

Chapter 1: Context and Challenges

Grassroots Leadership and Popular Education in Indonesia

Reflections and Suggestions from Movements for Social and Environmental Change

based on interviews and conversations
with dozens of indigenous leaders and elders,
activists, educators, and movement-builders



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Grassroots Leadership and Popular Education in Indonesia is a publication by LifeMosaic and The Samdhana Institute. The book sets out to analyse and recommend ways to support grassroots leadership development and popular education in order to strengthen movements for social and environmental change – in Indonesia and around the world.

The book is for grassroots leaders, activists, educators and movement-builders in Indonesia and beyond, for all those participating in systemic change towards a more equitable and sustainable future, with the hope that in these pages there is a spark that gives you energy on your journey.

Please read **Chapter 1: Context and Challenges**.

The Introduction and Summary to the book has already been published [here](#). Chapter 2: Leadership in Crisis will be published in April 2015. The rest of the book will be serialised throughout 2015. The full version of the book will be published after the serialisation. Please subscribe to www.lifemosaic.net to receive the next chapters.

Please send your comments, critiques and stories to leadership@lifemosaic.net, or leave a comment on LifeMosaic's facebook or twitter.

Cover Photo: by Nanang Sujana, Malind child suffering from malnutrition in area of expanding industrial tree plantations, Zanegi, Merauke, Papua.

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1. Context and Challenges

This chapter provides an overview of the unprecedented challenges faced by communities, social movements and ecosystems in Indonesia and around the world. These include:

- A global rush for increasingly scarce resources; the risks of breaching multiple planetary boundaries which have enabled human life on Earth; increasing inequality; and an enormous loss of biological and cultural diversity.
- An Indonesian context where progress for community rights is being held back by large-scale land acquisition and growing agrarian conflict.
- Top-down models for social or environmental transformation, critiqued by interviewees and workshop participants in the course of this research.
- The influence of the doctrine that states that *There is No Alternative* to neo-liberal economics and globalisation.

Yet this chapter ends on a positive note, showing how, despite such challenges, there *are* alternatives that are being created around the world.

Global Context

Resource Rush

The global economy is due to triple in size by the time the world population reaches 9 billion in 2050. This presumes a business-as-usual scenario of maintaining resource-intensive lifestyles in industrialized countries while developing countries move towards similar consumption patterns. Leading the expansion is a fast-growing middle class, with rising per capita consumption and an appetite for more consumer goods and large footprint diets based on animal proteins and convenience foods.

Since the year 2000, a minimum of 30-50 million hectares of land have been sold, leased or are under negotiation in developing countries, mostly to international investors. Even these staggering numbers are likely to be underestimates, given the lack of transparency and difficulty in obtaining data for many land deals. And the pace is accelerating; most of these land acquisitions occurred within the last two years. Half of the land-grabs are in Africa. The second largest target is South East Asia and especially Indonesia.¹

The drivers behind large-scale land acquisitions include increasing demand for food, bio-fuels and other non-food agricultural products, as well as for minerals, timber and carbon sequestration credits.² Tourism and urbanisation are also taking their toll.

Land and water *banking* – securing control over resources for future use and speculation – is also on the rise. A 2011 World Bank study of 56 million hectares of large-scale land deals showed no productive activity had yet begun on 80% of the acquisitions.³

¹ Anseeuw, W, et al. (2012) *Land Rights and the Rush for Land: Findings of the Global Commercial Pressures on Land Research Project*, Rome: International Land Coalition, p.4.

² *Ibid.*

³ Deininger, K. et al. (2011) *Rising Global Interest in Farmland: Can it Yield Sustainable and Equitable Benefits?*, Washington: World Bank.

Planetary Boundaries

The enormous increase in resource demand is contributing to global environmental, social and economic problems for humanity. The best known of these global problems is climate change and its potentially disastrous consequences.

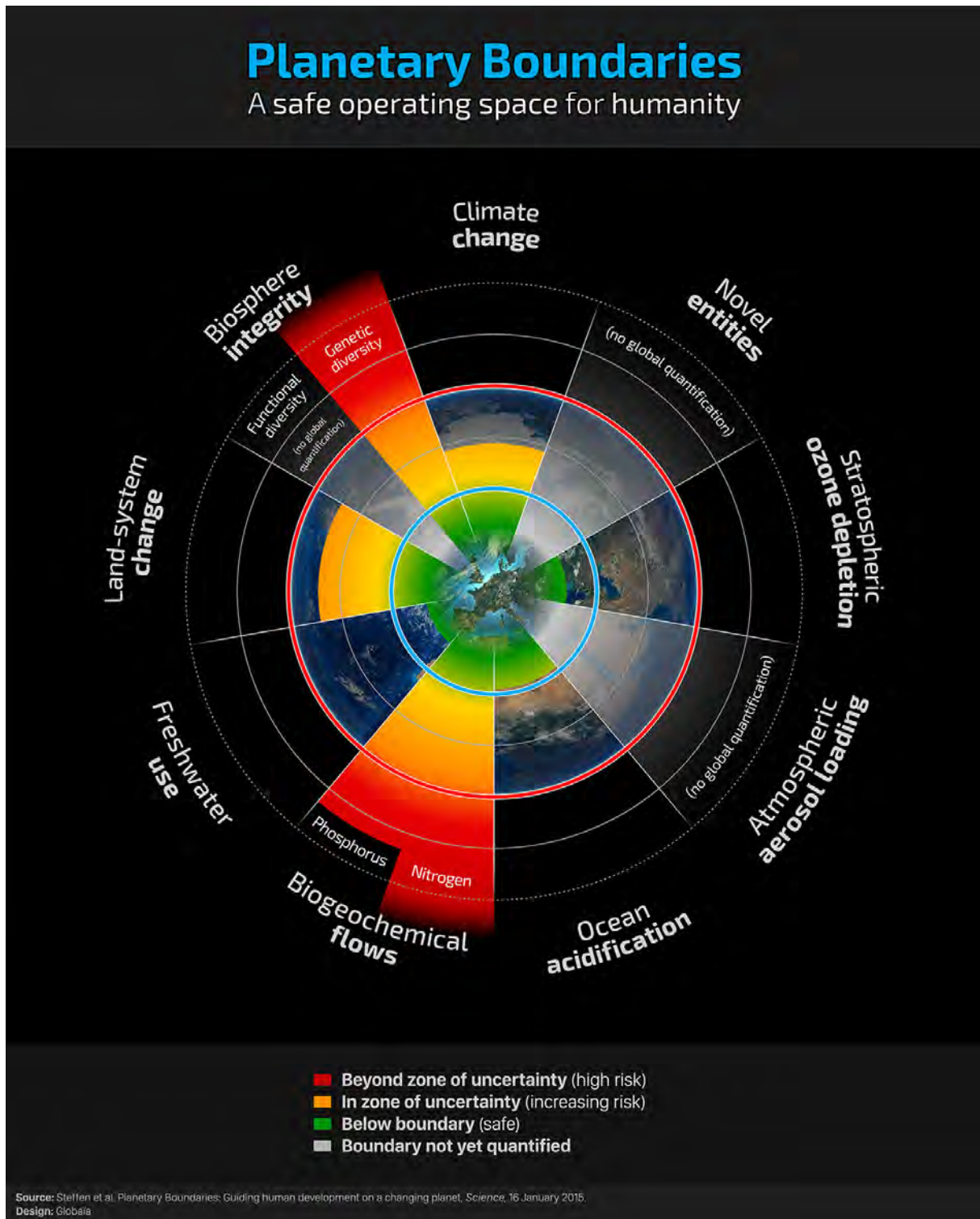


Figure 1: Planetary Boundaries⁴

⁴ Steffen W. et al. (2015) *Planetary Boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet*. *Science*, Vol. 347 (6223).

However scientists have identified a set of *nine* biophysical limits within which human life can exist safely on the planet, of which climate change is just one. The blue circle at the centre of the image shows the *safety zone* for each of these systems, while the orange and red pie-segments show how far we have already encroached on the acceptable limits.

*Four of nine planetary boundaries have now been crossed as a result of human activity. [...] The four are: climate change, loss of biosphere integrity, land-system change (for example deforestation), and altered biogeochemical cycles (phosphorus and nitrogen).*⁵

Crossing these boundaries increases the risks that human activities could suddenly push the Earth into a much less welcoming state, *damaging efforts to reduce poverty and leading to a deterioration of human wellbeing in many parts of the world.*⁶

In May 2013 atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ first reached a landmark 400 parts per million. Such a high level has probably not been reached since the mid-Pliocene around two to four million years ago, when the global average temperatures was 2-3°C higher and the sea level 25 m higher than today.⁷

The climate campaign group 350.org pulled together data to show the severity of the situation. For a 50% chance of staying below 2 degrees of warming, humanity can only emit another 565 more gigatons of carbon dioxide, only 14 more years of emissions at projected rates. Yet the large energy corporations have fossil fuel reserves that if used would result in 2,795 gigatons of carbon dioxide emissions, *five times the safe amount.*⁸

Bio-Cultural Diversity in Crisis

The unsustainable nature of the global resource rush is leading to a collapse in both biological and cultural diversity. The natural world is undergoing the Holocene Extinction, also known as the *Sixth Great Extinction*. If present rates of extinction continue, some scientists estimate that we will lose half of all animals and plants on our planet by 2100.⁹

Just as anthropologists, linguists and biologists are discovering strong correlations between biological and cultural diversity, humanity is also losing rapidly losing its linguistic and cultural diversity. About half of the world's languages will be lost by 2100, with a related loss of traditional ecological knowledge.¹⁰

⁵ Will Steffen, Planetary Boundaries 2.0 – new and improved (2015) Stockholm Resilience Centre, <http://www.stockholmresilience.org/21/research/research-news/1-15-2015-planetary-boundaries-2.0---new-and-improved.html> Accessed February 2015.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Dwyer, G.S., and M.A. Chandler (2009) *Mid-Pliocene sea level and continental ice volume based on coupled benthic Mg/Ca palaeotemperatures and oxygen isotopes*, Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: 367, p.157–168; Robinson, M., H.J. Dowsett, and M.A. Chandler (2008) *Pliocene role in assessing future climate impacts*, Eos, Transactions American Geophysical Union 89, p.501–502.

⁸ 350.org (2013) *Do the Math tour*. Web: <http://math.350.org/> Accessed June 2013.

⁹ Celâl Sengör, A.M., Atayman, Saniye and Sinan Özeren (2008) A scale of greatness and causal classification of mass extinctions: Implications for mechanisms. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 105 no. 36; Eldredge, N. (2001) *The Sixth Extinction*. Web: <http://www.actionbioscience.org/newfrontiers/eldredge2.html> Accessed June 2013.

¹⁰ Johnson, K. (2010) *The Sixth Great Extinction: The Sixth Great Extinction and its Effects on Humanity*, Izilwane. Web: <http://www.izilwane.org/the-sixth-great-extinction.html> Accessed June 2013.

As bio-cultural diversity is reduced, ecosystems and human cultures become less adaptable just as degrading ecosystems demand us to be more resilient than ever before.

Growing Inequality

Under the logic of the present system of global economic governance, environmental crisis is transformed into a speculative *opportunity*. In a vicious cycle, resource depletion leads to increased commodity prices, greater profit and further resource depletion. In August 2012, faced with the worst US drought since the 1930s, the resulting global volatility in food prices was hailed by the head of the agricultural division of the world's largest commodity trading firm as *good for Glencore* [his company].¹¹

In today's global land grab, investors from the Northern industrialised nations are joined by those from emerging economies like China, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Malaysia, Brazil and Indonesia. In this context, traditional calls to redress North / South injustice become less relevant than the widening gap between richest and poorest within nations and globally. National economies are increasingly controlled by transnational capital owned by a wealthy few.

The recent worldwide Occupy Movement staked out the refusal of the 99% majority of the world's people to *pay the price for the mistakes of a tiny minority*.¹² A 2014 Oxfam report offered a more detailed breakdown of growing inequalities:¹³

- Almost half of the world's wealth (46%) is now owned by just one percent of the population. This is up from 40% in 2006.¹⁴ The richest 85 individuals in the world own as much wealth as the poorest 50% of the world's population.
- Seven out of ten people live in countries where economic inequality has increased in the last 30 years.
- The richest one percent increased their share of income in 24 out of 26 countries for which Oxfam has data between 1980 and 2012.

Indonesian Context

Limited Gains

In Indonesia there has been some progress for community rights since Suharto's downfall in 1998.

There is freedom to demonstrate and freedom to vote, and an ongoing process of autonomy in Aceh and Papua. The 2014 village law has now superseded the 1975 village law, which imposed a uniform local governance model on diverse customary governance systems. This new law, though it remains untested and controversial for some, seems to offer more opportunity for the recognition of customary governance systems.

¹¹ Bawden, T. (2012) *Unholy trade of making millions out of misery*, The Independent, 23 August, 2012.

¹² Anon, *We are the 99%*. Web: <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/> Accessed February 2013.

¹³ Oxfam (2014) p.2 [richest 85 people in the world]-3, Working for the Few. Political Capture and Economic Inequality, Oxfam Briefing Paper no.178 Web: <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp-working-for-few-political-capture-economic-inequality-200114-en.pdf> Accessed May 2014.

¹⁴ United Nations University (2006) *Pioneering Study Shows Richest Two Percent Own Half World Wealth*. UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research. Web: http://www.wider.unu.edu/events/past-events/2006-events/en_GB/05-12-2006/ Accessed December 2006.

Perhaps the most important change has been Constitutional Court Ruling MK35 in May 2013, which acknowledges that indigenous peoples' customary forests are not part of the State Forest Zone, but forests subject to rights. This decision has fired-up the momentum for land reform, and invigorated the indigenous peoples movement. Hundreds of communities have raised signs declaring their territories as being outside of the State Forest Zone.

Across the country various local regulations are providing a degree of recognition and protection of community rights.¹⁵ The Indonesian Human Rights Commission has launched a National Inquiry on the systematic discrimination against indigenous peoples, due to report its findings early on in the mandate of the new president of the Republic of Indonesia. In the Indonesian presidential election of 2014, the winning Jokowi-Kalla candidates issued a manifesto that contained detailed commitments to addressing indigenous peoples rights.¹⁶

In December 2014, the President pardoned farmers rights activist Eva Bande who had been sent to jail for 4.5 years for organising communities to reject an oil palm plantation in Central Sulawesi. The establishment of an agrarian ministry and the merging of the environment and forestry ministries, might be signs of reform. A new land law is planned in 2015.

Cumulatively, these changes add up to the best opportunity for the recognition of community rights since the initial euphoria of the post-Suharto era.

Despite signs of hope, practitioners, activists and researchers consulted in the course of this research all agreed that the fundamental problems remain unchanged:

- Destruction of natural resources continues almost unabated.
- Laws and regulations continue to favour investors over communities.
- Indigenous communities' rights to their customary territories are not recognised. At the time of writing the draft law on the Recognition and the Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was not in the draft legislative programme for 2015.
- There is no national mechanism (at the time of writing) to recognise indigenous peoples' rights over their territories.
- Human rights abuses are still widespread and largely unpunished.
- The level of conflict and dispute in rural areas continues to increase.

The authors of a report assessing the situation of forest tenure reform in Indonesia highlight that despite the landmark Constitutional Court Ruling, there is no guarantee that the status of *masyarakat adat* (peoples of custom) as rights-bearing subjects will be restored. They point to weak political will by parliamentary and government elites, fragmented state institutions and systems, and the absence of a formal system to administer the process of recognition of rights.¹⁷

¹⁵ One example is the Local Regulation on the Recognition and Protection of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Malinau Regency (*Perda Nomor 10 Tahun 2012 tentang Pengakuan dan Perlindungan Hak-Hak Masyarakat Adat Di Kabupaten Malinau*), which notably recognises collective rights over indigenous peoples territories.

¹⁶ Jalan Perubahan untuk Indonesia yang Berdaulat, Mandiri dan Berkepribadian http://kpu.go.id/koleksigambar/VISI_MISI_Jokowi-JK.pdf Accessed December 2014.

¹⁷ Rachman, N.F and Siscawati, M. (2014 Unpublished), Report on the Assessment of Forest Tenure Reform in Indonesia. *Masyarakat Adat as Rights-Bearing Subjects of their Customary Territory after the Indonesian Constitutional Court Ruling of Case Number 35/PUU-X/2012*. p.2

Ongoing Expansion of Agri-Business and Extractive Industries

Indonesia leads the world in greenhouse gas emissions from land use change. Natural ecosystems, including carbon-rich peatlands, are sacrificed for the sake of a wholesale expansion of monoculture agriculture and mining.

Instead of protecting the rights and interests of local communities and land rights-holders, the Indonesian government has long supported large-scale land acquisition through investor friendly policies and practices. Though estimates vary greatly, in the coming decade there are government plans to establish 20 million hectares of new oil palm plantations; up to 9 million hectares new industrial tree plantations; and to convert 2 million hectares of forests for mining concessions.

In November 2014 President Jokowi declared of the activities of oil palm and pulpwood companies: *If they are indeed destroying the ecosystem because of their monoculture plantations, they will have to be terminated.*¹⁸

However, in late February 2015, President Jokowi announced plans to develop a further 9 million hectares of land for *small farmers*. It is clear the intended model is large-scale agricultural development, with smallholders and labourers brought in through transmigration programmes, and developments likely to take place on lands that have existing indigenous rights-holders. The developments will include large-scale sugar-cane investments, and 1 million hectares of new oil palm in Central and East Kalimantan.¹⁹

Cultural and Social Erosion

The land rush is undermining rural livelihoods and food security as communities lose access to ecosystem services. The investment juggernaut leaves little time for communities to reflect on self-determination, cultural survival or language loss. Empirical evidence points to an unprecedented erosion of Indonesia's cultures and languages. The UNESCO *Interactive Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* classifies 146 Indonesian languages as *vulnerable, endangered or extinct*.²⁰

Conflict

The rapid transformation of landscape and culture leads to widespread social conflict. Every week brings news of another violent land dispute. The National Land Agency (Badan Pertanahan Nasional – BPN) lists no fewer than 14,337 agrarian conflicts across the country.²¹

¹⁸ <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/nov/27/indonesia-cracks-down-on-deforestation-symbolic-urban> Accessed November 2014.

¹⁹ Lahan 9 Juta Hektar Segera Dibagikan, Kompas, 28th February 2015. <http://print.kompas.com/baca/2015/02/28/Lahan-9-Juta-Hektar-Segera-Dibagikan> Accessed February 2015.

²⁰ UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. Web. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/languages-atlas/> Accessed February 2013. The numbers of vulnerable Indonesian languages is likely to be an underestimate since UNESCO's map hardly covers the southern half of Papua, East Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Timur - NTT), West Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Barat - NTB), Sumatra, or Kalimantan.

²¹ Examples include the displacement of communities by PT Asiatic Persada in Jambi; violence by PT Permata Hijau against 18 women in Maligi, West Sumatra; the shootings of six smallholders in Rokan Hulu, Riau; the infamous killings and protests in Bima, Sumbawa and Mesuji, South Sumatra; the August 2012 killing by Brimob of a 12-year old boy in Limbang Jaya, South Sumatra, in a dispute between the community and a state-owned plantation company.

An Indonesian national news magazine, Kompas, has described the situation as a *time bomb* of land disputes that could explode at any moment.²² The planned expansion of agribusiness and extractive industries described above is likely to exacerbate and accelerate the problem.

Urbanisation

Indigenous people and farmers' movements are affected by the simultaneous trends of urbanisation and rural transformation. A detailed analysis of this relationship is beyond the scope of this publication, but a few key points emerge in the interviews:

- One reason young people leave their villages is because their tenure rights are not secure, they face violence and intimidation, and their livelihoods and territories are under threat from the ongoing industrialisation of the landscape described above.
- Educated young people also feel they have no choice but to move to the city²³ because of a focus on urban economic development; and diminishing rural economic alternatives. Rural communities face political and structural disincentives that stop them from developing community-based forest management businesses. At the same time a growing plantation economy creates unskilled, ill-paid, insecure jobs.
- Cultural erosion is compounded by the exodus of the young and talented. Many older leaders speak of the increasing disconnection between humans and nature. Fewer young people speak the local language, practice customary law, or have in-depth knowledge of traditional management of natural resources.
- When young people leave the community, the struggle for land rights may be weakened, particularly when some of the brightest go. Roem Topatimasang described cases where *the young people who go study are the people who come back and want to sell the land because this is the way that they enter the 'modern' world.*

Weaknesses in Indonesian Movements

Indonesia boasts an impressive array of NGOs, research organisations, activists, academics and social movements working on indigenous peoples rights and environmental issues. They have had some successful campaigns, yet progress is less than might have been hoped for in the Post-Suharto era.

This relative failure can primarily be explained by the ferocity of the land grab and the dominance of the monoculture-based development model. At the same time interviewees and workshop participants spoken to in the course of this research point to weaknesses in the movements as another cause of this stagnation.

The analysis below does not mean that such problems occur in all organisations, far from it. However respondents pointed out that these were frequent failings, repeated in many different situations. This identification of weaknesses should be seen as a call to action by respondents wishing to strengthen the movements they are part of.

²² Kompas, "*Bom Waktu*" Sengketa Lahan, Kompas. Web:

<http://nasional.kompas.com/read/2012/05/28/01421611/.Bom.Waktu.Sengketa.Lahan> Accessed May 2012.

²³ The rural to urban brain-drain and its challenges to the emergence of new indigenous leaders are discussed at more length in the next chapter.

The points brought up by interviewees and workshop participants included the following:

Limited Investment in Critical Analysis

Many rural communities still lack sufficient critical analysis of their situation, and this fundamental problem is insufficiently addressed by some NGOs. Communities continue to suffer from a lack of self-respect and self-value. They often lack even basic information about the challenges they face:

Communities don't know that the laws of the state do not recognise their existence as indigenous peoples, [nor] their rights to their natural resources, such as their territory and forests, which they have considered to this day as their own, because they have inherited them from their ancestors who have owned this land since time immemorial.

- Yati Simanjuntak

When there is no process of critical consciousness raising, communities also find it more difficult to maintain unity, or to critically analyse the development choices that they face.

Training versus Popular Education

NGO trainings are all too often one-off, issue-based events aimed at short-term project objectives rather than a fundamental assessment of community needs and aspirations. Some trainings focus on delivering outputs for funders, rather than addressing the fundamental goals of a prior needs assessment. By prioritising advocacy targets and activism over education for critical consciousness, such training may be of limited long-term use for communities.

Insufficient Investment in Grass-Roots Leadership

Practitioners remark that too few new grass-roots leaders are emerging to tackle the problems faced.

There are not enough senior *activist-educators* with the skills and knowledge to facilitate the emergence of these grass-roots leaders. Senior activist-educators have difficulty finding work in movement-building. The opportunities are in management, consultancy or policy advocacy, which means the grass-roots movements lose their most experienced facilitators.

Local movements are still often led by urban educated NGO staff rather than local community members. Although there are community representatives in the movements, there are few new faces and often *the usual suspects* attend meetings and conferences.

Pitfalls of NGO-Dependency

Many NGO activists continue to see themselves as the agents of change, instead of acting as facilitators and midwives to social movements.

Confusion of Roles

Paulo Freire had already identified the confusion of roles that some middle-class supporters of popular movements experience:

Some people of the dominant classes join the oppressed in their struggle for liberation. There is a fundamental role and has been so throughout the history of this struggle. However as they move to the side of the exploited they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin. Their prejudices include a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think, to want, and to know. These adherents to the people's cause constantly run the risk of falling into a type of generosity as harmful as that of the oppressors. They truly desire to transform the unjust order; but because of their background they believe that they must be the executors of the transformation. They talk about the people, but they do not trust them; and trusting the people is the indispensable precondition for transformation.

- Adapted from Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p.60

Communities are too rarely considered the main decision-makers in transforming their situation. Too often they are still seen as *objects* of development, or sources of information by government or NGOs; or as *case-studies for advocacy* by activist NGOs.

Even when interventions aim to support communities to regain their rights, at times the result can be increased material or psychological dependency on outside actors.

Some NGOs continue to *claim* communities (*this is OUR area - only we work here*), and communities are given little choice in deciding whom they would like to work with. Some NGOs demand that communities embrace their philosophies or their point of view rather than encouraging them to think for themselves.

Limited Strengthening of Traditional Structures

Some respondents argued that NGO work with communities can accidentally increase monocultural thinking and homogenisation of systems and institutions. For example some NGOs and funders may encourage *new* organisational structures, where they could instead value and strengthen traditional systems of governance and support self-governing entities.

Too few organisations facilitate communities to reflect on and to revitalise their traditional systems of governance, helping them to choose their own self-determined development. This is often related to the dominance of reactive campaigning described below.

International language sometimes replaces local concepts. In addition, many NGOs have sectoral approaches, focusing on health, education, or natural resource management, while communities assess their situation in a more holistic way.

The Money Trap

Much funding tends to bypass long-term grass-roots leadership development and movement-building, in favour of *expert-led* models with top-down frameworks. In funding negotiations, many donor agencies work with groups such as international NGOs or government agencies, with whom they have a shared discourse, rather than dealing directly with communities. Donors tend to think in terms of short-term funding cycles, rather than long-term visions. Many international donors are reactive, following the money and the latest trend.

Grantees can at times be equally reactive, as interviewee Yati Simanjuntak points out: *Sometimes NGOs don't have a clear ideology. They follow the next issue that is sexy – REDD, women's rights, human rights. They follow the fashion of their respective funding.*

Few NGOs are able to develop a strong bargaining position with funders. Given the international nature of the development sector, homogeneous systems, thinking and institutions can be unexpected side-effects of development interventions.²⁴

Reactive Campaigning

Many NGOs set their sights on policy advocacy and legislative change instead of increased community leverage over existing planning and legal tools. This amounts to over-reliance on the promise of future laws to solve present problems.²⁵

All too often NGOs focus on advocacy, responding to a human rights abuse or an environmental threat, rather than focusing on building long-term, grassroots movements. The reaction is entirely understandable, given the urgency of dealing with these situations, yet in the long-run this tendency means that insufficient effort is going into building the movements for broader transformation.

Without the investment in movement-building and leadership, a small pool of activists end up addressing ever-greater problems. Overworked, and emotionally drowned in a constant torrent of environmental destruction and human rights abuses, activists inevitably burn-out.

Community organisations are too often born and developed in opposition to large-scale developments. As a result community organisations may become weak at the end of a campaign – *whether the community wins or loses* – since the main purpose of the organisation has come to an end. When organisations have no long-term plan for self-determined development, particularly for building viable and equitable economic alternatives, unity and sense of purpose are often lost.

Corporations take their time. They may be rejected the first time round. But if the community has limited critical awareness and no clear plan for the future, they will eventually accept the corporation coming to their land.

Perhaps the most basic weakness of the one-campaign-at-a-time approach is that it draws its impetus from despair, shock and fear in the face of gross infringements upon the

²⁴ Besides interviewees, an additional source for this section was Attorney Doming Nahayangan, and his analysis of funder-community relationships, recorded in *Loket* project documents (2001) DFID MFP internal document.

²⁵ The limitations of such an approach was recognised as early as 117 AD when Roman historian Tacitus observed that *laws were most numerous when the state was most corrupt*. Tacitus (117 AD) *The Annals of Imperial Rome, Book III*. Web: various versions.

environment or human rights. While this can be effective in the short-term, it may not have long-term positive impacts. To achieve long-term, fundamental social transformation, it is far more effective to tap into community hopes than fears.

Monocultural Thinking

There Is No Alternative (TINA)

The impression that *there is no alternative* often influences the debate in Indonesia. Aggressive large-scale developments; laws and regulations that benefit corporations and criminalise communities; the use of intimidation and corruption to weaken debate or resistance; and the lack of tenure security for communities; all make the development of alternatives difficult.

Too often, no matter how destructive a planned development, affected communities ask *if not the mine, then what? If not the plantation, then what?* Communities accept the mine or the plantation because they feel *there is no alternative*. The dominant media, the politicians, the local government, the companies all tell them that *there is no alternative*.

NGOs are blamed for not having *solutions* or *alternatives*. Representatives of social and environmental movements find themselves caught in false debates where they are required to find alternatives to industrial-scale developments even when the planned transformation will clearly lead to worse outcomes than the existing situation.

This kind of false debate has become a powerful ideological weapon in the arsenal of neo-liberal economics and globalisation. Promulgated by media, politicians and companies, it even acquired an acronym under former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s: TINA, standing for *there is no alternative*.

The focus in many Indonesian movements on fire fighting instead of birthing the world we want to see, on describing despair instead of creating hope, may accidentally be reinforcing the idea that there is no choice. Since these approaches exist only in opposition to the dominant model of the industrial growth society, this strengthens the impression that movements are fighting a losing battle.

Monocultures of the Mind

The idea that *There Is No Alternative* is not original to 20th and 21st century neo-liberal thinking, on the contrary it is the continuation of a long process of devaluing and hiding knowledge outside of the dominant culture and economic system.

For instance indigenous cultures and knowledge have been devalued by centuries of colonialism, and as a result: *the sacred becomes profane, important bodies of knowledge are considered superstitious, equal exchange and the common ownership of land are seen as an archaic tradition against the expansion of the market and individual property.*²⁶

²⁶ Martinic, Sergio, quoted in Kane, L. (2001) *Popular Education and Social Change in Latin America*, Nottingham, UK: Russell Press. p.15-16

Portuguese philosopher Boaventura de Sousa Santos has offered a detailed examination of how the perceived absence of alternatives is constructed, briefly described below:²⁷

Knowledges, cultures and entire peoples are made invisible by dominant Northern paradigms emanating from centres of learning such as Oxford, Leyden or Berkeley. Whatever is not recognised by *modern* science is by default declared non-existent, ignorant or backward.²⁸

Pre-eminence is given to *international* activities or organisations, whether multinational corporations, global policy processes (such as climate conferences), or international NGOs, at the expense of local initiatives.

All labour is construed to be in service of the globalised, monetised economy. Any work that cannot be thus quantified or categorised (such as indigenous or peasant economies) is regarded as non-productive and therefore non-existent.

Development is perceived as a linear process, with the development pathway of the *developed* nations considered the only viable model.

In the name of this supposedly linear process, it is not uncommon for representatives of governments and corporations to argue that *there is no alternative* to deforestation; to the destruction of indigenous cultures; or to the enclosures of common land; given that this is what European countries did in order to develop their economies.

Another World is Possible

To be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing.

Raymond Henry Williams, Welsh political scientist and adult educator.

Despite the looming threats of land grabs, conflicts, cultural erosion, environmental degradation and uncertainty in Indonesia and worldwide, hope still exists. Paulo Freire, a key *popular education* thinker, understood that oppression reduces the oppressed to a sense of timeless hopelessness, where change seems impossible. Yet throughout history, these hopeless moments are the ones that have been followed by radical paradigm shifts.²⁹

κρίσις = critical thinking

The Greek word *krisis*, or *κρίσις*, can mean a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger. But the word comes from the ancient greek for *I decide*. In this sense *krisis* is an invitation to critical thinking,³⁰ which in turn sows the seed of societal change.

²⁷ Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009) *Educación Popular y Paradigmas Emancipadores*, La Piragua: Revista Latinoamericana de Educación y Política, Panamá: CEAAL, no. 30. p.11-32.

²⁸ Such monocultures of knowledge may help explain why certain conservationists have been blind to indigenous communities' excellent management of their natural resources. The world-view on which conservation was based was simply not capable of understanding the knowledge in front of them.

²⁹ Steinberg, S. *Paulo Freire (1921-1997)*, The Paulo and Nita Freire International Project for Critical Pedagogy. Web: <http://www.freireproject.org/content/paulo-freire-1921-1997> Accessed August 2012.

³⁰ Etymology of crisis (*le mot grec krisis, utilisé à la fois pour désigner la «crise» et la «pensée critique»*) Richard Werly (2012) *Paros, une carte postale contre la crise*, Le Temps. Web: <http://www.letemps.ch/Page/Uuid/7750e60c-e897-11e1-8e1d-ddab828cee35#.Uc2R715bNsQ> Accessed August

Push-Back

There are also many stories of hope. Dramatic change can spring up quite suddenly where it is least expected, as we have seen in recent years Spain's *Indignados* protests leading to the Podemos movement based on participatory leadership; Occupy movements around the world; Turkish pro-democracy movements; Brazilian movements for political reform; *Idle No More*, the growing movement for indigenous resurgence in Canada and globally, and the oil divestment movement growing exponentially

The loss of culture, community and land can be reversed. For example the Apache nation, displaced 100 years ago, has in recent years been able to revitalise its culture and language, and to regain rights to parts of its territory which it had long been scattered from.³¹ Three hundred years after being cleared off their lands to make way for large-scale sheep-farming, some Scottish communities are regaining rights to their lands, and creating sustainable economic alternatives, producing their own energy from wind and micro-hydro, generating jobs to ensure that young people can stay and work in the community.

In his famous 1960s essay *The Tragedy of the Commons*, ecologist Garrett Hardin argued that communally held resources end up overharvested and destroyed. But in the years since, Nobel Prize-winning economist Elinor Ostrom pointed out that Hardin *confused open-access commons with commons that are the joint property of a community*.³² A growing body of research has shown that communities with secure rights and set rules for their *commons* are often the most effective managers and protectors of forests and other natural resources. In the process, these communities also reap multiple benefits in terms of livelihoods, biodiversity, cultural diversity, and emissions reductions.^{33 34 35 36}

This new understanding challenges the orthodox left-right choices of state versus private control of the means of production. While no panacea, the commons are being recognised as another viable set of alternatives for organising the world.

2012; Thayer and Smith (1999) *Greek Lexicon entry for Krisis*, The NAS New Testament Greek Lexicon <http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/krisis.html> Accessed March 2013.

³¹ James Anaya, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, told the story of his nation during the 10th anniversary celebrations of AMAN in Jakarta, 2009.

³² Ostrom, E. (1990) *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 90.

³³ A study by International Forestry Resources and Institutions into the conditions of forests near 178 forest user groups, found that regular monitoring and sanctioning by local groups was strongly associated with better forest conditions. Ostrom, E. (2010) *A Multi-Scale Approach to Coping with Climate Change and Other Collective Action Problems*, Solutions. Vol 1, No. 2. pp. 27-36

³⁴ Chhatre and Agrawal, using IFRI data, associated larger forest size and greater rule-making autonomy at the local level with high carbon storage and livelihood benefits. Ashwini Chhatre and Arun Agrawal (2009) *Trade-offs and synergies between carbon storage and livelihood benefits from forest commons*, PNAS 106 (42) 17667-17670.

³⁵ World Bank and IRRI Researchers found that *in Latin America and the Caribbean...indigenous areas are almost twice as effective as any other form of protection. In Asia, strictly protected areas perform better than in the crude estimates, but multi-use is twice as effective* Nelson A, Chomitz KM (2011) *Effectiveness of Strict vs. Multiple Use Protected Areas in Reducing Tropical Forest Fires: A Global Analysis Using Matching Methods*. PLoS ONE 6(8): e22722.

³⁶ Studies from Brazil, Nepal, Mexico, and Guatemala showed that indigenous forest management compares favourably to that of protected areas for reducing deforestation, fires and emissions. David Kaimowitz (2012) *Community & Indigenous Forest Ownership & Management: Potential to reduce forest carbon emissions*, Unpublished powerpoint presentation.

Around the world, indigenous peoples' movements increasingly reject the *logic* of a zero-sum choice between economic growth versus environmental sustainability.

For example, in Latin America grassroots activists have won recognition of indigenous peoples' territorial rights and introduction of intercultural bilingual education in schools and universities. Ecuador and Bolivia have both accorded legal status to the *Rights of Nature*, and both countries' constitutions now incorporate the indigenous concept of *Sumak Kawsay*, or *living life in plenitude*³⁷ as the overarching goal of development. *Sumak Kawsay* is an ancestral Andean ideal of seeking life in harmony and equilibrium within yourself, between men and women, between different communities, and between human beings and the natural environment of which they are part.³⁸

Examples like the ones above show that history has not stopped; the destruction of livelihoods, resources and cultures does not need to be inevitable nor permanent. The hopeless outlook that tells us that things will never change is not necessarily true, and is likely to be an impediment to action.

Strengthening Indonesian Movements and Leadership

Indonesian movements for positive social and environmental change are in a strong position to face the challenges of the day, and to transform the reality of the country.

This unique moment calls for large numbers of talented, critical, autonomous local community leaders. In the long-run, a movement for social change is only as strong as its capacity to nurture new leaders. Most of the knowledge, skills and capacity for supporting the emergence of a new generation of grass-roots leaders and movement-builders is already there, but the channels and frameworks to make this happen need to be strengthened.

Respondents offered the following key recommendations to make this happen:

- Focus on movement-building in addition to advocacy
- Focus on education for critical consciousness in communities.
- Invest in community leadership.
- Strengthen the institutions communities themselves choose to be represented by.
- Work to avoid funder-led interventions and a culture of dependency.
- Focus on preventative campaigning instead of firefighting.
- Set out your visions of a better world (work to make hope possible rather than despair convincing).

The following chapters – on leadership, popular education, approaches, curriculum, syllabus and recommendations – will provide analysis and suggestions to support the emergence of new leaders to help facilitate and accelerate positive social and environmental change.

³⁷ Kowii, A. (Subsecretary of Education, Ecuadorian Ministry of Education) *El Sumak Kawsay*, UNPFII. Web: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfi/documents/El%20Sumak%20Kawsay-ArirumaKowii.pdf> Accessed June 2012.

³⁸ Adapted from Bizerra, C. (2009) *The Indigenous Decolonial Concept of "Buen Vivir" in Latin America* Foro Social Mundial. Web: <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2010/02/446813.html> Accessed June 2012.

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