
Perceptions towards companies and forest conservation in two villages of Uut Murung, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

Andrea Hoeing^{1,2}, Andhi Suncoko^{1,3}, Deni^{1,3,4}, Dominic Rowland¹, Erisa Murray^{1,5}, Iis Sabahudin^{1,5}, Michal Zrust^{1,6}, Peter R. Houlihan^{1,7,8}, Kristina Grossmann⁹, Matthias Waltert² and Susan M. Cheyne^{1,10}

1 BRINCC (Barito River Initiative for Nature Conservation and Communities), Hitchin, Herts, UK, SG4 9RJ

2 Georg-August-Universität, Conservation Biology/ WG on Endangered Species, 37075 Goettingen, Germany

3 Faculty of Human Ecology, Bogor Agricultural University, Indonesia

4 Faculty of Forestry, Kuningan University, West Java, Indonesia

5 Faculty of Social and Political Science, Postgraduate Department of Anthropology, University of Indonesia, Indonesia

6 Zoological Society of London, Regent's Park, London, England NW1 4RY

7 Department of Behavioral Biology, The Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA

8 Department of Biology & Florida Museum of Natural History, University of Florida, Gainesville, USA

9 Department for Development and Cultural Studies, Southeast Asia, University of Passau, Germany

10 Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), Department of Zoology, University of Oxford, The Recanati-Kaplan Centre, Tubney House, Abingdon Road, Tubney, Oxon, OX13, 5QL, U.K.

Corresponding author: Andrea Höing, email: andrea@brinccborneo.org

ABSTRAK

Peningkatan jumlah perusahaan dengan rencana alih fungsi hutan dalam berbagai industri seperti petambangan dan pengusahaan hutan, semakin mendesak ke bagian daerah terpencil di pedalaman Kalimantan. Penelitian ini mengkaji sikap masyarakat lokal terhadap perusahaan-perusahaan tersebut. Kegiatan dilakukan dengan melakukan ekspedisi selama dua bulan ke dua desa pada kecamatan Uut Murung, Murung Raya, Kalimantan Indonesia, kelompok tim sosial melakukan kajian dengan kuisioner dan wawancara semi terstruktur. Faktor-faktor yang mungkin mempengaruhi sikap masyarakat terhadap perusahaan tersebut dianalisa, termasuk keuntungan dan kerugian yang didapat untuk kehidupan responden. Selain itu, dilakukan juga penilaian terhadap persepsi pentingnya konservasi. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa jenis kelamin, umur, kepercayaan dan jumlah bentuk keuntungan yang didapat mempengaruhi sikap mereka terhadap perusahaan. Untuk menemukan keseimbangan antara keuntungan ekonomi yang didapatkan perusahaan dan konservasi daerah ini, kami menyarankan perlunya pendekatan lintas disiplin ilmu yang melibatkan berbagai pihak, baik akademisi maupun non akademisi untuk bisa melakukan perlindungan keanekaragaman hayati dan kehidupan masyarakat dengan melakukan transformasi pengetahuan

ABSTRACT

An increasing number of companies in industries such as mining or logging with forest conversion plans, are advancing into remote areas in the interior of Kalimantan. This study investigates attitudes of local villagers towards those companies. We conducted a two months expedition to two villages to the sub-district of Uut Murung, Murung Raya, Kalimantan, Indonesia, where the social science team completed questionnaires and semi structured interviews. Factors potentially influencing those attitudes towards companies were analysed using step-wise linear regression, as well as perceived benefits and disadvantages for respondent's livelihoods. In addition, perceptions of the importance of conservation were assessed. Our results show that gender, age, the belief in forest spirits and the number of advantages named, significantly influenced the attitude towards companies. We found communities generally highly receptive to economic development but hostile of environmental degradation, suggesting a difficult trade off between conservation and development. Communities desire the protection of livelihoods and sources of environmental income but also the investment and infrastructure development associated with extractive industries. To find a balance between economic interests from company investments and conservation of the area, we suggest a trans-disciplinary approach which includes different actors - academic and non academic - to be able to protect biodiversity and livelihoods by creating transformation knowledge.

Keywords: Companies, Conservation, Human-nature relations, Natural resources, Murung Raya, Perceptions.

Received 12th June, 2014; revision accepted 1st February, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Murung Raya's forests are known for their richness in natural resources such as timber, coal, gold and copper, which attract national and international investors. Recent investment in and proposed expansion of, infrastructure to the area has enabled easier and cheaper transportation of minerals and coal. One such proposal is the building of a freight railway to connect the interior of Kalimantan to the coast, for the exclusive transportation of coal (Ministry For Economic Affairs, 2011). This plan has already been released to the international media, attracting investment in companies with forest conversion plans to operate in the area (Arman, 2013). The Murung Raya regency has an estimated one billion tonnes of exportable coal, and to date, 66 mining licenses have been issued by the regency government (Arman, 2013).

The establishment of open mines will not only influence biodiversity and forest cover, but also significantly impact local communities living in the area, such as the two communities that are part of this study in the sub district Uut Murung. These circumstances stress the importance for nature conservation initiatives, including the protection of people's livelihoods in the area. Research studies in Borneo on social adaptation to changes in landscape concomitant with cultural transformation have highlighted trade-offs between conservation and development. For example, studies on the Punan Tubu in East Kalimantan (Levang et al., 2007), the Penan in Sarawak (Pritchard, 2005 in Levang et al., 2007) or the inhabitants of the North Barito district in Central Kalimantan (Orth, 2009), have shown that local communities attempts to gain the best outcome from both modernization and conservation which is not always possible to achieve (Levang et al., 2007).

Trans-disciplinary research for conservation

Barito River Initiative for Nature Conservation and Communities (BRINCC) interdisciplinary research design focuses on the conservation of rainforests and its human and non-human inhabitants (Cheyne et al., 2012). Environmental degradation and loss of natural resources does not only affect biodiversity, but also communities living in the surrounding area. With the combination of social science and biodiversity research we aimed to find ways to understand so-called, 'real world problems', which means those problems that are of relevance to societies (Christinck & Padmanabhan,

2013). Therefore, BRINCC has been working towards an transdisciplinary approach that involves not only scientific knowledge, but also non-academic knowledge. The transdisciplinary approach is aimed at creating a transformation knowledge needed to be able to change an undesirable situation into a more favourable one. For this, there is a need to involve a variety of actors (Christinck and Padmanabhan, 2013). BRINCC mainly worked with local villagers and also consulted governmental agencies, such as the Bupati (Regional Governor) before and after the 2011 expedition, as well as the Department Kehutanan (local Forestry Department). Data were mainly collected at the village level but secondary data from the statistical office (Badan Pusat Statistik) were used.

This article intends to describe the attitudes of two local communities towards companies with forest conversion plans and the factors that might influence those perceptions. We present perceived advantages and disadvantages of the presence of companies and local perceptions on the importance to conserve nature. The research was conducted in two different villages in the sub district of Uut Murung which lies in the district of Murung Raya in the Province of Central Kalimantan, Indonesia.

METHODS

Ethics statement

This study was conducted after in-depth consultation with the local government, international NGOs operating in the Murung Raya Regency, such as "Fauna and Flora International" (FFI), as well as with the local communities themselves. In February 2011, a pre-expedition took place, which focused on gathering preliminary data, as well as giving local communities the chance to influence research directions. BRINCC aimed to incorporate a significant component of community directed research, whereby local people can request research on topics important to them. Therefore, the research plans were adapted accordingly, based on the requests of villagers to map an area of high social importance in order to strengthen community management rights through the application for a village forest (hutan desa). Before conducting the research, all national and local research permits were obtained. Further consultations were conducted to carry out our research at the beginning of the data collection