MANAGING LAND RE/DIS-POSSESSION FROM BELOW: HISTORY OF BIOPOLITICS COUNTERMOVEMENT IN TWO JAVANESE RURAL COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The long debate on whether rural community in Java is more characterised as egalitarian or differentiated one has underrated the agency of the local people. This paper tries to propose the agency of local people through a comparative account upon history of two communities, namely Ngandagan in Central Java and Wangunwati in West Java. Mobilizing the collective action toward land struggle, both communities involved in a broad spectrum of property relations reform which ranged from struggles over material things, revenue, to political power. As those struggles reflect interventions for "making live" and "not letting die" of the local population, this paper argues that both communities engaged in biopolitics countermovement directed to market and political forces threatening their means of livelihoods and even their life. However, while two communities succeeded in transforming inter-groups property relations within community, their political future would eventually necessitate the broader transformation of property relations between the state and the society.

Keywords: history of rural community, agrarian crises, the agency of local people, land struggle, property relations reform, biopolitics, Java, Indonesia.

ABSTRACT

Perdebatan panjang mengenai apakah komunitas pedesaan di Jawa lebih bercorak egalitarian atau terdiferensiasi telah menyebabkan agensi penduduk lokal kurang diperhatikan. Paper ini mencoba mengedepankan agensi komunitas lokal melalui uraian komparatif atas sejarah dua komunitas, yakni Ngandagan di Jawa Tengah dan Wangunwati di Jawa Barat. Memobilisasikan aksi kolektif seputar perjuangan atas tanah, kedua komunitas ini terlibat dalam pembaruan relasi-relasi kepemilikan dalam spektrum yang luas, yang terentang dari perjuangan atas kepemilikan menyangkut benda material, pendapatan, hingga kekuasaan politik. Mengingat perjuangan demikian mencerminkan intervensi untuk "membuat hidup" dan "tidak membiarkan mati" atas penduduk lokal, paper ini berargumen bahwa kedua komunitas tersebut menjalankan gerakan perlawanan biopolitics yang ditujukan pada kekuatan pasar dan politik yang mengancam sarana penghidupan dan bahkan jiwa mereka. Namun, sementara keduanya berhasil dalam mentransformasikan relasi-relasi kepemilikan di dalam komunitas, masa depan politik mereka pada akhirnya akan menuntut transformasi lebih luas dalam relasi-relasi kepemilikan antara negara dan masyarakat.

Kata kunci: sejarah komunitas pedesaan, krisis agraria, agensi masyarakat lokal, perjuangan atas tanah, pembaruan relasi-relasi kepemilikan, biopolitics, Jawa, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Benda-Beckmann and Benda-Beckmann (2011), in their response to some criticisms on *adatrecht* scholarship, strongly criticize the lack of consideration toward the agency of local people and their leaders. The enthusiasm to unpack how adat law was written and debated in legal, political and academic circle during colonial period "have underrated the agency of local people and their intellectual and political leaders" and at the same time "overrated the actual significance of colonial legal constructions of adat or adat law on the legal life of the population" (169).

In line with this counter-criticism, it can be argued that the less presence of local people agency may also be attributed to the long polemics on the Javanese village community. The dual faces of village community in Java—the egalitarian face and the differentiation one (Hüsken, 1998) have been the main focus of policy debate since Raffles to Van den Bosch to postcolonial state apparatus, as well as scholarly debate involving Boeke to Geertz, and others including some Indonesian scholars such as Sajogyo and Wiradi. As in the case of adat law debate, it seems that the polemics about Javanese village community also "underrate the agency of local people and their intellectual and political leaders". In this case, the question on how village community managed to respond agricultural commercialization and differentiation processes and how they actively counteracted toward such situation are rather underemphasized. It was obscured by the romantic notion of "solidarity and shared poverty" on one hand, or by the linear prescription of rural differentiation due to "the dull compulsion of economic forces" on the other hand.

Furthermore, while Hüsken and White have noticed different responses of village community in the face of fluctuating processes of commercialization and decommercialization in Java, their statements are very general, stating that such responses seem "to have been cyclically alternating responses to changing conditions of the outside market which determined their course and pace" (Hüsken and White, 1989: 247). It is in Tania Li's article (2010) on indegeneity, capitalism, and the management of dispossession that the agency of village community is seriously discussed and problematised. By focusing the management of piecemeal land dispossession, she successfully unpack mindful counteracts that local community exercised in managing threats of social differentiation and land dispossession when they exposed into capitalist market economy. Nevertheless, Li refuses the idea that village agency and counteract measures are one that will automatically emerge as a kind of "countermovement [that] checking the [market] expansion in definite directions", as Karl Polanyi seems to believe (Li, 2009: 79). For Li, the activation of countermovement, and hence the existence of agency, is greatly depend on its enabling conjunctural conditions—a matter of empirical fact rather than of presupposed preposition.

This paper will focus on *the agency of village community* in Java as response to threat of agrarian differentiation and land dispossession during a period of "rural political activism", i.e. since the years of national revolution in 1940s until its reversal following mass political massacre in late 1960s. Such focus is notably important during this period since the vision of social justice, which was very prominent in the anti-colonial struggle, was very influential in people's imagination; meanwhile the democratic climate in rural areas had enabled rural population and national political organisations

to engage in mobilizing peasants' political activism and collective actions.

Two cases will be discussed throughout this paper. The first is Ngandagan community, a lowland, rice growing community in lowland Central Java during period late 1940s to mid-1960s. The second one is Wangunwati community, a rubber estate community in upland West Java during early 1950s to 1980s. For the first case I and some colleagues have carried out our fieldwork in 2010 (cf. Shohibuddin and Luthfi, 2010), but for the second case I rely mainly on secondary sources (especially report by Novrian et al, 2010 and Novrian, 2011). Fieldwork for both cases was part of long term research cooperation project on agrarian problems and land policies in Indonesia since 2009 between Sajogyo Institute (SAINS), Bogor and National College of Land Studies (or *Sekolah Tinggi Pertanahan Nasional*, STPN), Yogyakarta. I was involved as a member of steering committee in this research project.

Based on those two cases, this paper argues that collective action both communities engaged in response to agricultural commercialization and land dispossession was a manifestation of biopolitics program; a Foucauldian term contextualized by Li (2009) for current intervention in India and Indonesia. Interestingly, but understandably, in both two Javanese village communities such biopolitical program revolved around a broad struggle over land—what I call here as "managing land re/dispossession from below". This was a community-initiated struggle "to make local population live" and not "to let them die" exercised through a broad agenda of property relation reform, as it will be elaborated later.

Before introducing my cases study, in the next section I will firstly provide an analytical framework through which I will examine my cases of study. The following section will be a concise exposition of two cases of community countermovement and its comparative analysis. Finally, in I will provide some concluding remarks the last section .

BIOPOLITICS AS AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Situated in the face of agrarian differentiation and land dispossession, two communities in rural Java actively reacted to this situation by engaging themselves in series of collective action and political mobilization. Instead of being merely passive or conservative, they organize, as a collective response, one or another type of countermovement measures. Although such measures basically revolved around the management of land re/dis-possession, it went beyond the limited self-protection of collective landholding as examined by Li (2010), since they also pursued a broader inclusive system of land access, livelihoods and political life. But most importantly, they also engaged in a very political struggle of making live interventions under the chaotic situation of national revolution and making die (military-initiated) counter-revolution during late 1960s.

It is accordingly that these measures can be fairly put as the manifestation of biopolitics countermovement. Neverthless, what is biopolitics, and what are its elements? To summarize, biopolitics is a term reworked by Foucault to simply denote "an orientation to intervene in populations, to enhance their health and wellbeing". It is a politics of making live, or letting die, and the social struggle that shape the way the equation is resolved for different segments of the population. Especially in

the moment of crises, biopolitical programs become more urgent since people can no longer sustain their own lives through direct access to the means of production, or access to a living wage. Thus, it is such intrinsic value of life (rather than the value of people as workers or consumers) that make the execution of biopolitical programs is necessitated and justified (Li, 2009: 66-68).

For Li, the politics of letting die is not a counterfactual at all: it happens when governing authorities decided not to intervene when they could, or selected one subset of the population for life enhancement while abandoning another (Li, 2009: 66). In this regard, the political massacre in late 1960s of Indonesia was obviously hard evidence about the politics of making die (Farid, 2005). However, the mobilization in a wholly making live direction is not impossible, and as Li argues, it will depend greatly on a range of social forces at work in a make live conjuncture. It is too naive, however, to attribute these social forces merely to a narrow view of class. Portraying the conjuncture of live-enhancing countermovement in Europe, Polanyi—as Li notices—highlighted "the role of cross-class alliances in promoting such interventions, their adoption by European regimes across the spectrum from left to right, and their emergence under authoritarian conditions as well as democratic ones." Polanyi also pointed out that "many interventions arose as pragmatic response to particular problem such as unemployment, and crises in public health" (Li, 2009: 79).

Although Polanyi's countermovement is polymorphous and it does not provide analytical tools to uncover its elements, however, his thinking about the role of cross-class alliances in mobilizing it, and its emersion as pragmatic response to concrete problem in different political regimes, is very useful to view biopolitics interventions as an assemblage. It is, as Li describes, an assemblage of contradictory elements of making live interventions in relation to a given ensemble of population and territory. Thus, from this perspective, the aspirations to make live interventions can be taken at their word, "while acknowledging the contradictions that cause them to fall short. There is ... no master plan, only assemblages pulled together by one set of social forces, only to fragment and to reassemble" (Li, 2009: 80).

Li elucidates further that some elements of assemblage are located within the state apparatus, an expression of uneasy tension between the protection agenda from the "left hand of the state" and the agenda of productivity stressed by the "right hand of the state". A similar split also exists at transnational scale: a right based approach to development sits awkwardly alongside the agenda to promote economic liberalization. Last but not the least, in current neoliberalism era when attempts "to govern through communities" is promoted, Li also notices that some elements of assemblage are located within communities as they are pushed to be self-reliance and to be able to provide the protection to their members (Li, 2009: 80-81). It is in this last notion—the existence of making live assemblages located within communities—that two cases of Javanese community will be examined in this paper.

It is worth noting here that to specify elements of making live assemblages I will identify community's management of land re/dis-possession as *a broad front of struggle to transform property relations*. The struggle is not limited to "a right in and to material things"—in this case, access to land (which is certainly very important in agrarian world). No less important, the struggle for property relation transformation also includes "a right to revenue", i.e., access to means of

labour (which is very crucial for welfare provision). As MacPherson put it nicely,

> ... the concept of property as solely private property, the right to exclude others from some use or benefit of something, which is already a concept of individual right to a revenue, will have to be broadened to include property as an individual right not to be excluded from the use or benefit of the accumulated productive resources of the whole society. (p. 133).

Furthermore, I will also consider in that struggle for property relation transformation "a right to a share in political power" to control the uses of community resource and wealth (which is very vital in transforming state-society relation). To quote MacPherson,

> ... if property is to be consistent with any real democracy, the concept of property will have to be broadened again to include the right to a share in political power, and, even beyond that, a right to a kind of society or set of power relations which will enable the individual to live a fully human life. (p. 136).

In short, in considering a broad range of community's biopolitics countermovement, I will adopt a political theory of property as developed by C. B. MacPherson (1973) which consists of three interrelated notions of property: a right in and to material things, a right to revenue, and a right to a share in political power. However, while McPershon developed his theory as an abstract theory, I will use his concepts in practical way as a heuristic tool to analyze the empirical cases.

Now, how did two communities in rural Java from different context mobilized the biopolitics countermovement in their complex encounter with capitalist economy and state apparatus? To examine this topic deeper, I will elaborate such questions as follow. What were agrarian crises that two communities confront with? What was the assemblage of making live interventions they have pulled in addressing such crises? What were the social forces behind such interventions? And what were the outcomes and its trajectory?

BIOPOLITICS COUNTERMOVEMENT AND ITS ASSEMBLAGE IN TWO JAVANESE COMMUNITIES

The Context of Agrarian Crises

Two communities examined in this paper differ in their agrarian crises primarily in the following sense: Ngandagan community has been dispossessed from most of their land since colonial era through mundane mechanism of *land sale and debt*, and hence they started to engage in a collective *struggle for its repossession*; while Wangunwati community, on the contrary, engaged in a long *struggle against* series of *political forces* tried *to dispossess them* from the land that they have occupied during Japanese military administration (Borras and Franco, 2010a).

Ngandagan typically exemplified an image of Javanese village with communal landholding that has been debated since decades. Historically, communal landholding in Ngandagan, as well as in other villages influenced by Mataram Kingdom, has been consolidated as the result of a convergence between two reinforcing factors: the *apanage* system of the kingdom on the one hand, and the village system manipulation for *cultuurstelsel* exploitation on the other hand. However, since liberalization era and especially after *Suikkerrestrictie* policy in 1933 (which restricted village authority to facilitate land rent for sugarcane production), many roles village authority enjoyed under indirect rule system was

diminishing. Periodic communal land reappropriation was over, more individualized landholding became stronger, and land market mechanism took the place. Thus, in early 20th century van Vollenhoven observed that communal landholding in Kedu Regency (where Ngandagan located) was fading away. The residual right of independent farmers (*kuli* or *sikep*) to their plots in communal land (*kulian*) was getting strong and more equal to individual rights of *yasan*, even to *eigendom* rights (*in* Praptodihardjo, 1952: 59).

The individualization of landholding facilitated land market functioning in this locality, and a silent process of piecemeal land dispossession (as discussed by Li, 2010) shortly took place among farmers. The scale of this dispossessory process was very surprising. When Soemotirto run for the village head election in 1947, all communal paddy field (*sawah kulian*) has been individualized, but more than 70% of it was owned by people from other villages (*land absentee*). It means that from 36.2 ha of paddy field in Ngandagan, only around 10.8 ha that still owned by village members (partly was *bengkok* land). A similar condition also happened in upland area that constitute 64.55% (or 87.52 ha) of total village area. While only a few farmers cultivate this area due to lack of capital for opening the land and of technology for dryland farming, a big portion of this area (more than 10 ha) was owned by former official of *Kawedanan* (sub-district authority). Confronted with such situation, Wiradi's informant testified that some villagers then committed to social banditry acts for their survival, even at that time Ngandagan was famous as a robber stronghold (Wiradi, 1981).

Apart of the fact that land ownership in this village was individualized and highly unequal, some remnants of communal landholding still existed. The standard unit of plot sizing in *sawah kulian* (communal paddy field) that previously used as a tool for its periodic reappropriation still continued to be a principal for land management. The whole *sawah kulian* was divided into small pieces of land, each covering only 300 *ubin* (equal to circa 0.43 ha). In the past, every independent farmer (*kuli* or *sikep*) had rights only to one unit of *sawah kulian*, and for that right they had heavy tributary and corvée obligations to the village and colonial authorities. Therefore, during 19th century some members of particular villages in Java were reported as having voluntarily reduced the size of their landholding in communal land as a way of more equitably distributing the colonial and indigenous rulers' demands for corvée labour (Burger, 1975 *in* Alexander and Alexander, 1982: 604-605). Geertz (1963), on the other hand, interpret such arrangement as an evidence of "shared poverty" mechanism. For criticizing to Geertz' ideology of shared poverty, see Alexander and Alexander (1982) and White (1983).

In Ngandagan, some independent farmers (locally termed as *kuli baku*) practiced the same strategy, setting apart as much 90 *ubin* (approximately equal to 0.13 ha) from their plot and giving it to landless co-villagers as using rights. The patronage relationship then became established since the last party now become *kuli baku*'s clients (locally termed as *buruh kuli*) and they were required to replace corvée obligations of their patrons. As land became more and more scarce, and it was increasingly accumulated in the hand of small section of society, such a relationship tends to be more exploitative than before (cf. Hüsken, 1998). Thus, in spite of replacing corvée obligations (or *kerigan* in Ngandagan term), the clients were also demanded to work in the patrons' paddy field as well as to

assist them in their daily domestic work. At the same time, such arrangement made the village tenure system in this village more complicated by creating a new category of *sawah buruhan* (that is, a slim plot controlled by *buruh kuli* as use rights) (Shohibuddin and Luthfi, 2010).

This situation of agrarian crises was well-understood by Soemotirto when he came back to his village from long period of odyssey in Sumatra. His experience as contract labour in colonial plantation, and his involvement in a communist movement of *Sarekat Rakyat* during this period (for what "crime" he was jailed for some moments by collonial administration) have given him a comprehensive view on the predicament of Ngandagan community as well as a progressive vision for its transformation. In fact, what he promised when he run for the election, as Purwanto (1985: 31) puts it, it was to bring "welfare plan" (*sic*) to the community.

> In every occasion ... Soemotirto always illustrated the progress that community will experience in the future. He told the community about school, electricity, productivity of agriculture and aquaculture, and most importantly, about his plan to provide access to land for all community members. (Purwanto, 1985: 29).

When Soemotirto was elected as village head of Ngandagan in 1947, it was for such promise that Soemotirto devoted all his efforts to make it come into the reality. Although his leadership was very harsh and tend to be authoritarian, however, his vision and programs were perceived by his fellow as very beneficial to community. As described by Purwanto's informant: "Soemotirto was very harsh, but above all what he did is true" (Ibid: 41).

As already mentioned, Wangunwati case differs from Ngandagan in the sense that the community already occupied land from former colonial rubber estate. In the past, the community were contract labours in this estate. When they occupied the land since the end of Second World War, they immediately confronted with several political forces threatening to dispossess them from that land. In this sense, it was political drivers—rather than economic ones—that become the imminent and recuring threats, and it was the situation that triggered community's struggle against land dispossession.

As a matter of fact, Wangunwati was a name of plantation location, and the community was not indigenous to that place. The plantation established in 1908 by German enterprise named "Straat Sunda Syndicaat NV Cultuur Mij Wangunwatie", while the community came from anywhere as contract labours in that rubber estate. In early 1940s, following the Second World War, the estate was took over by Dutch colonial authority until their position seized by Japanese Military occupation (1942-1945). During this short period Saibai Kigyo Kanrikodan managed the estate, assisted by six local staffs recruited from former plantation labours (which then become the community leaders in the land struggle). In line with the military government policy to produce more logistics for continuing the war, a large part of the estate then is converted into rice field.

By the end of Second World War, amidst of power vacuum, those ex-plantation labours organized themselves to occupy plantation land, distributed it equally among the community members, and managed for their class transformation from plantation labours into independent farmers. This movement started a long period of land struggle during which they resisted some parties willing to take over the estate, and engaged in some political struggles to

strengthen their land occupation as well as some lobbies to acquire its formal recognition from the state (Novrian et al, 2010).

In fact, during three decades after the occupation of plantation land, some dispossessory forces took place in this area that threaten community's claim to the land. Due to limited space, I will summarize those political forces in Table 1 as follow (take notice some dispossessory forces as I emphasize in the underlined parts).

Having different context of agrarian crises as explained above, both two communities however share a similar vision of social justice and making live politics; a vision that they tried to pursue through a broad struggle of property relation transformation.

Making Live Interventions through Property Relation Transformation

Property rights are not "things"; they are about social relations between people that are linked to the dynamic process of property-based wealth and power creation. Therefore, it is *these relationships* (between groups of people, or social classes, or between state and society) that should be the subject of any reform attempts (Borras and Franco, 2010b).

However, reforming such relationships is not limited to the notion of right to property as "material things". As I have alluded to earlier, it also includes "a right to revenue" (means of labours) as well as "a right to a share in political power" (means of life). In the following Table 2, I outline some elements of making live interventions that two communities engaged by identifying those three categories of property relation transformation.

As indicated in Table 2, the case of Ngandagan community showed that their land struggle laid mainly in transforming property relation between groups in society (within village boundary). However, as they had succeeded in such reform, its future and continuation would eventually necessitate the transformation of property relation between the society and the state. On the other case, the story of Wangunwati community clearly explicates that their main struggle was about transforming property relations between the state and the society, but this struggle continuously is in accordance to what they have done in reforming property relations among themselves.

Similar to Li's account on communal fix as the management of dispossession, Ngandagan community under Soemotirto leadership is also based their land struggle on a shared notion of adat norms concerning communal landholding and the village authority to periodically re-appropriate it among community members. Actually, when Soemotirto's proposal was discussed among village officials, two opposite views emerged as the response. The first one supported Soemotirto's idea of providing land to all community members, but emphasized that such attempt should be firstly executed through the abolition of *kulian* communal land to be followed by its redistribution equally among the people. Otherwise, the unequal structure of land ownership between *kuli baku* and *buruh kuli* would still continue. The second view opposed this idea and rejected any plan to intervene landholding system that has been individualized since a long ago. For the later, such plan will be a violation to people's land rights and hence could not be justified (Wiradi, 1981).

What Soemotirto decided after heated debate on this matter is a compromised policy not to abolish *kulian*

system of landholding; yet, he required all *kuli baku*s to allocate small plot (90 *ubin*) from every unit of *sawah kulian* that they owned to form a pool of *sawah buruhan*. This is not a new practice any way, and many independent farmers already executed it since a long time ago to establish patronage relationship. However, the "new invention" in this policy is to withdraw this pool of *sawah buruhan* under village's direct control and management, redistribute it periodically among *buruh kuli* in reduced size (45 *ubin*, equal to 0.064 ha) to cover more beneficiaries, and by doing so terminated the patronage relationship between *kuli baku* and *buruh kuli*. Thus, what the village did in the past to re-appropriate *sawah kulian* periodically among *kuli baku* is now exercised in a same pattern but at smaller scale in *sawah buruhan* among *buruh kuli*.

This kind of revitalizing communal fix for managing land dispossession was not the entire story. Prohibiting any forms of land tenancy and wage employment for farming, Soemotirto then introduced labour exchange arrangement (locally termed as *grojogan*) among all villagers that now become landowners, although with different size of landholding and different rights of ownership. For this purpose, some labour exchange groups were created whose members consist of *kuli baku* and *buruh kuli* farmers. Every member of those groups jointly worked in their respective paddy field alternately for all steps of farming activities except harvesting. In the last activity, the old practice of *bawon* was maintained since the speed of harvesting depended not solely on the size of paddy field but also on the skills of harvesters.

However, since *buruh kuli* only had small piece of *sawah buruhan*, they spent much time in *kuli baku*'s paddy field while the later could not pay equally in *buruh kuli*'s land, thus creating unequal labour exchange. To solve this problem, it was arranged that *buruh kuli*'s labour surplus in paddy field under *grojogan* arrangement should be paid by *kuli baku* farmers for opening idle, upland area—resulting in an "extra land" for *buruh kuli*. As the outcome, such arrangement created more balanced land ownership among village members. At the same time, it also created a mixed land tenure regime, i.e. communal-landholding in *sawah buruhan* and individual-landholding in *sawah kulian* and upland area. However, in all types of landholding, land sale and debt, as well as its tenancy, was strictly prohibited by the village authority (Shohibuddin and Luthfi, 2010). There were still some other elements of making live interventions, as described in the aforementioned Table 2.

The social forces behind this biopolitics countermovement were rather limited. On the one hand, the conjuncture was crystallized by strong leadership of Soemotirto which was influenced much by the communist ideals of social justice. His leadership got strong support and loyalty from his folk to the point that most villagers voted Indonesian Communist Party or PKI in 1955 national election (making Ngandagan as the "communist village" within a region dominated by Indonesian Nationalist Party or PNI). On the other hand, at that time the village exercised a relative degree of autonomy and self-governance. As a relatively autonomous political body, village leadership could perform redistributive role and welfare provision to community members during this period of rural political activism. The extent of village autonomy and the strength of its intervention, however, constrained significantly by the village predicament as "political minority" in a wider, district level of political struggle. Thus, in late 1963, the district civil court has been

misused by some Soemotirto opponents in the village to bring him to the trial on charges of violating private land rights in the settlement area—a long passed intervention that Soemotirto ever made to reorganize village settlement area.

It could be expected that this lawsuit had changed significantly Soemotirto's perceptions about the future of his village and community. Although he then released in early 1964, and the lawsuit was closed during mediation process, Soemotirto decided to resign from his position as village head. However, before his resignation, on April 1965 he instructed all his communist comrades in the village to change their party loyalty to another party. Soemotirto and his loyal fellows decided to choose the Catholics Party rather than PNI; a symbolic expression of their strong resistance to PNI although it means that they convert to Christianity. It was a very timely decision of "letting people live" because soon afterward by the end of 1965, the military backed up mass killings engulfed throughout the countrywide and drastically transform national political landscape as well as rural life. In this very chaotic period, three persons from Ngandagan were detained by the army due to their insistence to maintain their PKI membership.

Having a similar vision of social justice and making live politics as Ngandagan community did, Wangunwati community nevertheless provided different course of making live interventions through property relation transformation. As former plantation labour occupying estate land, and then as smallholder farmers and estate manager after Second World War, threefold land struggle became the community's main concern. *The first* is to protect their land from any dispossessory forces, either through taking over the estate or through disbanding their collectivities. *The second* is to transform their class position from plantation labour to independent smallholder farmers, including by securing their individual-landholding in estate land as their means of subsistence. Besides *the last* is to strengthen their collectivities by establishing the cooperative, by developing rubber enterprise, and by pursuing legal rights for the cooperative in controlling and managing collective estate land.

As Table 1 indicated, amidst the chaotic situation and political upheaval came about during independence and civil war in late 1940s to early 1960s, Wangunwati community repeatedly forced to leave their land, but it always managed to return and stay on it. It was during this period that they managed to secure their interests by integrating themselves to be part of national aspiration for independence and political unity; including through participation in supporting Indonesian military operations either in the war for independence or in the battle for suppressing DI/TII rebellion. They also participated in the political life through involvement in Gerakan Tani Indonesia (GTI), a national farmer organization affiliated to Indonesian socialist party (Partai Sosialis Indonesia, PSI). It was through such participation that the community had good contact with military officers and political leaders at the district as well as national level. Such social and political capital proved to be very useful for lobbying and supporting when the community respond to recurring forces challenged to dispossess them from the land.

Thus, in 1951 the community got partial legal recognition to settle in plantation area and to control and manage the estate. They took this opportunity to establish their own cooperative in 1952, to improve their political as well as managerial competency through several training sessions organized by GTI, and

also to arrange landholding system in plantation area that already under their control. The later was pursued by dividing the total area of plantation (748.35 ha) into two parts. A large part of the area (468.15) was distributed to community members to be used as their housing plot and means of subsistence. GTI actively assisted this distribution process, assuring every member not exceed the limit of land ceiling (maximum 2 ha for each household). The remaining part of the area (280.2 ha) was maintained as rubber estate and became collective asset of the community to be managed and operated by the cooperative for the community benefit (Novrian et al, 2010). Thus, a mixed land tenure regime also applied here as in the case of Ngandagan community, but with opposite pattern of land use and purpose: private, individual-landholding in paddy field for subsistence (while in Ngandagan it was partially communal one), and collective, cooperative-managed landholding in dryland for commercial rubber enterprise (while in Ngandagan it was completely private, individual landholding).

However, for some years such arrangement was still legally unsecured, and Wangunwati community should strive for a long time to obtain legal recognition for both types of landholding. When President Soekarno on August 1961 announced land reform program as the implementation of 1960 Basic Agrarian Law, it soon created "a battle arena" in rural areas since the communist party (PKI) started to use it for radicalizing rural population to demand land reform implementation. Thus, Wangunwati plantation came to be contested terrain as the area used to be one listed as a target for "one-sided action" by Barisan Tani Indonesia (BTI), a national farmer organization close to PKI. Fortunately, the community could successfully approach BTI local leaders, arguing that they were previously landless peasants succeeded to claim ex-colonial plantation, and hence no justification could be made to take over the land in the name of land reforming implementation.

Furthermore, the community indeed succeeded to convince the government to legalize what they already done in 1952 as part of land reform program. Thus, on 4 June 1965 Inspectorate Office of Agrarian Issues in West Java Province issued a decree letter No. LR.249/D/VIII/60/1965 (known as SK KINAG), stating that the government distribute 468.15 ha of land to 240 households. Yet, just three months afterward the so called as "G/30S/PKI rebellion" by Soeharto regime abruptly occurred in Jakarta, with the consequence of (among others) the reversal of land reform program marked by some cases of taking distributed land back. This situation is well described by one cooperative manager as follow:

> It was really a severe period for this community, and certainly for many other farmers groups. Accusations as communist can be easily addressed to those were hated, and afterward they will disappear… There were many instances outside this village that farmers accused as PKI, their land was taken back, and the decree letter of land distribution was destroyed. Fortunately, we could save our 1965 decree letter, and succeeded in surviving many political difficulties at that time. (Novrian *et al*, 2011)

Due to this situation, the community still had many difficulties to get formal title deed for their individual landholding. Although they could secure their land possession hereafter, the title deed for their land could only be obtained in 2002. The same also true for the legal status of collective land managed by the cooperative. However, in

the last case, the community got formal recognition from the government earlier. After waiting for a long time, the government finally issued a concession right (Hak Guna Usaha) for the cooperative on 29 July 1989 (decree letter No. 37/HGU/BPN/89), thanked to late General A.H. Nasution for his endorsement to the community by sending a letter to the National Land Agency.

Despite some similarities between two communities, the Wangunwati case however exemplified more advanced innovations compared to Ngandagan case. While both communities creatively developed mixed landholding system to meet two different purposes (subsistence security and market opportunity orientation), the way they did it was significantly different. It was adat norms on landholding system that underlying Ngandagan's management of dispossession, and it was basically worked on the same pattern as in the past. Although now the communal landholding was combined by the individual one in upland area (making it similar to Vietnam example in Li's exploration), there was no attempt to combine household farming with the collective farming in different agricultural sectors. What Soemotirto introduced was actually collective working in each group members' plot, without any idea of increasing organizational scale for farming. Therefore, one may doubt it as just delaying agrarian crises rather than solving it in a sustained way.

It is exactly this organizational scale of farming that Wangunwati community managed to develop by establishing the cooperative. Thus, not only combining different landholding system, but the community also developed a combination between two economic scales of farming: *household managed farming* in each individual land for growing rice and *cooperative managed farming* in estate land for rubber enterprise. By doing so, the community could secure their position to be advantageously (rather than adversely) incorporated in the market system. Furthermore, as the cooperative enterprise is running well, so the community as cooperative members also benefits "right to revenue" from the cooperative, i.e. in the form of employment opportunity (as workers in rubber estate) as well as a share from annual profit of the cooperative.

The conjuncture of social forces in Wangunwati case also more varied and cross-boundary compared to the Ngandagan community. Wangunwati community's countermovement is highly institutionalized rather than personalized. Their cooperative is political instrument for long struggle against land dispossession as well as enterprise body to engage in capitalist market. They also had many good contacts with military and political leaders at different level of government authority, while Ngandagan community seems to be self-contained due to its status of "political minority" in the region. Such contacts were very useful to provide the community "the necessary social and cultural capital, legitimacy, exposure and/or recognition to the outside world" (Nooteboom and de Jong, 2010). It was a combination of these social forces that enabled Wangunwati community to persuade "the left hand of the state" and obtained its protection and recognition—a reason why the community succeed to survive through many regimes transition in the country.

However, to do justice to Ngandagan community's countermovement, it should quickly be emphasized that given the opportunity to evolve along its natural course, and not interrupted by the 1960s political massacre. It was very possible that the community

will find their own trajectory toward more inclusive and just society.

CONCLUSION

I start this paper by discussing the long polemics on two faces of Javanese villages, while highlight the underrated valuation on community agency from both parties in the debate. I then suggested for more attention to the agency of local community through examination of their intervention in making live and not letting die their population, especially during period of "rural political activism" in Indonesia.

The contrasting cases of Ngandagan community and Wangunwati community provide a good illustration on how local people, having different context of agrarian crises, strove for social justice and biopolitics agenda through land struggle. Having more participatory atmosphere and relatively autonomus institutions in the aftermath of independence, both communities actively engaged in broad front of land struggle and their management either for land (re)possession or against land dispossession. Interestingly, they engaged in some efforts to transform property relations in its broader notion, and by doing so pulling interventions of making live and not letting die of their population in quite different conjuncture, resulted in the assemblage of land based wealth (re)distribution and welfare provision among community members.

The extent to which two communities able to redistribute community resource and accumulated welfare among their members in sustained way diverges in both cases. It can be said that Wangunwati community was more successful in some respects than Ngandagan community due to its well-institutionalized countermovement either in land tenure arrangement, socio-economic measures as well as in political manoeuvring. Not only they had good arrangement in combining different landholding system and farming scale, but they also could develop an advance organization to operate the estate as well as to achieve economic scale of commercial plantation. Moreover, they managed to build a political competency for lobbying government officials to enable a conjuncture for alliance with "the left hand of the state".

The nature of social forces in both two cases influences the trajectory of two community's countermovement in every respect. As we have seen, Ngandagan community's countermovement has tragically terminated as the political fate of their party (PKI), while Wangunwati community could survive through different regime transition when their party (PSI) could not. This suggests that while two communities in some degree succeeded in transforming inter-groups property relations, their political fate and future will eventually necessitate the broader transformation of property relations between the state and the society.

Now, it is this later arena of property relations that become a crucial engagement. It constitutes the right of community to have "a kind of society, a set of power relations throughout the society, essential to a fully human life" that state and the whole society have responsibility to fulfil.

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Table 1. Land Dispossessory Forces Taking Place in Wangunwati Community

YEARS	LAND DISPOSSESSORY FORCES	REMARKS
1946	Indonesian Government issued Regulation No. 4 on 6 June 1946 that established State Plantation Enterprise or Perusahaan Perkebunan Negara (PPN) to take over and operate all former Dutch plantations.	Due to personnel and financial limitation, and security situation during independence war and civil war, PPN failed to include Wangunwati estate under its control and management.
1947-1949	Years of social revolution and war for independence. During this period, the community supported Siliwangi army division in the guerrilla war against Dutch army willing to restore their colonial rule. Obeying Siliwangi command for "Scorched Earth" to stem Dutch military operation, the community then burnt the rubber estate, left their homes, and for some period also evacuated to several places.	As the result of estate burning tactics, a large part of plantation area was severely damaged and only small part of it still in good condition and available for rubber production. However, during this period the community built a good contact with military officers and then involved in national farmers organisation (GTI) affiliated to Indonesian Socialist Party (PSI).
1950-1952	On 2 August 1950 government allowed Wangunwati community to settle in the plantation area and operate the estate. On 24 May 1951 the Ministry of Agriculture issued a decree no. E.1309/PKB, recognizing the community's rights to land and remaining rubber tree in Wangunwati plantation area. However, it also stated that this is "a temporary provision and the government may change it whenever needed, and all parties have to obey such change".	Getting the recognition, the community then established Management Board of Wangunwati Estate or Dewan Penyelenggara Kebun Wangunwati (DPKW) in 1950. On 2 May 1952 they transformed the Board into Coope-rative of Wangunwati Plantation Labours or Koperasi Buruh Perkebunan Wangunwati (KBPW). In this period, the community got political training and support from Gerakan Tani Indonesia (GTI), including from Mochamad Tauchid, one of GTI leaders and well-known scholar.
Late 1950s-1960	Following declaration of Islamic State of Indonesia (NII) on 7 Agustus 1949 in West Java, political upheavals and civil war exploded in many parts of the province, causing mass refugees from conflict areas. To suppress DI/TII rebellion in West Java, the army mobilized village popu-lation and involved them in "pagar betis" operation (lite-rally means fence of human) to besiege DI/TII fighters.	Wangunwati community actively participated in the army operation, and one of military post located in the plantation area. This is a difficult period for Wangunwati community since some leaders of PSI (to which the commu-nity affiliated politically) also involved in similar regional rebellion to the central government, i.e. PRRI/Permesta rebellion in Sumatra and Sulawesi.
	On August 1960, President Soekarno disbanded PSI and Masyumi party due to the involvement of some leaders of both parties in PRRI/Permesta rebellion in Sumatra and Sulawesi.	To avoid the liquidation of their organisation, Wangunwati community ended their formal relation to GTI and affiliation to PSI, and then relied on their cooperative as the organisation for pursuing their interests.

Table 1. Land Dispossessory Forces Taking Place in Wangunwati Community

YEARS	LAND DISPOSSESSORY FORCES	REMARKS
Late 1950s-1960	In 1958, government announced nationalization policy toward all Dutch enterprises in Indonesia, including in plantation sector. Its implementation took several years until early 1960s, and this process in some occasions led to the military control over some plantations areas.	Wangunwati community capitalized the 1951 decree from Ministry of Agriculture to avoid taking over of their land. In this regard, their good contact and lobbying with some military officers might also have an important role to make this case different.
1964-late 1960s	On August 1961, President Soekarno announced land reform program. Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) used it as a tool to radicalize rural population, and Wangunwati estate used to be target of local branch of PKI for land reform implementation.	The community successfully convinced the government to formalize land reform on large part of plantation area that already distributed among community members since 1952. The government issued a decree known as SK KINAG to formalize those already distributed land.
	After the failure of aborted coup was attempted by some PKI leaders just after 30 September 1965 midnight, the army initiated a military operation for communists' estermination, including a wave of mass killings of about a half to one million PKI members and its sympathizers. In this situation, many achievements of land reform were reversed and some distributed land was taken back by the army.	The community reacted to this situation by collecting all SK KINAG (a decree issued by government on 4 June 1965 to formalize all estate land have been distributed since 1952), and hiding it in secured place to avoid its taking back.
Transition to New Order regime	Period of political stabilization and economic develop-ment based on authoritarian rule, floating mass policy on rural population, state corporation, and strict control over press and academic expressions.	Avoiding communist stigma, the community changed their cooperative name to be Wangunwati Cooperative of Rubber Production or *Koperasi Produksi Karet Wangunwati* (KPKW). Moreover, they also managed to become a member of state sponsored farmer association, named *Himpunan Kerukunan Tani Indonesia* (or HKTI).

Table 2. Elements of Making Live Intervention in Two Communities

RIGHT TO MATERIAL THINGS (LAND ACCESS)	RIGHT TO A REVENUE	RIGHT TO A POLITICAL POWER
NGANDAGAN CASE:	NGANDAGAN CASE:	NGANDAGAN CASE:
• All kuli bakus obliged to set apart from every unit of sawah kulian (300 ubin) they have as much 90 ubin of sawah buruhan. In return, kuli baku now exempted from any corvée labour to the village. • The pool of sawah buruhan was put under village direct control and management to be redistributed periodically as use rights among buruh kuli in reduced size (45 ubin) to cover more beneficiaries • The patronage relationship between kuli baku and buruh kuli was terminated. Now, all buruh kuli become clients of the village since they get access to sawah buruhan from the village. • Village leadership distributed absentee land in upland area to farmers as individual private property. It had redistributive effect, but it subsequently resulted in differential outcome as a function of unequal access to capital and labour needed for making plots in this area into production. • By combining property relation reform in paddy field and upland area, a mixed tenure regime was created for different land use and purpose: partially communal-landholding in paddy field for subsistence and individual-landholding in upland area for market crops growing. • Land consolidation to rearrange settlement area became political blunder for Soemotirto since land in this area always regarded as individual rights (yasan), and it was not communal one nor idle or reserved village land.	• No wage employment for farming was permitted as every land owner should till their land themselves. To solve labour shortage, access to labour through labour exchange arrangement (grojogan) were introduced. • Since buruh kuli only has small piece of sawah buruhan, their labour surplus in paddy field under grojogan arrangement should be paid by rich farmers in idle, upland area (resulting in "extra land" for buruh kuli that create more balanced land ownership in the village). • Access to portion of rice harvesting through old institution of bawon, but with more share for harvesters. • Access to food in moment of crises through rice granary cooperative.	• Village exercised a relative degree of autonomy during period of rural political activism, and as an autonomous political body was able to perform redistributive role and welfare provision to village members. • However, the community failed to attain political recognition from supra village state authorities due to competing affiliation of political parties (being a PKI village within PNI dominated district). • On April 1965, Soemotirto instructed all his communist comrades in the village to change their loyalty to another party. It was a timely decision of "letting people live" just before the army started ruthless campaign of mass killings in late 1960s. • Village initiative of making live interventions was swept away during political massacre in late 1960s that manifested a brutal politics of making die on behalf of the state. • While sawah buruhan still existed in Ngandagan until this moment, however it is now used as means for creating political loyalty among village head supporters rather than as means for redistributing wealth among village members.

Table 2. Elements of Making Live Intervention in Two Communities

RIGHT TO MATERIAL THINGS (LAND ACCESS)	RIGHT TO A REVENUE	RIGHT TO A POLITICAL POWER
WANGUNWATI CASE:	*WANGUNWATI CASE:*	*WANGUNWATI CASE:*
• In 1946 ex-plantation labours occupied former colonial plantation (748.35 ha), and then engaged in long struggle against any threats of dispossession from that land. • After getting partial formal recognition from the government in 1951 to settle in the area, the community redistributed most parts of the land (468.15 ha) to individual households as means of subsistence. • After engaged in uneasy political manoeuvring during land reform campaign, the community finally obtained government decree letter No. LR.249/D/VIII/60/1965, dated 4 June 1965, that formalized those already redis-tributed plots as land reform program. • The community continuously strove to acquire legal recognition for the remaining parts of the land (280.2 ha) that they already cultivated as rubber plantation. After a long efforts, and getting written support from General AH. Nasution, on 20 July 1989 the government issued a concession right (HGU) for community's cooperative. • A mixed tenure regime also adopted here with more strict land use purposes: individual-landholding in paddy field used for subsistence, and collective-landholding in dryland used for commercial rubber plantation.	• Employment opportunity (a right to revenue) as plantation worker in rubber estate is prioritized to cooperative members. • As shareholders, the community as cooperative members has a right to a portion of cooperative's annual profit. • Multiplier effect of cooperative business.	• In 1952 the community established cooperative and exercised it as political instrument for long struggle against land dispossession... • .. and as enterprise body as well to engage in capitalist market through producing and processing rubber and its sale to global market. • Through cooperative, the community able to maintain, cultivate and nurture the "socialist values" in business practice and management. "We are doing business with buyers but building equal partnership with farmers". • Wangunwati community was able to surf dangerous waves of political turbulence in Indonesia, and hence successfully survived along three different regimes in Indonesia (Soekarno administration, Soeharto administration, and current period of *Reformasi* and decentralisation).

Source: Extracted from Wiradi (1981) and Shohibuddin and Luthfi (2010) for Ngandagan case, and from Novrian et al (2010) and Novrian (2011) for Wangunwati case.