



Tropentag, September 20-22, 2017, Bonn

“Future Agriculture:
Socio-ecological transitions and bio-cultural shifts”

In the Shadow of Large Infrastructure Development: Sustainability of Sawah Surjan Systems in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

R. RIJANTA

Gadjah Mada University, Development Geography, Indonesia

Abstract

The South Coastal Regions of Yogyakarta Province in Indonesia inherited a unique farming system called sawah surjan. It is considered as a cultural heritage, demonstrating a form of local wisdom in managing land resources with poor drainage. The system shows two different but complementing land uses, i.e.: first, the raised beds for various cash crops and second, the sunken beds for rice and fish. Geomorphologically the region comprises fluvio-marine lands, occupies the back swamp zone of the coastal zone of Kulonprogo Regency. The local knowledge of the rural dwellers of Kulonprogo Regency has succeeded in realising the farming system as an ecologically stable and able to provide a decent living for them. The farming systems as a cultural heritage have been under an increasing threat of conversion for urban settlements. Presently the area is undergoing a massive infrastructure development that increases the risk of land conversion of the sawah surjan into different land use designations. The construction of new arterial road along the coastal region of the province has further encouraged large scale investments by governments and private companies (iron ore mining, international airport, sea harbors, naval base) and smaller size of investments by the locals (governments, companies and community groups; especially those related to development of community-initiated tourism destinations). Many of the locals have also received substantial financial compensation for their lands, but there is an emerging question on their capability in sustaining their financial resources and to anticipate the emerging opportunities from the development of the new infrastructure. This study aims at assessing the prospects and sustainability of sawah surjan as a special farming system in facing the on going large scale investments. The paper will focus on how and to what extent large-scale infrastructure development in the province has marginalised or provided new opportunities for the sustainability of the existing traditional farming systems.

Keywords: Indonesia, infrastructure development, large scale investment, sawah surjan, sustainability