

# **Forest Conservation and Sustainability in Indonesia**

## **A Political Ecology Study of International Governance Failure**

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2019

*This is a pre-publication copy of manuscript published by Routledge Earthscan in 2019.  
To cite, please contact the author.*

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## Introduction

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### ABSTRACT:

Deforestation in Indonesia is a global dilemma, with a long and complex history. The numerous attempts to stop deforestation have failed to have any lasting effect. Fires, land conversion, and logging have continued and, particularly since 2000, tropical deforestation in Indonesia has increased. This book explains why conservation interventions have been unsuccessful, why that matters, and why conservation efforts will continue to fail without a major change in the assumptions and goals of rich countries. Rich countries must stop off-shoring their ecological responsibilities to poor countries like Indonesia; the developed world must stop its economic and ecological hypocrisy, if deforestation and climate change are to be stopped.

In 2009 I was walking through the beautiful, sculpted Botanic Gardens in Singapore, a freshly-baked Master's in Environmental Science under my belt, ready to take on a dream job as the General Manager of the regional Jane Goodall Institute. It was hard to breathe. Smoke from forest fires in Indonesia blew across the Malacca Strait, grounding flights and causing respiratory problems for populations across Indonesia and the Malay Peninsula. That year, my quest began to find out why: why fires burned with horrifying frequency; why ancient rainforests had so little value left where they were; what was this palm oil that seemed to be behind it all? Ten years later, as this book went to press, the fires were burning again, as they have burned every year, sometimes reported, often overlooked. The sky in Sumatra in 2019 was turned blood red, reminiscent of the science fiction film *Blade Runner*.<sup>1</sup>

Thousands of people sickened, some died, in an event that has repeated itself more times than most casual observers can imagine. Professor Jack Riley, of the International Peatland Society, wrote in an article for *Nature* in 2002, led by an appropriately apocalyptic

<sup>1</sup> Lamb, "This Is Daytime": Bright Red Haze from Indonesian Rainforest Fires Envelops City'.

cover picture of that year's Indonesian forest fires, that 'tropical peatlands will make a significant contribution to global carbon emissions for some time to come unless major mitigation, restoration and rehabilitation programmes are undertaken'. Major mitigation, restoration, and rehabilitation programmes were undertaken, and yet the fires have continued, just as carbon emissions, resource extraction, and climate change have continued. In Indonesia, irresponsible small-holders and ne'er-do-wells are blamed for perpetuating this hell on earth. The real reason the fires continue, the forest is lost, and climate change gathers pace, is, of course, much more complicated. It starts not with poor people in poor countries, but with rich countries, and their unsustainable economic ideology, their obsession with economic growth, and their belief that somebody else can always be found to pick up their tab.

Deforestation in Indonesia is a geo-political hornet's nest of global proportions, with a long and complex history. There have been many attempts to stop it but none has had any lasting effect. The destruction, by fire and by chainsaw, of Indonesia's old-growth, tropical forests has continued and, particularly since 2000, been increasing. This book explains why conservation interventions have been unsuccessful, why that matters, and why conservation efforts will continue to fail without a Herculean shift in the objectives and assumptions of the West (what many people call 'Global North').

Tropical deforestation in Indonesia began on a significant scale in the early 1970s. Resource extraction, especially of timber, was part of a national strategy to build economic, political, and social stability. There have been variations in the rates of deforestation since then, and in the incidence and severity of forest fires, which are the most efficient and cost-effective way to clear land for development. Some fire years (especially those coinciding with El Nino events) have made international headlines,

notably in 1997 and more recently in 2015, when Indonesian forest fires released as much CO<sub>2</sub> in three weeks as Germany emitted in a year.<sup>2</sup>

Since the year 2000, the rate of deforestation in Indonesia (Figure i.1) has more than doubled. Together with a 19% rise in population over the same period, this has contributed hugely to a 27% increase in Indonesia's per capita GHG emissions (Figure i.2) and a 48% increase in the country's total GHG emissions. The general trend of GHG emissions is important, but the peak fire years are a particular problem: in 2015 emissions from Indonesian forest fires were almost double the 2000 to 2012 average national GHG emissions from all other sectors.<sup>3</sup>

Tropical forests are important in the GHG story for two reasons: first, they are net carbon sinks because they absorb carbon through photosynthesis. Second, when they are felled and particularly when they are burned, they release the carbon they have previously absorbed. There is a dual need, therefore, to avoid emissions of stored carbon and to retain the forests' capacity to absorb atmospheric carbon in the future. Tropical forests absorb and store vast amounts of carbon as they grow and photosynthesise. This carbon is stored in their living biomass – their branches and trunks, with many rainforest trees living for over 100 years. When left to die naturally, tropical plants decay slowly and anaerobically (without oxygen), turning over many centuries into peat. This is an even denser, more concentrated store of carbon. Peat is especially prevalent and extremely deep in parts of Indonesia's rainforest. When these forests and the peat burn, their carbon is released into the atmosphere, with significant consequences for climate change.

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2 N. Harris et al., 'WRI - Indonesia's Fire Outbreaks Producing More Daily Emissions than Entire US Economy', 16 October 2015, <http://www.wri.org/blog/2015/10/indonesia%E2%80%99s-fire-outbreaks-producing-more-daily-emissions-entire-us-economy>.

3 A. Pribadi and G. Kurata, 'Greenhouse Gas and Air Pollutant Emissions from Land and Forest Fire in Indonesia during 2015 Based on Satellite Data', in *Earth and Environmental Science*, vol. 54 (IOP Conference Series:, IOP Publishing, 2017).

Emissions from global forest destruction and degradation were estimated in 2017 at 10-12% of all anthropogenic (human-induced) GHG output.<sup>4</sup> But this should not get in the way of another, more important climate fact: forests are an important factor in the emissions story, but it is fossil-fuel combustion that is much more serious for climate change. Fossil-fuel combustion and industrial processes accounted for 78% of the total increase in GHG emissions between 1970 and 2011.<sup>5</sup>

The role of forests as carbon sinks unfortunately becomes unclear as climate change increases. Some effects of climate change may create positive sequestration effects (for example by boosting carbon absorption), but others may reduce (or even reverse) forests' carbon sink function. Increases in anthropogenic carbon emissions appear to enhance the fertilisation of tropical forests which may increase their carbon sequestration in 'normal' non-drought years.<sup>6</sup> Alarmingly however, recent research shows that tropical forests are increasingly victims of climate change, becoming carbon contributors instead of carbon sinks. 'Drought stress' and changing soil nutrients can cause photosynthesis to shut down. Dead vegetation continues to decay, however, so that under certain conditions forests can start emitting carbon. This phenomenon was observed in parts of the Amazon in 2005 and 2010, both El Niño years.<sup>7</sup> It is unclear which effect will be greater over time. For these reasons at least it may be unwise to put too much emphasis on forests as a cure for humanity's emissions problems.

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4 C. Martin, 'The Uncertain Role of Tropical Forests in the Paris Agreement' (Hamburg, 2017).

5 United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), 'Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data', 13 April 2017, <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/global-greenhouse-gas-emissions-data>.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

## The argument

This book makes the case that, far from prioritising the long-term sustainability of natural environments (or indeed the well-being of societies), programmes like REDD+, RSPO, and the Norway-Indonesia bilateral partnership, as well as sustainable development programmes serve profit, not nature. It argues that they actually make it easier for influential people to channel knowledge and social behaviour in ways which support the interests of the minority,<sup>8</sup> side-lining the material and social interests of the majority. This is, to a great extent, because neoliberalism (see Box i.1 Key terms) tries to replace interests and ideologies which do not conform with its world-view.

This book explains how conservation interventions are, in effect, a new way of creating buyers and sellers, and commodities for exchange and, along with it, norms, laws, and institutional frameworks to ensure rational market transactions. It also explains, in detail, how and why forest conservation programmes in Indonesia, and sustainable development ideas more generally, are failing, with forest cover loss and carbon emissions rising. This is a global trend (Brazil's forest conservation successes too have been short lived) because of the way developed countries think, and because of what they see as important.

### Figure i.1: Annual forest cover loss in Indonesia from 2001 to 2015

<FIGURE i.1 HERE>

Source: Author's graphic from Global Forest Watch, 2017; NB: Linear indicator represents the trend.

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8 Forgacs, 46.

## Figure i.2: Total and per capita carbon emissions from Indonesia from 2001 to 2014

<FIGURE i.2 HERE>

Source: author's graphic compiled from World Bank Data, 2017 and Climate Action Tracker, 2017

### Some notes on the academic theory

Non-academics may want to skip this section. In technical, academic terms, this is known as a *critical political economy* analysis. Critical political economy is a form of analysis which questions the validity of dominant systems and narratives, and asks difficult questions about dominant thinking. It is generally associated with Marxist views, in that it is sceptical of the way capitalism is organised, the issues it prioritises, and the social order it encourages. Critical political economy is a field of study that asks whether there are better ways society can organise and run global society, by looking at what is wrong with current assumptions.

A lot of the analysis focuses on the interests and so-called 'subjectivities' (see Box i.1: Key terms) of political and economic actors in the 'Global North' (see Box i.1: Key terms), which has strongly influenced the construction of conservation mechanisms in Indonesia. The focus is on why these interventions have had limited success and why they will continue to fail. It asks why reducing tropical deforestation is framed as so important in climate change mitigation, when other sources of emissions are left largely unaddressed.

The analysis builds on elements of social conflict theory, that is, the notion that markets and their supporting institutions are constructed on wider, system-level conflict (class

relations) and political conflict (particularly relating to power).<sup>9</sup> It shows how power relations shape institutions (especially class relations), and in turn institutions (which are created, used and abused for class interests) to reinforce unequal distributions of power and wealth. These market-oriented conservation interventions cannot be fully understood unless they are seen in the context of the interests, relationships of power, and institutions which they serve.<sup>10</sup>

The theory in this book combines Gramscian ideas of hegemony and 'common sense' (see Box i.1) with an exploration of 'subjectivities', the concept elaborated by Žižek and others to explain the mix of expectations, assumptions, and understandings based on experience, culture, and interactions which guide human behaviour.<sup>11</sup> The concept of 'subjectivities' aligns with Gramsci's description of repeated norms of behaviour, and explains why 'people don't do as they should'. Instead, people tend to 'adapt to circumstances and mechanically repeat certain gestures which, through their own experience or through the education they have received (the outcome of others' experience), have proved themselves to be suitable for attaining the desired goal: survival'.<sup>12</sup>

#### Box i.1: Key terms

**Elites:** the 'elites' referred to in this analysis are people in the institutions benefiting from the wealth-generating capacity of capitalist dynamics and the political actors who enable and regulate corporate activity. Understanding that the complicity of these vested interests does not necessarily suggest an explicit intent to exploit, this

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9 Rodan, 7.

10 Ibid.

11 C. Kul-Want and Piero, *Introducing Slavoj Žižek: A Graphic Guide* (Duxford: Icon Books, 2012); S. Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2015).

12 D. Forgacs, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 47.

section outlines the political economic structure of mature capitalist economies and the 'common sense' behaviours which support the hegemony. 'Common sense' compels certain behaviour which supports hegemony, guided by certain assumptions and thought processes, without significant reflection, becoming so 'natural' that any meaningful reflection is excluded. There is no conscious motivation to deprive others in order to gain advantage, to deliberately destroy natural ecosystems or to purposely make underprivileged people and societies poorer. The cobweb of class-, cultural-, historical- and institutional assumptions and values makes up an unthinking 'common sense' which renders individual and institutional behaviour automatic. Finally, since much of the wealth generation of modern capitalism comes from the appropriation of natural resources, from land, to minerals, fossil fuels, and trees, the regulation of natural resources in the face of threats to ecological stability created strong incentives for those interested in profit to control the definition of both problem and solutions – or risk losing their stronghold on the economic status quo.

**Externality:** An externality is a consequence of an activity that is either unforeseen or deliberately ignored. A negative externality of burning fossil fuels, for example, is that chemicals and particles enter the air. These cause respiratory problems and are one of the main causes of climate change. Current practice is for businesses to ignore the costs of these problems when they calculate the prices they charge and their profitability. They are generally ignored by economists, too, who do not include them when they calculate GDP. The price of garden furniture made from Indonesian teak wood, or of chocolate, crisps, or toothpaste containing palm oil, does not

include the social, economic, or political consequences of deforestation on current or future generations.

**Framing:** the language and imagery used to present an issue. The vocabulary is modified to support an agenda while other notions are deliberately ignored or excluded. Such framing guides the audience towards an apparently self-evident conclusion, reinforcing or constructing a 'common sense'. Language and imagery are then used to reinforce patterns of thought and behaviour.

**Global North:** I use the terms 'Global North' and 'the West' or 'Western countries' interchangeably. 'Global North' refers to mature capitalist countries, including many in Europe, Scandinavia, and North America but also Australasia and some parts of Asia. The 'Global South' refers to less-developed, poorer countries, which often have a long history of under-development.

**Global resource institutions:** programmes and coalitions which come together to think about the world's environmental or resource problems. They can be research-based, publishing reports and analysis on the state of the world's resources or environment, provide managerial or technical consulting services or advice, or sometimes take a more active approach to awareness-raising or direct engagement with opposing groups or actors. The United Nations, organisations like the World Resources Institute, or NGOs like Greenpeace are global resource institutions, but so are programmes like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), REDD+, and RSPO (see Box i.2). Institutions are more than just physical structures or groups of people: they are ways of organising and systems of behaviour.

**Hegemony and 'common sense':** hegemony is the 'position of intellectual and moral leadership' which provides the glue to unify broad elements of society 'around a strategic vision and programme'. It is the dominant system of thinking, being, and of organising society, politics, and the economy. Hegemony does not imply direct force or oppression but rather the creation of popular consent, achieved by making the goals and ideologies of the powerful apparently the 'common sense' interests of the whole of society.<sup>13</sup>

**Historical bloc:** a coalition of interest groups, consensus, organisational forms, political practices, and political thinking. Gramsci made the case that transformation can only happen if the masses, elites, intellectuals, and non-intellectuals come together determined to replace one hegemony with a new one. If the combined will of this bloc supports the established common sense thinking, in terms of social, political, and economic structures, then change is not possible. Consensus, which reflects the 'common sense' of the time, and cooperative forms (institutions, political groups, and civil society, for example) are the essential conditions for transformation. The historical bloc therefore represents the pre-condition for change.<sup>14</sup>

**Neoliberal(ism):** neoliberalism is an economic, political, and social system which prioritises private property rights and which focuses on economic growth and free trade. Short term financial profit is maximised. Social issues are viewed and

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13 S. Davison, 'What Antonio Gramsci Offers to Social Democracy', *Policy Network*, October 2011, [http://www.policy-network.net/pno\\_detail.aspx?ID=4064&title=+What+Antonio+Gramsci+offers+to+social+democracy](http://www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=4064&title=+What+Antonio+Gramsci+offers+to+social+democracy).

14 Forgas, *The Antonio Gramsci Reader: Selected Writings 1916-1935*, 189–192; 275

discussed in terms of monetary value. The role of the state is limited to guaranteeing the economic and legal institutions and frameworks which allow the smooth functioning of the market.<sup>15</sup> Neoliberalism has become the 'common sense' economic paradigm in much of the modern world. It comprises a set of assumptions, norms, and expectations which extend deeply into the 'way of thinking and being', a 'general style of thought, analysis and imagination'.<sup>16</sup>

**Subjectivities:** a world-view based on identity, interactions, and experience which builds and reinforces expectations of the system we experience. Subjectivities are a collection of all the abstract, intangible and emotional elements on which ideas, attitudes, understanding, and expectations are based. Subjectivities are distinct from **interests** and **agendas**, which concern a more conscious and strategic pursuit of gain, frequently dispossessing and exploiting others for economic or political advantage.

**System:** the 'system' is understood here as a set of assumptions, ideas and practices which drive capital and power into minority hands, and explores the complex web of vested interests and to show whose survival depends on the short-term maintenance of the status quo. The hegemony of neoliberalism is neither inevitable nor the result of some natural phenomenon, but instead 'has been continually worked for as opportunities have arisen and new coalitions have been secured as dominant'.<sup>17</sup>

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15 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*; Hall, Massey, and Rustin, *After Neoliberalism? The Kilburn Manifesto*.

16 R. Fletcher, 'Neoliberal Environmentalism: Towards a Poststructuralist Political Ecology of the Conservation Debate'.

17 Grayson and Little, 'Conjunctural Analysis and the Crisis of Ideas', 65.

**Vested interests:** these are people in corporations and other institutions, all acting in 'common sense' ways within the system.

The important questions this book addresses are:

- Why has large-scale international forest conservation failed to reduce deforestation in Indonesia?
- How much do the structure and goals of global resource institutions reflect and reinforce the role of specific interests and ideas and how does this affect outcomes?
- What assumptions and subjectivities are reflected in conservation interventions and what interests do they serve?
- What does the history of geopolitical relations and imbalances of power tell us about how global and domestic resource institutions have evolved, about how environmental problems are framed, and about how solutions are selected?

To answer these questions this text examines three case studies: **Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)**, the **Norway-Indonesia bilateral partnership** and the **Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)** (see Box i.2).

#### **Box i.2: Case studies**

**REDD+:** UN-based programme with state and private partnership which links global climate change mitigation to tropical deforestation. A 'cost effective' market-based mechanism to reduce GHG emissions from deforestation, by providing economic compensation to deforesting industries, forest communities, and governments so

that forests become more valuable to preserve than to cut down.<sup>18</sup> Particularly since the 2007 UN climate change talks in Bali, Indonesia has been a high-profile participant in the programme.

**Norway-Indonesia bilateral partnership:** an arrangement between Norway and Indonesia. Norway is the biggest contributor to REDD+, accounting for 73% of global REDD+ funding. This programme attempts to go directly to 'the problem' and to reform the core institutions in Indonesia, so that legal frameworks and ownership are more clearly defined. Under this arrangement, Norway agreed to pay USD1 billion to Indonesia to help reduce deforestation. A moratorium on new forest development permits and a forest classification and land-use mapping project are the keystones.

**RSPO:** a voluntary certification and standard-setting framework aimed at the palm oil sector, from plantations through processing to trading, procurement, and retail. The standards, certification, auditing, funding, and enforcement are all carried out by participants in the palm oil supply chain.

The book maps out the historically relevant events, interests, and subjectivities to understand why deforestation happens, why conservation is carried out as it is, and why it does not stop forest destruction. Academics and political theorists will recognise references to mainstream institutional theories (especially in relation to the question on the structure and goals of the global resource institutions) which, though largely depoliticised, is nonetheless highly influential in mainstream development. New Institutionalists such as

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18 P. Howson and S. Kindon, 'Analysing Access to the Local REDD+ Benefits of Sungai Lamandau, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 56, no. 1 (April 2015): 96–110.

Coase and Stiglitz have had an enduring influence on both mainstream development (as in how countries and societies develop) and on conservation and environmental thinking (both directly, through 'sustainable development' models which strongly influence modern conservation thinking, and indirectly, as the unspoken assumptions, based on which supposedly-sustainable initiatives are rolled out).

The second question, how geopolitical history and imbalances of power across resource institutions influence the framing of 'the problem' of deforestation, and the selection of 'solutions', draws on critical theories in the Marxist tradition. Historical Institutionalism might seem a better approach (because it explicitly considers historical factors) than New Institutionalism, but it gives less attention to class and class conflict, which are profoundly and unavoidably relevant to an understanding of the structures and goals of conservation and development institutions. Historical Institutionalism also tends towards a national focus which is less helpful in understanding capitalism, deforestation, and climate change in the *global* system. So although Historical Institutionalists such as Hall and Steinmo are useful for understanding path dependency and historical influences on contemporary institutions, a framework that more specifically considered power (especially class power), and the role of consent, coercion, and co-optation, in understanding the structure and goals of conservation institutions and interventions, and the interests they serve, is more useful. A Gramscian framework, which centres around hegemony and power blocs, puts Indonesian environmental studies in a global environmental and political economy context, which understands the human, behavioural realities of politics, society, and economics, which are sorely lacking in so much contemporary, over-technical analysis.

Anyone who has not had their brains addled by modern neoliberal ideas that everything can be boiled down to technical fixes, economic incentives, and ownership, will look at the

theories of subjectivities and say 'well that's obvious'. Clearly we are all conditioned by our own cultures, experiences, and understanding. But it is surprising how little this is understood, which means that subjectivities and 'common sense' are actually more useful and profound for interpreting long-running problems than it might first appear. Certainly the human, emotional elements of economics and development tend to be ignored, or relegated to a tiresome footnote in otherwise rational policy prescriptions. Even 'stakeholder participation' ushers them into convenient boxes, assigning appropriate spaces for expression as an addendum to the technical, serious work of development. That is how frustration comes out of mainstream programmes, when people do not do as they apparently should. Gramsci's theories and the idea of subjectivities help explain why 'people don't do as they should', but also why (and not just how) structures of power are replicated, demonstrating how hegemony traps elites as well as non-elites into repeated societal structures, norms and assumptions.

The analysis touches (but does not go very deeply into) elements of Foucauldian eco-governmentality or environmentalism, going much more in the direction of scholars like Fletcher who examine how 'fortress conservation' constructs a moral crusade of biodiversity protection, which becomes a justification for neoliberal ownership, access, and exclusion rights over land and resources. Social conflict theory is useful for asking what the real outcome is of these interventions and how we can best explain them. Rodan, Robison, Hewison, Chaudhry and others provide a theoretical and empirical foundation to explain class and fractions of capital as major influences on structures and conflict, focusing particularly on asymmetries of power in institutional development. The work of Smith, and of Castree, on the social production of nature, gives refreshing insights into the idealisation of nature, nature parks and supposedly 'wild' spaces (particularly useful for the Rimba Raya case study). Important theoretical context in a related field, the social

construction of urban spaces, was drawn from the work of Miles, in which to understand eco-labelling, certification, and 'responsible' or 'sustainable' consumption, especially the idea that physical spaces can be systematically constructed which are 'anti-choice' but where citizens are 'free' to consume. By doing so they actually reinforce and re-legitimise capitalist dynamics and those imbalances of power.

### **Box i.3: Where the data came from**

The research data came from critical reviews of historical and current literature spanning early conservation and environmental subjectivities and norms, the development of indigenous capitalism in Indonesia, and the evolution of global hegemonic economic thought.<sup>19</sup> Discourse analysis was done on project documentation for each of the three case studies, and on promotional materials from project leaders and project partners. This was supported by extensive in-field research comprising over 55 interviews, conducted in Indonesia, the United States (US), and Europe.

The literature and empirical data (documents and interviews) were collected over more than six years, much of it during field trips to Indonesia, Washington D.C., and Switzerland. The main focus was on interviewing conservation programme and project designers (for example in multilateral organisations), directors and line managers, as well as policy makers, development personnel (for example in International Financial Institutions (IFIs)) and research analysts to gain insights into

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<sup>19</sup> See for example P. Boomgaard, 'Oriental Nature, Its Friends and Its Enemies: Conservation of Nature in Late-Colonial Indonesia, 1889-1949', *Environment and History* 5, no. 3 (October 1999): 257-92; R. Cribb, 'Conservation in Colonial Indonesia', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 9, no. 1 (2008): 49-61; M. Dove, P. Sajise, and A. Doolittle, *Beyond the Sacred Forest: Complicating Conservation in Southeast Asia*, 2011; Hunt and Lautzenheiser, *History of Economic Thought: A Critical Perspective*.

the assumptions, expectations, and experiences of actors in different locations and at different levels of conservation.

There were a large number of academic and non-academic works such as reports from research institutions and numerous media sources. Quantitative data were drawn from sources such as World Bank and IMF data sets, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), national government statistics, banks, forest- and deforestation data from quantitative third party analysis (for example published academic works) and remote sensing compilation sites such as Global Forest Watch. Evidential data were drawn from field research, project-reports and -documents, interviews, multilateral reports (for example World Bank and United Nations Development Programme/REDD), media sources and relevant published academic materials.

#### **Box i.4: How the analysis was done**

Project documents and reports and related media material were examined using framing analysis and discourse analysis to identify theoretically-grounded structure, strategies, assumptions, and dynamics.<sup>20</sup> This approach involves extracting linguistic or discursive expressions of historically significant dynamics and structures which identify particular theoretically-grounded strategies and assumptions. The aim is to reveal the way imbalances of power and privilege are replicated and reinforced in spoken and written communication, thus reinforcing a 'common sense' which upholds relations of power.

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20 C. Antaki et al., 'Discourse Analysis Means Doing Analysis: A Critique Of Six Analytic Shortcomings' (Discourse Analysis Online, 2002), <http://extra.shu.ac.uk/daol/articles/v1/n1/a1/antaki2002002-paper.html>.

Hall and O'Shea have demonstrated a useful model of discourse analysis.<sup>21</sup> They describe the construction of understandings of peoples' proper roles and interactions with the world at large. They then extract and de-construct statements and strategic use of vocabulary to reveal 'common sense' understandings, assumptions, and expectations. I used discourse analysis to understand 'sustainability' subjectivities to show how two forces act alongside and against each other in Western hegemonic conservation interventions.<sup>22</sup> These two forces are the continuous struggle to extend capitalism and the structural trap of precedent. 'Framing' concerns the words, 'common sense' phrases, and imagery used to present an issue. Vocabulary, ideas, or images that are emblematic of opposing interest groups can be adopted and manipulated to promote an alternative agenda with non-supportive concepts or context strategically excluded. The aim is to direct the audience towards an apparently self-evident conclusion, reinforcing or constructing a 'common sense'. Adopting the language of a particular set of interests or ideas constructs an illusion that the values and practices suggested by that narrative are in fact the values and practices of this interest group.<sup>23</sup>

The range of questions for interviewees differed but aimed to understand the assumptions of programme planners and implementers and the impact of programmes on the ground. Apart from questions about the basic mechanics of the programmes, interviews were aimed at finding context that was not available from other sources, for example the impact, understanding, and expectations of programmes and programme participants. The aim was to identify commonalities in approach and assumption, which were representative of a way of thinking in

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21 Hall and O'Shea, 'Common-Sense Neoliberalism'.

22 Subjectivities are distinct from the types of interests or strategic agendas which frequently motivate actors to acquire advantage or assets, to the costs or disadvantage of others. I make such political and economic motivations, as distinct from subjectivities, clear throughout the thesis.

23 Hall, Massey, and Rustin, *After Neoliberalism? The Kilburn Manifesto*.

'mainstream' conservation, in order to identify broader structures and dynamics at work in climate change initiatives. Each of the three case studies had high international profiles, broad international legitimacy, and appeared to present 'breakthrough' solutions to the intractable production-sustainability dilemma at the heart of Indonesian deforestation. Cases were chosen because they targeted Indonesia specifically but also carried the legitimacy of powerful stakeholders in the Global North.

### Common sense conservation

This book explores how the three conservation models in the case studies are rooted either in market logic, or trapped within the confines of a post-(second world)-war economic system which requires ever-greater throughput of resources. The 'common sense' of each of the case studies, and the socio-economic realities in which they are applied, do not allow any possibility for development outside the confines of ever-increasing economic growth. They do not account for the political economy realities which condemn them to fail. Each programme is an attempt to avoid reality: that is, that in order to stop climate change, there must be a radical overhaul of Western economic ideology and expectations. Unfortunately market imperatives have become the only logical option for governing society,<sup>24</sup> whether for ecological purposes or for any other problems of society or politics. Why so much of global society so unquestioningly accepts the market as the sole regulator of social, political, and ecological life is the fascinating question at the centre of this story. Truth, 'common sense', and the institutions which represent, reinforce and re-embed them are constructed and disseminated through educational, media, and cultural institutions and networks in order to guide mass behaviour. Discourse is a key

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24 S. Hall, 'Gramsci and Us', *Marxism Today*, June 1987, 16–21; Hall, Massey, and Rustin, *After Neoliberalism? The Kilburn Manifesto*.

component of the construction and distribution of such 'common sense' and can be manipulated, adapted, and adopted in ways that conceal objective fact.<sup>25</sup>

But what is left out of a narrative is as important as what is included. Details neglected by discourse, and the assumptions embedded in the choice of discourse, give clues about the subjectivities different parties have. Neoliberalism not only obscures certain inconvenient reality, but by generating an entire 'common sense' discourse, it *constructs* reality.<sup>26</sup> This construction-through-discourse generates an all-embracing way of thinking, being, and communicating, and discourse – the words, phrases, and linguistic constructions used to convey ideas – is a powerful tool for influencing the way people see themselves in relation to the wider world. Discourses are not only descriptions but are 'a powerful means by which new subjectivities are constructed and enforced'.<sup>27</sup>

The topic of Indonesian deforestation, sustainability, and climate change mitigation are all cases in point: there is no broad imagination for understanding these issues outside the confines of the existing 'common sense'.<sup>28</sup> There is still no major accepted alternative to the dominant narrative that 'the market' should provide the solutions to social and environmental problems, and so deforestation, sustainability, and climate change should apparently be fixed using the same logic that has created these problems in the first place.

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25 Ibid.

26 R. Fletcher, 'How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Market: Virtualism, Disavowal, and Public Secrecy in Neoliberal Environmental Conservation', *Environment and Planning, Society and Space*, 31 (2013): 796–812.

27 Hall, Massey, and Rustin, *After Neoliberalism? The Kilburn Manifesto*, 26.

28 E. Swyngedouw, 'Apocalypse Forever? Post-Political Populism and the Spectre of Climate Change', *Theory, Culture & Society* 27, no. 2–3 (2010): 213–32; S. Žižek, *Trouble in Paradise: From the End of History to the End of Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2015).

Capitalism continually fights for extension because it cannot do anything else. Businesses are required only to increase profits.<sup>29</sup> And yet both are pitted as the only logical arbiters of social, political, and ecological well-being. Developed countries are caught in a perpetual imperative of economic growth,<sup>30</sup> which is fundamentally at odds with ecological sustainability, and yet 'sustainable' development prescribes the same poison as a health drink for planet and society. The struggle to decouple economic growth from the ecological footprint has been at the centre of environmental discussions since the 1987 report 'Our Common Future' coined the term 'sustainable development'. Since then sustainability debates have kept unfettered economic growth sacrosanct even though unrestrained economic growth is the very nemesis of sustainability.<sup>31</sup> This is the essential contradiction at the heart of forest conservation in Indonesia.

This book has five core chapters in addition to this one and the conclusion. **Chapter One** maps the history of deforestation and forest conservation in the context of Indonesia's political and economic development and explains the assumptions and logic of market-based conservation. It then analyses the framing of conservation and development in Indonesia, set against the backdrop of histories, geographies, economies, cultures, and politics.

**Chapter Two** outlines the formal and informal frameworks governing forest-based land-use in Indonesia and illustrates some of the main, highly complex competing interests. In doing so, it weaves together understanding of historical conjunctures explained in Chapter one, to show how the structure of forest politics creates subjectivities which resist

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29 M. Friedman, 'The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits', *The New York Times Magazine*, 13 September 1970, <http://www.colorado.edu/studentgroups/libertarians/issues/friedman-soc-resp-business.html>.

30 G. Maxton and J. Randers, *Reinventing Prosperity: Managing Economic Growth to Reduce Unemployment, Inequality and Climate Change* (Canada: Greystone Books Ltd., 2016).

31 J. O'Connor, *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1998), 184.

conservation and facilitate the extension of the 'common sense' of the market into nature and society.

**Chapter Three**, the first case study chapter, puts the development and origins of REDD+ in the context of a hegemonic struggle in the decades-old economic growth versus planetary limits battleground. In doing so it argues the case for a better understanding of the subjectivities and hegemonic traps which influence conservation, 'sustainability', and climate change negotiations. This is followed by a critical analysis of Rimba Raya Biodiversity Reserve, using project documents to show how the problem and solutions are framed in the contradictory 'common sense' of the market, despite being on the surface quite radical and ambitious in its approach. In doing so it offers an understanding of how a 'common sense' system of thinking and being replicates and reinforces a world view which is unable to interpret problems and solutions outside of neoliberal frameworks.

**Chapter Four** extends the understanding of framing to analysis of Norway's subjectivities in the Norway-Indonesia bilateral partnership. This is set against the exploration of Indonesian conservation and development subjectivities in Chapters one and two. This chapter extends the theoretical discussion of hegemony, the extension of capitalism, and its disruptive force on social relations and nature, combined with understanding of subjectivities, to offer a new perspective on resistance to change. This discussion shows that policy reforms, transparency, and stakeholder participation in developing countries are dead-end strategies, unless developed countries radically change their socio-economies.

**Chapter Five** explores the non-state, multi-stakeholder certification and standard-setting approach to sustainability of RSPO, explaining its logic and origins in the context of

neoliberal assumptions. The chapter also describes the 'competitor' models in the certification market-place and the roles and subjectivities of different coalitions in forming these programmes. In doing so, the chapter shows how this particular approach to 'sustainability', and its competitor programmes, embody a struggle between the Indonesian state, multilateral authority, capitalism, and market actors.

Finally, the **conclusion** pulls everything together and discusses the implications, calling for much greater clarity on the structural traps of the global economy and the economic growth imperative which lies behind so much environmental degradation. It argues that the market cannot provide the logical framework for understanding environmental problems and presenting solutions. This chapter calls for deeper understanding, transparency, and communication about the technique and application of framing, and how it shapes and misdirects environmental discussions, and appeals for an open, honest discussion of ecological problems with real space created for genuine – non-'common sense' - alternative approaches. If global society is to survive the Anthropocene, honesty seems a more sensible place than fantasy to begin.