

Re-imagining Agrarian Futures: Anticipation and Climate Change from Below

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Rationale

The reality of on-going climate change has severe repercussions for people who experience climate change on a daily basis, either in the form of anxieties and loss (both in the global North and the South) as well as in terms of ecological change, resource depletion and livelihood change (often in the global South). Also, in Southeast Asia, scholars, governments and civil society actors are seeking to develop 'green' futures; policies and practices of anticipation. This is reflected in a wide range of initiatives, ranging from moderate attempts to combine sustainability principles with paradigms of economic growth to approaches that call for more fundamental changes, challenging the predominance of growth-oriented development and a neo-liberal economy. The perspectives of people experiencing and living under the reality of climate change, their anxieties, interpretations, adaptations and relations, are often rendered invisible in state and mitigation/ adaptation policies. The same counts for alternative meanings, adaptations, and innovations which might emerge out of people experiencing and dealing with climate change. This panel aims to put their knowledges and meanings at the center of attention.

Format

The panel departs from the observation that interpretations, perceptions, and responses to change amongst (dis)empowered rural people facing emergent or disappearing livelihood options may erode predominant political projects (or capitalism) – both through everyday modes of resistance and through development of alternative futures – as much as social movements. Under the reality of climate change, alternative knowledges and practices emerge which might resist mainstream solutions, as well as provide alternative avenues of dealing with climate change at the local level. We aim to analyse the hybrid assemblages of 'anticipation' that emerge as rural actors advance their livelihood aspirations.

These eventualities invite empirical and ethnographic inquiry into how ideas of the future are shaped (Appadurai 2013). In the proposed panel, the 'green visions' as well as the practices, experiences, interactions, conflicts and collective actions regarding climate change and doom-filled ecological crises will be studied drawing on diverse theoretical and practical perspectives and field research in south-east Asia and Indonesia.

The panel will identify a research agenda and, together with participants, aims to develop an approach for unpacking the intertwined scenarios of agrarian-climate change. For this, we invite participants to share ideas and cases from all over Southeast Asia to generate a comparative understanding of lived experiences, resistance and alternative knowledges from

below. After three short presentations of the organisers, the floor will be opened to the audience to share cases, examples and ideas.

Content

The panel studies several possibilities for re-imagining agrarian futures. Rural people may attempt to revive subsistence, agroforestry, and reciprocity practices within portfolios of extensive and diversified livelihoods. Climate-related crises may spur rural communities to assemble post-capitalist futures by building alternative socio-economic and agrarian spaces while resisting current developmental imaginaries. As the state is often ill-equipped or slow to respond, livelihood crises may lead people to oppose prevalent developmental imaginaries as people pursue livelihoods in post-capitalist ruins (Tsing 2015). In these ways, novel and contradictory assemblages of climate-agrarian change will provoke a new politics of land, labour, and distribution. As agrarian change and local politics are coproduced under climate change, insecurities will coincide with competing aspirations, livelihood strategies and policy contestations.

Three short presentations will describe emergent patterns utilising recent studies on agrarian change in diverse rural landscapes in Indonesia (Nooteboom & Kutanegara on Java; Haug on Kalimantan; McCarthy on Sumatra). After this, the floor will be opened for sharing cases and experiences in other parts of Southeast Asia.

Audience

The proposed panel focuses on three interrelated domains of academic inquiry and activism. These will also be reflected in the key topics discussed by panel presenters. These include the global flows of ideas, policy hotspots and their social consequences, as well as alternative, bottom up dynamics of future making and green innovation. The panel aims to connect people working on these themes and to develop collaborative actions in the field of research, teaching and societal engage