



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2014, Prague, Czech Republic

“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

To Develop or To Be Developed: Drivers, Dangers and Opportunities related to focus on rubber in Kesindu, Sarawak, Malaysia

OUMAIMA DRIDI, SOFIA FÖRSTER, MARIUS VON OSTEN BRAATHEN, JACOB RAFFN , HAYET DJEBBI

University of Copenhagen, Fac. of Life Sciences, Denmark

Abstract

In recent years, conversion of ‘idle land’ into large-scale rubber and oil palm plantations in Sarawak Borneo occurred often without the affected people having a real say in the decision making process. Kesindu, a 44 households village in Sarawak, Malaysia, is affected by this development as several land development organisations have approached the village.

The present study carried out by students from both University of Copenhagen and University of Malaysia Sarawak investigates the conversion of a forest into a large-scale rubber plantation, the drivers behind it, the effects on the environment and the livelihoods of the local population, and the opportunities associated to the land use change in Kesindu.

For the investigation process, open-ended interviews, questionnaires, seasonal calendar, transect walks, focus group discussion and interviews besides natural science methods were carried out all households.

The findings illustrate that lack of finances combined with a “develop or be developed paradigm” in Sarawak is leaving the villagers with little choice in terms of future land development. A 90 ha rubber plantation is being implemented by the government in order to avoid encroachment on their land by private agencies. In order to secure tenure rights, focus on derived effects was lost. Adverse effects include environmental degradation, health issues due to pollution of water sources and social conflict from different points of view towards development. In spite of this, it might still be possible that development schemes involving rubber can be sustainable on both social and ecological indicators if approaches such as diversification of livelihood strategies and agroforestry are pursued.

Keywords: Dangers, drivers, Kesindu, land conversion, large-scale, Malaysia, opportunities, rubber plantation, Sarawak