

A photograph of a person sitting on a wooden raft in a river, surrounded by dense tropical vegetation. The person is wearing a light-colored t-shirt with text on the back, green shorts, and a blue headscarf. They are looking towards the right side of the frame. The river is narrow, and the banks are covered with lush green trees and plants. The water is calm, reflecting the surrounding greenery.

“We Have No Choice, But We Have to Survive”

The Sense of Belonging of people living Around Oil Palm Plantations

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Master Thesis
Wageningen UR

“We Have No Choice, But We Have to Survive”

The Sense of Belonging of People Living Around Oil Palm Plantations in Sambas District,
Indonesia

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Abstract

In the last few decades palm oil has become an essential agriculture product to encourage the national economy especially for developing countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia. However, on the other side, research institutes and NGO's have expressed concerns about the consequences for the social and environment impact of oil palm expansion. Palm oil has become a topic of controversy which generated debate about two mainstream poles between positive economic and negative non-economic aspects. West Kalimantan is one of the locations of expansion where numerous disputes and conflicts about of land occurred. This research aims to examine how the sense of belonging of local farmers and migrant workers in Sambas is impacted by the expansion of oil palm plantations. This study was conducted using an ethnographic approach, using participant observations and semi-structural interviews. This study is based on two months of fieldwork in Sambas, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. This research found that the impact of oil palm expansion on people's sense of belonging was complex. On the one hand, local farmers and migrant workers appreciated the improvement of economic aspects, such as a regular income. On the other hand, they simultaneously considered non-economic aspects such as land rights, livelihoods of future generations, and environmental impacts affecting their sense of belonging to their place.

Key Words

Oil Palm Plantations, Ethnography, Local Farmers, Migrant Workers, Sense of Belonging, West Kalimantan,

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“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I
am changing myself.”
— **Jalal Ad-Din Rumi**

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List of Abbreviations

BPB	: Badan Pertanahan Nasional/The National Land Agency
BPS	: Badan Pusat Statistik
CAO	: Compliance Advisory / Ombudsman
CPO	: Crude Palm Oil
Disbun	: Dinas Perkebunan/ The Estate Department
FFB	: Fresh Fruit Bunch
IDR	: International Code for Indonesian Rupiah
ISPO	: Indonesia Sustainable Palm Oil
KUD	: Koperasi Unit Desa/ Cooperatives
LG	: Lembaga Gamawan
MYR	: International Code for Malaysian Ringgit
NGO	: Non-Governmental Organisation
PT	: Perseroan Terbatas (Incorporated Company)
RSPO	: Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
FAO	: Food and Agriculture Organization
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product

1. Introduction

Indonesia is the world's largest palm oil producer, ahead of Malaysia and Thailand (FAO, 2014). The palm oil industry currently is the most rapidly expanding among all plantation industries, making a significant contribution to the Indonesian economy¹. According to the Indonesian government, GDP from this sector averaged 4.1 Billion Euro annually over a period of eight years (2010-2018). In 2017, the total export of this product reached about 15.5 Billion Euro. This demonstrates the crucial role played by oil palm in the growth of the Indonesian economy.² The government claims that oil palm plantations have contributed to poverty eradication for rural communities for the past 25 years. Palm oil is seen as a key solution to national and regional economic improvement which provides a means to reduce inequality of development between Java and other islands (Zen et al., 2015).

Statistics cited in Zahari et al. (2015) show that palm oil exports experienced a growth rate of 11.35% per year, from US\$11.88 million tons in 2007 to US\$20.58 million tons in 2013. Export taxes grossed IDR 28.9 trillion in 2013³. In Indonesia, oil palm plantations are mainly found in the four largest islands; Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Papua. Currently, the local government of Kalimantan aims to expand the oil palm plantation area from 1.5 million to 4.5 million hectares (ha) by 2025 (Julia & White, 2012). The total palm oil production in Kalimantan has reached about 2.2 Billion tons annually and there are about 128 thousand people whose livelihoods are tied to oil palm production.³ However, in May 2010, the Government of Indonesia announced a moratorium which prohibited local governments from giving new concession licenses to palm oil companies, as part of commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Purnomo, 2012). This moratorium was conceived as a step forward in reforming Indonesia's complex forest tenure system and a mechanism for reducing deforestation in Indonesia. However, oil palm companies with licensed concessions are continuing their expansion.

¹ Keynote Speech of Minister of Agriculture in The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (2004)

² Keynote Speech of Coordinator Minister for Maritime Affairs of Republic Indonesia at the International Conference
“Eradicating Poverty Through Agriculture and Plantation Industry to Empower Peace and Humanity” (Rome, 2018)

³ BPS, 2014 and BI, 2014

The government announced the moratorium for the new concession of oil palm plantation to show that they also concern about the environmental issue as well as their economic development. The debate about the expansion of oil palm plantations continues to the level of scholars. Some scholars argue that the oil palm industry has enhanced the economic situation of rural communities. Oil palm expansion has provided crucial economic development for its host countries, as well as indirect benefits through local infrastructure and poverty eradication (Pacheco, et al 2017; but see Santika et al., 2019). Rist, Feintrenie and Levang (2010) found that many smallholders have benefited substantially from the higher returns to land and labor afforded by oil palm. According to Susila (2014), oil palm activities created positive impacts for local people and smallholders' economic development, promoting poverty alleviation. Oil palm plantations contributed about IDR 5-11 million (312-687 Euro) and accounted for over 63% of smallholder household income in two different locations in Sumatra island. Farmers in the study of Rist, Feintrenie & Levang (2010) considered that the expansion of oil palm plantation is the best option for improving their financial needs. This research indicates that in some cases, oil palm plantations have brought about economic benefits for local farmers. In Kalimantan, Semedi (2014) found that the expansion of oil palm cultivation has brought new wealth at an unprecedented rate for the local people, yet at the same time it has spread moral panic about loss of traditional livelihoods. He argues that according to local farmers, their life today is better than before since they have a regular source of income, accessible markets and public services in town. Local people have brand new motorcycles, televisions, DVD players and the latest mobile phone models. However, this condition of better income and economic development has generated a sense of loss amongst the local people. As land is transformed into oil palm plantations, it is not economic devastation felt by smallholder farmer communities, but rather a deep sense of loss and an erosion of the quality of life (Semedi, 2014).

Whilst the proponents of oil palm cultivation frequently point to its role in economic development, oil palm expansion has also generated adverse social and environmental impacts. For example, Sirait (2009) argues that oil palm expansion led to the emergence of social conflict in West Kalimantan. Li (2015) explained that there are five main issues concerning the social impact of oil palm expansion. First, land acquisition by plantations: the expansion of plantations on customary land diminishes opportunities for independent farming and foraging. Land acquisition by

companies generate a reformulation of local land tenure arrangements. Semedi (2014) explains that for local farmers, farmland is more than just soil, it is a matter of life and death. Moreover, farmland for local farmers is the physical basis where social identity, cultural systems and farming communities are established. Land acquisition led to heavy consequences for social relations, cultural codes and production activities (Semedi, 2014).

Second, palm oil has become a controversial issue, as many research institutes and environmental NGOs assert their concern regarding negative environmental consequences, including deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and water and air pollution (Laurence et al., 2010). Oil palm plantations are frequently associated with environmental degradation and deforestation. The development of oil palm plantations is mostly done through systematic forest burning to open land (Varkkey, 2015). Consequentially, air pollution is generated effluent accumulates in rivers. The problems continue as the mill factories need to be located alongside water sources; these produce large amounts of waste which are then deposited into the river (McCarthy & Zen, 2010). River pollution and smoke haze disaster threaten the health of local people and cause loss of food and income (Colchester, 2011; Colchester et al 2006; Marti, 2008; Obidzinski et al, 2012).

Thirdly, there is the degradation of customary institutions. In Indonesia the existence of the customary institutions has been recognized by government regulation under certain, strict conditions.⁴ However, the relationship between state and customary resource control is uneven and the national government more priorities ‘national development’ over customary rights. This condition continues to the facilitation of the oil palm companies to get concession permit from national and local government (Elmhirst et al,2017). Oil palm expansion not only wiped out the structures of these customary institutions, but also eroded the sense of trust and legitimacy that give these institutions their real value. Companies have co-opted these structures, making deals with customary leaders, local government, and security personnel to persuade landholders to agree with company demands and release their land (Li, 2015). In this respect, customary institutions have lost their role in defending customary land.

⁴ Article no 2.2 Regulation no 5/1999

Fourth, there are deficiencies in smallholders' schemes, as most of the partnership arrangements between communities and companies suffer from lack of transparency. Elmhirst et al (2017) explained that the lack of transparency in terms of the distribution of benefits has been led to considerable disquiet among the local community. Plasma holders are often unaware of the size of plots that they are entitled to. Each participating household holds a letter outlining the hectares from which they would benefit in terms of income generated by the oil palm once costs have been deducted by the company. Moreover, the plasma holders never received comprehensive information about the costs that the company expended for land clearance, planting and maintenance. Thus, in this sense the plasma farmers had no information regarding the amount of debt they had incurred and how much they would receive from the sale of the oil palm once it started producing. This lack of transparency has generated mistrust and conflict within communities, and between the community and the cooperative plasma board (Elmhirst et al., 2017).

The last is the issue of employment, which is dominated by the low payment of wages, indecent standard of living and low absorption of the labor force. Li (2016) noted "miserable rotting wood houses for the workers, isolation mud". She found that laborers in a plantation in Buol were living in indecent conditions. The lodge was filled with ten or more young men sleeping in each room. They had no electricity and a foul, polluted, sluggish drainage ditch was the only place to bathe. Their jobs were very strenuous, and pay was low. Industrial oil palm cultivation only requires an average of one worker per five hectares compared to a ration of (1:1) for rubber, which means the labor absorption potential is far lower (Cramb & Ferraro, 2012; Li, 2015). Moreover, the plantation workers who live in the plantation lodge are provided with facilities unfit to support their livelihoods, such as a lack of clean water, education and health facilities for their family.

This research was conducted in Sambas district in West Kalimantan, one of the main areas of oil palm expansion. This research was held in two different locations; the villages of Salaman Kecil and Selayar. As Semedi (2014) argues, whilst the expansion of oil palm plantation has brought new wealth at an unprecedented rate in Kalimantan, it has also brought about a sense of loss of an ideal of social equality felt by farmers. This research focuses on the perception of local farmers and migrant workers within oil palm plantations in relation to their sense of belonging.

1.1 Problem Statement

The debate about palm oil expansion and its impact on local people has been split into two different poles: the economic aspect and the social and environmental aspect, as discussed in the introduction. However, there is still something crucial missing from this discussion; the perspectives of people whose affected by oil palm plantation and the impact on their sense of belonging. As the oil palm companies expand their plantations into local farmland, the local farmers' sense of 'feeling at home' has been impacted. In this respect, research on how local farmers give meaning towards their place is crucial in analyzing social changes and their repercussions among local affected communities.

The expansion of oil palm plantations is typically associated with the improvement of economic development for the host countries (Budidarsono & Susanti, 2012; Pacheco et al., 2017; Rist et al., 2010). Nevertheless, this economic development at national level does not necessarily translate into positive local level benefits. Development is about more than just the economic aspect. Other non-economic factors play an important role in shaping local people's notion of development. The question of how these non-economic aspects can be analyzed and developed is crucial for improving the quality of life for people. In this respect I would like to focus my attention on the sense of belonging among local farmers and migrant workers.

In this research, I analyze how the local farmers' sense of belonging is affected by oil palm expansion. Semedi (2014) finds that the existence of oil palm plantations has improved local economies. McCarthy (2010) argues that the impact of economic development is diverse in many different locations. It is highly uneven and depends on the terms under which smallholders engage with oil palm. Oil palm expansion affects their natural resources, damages their social relations, changes their agriculture into monocultures, and many of farmers are worried about the fate of future generations. This phenomenon leads to an erosion of people's sense of belonging to their territories. In order to understand how farmers in Sambas give meaning to their sense of belonging and how they respond to the expansion of oil palm plantations, on the ground empirical research is needed into the daily life of local people. Moreover, in this thesis I broaden my lens of analysis by also considering the perspective of migrants' workers who live inside the plantation areas. This

perspective provides an image of how sense of belonging differs between plantation workers from the surrounding area and migrant workers.

1.2 Research Objective

The objective of this research is to examine how the sense of belonging of local farmers and migrant plantation workers is impacted by the expansion of oil palm plantations. The perceptions of the local and migrant workers about the oil palm plantation will be analyzed to find out why and how different aspects of belonging are used to give meaning to their place. The outcomes of this research can contribute to provide grassroots understanding within the oil palm plantation debate. Second, the research results can be used to develop policy recommendations that are sensitive to people's sense of belonging. In other words, policy decisions regarding farmers livelihoods should consider the perspectives of the farmers themselves. The third and last aim of my research is to develop the concept of belonging with the perspective of oil palm local farmers and migrant workers. Through this research the concept of belonging can be broadened in relation to the impact of oil palm impacts on farmers.

1.3 Research Justification

The topic of oil palm has been researched and discussed extensively by many scholars. Oil palm expansion can leave people impoverished and indebted, damaging the social relations and culture of local communities, and degrading rainforests and biodiversity in Indonesia (Sawit Watch, 2008). Currently, solutions are focused not on the abolishment of oil palm plantations, but on how to make oil palm become the source of development in sustainable and equitable manner for local communities (Rist et al., 2010). This research seeks to fill the knowledge gap on how the development of sustainable palm oil manifests in grassroots contexts (local farmers and migrant workers), examining the effect on people's sense of belonging. Approaching the topic through ethnographic research provides an image of how the expansion of oil palm plantations impacts emotions and viewpoints of those residing in the area.

1.4 Research Questions

This research aims to understand the impact of oil palm plantations on the sense of belonging of local farmers and migrant workers. Certain aspects of sense of belonging will be the central issues of this research. Following from this, the central question in this thesis is:

“How do people in expansion areas give meaning to oil palm plantations in relation to their sense of belonging?”

This question involves six of sub-questions:

The first sub-question examines what the economic aspects of belonging mean to people. How do they appreciate their income as part of their sense of belonging? As the oil palm plantation has changed the major source of people’s income, from independent smallholdings to plantation labor, the way people give meaning to the source of their income is crucial to explore.

The second sub-question relates to people’s feeling related to their land rights. What are the consequences of oil palm expansion for the feeling of the people in relation to their farmlands? As land acquisition has affected how local people use land, it is crucial to understand their responses in relation to their rights over land.

The third sub-question goes into people’s perceptions about social relations which are considered to affect people sense of belonging. How do people give meaning to their social relations before and after the expansion of the oil palm plantation? How do people respond to this change in social relations? What are the consequences of changing social relations in terms of the perception of the oil palm plantation? These questions focus on how social relations affect people’s sense of belonging.

A fourth sub-question focuses on changing lifestyles in relation to people’s sense of feeling at home. The expansion of oil palm plantations has directed people’s way of life away from independent farming. Living as the plantation workers has affected their sense of belonging to

their place. How does the change in people's lifestyle as a result of oil palm plantation development relate to their sense of belonging?

The perception of future generations will be the fifth sub-question of this thesis. As oil palm plantations are a long-term agricultural business, the impact of this plantation not only affects the current generation but also the future generation of the farmers. In this respect, it is crucial to explore: how does the oil palm expansion affect the people's feelings about their future generations? And what does the future generation mean to the people involved in oil palm plantation?

The last sub-question relates to people's experience of the environmental impact of palm oil plantations. As local people form relations not only in the human domain, but also with their natural resources, people's feelings about their environment are necessary to explore. How are people's perceptions of the environmental effects of the palm oil plantation related to their sense of belonging?

2. Methodology

This research uses case studies as the primary approach, which is based on qualitative ethnographic approach. The qualitative ethnographic approach in this case is crucial because this allows examinations of people's feelings in relation to the place where they live, as well as everyday practices of living in an oil palm area. The methodology I chose in this research aims to understand socio-cultural problems in the farmers' communities. In addition, the ethnographic approach is based upon face-to-face interaction which could generate trust between the researcher with the people.

De Vaus (2001) explains that a case study research design helps researchers to obtain fuller pictures of the complexity of a research site, including all elements that are embedded in it. In that case, I used triangulation of qualitative research methods; participant observation; semi structured interviews; and informal conversation which will improve my internal validity.

Utilizing the ethnographic approach gave me greater insights into the grassroots perspectives of farmers affected by oil palm expansion. This approach was essential as this research explores their story and how they feel about and give meaning to their living conditions under oil palm plantations. In this methodological chapter, I will explain the process of this research: I describe the fields research process, research participants, and different research methods used, and explain how I did my data analysis. Moreover, to conduct ethical codes in this research, I have made up names for the informants, companies and the areas of research. Finally, I will reflect upon the limitations of this research.

2.1 Data Collection Method

This research focuses on two villages: Salaman Kecil and Selayar, which are both part of the Sambas Region in West Kalimantan. I chose these two villages as my research location as they offer differing perspectives on oil plantations: that of the local farmers in Salaman Kecil village, and that of migrant workers living inside the company plantation in Sebunga village.

The main ‘subjects’ of my research are the local farmers and migrant workers from different backgrounds. These two groups are relevant for this research as they can give personal accounts of their experiences under oil palm plantation management. Besides the local farmers, I also gained insights from other important actors, like the head of the village, the chief of a local farmer’s group, the chief of a cooperative, company managers, a company head of administration, local laborers, and other actors. Purposive snowball sampling is used to get a high diversity of informants. In total I conducted 20 interviews with various local farmers and migrant workers.

My field work began on 22nd of October 2018 and ended on the 23rd of December 2018. The first day I arrived at Sambas region, I met with gatekeeper Pak Haji who helped me to find a host during my field work. The first month I stayed in Sulaiman’s house, a local worker in Salaman Kecil. In the first week of fieldwork, I built trust among the local farmers in the village by following their daily activities and discussing their daily lives, whilst observing simultaneously. In the second week, after I gained greater trust among local farmers, I went to the oil palm plantation with

Sulaiman to follow his daily activities as a plasma farmer. During this time, I conducted semi-structured interviews with some other fellow farmers. I chose a casual setting to make them comfortable and open about their experience. Another activity in which I was involved was the monthly meeting between the local farmers and the board of the plasma cooperative that I considered crucial in assessing relations among these two stakeholders in terms of the plasma plantation.

For this research, semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to collect the data from the stakeholders. For these, I used an interview guideline in which I listed topics (income, daily needs, children education, health access, history of land, customary law, labors living conditions in lodge, social capacity, environmental perception) which relate to sense of belonging and main questions to be covered in the interview. This approach was useful given the unpredictability of the kind of information that people would share. As I explained before, the ethnographic approach is more effective in this research context in obtaining a fuller understanding of people's perspectives. One advantage of this method is the flexibility it affords, which also contributes towards a more comfortable and open dialogue.

During my field work in Salaman Kecil, I attended a local wedding ceremony. I joined with the men in meetings to discuss the wedding process mechanism and tasks during the event. I observed local people's activities during the preparation of the wedding ceremony and how they communicate with each other. Through this method, I gained insights into how the local people maintain their relationships and social culture.

On the 28th of November I moved to Selayar village, which is located in the border area between Indonesia and Malaysia. In this village, I spent about four days with local people, although this was unrelated to oil palm activities. One local suggested that I should go to the oil palm company about thirty minutes from border post area. I introduced myself as a researcher to the company manager and they welcomed me well. Inside this plantation, I stayed with the administration head for the first three days, yet I got news that the head of administration was fired by the manager and that they had to move within two days. Afterwards, I moved to live with the workers and observe their daily activities and participate with their work in the plantation. I utilised the same

methodology as in Salaman Kecil to conduct semi-structured interviews and participant observation (joined with harvesting, lunched together with the farmers in the garden, and walked with the key informants)

The ethnographic approach which I used in this research was conducted by being actively involved in the local farmers' activities on a daily basis. During the fieldwork period of two months, I joined many activities of the local people. I was involved in the monthly cooperative meeting, joined with the farmers to the administration office on payment day, harvested the FFB etc. Through these occasions, I had the opportunity to gather documents about the plasma-nucleus scheme agreement⁵, participate in a wedding ceremony, join plasma cooperative monthly meetings, and observe the interaction among local people. The benefit of participant observation is that I can see how they give meaning to their lives and their spatial place. Moreover, I could see directly their emotions and feeling through their expressions, and verbal and non-verbal language (intonations and body language).

Within this approach, I took up the role of a participant observer, taking field notes and recording what I can observe from their daily activities. Through this approach, Bernard (2017) explained that participant observation involves getting close to people and making them feel comfortable with the researcher's presence; thus, the researcher is able to get more accurate data and information regarding their lives. This method also allowed me to attain access to some formal and informal meetings in the village that were related to my research focus.

In my research in West Kalimantan, I spoke in both Bahasa and Malay, since I was born on this island and therefore could speak both. I could communicate well with the local people in two villages, however I still had to build trust among them as they still perceived me as outsider even though I can speak their language. In this respect, I aware of my identity as an outsider. I was not born in this village and I am not a part of this village. Being an outsider had several downsides but also opened up opportunities. As an outsider I was relatively neutral when I came to the local people and especially inside the company plantation. The local people in Salaman Kecil village

⁵ The arrangement of plantation models' regimes shares the division into the core (inti) area that belong to the company and the smallholder (plasma) area that is allocated to small holder contract growers

were relatively welcoming to me as most of them are ethnic Malay like myself. In Selayar village, I worried that the plantation manager might think that I was an NGO member, and most of the workers were Dayak people, yet I was able to convince the manager that I was a student researcher conducting research for university. Bernard (2017) argues that participant observers can be insiders who observe and record some aspects of life around them. This advantage allowed me to be able to speak fluently with the local people and understand the meaning of their perspective without translators.

All the information I gathered was recorded in my field notes. I also recorded the interviews on audio with permission. During informal conversation and participant observation I took notes. Sometimes I also asked to record informal sessions with their permission.

At the beginning of this research my focus was on local people's perceptions of oil palm expansion in relation to their sense of belonging. The focus was on those living outside of the plantation itself. However, after I arrived in the second village, I lived inside the plantation lodge with the workers. Inside this plantation lodge, I realized that workers living inside the plantation lodge have a different perspective in relation to their sense of belonging. The workers feel no ties towards the plantation and their motivation for working inside the plantation was dominated by economic motives.

In the first week of my research, I was not directly following the local farmers into their plantation. I intended to get more information about living conditions. I noticed several striking matters, such as; the local people already prepared go to work at 4 A.M in the morning, the meeting among the cooperative members, and the number of local people working for the plantation. Afterwards, the second week, I decided to follow my host to go to the plantation garden and conducted semi structured interviews. During my interviews, I focused on several topics, which are; the history of the plantation expansion into the village, the process of negotiation between the local people and the company, people's perception of the oil palm plantation, and the meaning of the village for the local people. Sometimes I got the information not only from the interviews but also from daily conversation with my host or other local people in the village.

During my research, I found that not all of the interviewees have the same information that I was looking for, yet I just recorded all the information just in case it became relevant later on. For example, when I asked about the history of the negotiation process, I could only interview the key actors who were involved during the negotiation process. Throughout the process, I established several key topic areas, which could then be used later on in the coding stage to distinguish the different aspects of belonging relevant to local farmers.

In the second village, I stayed about two weeks inside the plantation area. I lived with the migrant workers and noticed a strong sense of detachment from the plantation amongst them. Moreover, some other local workers also expressed similar perspectives. I decided to categorize some topics regarding their feelings about living inside the plantation areas and explored their motivation to remain plantation employees despite feeling disconnected to the plantation

2.3 Reflection

Conducting this research was a personal experience for me. Living with the local people and the migrant workers gave me more insight about how simple they see this life under the oil palm plantation. Scholars often debate about the positive and negative impacts of oil palm plantations for farmers, yet we forget about how they perceive their lives and how they give meaning to their place. The farmers have a simple perspective towards their life than what I assumed. They just want to assure that they still have land to cultivate and assure a better life for future generations.

During the fieldwork period, I encountered a number of obstacles. One of these was the daily routine of plantation workers; during the first week I was not able to join farmers in their activities in the plantation as I would wake up too late. However, from the second week onwards I had already synchronized my daily cycle with theirs. I noticed that I could not find many key actors of the negotiation process between the local people and the company. My host was one of the key actors and had a lot of knowledge on the topics I was aiming to investigate, but I still needed to qualify his information with that of others.

When I conducted semi structured interviews, I asked permission to record the conversation. However, after they realized that I used voice recorder, interviewees often became nervous and spoke unnaturally. In this respect I always tried to tell the interviewees to relax as I will use this recording for my research and not for other purposes. In other cases, when I had informal conversations, after the conversation I had difficulty remembering some of the information that I wanted to record in my notes

In the second village, I experienced further obstacles. The distance between the company lodge and the village made it difficult for me to interview local people. During my two weeks living inside the plantation, I mostly interviewed the migrant workers and the plantation management. Local people would be interviewed when they came to the plantation office on the payment day. I also felt uncomfortable when the manager fired the head of administration whose house I was staying in at the time. I had to move to the workers lodge and live with the migrant workers. I could not totally blend with the workers, since they typically consumed alcohol after finishing work, and I could not deal with this situation. Interviews were thus carried out when they had spare time during plantation work.

By living and staying with the local farmers and migrant workers I automatically was associated with them. Despite being there for my research and just as a neutral observer, I still lived with them. I had some migrant worker friends who helped me to introduce myself to the other workers. It was a special experience for me to get in touch with so many people during my field work.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Livelihood Approach

For many years, the expansion of oil palm cultivation by corporations has generated widespread conversion of agricultural and forest land into plantation monocultures (de Vos, 2016). The debate on the impact of oil palm expansion leads into two main stream claims: positive economic impacts vs negative non-economic impacts. Chambers and Conway (1991) explain that economic impacts are related to livelihoods, which they define as: *“A livelihood comprises people, their capabilities and their means of living, including food, income, and assets. Tangible assets are stores and intangible assets are claims and access”*. In many livelihood approaches, the attention is more focused on poverty reduction by improving and maintaining tangible (material) aspects. This instrumental poverty reduction approach to livelihoods leads to the emergence of development programs and policies which consider capabilities, assets, and activities as the fundamental aspects for living. This perspective underpins the economically-centric narrative that capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities were the factors important for making a living (Carr, 2013)

Scoones (2009) explained that researchers often priorities the poverty reduction agenda, which is framed by economics, rather than the social processes relevant within the livelihood framework. He argues that rather than merely focus on economic development, livelihood perspectives should be analyzed in an inter-disciplinary manner, countering the mono-disciplinary approach which has dominated development enquiry and practice. He identified four additional aspects which are related to the livelihood concept: knowledge, politics, scale and dynamics. These four additional aspects offer opportunities to enrich our understanding of livelihoods from a variety of different perspectives.

However, in this research, I seek to broaden the livelihoods perspective through utilising the lens of ‘sense of belonging’ as a framework analysis. This framework allowed me to make sense of the intricate living conditions that the people experience on a daily basis. Scoones (2009) explained that the complexity of the livelihood approach brings the chance to broaden innovative analysis at

different levels. In this respect, I use the concept of sense of belonging as part of the livelihood approach to gain an image of people's feelings towards their livelihood under oil palm plantations. In order to get a better understanding of the non-economic impacts of palm oil cultivation on farmers, it is helpful to appreciate the concept of sense of belonging as the framework of this research. The concept of belonging in this research helps to explain how the farmers give meaning to their land, into which companies are expanding their plantations.

During the debate about the positive and negative impact of oil palm plantations, economic and non-economic aspects always have different aspect of analysis. One of the economic impacts of oil palm plantation development is that farmers may be able to improve their cash income. Local farmers who favor oil palm expansion in their areas have argued that the direct profitability in the form of wages from working on an oil palm plantation is desirable. Oil palm development has brought new jobs and income opportunities to local farmers, and has provided a possibility to diversify their cash crops (Feintrenie, Chong, & Levang, 2010). Feintrenie et al. (2010) find that some people in the most remote areas are not concerned by environmental issues like deforestation or loss of biodiversity, as long as deforestation means economic development and livelihood improvement. Moreover, Semedi (2014) found that in the last decades, the expansion of palm oil cultivation into the hinterlands of West Kalimantan has brought new wealth to farmers at an "unprecedented rate". In this respect, in some cases the expansion of oil palm plantation has improved the economic aspect of the farmers' livelihoods.

Another angle on the discussion about the impact of oil palm plantations highlights the non-economic aspects, of which there are many. Li (2017a) explained that the creation of plantation zones has brought about adverse effects, such as co-optation of customary institutions, deforestation, water pollution, significant greenhouse gas emissions, and the loss of access to diverse and flexible farming futures. Moreover, the intrusion of oil palm expansion onto customary lands has created land conflicts, social fragmentation and disputes between companies and local communities, as well as within communities between people who support and oppose oil palm plantation developments (de Vos, 2016). This condition has brought about many environmental and social issues (Li, 2017a)

One of the eminent impacts of oil palm expansion mentioned above is that of land conflict, which leads to leading to social fragmentation, between proponents and opponents of oil palm developments in a certain area. Local farmers who oppose the emergence of oil palm plantations, as de Vos (2016) found in her research, believe that land is not merely about economic development, but land can concurrently be perceived as valuable for socio-economic, cultural, spiritual, ecological, and political reasons which are closely related to people's sense of belonging towards their place. Thus, local people might feel that economic benefits are not enough to make them feel at home.

3.2 Sense of Belonging

People belong to their place when they have a personal, intimate feeling of being home in a place and a discursive resource which is a notion that constructs, claims, justifies or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (Antonsich, 2010). Yuval-Davis (2006) also explains that the construction of belonging cannot and should not be seen as merely cognitive stories. The sense of belonging reflects emotional investments and desire for attachments: 'Individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become, a process that is fueled by yearning rather than positing of identity as a stable state' (Probyn, 1996). In this the respect, the concept of belonging is crucial in analyzing how people engage and invest in their emotional connection with their place.

Before the existence of oil palm plantations, local farmers in Sambas often had a variety of cash crops such as rubber trees, coconut palm, rice, vegetables, and fruits as their key sources of income. The people are independent in managing their own land and assure the land is enough to accommodate for the needs of future generations. However, the spread of oil palm plantations has changed vast agro diverse areas into monocultures, which erodes cash crop diversity and makes their income dependent on plantation companies. This situation leads to a significant change in people's lifestyles. Independent farmers are turned into company laborers, with no more freedom to manage their land. Moreover, local communities experience environmental impacts such as polluted water and smoky haze. In this sense, people have lost their intimate feeling of being at home and the right to claim their own land, which makes them lose their sense of belonging.

The notion of belonging is often ambiguous and has drawn little attention from livelihood scholars. (Antonsich, 2010). They tend to take this notion for granted, bundling it together with identity and citizenship. Antonsich (2010) argues that sense of belonging has to be seen as the personal feelings and intimate relations which make the people feel 'at home' in their place. Yuval-Davis (2006) explain that people can belong in many different ways and to many different objects of attachment. They emphasized that sense of belonging is always a dynamic process, not a reified fixity. Poe et al (2014) argue that a personal sense of belonging is also conducted in people's everyday practices that produce emotional attachments. In general, belonging has multidimensional terms and definitions. In their article, Sicakkan and Lithman (2005) mentioned that birthplace, ethnicity, class, race, religion, culture, nationality, gender and age (or a combination of these aspects) could form the sense of belonging.

Antonsich (2010) argues that sense of belonging can be understood from two significant perspectives, the sense of personal, intimate feelings of being at home in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as part of political aspects. However, in this research, I focus more on the personal sense of belonging expressed by farmers, as this can help to explore how the farmers give meaning towards their place in relation to oil palm expansion. The sense of intimacy and feeling at home can be defined as a personal sense of rootedness and an emotional state where people can feel comfortable, secure and engaged with their own environment. There are five factors which might generate a sense of belonging, which are: auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic and legal.

First, Auto-biographical relates to the personal memories such as personal childhood experiences, memories in a certain place or of a certain person. This factor can play an essential role in the sense of belonging for some people. In some cases, people will miss their childhood where they were born and grew up. They sometimes compare their current livelihood condition with this experience.

Second, Relational factors refer to the personal and social engagement that shape a person's acceptance within their society. In their findings, Ager and Strang (2004) mention that the sense of belonging was the key to integration, and this means having close relations with family

members, the commitment to make friendships among the local community, and a sense of shared values. As I explained before, the arrival of oil palm plantations has created social fragmentation between people who support and oppose the external company. Social relations were damaged during the conflict due to the loss of trust brought about by the new divide between supporters and opponents. These conflicts and disputes may therefore impact sense of belonging by affecting the relational aspect and the level of social engagement among local communities.

Third, Buonfino and Thomson (2007) argue, drawing on their case from British society, that culture will continue to play a crucial role in determining people's identity, and it serves a powerful social function. This cultural aspect brings people together over a common language, or common symbols, and norms. Moreover, in line with this context, religion has a vital role in maintaining the influence and the strength of society. However, in the case of oil palm expansion, the conflict and mistrust among fellow villagers has created a cleavage in their religious practice. The people who were against oil palm expansion decided to build a new mosque to pray as they could no longer pray together with the supporters of the oil palm company (de Vos, Köhne, & Roth, 2017). In this case, the cultural and religious values have been affected by the emergence of oil palm companies.

Fourth, Economic considerations are important to assure the stability and safety of the material conditions for an individual and their family. However, this economic condition is not only about the material perspectives, but also the feeling that makes an individual preserve the future of the place where they live. P.Semedi (2014) finds that oil palm cultivation under companies' benefit-sharing arrangement schemes (nucleus -plasma) has proven capable of improving the economic aspect for the farmers. It raised the farmers to the higher level of socio-economic status, yet he noticed these positive facets had not broken free from other social dissatisfaction. Julia & White (2012) noticed a contradictory situation in which on the one hand sees the improvement of regular cash income, and on the other hand the loss of resource tenure and autonomy, and the rise of exploitation and intimidation. In this regard, economic benefits are insufficient for the farmers to feel that they are feel belong to their place.

Fifth, Legal forms are crucial components in generating sense of belonging. In this context, legal forms can be equated as citizenships. Alexander (2008) argues that traditionally, citizenship is related to the legal membership of the political community. This is also supported by Buonfino and Thomson (2007), who observe that the law determines who is 'in' and who is 'out'; who belongs and who does not. This idea could make people feel self-esteem through their citizenship. It could open up a pathway towards rights and identities, as well take them away (Buonfino & Thomson, 2007). There had been a gradual shift of citizenship as a passive right towards something that entails citizens' responsibilities and active participation (Alexander, 2008). This notion encourages the active role of society in being part of government policy and development projects. The local farmers in this case might compare their environment and livelihood in the past with their current situation after the expansion of oil palm plantations.

Some other scholars also discuss the impact of oil palm plantations on people's sense of belonging. de Vos et al (2017) explained that land acquisition practices work like small wedges that distort the social relations between people and their (social) environment, gradually transforming the social and physical landscape. As the social relations between people and environment are disrupted, people may start to lose their sense of belonging to their place. Li (2017b) added that in many cases of land acquisition, oil palm companies and government officials use intimidation and manipulation to make customary landholders feel insecure about the legal status of their land. People feel uneasy with such practices which generate dispute and conflict not only between the local people and the company but also among villagers themselves. For the local people, land is crucial as it connects them to their ancestors and is an investment for their future generations. The expansion of oil palm plantation would fix property objects, property holders and the bundle of rights and responsibilities in line with nucleus-plasma arrangements, reducing the meaning of land to a mere economic function (de Vos, 2016).

The plasma arrangements only acknowledge current property holders, meaning access to the plasma plots for the next generation remains uncertain. The local people who have no land to convert into plasma plantation could lose their access to land as they are not qualified to be registered as plasma holders, which means there are no ways for their future generation to have their own land (de Vos, 2016). Li (2017b) explained that oil palm's net labor absorption is low

which means the land is needed but the labor is not needed. The selection of workers according to ethnicity, age and gender specifications could lead to displacement of opportunities for jobs and regular income for future generations. In this condition of uncertainty, local people may worry about the livelihoods of their children in the future. Furthermore, Julia and White (2012) gave their perception about the impact of oil palm plantation from a gender perspective. They argue that the expanding corporate plantation and contract farming system has undermined and eroded women's right to land, and women are becoming a class of plantation labor. Under these circumstances, the local women could feel that their position and livelihood has been destroyed by the existence of oil palm plantations, in turn affecting their feeling of being at home.

Having already explained the aspects that make up the sense of belonging framework, it is important to take into account some other aspects that farmers find important. As aforementioned, some scholars explained how the local people give meaning to their land, which is affected by oil palm expansion. The farmers considered their right over their land to be an essential aspect in relation to their sense of belonging, and that it is crucial not only for current generations but also to assure that their future generations still have spare land to cultivate. Land rights are therefore a crucial aspect to explore in relation to people's sense of belonging in the context of palm oil expansion.

Furthermore, other element that I consider crucial in the construction of personal belonging relates to the future generation of the farmers. The scholars discussed that the farmers show concern with the fact that the nucleus-plasma scheme does not provide guarantees for the availability of land for their children. Naturally, people wish for a better and more secure livelihood for their children, and the future uncertainty created by the nucleus-plasma scheme therefore is likely to affect people's sense of belonging.

The last aspect that plays an important role in shaping the sense of belonging of oil palm farmers is the environment. The local people have attached their emotions to their local environment as their ancestors have done before. Julia and White (2012) explained that one of serious issue experienced by local residents is lack of clean water. As the impact of conversion of upstream areas into oil palm plantation, river water has become dirty and muddy. In some cases, the oil palm

factory has produced waste which polluted the river water. The community are currently dependent on clean water supply from their protected mountain. It could be seen that the environmental aspect could significantly affect people's feelings of being at home. When their river was damaged by the expansion of oil palm plantation, the emotional attachment of the farmers with their environment was damaged as well.

As such, I propose that three additional elements are relevant for the concept of belonging in the palm oil context: land rights, future generations and environmental aspects. In my research I found these to play a crucial role in constructing personal belonging and affecting how people give a meaning to their place.

4. Sense of Belonging of The Local Farmers

This chapter discusses the sense of belonging and perceptions of local people on the impact of oil palm plantation development in Salaman Kecil village, Sambas Region, West Kalimantan. Salaman Kecil is a village located in Sejangkung sub-district and Selayar village is located in Sajingan Besar sub-district near the border between Indonesia and Malaysia. In Salaman Kecil, the local people have experienced the expansion of an oil palm plantation and conflict with companies in their locality since 2005. The conflict between local people and the company was eventually solved through a negotiation process facilitated by a local NGO (Lembaga Gamawan) and the Compliance Advisor Ombudsman (CAO) of the World Bank.

This chapter is organised into two major sections consisting of: (1) a description of the village and the dynamics of daily life, and (2) the perception of the local farmers on the impact of oil palm plantation on their sense of belonging. I argue that based on the perspective of the local farmers, the economic aspect is not the only impact they consider as important. Economic considerations are an important aspect in improving livelihoods, however other aspects such as independence and freedom to manage one's property, maintaining social relations, the prospects for future generations, as well as environmental aspects also shape people's perception of the impact of oil palm.

4.1 Salaman Kecil Village

4.1.1 The social culture of people in Dusun Salaman Kecil

Salaman Kecil is located in Sambas Region. Currently, about 300 families live in this village. From Sambas it takes about one hour by longboat, known locally as *Kapal tambang*. This hamlet is located beside the river; thus, some people built their houses above the water. Most of the villagers Salaman Kecil live in wooden houses built on stilts with roofs constructed from zinc sheets or thatch. People build their houses above the ground, because of the instability of the river bank. Moreover, this architecture is designed to anticipate flooding. Inside the village, the road is made of pieces of woods so that it can only be passed by pedestrians.

The river is the primary source to support their daily activities in this area since people use the river to travel to the city and to sea, as well as for bathing, fishing and sanitation. When the sun is rising in the east, the people start their activities. Some women sell vegetables and fish door to door using a handcart. The boat engines are turned on; some men are crossing the river to search for timber in the forest on the other side, whilst others are fishing in the river. Other women are washing clothes, cleaning utensils and preparing their children for school. In the sunset, many children swim and the workers, back from their activities, bathe in the river. Farming is not the primary occupation of the people in Salaman Kecil; local people primarily derive their income through logging, fishing and boat building.

The social relations among the local people are still maintained in the midst of changing socio-economic conditions. The value of “gotong-royong” (mutual aid) seems to have never faded from the lives of people in Salaman Kecil. This local value can be seen when there is a wedding celebration in the village, when other families will come to contribute food items such as chicken, rice and meat for the festivities. Before the wedding celebration, the residents will hold a meeting to raise money among the villagers and divide the tasks for during the celebration. Some slay the chicken, whilst others cook them and so on. The cooked chicken and other dishes are served on plates which have been neatly organised. Everyone in the village is invited to enjoy the food, as well as acquaintances of the married couple from outside of the village. The wedding celebrations are usually held over an entire weekend. The first day is for the local village residents and the second day is for the guests of the families involved who come from outside the village. In the morning, the youngsters go to the forest to gather for building a semi-permanent stage for public entertainment. Usually, the family will hire ‘Tanjidor’ and ‘Dangdut’ performers, traditional styles of music in Indonesia. During the celebration, some women open temporary stalls in front of their house to sell various items such as sausages, milkshakes and clothes. The bride and the groom are seen on the stage next to the singer while the local people enjoy the performance from below the stage.



Figure 1 wedding ceremony in Salaman Kecil Village

This wedding ritual shows how the intimacy of social relations among the local people in Salaman Kecil hamlet is maintained. The process of the wedding ritual symbolizes the unity among the local people to achieve their common goal. Everyone in the village contributes in the ritual process and together they enjoy the celebration as one community. It is an important insight displaying how the local people strengthen and preserve their social relations. However, the development of oil palm plantations in this village have altered people's sense of belonging. There exists a divide between those who support and oppose the company's activities, a loss of trust in the village officials, and the emergence of competition over land among the villagers. These developments pose a real threat to the unity of this community.

4.1.2 Logging activities

Economically, before the company came to their village, the local people mainly depended on forest products. Some people also cleared land to cultivate plants like rubber and Sengon wood for additional income. Sulaiman, a local resident, said:

"...we always made use of this forest before, it was a dense forest. This is what I say: we never cultivate the plant, but we always harvest. This forest does not belong to anybody, yet it could be used by anyone (residents). This forest belongs to Salaman Kecil administration and is not for individual ownership..."

The residents usually enter the forest in order to select the appropriate trees for logging. In the meantime, they also bring their family to stay in the tents they build. They use chainsaws and simple tools to cut down the trees and only cut down those that are needed. The logs are then brought to the river bank, then sold on to sawmills owned by a Malaysian tycoon. People of

Salaman Kecil also use their wood to build boats as well as for furniture manufacturing. It is a common custom; this kind of work is maintained from generation to generation and is dependent on the availability of wood in the forest. Timber from Salaman Kecil hamlet is known as one of best sources of timber in the town of Sambas. However, the high demand for wood in the Sambas region encourages the local people to expand their logging activities. Population growth also drives up demand, putting pressure on forest resources. Local residents therefore need to consider the availability of these resources for future generations and diversify their income sources. Nowadays, logging activity is no longer seen as the primary source of income due to the scarcity of timber sources and the expansion of oil palm plantations.

4.1.3 Agricultural Life

When people started to think that forest products can no longer become their main resource to rely on, they cleared small areas of land for agricultural purposes. People in Salaman Kecil tend to clear land in groups of eight to ten people. This group usually clears the area of their plot of any wild plants and scattered twigs. They use the traditional long blade to clear vegetation. However, what is considered one of the most effective ways to clear the land is the burning of dry vegetation. Burning was the method most frequently employed by the people to clear the land, since it takes a short time. Sulaiman said:

“...a long time ago, before the company (PT.INA) came to this land, every year we would clear land by burning. However, this method never became a problem for our environment since we were only doing this on a small scale. We only clear land areas as large as we need.”

“...when we clear new land for agricultural purposes, we do it together as one village. We usually use a collaboration system ‘system keroyokan’. For instance, if ten villagers want to open 10 Ha of new land, then they will collaborate to clear that land until it is finished, and each of them will get one Ha of land.”

The other method to clear the land is by using pesticides. Some people choose this method since they think that this pesticide will be safer and under their control rather than burning. After they finish clearing the land, then they will use a long stick to make some holes in the soil and plant crops such as corn, cassava, black pepper and so on. The local people usually plant what they need

for their family. This kind of consumption pattern is an example of the household's economic resilience in fulfilling their primary needs. The people just buy additional ingredients for their dishes such as chili or *petai* from the market.

Local people in Salaman Kecil are ethnic Malays, and do not identify as *adat* communities. Therefore, they do not adhere to the concept of community-owned land (*hak ulayat*), in the same way Dayak communities have communal land. However, their land governance system is also based on ancestral inheritance. According to local people, if they want to clear new areas for cultivation, they just need to sow their plants in the ground, endowing ownership upon the planters. If there is an area which is abandoned by the local people for five years at least, the land status will become unpossessed again, and anyone could have it. Ghani an independent farmer said:

“The adat rules are not specifically written, yet this custom is recognised by every member of society. Whoever clears the new land takes ownership of that plot. However, the weakness of this system is the absence of sanctions for anyone who creates conflict among the local people...”

The residents who open land for agricultural purposes usually do not hold a legal certificate from the national land agency. They only register their land with the local village administration in the form of a ‘Surat Keterangan Tanah’ (SKT), a certificate stating that this specific area is theirs to cultivate. The people of Salaman Kecil think that SKT is more than enough in terms of a legal document for their land. They said that the cost to register the certificate is more expensive in comparison with the SKT. According to local people, they are able to sell their land despite only holding an SKT as their legal document. This is the reason why the local people have low participation rates in registering their land with the national land agency (BPN).

The residents in Salaman Kecil have long-lasting connections with rubber cultivation. Rubber is one of the local people's resources for economic income. The local people have grown rubber for many years. They normally locate their small plantations nearby their forest. When the trees have reached a productive age about three or four years, the local people can tap the rubber almost every day unless it is the rainy season. However, the price of rubber in the market is frequently unstable. According to local farmers, the rubber price has reached IDR 30.000 - 35.000 /kilo (2 Euros), yet

this does not last for a long time, with the price dropping to only IDR 10.000 /kilo (0.63 Euros) within a month. Despite the unstable price, people still rely upon these products to increase their financial income. More important is that local people become the landowner of their plantation. They have independence and freedom to manage their land and provide land for the next generations.

4.1.4 When the Oil Palm Plantation Comes

It was around 2005 that the oil palm investors start expanding in West Kalimantan, including Sambas Region. According to local farmers in Salaman Kecil hamlet, the first time PT.INA came to their area was in 2005. PT.INA, under the company X group, took over the permit of an existing plantation operated by PT.Bahari Lestari, which is part of the Y company group. PT.INA expanded their plantation crossing the borders of Salaman Kecil village territory. When local people were still working as carpenters, they already felt bothered by the company's activities in their forest. However, at that time, the local people did not know how to protest to the company since the company workers said that they work for the money and have no idea about the legality and status of the forest. Sulaiman said:

"...at that time, we did not know how to protest against the company, we only protested as individuals. We got mad with the company workers, but they said that they were not the bosses or the decision makers, they did not have any idea about this matter and they just followed orders. Thus, some people had the initiative to create a small meeting to discuss this problem..."

When the local villagers doubted how they could protest towards the company, they were invited to a training session about the oil palm plantation held by a local NGO (Lembaga Gemawan) in the neighbouring village. In that session, people shared their experiences regarding the company's expansion in their area. From that meeting, they asked for the village officials to organise a formal meeting with the company. Mulawarman one of the protester expressed:

"...it is clear for me and for other fellow villagers, that we want to protest against the company which destroys our forest, we want our land back, yet the company offered us the benefit-sharing

arrangement plan. For me personally they did this just because their actions have been caught by the villagers. People will not benefit from entering into partnerships with the company...”

In the first meeting, attended by the village head and representatives of PT. INA management, the company's excuse was that they did not know their plantation area encroached on the land area of Salaman Kecil hamlet. They did not even know the existence of Salaman Kecil hamlet. Yet for the local communities, the company's reason did not make any sense since the people believed that the company cannot enter the land without a legal permit from the local government, while the government must know about the existence of the hamlet. The first meeting was unsuccessful because the local villagers stuck to their demand to get back their land from the plantation. According to local farmers, when the company tried to offer the benefit-sharing plasma-nucleus arrangement to the local people, they got assistance from a local NGO (Lembaga Gamawan) in carrying out a cost benefit analysis of the offer. The local people realised that they would not get the forest they had in the past. The only realistic choice that they had was to accept the offer of the plasma-nucleus scheme, yet they could negotiate the share of the land.

The local villagers were assisted by local NGO (Lembaga Gamawan) in trying to get the support of local and international NGOs. They were highlighting the gap between the real condition in the field in terms of company practices and the ideal standard of the RSPO. Through this method, they got a response from compliance advisor/ombudsman office (CAO) of the IFC, the international financial institution that had funded the company's operations. In this case, the role of CAO was important in assuring that the company would be able to sit with the local villagers to try and address the problems. The CAO then sent a team to Salaman Kecil hamlet to conduct a preliminary investigation.

The agreement between Company X Group Group and Salaman Kecil villagers, which was facilitated by CAO, took almost a year (eight months) to reach the deal. After seven mediation meetings, this agreement resulted in the benefit-sharing scheme (plasma-nucleus). In 16 October 2008, the final agreement between PT. INA and the local people of Salaman Kecil had reached the final draft. Some points that highlighted from this agreement focusing on the establishment of plasma-nucleus plantation and the compensation for the Salaman Kecil villagers. The area of

plantation consists of company plantation areas (763 Hectares) and areas cleared but not yet planted (403 Hectares) for the plasma plantation. Both parties agreed to preserve forest land (327 Hectares) and if someday it is found that preserved forest have been converted into oil palm plantation or stacking areas, then PT. INA is obliged to reforest the land. From this agreement, the company also agreed to provide compensation for the planted areas in nucleus plantation at a rate of IDR 300.000/Hectare (19 Euros) and the local people will get the compensation for the development program of Salaman Kecil village worth IDR. 40.000.000/year (2500 Euros) for five years until the oil palm becomes productive. This concession between PT.INA and Salaman Kecil local people will be valid for 35 years, starting from 1 September 2006 and the most important commitment is that PT.INA agreed to stop expansion for their oil palm plantation in areas owned by Salaman Kecil village.

However, according to a local farmer, the establishment of the plasma plantation will be conducted by the company; thus, the local villagers do not have the freedom to manage their own plasma plantation. The plasma-nucleus scheme adopts a ‘one roof’ management system (*manajemen satu atap*). Even though the plasma plantation has its administrative cooperative called ‘Kembang Seroja (CB)’, the company still has a strong influence on cooperative decision making and the operational budget. In general, under ‘one roof management’, the cooperatives must adhere to the conditions dictated by the company, meaning they have little autonomy over decisions such as fertiliser and herbicide use. The land is managed by the company and the result of the palm oil harvest will then be paid to the plasma farmers monthly (Gillespie, 2012).

Sandi is the new chief of the Kembang Seroja cooperative who is also a Salaman Kecil resident. He used to be a secretary and after just two months become the chief of the cooperative since the previous chief passed away. Sandi will continue to serve in this role for the remaining period until 2019. Sandi said:

“...I could not say that our cooperative now already advanced since we are still learning. There are still so many interventions from the company in our cooperative. I could say the company decides 75 percent of the decision making in this cooperative, from the financial until the managerial aspects. For example, just a few months ago, we got information from the company

that we have to pay double the operational fee (fertilizer and herbicides) for our plasma. It is very strange, since based on our experience, our operational fee has never been as high as it is now. If this issue is not resolved as soon as possible, conflict could emerge...”

Sandi believes that the cooperative should be able to manage the plasma plantation independently. This cooperative has to deal with many issues, from the establishment of the plasma to running the management side of things. There are some aspects which the cooperative could handle such as providing oil palm seedlings, assuring the availability of fertilizers and herbicides, managing workers, and oil palm quality improvement. The company should not interfere with these things, and their role should be simply to buy the produce provided by the cooperative. Currently, the ‘Kembang Seroja’ cooperative does not hold any power to manage their own plantation. The company takes over the cooperative’s role in deciding the level of fertilization for the plasma, and they manage the cash flow of the plasma plantation. The organisation of plasma workers also falls under the management of the company. The company has power to decide the number of workers in the plasma plantation. Moreover, the process of paying salaries is carried out under the administration of the company. The cooperative has become an administrative institution which is recording FFB sales data and distributing it to the plasma farmers.

Besides the agreement between local people and the company regarding the land concession, the technical procedure also discussed the establishment of a plasma plantation between PT.INA and the Kembang Seroja cooperative. It was agreed that a plasma plantation would be funded by the national bank, with the company becoming the contractor of the initiative. The local farmers are imposed with a debt up to 30 billion IDR which has to be paid off in 25 years. However, according to a local farmer, in five years since the plantation became productive, they have only earned about 2 billion IDR from the FFB sales. Under such conditions, the local farmers would never be able to pay their debt. If the plasma cooperative could not pay for their debt, the company will bail out the debt to the bank and they will hold the legal certificate (HGU) of the plasma plantation. In other words, the company will possess the legal right of the plasma plantation and the local villagers will never get their own land plantation.

The points that can be highlighted from the agreement are the establishment of plasma plantations and the provision of compensation for the land which has been planted (nucleus) on Salaman Kecil territory. These points demonstrate how the local people have lost their independence to manage their own land, as well as the forest area that provided their livelihoods. On the one hand, we could assume that the local people could benefit from the compensation funds and the plasma plantation which will provide jobs for local people in Salaman Kecil. On the other hand, the local people will become highly dependent on the company to make their living. Furthermore, their lives will significantly change, and uncertainty is generated for future generations; the community is increasingly divided by the presence of the plantation, the possibility to plant other crops is diminished, and unprecedented environmental impacts will be created.

4.2 Local Farmers Perception Towards Oil Palm Plantation

The expansion of the oil palm plantation in Salaman Kecil hamlet has brought about numerous impacts on the sense of belonging of local people. The lifestyle of the people has changed drastically; they used to be independent farmers who managed their own land and had control over their forest. This subchapter will explain the perception of the local farmers regarding the impact of the oil palm plantation in their territory in relation to six different aspects, which are: income, rights to land, lifestyle, social relations, future generations and the environment. I argue that these livelihood aspects are of utmost importance in providing an understanding of the sense of belonging of the local people in Salaman Kecil.

4.2.1 Income

This subsection will explain the perception of local people regarding the impact of the oil palm plantation on income levels. There is a difference in opinions between the younger and the older generations of workers on this issue. Independent smallholders are anxious about the price of their FFB on the market, which is just a half of the price for FFB from plasma plantations. As aforementioned in the introduction, the claim may appear that income is one of the most important aspects of livelihoods, yet there is a diverse response from community members in Salaman Kecil regarding the importance of incomes on their lives.

In 2005, the local people in Salaman Kecil hamlet worked as loggers, fishermen, farmers and shipbuilders. The local residents could benefit from forest products such as honey, rattan, resin, jackfruit, and timber which are located in the Mount Senujuh region near their settlement. Some of these products were used to fulfil their daily needs and rest they would be sold at the market to gain additional income. Currently, most of the people in Salaman Kecil have become plasma farmers and plantation labourers, and this transition has also affected every aspect of their life.

It is a common claim that an oil palm plantation brings many positive impacts for local farmers' incomes (Feintrenie et al., 2010; Pacheco et al., 2017; Rist et al., 2010). As Semedi (2014) found, palm oil cultivation under the nucleus estate scheme has proven capable of improving the economic performance of the entire area, and in turn the socio-economic status of local people. However, he also emphasized that the positive impacts of economic development were entangled with the onset of social dissatisfaction. This claim may hold true since some of the local farmers believe that in their current condition, they can have a regular wage, national insurance, and permanent status as workers in the oil palm plantation. The regular wage assures them of a monthly income, helping them to fulfil their daily needs. National insurance is of importance to protect the workers from health and safety issues. The permanent status in the oil palm plantation means that they have enough stability to qualify for loans from the bank or a Credit Union (CU), which they can use to buy a motorcycle or speed boat engine for their transportation needs. However, the question is: were the local farmers poor before the oil palm expansion came to their village? And how significant has the economic development been for the local people been since the oil palm expansion? Some other local people believe that the oil palm plantation has brought negative impacts for the local economy. Moreover, they also argue that the economy is not the only aspect that impacts their sense of belonging.

In Salaman Kecil hamlet, the young local farmers who have worked for the company after the agreement was signed in 2007 have more positive comments about the economic impact of the oil palm plantation. During the interview session, I spoke to three younger farmers who express their opinion regarding the oil palm company. Most of these farmers are the younger generation who were not involved when the company came to their village. This younger generation (20 - 25 y.o) has a different perception towards the oil palm plantation than the older generation. They believe

that the current situation is the best way to get a better income. Some of the young farmers feel that the company provides jobs for them, so they can feed their family. Moreover, their status as permanent workers make it easier for them to get a loan from the bank or Credit Union (CU). These young local farmers will get paid IDR 91.000 (6 Euros) per day for their work. If they get sick, the company will pay for their healthcare costs. These local farmers usually work from Monday to Saturday and are paid based on the number of days they have worked. Harvesters in particular may choose to work through the weekends, as by doing so they will receive double pay in comparison with a normal weekday. This situation means that harvesters can potentially gain higher incomes than the maintenance group. Jaelani, a young harvester said:

“...usually I can earn a higher income every month since I work weekdays and weekends. I think it is fine for me because I have not married yet, so I have more time to work and save more money for myself. This month for instance, I was able to earn around five million rupiahs because I worked the entire month. I was able to buy a brand new handphone...”

Triadi, another young local farmer stated:

“...I think it is good now, we have a job, we have money because of the company. I need to feed my family. The more I work, the more I get money...”

“...I believe that the oil palm workers will not get fired as long as they have not made fatal mistakes. The price of the FFB also will not collapse since the government have set a standard price for plasma-nucleus plantation...”

These young local farmers have usually worked for the company for less than five years, when the plantation was already productive. They are not really emotionally invested in the history of the oil palm expansion in their territory in the manner that the older generation are. It is not because they do not aware the history of the local people's struggle for the land, but it is more about their positive perception of the comfort of having a stable economy that the company provides. For the young local farmers, they seem to hope that the company will remain stable in the future and that they can still get a regular wage and a stable income for their family. Currently, the young generation

who work for the company do not get a share of the plasma land, since the agreement states that this is only for the families who registered when the agreement was signed.

A contrasting perception is held by the older generation of farmers who more critical towards the plantation. Sulaiman recalls his memories regarding the income that they had before the company came to the village. He stated:

“... the income from this work (logging) was not as high as what we have earned from the oil palm plantation, yet we have freedom and independence to manage our time to go to work. No one will force us to go to work, no rules, no one angry because of our results. I could say it is better income in the oil palm plantation because we are doing this work daily. I say if we are doing this logging as frequently as we work at the oil palm plantation, we would get a better income from logging...”

Besides the local farmers who work for the company, some other independent smallholders also feel the impact of this expansion. The independent smallholders are the local villagers who have inherited land from their ancestors. They have used this land to grow agricultural plantations such as rubber, petai (*parkia speciosa*) and cempedak. When the oil palm plantation came to their village, the independent smallholders were tempted to change their plantations into oil palm since the company offered a good price for their FFB. However, after the company plantations (nucleus) became productive, the price of independent farmers decreased. Currently, the price for the company FFB is still in the range of IDR 1200-1300 /kilo, (0.082 Euros) while for the independent smallholders it is only IDR 550-600 /kilo. (0.038 Euros) This situation may be due to the fact that there is no standard price set by the government for the produce of independent smallholders. The government only set the minimum price for fruits from plasma and nucleus plantations.

The only reason why the independent smallholders do not want to change their oil palm plantations is that they do not want to experience a total loss, as their plantations are still in the productive stage. Some of the independent smallholders are trying to plant Sengon woods in the rest of the land and hope that the income from this product will cover up the loss caused by the oil palm plantation. According to the independent smallholders it has been ten years since their oil palm plantation become productive. They only harvest their oil palm twice in a month. Each harvest

time, they usually get 6-7 tons of FFB. The yield of their plantation is far below that achieved by the company. This is because the independent farmers have a limited budget for their fertilizer and pesticide. However, for them it is better to be independent smallholders rather than laborers. Ghani, who is an independent smallholder stated:

“...honestly, I do not want to be a laborer, that is my principle. I have never worked for the company. I used to be a carpenter as well before, but then when the wood supply decreased, I cleared my own land for this plantation. Not all of local villagers have the same principle as me...”

To respond to the negative economic impact of the oil palm plantation, Ghani tried to practice “*tumpang sari*” in his plantation. Tumpang sari is the technique of growing two or more crops in the same piece of land. Instead of monoculture, Ghani also grew other crops such as peanuts and cucumber between the oil palm intervals. Although, the outcome of these crops did not significantly improve his financial outlook, he can use this practice to fulfil his family needs. He did this because he believes that it is not enough to just rely upon the result of the oil palm plantation. Ghani realised that at the moment the FFB from independent smallholders cannot compete in terms of quality and quantity with the FFB from the plasma and nucleus plantation. Moreover, because he is an independent smallholder, he can manage his own plantation without intervention from anyone else; this is different from Sulaiman, who works for the company. He has no right to practice intercropping because the company prohibits planting any other crops other than oil palm.

The claim that the oil palm plantation would bring positive economic impacts for local farmers holds some truth in this case. The plantation has provided a regular wage, health insurance and permanent employment status for their workers. For this reason, the local farmers have prospered economically. In the same fashion, the younger farmers express the positive effects that it has had on their living conditions. They are not emotionally engaged in the history of conflict between the plantation and their village. They believe that the current conditions provide the best opportunity to make a living to support their families. Conversely, the older generation believe that the company has grabbed not only their land but also their livelihood autonomy. Therefore, the older farmers are more appreciative of the income from their previous job as loggers, where they enjoyed

greater flexibility and independence. In addition, independent smallholders are concerned about the wide price gap between company produce and their own. As is evident from these varying economic perspectives, local farmers value their income, but other facets of belonging also play an essential role to determine their sense of ‘feeling at home’.

4.2.2. Land Rights

Since the oil palm plantation expanded their plantation area towards the territory of Salaman Kecil hamlet, the local villagers started to respond and adapt to their changing conditions. Their ability to respond and adapt to the oil palm plantation allowed them to survive despite the changing social economy in their area. The local people in Salaman Kecil started their response by attempting to legalize their land through village officials. I argue that the concerns of local people regarding their land rights has increased because of the impact of the greater competition over the land in the future. The oil palm plantation indirectly impacts the sense of autonomy that local people feel. The loss of autonomy felt in turn creates the fear that more land will be lost to the company in the future.

Before the oil palm plantation came to their village, the local people are not used to claiming their land and forest as personal belongings. They made use of the forest and land as a community, and as I explained in the introduction of local people in Salaman Kecil, not as individuals. However, after the negotiation between local people and the company had been finalized, an awareness emerged amongst local people regarding registering their land officially with the village administration (SKT). It is important for the local people to claim their own land since they do not want to lose any more of it. Ghani for instance, has registered his 60 Ha plantation of oil palm and Sengon wood for through SKT. He realizes that what he has done is not for himself but for future generations. The same thing was also done by Sulaiman, who has about two hectares of land which he registered as individual land. He believes that it is crucial for him and his family to secure their land since it will be inherited by future generations. For Sulaiman, land is the only property that their family can make a livelihood from since they cannot depend anymore to the forest products. Sulaiman stated:

“...I have to legalise the status of my land to the village officials since it will have stronger legal status. With that legal certificate, I will share the land between each of my children equally. I have told my children that they should never sell this land since one day this land will run out and we will have nothing left for our grandchildren...”

Sulaiman and Ghani are local people who are aware of the importance of the land legal status. They learned from their experience with the company's expansion in their area. The expansion of the oil palm plantation made them realise that their land is targeted by various actors, including oil palm companies. It can be seen that the expansion of oil palm plantations has changed the sense of community among the people of Salaman Kecil. They have lost their sense of mutual trust that facilitated communal land use, and they now prefer to secure their own.

The legal status of SKT provides them a secure condition to save their land from any party that wants to grab it from them. However, the power of SKT is not as strong as a legal certificate from the National Land Agency (BPN). This is because the legal certificate is the legitimate document proving legal, economic and social guarantees for the holder, while SKT is only a legal letter registered at village level (Dilapanga, 2017). It might be difficult for local people in the future to hold out for a higher compensation from a company that might be trying to take over their land, since they only hold the SKT legal status, which is not as strong as the legal certificate from the national agency.

The ability to respond and adapt to the oil palm plantation has raised a sense of individuality among local people, exemplified by claims to private land through SKT. At the same time, they have lost their sense of community, resulting in an erosion of communal land use practices. Worries about greater competition over the land in the future push people to claim their land in order to secure for their future. Nevertheless, claiming land through SKT is not enough to secure the ownership status of their land. In the future, if an external company were to make claims to their land, they would not have sufficient legal grounds to oppose this. In this respect, the local people consider their feeling of their community and their fear about land competition in the future to be part of their sense of belonging.

4.2.3 Lifestyle

This section describes the daily activities of local workers who live outside the oil palm plantation. It is important to look at the daily lives of the workers to get the perspective of the local people about the meaning of the life that they have. From this perspective we can see that the aspects of living that the local people consider crucial are not only financial, but also related to their sense of belonging in their place. The story of Sulaiman and his family represents how local people have had to change their lifestyles to adapt to the new condition in their village after the oil palm expansion.

The oil palm workers usually wake up at 3 am in the morning. This is the regular routine of oil palm laborers family like Sulaiman. His wife, and three of his children have to work in the plantation to fulfil their daily needs. Sulaiman and his wife have to wake up earlier than other family members since they have to bathe, wash clothes and prepare food for breakfast and lunch for their work. Every morning before they leave the village, they have some snacks and hot water as their breakfast. Sulaiman wears his jacket, long pants and boots to protect him from the mosquitos. He also prepares his equipment, such as a machete and a scythe.

His eldest daughter called ‘kak long’ has two children who are still toddlers. She has to wake them up every morning and leaves them with her neighbour for the day. Kak long’s husband works as the secretary of the Kembang Seroja cooperative. His job is to manage and synchronize the FFB sales data with the company administration. He is obliged by the company to live in the company’s lodge, which is located in the nucleus areas about two hours from the village by motorcycle. Kak long’s husband may only return to his village during weekend. Kak long said:

“...I think this daily activity is difficult for my children, I feel sorry to wake them up in the early morning. Yet, I could not do anything since the company obliges the workers to be present at the plantation at 6 AM. My first child is already in the second year of primary school, she already got used to my daily activity, but the second one, he always cries when I leave him with the neighbour...”

It's still 4 o'clock; in the dark, the laborers use a flashlight to get into their longboat which will bring them to their work sites. It takes about one hour and a half from their village to the plantation. Currently, there are two longboats in charge of delivering the workers every day. Each longboat has a capacity of forty passengers. This boat belongs to the local villagers, who leased it out to the company. On the way to their plasma garden, some women laborers have breakfast inside the boat because they want to save more time when they arrive in the plantation. White rice is their staple diet for breakfast, lunch and dinner. They usually bring some side dishes such as omelet, spicy anchovy, and fried tempeh. As they believe that carbohydrate and sugar will provide them more energy for their body to work for a whole day, they eat more rice and drink very sweet tea in the morning. In the dim light inside the boat, the women open their breakfast boxes with white rice, salted fish and chili sauce.



Figure 2

local farmers leave for plantation garden in the dark (top left), arriving at the plantation in the morning (top right), finger print absent attendance (bottom left), briefing from the foreman (bottom right).

At 5.30 AM they arrive at the small dock of the plasma plantation. The sunrise illuminates the river channel and the boat sits in the dock. The workers will make a line to put their finger in the fingerprint machine as the proof of their presence. It takes about 30 minutes from the small dock to their shelter; some laborers use their motorcycles which they park in the small shop near the dock, some others just walk to get to the shelter, and the rest will be picked up by a truck which is leased from the company. The truck will carry the laborers from the dock to their shelter for about three kilometers on a rutted road.

In the shelter, before the workers split up to their working sites, they will gather to recite the basic principles of the RSPO and ISPO loudly. This activity is the rule introduced by the company to make the laborers understand the point of the RSPO and ISPO principles. However, this activity seems to have just become a formality. In practice, the chief foreman frequently violates these principles. For example, one of the RSPO basic principle is the responsibility for the workers, individual, and local community who get affected by the plantation and factory of oil palm. Yet, when the company restock the fertilizer, the amount of fertilizer often exceeds the number of the fertilizer workers. The chief foreman then asks laborers from different divisions to spread the fertilizer, yet there is not enough safety equipment to protect the laborers from the toxic chemicals. The laborers do not dare to protest to the chief foreman since they have no choice but to do other work, otherwise they may face punishment in the form of deductions from their wage. It shows how the company does not responsible for the job desk of the workers. After the laborers recite the RSPO and ISPO principles, the other foreman will come to brief the workers regarding the blocks which have to be cleared or sprayed. The workers are divided into three groups: maintenance, harvesting and the loading. The maintenance group is responsible for slashing, circle weeding, manuring and spraying. Most of the female workers are in this group, while the men work primarily as the harvesters and loaders.



Figure 3 The fertilization process (top left), the harvesting process (top right), Process of loading FFB in the truck (bottom left), picker of loose fruits (brondolan) (bottom right)

The workers usually finish their work at 12.00 PM in the afternoon. It is time for them to take a rest in the longboat before returning to the village. Because the farmers have to work at different work sites, they have to wait for the others because the boat will not depart until they are complete. Some of them bathe beside the river and others choose to take a nap while waiting for departure. After their rest, the workers usually have lunch together on the deck. Each of them brings their own lunch box and they share their food among themselves. The company does not provide lunch for the workers nor a food allowance. They usually arrive at their home at 1.30 PM, where their children have been waiting for their parents. It is the only time that the local farmers have to gather with their children since they spend most of their time in the plantation. In the evening, the labourers sometimes watch dramas or a football match on the television with their family. About 22.00 P.M they already tired and retire to their rooms to sleep. This is the cycle of the daily lives of the people of Salaman Kecil following the expansion of the oil palm plantation in their village.

These daily activities show us how the local workers deal with the routine in the oil palm plantation. For Sulaiman and his family, after the oil palm expansion, many things have changed in their lifestyles. Their daily routine will never be the same as before the oil palm plantation. They have a little time to take care of their garden and farms since they are too tired from working in the plantation. Moreover, the local people lose their freedom to manage their livelihoods as they are bound by company rules.

The lifestyle changes are considered by the local people as a crucial aspect of belonging impacts resulting from the oil palm plantation. The local people of Salaman Kecil have to transform their lives to adapt to the new condition of their village. The change in their lifestyles has created a sense of insecurity over their belonging. The local people lose their independence to manage their own land and forest. I would argue that these lifestyle changes have been adopted by local people in order to survive in their current situation.

Sulaiman is one of the local villagers who works for the company as a laborer. He is the epitome of the transformation of the Salaman Kecil hamlet people. He used to be a logger who collected timber and other forest products and now he has changed his entire life into that of a worker. Sulaiman no longer has time to manage his small garden nearby his house. In the weekdays, from Monday to Saturday he is a full-time employee for the company. During the weekend, he spends his time with the family and gets some rest to recharge his energy to work again the next day. Sulaiman stated:

“...honestly, I could not compare the current condition and the past, because we have to adapt with the new condition, I think it is important. I had no intention become a plantation laborer until now, I am a victim and I have been forced by the situation. I could say that because I have no choice over my way of life. I have to be a laborer to feed my family; thus, I have no choice but to do this to survive...”

The local people in Salaman Kecil hamlet have shifted their primary source of work from independent forest gathering into oil palm laborers. According to local people, about 80 percent of the local population have converted into oil palm laborers. This shift could be seen as the result of

the oil palm plantation on the local people's livelihoods. However, this condition is also brought about by the response of the local people to adapt to the current condition in their village in order to survive. The local people have experience in how to make use of forest products. Now, they have shifted their way of life to that of an oil palm laborer. Sulaiman said:

"...I never imagined someday I would be a laborer in this company. I just think how to survive in this current situation, working to feed my family..."

Jono is one of the local people who was involved in the negotiation between PT. INA and Salaman Kecil people. He is one of the few people who refused to convert his work as a logger into that of an oil palm worker. Jono feels that he would rather remain a logger as he doesn't want to become a company laborer. His financial situation has worsened since the arrival of the company, yet he does not want to follow the same path as the majority of local people have. Jono states:

"...it is difficult condition for me now, our economic situation has deteriorated drastically. I feel colonised by the foreign investor. Because they pollute our river, it is hard to go fishing now. In this village, the local people's skills are still low. I am just a logger and sometimes I fish in the river. However, I do not want to be a laborer for the company. I joined with the negotiation team because I feel that it is my right to defend my land and village from anyone who tries to grab it. I only graduated elementary school, yet it does not mean that I will stop fighting against people who are smarter than me..."

Looking at the daily activities of the local farmers in Salaman Kecil has provided a clear image of how the local people have dealt with their current situation as labors. Most of them have shifted their lifestyles from that of independent farmers to that of company labors. The local people reflect upon their historical memories when they were independent farmers who had freedom to utilise and communally manage their lands. Antonsich (2010) argues that the auto-biographical facet place-belonging is related to the shared memories among the local people. However, the local people feel it is necessary to adapt to their current conditions, even though they never expected this to happen. For those like Sulaiman and Jono, they never expected that the expansion of the oil palm plantation would affect their lifestyle to such an extent. The capacity of local people to be

independent farmers has been eroded, and despite now receiving a regular income through plantation labor, their lifestyle changes leave them feeling insecure. This demonstrates the importance of values beyond those in the economic domain; people's daily routines and emotional connection to their work are also prominent factors shaping people's sense of belonging.

4.2.4 Social Relation

Social relations emerge as one of the aspects which was affected by the oil palm plantation development. This subsection demonstrates two elements of social relations among local people which emerged after the expansion of the plantation. The disparity between fellow villagers who assessed the pros and cons of the plantation differently became an issue at the local level. Another element is the emergence of the relationship between local people of Salaman Kecil and a local NGO. However, the emergence of this relationship cannot be generalised to represent other cases, as local NGOs may not exist in certain areas to assist local people in dealing with palm oil expansion.

Pro and cons oil palm plantation

The social relations amongst fellow villagers have been maintained since ancestral times. The aforementioned wedding ceremony one of the traditional events that serves to build and strengthen their sense of unity. The local people generate their sense of (group) belonging, as Baumeister and Leary (1995) explained, with long-lasting, pleasant interaction (filled with mutual assistance), and stable relations among them. However, the existence of oil palm plantations has ruined such strong relations, dividing communities between the supporters and the opponents of plantations in their area.

The expansion of the oil palm plantation in Salaman Kecil hamlet has created many impacts on social relations among local people. The company's strategy to obtain land created a divide among local people, with people assessing the pros and cons in a different manner. Social relations were damaged during the process of negotiation between PT.INA and the people of Salaman Kecil. The company came to the village officials to offer the plasma-nucleus scheme after they got pressure from the local NGO and CAO Ombudsman. This plasma-nucleus scheme has been received

different response from the local people. Syari'e and Mulawarman are two local people who totally oppose the expansion of oil palm plantation in their territory. They become Salaman Kecil representatives to go to the negotiation table. As the representatives of the local people in these negotiations with the company, Sulaiman and his colleagues were pressured by the local people and the village elites who supported the oil palm plantation. Mulawarman stated:

"...when we were still fighting against the company expansion on our lands, the village head threatened to have us arrested. We were not afraid, we wanted to prove to our fellow villagers that this struggle was not in vain. I remember that when Lembaga Gamawan was training us, I heard that some people accused us of being a communist group (a forbidden party in Indonesia), because during the training we engaged with the story of Brazilian people struggling for their land against outside companies..."

Sulaiman added:

"...I was threatened by the local villagers who supported the company and those who asked me to stop the negotiation. I have told them that I was fighting struggled for their right to land, for a better deal for local farmers and for land to be taken back from the company. Yet they did not believe me. They said that I just hindered their work. For me, as long as they do not physically threaten me and my family, I will keep struggling for it..."

Sulaiman believed that this struggle is actually not in his interest only; he struggled for the rights of the all local people in Salaman Kecil and their future generations. He argues that the practical route to take is to accept the oil palm plantation in their area since the company has already planted their oil palm and ruined their forest. While in the beginning the local people questioning the legitimacy of the plantation occupation of their land, they considered here seek not to remove the existence of the plantation, but rather demand a more just participation in its process and more equitable sharing of its profits (Acciaioli & Dewi, 2016). The best choice for the local people now is to work on how to get the highest benefit from the negotiation process and get compensation for the land which had been planted with oil palm. Sulaiman said:

“...if I’m just looking after my interests, I can just accept bribes from this company and stop this negotiation. But then, it means that I have betrayed my village, I will lose my face and maybe I will move from this village...”

At first, the village officials already created the team to engage in the negotiation. In actual fact, the team which was created by the village elites who supported the company; thus, they would just agree with any proposition that the company would offer them. A separate group of local people who opposed the company also organized a team to get involved in the negotiation. Sulaiman was one of the negotiating members from opposition, and then became the leader and spokesperson of the team after receiving training on negotiation skills from the local NGO (Lembaga Gamawan). Sulaiman, along with six other people, formed this team. He convinced the local people that if their team was chosen to represent the village, they would not ask for a fee for conducting the negotiations on their behalf. Contrastingly, the team comprised of village officials had set a fee of 20 percent of the potential compensation won through the negotiation. Eventually Sulaiman’s team was chosen by the CAO Ombudsman and the local people to represent the people in negotiations.

This decision signals a loss of trust in local officials, with people no longer wanting to obey the will of the village chief. People realised that if they let the team of local officials conduct the negotiation, the process would be over fairly quickly. The result of the negotiation would be determined by the company interests and the local people would lose their rights to their lands. Moreover, the negotiations would not serve to stop the company’s further expansion in Salaman Kecil’s territory. Ultimately, the local people understood that the village officials would seek their own private interests in any deal with the company, and thus did not wish for them to be involved in the negotiations.

After the agreement was signed in 2006, PT.INA agreed to pay compensation for the land which they had already planted without prior permission, and to dedicate a larger share of the land for the plasma plantation than they had initially offered. However, Sulaiman and his colleagues did not get any recognition from the local people who actually received larger benefits from the agreement. After the negotiation, he decided to work for the company to continue his life. Thus, we could see that Sulaiman and his colleagues eventually accepted the establishment of the

plantation and the negotiation process led to their decision to work for the company as a survival strategy.

In brief, the social relations among the local people has been wounded by the emergence of the company in their territory. The social cleavage created between those emphasising the pros or cons of the plantation has eliminated the sense of unity which they always preserved before. Moreover, due to economic motives, the village chief has lost the trust of his people. In this respect, the local people feel uncomfortable in their current condition and their sense of feeling at home has been eroded.

The emergence of relation with NGO

Since the company impacted local people's livelihoods, some people in Salaman Kecil also started to recognise the local NGO as their counterpart. Lembaga Gamawan is a local NGO that supports local people in standing up for their rights that had been violated by the activities of the oil palm company. They have been involved in educating and training local people like Sulaiman and his colleagues to understand local people's rights to their land. Moreover, they also taught local people about the important aspects before they entered the negotiation agreement. In this sense the local people responded to the company expansion on their land by collaborating with local NGO to fight for their rights. However, some other local people accuse this local NGO of hindering their job prospects. This point of view comes from the local people who support the company expansion in their area. Proponents of the plantation company were afraid that the influence of the NGO may cause the company to leave the village altogether and cancel the plasma-nucleus scheme.

Mulawarman is one of the local farmers who opposes the company. When the company came to the village, he and Sulaiman are two of the local people who demanded the return of their land from the company. He joined with the NGO (Lembaga Gamawan) to gain knowledge about the oil palm conflicts and the how the local people could strategise to claim their rights. He explained:

"...At that time, we were still insistent on taking back our land from the company. The chief of the hamlet called me to come to his house. When I arrived, there were already some village elites and local people who supported the plantation. They asked me to stop collaborating with the NGO

(Lembaga Gamawan) and accused me of hindering the development of the village by opposing the company. Personally, I felt intimidated in that meeting, and they threatened to ostracize me and my colleagues...”

The local people who support the oil palm plantation believe the many promises made by company officials. Zaki, one of the villager said *“the company came to our village and offered us the shared benefit scheme. They said that if we accept this scheme, we do not need to work, just stay at home and the money would come to us. Our children could get higher education to go abroad to find work. They also said that if I usually smoke Chakra, I can smoke Sampoerna (a more expensive cigarette)”*. These sweet words made the local people think that the oil palm plantation would improve their lives (see also de Vos et al., 2017).

Other local people who were critical towards the company’s promises still held out in rejecting the establishment of the oil palm plantation in their territory. Sulaiman and his colleagues have spent about two years getting training from the local NGO about their right to land. During this time, Sulaiman had no proper job and income, so his wife had to cover the needs of their family by working for the company. He stated:

“the training was really intense, every week I had to go to many places where the training was held. During that time, I had no permanent job, and my wife worked to fulfil our family needs. I am thankful that she never complained about my activities, it was hard decision.”

Sulaiman was the leader and the spokesperson of the local villagers' team to negotiate with the company. Before he decided to work for the company, he did not immediately work as a laborer. He had spent almost two years receiving education from the local NGO (Lembaga Gamawan) about oil palm plantations and local people’s right to their land. He had travelled to many places like Pontianak and Singkawang to join the program with his partner from Salaman Kecil. During this time, his wife had taken responsibilities to fulfil their daily needs as a worker in the plantation. He believes that the knowledge he got from the NGO will be useful in the future. He does not want to be a person who just accepts the condition while he still can struggle for what he believes. However, he was under pressure to accept the offer from many people such as the village head,

the company and also his own people in Salaman Kecil hamlet who support the plantation. He and his team kept struggling in the negotiation until it resulted in an agreement which gives the plasma plantation a larger share (30:70) and compensation funds for the nucleus plantation. As Sulaiman said:

“...I obtained a lot of knowledge from the NGO (Lembaga Gamawan) about our rights to our forest, and the obligation of the company to respect it. We were given the understanding that we are not against the government, but we defend our rights from the company which is not monitored by the government...”

“...I can have this bravery to speak up because of that short course. I have spent almost two years engaged in that course, which makes me understand the role of the local farmers, government, NGO and the company in this case. Some of the NGO friends ask me whether I am ready to face all the consequences of this negotiation because there will so much pressure from many actors. I said that I am more than ready to face them...”

In this respect, the local NGO plays an important role in empowering the local people to recognise their land rights and to introduce them to the negotiation table. The awareness of land rights and active participation during the process of negotiation is related to the legal aspect of belonging. As Antonsich (2010) discussed, the sense of feeling at home can be articulated in the form of the legal aspect. The NGO encourages the local people to be aware about the legal status of their land. Moreover, they enhance the local people's capacity to defend their land from the company's expansion. The active participation of local people during the negotiation process shows their emotional connection to the issue of their land rights. Before the local NGO came to the village, people did not have any idea how to express their grievances with the company. The role of the NGO is to mitigate the worst impacts of the company's expansion on the local people. However, the case of Sulaiman and Mulawarman, who got training from the NGO, seems to be an exception. The emergence of relations with an NGO often does not exist in other cases, where an NGO is not present in order to engage with the local people.

4.2.5 Future Generation

Concerns for future generations are critical to take into account as a key component of how people feel their sense of belonging. This subsection explains how the local people valued their future generation as their successors. The local people wish that the future generation will have better living conditions. Yet it seems like the impact of the oil palm company creates a dependency amongst young people on plantation labor. The perception of the local people regarding the prospects of the future generation is crucial in order to understand their attitude and response towards the impact of the oil palm plantation.

For local people like Sulaiman and Ghani, they have been through difficult times struggling for their land against the domination of the company in their territory. Ideally, their struggle will be continued by their descendants. However, currently the young generation of farmers seems to favour becoming dependent on the company for their livelihoods. Those like Triadi believe that the company has provided job and permanent status. In general, these farmers only consider the fact that the current condition is ideal for them. This dependency brings a negative impact for future generations since they do not have alternative jobs to choose from if the company bankrupt. Moreover, the younger generation will lose their independent to manage their own land and eventually lose their sense of belonging. Many young farmers are not concerned with the long-term consequences of their lack of land ownership; their main concern is that they continue to receive a salary from the company. Yet if this situation continues, then their landlessness will make them wholly dependent upon the company for their livelihoods.

Currently, Sulaiman has three children whose livelihoods already depend upon labor at the company's plantation. His youngest daughter is the only child that is still in senior high school. She needs to live outside her village with her uncle in another village since there is just an elementary school present in Salaman Kecil. Sulaiman hopes that his last children will get better education until university level and be able to get a better job. He does not want his daughter to become a worker in oil palm plantation because he argues that she will lose her life if she becomes a laborer. Sulaiman has prepared land for his children which he believes can provide an income

after he has retired from the company. In the future he is sure that it will be much more difficult to clear new land since the company will continue to expand in the area.

“...If I am not the one who clears land for my future generation, I am sure that my children will not get their share. Because the competition to get land will be more difficult; thus, whilst I still have a good health, after I retired from this company, I will clear more land for my children and my grandchildren...”

However, this generation feel the worst impact when the place where they have grown up has been changed into an oil palm plantation. Li (2017) said that the children of the local farmers aspire to manage their own lands. On the one hand parents who can provide their young generation with the income from a productive smallholding (independent smallholders) are expected to prosper from oil palm. On the other hand, the children who inherit no land have very limited opportunities to improve their prosperity.

The future generation is also threatened by the triple displacement of the oil palm plantation (Li, 2017b). The future generation could have no more land as their land will have been grabbed by the company in the future. Moreover, the company would not be able to absorb all those affected into their labor force, as the net labor absorption is quite low (one worker per five hectares), and eventually the selection of the workers would be based upon ethnicity, age, and gender specifications. Only healthy young men are selected for oil palm harvesting since it takes specific skills and power to do this strenuous work (Li, 2017b)

The wellbeing of future generations is one of the essential aspects determining the local people's sense of belonging. They wish for improved livelihood conditions for their descendants. However, the expansion of oil palm plantation in Salaman Kecil has created anxiety among local people regarding their future generations. There are several facets of concern that local people express relating to future generations and their sense of belonging. One is the high dependence of the younger generation on the plantation for their livelihoods. The future generation will have no chance to develop their own agriculture and very few workers will be absorbed as laborers in the plantation. Future competition over land and the uncertainty over whether future generations will

obtain plasma plots are two further facets of concern. The local people's experience as laborers in the plantation is another aspect that makes them reluctant to let their children follow their path. Unfortunately, the lack of school and education facilities in Salaman Kecil discourages the parents from sending their children to school, which makes it difficult to escape from this vicious circle.

4.2.6 Environment

In Salaman Kecil hamlet, the nucleus environmental affecting the local people is water pollution. As aforementioned in the introduction section, the river is the primary resource for the local people to make a living. This section discusses the response and perspective of the local people in relation to the water pollution issue in their area. Environmental considerations have become one of the most important aspects in which local people perceive that the oil palm plantation has damaged their sense of belonging.

In 2017, the worst case of the oil palm pollution occurred in Salaman Kecil hamlet. The company waste created pollution along the river in Salaman Kecil hamlet. As discussed before, the river is highly important for the livelihoods of the local people. They use the river to do their daily activities such as bathing, washing clothes, sanitizing, and fishing. According to local people, this polluted waste came from a neighboring village where PT. HMS operated. This water pollution caused skin disease for over half of the local people, especially children. The local people have already reported this issue to the local government in Sambas city. However, there was not a fast response from the local government to resolve this case. Moreover, because the waste polluted the water, the fisherman could no longer fish in the river. The consumption of fish had become dangerous due to the level of pollution. The local people became victim of this disaster which should not have happened on their territory. Jono, who is also local fisherman, said:

"...before the oil palm plantation, most of the local people used to consume water from the river to drink and cook. The water was clean since it was filtered by roots. After this water pollution, we get water from the hill or rain water. We have to pay for the water from the hill. I also used to fish in this river, it was easy to get fish but now many local people are reluctant to fish in polluted river. I used to trawl to get fish, in one night I could get almost 500 kilograms fish. Because of this waste, everything in the river is polluted..."



Figure 4 River as the natural resources of local people in Salaman Kecil to make a living

The River is the main resource for local people in Salaman Kecil to make a living from. When the river gets polluted, it not only affects their current living conditions, but also damages their sense of belonging regarding their natural resources. The threat is particularly acute for women who use water from the river to wash their utensils and clothes, and their children, who often swim in the river whilst they do so. The river is more than just a source to local people's daily life, they have attached their emotions to the river as their ancestors have done from generation to generation. The emotional attachment to the river relates to the relation between the people and their natural resources. Tollia-Kelly (2008) argues that people value their natural resources as it is a space for the people to engage with each other. As mentioned above, men, women and children use the river to bathe, and they usually chat amongst themselves. In this respect, the river becomes a medium for local people to maintain their relationships and generate their sense of community and belonging to their place. Water pollution is therefore an important issue for the local people in Salaman Kecil in relation to resource insecurity and the resulting social implications.

4.3 Conclusion

The central objective of this chapter was to analyse the local farmers sense of belonging in relation to the expansion of oil palm plantations in their areas. The analysis found that the matter of income may be valued by local farmers in order to improve the economic aspect of their livelihoods. However, the improvement of the economic aspect per se is insufficient to create a sense of feeling at home. Other facets which the local people discern as important for their sense of belonging are

the access to independent land rights; the shift of lifestyle, cleavage of social relations, the uncertainty for future generation and the emotional attachment to the river as their natural resource.

Since the company came to Salaman Kecil to expand their plantation area, the local farmers started to claim the rest of the land as their individual property. This condition leads to the emergence of land competition among the local farmers in Salaman Kecil. The increased competition over land brought about by plantation expansion has triggered a rise in individual ownership claims and simultaneously has eliminated their sense as a community. The local farmers used to clear land together as a community, yet competition to secure land eroded their trust towards their fellow villagers. In this respect, after the expansion of the company, the local people feel insecure about their land rights, even in relation to the people who live next door. On the other words, the land competition has affected local farmers sense of feeling belong to their land as community.

The shift of the local farmer's lifestyle is also crucial in shaping their sense of belonging. They used to live with their forest and land as farmers. The farmers managed and maintained relationships with their natural resources. Contrastingly, the oil palm plantation turned them into company laborers which make them lose their sense of self-sufficiency. This condition causes the local farmers to reflect on their historical memories about their lives before oil palm came to their territory. They start to rethink their perspectives on economic improvement, which has not met their initial expectations. The local farmers feel that they are no longer the hosts in their own houses in which related to loss of their sense of belonging. Yet eventually, they have to put aside their feelings in the face of the economic pressure to survive.

In terms of social relations, company expansion has split the local farmers into two groups. During the negotiation process, the social ties between the local people were fractured through the intimidation of local opposition by supporters of the plantation activities. This situation creates social cleavage among fellow villagers and eliminates their sense of unity and that was embedded in their traditional values. Moreover, the farmers who are against the company have lost their trust in their village chief as he supports the company and receives the benefits from it. The local farmers feel irritated with this condition which makes them uncomfortable living in their own home. In this respect, the damage of social relation among the fellow villagers affected their sense of

belonging towards their community. However, from another perspective, some of the local farmers gained knowledge and relationships with a local NGO which helps them to realize their rights over their land. As they feel emotionally bound to their land, the local people recognized the importance of their land rights and defended it from the company's expansion plans. In this vein, their sense of belonging leads them to aware about the legal aspect of their land.

Equally important is the perception of the future generations' wellbeing which shape local farmers sense of belonging. The local farmers are worried about the young workers who are highly dependent on the company plantation. As the local farmers believe that the future generation should have a better living condition, they want their descendants to be less dependent on the company's plantation. Moreover, they also think about the uncertainty that the future generation will obtain plots in the plasma plantation; thus, making them feel insecure regarding both current and future living conditions.

For the local farmers, the river is more than just natural resource that they preserve. The river connects them to their ancestors and their future generations. The local farmers attached their emotions through their daily activities with the river. As the river gets polluted, the local farmers feel uneasy with their current situation. They used to drink from the river, yet currently, they have to pay for clean water to drink. In this respect, the local farmers lost part of their feeling of home when they lost this natural resource. The local farmers feel anxious about the resulting environmental issues, not only in the present, but also for their future generations. It is clear that the arrival of the plantation has profoundly and irreversibly altered local sense of belonging.

5. Workers Sense of Belonging in Selayar Village

In the far north west of Kalimantan, Selayar village is located near the border of Indonesia and Malaysia. Whilst the village sits on Indonesian territory, the local people also relate their identity (Dayak Bekati) to their neighboring country Malaysia, having occupied the area before the Indonesian and Malaysia states were formed. In the past, the social economy of the local people in Selayar village was dependent on relatives residing in Malaysia. Isolated areas and lack of infrastructure were key reasons for this. In the last decade, the Indonesian government has shifted its development focus to marginal areas especially in border areas. However well intentioned, this process does not automatically cater for the livelihoods of marginal communities, which has proven the case in Selayar village. The improvement of infrastructure has instead opened up access for oil palm companies to invest in this area, bringing with it impacts on local people's sense of belonging. In Selayar village, a plantation is operated by PT. AGA HIJAU, which is part of the STM-RM group. In this village, the company came to the local elites to offer the nucleus-plasma scheme and buy land from local people. In this case, the local elites played an important role in assuring that the local people would accept the offer, as long as the company fulfills their promises.

In the previous chapter, I have explored the perspective of local farmers with respect to oil palm plantation developments. This chapter will address the expansion of an oil palm plantation in Selayar village and shed more attention on the workers living inside the oil palm plantation area. Through living inside the oil palm plantation, I obtained an important insight into the perspectives of the workers who live within the company's estate in Selayar village. This perspective is crucial to ascertain in order to see how the workers feel and belong to their work site. Most of the workers in this plantation are locally hired. But there are many other workers living inside the plantation who originate from elsewhere. Since the company provides transportation for the local workers, they prefer to live in their village rather than inside the company's lodge, while the migrants are commonly living inside the plantation.

There are three main ethnic groups living inside the plantation: Dayak, Malay, and ethnicities from Eastern Indonesia. In PT. AGA HIJAU, migrant workers are obliged to stay within the company area and live under indecent living conditions. As Li (2017a) describes in her research on oil palm plantations, inside the plantation zone there was a pervasive sense of threat as opposed to the

development of any sense of belonging. Few of the migrant workers planned to stay for good. The absence of facilities such as clean water, a health clinic, a school, and a house of worship are the main issues inside the company. Moreover, social relations also become an issue among the migrant workers living inside the plantation area.

This chapter will be structured into two sections. Firstly, a description of social and cultural life within the village, a look at the infrastructural and economic conditions, and a subsection on the story of oil palm expansion in Selayar village based on local elites' perspectives, which will explain how elites have benefited from the expansion and the crucial role they have played in influencing the ordinary villagers. Meanwhile for the local people, promises to work inside the plantation with a regular wage and the expectations of benefits from a plasma scheme made the local people hand over their land. Secondly, section takes into account the perception of the workers about their company plantation and how they perceived sense of belonging in their place. In this section I argue that the local and migrant workers are willing to suspend their sense of belonging while they are working inside the plantation. Their only reasons for working for the company plantation are economic; their access to a regular income. As they consider that certain aspects make them uncomfortable living inside the plantation, they are leaving their sense of belonging elsewhere. In this respect, I argue that these workers are not rooted in their plantation areas as they do not treat the plantation as their home. The workers have accepted the indecent condition inside the plantation as a pragmatic means to merely collect income.

5.1 Selayar Village - PT. Aga Hijau

5.1.1 The Social Culture

Selayar village is located on the border between Indonesia and Malaysia. It takes one and a half hours from Sambas city to Selayar village by car or bus. This village is known as “Kampung Dayak”, as most of the local people are from the Dayak tribe. This “Kampung Dayak” was established even before the states of Indonesia and Malaysia came into existence. The emotional bond and the strong relationship between Dayak people from Indonesia and Malaysia encourage them to share their culture and economic activities without a barrier. Eilenberg (2012) explained that it is daily transnational life to conduct activities like cross-border trading, labor migration,

socializing, and visiting friends and kin on the opposite side. Before the government built the cross-border post, it was common for Dayak people to cross the border from Indonesia to Malaysia to see their family or visit the market for their daily needs in Biawak (Malaysia).

Regarding the cultural aspect, most of the local people in this village are Dayak communities which consider themselves as indigenous people. The Dayak people in Selayar village still share the same bloodline with Dayak in Biawak village (Malaysia). They also speak the same language and hold the same traditions as a result of their shared ancestry. The Dayak community can be seen as a single entity inhabiting the border area between Indonesia and Malaysia. There are two sub-ethnicities of Dayak people, Bekati and Selako, who reside in the Sajingan Besar sub-district. The Bekati people are mostly living in the northern part of Sambas District (Selayar village), Bengkayang, Ledo, Sanggau Ledo, and Seluas. In the Malaysian part, the Bekati people live in three villages in Lundu district; Pasir Tengah, Pasir Ilir, and Kendaie. The physical geographical barriers mean that the Bekati and Selakao people do not frequently communicate since they have different river track and different language (Munandar, 2013).

The social relations among the Dayak people in Selayar village was preserved by the traditional culture, as well as events. ‘Gawai Dayak’ is one of the traditional annual events that is celebrated by the Dayak community in Kalimantan. The Dayak community usually celebrate this event twice, on 20th May in West Kalimantan (Indonesia), and on 1st June in Sarawak (Malaysia). Even though this event is held in two different countries, the Dayak communities from both locations will cross the border to attend each other’s event (Munandar, 2013). For Dayak community, Gawai Dayak is the symbol of unity. During this celebration, there was no difference between the Dayak people from Indonesia or Malaysia. They appreciate their relatives who come from across the border. They believe that this celebration is the gratitude expressed to their god after the harvest time (Munandar, 2013).

During the event, men and women usually dress in their traditional costume, with large feathers as part of their headgear. The men will hold an ornate and long shield and a sword in their hands, with multicolored beads and chains the accessories worn by the Dayak woman in the festival. The customary leader will lead the ceremony by reciting a prayer in the middle of the longhouse (Dayak

traditional house). After the praying ritual, the local people will start to dance and feast on their traditional cuisine. Tuak is the traditional rice wine that is always served during the festival. This drink is made from the fermentation of rice at least one month before Gawai Dayak is held. The traditional cakes are prepared from glutinous rice flour mixed with sugar. There are various cakes served during the festival such as Sarang semut (ant nest cake), cuwuan (molded cake), and Kue sepit (twisted cake) (Ho, 2018). This event is not only about harvest celebration, but also the moment to show their unified identity as indigenous people in Kalimantan. For the Dayak people, Gawai Dayak is their gratitude to the god for their farming harvest (Munandar, 2013).

Farming is one of the primary sources of livelihood for the local people in Selayar village. The local people generally cultivate cash crop plants such as Black pepper, Lemongrass, rambutan, Dragon fruit, and Durian. Additionally, they also clear their land to grow rubber and teak wood which they usually sell to Malaysian middleman. The local people cultivate rice as their staple food in Selayar village. For the local people, rice is the symbol of prosperity; thus, it has to be cultivated on slopes, with traditional rituals to praise the god of nature. Dayak people are base their cultivation on a small-scale shifting fields system. This approach is employed because the soil around Selayar is not suitable for permanent cultivation. The community believes that permanent cultivation could damage soil fertility (Munandar, 2013). They therefore practice shifting cultivation because they want to get a blessing from their god for their land.

In the structural and social system of the Dayak Bekati in Selayar village, the role of the customary leader and local elites is crucial. This local elite plays an important role not only in leading the traditional ceremonies such as weddings and funerals, but also as a social representative of the local people's mindset, feelings, and hopes (Munandar, 2013). The consideration of the local elite is crucial to take into account in any decisions regarding the development of the village. The existence of customary law and the traditional chief is aimed at regulating community life under the values and traditions of the Dayak people. In the past, the customary leader automatically acted as head of the village, yet currently this role has been split. The role of the customary chief is restricted to cultural and traditional domains. The political head of the village is chosen in a democratic general election by the local people (Munandar, 2013).

5.1.2 The Cross-border Economy

Selayar village consist of three hamlets which are Aruk, Aping, and Beruang. In 2011, 904 families were living in this village which consists of 904 men and 763 women (Huruswati et al, 2012). Before the government concerned with the borderland areas, the economy of local people of Selayar village was highly dependent on Malaysia. Selayar village was an isolated area in the north of Sambas region. In 2002, the government officially opened the road access from Sambas to Selayar village. However, the rutted road condition was very bad, and it takes about 5-6 hours from the capital city of Sambas to reach Selayar village by land. The local people tended to buy their goods from Lundu City (Malaysia) which only takes only 20 minutes from their place.

They also frequently used Ringgit Malaysia (RM) as their exchange currency because they have to buy their goods from Malaysia. The local people in the borderland areas are frequently accused of having a low sense of nationalism because they depend on their life in Malaysia rather than in Indonesia (see Munandar, 2013). According to Munandar (2013), the local people in Selayar village used Ringgit Malaysia as their currency not because they have no sense of nationalism to their country or as a form of protest towards Indonesian government, but rather due to economic rationale in supporting their livelihood. Malaysia is the only reasonable choice for the local people to sell their products because the market in Indonesia is too far to reach by road or river from their isolated area. The bad road condition in Indonesia is the main issue for local people willing to sell their products at market. Local people in Selayar village depend on farms and agriculture to support their income. They produce rubber, black pepper, and Durian fruits to be sold in the Biawak or Lundu markets in Malaysia. If they go to Sambas via the river, it will take too long, and their fruit products will get rotten before they arrive in the market. The other fundamental issue for the local people in Selayar village is the electricity supply. The local government has a limited capacity to provide electricity for its people. Those residing in the central part of Selayar village got electricity access in 2002. In 2007, the local government decided to buy the electricity supply from Sarawak Energy Berhad, a Malaysian company, to provide a proper supply for the local people in Selayar village (Munandar, 2013).

Currently, the national government of Indonesia has built the official border post in Aruk-Biawak. They also built the road infrastructure to open access from the capital city of Sambas to the border areas in Aruk village. In Kalimantan, roads are the veins of commerce and transportation. eighty kilometers long road from Sambas to Aruk has been built in order to improve local economies. The government believes that by advancing the road infrastructure; it will bring about a domino effect which will automatically improve the balance of trade in the borderland areas and will eventually provide the opportunity for local people to benefit from the development agenda. However, the expectation about the economic development in the border areas seems premature. Trade flows, which were expected to improve economic activities in the border area, are still low. My fields note read, there is still an insignificant number of people who cross Aruk post border to go to Malaysia and vice versa. One of the reasons for this is that Indonesian customs officials have not yet given a permit for private vehicles (mini truck) to cross through the border. In addition, the new road only opened in 2017, so it may take time for trade flows to formulate. Moreover, the Entikong cross border post (Sanggau Region) is more commonly used by traders to cross to Malaysia rather than in Aruk post since it is the first border post in West Kalimantan.

To accelerate the trade flows at the Aruk border post, the government has built supporting facilities such as an immigration office, a quarantine office, a food and drug supervision office, a guest house, a bus station, telecommunication network, a health center, and a local market. However, most of these infrastructure facilities do not function optimally (see also Munandar, 2013). The government does not optimally support with a descent and proper service, thus the people cannot utilize such facilities. Only a small health care center (Puskesmas) provide their service toward the local people in border land area. This condition leads to negative comment from the local people that they perceived the development of infrastructure is not directly improve their livelihood.

Madi is a local people living in Aruk border. He and his family are living beside the country to the Aruk border post. He said that the government give him compensation for his home yard for the road expansion. Currently, his house only about two-meter space from the main road and he used that to open small stall in front of his house. He grateful that the government focus to develop in the border land areas especially expanding the road. However, he also criticized about the support facilities that the government built still not optimally utilized by the local people.

“...I feel grateful that currently the government shed their attention towards the people in border areas. They built the road and open the access towards the border post. But not all the building is useful for me. I just go to the healthcare when I feel sick...”

Even though the trade flow is still not significant, there are still local traders from Selayar village and other villages bring their goods and commodities to be sold at the border post. The Indonesian and Malaysian governments have agreed to set a buffer zone between the Aruk and Biawak border posts in which trade activities can be conducted. The center point of this zone, known as the 0 km point, is located roughly 500 meters from each of the posts. The trade activities are set from 07.00 AM to 12.00 PM, since the Malaysian traders have to supply the logistics to the markets in their country before dawn. Durian and Rambutan are the most common commodity traded by Indonesian traders in this free zone. The local traders from Indonesia are not only come from Selayar village but also Sungai Bening village. On the other side, the Malaysian traders bring some primary logistics such as rice, sugar, cooking oil, and gasoline. For the local people living in the border area, they have to register their identity in the cross-border post and get a permit to buy their goods. The Malaysian border officials have limited the number of goods that foreigners can buy from Malaysia to RM 600 (130 Euros). The local people believe that the price of the daily goods in Lundu much cheaper rather than in Sambas since the Malaysia subsidizes its market products. The number of trade activities in border areas depends on the capability of the traders to bring their commodities to the free zone. For the local people in Selayar village, they can bring various commodities, and it just takes a few minutes to get into the free zone because they are living near the border zone, which is not the case for traders from Sungai Bening village (Huruswati et al., 2012).



Figure 5 Trade activity in the border area

In general, the economy of the local people in border areas still depends on neighboring Malaysia. In the last few years, the government of Indonesia has realized the importance of developing infrastructure in the border areas to open access to isolated areas in Selayar village. However, these developments have not necessarily released the economy dependency local people from Malaysia. The concern of national government to develop the border areas infrastructure is not only aims to develop marginal livelihoods, but also to open up access for oil palm investors to expand their plantation in remote areas, which are often customary lands.

5.1.3 When the oil palm comes

This subsection will explain how the company established their plantation in the Selayar village and describe the daily activities of the workers inside the oil palm plantation. For the local elites, they perceived that the company came to offer a fair scheme of plasma-nucleus plantation and to employ the local people in the plantation, which they believed could improve their local economy. As mentioned previously, in the social culture of Dayak people, the local elites have a powerful influence over their people. In this sense they play a crucial role in shaping whether or not local people would accept the plantation offer. I would argue that for the local elites, even though they handed over some of their land to be converted into plantation, they still have spare land as their safety net. Meanwhile ordinary villagers, who have no more land for their future, are promised plasma plots and must live in a state of uncertainty, as they do not know when these plots will be realized.

In 2006, PT. AGA HIJAU was the oil palm company, under STH-RW group, which operated in Selayar village. This planted plantation is relatively small (about 900 Ha), compared to other oil palm plantations in West Kalimantan. This is because their main company is operating mainly in Sumatera, in areas such as Riau and Jambi province. According to the company officials, they got a concession permit for 6000 Ha in the area around Selayar village. However, after more than ten years, just 895 Ha are already planted and productive. The main business of this plantation is selling their FFB to other companies since they have not yet built a mill to process their FFB. Government regulation also requires a mill for the company plantations to open the smallholder's plots (Cramb, Rob A & McCarthy, 2016). This condition meant that the company was unable to

provide smallholder plots, as they had promised, to the local people. According to Jerry, the head of the administration office, this company is not certified by the Roundtable Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). They just registered with the national certification agency (ISPO) as a national company. Jerry explained that because of the small areas of plantation they do not fulfil the requirement of RSPO certification. Jerry stated:

“...This company does not yet fulfill the requirements for RSPO certification. The RSPO team will come to the company and assess the company performance. If we are already certified by RSPO, we have to conduct standardization of management practices in the field. The company would have to guarantee the quality of the FFB and our fruits would be promoted internationally...”

In practice, the workers are not aware about the sustainable certification and what it entails. It could be assumed that the workers just engage in practices according to their basic knowledge about palm oil production, without concern for sustainable practice in the field. Lambertus, one of the workers said:

“...what is that RSPO? I do not know about that, maybe the management officials know but not me...”

Randi is one of the Dayak local elites who helped the company officials to organize the meeting with local people. He is the son of the village head who was involved in the process of the land survey in Selayar village. He believes that the process of plantation establishment at that time was done in a good way. According to him, there was no land grabbing since the local elites as the broker in this process was assured that the company will fulfil their promises, and the local people agreed to sell their land. The local people and the company agreed to establish plasma-nucleus plantation after the local people sold their land to the company. According to him, before opening the plantation, the company came to the local elites in the village asking to get permission to clear land for the oil palm plantation. The local elites then asked the company to organize a meeting with the local people to gain consent for the land. Randi stated:

“...This company is very excellent; they are different from other oil palm company. Every worker will be selected very well, and they will appreciate anyone who works hard. Even for someone who did badly for this company, they still pay his wage. I followed this company since they were opening land, seedling, until producing... “

The local elites coordinated with the traditional leader to invite the local people to the meetings with the company. The meetings were symbolized by slaughtering pigs and providing a feast for the local people. Afterwards, the company, along with the village chief, will discuss the plantation plans with local people, a process known as “socialization”. They informed the local people about the benefits of the oil palm plantation, and they gave some examples of success stories of oil palm farmers in other villages. Moreover, the company promised the local people higher incomes and profits if they accept the company’s plantation scheme. The local people and the local elites then agreed to sell their land to the company with the condition that the company would have to accept local people who want to work for the company afterwards. At that time, Selayar residents were reliant upon farming and logging for their income. Sitting in front of his lodge, Randi said:

“...when the company came to this village, I was employed as a surveyor for the company’s new plantation and I got paid IDR 50.000 (3.5 euros) for half a day. I was with the company officials to negotiate and buy the local people’s land. There is no such land grabbing in this hamlet. First, the company surveyed the local people’s land; then they went to the local government to get a permit... ”

Currently, Randi works for the company as a foreman for the harvest group in the plantation. Although he is working for the company, he still has his land outside the plantation. He has about two hectares which he plants with oil palm, rubber and black pepper. He argues that he still needs to work for the company since his plantation is still unproductive. Thus, he needs a regular monthly income to invest in his own land. Randi frequently has no time to manage his own land. He asked his colleagues to work on his land, and he will be paid daily. He is currently 30 years old, so still has a long time to work for the plantation. Yet, he plans to retire from his job after about 5 years as his plantation will be productive then and his daughter will have entered school. Although his house is not far from the plantation, he chooses to live inside the plantation since his job requires

him to stay in the company lodge. He believes that the company has treated its workers properly. As a permanent worker, health insurance is covered and an additional staple food allowance for his family is provided. Randi is one of only a few local elites who have secured a better livelihood.

When the oil palm came to the village, they approached the local elites such as community leaders, customary leaders and other figures (religious leaders, etc). Most of the local people were attracted to the promises that the company made them. However, not all locals automatically accepted the offers made to them. Some people were skeptical about the plantation plans. They were afraid that if the company opened their plantation, the local people would not benefit (losing their land and not being employed inside the company). Thus, some of the local people rejected the idea of the plantation. However, the pressure from the supporters of the plantation deterred them from standing against it. Moreover, the absence of a local NGO to advocate for local people's rights left many feeling forced to accept the offer. Randi stated:

"...well actually there are many local people who ignored this plantation company. There must be always pro and cons on this issue. However, the company never forced someone who did not want to sell their land, the people were free to sell their land or not. The number who accept the plantation was much more than those who were against it. So, the company goes on. At the end of the day, people who were against the plantation eventually asked to work in this company. The sceptics said that they were against the company since they were afraid that the company would not employ them. Then I answered, it is impossible that the village chief and the local elites want to make the people suffer through of the plantation. We have an agreement signed by both parties that assures that we will not lose our job, and still have land for our agriculture..."

In the subject of plantation scheme, there are various schemes and models applied by companies in plantation areas. The latest system is called a 'partnership (kemitraan) system'. This creates two areas: a 'nucleus' area that is company controlled by the company, and a 'plasma' area that is tended to by local farmers and managed by a cooperative. In Selayar village, the local people who agreed to hand over a certain amount of their (customary) land were promised to obtain a smaller area on which they can cultivate oil palm. For instance, somebody providing five or seven hectares of their land will receive in return two hectares planted with oil palm for themselves, and the rest

will be part of the nucleus plantation. Even though the local people have provided their land for the company plantation, their monthly harvest income will be deducted as repayment for the costs of establishing the plasma plots. Furthermore, fees for fertilizer, herbicides, infrastructure maintenance and transportation are also deducted from harvest incomes (see also Julia & White, 2012).

Daily Activities Inside the plantation

Similar to the local farmers in Salaman Kecil, the daily activities of local workers in Selayar village started about 3.30 A.M in early morning. They worked six days in a week from Monday to Saturday. The company provided truck to pick the local workers from the village to the plantation at 04.00 AM. It takes about an hour for them to arrive in the plantation and at 05.00 A.M. at 06.00 AM, the foreman will gather the workers including those who live inside the plantation to brief them on their task for that day. There were two maintenance groups and two harvester groups in this company. They started to work in their block from 06.30 A.M - 12.00 P.M then the local farmers went to their village by foot.

For the workers who were living inside the plantation area, they did not need to be ready in the early morning. When the cock crows, at 06.00 AM the workers (migrants and local people) gathered in front of the administration office. The workers wear long pants and boots to protect them from thorns and mosquitoes, and they also equipped themselves with a machete and a scythe. Randi and some other foreman will step in front of the workers, counting the number of workers present and give a brief direction before they go to the field. The manager of the company then came out from his chambers to inspect the foreman and the workers. That was a different routine compared to the Salaman Kecil workers, as in this company the workers do not recite the principles of the RSPO and ISPO before they go to the plantation.

The workers commonly finish at 12.00 PM. Most of them return to the lodge to take a rest and get lunch (the company does not provide a lunch allowance). Yet, for some casual workers, especially the harvester group, the fact that their wage depends on their productivity motivates them to continue. After they get some rest in the lodge, they will continue their work from 02.00 PM until

05.00 PM. This extra time working will be paid based on the number of FFB that they harvested from the trees. It will be accumulated in the payment day as their extra money.

In order to get an additional income, some of the workers, like Randi's wife who lives inside the plantation, opened a small stall in front of their lodge. They sold some necessities such as rice, instant noodles, mineral water, and eggs. In the weekend, they got supply in the weekend market at the border areas. It takes about 30 minutes from the plantation to the border post through a rutted road. These workers usually sell their goods for twice the normal price they bought them for in the market. This condition makes the living cost inside the plantation much higher than in the village. Some of the worker's spouse who do not assist their husband in the garden choose to be an office workers or assistants, preparing lunch and laundry for the managers and officers.

In the night, after the workers finish (some of harvester groups the still continue their work until 05.00 PM), they usually get together in the hut in front of their lodge — some workers play cards and have coffee and snacks. When the electricity is turned on at 5.30 P.M, every worker's lodge will start disco or beat music with a stereo speaker. The silence of workers' lodges is suddenly filled with noisy music from every house. They usually finish their activity after the electricity is turned off at 11.00 P.M. Other groups like Dayak and Eastern workers have their own way to gather with their own group.

5.2 There Is No Belonging in Here

This subsection will explain the perception of the workers about the oil palm plantation in relation to their sense of belonging. I would argue that for the local workers, working inside the oil palm plantation was not what they considered as sense of belonging. The local workers perceived that their sense of feeling at home is still strongest inside their own village where they were born and where they still have rights to their land. Likewise, despite their decision to stay inside the plantation, the migrant workers are willing to suspend their comfort and sense of belonging to raise more money for their future. They argue that if they work hard, they could earn a better income and send it to their family in their hometown. Both local and migrant workers agree that they do not feel rooted in their plantation areas, instead the lure of a regular income is their primary

motivation. Their attitude represents a pragmatic way to adapt to economic pressure, without giving any meaning towards the company plantation.

The workers considered that the indecent facilities inside the plantation lodge and the unfulfilled promises of their plasma plots meant they have no real sense of engagement with the company plantation. Moreover, the workers added the poor social relations among different ethnicities of workers makes them feel like they do not belong in the plantation setting. As a result, many preferred the status of casual daily laborer, as they could then choose when they want to work and not be bounded by the company rules.

5.2.1 “Just Income, No Need to Belong”

The workers in the plantation see the regular income that the company offers as the as the primary motivation to become laborers. For the local workers, they used to be farmers whose primary source of revenue came from rubber and black pepper. When the rubber and black pepper price dropped significantly, or during the rainy season when rubber cannot be tapped, the offer to be workers in the plantation with a regular income became attractive. However, the local people perceived that becoming plantation workers as their additional source of income. The local people perceived working inside the plantation as a strategy to get regular income. This regular income could make them gain trust from the creditor to get loan or buy their stuffs by credits. Wirna, local women workers expressed her reason to work for the plantation:

“...because I need a regular income. The harvest from my garden was not sufficient to fulfil our daily needs. The unstable price of black pepper and rubber makes uncertainty; thus, I choose to be a laborer...”

Maria, another local woman worker explained that the volatility of the black pepper price forced her to work in the plantation to get additional income:

“...currently the black pepper price has dropped to IDR 30.000/kilo (2 Euros), while a sack of fertilizer is about IDR 120.000 (8 Euros). The price was uncertain, the production cost is often greater than the profit results. Usually a sack of fertilizer is enough for 50 trees. Hence the yields

not cover the capital invested and we are at a loss. Sometimes this black pepper is sold in Malaysia, yet currently it is not the harvest season, it will be in August...”

Julia & White (2012) explained that one impact of oil palm plantation establishment is that the workers seem to be proud to use the term ‘gaji’ (salary) to refer to what they receive every month from the company, either for sale of their oil palm fruit or in payment for daily labor. I also observed that the workers in this respect feel excited when the payment day is about to come and see themselves as modern workers. Usually, the labors get their payment in the first week of the month. The workers will come to the administration office after their working hours and wait for the administration head to come back from the city to bring their cash. After the workers get paid, they feel excited to have a lot of money in their hand as the result of their hard work and they will spend their money to buy some of the things they like. Maria, one of the women worker stated:

“...I feel happy when the payment day comes. This is my own income, and I can buy anything without other people’s consent...”

It was already dawn when the manager returned from the bank with the cash for the workers. It was a payment day for the workers. In the morning, the manager, accompanied by two border patrol personnel, went to Galing sub district to get cash from the bank. The company hired the border army to secure the cash they brought from the bank. There was no exact date for the payment day, yet it is usually in the first week of the month. It was Friday, the workers had just finished their labor tasks, when the foreman told them that today was the payment day. At 2 o'clock, they were already at the office and waiting for the manager to get back. Some of the women workers chat with their colleagues while sitting in front of the security post. Others swarm around the mini trucks of mobile traders that sell household goods. The women workers usually buy their goods through credit, and they will pay when they receive their wage from the company. Wirna, a female worker, said:

“...I have many debts (family needs and daily needs) to be paid. Thus, I need regular income. Sometimes at the weekend, there is also a floating market which makes me want to buy many things. I feel rich when I get paid, yet after I spend the money, I am poor again...”



Figure 6 Payment day

A similar perception is expressed by a migrant worker who came to Kalimantan to earn a better income for his family. Lambertus (30 y.o) is a migrant worker who comes from East Nusa Tenggara province, Eastern Indonesia. He brought his family into this plantation since he considers it costly to get back to his hometown every year. It is his fifth year working for the company, and he has one son who was born in this plantation. His was motivated to work in Kalimantan, especially in this company, because he believes he can get a better income than in his hometown. He and his wife work as a casual day laborer worker. Lambertus also used to be a farmer in his hometown, but he decided to follow his uncle to migrate to Kalimantan as he told him he could get a better income working in the oil palm company.

“...in Kalimantan is easier to get money rather than in my hometown. I used to be a farmer in my hometown, but it was not enough for my family and me because our land was dry and infertile. So, I decided to move here to collect more money. Every month, my wife and I can collect about IDR. 5 Million and we send some of our money to our family in Atambua...”

“...I planned to buy land in my village in Atambua in the future, but now I have to work as well as I can to collect money. If I have enough money, then I will back to my village...”

Mulyadi, a migrant worker from Teluk Keramat sub-district explained his motivation and aim to work in this plantation just to get more income, yet he feels no belong to the company plantation.

He works five days in a week, during the weekend he intend to back to his village as his family was there. He stated:

“...I used to work as a logger. In 1997, the logging business was promising. There was a lot of timber sold from Indonesia to Malaysia. Currently, I could say timber is just the same as drugs. The border customs and police will raid any timber that crosses the border. So, I moved here to work as a plantation laborer, to fulfil daily needs and send money to my family in my village...”

“...I stayed in this plantation just for work and collecting money. Every weekend I must back to my village to see my family. This plantation lodge is not decent to make a living or bring our family...”

Another story come from Mukimin a migrant worker who comes from the town of Sekura . He has been working for the company since 2014. As a casual day worker, Mukimin has to live inside the company lodge with two other colleges. His primary income is from his daily wage for harvesting FFB. Mukimin has to work from 6.00 A.M to 12.00 P.M, and if he wants to get more income, he has to work again from 2.00 P.M to 5.00 P.M. All his money is sent to his family in the village. During the weekend, he always spends his time with his daughter and wife in his village. He always back to his village as he feels hard living in the plantation lodge. Sometimes if he feels lazy to back to the plantation, he will extend more time in his village to stay longer as he has no obligation to back in time

These are some of the perspectives held by local and migrant workers regarding the income they earn at the plantation. Their motivation to work for the company is dominated by the desire to obtain a better and regular income. In relation to the sense of belonging, Antonsich (2010) explained that the economic motivation is one of the aspects of feeling at home. In this respect, the workers perceived income as crucial to ensure the stability and safety of material conditions for both themselves as individuals and their family. However, it is important to be noticed that the motivation over income does not necessarily generate their sense of belonging. For the local people, the regular income from the company represents improved and secure wages to aid their daily lives. The uncertainty of the agricultural products like rubber and black pepper forced them

to choose oil palm labors as their main resource to get income. In the same time, the local people perceive that their sense of belonging are still in their village not in the plantation. They chose to live in their village as they perceived that the plantation is solely a place to work not to live. In similar vein, for migrant workers, improved income is the central goal. They believe that working for the plantation was not for long term living. In the future when they have collected enough money, they want to buy some land in their home village and start to plant their own agricultural plots.

5.2.2 “Suspending My Belonging”

This subsection addresses the reasons why the workers do not feel they belong in their company’s plantation and willingly suspend their sense of belonging somewhere else. The workers are not satisfied with their living conditions as they perceive the facilities provided by the company such as water, education and health to be indecent. It seems like the company also do not take this issue into account as they are more concerned with how to extract the benefit from their plantation rather than investing in their workers’ living conditions. The issue of social relations also forms a part of the lack of sense of belonging among the workers. Inside the plantation lodge, the workers have to live with other different ethnicities (Malay, Dayak, and Eastern). There seems to be little connection between workers of these different ethnicities. Inside the plantation lodge, they tend to gather within their own ethnic community, and this separation prevents a sense of community developing amongst the workers.

While there are some aspects that make the workers (local and migrant) feel like they do not belong to the plantation, they still need work to maintain their regular income. In this plantation, the workers do not feel they belong, but they do not mind as they need to fulfill their economic needs. The workers put their sense of belonging aside whilst they work to collect income. In this respect, the workers perceived that their status as casual daily labors is the best option as they are not bounded by company regulations. The workers prefer to be casual workers as they have flexibility to choose when they want to work as well as when they can go back to their village.

The Indecent Facilities Inside the Plantation

The company has three different buildings blocks for the workers and the company officials. The first building is the central administration office which is connected with the houses of the manager, head of administration, and head of machinery. This was a permanent building which has greater access to electricity and water than the other buildings. The building also has internet to support the connection with the central office in Jakarta. The second, there were twenty blocks of permanent houses in this building in which was intended for the permanent workers. The third was a semi-permanent wooden building, and it is intended for contract migrant workers, especially from areas in East Indonesia such as Kupang, Lombok and Maluku province. These last two buildings can only access the electricity for 8 hours every day from 12.00 PM to 4.00 PM and from 6.30 PM to 11.00 PM. This oil palm plantation uses their own generator set and water pump since they cannot get the access through PLN and PAM (National electricity and water agencies); thus, the use of electricity and water is rationed according to company budget.

Inside the plantation, the workers living there are mainly men and couples, crowded into small lodge, work clothes hanging from rafters (see also Li, 2016). Migrant workers were not satisfied with the facilities inside the company lodge, especially regarding water, which was limited. They have to take turns filling their water containers for sanitizing, bathing and washing. For drinking, the workers have to buy a gallon of mineral water or make a shelter pool for rainwater. Mulyadi, one of the harvesters, laments:

“...In my opinion, this company lodge is not for family living. The facilities for the family are not decent, and living costs are high. If I bring my family here, the living expenses will be costly...”

Randi as one of the foreman explained that sometimes he got complaint from the workers about the lodge facility especially water access. He realised that as the middleman between the management and the workers he has to express the aspiration from his subalterns. However, in sometimes he also gives motivation to his subordinates to work hard.

“...as one of the group foreman, I always tell my men to work hard. I motivate them before they go to the plantation. I told them that it is a place for collecting more money, more extra work that

we did, more money we will get, but do not forget about our working performance. We have to improve our quality of work then we will get the result. I told them that actually the boss manager also a laborer, yet in different level...”

In this sense, Randi as a foreman realized his role to maintain the performance of his subordinates. He should become an example of a good leader for his workers. He keeps reminding them that they will not be working in this plantation forever. He motivates his workers by acknowledging that the main purpose of working in this plantation is to collect money, so they could keep this dream to maintain their performance for the plantation.



Figure 7 First building for administration office and manager lodge, Second Building for permanent workers, third building for migrant workers

The essential facilities such as elementary school, health clinic, and religious building were absent in this plantation. There was no school within walking distance, and they had no access to the plantation transport system that took the children of regular workers to school (see also Li, 2016). Budget efficiency and the small plantation area were the reasons given by the plantation manager for these shortcomings. “...I have been appointed as manager of this company to manage the budgetary expenses. Efficiency is the priority...” the manager stated. According to the administration chief, the company used to have a health care facility for the workers, yet after the government regulation related to national health insurance (BPJS) (presidential regulation no 111, 2003), the workers have to claim their insurance in the public health care instead; thus, the company no longer covers the health facility for the workers. Randi expressed his experience about the health facility inside the plantation:

“...there was a health facility in this plantation, it was facilitated with the nurse, chamber, and small pharmacy. But when the facility was available, the workers stay in this plantation were still few; hence the management close the facility. When the workers get sick they will go to the village health care and their expense will be reimbursed by the company. My son was born in the village and the cost was reimbursed by the company. However, the insurance just covers the permanent workers. While for the casual labor, if they get sick during their working hours, they will get an allowance to go to see the doctor from the company...”

The workers' life inside the company plantation was different from the village workers. Limited facilities and the isolated living areas make the workers discerned that it is not a family-friendly environment. The location of the company lodge which was surrounded by the oil palm plantation means that this area was isolated from the central village. The workers seem not to have time for any activities other than work and rest, and this repeats on a daily basis.

Lambertus has just returned back from the plantation, and rests sitting on the floor. He is one of the eastern Indonesia workers who brought his wife, and his first son was born inside the plantation. According to him, the decision to bring his family to this plantation was a bad one, but he had no choice since he cannot have lived far from his family. Moreover, it was costly to get back to his hometown in Atambua, East Nusa Tenggara. He said that in the three years he has been working in this plantation, only once has he returned home. He perceived that by working with his wife, he could get a better income to send to his family in his hometown. Lambertus and his wife have plans to buy land in their hometown in Atambua. Currently, he has to struggle to collect money for their dream. However, he felt uneasy with the living conditions inside plantation, which he perceived as isolated from the outside world. Moreover, he is also worried about his son's future education since the company did not provide a kindergarten or elementary school for the workers' children. His son was still three years old, but in the next three years, Lambertus wonders where he should send his son to go to school.

The daily activities of the workers inside the oil palm plantation shows how they deal with their living conditions. The indecent facilities and social relations among different ethnicities of workers were the main issues for the workers regarding their sense of belonging. So why were these people

still working here? Li (2015) argued that plantation workers often had no alternative employment prospects. The migrant workers had little or no land in their home village; the uncertainty and insecure feeling working in Malaysia made them come back to this border plantation. Many of the workers in this plantation have experience working in Malaysia. Some of them worked in the oil palm plantation, as households' assistant or as construction workers. However, the uncertainty of the working conditions in Malaysia forced them to back to Indonesia to find a job.

Randi stated *"...I used to work for 9 months in Sri Mewah, Malaysia. No matter how convenient working in the foreign country was, it was not as free as working in our own country. If I make a little mistake during working hours, it might be trouble for me. I should admit that I got a higher income in Malaysia, but it was along with the high living cost. So, I think it is just same as working here. But the thing is, I feel more safety and comfort working in my own country..."*

"...when I worked in Malaysia, we got payments every three months. Later when the payment day arrived, it was common for bosses to hire a "preman" to make us uneasy and eventually leave the company without been paid..."

Lambertus added *"...I used to work in Malaysia oil palm plantation for 8 years. In Malaysia I got higher income, and the system was bulk (Borongan). I was an illegal worker, I felt so uncomfortable and insecure working in Malaysia. The police are always looking for us (illegal workers). Once, I was captured by the Malaysian police and detained in their office for a month. Afterwards I was deported to Indonesia (West kalimantan) ..."*

However, this was the best they could do, seeking money in peripheral areas. Even with indecent facilities in their living sites, the workers still believe that in the future they could have a better life. The workers have no sense of belonging towards their company plantation. Income and feeling secure working inside their country territory become their only motivation to adapt to their living conditions. They perceived themselves not as a part of the plantation, but temporary laborers who belong somewhere else.

The Unfulfilled Promises Plasma Plots

When the oil palm plantation came to this village, the local farmers were promised employment and plasma plots. From 6000 Ha concession PT. AGA HIJAU has from the local government; only around 895 Ha are in production. The company and the local people in Selayar hamlet have agreed to set a benefit-sharing arrangement plan for the plantation scheme. This scheme, according to the head of administration of PT. AGA HIJAU is the plasma-nucleus plan in which the company will establish 20 percent of the plantation into plots for local farmers, with the rest being managed by the company itself. However, the establishment of the nucleus plantation in 2006, there have been no developments regarding the plasma plantation to this day; thus, all the plantation land is still under the company's management (nucleus plantation). According to the chief of administration, the reason why the establishment of plasma plots is still suspended because of small number of productive plantation areas (895 Ha); thus, the company considered that the plantation areas were under nucleus management. He added that the company still doubts the local people capability to manage their plasma plantation. The company tends to have more control of the plantation under nucleus management rather than over plasma areas. Many investors in Indonesia and Malaysia perceived that smallholder plots entail significant risk. By avoiding dependence on smallholders and directly controlling the largest area of production, they could boost profits by maximizing and stabilizing the daily input of high quality fruit to the mills (Cramb, Rob A & McCarthy, 2016). Queuing in the line, waiting for her turn to get her wage, Maria a Dayak local women worker laments:

"...We do not know when the company will give us plasma plots. They said it is already arranged, but the fact is we are still working as labors in this plantation. This, all of this plantation is still under nucleus plantation..."

Working as laborers for the company does not generate the same feeling as working on plasma plantation. Working as laborers under company control means that the workers are bounded by the company rules and they have no motivation other than to fulfil their economic needs. The workers do not give meaning to the work in the company's plantation as they have no management rights. The promised plasma plots for the local workers is one of the reasons why the local people accepted the establishment of the plantation in their village. They believed that the company would

convert their land into oil palm which they could get a better income from and have the right to manage their own plasma plots. As the company has always come up with reasons to suspend the development of plasma plots, the local workers do not generate a real sense of belonging and engagement with the company plantation.

For the local elites, the existence of an oil palm plantation in their area is a blessing. The local elites have received incentives for allowing the land to come under company control. Moreover, their family members benefit by accessing privileged positions in the plantation. Randi, the son of the customary chief in Selayar village, became a foreman for the laborers. However, for the ordinary local workers, the promised plasma plantation was never being realised. The absence of plasma means there is no real engagement for the oil palm plantation. The local workers perceived that they just work for the income while they feel no belong to the plantation in which under company control.

Social relations

The migrant workers' have no feeling about social relations and sense of community inside the company lodge, in a multiethnic context. Inside the company, the workers originated from many areas outside Selayar hamlet. They are divided into three major groups, the Malay group, Dayak group, and Eastern Indonesian (Kupang, Flores and Papua) group. Dayak people are natives to the area but came from outside Selayar village and have decided to stay inside the plantation due to the distance and transport costs from their own villages. Most of the local farmers lived outside the company plantation, whilst the migrant workers were commonly living inside the plantation. According to the administration chief, there are 119 workers in the plantation, of which 90% are Dayak local people who choose to live in their village rather than inside the company lodge. Mulyadi, a Malay migrant worker, express his opinion about local people:

“...these local people, they do not want to live inside the plantation because of the indecent living conditions, they have their village. Local people who work in this plantation were not poor. They have black pepper, rubber etc. They still have some spare land for their sons and grandsons. In this plantation, they just want to collect more money...”

For the migrants from Dayak and Malay groups, they did not bring their family into this plantation since they believe that the plantation environment does not provide properly for family living. Instead of living with their families inside the plantation, they prefer to go back to their villages weekly. It is different from the migrant workers from Eastern Indonesia who prefer to bring their family to the plantation. The high cost and the long distance to return to their hometown is the main factor in this decision. Many of these workers also work with their spouses to collect more income.

These three groups of migrant workers have their own community inside the company lodge. Each member of this group has their own language to speak with their own people. They only use Bahasa, thenational language, when they need to interact with other groups. Among these workers groups, the nature of social relations differs from that of Sanjingan Kecil. Most of the time, these workers just gather within their own community. Each group has their own hut which he usually uses for a little party after finishing work in the night. The other factors create a divide between the workers are related to different religions and values. Most of the Malay group workers are Muslims who cannot consume alcohol and pork. Contrastingly, Dayak and Eastern Indonesia groups are frequently organizing parties and consuming alcohol and pork. This situation sometimes leads to unease among the Malay workers group. In this case, the company just acts as a night watchman to assure that there is no conflict among the workers, since it will be detrimental to the company. The company does not seem to put their concern on this issue since they only focus on how to improve the production of their plantation.

Mukimin as the Malay worker said:

“...we (Malay people) are usually playing cards and have some coffee together, but other workers (Dayak and Eastern) just have their own activity after work, they (Dayak and eastern groups) do not want to join with us...”

Lambertus an Eastern worker stated:

“...the eastern (orang timur) workers usually have our own group to gather after work. We drink alcohol and turn on the beat music to relax. We welcome anyone to join with us to drink together...”

Among the different ethnic workers, there is no such division of workers. The plantation management treat the workers equal. As the company is profit oriented, they treat the workers based on their result not from their ethnic tribes. According to the administration head, the eastern people is the strongest workers in the plantation. They usually worked extra to get more fruits in the garden and they will get extra payment. Only a few Malay and Dayak workers continue their work after they break. In this sense, the company appreciate the result of the workers based on their performance.

In general, In the respect of sense of belonging, the heterogeneity of the workers' groups inside the plantation does not automatically blend them into a single group identifying as migrant workers. As related to Buonfino and Thompson (2007), the cultural aspect will continue to determine the social identity through their language, symbols and norms. For the Malay workers, they feel that they could not conduct tight social relation with Dayak and Eastern workers as their have different believe on their religion. The Malay workers have different norms and values that they cannot compromise. Their ethnic and religion identity seems to be their main consideration when building their social relationships with other workers. Even though there is no open conflict evident among the workers, it is clearly seen that they do not want to blend with other ethnic groups. This situation leads to the loss of their sense of belonging towards their living site inside the plantation.

“I Prefer to be a Casual Daily Worker”

In this plantation, the company used three categories of workers: permanent laborers, casual day laborers, and extra unpaid laborers. Permanent laborers are recruited on a permanent contract with a secure monthly salary. Casual day laborers are hired by the foreman for a specific task (manuring, circle weeding, slashing, etc.) and paid based on the number of days they work. The third category is the extra unpaid labor which relates to the workers' family members (spouses, relatives,

children) who assist the workers but are not included as parties in the labor transaction (see also Julia & Ben White, 2012).

Most of the local workers in this company were casual day laborers. The company did not permanently contract them. For the local people who work as casual day laborers, they were not covered by the health and labor insurance which was required for the permanent workers. They were only paid a daily wage of IDR 91.000 (6 Euros). According to local farmers, they did not worry about their status as daily laborers since it was more flexible for them to choose whether they want to work or not. People prefer this since they will get paid based on their result that day. If they became permanent workers, they would not be able to skip certain working hours. As one female worker said:

“...our status in this company is as a daily laborer, not permanent. Here, no one forces us to work, we are free to choose to work or not. If we become permanent workers, we have to follow the company regulation, and if we are skip work for a day, they will cut our income for two days, if we skip for two days, they will cut for four days, so we do not want to be permanent workers...”

Mulyadi, a casual daily worker, expressed:

“...I prefer casual work. I am not bounded the company regulation and I can work as I want. Sometimes, when I go back to my village in Sekura in the weekend, I can spend three or four days, I can just come back here on Wednesday or Thursday. I decide myself when I want to come back to the plantation. The only difference between permanent and the casual workers is that the permanent can get a rice allowance for their family...”

Their status as casual workers do not make them feel uneasy. They feel more free as casual workers since they can choose whenever they want to work, while in the meantime they can manage their land for additional income. For the local workers, they are willing to start their daily activities at 4.00 o'clock in the morning to go to the plantation rather than stay inside the plantation. Migrant workers may prefer to stay inside the plantation as they have no choice to live outside the plantation. The company required them to live inside the lodge, yet some of the migrants from

outside Sebunga village go back to their village in the weekend. This exemplifies that the local and migrant workers do not feel that they belong to their plantation site, showing an absence of emotional engagement.

The other issue among the workers relates to age restriction. The company organises age selection every year for the old workers. According to the management, the old workers above 45 years old will be forced to retire as permanent workers, yet if they still want to work, the company will just pay them based on their performance.

Wirna stated: “...in this year (2019) there will be age selection from the company. The company does not give chance for the old workers to work...”

In this respect, the local and migrant workers prefer to be casual daily workers rather than have permanent status. The absence of sense of belonging towards the plantation areas makes them think that becoming a permanent laborer would not make them flexible to choose when they want to work. The workers do not want to be bound by the company regulation which has a fixed work schedule. Moreover, the treatment of workers as commodities gives the impression that the company cares little about workers’ sense of belonging to the plantation. The workers are only used when they are in prime health and have good strength. As Li (2017b) explained, the company will only provide jobs for healthy young men to do strenuous work, especially in the harvesting division. This condition is a barrier to developing a sense of belonging within the plantation. Workers who have exceeded the age limit of the company certainly still want to have a permanent job to support their livelihoods, but the existence of this rule forces them to give up their status as permanent workers and creates uncertainty as to what they will do after they have been made to retire.

5.3 Conclusion

The central objective of this chapter was to describe the expansion of oil palm plantation in Selayar village and explore the perception of the workers in relation to their sense of belonging to their company plantation. The local elites play a crucial role in influencing the local people to accept the establishment of the plantation. These local elites could get incentives from the company and

special positions from them as a reward for their service in facilitating access for the company. As the company established their plantation, they not only hired the local people as their laborers but also migrant workers as an additional labor force.

Inside the plantation, the perception of the workers shows their motivation in working for the plantation. The local and migrant workers are mainly motivated by improved incomes. The economic aspect become their priority as, for the local people, they have handed over their land to be converted into an oil palm plantation. They are therefore dependent on the regular wage for their labor as a source of income. Furthermore, the feeling of security brought about by working in Indonesia as opposed to abroad leads them to choose plantation labor in their home country.

Despite the income and security factors, plantation labor does not generate a sense of belonging among the workers. The workers perceived that working inside the plantation was a temporary occupation to fulfil their economic needs. The reasons why the workers feel that they do not belong in the plantation are diverse. Firstly, the indecent facilities inside the plantation lodge mean that workers are solely focused on making money rather than forming any sense of attachment to their living space. Secondly, the promise of plasma plots which has never been realized by the company has damaged the trust of local people and created no feeling of real engagement under the company plantation. Third, accumulation of disappointment among the workers regarding the lack of facility and the promised plasma plots leads workers to choose to be casual daily laborers. In this sense they still are able to satisfy their economic needs, but in a more independent and detached manner than becoming permanent laborers. Finally, ethnic divisions within the plantation lodge provide a barrier to the development of close social relations among the workers, in turn contributing to a lack of sense of belonging.

6. Conclusion & Discussion

6.1 Conclusion

The expansion of oil palm plantations in Kalimantan has generated a debate about the positive and negative impacts for the local farmers. On the one hand, the positive impacts of the palm oil sector are related to the growth of economic development, which improves farmer's incomes as well as the national income. On the other hand, the sector is associated with negative environmental and social impacts such as deforestation and land disputes involving indigenous communities. However, the debate about oil palm plantation expansion infrequently involves the perspectives of local farmers and migrant workers, who are the main actors affected, in relation to their sense of belonging. This research studied how people in oil palm expansion areas give meaning to oil palm plantation development in relation to their sense of belonging. This research was conducted in two different villages in Sambas district (Salaman Kecil and Selayar). From these two villages, it became clear that there were nuances in people's opinions; they do not only consider economic development in relation to their regular income in shaping their sense of belonging. Non-economic aspects also play an important role for them. The concept of sense of belonging, adapted to the context of oil palm development, is used to analyze the perception of the local farmers and workers in oil palm plantations.

The concept of belonging has been discussed by Antonsich (2010), which he categorizes into five aspects of belonging; autobiographical, social relations, culture, economy and legal aspects. In the oil palm development context, I developed three further categories based on the perception of the people which are the aspect of land rights, future generations, and the environment. These three additional aspects are crucial in analyzing how those affected by oil palm expansion shape their sense of belonging. For the local farmers, land is more than just physical matter, it is a symbol of identity, culture and an investment for their future generations. In this sense, future generations are considered by the local farmers to shape their sense of belonging. As they wish for better livelihoods for their children and their descendants, they want to assure that they can pass on some land in order to allow them to make a decent living. Another crucial aspect is the emotional attachment and connection between local farmers and their river; this relationship underpins the

significance of the environment as a source of their livelihoods, and as a determinant of their sense of belonging.

In Salaman Kecil village, I found that the local farmers give meaning to their place in some elements. Even though they appreciate the economic benefits that are related to their regular income, they still believe that their sense of belonging is not per se contingent upon income alone. They consider other non-economic aspects such as right to land, lifestyle, social relations, future generations and the environment as crucial factors to determine their sense of feeling at home. Before the expansion of the oil palm plantation, local people were largely independent farmers who managed their land as a community. The expansion of the plantation caused most of the local farmers in this village to convert themselves into oil palm smallholders working in the plasma plantation that fell under the company's management. This shift has altered people's sense of feeling at home.

The benefits of regular income brought about by the plantation expansion does not automatically equate to a settled sense of belonging in their place. Social and environmental changes have induced a sense of loss. Moreover, future uncertainty under oil palm plantation regimes generate anxiety among the local farmers regarding their future generations.

In Selayar village, the local workers and the migrant workers perceived that economic motives have led them to work in the plantation. Local and migrant workers alike expressed that the plantation was simply a place to fulfill their economic needs. Despite the motivation of income and feeling secure working in Indonesia rather than Malaysia, there were elements that made them feel like they do not belong to the plantation. For the local workers, they used to trust the company as they promised to provide plasma plots for them. Yet, when this promise was not fulfilled, this trust was broken. For the migrant workers, they considered their experience with indecent facilities and uncomfortable social relations inside the lodge as the principal reasons why they felt no sense to belonging towards the plantation. Both local and migrant workers agreed that they put their sense of belonging to one side; working inside the plantation is their strategy to collect money that they will use to buy some land or send remittances to their families. They have accepted this condition inside the plantation as a pragmatic way to fulfil their economic needs.

6.2 Discussion

This research addressed the knowledge gap in the grassroots understanding of the impact of oil palm plantations in shaping the sense of belonging of affected communities in expansion areas. It provides an analysis of how people are engaged with their place and value the immaterial aspects of their lives. These insights into their sense of belonging can help to reveal how people see the development agendas surrounding oil palm plantation expansion. From the academic perspective, this research has contributed to broadening the concept of sense of belonging in line with the specificities of the oil palm context. This broadened concept of belonging is important in analyzing people's behavior and attitude towards oil palm plantations. The concept of belonging is used to identify sort of aspects which become their priority that shape their sense of belonging. Afterwards, it relate to the connection between the aspect of belonging and the behavior and attitude of the people towards oil palm plantations. Moreover, in future research, this analytical framework could be used for better understanding people's experiences with oil palm plantation in their areas.

The findings suggest that the government should take into account how the local people perceive conditions within the plantation. The notion of development for local people does not solely revolve around economy and income, but also has to do with the immaterial aspects which influence their feeling of being at home. The government should pay more attention to these non-economic aspects for local people who are affected by the oil palm expansion. The clarity of land status for the local people who have conflicts with companies is the responsibility of the government to rectify. In the case of environmental pollution, the government should fulfil their role as regulators and be more assertive in dealing with companies who have been proven to pollute local water systems. This action is necessary to maintain the sense of belonging of the local people towards their place. In addition, regarding the workers of the plantation, the government could be more aware of the situation of casual daily workers, and provide them with social insurance. My fieldwork suggest that companies prefers to hire casual workers so that they do not need to spend extra costs on insurance. Another crucial issue is that the government should ensure that decent facilities are provided for workers living inside the plantation. These all should be government responsibilities to adhere to sustainable development principles in the oil palm context.

While the principal concern for oil palm companies may be generating profit, this should not detract from sustainable development regarding environmental and labor prosperity. In this respect, companies should also engage with the local community to protect rivers and forests which belong to local people. Companies should respect the traditional values and customary law of the local people in order to reduce the potential for conflict. Moreover, they should pay attention to their workers' sense of belonging to their plantation, which relates to the state of the plantation lodge and social insurance.

NGOs also play an important role in enhancing the awareness of sense of belonging for the local people. In many cases, NGOs were present to give education and training regarding the impact of oil palm expansion. Moreover, they also help the local community to negotiate with the company regarding land disputes. In this sense, the existence of NGOs can help to conduct training with the concept sense of belonging generating awareness among local communities about the feeling of being at home. In addition, from this concept, the NGOs could also campaign in national and international level about how people give meaning towards their place as the impact of oil palm expansion to their areas. This action is crucial to develop discourse of being at home towards other actors such as government and oil palm companies to aware about the non-economic aspect of people in deal with development agenda. However, in some other cases (Selayar village), no NGO existed to aid local people in making an informed decision on whether or not to accept the plantation scheme. The existence of NGOs is crucial to ensure that the local people get a balance of information regarding the oil palm expansion in their areas.

Regarding this research, there are several limitations. First, due to time and resource constraints the analysis is based on two cases, inside and outside the oil palm plantations. Even though they may reflect the way in which local people give meaning towards their place in Sambas, West Kalimantan, different outcomes might be found in different areas. In the two villages in which I have conducted this research, the oil palm companies have been operational for about 13 years, meaning that people have long been exposed to them. However, this limitation is also the strength of this research. The focus on these two villages gives me a clearer and more in-depth image of how people express themselves. They express their opinions, feelings and anxieties through verbal and non-verbal language (from the observation). In this sense I can understand their feelings and see how they give meaning towards their life under the influence of an oil palm plantation. A

further limitation is that my entry point for this research to the community was through the people who were openly against the plantation. It is therefore possible that my research may not completely capture the full range of perspectives in oil palm plantation affected areas. I talked more to people who oppose the plantation company rather than support it. However, my main aim of this research was not to judge whether oil palm plantations are good or bad, but to capture the experience of the people experience living under oil palm plantation in relation to their sense of belonging.

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