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## Slippery Violence in the REDD+ Forests of Central Kalimantan, Indonesia

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### Abstract

Due to increasing global demand for palm oil, coal, and timber, Indonesia has become the largest contributor of greenhouse gases from primary forest loss in the world. Carbon market mechanisms, like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+), are being promoted by many elements of Indonesia's government as an effective policy response. The REDD+ programme is designed to enable the provision of financial compensations to protect and restore standing forests by making them more valuable than the timber they contain. However, the logic of REDD+ constructs people living in and around project sites as environmentally destructive and therefore in need of incentivisation to do otherwise. Local people are compensated for the 'opportunity costs' of not degrading forests. Within this frame 'locals'—suffering from the malaise of dispossession—are Othered as illegal loggers, poachers, greedy miners or arsonists. In reality, REDD+ often facilitates the continuation of violence, legitimising an image of small-holders, rather than large international corporations, as the cause of forest degradation in Indonesia. Focusing on the Sungai Lamandau REDD+ project of Central Kalimantan, I discuss how, for some of Sungai Lamandau's landless farmers, REDD+ is accelerating the very violence and environmentally destructive behaviours it claims to discourage. Farmers are becoming embroiled in other ongoing processes, pushing them towards illicit livelihood strategies, sometimes with devastating outcomes.

**Keywords:** REDD+, neoliberal conservation, intimacy-geopolitics, violence, exclusion, Indonesia

### INTRODUCTION

Indonesia remains the largest contributor of greenhouse gases from land use change and forest degradation in the world<sup>1</sup>. Every year, 840,000 ha of primary forest is removed in Indonesia (Margono et al. 2014). As a global policy response, the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) mechanism is growing in significance, providing economic incentives for forest protection to make

standing forests more valuable than just the timber they contain. However, REDD+ has become loaded with a great many other meanings. The mechanism has changed considerably since its original conception to encompass multiple governance objectives—from a tool to reduce emissions from land use change and forestry to a complex and multifaceted programme, redefining human-forest interactions (Astuti and McGregor 2015; Howson 2017). REDD+, as a market mechanism, is variously presented as a cost-efficient option for mitigating human-induced climate change, providing development assistance to Indonesia's 'forest dependent communities', and protecting tropical forest ecosystems (Nielsen 2013; den Besten et al. 2014).

REDD+ is becoming understood widely as part of a suite of neoliberal resource-valuation tools, which do more to promote uneven accumulation of rights to things and extend the reach of global capitalism than to providing tools for sound ecological management (Brockington and Duffy,

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2010; Büscher et al 2012; Matulis 2014). As well as being starkly disingenuous, I argue that these modes of neoliberal environmentalism can be profoundly violent. As Tyner (2016) observes, the market logics of neoliberalism is determinant of a pervasive indifference to life, whereby some individuals are let die because they fail to conform to the dictates of capital accumulation. Such a biopolitical perspective lays out the forms of life that environmentalists should support through market-based interventions and the others which may be either directly or circuitously sacrificed (Nel 2015a).

For REDD+ to work there remains a necessity for projects to at least appear just and equitable for local ‘forest dependent communities’ (Di Gregorio et al. 2013). For this purpose, REDD+ projects are legitimised by roping the ‘poor’, the ‘local community’ together for the sake of equivalence and commensurability, often painting them as illicit actors in need of incentivising to do as they ought. The workings of REDD+ in Indonesia are wrapped up in all sorts of good things, including forest protection, community empowerment, and economic development—the desire to intervene in other people’s lives and make them better (Hall 2013). Not surprisingly then, aside from a few exceptional cases (e.g., Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2014; Nel 2015b), processes of enclosing forests for carbon rarely necessitate the use of direct corporeal harm to the bodies of those affected. However, the violent exclusions from REDD+ forests addressed in this paper are of an implicit kind—hidden away in market-based regulation of land and private property. By focussing on these many forms of hidden violence occurring through REDD+ interventions, the paper understands the push for REDD+ in Indonesia as an intimate ‘war by other means’ (Duffield 2007). Despite lacking bloodshed, the multiform plurality of violence explored here are in some respects much more insidious. They take on a legitimate mask. With their associated structures of discrimination and oppression, they concretise the rightness of capital interests while doing very little to alleviate the environmentally destructive excesses of those same interests.

To draw attention to these hidden forms of violence, the paper adopts a feminist-inspired intimacy-geopolitics approach to an analysis of REDD+. This analysis highlights the connections and relations between intimate actors and actions with what is often considered geopolitical. Such an approach attempts to dissolve the customary boundaries between the global and the local, the family and state, and the personal and political as objects of study (Pain and Staeheli 2014). ‘Intimacy’ is understood here not only as elements of life taking place at close range, spatially and socially restricted to a person and a few tight-knit connections. Instead, the paper argues that the geopolitical is never separate from that which is intimate. This conceptualisation considers intimacy through sets of multiple intersecting relations, connecting the bodies of people in Sungai Lamandau with others more distant from them. Violence is a key theme for intimacy-geopolitics (Williams and Massaro 2013; Pain and Staeheli 2014). The paper therefore understands violence as operating through emotional and psychological processes as a means of

wielding control. Violence, through the intimacy-geopolitics frame, is therefore linked to wider social norms, obligations, and customs, and to economic relations (Hays-Mitchell 2005). These forms of violence are often understood as explicitly or implicitly sanctioned by states (Springer 2011) and institutions (Fletcher This issue). In this way, violence plays a fundamental role within systems of oppression and the insecurities that disproportionately affect those excluded (Koopman 2011).

The empirical exploration of violence is informed by the Sungai Lamandau REDD+ project in Central Kalimantan, one from a portfolio of four REDD+ projects being supported by the Clinton Climate Initiative’s (CCI) Forestry program (between 2008 and 2013). Through this exploration, I argue that the REDD+ project is far from simply a defender of forest spaces, but constitutes an offensive position, whereby conservation is, for some, an intervening aggressor used to keep things as they are (Duffy 2014). In order to make sense of this offensive position, I do not attempt to police a strict definition of violence here. However, I do adopt a conceptualisation that makes use of violence’s slippery character. In doing so, the paper argues that limiting a definition of violence to that which is explicitly obvious within any framing of ‘green wars’ neglects injustices rooted in the enabling and all too often hidden structures of violence.

The following section explains the slippery conceptualisation of violence in more detail. I then introduce the intimacy-geopolitics lens used for looking at violence in everyday places. The complex political ecology of the project site as well as the ‘community-based’ model of REDD+ as manifested in Sungai Lamandau is then explored. The penultimate section investigates how everyday market-based interactions tied up in the REDD+ project’s development and conservation goals constitute the arsenal for a hidden ‘green war’—exposing the violent exclusions from the REDD+ project as they were mobilised by the project’s diverse array of actors. These discussions inform the paper’s conclusions.

## SLIPPERY VIOLENCE

When understood as ‘slippery’, violence is not an ontological category. Acts described as violent are always historically and geographically contingent and dialectically related to the society from which they emerge (Tyner 2015). By adopting a broader view of violence that places acts in their geographical and historical context, certain violence in the form of transgressions of conservation and development interests, for example, become more understandable (Duffy 2014).

When enclosing forests for REDD+, exclusions form part of an inevitable trade-off to securing conservation and development interests, which are often considered more legitimate than those involving resource extraction. Violence thus becomes a matter of law and property rights. Whether realised or implied, physical violence is important to the legitimation, regulation, and market-based operation of all property concerns and their legal basis of existence (Hall et al. 2011). Proudhon (1840) contrasted the sovereign

right of ‘property’—viewed as an affront to the liberty, equality, and security of the community—with ‘possession’, which cannot be mobilised for exploitation as it is based on actual use. Property is thus defined by its mechanism of exploitation, which makes it fundamentally different from possession insofar as it relies on coercion, exclusion, hierarchy, and most notably, force (or law) to maintain its viability (Springer 2015).

Baird (2014) argues that in legitimising the ‘rightness of property’ and servicing the green economy’s land requirements, memories of formalised exclusions are particularly relevant. He also stresses, in relation to various large-scale plantations, mining, and hydropower dam concessions, the importance of political memories in (re)shaping understandings of particular varieties of memory-laden political landscapes. However, these memories within landscapes are rarely uniformly shared by all. For example, years of dictatorial rule in Indonesia are often remembered for their hardships, or occasionally with fondness for their stability and assertive leadership. Memory and politics shift enclosures from a violent to a legitimate truth. Furthermore, shared understandings of past events shape perceptions concerning what is right, possible or pragmatic today, especially when the rightness of property remains contested.

Benjamin (1921) in his *Critique of Violence*, explored a general tendency to obscure violence in institutionalised forms of private property. There are also inclinations to exclusively regard violence as something one can perceive only through its direct bodily effects. Benjamin used the idea of ‘divine violence’ in order to designate ‘an Act’—a brutal disruption, which exists external to any law. This can be contrasted with ‘mythic violence’, which is a means of establishing the rules of law, or the legal social order. Arendt (1963) exemplified mythic violence in a recount of how the Nazi officer, Adolf Eichmann defended himself during his trials in Israel, by appealing to Kantian duty for his part in the ‘Final Solution’. Arendt (1963) called this the embodiment of the banality of evil. From this perspective, one does not need to be fanatical, sadistic, or mentally ill to murder millions; it is enough to be a loyal follower eager to do one’s duty from a desk (Levy 2006).

Rooted in Lacan’s (1977) triptych of psychoanalytic theory, Žižek (2008) distinguishes blood-spilling ‘subjective violence’ from its ‘objective’ counterpoint. Subjective violence is, according to Žižek, the perceptibly obvious violence seen on the news or on the streets in the form of crime and ‘terror’, civil unrest or international conflict. This is the most visible portion of the violence spectrum. ‘Objective violence’ is the ‘unengageable’ processes of violence that take the shape of either the symbolic (bound up in language and its forms [Bourdieu 2001; Jiwani 2006]) or the structural (e.g., the catastrophic consequences of the global market economy when it is functioning normally [Galtung 1969; Farmer 2004]). Structural and symbolic violence are at the slippery core of this discussion. As Žižek (2008:2) suggests, these forms of violence “may be invisible, but [they have] to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what might otherwise seem to be ‘irrational’ explosions of subjective violence”.

When violence concerns only the direct, corporeal offences to a person(s), one runs the risk of relegating violence to irrationality. Springer (2011) argues that all violence is rational. Where violence is ever explained away as ‘irrational’, Springer argues that this is a colonial ascription applied to cultures or individuals in an attempt to mark them as ‘Other’. When one acknowledges violence, what one sees is not a ‘thing’, but a moment with a past, present, and future that is determined by its relations with other moments of social process (Springer 2012). The material Act of violence itself is merely the Real (in the Lacanian sense) nodal point, a snapshot of oppressive social relations. On its own the ‘act’ does not mean very much. The missing imaginary and symbolic elements are what make the Real Act profoundly unjust, humiliating, painful or emancipatory.

Resistance, according to Žižek (2008), may constitute emancipatory violence<sup>2</sup>. However, there needs to be a clear differentiation between acts that are an authentic and violent break that challenge the morality of a neo-liberal symbolic order, and those that work to perpetuate that order. Badiou (2012) has argued that the neoliberal ‘market-society’, although by virtue of being ‘global’—it appears to encompass the whole world—sustains a ‘worldless’ ideological constellation in which people are deprived of their ways of locating meaning. Often within carbon forestry discourses, subjectively violent reactions to the market-society’s worldlessness work to reinforce the primacy of the market, both by ingraining limitations within subjects of any potential alternative to the market-society and by acting as a kind of ‘pseudo-violence’, legitimising the market-based symbolic order. By using a slippery conceptualisation of violence one can take account of violence’s emancipatory potential and draw attention to the vulnerable bodies of those at the sharp end of REDD+ interventions. As Vaneigem (1967 [1994]: 163) puts it, “so long as we have not managed to abolish any of the causes of human despair we have no right to try and abolish the means whereby men [sic] attempt to get rid of despair”.

## INTIMACY-GEOPOLITICS AND VIOLENCE

The geopolitical scalar categorisations, dominant in much of REDD+ literature, are highly problematic. Lindhjem et al. (2010) characterise two forms of REDD+ benefit accrual—the first involves sharing benefits among global, national, and local level actors; the second among communities, households, and other local actors. These scalar formations, suggesting that sites of carbon commodity production are fundamentally separate from where they are theoretically traded, serve to justify an apparent impracticality to distribute benefits equitably. These categories also disguise messy and inequitable webs of power, drawing them instead as well-ordered production lines along which people receive what they deserve (Howson 2017).

A feminist-inspired geopolitical lens redresses the usual emphasis on the geopolitical as primary in negotiations of REDD+ in places. It refocuses attention on the seemingly apolitical, ‘mundane’, everyday reproductions of geopolitical

power and violence. In much geographical analysis, violence has been separated out, positioned either as local or everyday, or as objects of international or political conflict (Dalby 2008). Intimacy-geopolitics, as I use it here, unpicks and draws connections across different forms of violence and insecurity. The approach enables an understanding of how violent exclusions mediate intimate processes that traverse the conventional scales of REDD+ implementation—‘national, sub-national and local’ (Angelsen et al. 2012). These intimate processes include friendships, fears, shared histories/memories, and spaces of interaction. ‘Intimacy’ therefore represents more than just the relationship between neighbours and kin, or that which was spatially proximate.

Pain and Staeheli (2014) suggest that intimacy consists of three intersecting sets of relations, which work simultaneously rather than separately. First, intimacy is understood as a set of spatial relations, stretching from proximate to distant. In this regard, my analysis, like much feminist research, emphasises the body as the primary unit of analysis. Second, intimacy is understood as a mode of interaction that stretches from personal to distant—e.g., how emotions, fears, and knowledges affect how subjects resist and shape wider power relations and formalised systems of REDD+ operation. Third, intimacy involves a set of practices, again applying to, but also connecting the body and that which is distant; e.g., livelihood strategies in Sungai Lamandau often traversed the interpersonal, institutional, and national realms.

Besides a few exceptions, according to Pain (2015), political geographers have had little to say about domestic or everyday violence. This is surprising within a discipline with a core interest in how spaces, places, and scales produce and reproduce a range of social and political phenomena. Attention towards militarised and violent green wars are of course warranted. When this attention fails to understand the green war as inseparable from the politics and experiences of everyday life, the violence becomes situated as different and distant (Sjoberg 2013). The geopolitical violence in question relies on more pervasive, intimate forms of slippery violence. Both are similarly located, they work through emotions, and there is always some enactment of resistance (Pain 2015).

When meanings associated with forest protection and social justice become understood only through a geopolitical, economic lens, using mechanisms such as ‘informed consent’ (see Corbera and Schroeder 2011), where equity or justice becomes ‘benefit-sharing’ (see Di Gregorio et al. 2013), where nature becomes ‘natural capital’ (see Juniper 2012), and social protection is understood through a collection of ‘safe-guards’ (see Jagger et al. 2009), the results reify an economic reality. A critical analysis of REDD+ should be framed so as to escape the economic representations which place imaginations of forest conservation within a discursive *cul-de-sac* of neoliberal environmentalism. An intimacy-geopolitics, I suggest, offers one way to do this.

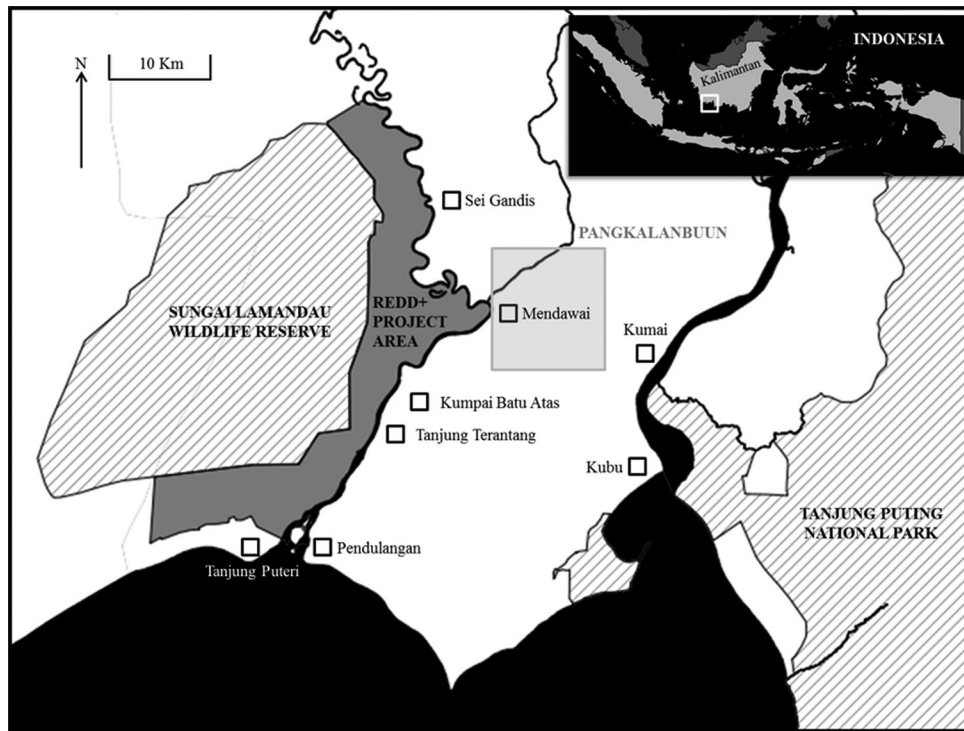
## THE CONTEXT OF REDD+ IN SUNGAILAMANDAU

As the Sungai Lamandau project was the first ‘community-based’ (*Hutan Kemasyarakatan*; HKM) REDD+ related activity in Indonesia, it is a good case through which to explore processes of violent exclusion occurring within intimate settings. A consortium of NGOs in partnership with the local West Kotawaringin (KoBar) government proposed the project in 2010. The project was initially funded with a CCI grant, with sustainable funding proposed through the sale of produced REDD+ Certified Emission Reductions (CERs). The proposed site constituted a ‘buffer zone’—a restricted area bordering the Sungai Lamandau wildlife reserve. Within the buffer zone, extractive activities, fires, and the felling of trees was prohibited and closely monitored by local government officials through a series of guard posts (Figure 1).

At the time of conducting this study, the Sungai Lamandau demonstration activity is the only REDD+ initiative in Indonesia where a community cooperative is listed as the official ‘Proponent’ on the Project Design Document (PDD). In March 2011, 10 cooperatives, with members from villages across the KoBar district, formed a legally-recognised union known as Pelangi KoBar Bersatu—The United Rainbow of KoBar (PKB). The aim of the project was to formalise existing community groups into legally recognised farmers’ cooperatives, which Yayorin (Indonesian Orangutan Foundation), a small conservation NGO, had facilitated locally since 1991. An alternative sustainable livelihoods programme for the cooperatives was implemented, involving the revival of traditional land management practices, including native rubber (*jelutung*), rice, and rattan. In order to become a member of any of the cooperatives, one had to prove a livelihood connection and be a registered citizen of KoBar. Participating farmers’ cooperatives were expected to establish at least one communally-managed enterprise, which would in principle, provide members with greater economic security, a source of credit, or a means of capital to establish other enterprises in the future.

Empirical analysis of local people’s responses to the conservation and development measures derives from nine months of ethnographic fieldwork, which I conducted in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, in 2013. Much of the research involved semi-structured interviews and observations within three groups. These included: 1) the Mendawai of Pendulangan—indigenous Muslims (sometimes known generically as ‘Malay’), 2) a Javanese transmigrant community located within a rice farming settlement between Kumpai Batu Atas and Tanjung Terantang, and 3) an ethnic Malay Banjarese native *jelutung* rubber tapping group located in the Sei Gandis settlement. In each village and sub-village, the administrative head (Kepala Desa/Kedes), leaders, members, and affiliates of local farmers’ groups and women’s groups, and a sample of 15–40 individual households participated in the study. The material generated through observation was supplemented by formal and informal discussions with the project implementers, CCI and Yayorin, heads of local corporations, associated NGO





**Figure 1**  
*Map of the Sungai Lamandau study area, including REDD+ project site*  
 Source: Adapted from Howson 2017

staff members and volunteers, as well as local and provincial civil servants. All this data enabled a nuanced understanding of the relations, interactions, and practices of Sungai Lamandau's intimate green war.

The following section will use an intimacy-geopolitics approach to explore the slippery violence occurring as REDD+ played out in Sungai Lamandau. The violence traversed scales and sites of implementation, underpinning how they worked. The diffusion of geopolitical violence was achieved through their presence in the everyday, manifesting as a series of intimate exclusions. The discussion is divided into four parts, examining how violent exclusions were instituted, regulated, and legitimised through the REDD+ project's conservation and development goals. These goals included, 1) the promotion of market enterprise, 2) the development of 'sustainable' alternative livelihoods, 3) the enclosure of spaces for forest ecosystem restoration, and 4) incentivising pro-environmental behaviour. Within each, I highlight how structural violence(s) worked through everyday processes—they were similarly located, they worked through emotions and memory, and there was always enactment of resistance.

## SLIPPERY VIOLENCE IN REDD+ FORESTS

### Violence, market enterprise, and REDD+

REDD+ development interventions are said to require an enabling business environment for improving the quality of life for 'forest-dependent people' by generating alternative sources

of income and employment (Tomaselli and Hajjar 2011). Dependence is understood as a debilitating scourge, while its opposites—independence, autonomy, and freedom—are unproblematic (Ferguson 2013; Li 2013). The evidence from Sungai Lamandau reveals problems with this assertion. The formation of REDD+ project enterprises requires the merging of two opposing logics. The first suggests that promoting local entrepreneurship, income generation schemes, and small-businesses, will lead to socio-economic empowerment for marginalised groups. The second suggests that local small-holders are incompatible victims of global capitalist processes intruding from the outside, and should therefore be protected from capitalism by managing their lands in common. As Yoshi, a Yayasan staff member once explained to me:

[Some farmers] do not understand money. When they get it they spend it on silly things. They get themselves into trouble sometimes. It's crazy. They're like children. We gave out transport money at a project visit once. We had people asking for IDR 10.000 instead of IDR 50.000, because they want the red note, not the blue one, and they could buy cigarettes with the red ones.

Put together, the incompatible logics form what Davis (2006: 181) calls the "micro-capitalism" of the poor—walled economies, protected from the alluring viciousness of capitalism in its global form. Yet, the REDD+ project's proposed small-scale capitalism described through terms such as 'independence' and 'local entrepreneurship' ignores the micro-processes of dispossession that such a capitalism generates.

The push to enable an adequate business environment around Sungai Lamandau's local commodity markets of rubber, rice, and rattan, was an important mediator of REDD+ benefits (Howson and Kindon 2015). The push was also a cause of structural violence, excluding already marginalised farmers and labourers from project benefits. For example, some REDD+ cooperatives offered options of loans to small-holders and landless labourers. Many used the loans as *modal* (start-up capital) to fund small business ventures, others used it to weather a crisis, buy food or cover school fees. Where debtors became over-extended, they were often forced to turn to illicit and environmentally-destructive repayment options. Agung, a member of the all-male Tani Sejati group, explained the situation like this:

Rice harvests fail at least once every three tries. The soil isn't right for it. We're forbidden from burning the fields like we used to, so we have to buy chemicals. [...] When there's no rice to harvest, people borrow from each other from the *arisan* [rotating communal savings and loans schemes]. If people can't pay it back they take timber and look for gold or something inside the reserve. [...] It's dangerous yes, but people have to eat (19 June 2013).

Unlike landed cooperative members, the landless lacked the means to invest in private business ventures or speculate on carbon markets, which they did not understand well. They were, instead, compelled into debt. For most labourers, excluded from REDD+ activities, mute docility was their response, fuelled through a desire to prosper. This tolerance for inequality and structural violence was usually (but not always) brought about through an internalising rationalisation. They displayed a spirit of '*belum*' (not yet) rather than '*tidak pernah*' (not ever). For landless farmers, this came with some violent environmental impacts. As Fathir, a male resident of Kumpai Batu Bawa explained:

Some people have no land. They have to sell it all, bit by bit, to pay off debts. They have nowhere to grow anything. For me, I cleared the forest at the back of my house. Noone was using it, just the chickens. [...] I still had to keep it quiet. You go to jail for clearing trees. Even the pylons are made of metal now you see? There's not even enough trees left to make pylons (4 October 2013).

The deforestation described here was a hidden form of violence countering the exclusionary dynamics forcing Fathir out of the REDD+ project. The act also worked to undermine a central objective of the REDD+ project—to protect Sungai Lamandau's forests. However, although the REDD+ project did not overtly dispossess people or enclose land formally held in common in Sungai Lamandau, it did rely on the same instruments of market-based force, creating market subjects through a rightness of property.

For *jelutung* rubber tappers in Sungai Lamandau, access to land was mediated less by property rights, but by other bundles of powers (Howson and Kindon 2015). The REDD+ project brought an opportunity for rubber tappers who maintained

these access qualifications to form collectives and resist the power of middlemen to set arbitrary hikes in commodity market prices. Prior to the REDD+ project, rubber tappers in Pendulangan and Tanjung Puteri worked independently of one another and sold their raw product to middlemen in the market centres of Mendawai and Sampit. Prices fluctuated daily. Utami, a member of the all-male Sepakat group told me in one interview:

I used to sell my *pantung* (raw rubber) at the docks in Sampit, because the market prices were higher there and my brother worked for the KORINDO [saw mill] on the boats, so he took it there for me. [...] Sometimes I wouldn't get more than IDR 4,000 a kilo selling it to middlemen, so I would make a loss. We don't have anything to do with [middlemen] now. They're all swindlers. They drove nice new cars while sometimes I couldn't even afford an *ojek* (motor bike taxi) to return home (25 July 2013).

The formation of the REDD+ enterprise in Pendulangan allowed the group to reshape the exclusionary market regime and assert their own powers to exclude. This formation enabled a resistance to violent market exclusions achieved through the same market rationale. However, for rubber tappers who could not maintain the necessary access qualifications, their outlook was very different. Rahmat, a local forestry officer described the situation:

To conserve and manage the forest effectively there is now a 33 member maximum [limit] allowed to enter the forest for rubber. We are trying to wean them off using the protected areas and the buffer zone by using the permit system and we work with *PolHut* to enforce the rules. [...] With the entry permits, they are valid for just six months. They can't be handed down to children and they have to be renewed by the cooperative leaders. So the numbers of forest users will always decrease. [...] Yes there's resistance, because there are few alternatives for them. (25 September 2013).

The act of unifying to improve market access only supported those who could access a REDD+ enterprise. The market-based symbolic order of competition and exclusion was peacefully normalised and reinforced, rather than transcended. After all, any capitalism is an assemblage of elements, practices, and processes with a history of violence and struggle. "We cannot tame it by building walls or wishing it away" (Li 2010: 400). In this instance, the issues engendered in systems of private property were solved, temporarily for some, yet perpetuated for others through systems of private property. The market's violence was simply moved around.

### Violence and 'sustainable alternative livelihoods'

The REDD+ project was attempting to link income generation (especially for the rural poor) with conservation objectives—a process commonly referred to as Integrated Conservation and Development (ICD). This approach,

according to CIFOR (2000: vi), accepts an understanding that, “a community and its members (potential entrepreneurs) will conserve and protect forest resources, if it receives the economic benefits from sustainable forest use”. For the REDD+ project in Sungai Lamandau, the application of such an approach assumes that it is the forest residents, rather than large multinational corporations, who are responsible for forest degradation with the challenge being to create ‘alternative livelihoods’ and make sustainable forest uses more profitable for the rural poor. As Yayorin programme volunteer, Budiarto explained:

The people here, who have come from Java, they moved here to work in the forest for the timber. Most of the timber mills are closed because all the big trees are gone. Now we have to change their minds about forests as just timber. We need to help them find prosperity outside the forests with non-timber forest products (14 July 2013).

The term non-timber forest products (‘NTFPs’) appears to be a politically neutral reference to specific forest outputs, yet the regulation of what constitutes ‘sustainable alternative livelihoods’ and the promotion of NTFPs is profoundly violent. As discussed by Dove (2011), NTFPs are highly politicised on two assumptions—the first is that they are resources local people may be permitted to exploit, and the second is that no one but local people would want to exploit them, leaving powerful actors to seek out more lucrative forest-based resources, or the same resources on a more profitable scale. The rhetorical constraints in the concept of NTFPs are reflected through their absence in the context of lucrative commercial resources. For example, there was no reason to consider the gold within Sungai Lamandau’s forests as anything other than NTFPs, yet access to the REDD+ project site for purposes of artisanal gold mining was strictly forbidden.

Access to the forests for fishing was also forbidden for anyone without an official permit. However, through the REDD+ project, cooperatives were offered sustainable alternative livelihood training in aquaculture. Again, this was considered with limited sympathy for landless fishermen dispossessed by the REDD+ project enclosure. Instead, beneficiaries included those with the necessary collateral to take part—the landed, all-male, transmigrant rice farming cooperatives of Terantang.

The structural violence engendered within promoting sustainable alternative livelihoods was nowhere more obvious than within the only two women’s groups of Wanita Mandiri and Cabe Rawat. None of the women had received training in aquaculture or had access to the REDD+ site for exploiting ‘NTFPs’. However, almost all had husbands or close male family members in other REDD+ cooperatives that had. The leader of Wanita Mandiri told me:

We work to support our husbands. They have the livelihood in the forests, not us. So we don’t get the land to plant anything or cut trees, just our husbands’ groups get that (5 October 2013).

The all-female groups worked as *kelompok suport* (support workers)—preparing tree saplings in polythene sacks or meals for visiting carbon consultants or development workers. Women were being included in the project, yet the construction of sustainable alternative livelihoods was working to concretise the prevailing essentialist dichotomies of masculinity and femininity. Women’s work would legitimise the project’s inclusive aims, but property and access to land would stay under the men’s control. Men were assumed to be the workers of the household and on that basis were perceived as the families’ destructive sharp edge. The traditional realm of Sungai Lamandau’s women was perceived to be the home. Home-industries and assistance with managing the household economy was therefore considered the most appropriate intervention within the common purview of women’s lives.

### **Violence and the construction of spaces for forest ecosystem restoration**

The violent strategies of land acquisition and enclosure for conservation were deeply troublesome. As Kelly (2011) argues, to understand reserves and national parks as an unadulterated and uncomplicated good is misleading as they often lead to further enclosures and dispossessions. In Sungai Lamandau, the means by which protected areas were created, maintained, and commodified through violence were leading to increased environmental violence and long-term social instability.

Many of the villages responding to the Sungai Lamandau project were also responding to a number of other large-scale conservation enclosures in the region with similar conservation and development goals. These included the Rimba Raya REDD+ project, also headquartered in Pangkalanbuun. These REDD+ efforts flanked the Tanjung Puting National Park, which was facilitated by the same consortium of orangutan conservation NGOs.

The Sei Gandis rubber collective shared a distinct sense of historical injustice instituted through these various enclosures orchestrated for purposes of orangutan conservation. Sarwono, a male Sei Gandis member explained to me:

Our group used to collect rubber from across the bay from Kubu, in the [Tanjung Puting] National Park. When they first closed the forests for the orangutans, we could still get in. But now we must go up river. It is as if the army are there now. [...] They would put you in jail if you take from the National Park now (1 November 2015).

Though the forest had been set aside by the Dutch colonial government in the 1930s, OFI had led a move in the 1980s to fully enclose the 400,000 ha site as a National Park. Sei Gandis members were prevented from accessing what they saw as their customary lands for the purpose of creating a pristine environment for wild primates. But, as Münster and Münster (2012) argue, the idea of a pristine wilderness disregards centuries of human interaction with forests and serves to justify ‘fortress conservation’ (Brockington et al. 2006).



In order to ensure lands for the region's orangutan projects were acquired with minimal upset, OFI regularly purchased the same privately owned plots two or three times over, from different families. Where deeds were held, land neighbouring OFI's reserves could be sold at hugely inflated prices. In November 2012, an undeveloped area less than 5,000 sq. m had sold for USD 80,000. The boom was sparking a rush for vacant land. In Kubu and nearby villages, land with no clear ownership attached was often fenced off and offered up for sale. It was explained to me by one Kubu villager how a family who had used a small plot of land for generations had it sold from under them by neighbours holding deeds to it acquired through links to political officials. Many villagers who felt defrauded by the conservation initiatives had little interest in supporting the REDD+ project. As one male rubber tapper from Kubu told me:

Our forests are used for the prosperity of orangutans, but what about my prosperity? What about my children's prosperity? It is very clear that they care more for orangutans than human beings (18 November 2013).

When the conservationists deemed it necessary, officers from *PolHut* (Forest Police) were called for suppressing dissent. The director of OFI explained: "When things get out of hand, and they do [laughs], we call for backup from the riot squad. We let [*PolHut*] sort it out" (8 December, 2013). But, for day-to-day policing of the newly instituted land tenure arrangements, OFI recruited three sympathetic Kubu villagers as political commissars. They were given dark blue uniforms and tasked with ensuring that sympathies for OFI's work were disseminated amongst other villagers. The commissars included elected officials, so as to ensure maximum influence for the enclosure's conservation and development goals. Violence also took the form of forced evictions by forest police, from land within the buffer zone and nature reserve. As Adi, a Babual Baboti resident, stated in an interview:

We have always argued that the reserve has been established without discussion with us. [...] *PolHut* came and removed everyone just like that. [...] Now what can I do? I have nothing. They can fine me if they like, but I can't pay. I will continue to use the forest like I always have" (21 September 2013).

Although the REDD+ project site was intended as a space for the forest-dependent peoples' economic reproduction in a sustainable manner, perversely, those without formal title to land were often the ones excluded from accessing Sungai Lamandau's forests. As explained by Rizky, a male Kumpai Batu Atas resident:

I don't have land so I can't join [the Tani Sejati group]. So, I can't get on the groups' *semaksi* [protected area entry permit]. And, I can't enter [the reserve] through the gates, even though I have always used the forest. My grandfather and I used to hunt together with *sumpitan* (traditional blow pipes). [...] We use a friends' boat to enter from time to

time. [...] It's very difficult now. [...] We have to go at night so that we are invisible like ghosts (28 August 2013).

The entry limitations inevitably led to violence inflicted on Sungai Lamandau's forests perpetrated by those excluded—those who relied on the forest to make ends meet. Yet, under secure conditions, entry and exit to the forest was taking place by covert means, without monitoring of resources collected. Illicit logging, gold mining and poaching were silently undermining the project's conservation goals.

### Violent alterity in incentivising pro-environmental behaviour

The principle behind REDD+ project incentives is that they serve to reinforce intrinsically motivated pro-forest behaviour or induce people to follow the good examples of other individuals (Luttrell et al. 2013). The various monetary and non-monetary incentives from a REDD+ project are a sort of ecological ransom, requiring the payment of an 'opportunity cost'—the minimum amount that would need to be paid to forest users not to deforest. This is based on the assumption that a rational economic entity would want to benefit at least as much as the entity gives up by not deforesting.

As well as inadvertently painting small-holders as illicit actors culpable for the destruction of Sungai Lamandau's forests, external incentives were also turning motivations of voluntary goodwill into market-like interactions. In these new arrangements, ideas of justice and equity were shifting from an intrinsic position to being rooted in serviceable claims to things. For example, in mid-2010, to initiate the REDD+ project's reforestation effort within the buffer zone, cooperatives were provided native *jelutung* rubber saplings as a sustainable livelihood benefit. However, according to volunteers, very few of the 1,500 saplings provided were ever planted. According to Dumadi, a male rubber tapper from Pendulangan:

We stored the saplings in the guard posts. They were meant to be moved to the rubber tapper's sheds on Sungai Bulu and then planted for *gotong royong* [volunteer work]. Most just rotted. [...] I found them a few months later. We took the polybags off and dumped them. [...] It's a shame we don't have the time. They don't last long and if we're busy at the weekends, they're all dead (16 October 2013).

A push to expand the availability of native *jelutung* was perceived unfavourably by many rubber tappers, resulting in the series of dissimulative acts. The rubber tappers' reluctance to plant the native species was understandable when contrasted with alternative species. *Jelutung* could only be tapped very early in the morning when the air cool. Trees were usually located up to a mile apart separated by deep swampland and there was no guarantee that once reached on foot, the tree would not have been tapped by others. Instead, group members preferred the extension of non-native *karet* rubber species. The *karet* could be planted very close together. A single hectare

plantation could sustain a family securely and planting the crop on private land meant the owner had exclusive rights to it.

The dream of external project proponents—envisioning a restoration of native wilderness maintained by native labour—became short lived. There were clear instances of what Adas (1986: 64–86) terms ‘avoidance protest’ (see also Scott 1985). This kind of violence bypassed open dissent or direct confrontation with the project implementers, forestry officials or donor bodies. As Hendra, a member of the all-male rubber group, Sepakat, told me:

There’s been two occasions when we have been given thousands of saplings. We plant some. But we must leave most of them on the floor. [...] We are a small group. How do they expect us to plant all those trees? [...] Besides, we don’t own the land. We can’t give the land to our children. Those trees are for the orangutans not us. They would do better to plant durian; the orangutans would enjoy that more (29 November 2013).

This sort of disobedience and lack of commitment to the project’s manual labour requirements was interpreted as indifference. The local people of Sungai Lamandau were symbolically constructed as uncaring ‘Others’—people who cared very little about forest and biodiversity conservation, a situation requiring external intervention from project implementers. An OFUK Director, stated:

It’s difficult to say ‘you have to protect the forests because you have to look after the orangutan’. It’s not a species people warm to. They like stories about tigers and elephants; they all know about the Komodo dragon. But the orangutan isn’t a species they’re comfortable with. [...] The majority of people who live here have never been to Tanjung Puting [National Park] and they have no interest in ever going to Tanjung Puting—no interest in orangutans. It’s because of the resemblance to humans maybe or vice versa, I don’t know. To get people to conserve forests you have to talk about timber and money and poverty, not species like orangutans, they don’t care about that. They don’t value it—the way we think about the value of the forest—in that way (14 June 2013).

Yet in fact, many local people did care about forest protection. A group of self-proclaimed ‘*aktivis*’, in their early 20s, met weekly at the small outdoor coffee stands erected within Pangkalanbuun’s main town centre roundabout to discuss opportunities for direct action against palm oil ventures encroaching into local forests. One of the activists, Aji, invited me to their regular Saturday evening meeting. He arrived with printed copies of an article from the Mongabay website—one for each of the 10 or so members. Aji was not alone in his concern for human rights and environmental issues. Other group members shared stories they had come across—featuring the US-based palm-oil giant Cargill’s use of child labour on its Kalimantan plantations, or local politicians’ affiliations with logging firms. But, this image of local people caring a great deal about local conservation issues was rarely shared

by the REDD+ project’s proponents. For them, local people remained the cause of forest degradation. Their perceived violent character legitimised market-based REDD+ projects, but in turn produced a self-perpetuating logic—a cycle of violent alterity causing the very degradation REDD+ was designed to fix.

## CONCLUSIONS

The degradation of Indonesia’s forests is an object of global environmental governance constituting the country’s largest source of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions (Margono et al. 2014). REDD+, as a global policy response, focuses on the provision of economic incentives for forest protection in Indonesia, striving “to make forests more valuable standing than cut down” (Katerere 2010: 105). The cornerstone of the REDD+ programme is considerations for social equity through systems of sharing costs and benefits across multiple scales of implementation. For Angelsen et al. (2008: 31–32) scales of REDD+ implementation refer to “the accounting levels of an international funding mechanism”. Within such a construction, various REDD+ benefits can be distributed using a ‘subnational approach’. REDD+ activities can be implemented in a defined geographical area with ‘communities’ incentivised to protect forests through a system of internationally agreed institutional arrangements. Such an imaginary implies that an equitable and inclusive distribution of benefits is not only possible, but also that it can be rolled out unproblematically and without conflict across various scales of implementation, enabling the fabled win-wins of REDD+ (Jagger et al. 2009).

However, using an intimacy-geopolitics frame (Pain 2015) this paper has argued that below the superficial yet ominous peace of the Sungai Lamandau REDD+ project, were processes of slippery violence—an intimate ‘green war’ exacerbating exclusion of the already marginalised. Those excluded rarely disappeared quietly. Many countered their exclusion with violence—sometimes with emancipatory effect, sometimes with environmentally destructive outcomes.

All too often, intimate spaces and bodies are either rendered invisible or are characterised as the disconnected, passive victims of national and global processes of REDD+ implementation (Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2014; Dowler et al. 2014). REDD+ interventions conceal policy façades which measure success according to outputs without acknowledging violent processes of spatial marginalisation (Biddulph 2011). By thinking about the production of violence through an intimacy-geopolitics frame, this paper has sought to shake the conventional approaches to space and scale that reinforce these invisibilities. Intimate violence(s) and geopolitical violence(s) are inextricably linked and indistinguishable (Pain and Staeheli 2014). Sites of violent exclusion included kitchens, river-side huts, and rice fields as much as police stations, government offices, and guard posts. The violence in question was rooted within histories of struggle. Political memories instituted the ‘rightness’ of exclusive claims to

things. How those excluded from REDD+ benefits resisted further marginalisation was also shaped by political memories, affecting what they deemed possible. As Gramsci puts it, before coming into existence, new possibilities must ideally be active in the minds of those struggling for change (Gramsci 1985).

Enclosures of space for carbon forestry, as well as the imposition of market enterprises, alternative livelihoods, and incentives for pro-environmental behaviours, were wrapped up in symbolic renderings of Sungai Lamandau's small-holders as 'forest destroyers' requiring less destructive pastimes. This construction of imaginaries featuring native woods gardened by native small-holders met with significant covert yet environmentally destructive counter-violence, heavily undermining the project's forest protection goals. The project's goals deserve suspicion, because the rationalities, strategies, technologies, and techniques they employed attempted to formulate violence as a meaningless or barbarous practice situated 'out there' among the destructive and unruly 'beneficiaries'.

Using the concept of slippery violence, this paper has tried to make sense of things by understanding violence as encompassing all processes that assault basic human freedoms and individual and/or collective survival (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). The paper has explored the grey zones of violence which are, by definition, not obvious. On many occasions, exclusion of social intimates resulted in unintended consequences. The inequitable benefit arrangements often resulted in the realisation of 'lose-lose' scenarios—losses for the local environment, the global climate, and the security of livelihoods. Yet, the conditions under which dispossessions took place were not an inevitable outcome of any social development. It took intervention through violence to exclude people from common land and transform people into wage labourers.

Violence and exclusionary processes are not inevitable facets of land and resource management in Indonesia. Yet, as the findings in this paper show, adversarial relationships were encouraged through a market-based REDD+ that relied on well-defined property rights. Even in cases where land tenure was secure and risk of dispossession minimal, such market-based undertakings presented a tendency toward exclusionary management practices. More equitable solutions, which support marginalised people, will undoubtedly require collaboration and recommoning of resources. Until then, REDD+ and similar carbon-forestry projects will not only continue to fail in addressing the root causes of anthropogenic climate change, but will also continue to be highly exclusive—disproportionately impacting women and other already marginalised groups.

## NOTES

1. In 2012, annual primary forest loss in Indonesia was estimated to be higher than in Brazil (0.84 Mha and 0.46 Mha, respectively) (Margono et al. 2014).
2. Žižek exemplifies this with the hunger strikes of Mahatma Gandhi in protest of the British colonial occupation of India.

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