resolution to the discrepancy between these various positionings was to make differentiations within the farmer group, to argue that some of its members were indeed landless, hardworking and generally law abiding while others were not. One observer stated that he had been sympathetic to the story of impoverishment, until he noticed that there were motorbikes outside the new houses in the occupation zone. Presumably, however, not everyone had a motorbike. Another critic observed that, a year after the initial occupation, at most 500 households were living and farming at the site, the implication being that the other half had moved on after realising their land and timber profits [Anon 2002]. No definitive 'data' about the background or economic situation of the farmer group was collected by the authorities, presumably because wilful ignorance was more amenable to engineering various kinds of compromise than legibility would have been.

Members of the farmer group could not select between the various positions attributed to them: they were limited by the places of recognition provided by others. Yet these positions had consequences: each enabled certain alliances and connections to be made, and foreclosed others. A positioning on the side of conservation seemed to be closed to the farmers group. Although they claimed to care about the environment and promised not to destroy it, the felled trees presented an obvious contradiction, at least from some perspectives. They envisaged a longer time horizon, in which tree cover would be re-established, crops would be bio-diverse, and the area under cultivation limited to two hectares per household. This could be promised, but the outcomes could not be guaranteed even in the short term, still less across the generations. But, argued the farmer groups' supporters, the stability of the park as a conservation area under state management was not guaranteed either. Besides the rampant illegal logging in which officials were complicit, a planned hydro-electric dam, mining concessions and new roads within the park borders threatened to transform the landscape on a dramatic scale. Seen in this context, smallholder activities were ecologically benign [Sangaji 2001, WALHI 2001a].

From the perspective of the park authorities and other critics of the occupation, a positioning as indigenous people also seemed to be closed to the farmers' group. Nevertheless, this was a position they attempted to establish through expressive practices such as ritual feasts, statements about collective labour and mutual responsibility, and an oath to stay and die at the site. Substantively, the livelihood practices and customary lore of the farmers' group scarcely distinguished them from their 'indigenous' neighbours. The debate that occurred, albeit implicitly, was whether indigeneity is a way of being, and hence portable, or an identity available only to those who happen to have remained in their ancestral place. After all, the farmers' group were displaced from their ancestral hillside hamlets through no fault of their own. Moreover the farmer group and the people whose lands they occupied all consider themselves indigenous in relation to the Bugis migrants from south Sulawesi who increasingly monopolise farmland throughout the province. In every village around the park, clusters of households arrived in different migrant waves making original or first (*asli*) and newcomer (*pendatang*) temporally relative terms. No one disputed that the ethno-linguistic group contesting the occupation were the first inhabitants of the area, but there was no consensus on the entitlements that follow. In many versions of customary law, the territorial claims of earlier occupants are thin unless an investment of labour has left an imprint on the landscape. Labour signals rights. Thus, for example, a valuable tree that has been nurtured and marked by its 'owner' is recognised as private property. Land that has been cleared for farming is subject to individual or group ownership rights, even if the forest has long since regrown

[Sangaji 2001]. At the site of the occupation, the 'indigenous' claimants had made no such investments, but labour *had* been invested by some members of the farmer group. While working as labourers for a timber concession operating at the site a decade earlier, they had planted coffee trees and continued to nurture them, an activity that gave them customary rights.

My purpose in examining the various positions attributed to, claimed by, or disallowed to the protagonists is not to adjudicate or draw conclusions about how diverse objectives – conservation, justice – can best be achieved. It is to emphasise the contingency and mutability of positioning, not as an outcome of unfettered individual 'choice', but as it is configured within the continuous play of culture, history and power. Under a different set of conditions, different connections, alliances, and oppositions could have been made, as they will be in future as the conjuncture shifts. Looming on the horizon is the bloody conflict between Muslims and Christians in the town of Poso less than 100 km away, a conflict setting refugees on the move, rearranging populations, and uniting fractious highlanders as a solid Christian block. It is also transforming the landscape, notably the landscape of the park, the favourite spot for contractors building donor-sponsored refugee housing to get cheap timber [YAKIS 2002]. Taking advantage of the NGO movement's current disarray, provincial planners are reviving the plan to build a hydro plant within the park, a threat that will again rework the lines of alliance and opposition.

Conclusion

To move beyond the limited optic of power and resistant others, virtuous peasants and vicious states, or 'stakeholders' bearing fixed interests, identities and ideologies, this article focused on projects, practices, processes and positions. Its analytical framework proved robust enough to expose the dynamics of a resource conflict in the highlands of Sulawesi, and readers will judge whether it is helpful in untangling the threads of resource conflicts in south Asia and beyond. [EPW]

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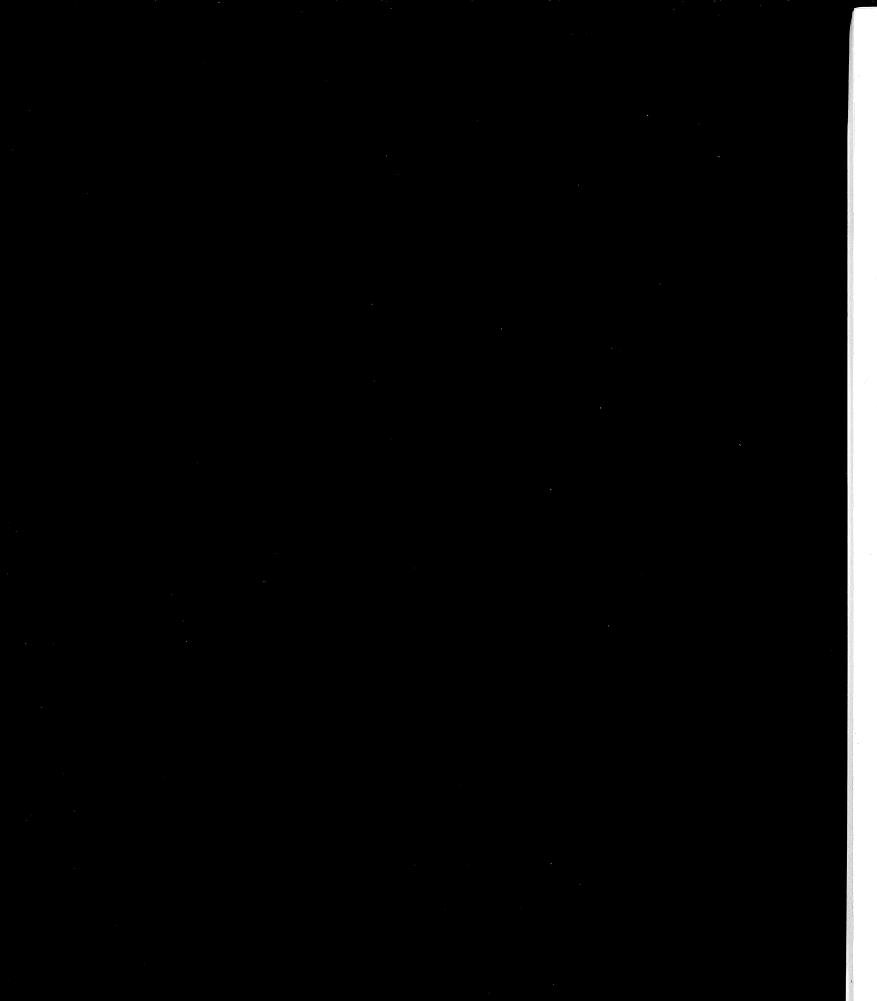taniali@dal.ca

Notes

1 My sources on this conflict include fieldwork, media reports and the voluminous, intense debate carried out over internet news groups and mailing lists. For accounts of the origins of the park, conditions in the border villages, the trajectory of the farmer occupation, and key positions in this dispute see [FPM 2001, Laban 2002, Laudjeng 2002, Sangaji 2001, Schweithelm et al 1992, WALHI 2001a, WALHI 2001b, WALHI 2001c]; Aliansi Tolelembunga, 26/07/01 #2140; ANZDEC, 1997 #2146].

2 I have examined the dilemmas of indigenous positioning in Li (2001, 2002a).

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Letters to editor

(Continued from p 5006)

· students felt abandoned and academics of the diaspora felt not only uprooted but a regret, maybe even guilt, at leaving.

What is amazing though is the kind of academic work that went on at least in the social sciences despite the tensions and insecurity.

The first murmur questioning the applicability of Keynesian Economics to underdeveloped countries starts in the early 1940s in a classroom at the University; contributions to *Indian Economic Journal, Indian Journal of Economics, J K Review* of this period give ample evidence of research in economic theory and empirical subjects. Desai talks of location of industries; in 1944 A K Dasgupta points out the attention this matter deserves in any scheme of post-war planning in India (A K Dasgupta, 'Location of Industries', *Investment and Finance*, Annual, 1944).

That was almost 60 years ago. Like Ashok Desai I too feel joy at the progress we have made, at the opportunities, choice, sense of freedom, and confidence we have achieved since then. Yet there is a sense of regret and failure. The raging fire from the lumbar yards of Mahim in January 1993 seemed alarmingly like an extension of similar scenes in Dacca of 1945-46. Subsequent events unfortunately did nothing to dispel this fear.

The crucial expression in Desai's article is 'social consciousness' but not just at the level of CEOs and managers.

It must percolate down to the individual at the grass roots level. And again, not for altruistic reasons but for her own gain; she must realise that the garbage dumped in front of the neighbouring house will only ricochet the pollution and germs back to her; that lighting the lamp outside her home can result in positive externalities that are actually more than just a convenience to passersby. In a multicultural society, which most of the world is today, social harmony and concern go towards building of social capital, an essential ingredient for economic growth.

I am reminded here of the two masterpieces of 14th century frescoes by Ambrogio Lorinzetti in the Sienna Town Hall where the windows are tightly shut and people go by without interaction, the trees are bare, the fields are dry; there is an overall feeling of death and decay. The scene opposite depicts a society where windows and doors are wide open with breeze flowing in, children play in the parks, neighbours chat, gossip and work; there is a general air of camaraderie. Here the fields are green, trees full of fruits and flowers and people are happy.

It has indeed been a journey in time – time changing at every turn, exciting, depressing, challenging. If we 'act together', another vital expression used by Desai, we may be able to drop the 'depressing' part and get on with the business of building the nation.

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