

Panel 12: Contested Values, Socio Natural Rearrangement, and Infrastructural Development in the Time of Crisis.

**Neoliberalism and the ambiguity of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)**

**Iwan Pirous** (Master Anthropology Nottingham Trent University, Social Development of PT Gaia Eko Daya Buana,

**Syarifudin** (Master Anthropology Universitas Gadjah Mada, Social Expert of PT Gaia Eko Daya Buana).

Presented in The 8 International Symposium of Journal Antropologi Indonesia, "What are the roles for anthropology in this time of multiple crises?". Organized by Department of Anthropology Universitas Indonesia and Universitas Sam Ratulangi on Manado, 2-5 August 2022

PANEL 12

This paper aim to discuss ambiguity of values, questioning ethical, power relations, moral issues which sit uncomfortably for anthropologists who take position as environmental consultant in neoliberalism economy era. A situation that requires her/him to twist the meaning of "putting the people first", while at the same time continuously self-questioning: who has the right to translate their money into what sorts of meaning? (Graeber, 2012).

The neoliberal economic system has created a market-driven world in which states and corporations both promote the commercialization of nature, and consultants serve as multidisciplinary scientists. An Environmental Consultant provides assessment and advisory services for their clients on matters regarding the management of environmental issues. They are generally hired by consultancy firms, which are hired by the public sector or commercial organizations.

Every environmentalist worked in consultancy firms are seemingly pushed to provide successful stories by promoting simplistic narratives to efficiently generates funds using productive terms such as ecotourism, bioprospecting, payments for environmental services. offers a spectrum of positive values as promises including aiding cash poor communities to protect their biodiversity, promise increased participation, inclusion, development, empowerment of rural populations, eradication of poverty, encouraging environmentally friendly industries, and educating people to love and steward nature. However, recent studies suggest that Neoliberal driven governance and conservation initiatives often have negative social or ecological outcomes. Büscher and Dressler (2007) use the term 'layer of discursive blur' to describe how a series of rhetorical concepts such as participation, sustainable development, and win-win solutions are repeatedly used throughout conservation agency networks to conceal complex reality of unequal power relations between companies, communities and ignorant state. It is doubtful that Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) really acts as instrument to gain people's consent.

Data was collected from various cases while working as an environmental consultant in Central Kalimantan and Riau from 2018 to 2021 related to palm oil companies (company names will be mentioned in presentation).

The term "FPIC" is used by the corporations to refer to an administrative procedure that includes an FPIC letter, an attendance list of attendees, and pictures of meeting activities in the village. But we believe that the FPIC general principle should be taken into account in social impact assessment studies. However, businesses that hire us as consultants typically disregard findings that have a detrimental effect on the community. Tenure disagreements are one of the things that the company detests the most. The company's resistance demonstrates that good corporate ethics haven't been properly put into practice, on the one hand. However, the researcher may feel that, despite the sophistication of the scientific approach they employs, the researcher is an unreliable source since they consistently offer unfavorable facts. This situation raises troubling ethical issues. First, if

knowledge must be concealed, how can researchers facilitate FPIC-based negotiation effectively? Second, communities are constantly vulnerable and at a disadvantage. Third, the researcher cannot guarantee that the report's findings will be truly used as a guide to strengthen ties between the community and the company. We hope that this presentation will provide an opportunity for us to share and reflect on field experiences in discuss the moral ambiguity or values that we confront as researchers working in a neoliberal business environment.

Keyword: Palm Oil, FPIC, moral ambiguity, neoliberalism.