

Human-Nature Interactions in East Kalimantan



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01. Background

Indonesia's capital city, Jakarta, is sinking by up to 15 cm per year due to several environmental factors. In response, the national government has decided to construct a new capital city called Nusantara on the neighboring island of Borneo. Pitched as a sustainable "forest city," many nonetheless worry about the impacts Nusantara's construction will have on the people and ecology of the Bornean region East Kalimantan.

02. Objective

Understand the unique socio-ecological history of communities in East Kalimantan as the region undergoes a huge transformation.

Key References:

- Bakker, L. (2010). Which Authority, Whose Land? Access to Land in Paser, East Kalimantan. *Leiden University: Van Vollenhoven Institute.*
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- Kusumanto, Y. (2007). Shaping opportunities for improving forest quality and community livelihoods in Central Sumatra and East Kalimantan, Indonesia. *CIFOR-ICRAF.*
- MacKinnon, K. (1997). *The Ecology of Kalimantan* (1st ed., Vol. 3). Periplus Editions.
- Saputra, E.. (2022). Pinched Between the Bulldozer Wheels: The Impact of the New City Development on People: Some Critical Notes From Indonesia's New Capital City. *Pustaka Pelajar.*
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03. Methodology

Relevant terms were searched relating to local indigenous groups, culturally relevant local species, and key organizations:

- Paser and Balik (indigenous communities)
- Dayak*
- Borneo
- East Kalimantan
- Mentawir and Pemaluan (villages)
- etc.

The terms were searched across several databases: the Southeast Asia Visions collection; Borneo Research Bulletin; Leiden and Cornell University libraries; the Bibliography of Asian Studies; and more.

**A note regarding the term "Dayak": this term is broadly used in early literature to refer to any indigenous peoples of Borneo. However, it often oversimplifies the experiences of distinct ethnic and cultural groups in the Nusantara region, and more specific terms are used whenever possible.*

04. Results/Findings

ETHNIC GROUPS

Various indigenous groups live in the region where Nusantara will be constructed (the IKN area). The Paser and Balik are two examples of local indigenous groups. There are also several non-indigenous communities from other Indonesian islands living in the IKN area.

LAND USE LAW

Laws regarding land ownership in East Kalimantan can be confusing and contradictory. There is some legal recognition of the *adat*, or customary, land rights of indigenous groups. More often, land is claimed by the national government, leaving many families without legal rights to the land they have lived on for generations.

TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOODS

Fishing and shifting agriculture, both of which heavily rely on the land, are the most common traditional livelihoods of communities in the IKN area. The increased influence of logging companies and the loss of forest land have complicated the feasibility these livelihoods.

BIOCULTURAL HERITAGE

Animals such as barking deer (right) and gibbons are viewed as important omens to several "Dayak" communities, but targeted search terms relevant to the IKN area and its people yielded few specific results.



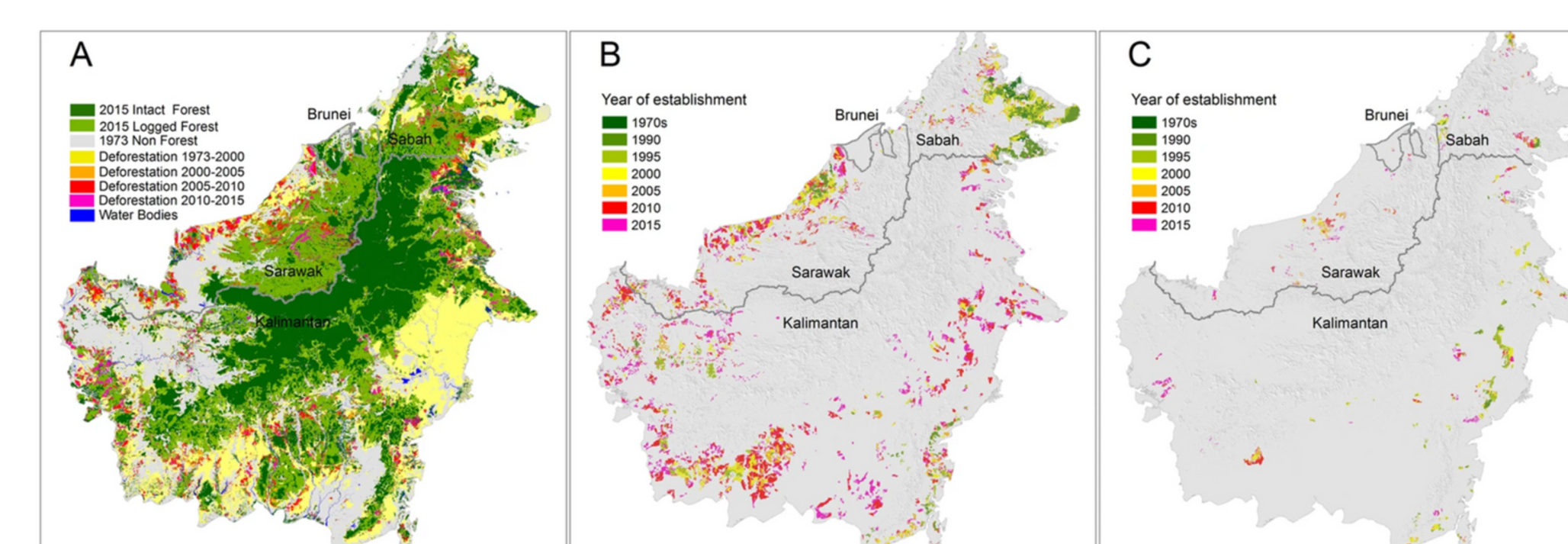
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06. Conclusion

Local communities view access to the land as deeply significant, and the landscape and creatures of East Kalimantan are imbued with deep cultural and historical relevance to these groups. As Nusantara is constructed, it will be more important than ever to honor the unique history of interactions between the people, animals, and land in this region.

05. Impacts

The construction of Nusantara concerns many environmental activists and indigenous community members. Deforestation is a huge issue, leading to lost forest resources as well as animals eating farmers' crops due to habitat loss. Additionally, many experts worry that Jakarta's environmental problems will simply follow Nusantara, and that a relocation will effectively "outsource" issues instead of truly fixing them.



(A) Total deforestation (18.7Mha) and remaining old-growth and selectively logged forest in December 2015; (B) The expansion of industrial oil-palm plantations (7.8Mha); (C) The expansion of industrial pulpwood plantations (1.3Mha). Maps created using ArcMap v10.2.2 geospatial processing program <http://www.esri.com/software/arcgis/arcgis-for-desktop>.

