



Naturalizing Land Dispossession: A Policy Discourse Analysis of the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate

By Takeshi Ito, Noer Fauzi Rachman, Laksmi A. Savitri

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**Naturalizing Land Dispossession:
A Policy Discourse Analysis of the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate
(MIFEE), Papua, Indonesia**

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Takeshi Ito¹
Noer Fauzi Rachman²
Laksmi A. Savitri³

Abstract

The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) signifies a strategic space within which corporations facilitated by the state find the frontier to start the new circuit of capital accumulation in the name of solving the world food and energy crisis. The grand design of the project is to accelerate the planning process of strategic development projects—mainly the agro-food sector. This paper explores the ways in which the state, through the refined concept of the modern estate, creates the need and design for producing food and agrofuels on a large scale in the frontier. It argues that the mechanisms by which land dispossession is naturalized can be seen in two areas: a) through the deployment by the state of a refined concept of corporate agricultural estate along with the discourse of the food and energy crisis and b) through a legally binding provincial regulation which mandates the local government to include the MIFEE in provincial spatial planning.

Key Words: State; frontier; peasant dispossession; food regimes; agricultural estate; Indonesia

I. Introduction

Arifin Panigoro, an Indonesian tycoon and founder and former CEO of Medco Group, envisioned to “flatten Indonesia” from Merauke, a district in Papua province that has the borderline of Indonesia and Papua New Guinea. Adopting explicitly the neoliberal view of Thomas Friedman’s book *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, Panigoro writes:

Areas of 11 million hectares in south Papua, covering Merauke, Asmat, Mappi, Boven Digoel districts, have almost never been touched by agriculture, and it reminds the author of tiny peasant-farmers’ paddy-fields (*sawah*) today. The total figure of paddy-field in Indonesia today is twelve million hectares. If the idle lands in Merauke were touched by productive hands, our food security will grow stronger. Moreover, those agricultural products could be processed to become renewable energy (biofuel) for domestic need....

¹ Department of Political Science, Colorado College. Email: ito.takes@gmail.com

² Department of Environment Science, Policy, and Management, University of California, Berkeley

³ Sajogyo Institute, Bogor, Indonesia

In short, from the solitude and “virginity” of Merauke, I could have a better understanding of the thought of Thomas L. Friedman about the contemporary world which is hot, flat, and crowded, and his insistence to a green revolution in all part of the world to sustain life on this earth. Thus, we need food, education, and energy.... It is our task together to flatten Indonesia. Without free movements of goods and services and the sturdiness of food, education and energy triangle, the hot and flat world will destroy us.⁴ (Arifin Panigoro 2009)

This op-ed appeared in the Indonesia’s leading newspaper, *Kompas*, about a week after Panigoro was inaugurated in August 2009 as a member of the Gebze clan of Marind tribe through customary ceremony in Merauke. The significance of his statement and this ceremony must be understood in the context of the Indonesian government’s plan to build a modern agricultural estate in Merauke, the so-called Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate in the name of “feeding Indonesia, feeding the world”.⁵ The completion of the development project will eventually dispossess land from the Marind people.

Gebze clan is one of the seven major clans of Marind tribe, the native settlers of Merauke. It is also the clan of Johannes Gluba Gebze, the District Head (bupati) of Merauke. Since his election in 2001, Johannes Gluba Gebze’s political ambition has been to develop Merauke into the center of rice production in the eastern part of Indonesia. At the pinnacle of his tenure came the designation of Merauke as the national food basket in 2006 by the national government. For Johannes Gluba Gebze, this meant a step toward his political ambition of dismantling social constraints on land dispossession by consent. Based on the land tenure system in Papua, particularly that of Marind tribe, the collective right to land has long been upheld. The Marind-anim territory forms an enormous triangle around the Bian river, where Medco’s concession is precisely located. The territory is carefully divided into *boan* land (controlled by clans and sub-clans). The right to use *boan* land is held by the clan, not by the individual headman of the clan, and only a member of the clan can access and use the *boan* land. Thus,

⁴ *Hamparan tanah seluas 11 juta hektar di Papua selatan, Kabupaten Merauke, Asmat, Mappi, Boven Digoel, itu belum banyak tersentuh tangan pertanian, misalnya, mengingatkan penulis akan sempitnya sawah petani saat ini. Luas sawah di republik tinggal sekitar 12 juta hektar. Jika tanah yang idle di Merauke itu disentuh tangan-tangan produktif, ketahanan pangan kita akan menggeliat dan sangat kuat. Lebih dari itu, hasil pertanian itu juga bisa diolah menjadi energi terbarukan (biofuel) untuk memenuhi kebutuhan dalam negeri. Pendeknya, dari kesunyian dan “keperawatan” Merauke, saya bisa lebih memahami pemikiran Thomas L. Friedman (2008) tentang realitas dunia kekinian yang panas, datar, dan kumuh. Juga keinginannya untuk sebuah revolusi hijau di seluruh dunia agar kelangsungan hidup bumi tetap terjaga. Untuk itu semua, kita butuh pangan, pendidikan, dan energi. Adalah tugas kita bersama untuk mendaratkan Indonesia. Tanpa lalu lintas barang dan pelayanan yang bebas (free movement of goods and services) serta kuatnya segitiga pertahanan (pangan, pendidikan, energi) di republik, dunia yang panas dan datar akan melibas kita.*

⁵ A catch phrase coined by President Bambang Susilo Yudhoyono

granting Panigoro the Gebze clan membership is an attempt to gain legitimation from the clan to allow Medco to use 350,000 hectares of land.⁶ It is, therefore, Albert Mouwen Gebze, the leader of Marind customary institution, who signaled the consent based on a condition that Medco should use the land in an environmentally-wise manner.

In contemporary Indonesian political history, the use of custom (*adat*) to get consent from ethnic/customary/local groups to “release” their resources such as land and forest for “development” projects is not new (Simbolon 1998, Colchester et al 2006, Davidson and Henley 2007). Explicating the way in which a particular connection was made by the owner of Medco, the district head, and Marind tribe in the context of paving the way for neoliberal vision of a corporate agricultural estate, allows us to explore how large-scale land dispossession, which is accompanied by devastating social and ecological impacts, was made socially acceptable. In other word, it examines the ways in which the Indonesian state and corporate actors made the acquisition of large tracts of land for the corporate agricultural estate imperative and natural.

The paper argues that the two mechanisms to naturalize land dispossession that can be seen in policy processes to create the so-called Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) are (a) the deployment by the state of a refined concept of corporate agricultural estate along with the discourse of the food and energy crisis; and (b) through a legally binding provincial regulation which mandates the local government to include the MIFEE in provincial spatial planning. In these mechanisms, the state not only utilizes legality to pave the way for the land dispossession by corporate actors, but also creates consensus between various state, corporate, and local actors through integrating them.

The paper is divided into three main parts. The first part of the paper establishes a theoretical approach to understand MIFEE by contextualizing the process of land dispossession as a necessary condition for developing corporate-driven industrial agriculture. The second part elucidate ethnographically concrete policy processes on the ways the concept of “estate” along

⁶ This company was founded in early 1990s and has grown into a multinational oil company with its oil rigs spread from Cambodia, Libya to Mexican Bay in North America.

with discourse of food and energy crisis are deployed to justify land dispossession. Lastly, the final section reviews our main arguments, contextualize the argument within the larger on-going literature on “global land grab”.

II. Land dispossession and the formation of the third food regime

Agricultural expansion in the frontier has played a critical role in the modern history of state formation and capitalist development (De Koninck 1996, 2006; Wood 2002). In this process, the modernizing center represents a force of civilizing the margins which is defined in terms of its not-yet “civilized” nature and the absences of modern characters (Duncan 2004, Scott 1998, Tsing 1993). Thus, the frontier is seen as a metaphor for national development (Fold and Hirsch 2009, Hirsch 2009, McCarthy and Cramb 2009). The frontier has presented opportunities and enormous potential for the state and capital to reach the next level by expanding territory, controlling resources, and deepening production relations.

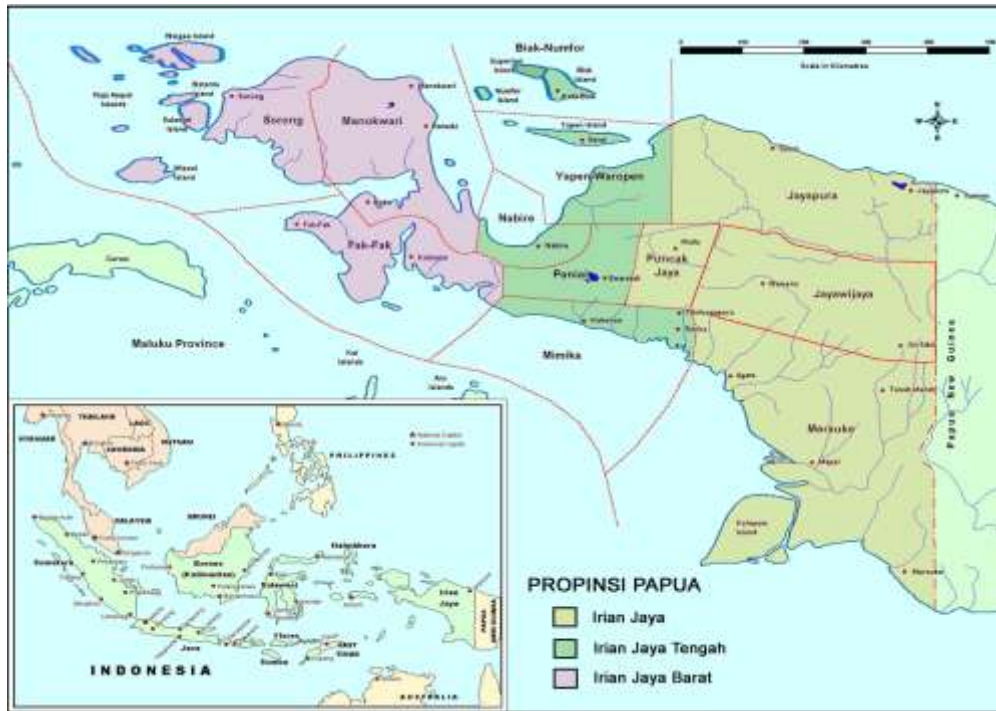
Nonetheless, the frontier is quickly disappearing as a result of what Araghi calls the “great global enclosure of our times.” Araghi (2000: 146) writes, “since 1950, and particularly since the 1970s, the proportion of the world’s rural population as a percentage of total population has declined dramatically. Today 55 percent of the world population (27 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean, 45 percent in Middle East and North Africa, and 25 percent in the more developed regions) lives in rural areas.” The dwindling frontier is tantamount to peasant dispossession or depeasantization. What distinguishes the contemporary depeasantization process is that peasants are being dispossessed through displacement by state policies under neoliberal globalization (Araghi 2000, 2009). The contemporary global land grab is mainly driven by multinational companies and private investor groups with legal and material support from national and local governments (Cotula et al. 2011). As Zoomers (2010) has shown, offshore production of food and biofuel is two of the seven processes contributing to the foreign acquisition of land.

“Dispossession through displacement” captures the spatial and economic planning of the frontier happening in the southeastern tip of Indonesia today. This paper looks at the most recent case of agricultural expansion at Merauke district in Papua province (Figure 1). The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE) is a large-scale development project led by the Indonesian state and corporate actors. Endowed with 2.5 million hectares of potential arable land with a flat terrain and suitable agro-climate, Merauke presents an ideal space for agricultural

expansion. This paper examines the policy discourse of the MIFEE that has defined Merauke in terms of the not-yet “civilized” nature. The state and corporate actors have problematized agricultural practices in Merauke, taking issue with the ways in which natural resources including land are managed. The world food and energy crisis presents opportunities for the state, corporations, and local officials to transform not only the geographic space endowed with rich arable lands and natural forests but also the space of social and production relations in Merauke.

The concept of the MIFEE exemplifies the classical theory of international trade (Myint 1971): “vent-for-surplus” --“opening up an economy to trade allows hitherto unutilized resources to be brought into productive use” (Booth 1988: 17). While the vent-for-surplus view became the rationale for exports of cash crops by means of “surplus” land and labor under colonial globalization, it still provides powerful rationale for post-colonial discourse about “development” under neoliberal globalization. In this sense, post-colonial neoliberal globalization from 1973 to the present is a continuation of colonial-liberal globalization between 1834 and the late nineteenth century (Araghi 2009: 114). This vent-for-surplus view is congruent with President Yudhoyono’s vision of creating the corporate agricultural estate in the hitherto untouched area, which turns the food and energy crisis to an opportunity for making Indonesia the world bread basket through what he called “Special Agricultural Zone.” The frontier once provided a safe place for nomads, gypsies, and shifting cultivators to evade burdens imposed by the state. Today, the frontier presents opportunities for the state and corporations to unleash potential to become competitive in the world capitalist system.

Figure 1: Map of Papua



The MIFEE, officially launched by the Ministry of Agriculture on August 11, 2010, is a large-scale development project by which corporate agriculture is designed to produce food crops and agro-fuels. The total targeted area of the MIFEE is 1,282,833 hectares (423,251.3 hectares in 2010-2014; 632,504.8 hectares in 2015-2019; and 227,076.9 ha in 2020-2030) (GoI 2010: 36; BKTRN 2010: 10). It is projected in its grand design that in 2020 the MIFEE will contribute food stock up to: rice 1.95 million tons, maize 2.02 million ton, soybean 167,000 ton, cow 64,000, sugar 2.5 million ton, and crude palm oil 937,000 ton per year. Merauke’s gross domestic product is expected to reach US\$ 13,500/year in 2020. Net food import will be reduced to US\$ 514 million (GoI 2010: 39). At the time, PT Medco Papua Agro Lestari expressed interest to invest and have concession 301.600 hectares, almost a quarter of total area of MIFEE and the largest among twenty-three corporations (see Table 1).⁷

Table 1: List of corporation that interested to invest and have concession in 2009

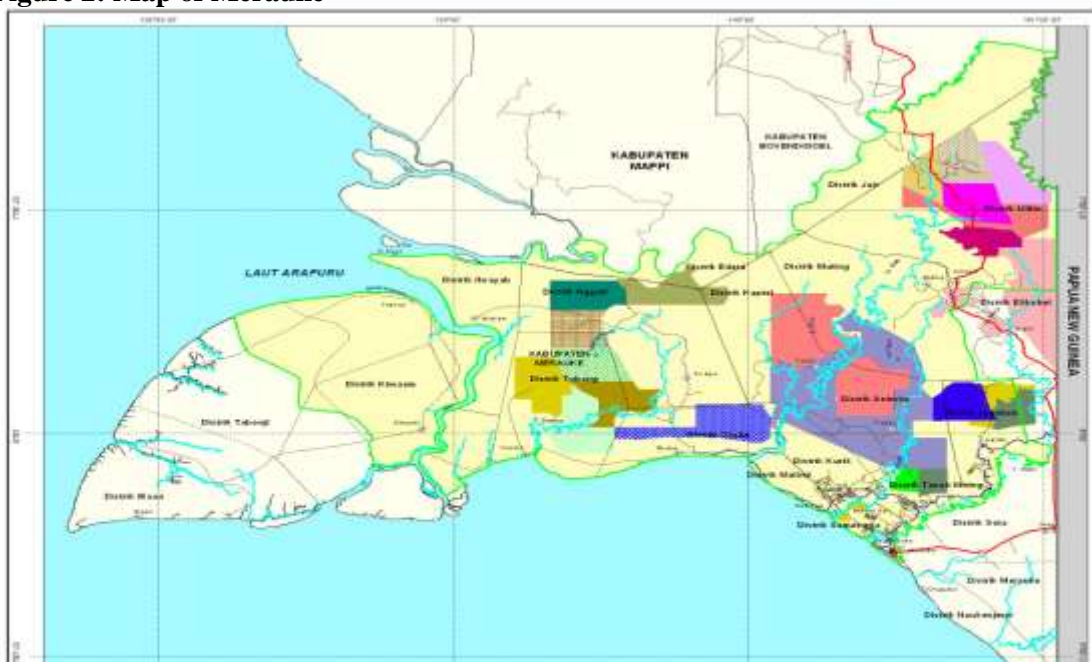
No	Name of Corporation	Concession (ha)
1	PT. Balikpapan Forest Ind	40,000
2	PT. Bangun Cipta Sarana	14,000

⁷ According to Hilmi Panigoro, brother of Arifin Panigoro and CEO of Medco Group, Medco Group will focus on agro-fuel industry. He argues that Indonesia has bright prospect for biofuel industry if Indonesian government consistently implement its commitment and plan to make the industry grow. Indonesia could learn from Brazil, which arguably has the best practice in the industry as well as in the ways government design national bio-fuel program (Hilmi Panigoro 2009).

3	PT. Berkat Citra Abadi	37,000
4	PT. Bio Inti Agrindo	39,000
5	PT. Centra Rejeki Gemilang	40,000
6	PT. Cipta Kreasi Abadi	40,000
7	PT. Digul Agro Lestari	40,000
8	PT. Dongin Prabhawa	44,000
9	PT. Energi Hijau Kencana	90,255
10	PT. Graha Inti Persada	40,000
11	PT. Graha Prima Nusa Kreasi	40,000
12	PT. Indosawit Lestari	40,000
13	PT. Inocin Kalimantan	35,000
14	PT. Kencana Sukses Perkasa	30,000
15	PT Kertas Nusantara	154,943
16	PT. Medco Papua Industri Lestari	301,600
17	PT. Muting Jaya Lestari	3,000
18	PT. Papua Agro Lestari	42,000
19	PT. Plasma Nutfah Marind Papua	67,736
20	PT. Sawit Nusa Timur	35,297
21	PT. Tebu Nusa Timur	16,750
22	PT. Ulilin Agro Lestari	30,000
23	PT. Wanamulia Sukses Sejati	96,553.56
	Total	1,317,135.56

Source: Badan Koordinasi Penataan Ruang Nasional (2010: 10).

Figure 2: Map of Merauke



The attraction of MIFEE design invites, not only investors, but also responses from environmental and social advocacy organizations, who are concerned with the impact. Presented before the Directorate General of Spatial Planning of the Ministry of Public Works on May 2010, the research done by Greenomics Indonesia showed that mere 4.92% (or about 235.260,68) of 4.78 million ha of Merauke area is non-forested area. The rest of the total area, which covers 4.55 million ha or about 95% are still forested. Greenomics recommended to develop the MIFEE in stages, and starts with the non-forest area, while conducting a thorough research prior to forest conversion. In addition, the President pledge of moratorium of primary forest conversion in Indonesia, as stated in the UNFCCC Convention at Copenhagen, should be taken into account.⁸ The Greenomics recommendation signals a predictive risk on the environmental side, while stressing the potential international pressure if it is ignored. The stronger voice on socio-cultural and political impact of the MIFEE is also presented by the fact-finding team and field study done by Zakaria et al. (2010). They reported that the MIFEE ignores the cultural gap of 125 centuries between cultivation and hunting-gathering mode of production, within which the marginalization of Papuans is already a result of this plan, from social, politic to economic aspects (see Table 2).

Table 2: The Impacts of MIFEE

No.	Aspect	Impact
1.	Socio-cultural gap	Low level education of Papuans, their hunting and gathering mode of production will exclude Papuans in the transformation from household farming to corporate-mechanization farming
2.	Demographic revolution	Labour demand of corporate farming is calculated to absorb about 4.8 million new migrants from outside Papua, which will leave Papuans as only 5% of the total residents. This demographic changes will displace Papuans from access to economic power, as experienced by the Papuans from the impact of transmigration program in 1980s,.

⁸ Center of public communication of Ministry of Public Works, 'MIFEE akan dikembangkan secara bertahap', 12 May 2010. Available from: http://www.pu.go.id/index.asp?site_id=001&news=ppw120510gt.htm&ndate=5/12/2010%2011:23:01%20AM (Last accessed: 3 July 2010)

3.	Economic marginalization	Agricultural modernization that provides no space for Papuans in its process will gear into a further process of socio-economic polarisation, and will leave Papuans at the lowest level of economic ladder.
4.	Political marginalization	The greater economic power that will be better accessed by migrants than native Papuans may bring a better access to political power as well in government offices, and other form of political leadership. Such circumstance is potentially escalated social conflict in Papua.

Source: Zakaria, Y., E.O. Kleden, and F. Samperante (2010)

The aim of this section is to situate theoretically the development of the modern estate project in Merauke in the early twenty-first century. To this end, we focus on three literatures. First, we rely on insights from the dynamic of capital to explain why the state and corporate actors converged on the joint project of creating the large-scale monocropping agricultural estate in Merauke. Second, we employ food regime analysis to shed light on the central characteristics of the MIFEE. Third, we shed light on the role of the state in naturalizing the violent process of land dispossession to realize the modern estate project by employing policy discourse analysis.

Accumulation by dispossession, dispossession by displacement

The foreign acquisition of land to develop the agricultural sector in Indonesia as well as in other post-colonial countries is all too common. Students of Indonesian agrarian history are familiar with the ways in which the colonial state imposed new land laws to take over native and kingdom lands and then legally granted large-scale land concessions to colonial plantation estates in East Sumatera and Java (Tauchid 1952; Gordon 1982, 1986; Stoler 1985; Kartodirdjo and Suryo 1991; Mubyarto et al 1992; Fauzi 1999). Nonetheless, one may be compelled to ask why the land rush is happening at this particular time (in the wake of the world food and energy crisis of 2008) and in this particular place (Merauke, Papua Province, Indonesia). In order to identify some clues to this question, we rely on the literature on the dynamic of capital (Araghi 2009, De Angelis 2004, Harvey 2003).

The dynamic of capital concerns the political history of capitalism which centers on the process of capital accumulation and expansion. Its analytical focus is on the relations between capital, enclosures, and dispossession. As Harvey (1982) has argued, at the core of capital logic is a chronic tendency to produce crises of overaccumulation. According to Harvey (1982, 2003), the manner in which capital produces new space to overcome its overaccumulation crises entails a “spatial fix.” That is, capital solves this problem by colonizing new space that is not yet defined by the capitalist relation. Harvey (2003: 116) writes,

“The production of space, the organization of wholly new territorial divisions of labour, the opening up of new and cheaper resources complexes, of new regions as dynamic spaces of capital accumulation, and the penetration of pre-existing social formations by capitalist social relations and institutional arrangements...provide important ways to absorb capital and labour surpluses.”

De Angelis (2004) furthers the discussion of the expansionary nature of capital, and argues that the fact that capital encloses—i.e., primitive accumulation—signifies a “continuous characteristic of capital logic.” By this, he means that enclosures are not merely a temporal thing in the past—the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production—but are a “continuous process that is rooted in capital’s drive to continuous expansion” (De Angelis 2004: 72). In this process, the central role of enclosures is to deepen the capitalist relation in new spheres of life. According to this capital logic, enclosures pose capital as a social force that must transcend a limit. De Angelis (2004: 72) puts it, “With enclosure, a new social *space* for accumulation is created, and this creation begins with the *identification of a concrete limit* and the deployment of strategies for its transcendence.”⁹ In terms of a limit to capital, he argues that a limit is identified in two areas: the frontier and political recomposition. The former represents a “space of social life that is still relatively uncolonised by capitalist relations of production and modes of activity” while the latter points to a social force that “constrain the capitalist process of production by raising a social barrier to the endless drive to commodify and accumulate” (De Angelis 2004: 72-73).

From the discussion of Harvey and De Angelis, a common feature of capital logic is in order. Enclosures are a continuous process of and integral part of capital logic; capital encloses not only when capital accumulation establishes a capitalist mode of production as a dominant mode of production but also when capital accumulation seeks to deepen of the capitalist relation in order to transcend a limit, thereby resolving the crises of overaccumulation. It is through this capital logic that the timing and place of the MIFEE can be understood. The MIFEE signifies a strategy of capital for a spatial fix within which capital facilitated by the state finds the frontier to put surplus land and labor to work and start a new circuit of capital accumulation. Because of the different political history,¹⁰ the provinces of Papua and West Papua, formerly known as Irian Jaya, are some of the least developed provinces in Indonesia. The 2008 Human Development

⁹ Emphasis in original

¹⁰ McGibbon (2004: 2), for example, has observed “rapid modernization and demographic change have resulted in the displacement and dislocation of Papua’s indigenous population, fueling Papuan resentment and the demand for independence. Better-educated settlers have dominated the growing market economy and, in the process, sidelined Papuans from the resulting economic benefits.”

Indices for Papua and West Papua are 64.00 and 67.95, which rank them 33rd and 30th respectively among the 33 provinces in Indonesia (BPS).

Opening up a new space, endowing it with necessary infrastructure, both physical and social, and preparing the new space adequately is one solution to overcome the overaccumulation crises that arise from the chronic tendency of capital to accumulate over and above what can be reinvested profitably in the existing production and exchange of commodities. Harvey theorizes this processes as accumulation by dispossession, a term he invented to grasp the continuous role and persistence of the predatory practices of ‘primitive’ or ‘original’ accumulation within the long historical geography of capital accumulation. Harvey (2003: 149) observes, “What accumulation by dispossession does is to release a set of assets (including labour power) at low (and in some instances zero) cost. Overaccumulated capital can seize hold of such assets and immediately turn them to profitable use.”

In terms of “surplus” labor and land, “dispossession by displacement” is carried out by the state under neoliberal globalization. A set of policies to deregulate, liberalize, and privatize state control over socio-economic relations is pushing for the dismantlement of postcolonial nation-based divisions of labor (Araghi 2000, 2009).

Contradictions in the corporate-environmental food regime

In order to gain an understanding of the characteristics of the MIFEE, we rely on insights from food regime analysis which gives attention to the “significance of food production and consumption relations across historical periods” (McMichael 2010: 610). The concept of the food regime, discussed in Friedmann (1982, 1993, 2005), McMichael (2005, 2009) and Friedmann and McMichael (1989), offers a useful analytical toolkit which enables us to locate particular national agriculture policy/program within an historical specific geo-political-economic organization of international agricultural food relations. Our theoretical contributions to the food regime literature are twofold. First, food regimes are seen as a “lens on broader relations in the political history of capital” (McMichael 2009: 148) through which we explain how and why the policy discourse of the MIFEE emerged as a central solution for food security, poverty alleviation, and rural development. Secondly, food regimes are conceived as a developmental process at a particular moment, which emerges and unfolds to address internal contradictions of the world capital system of production and consumption relations. In this connection, we focus on the pivotal role played by the state in naturalizing the violent process of land dispossession in order to solve internal contradictions within an emerging third food regime.

First, what is a particular pattern of food production and consumption relations emerging in response to the world food and energy crisis of 2008? The initial response was not at all new: the creation of a large-scale, monocropping estate in the area of “surplus” land. As observed above, the need for more food can be addressed by putting “idle” land to productive use. What is new, however, is the concept of food estate: a large-scale, mono-crop farming of rice by means of the state’s management and corporate investment. In Indonesia, food crop farming has been always associated with smallholding farming. The Green Revolution that enabled Indonesia to achieve self-sufficiency in rice in the 1980s was based on small farming. Traditionally, estate crops are rubber, oil palm, coffee, cocoa, tea, and sugar. Another new phenomenon in the MIFEE is the notion of “green capitalism.” Friedmann (2005) emphasized it as a distinguishing characteristic of an emerging third food regime from industrial agriculture in the second food regime (1947-73). The twin pillars of the MIFEE are to produce not only food but also energy by turning sugar cane into ethanol in the name of renewable energy. As will be shown below, the notion of green capitalism is an integral part of the large-scale, monocropping farming project in making dispossession by the state socially acceptable.

Secondly, how is the large-scale, monocropping farming project compatible with the environment? As specified in the design (GoI 2010: 21), the central goal of the MIFEE is to achieve food security and rural development while protecting the environment and local agricultural techniques. Although one cannot take this statement as its face value, attention to green issues in the policy discourse reflects an important moment of transition to an emerging food regime. As Friedmann (2005: 229) argues, “food regimes unfold through internal tensions that eventually lead to crisis, that is, to an inability of the key relationships and practices to continue to function as before.” Particular feature introduced in the previous regime became the main characteristic of the subsequent regime. For example, during the transition from the first food regime to the second food regime, the effect of policy of deregulation and privatization to eliminate barrier for international trade and investment liberalization that was implemented in the end of “surplus regime” paved the way for the dominance of transnational agri-food capital, and the presence of the ideology and politics of neoliberalism in guiding international governance institution and development agencies to provide regulatory settings, check and balance mechanisms, and financial assistance.

The world food and energy crisis of 2008 punctuated internal contradictions of industrial agriculture. It is expected that the emerging third food regime or “corporate-environmental food regime” will “deepen commodity relations in agriculture and transform relations between farmers, food workers, and agrofood corporations” (Friedman 205: 228). In the case of the

MIFEE, one of the contradictory relations can be found between the application of corporate-led industrial agriculture by converting forest lands and peatlands into large-scale, monocropping farmlands and the government's adoption of pro-poor and environment-friendly policy. We will show that while the MIFEE emerged as a reaction to the world food and energy crisis, the new pattern of production and consumption relations in the MIFEE is still unable to solve the internal contradictions—means of the acquisition of land and labor. We argue that it is through the state's discourse of the food and energy crisis and the legality of spatial planning that naturalizes the violent process of land dispossession.

Naturalizing Land Dispossession

In the vocabulary of Indonesian language, the concept of 'rice estate' and 'food estate' sounds bizarre, and, in fact, is unheard of. It has been perceived that the concept is dangerous due to the anticipated social and ecological detrimental impacts. For such a bizarre idea to be socially accepted and become a new economic mode of food production, the state needs to deploy some mechanisms to naturalize the transition to a "food estate" system. In the Asian plantation system of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the essential factors of production, namely cheap land and labor, were provided by all kinds of criminalization of customary ownership and access to land and labor under coercion wielded by the colonial state. Before the system, due to low population densities, shifting cultivators maintained relative economic independence from the state by evading forced labor, tax, and conscription (Dove 1985, Scott 2009). Thus, control of manpower was the first principle of statecraft in precolonial Southeast Asia. As Gordon (2001: 314) has argued in the context of Malay and Indonesian plantations, "Cheap labour had to be brought in from areas outside the plantations because with minor exceptions no locals were mad enough to work on plantations on the terms of the planter whilst they retained ownership of their own land." In corporate agricultural estates of the twentieth first century, naturalization becomes important because such a bizarre, unheard, and dangerous concept will not only invite questions but also resistance.

In his path-breaking study of the role of cartography in the nation-state building in Siam (Thailand), Winichakul challenged the conventional understanding of cartography which merely represents something already exists objectively, and argued that the function of cartography is rather to anticipate a spatial reality, not vice versa. In Winichakul's own words:

"a map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent. A map was not a transparent medium between human beings and space. It was an active mediator. In this sense, all the requisites of the map of a nation had not been given in premodern Siam and thus had to be created to meet the demands of a map. The outcome

was the result of the contending anticipation expressed on each claimant's map. Perhaps more than has been realized, the regime of mapping did not passively reflect Siam. Rather it has actively structured 'Siam' in our minds as well as on earth" (1994: 130).

Drawing on this insight, we argue that the relation of policymakers to policy discourse is like that of state-makers to a map. In other words, policymakers construct and use policy discourse in order to transform the target of development according to the blueprint of policy discourse.

By offering a critical analysis of the state's policy discourse about Merauke, we demonstrate that policy discourse analysis reveals two important mechanisms at work in the MIFEE by which land dispossession is made socially acceptable. First, the key to creating policy space conducive to the large-scale monocropping food and energy estate is the state's strategy to turn a crisis into an opportunity. Second is through putting the discourse into practice by employing the legality of spatial planning.

In this process, our analysis is informed by discourse analysis. The advantage of discourse analysis is suggested by Ferguson in his seminal work on "development" projects in Lesotho. Ferguson writes:

"one cannot assume...that a structure simply and rationally 'represents' or 'expresses' a set of 'objective interests'...for...structures can take on lives of their own that soon enough overtake intentional practices. Whatever interests may be at work..., they can only operate through a complex set of social and cultural structures so deeply embedded and so ill-perceived that the outcome may be only a baroque and unrecognizable transformation of the original intention" (Ferguson 1994: 17).

We are not saying that the food and energy crisis is an illusionary construct— There certainly exist socioeconomic and material conditions of food availability, hunger, malnutrition, and the lack of capacity to produce food and raw materials for agro-fuel. But rather that what is important to understand is how those conditions have been constructed as "food and energy crisis" and what have been the consequences of doing so; in other words, how those conditions were integrated as problems into an institutional field to be solved through foreign aid, industrialization, and the like. We must examine not only the effects of this politics of truth, but also how it ignores land dispossession, and what other possibilities might exist. As Escobar (1991) writes:

"The notion of discourse, as we use it here, does not refer to the ideal, or merely to the production of ideologies. Positivist thinking has made of language and discourse the opposite of the real or merely its reflection; this position assumes, on the one hand, the existence of an objective world independent of any discursive mediation and, on the other, of discursive structures which are the pure expression of thought, unrelated to any materiality. Discourse, in our view, partakes of a fundamental materiality; it involves a series of material elements and

processes which articulates it on a domain of things and through which the production of truth is organized. Discourse also articulates relations between knowledge and power. It determines ways of doing things through which the real is given shape by those who conceptualize it and manage it. “

Drawing on this insight, we argue that data and facts presented by the state and corporate actors in the wake of the world food and energy crisis frame the policy discourse of the MIFEE. In sum, the MIFEE embodies the emerging corporate-environmental food regime. In this process, corporations inform the policy making process by framing the policy around the discourse of the world food and energy crisis. The state plays a role of creating development plans, which in turn naturalizes the process of dispossession.

III. Policy processes to naturalize land dispossession in Merauke

We pose a main argument that two interlocking processes strategically chosen by the state to naturalize land dispossession for corporate agriculture are (i) the deployment of the concept of corporate agricultural estate along with the discourse of food and energy crisis; and (ii) the use of “spatial planning” that served functions to pursue consensus building between differentiated state institutions, and to provide reference by which corporations get concessions and work. It is crystal clear that the state has taken a prominent and very active role to shape the ways in which corporate agriculture works. To illuminate these two naturalization processes, we select three “diagnostic events”, a term invented by Sally Falk Moore referring to “moments of powerful contradiction that lay bare cultural logics, identify the diverse stakeholders in social conflicts, and reveal the genealogies of ideas linking institutions” (Moore 1987: 727-736).

Three “diagnostic events” within which enabled us to see the two process were (a) the Great Rice Harvest on April 2006 in Merauke; (b) the Grand Launching of MIFEE; and (c) The CSO’s counter movement. These three related events stand as the “diagnostic events”, the kind of event that should be privilege since it reveals the construction of complex sites of power struggle, contestation, and negotiation (Watts and Peet 1996:266), including the efforts to prevent resistances.

The 2006 great rice harvest in Merauke

Throughout the history of the Green Revolution in Indonesia, rice crop farming has always been known as a household farming. Rice being cultivated in a scale of estate crop has never emerged as a nomenclature in the Indonesian agricultural development program. What was understood as

estate crops were rubber, oil palm, coffee, cocoa, tea, sugarcane, and alike. During Suharto's authoritarian regime (1966-1998), self-sufficiency in rice was the state's first priority. The imposed package of high yield varieties, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, construction of irrigations, distribution of credit schemes, and new post-harvesting methods called *Panca Usaha Tani* (literally "five agricultural efforts") were introduced as new technologies to millions of small farmers' farming practices throughout Indonesia, together with the deployment of an army of extension workers. It started with contracting multinational companies, included Ciba (Switzerland), Coopa (Italy), Hoechst (Western Germany), AHT-Essen (Western Germany), and Mitsubishi (Japan), to provide such package (Uthrect 1970:164). Even, farmer groups who were skeptical of these benefits of such "revolutionary" package were pressured by the Suharto regime to accept them (Sajogyo 1993: 46-47). Achieving high productivity became the central objective of all measures.

The Suharto regime deployed "carrots and sticks" to control farmers' motivation and promote competitiveness among farmers. Every year, farmers' groups who had achieved the highest productivity, were rewarded by the president in a ceremony called the celebration of the Great Harvest (*Panen Raya*), which was held in the highest rice production region of the year. Rewarded farmers, who faithfully followed the *Panca Usaha Tani*, were praised as the model of the Green Revolution. At the same time, during the ceremony it became the President's routine to give a speech instructing farmers about new policies on agricultural development. The president also had direct conversations with invited farmers about problems they faced in agricultural production. In 1985, the FAO praised Suharto for the success of his government in bringing Indonesia to self-sufficiency in food production, and awarded him an FAO Ceres award. This international recognition reinforced his conviction of the effectiveness of the *Panca Usaha Tani*.

After the collapse of the Suharto regime in 1998, subsequent presidents discontinued the Great Harvest Ceremony. It was President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono who resumed the tradition. Nonetheless, the Great Rice Harvest in Merauke of 2006 was different from the tradition in many respects. First and foremost, it was this ceremony in Merauke that the concept of "rice estate" was declared in public for the first time. By that, President Yudhoyono meant a completely new agricultural practice—i.e., corporate agriculture (see Table 3).

Table 3: The comparison of green revolution and corporate farming/estate concept

Green Revolution as conventionally established in Indonesia	Food Estate as an emerging design
Small farmers' plots cultivation in a small scale (average scale of 0.19 ha in Java or 0.5 ha outside Java per plot), and mixed-crop with other vegetations	Monoculture cultivation in a large scale (hundreds to million hectares)
Operate by smallholders as a household farm	Operate by corporations as a private-company farm
The state is a service provider for inputs and technology (fertilizers, pesticides, new varieties, etc.).	The state takes a new role to enable the provision of land for corporations (lease or purchase)

The President's visit was to celebrate a Great Rice Harvest for the planting year of 2005/2006.¹¹ It did not seem as a regular official visit to inspect normal agricultural development progress. Since assuming the presidency in 2004, this was the first time President Yudhoyono visited the most eastern tip of Indonesia, Merauke. The travel to Merauke from Jakarta covers a distance almost as far as from Jakarta to Tokyo or farther than the distance from the West to the East Coast of US. It takes 11-12 hours flight from Jakarta to Merauke with two stops.¹² President Yudhoyono deliberately took a long journey to the place and brought with him a big group of his new cabinet ministers. Besides Madame Ani Yudhoyono, his wife, the President was accompanied by: Abu Rizal Bakrie, the Coordinating Minister of Economics; Anton Apriyantono, the Minister of Agriculture; Widodo AS, the Minister of Politics, Law and Human Rights; Bambang Sudibyo, the Minister of Education; and lastly, Prof. Dr. Ir. H. Ahmad Anshori Matjik, the Rector of Bogor Agriculture University. From the local government group, Dr. Sudjuangon Situmorang, the caretaker of Papua Governor and Johanes Gluba Gebze, the District Head of Merauke, were present. That was for the first time ever a ceremony of Great Rice Harvest was held in such a frontier region like Merauke. During the President Suharto time (1966-1998), ceremonies were held in the conventional rice producing regions such as Java, Sumatera, and Southern Sulawesi.

The event was a huge one, considering that the total population of Merauke District is only about 400,000 people, but thousands of children were standing along the

¹¹ "Presiden Lakukan Panen Raya di Merauke" (<http://www.presidentri.go.id/index.php/fokus/2006/04/05/362.html>), "Merauke diharapkan menjadi Lumbung Padi Nasional" (<http://www.depdagri.go.id/news/2006/04/06/merauke-diharapkan-jadi-lumbung-padi-nasional>)

¹² The flight departs around 10 p.m. from Jakarta and arrives the next morning around 9 a.m. in Merauke. Only one airline services the route for four times a week.

road to welcome President Yudhoyono when he arrived in the Merauke airport. Then, a group of two hundreds Asmat and Marind dancers also took part in the ceremonial event.¹³ This was a celebration for the harvest of 16,339 hectares of rice field with a production level of 21,632 tons. At the same time, it was an odd event since for the indigenous people of Merauke who danced and stood along the road, rice is not part of their main livelihood system. Marind people, who are the indigenous inhabitants of Merauke, mostly live in a culture of hunting and gathering with mixed staple food from sago forest and tubers cultivation. Rice cultivation has been practiced mainly by migrant settlers who came from outside Papua.

In such a peculiar event, President Yudhoyono stated that the Great Rice Harvest shows the success of agricultural development, not only in Java or the western part of Indonesia, but also in eastern Indonesia. He declared Merauke as the site for the National Food Basket. Then, a future of food export from Papua can be expected from this region, since it is endowed with suitable climate and available water for agriculture development.¹⁴ The Minister of Agriculture, Anton Apriantono reported to the President that “Papua potentially holds 9.32 million hectares of land suitable for agriculture, which 2.3 millions are located in Merauke”, and he assured that his ministry will prepare a comprehensive plan for the area¹⁵.

The grand launching of MIFEE

On August 11, 2010, one year after Medco Group’s successful acquisition of land in Merauke, Minister of Agriculture Suswono formalized the Grand Launching of Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate through a ceremony held in Serapu village, Semangga subdistrict. Nobody in this village knew what was actually happening.¹⁶ They only realized several weeks after, when

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *“Panen raya menunjukkan keberhasilan bersama dalam membangun pertanian di seluruh wilayah tanah air. Kita tidak hanya membangun pertanian di Pulau Jawa atau pulau lain di bagian barat, tapi juga membangun di wilayah Timur Indonesia.. Sambil memohon ridho Allah SWT, kita bangun Merauke benar-benar sebagai lumbung padi bukan hanya di wilayah Timur, tapi secara nasional di negara Republik Indonesia yang tercinta ini. Saya tahu dengan pasti bahwa pembangunan pertanian khususnya padi dan palawija tidak saja berlangsung di Merauke, tapi juga di kabupaten lain di Papua, serta pulau kecil lainnya. Daerah ini sangat potensial untuk dikembangkan menjadi tanah pertanian, karena didukung cuaca yang bagus dan air tersedia... Oleh karena itu dengan pemanfaatan lahan pertanian secara optimal, maka diharapkan akan meningkatkan produktivitas padi yang akan berperan dalam kebutuhan pangan lokal, kebutuhan nasional bahkan ekspor”.*

¹⁵ Op.cit.

¹⁶ Jago Bukit reported and posted in AMAN mailing list dated2011

bulldozers started to demolish their sago forests that it was “the ceremony of their dispossession of land.” To date, seven groups of national and multinational corporations have committed investment in MIFEE area.

This launching would have never been realized unless it underwent a series of events, which produced many policies including the recommendation of National Spatial Plan Coordinating Agency for Merauke spatial plan, MIFEE grand design, the Indonesia Chamber of Commerce (KADIN) Feed the World Seminar and Exhibition, President Instruction no.1/2010 on Acceleration of National Development Priorities, President’s letters to UN Secretary General and the President of World Bank to express his shared concern on the food crises, the Yogyakarta Presidential meeting with KADIN to expose the President’s idea of turning the crisis into an opportunity, President Instruction no.5/2008 on Focus of 2008-2009 Economic development, Government regulation no 26/2007 on National Spatial Plan, and back to the first meaning-making event of the Great Rice Harvest.

When the Great Harvest in Merauke occurred, the discourse about the food and energy crisis has not yet been used as the signifier of food estate policy. Following the Great Harvest, in December 2007, the District Head of Merauke was invited by the Minister of Economic and Finance to give a presentation about his concept of Merauke Integrated Rice Estate (MIRE). Then, within three months afterward, in 2008, the government regulation on National Spatial Plan was issued.¹⁷ In this regulation, Merauke is designated as a Primary Area (*Kawasan Andalan*) for economic growth, but not yet specifically mentioned as the food and energy estate.

The idea of food estate was effectively rolled to the policy table when President Yudhoyono started using the discourse of food and energy crisis to justify the concept of estate. Since the price of petroleum broke the highest record of \$100 in early 2008, then followed by 35 percent increase of food price, Dino Pati Jalal¹⁸ (2008) noted that President Yudhoyono expressed a deep concern with the hardships encountered by many low income countries, and concluded that the global crises must be responded by a global solution. Driven by this idea, he wrote to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon a proposal for a global conference to seek solutions for the crisis; then, another letter also sent to the President of the World Bank Robert Zoellick to throw his support to the World Bank’s pledge of “New Deal for Global Food Policy”. In all of his letters, President Yudhoyono stated that Indonesia is not affected by the crisis, but share concerns of international stability.

¹⁷ Government Regulation No. 26/2008 on National Spatial Plan

¹⁸ He was President Yudhoyono’s spokes person in 2004-2009, and now serves as the Indonesian Ambassador to the US.

On April 17th, 2008, he called for a presidential meeting with his cabinet and Indonesia Chamber of Commerce (KADIN) in Yogyakarta. The meeting was aimed at formulating an urgent response to the hike of global food and energy prices. He presented his solution to the crisis: “Increasing production and productivity of food, energy and mineral in order to improve Indonesia’s economy: From Crisis to Opportunity.” At the end of the meeting he called on the Indonesia Chamber of Commerce (KADIN) to prepare strategic solutions for the idea.

At the second meeting, on April 30th, 2008, President Yudhoyono emphasized seven points, in which two are most related to the constitution of food and energy estate policy, i.e.: a need for large scale farmers to grow, and designation of five agribusiness and/or agro-industrial areas specifically design for Special Agricultural Zone (Jalal 2008). KADIN seized the opportunity by pinpointing the need to eliminate all bureaucracy complexity for investment, and proposed to establish a committee called the Action Committee for Increasing Productivity of Food, Energy and Mineral¹⁹ (KAP3EM).

One of the KADIN actions to turn the discourse of the food and energy crisis into an economic opportunity was to organize a conference and exhibition called as “Feed the Nation and Feed the World” on January 28-29, 2010. The conference, as stated by M.S. Hidayat, the Chairman of KADIN, aimed to “...[s]eek the accurate and coordinated solution either from the side of regulation or practice for land farm, estate, cattle and fisheries allocation, provision of infrastructure, fertilizer, high-yielding varieties, food manufacture industry, funding support, and an optimal food research and development, which are aimed to suffice the national, regional and international food security in a sustainable way”.²⁰ In this conference, KADIN presented their food roadmap called as ‘Feed the World’, which covers 16 food commodities to supply domestic and international demand. One of the pledges to the government is to guarantee through the spatial plan the availability of enough land for agriculture, consistent land use policy at all level, easy process to attain land and secure its utilization, and a guarantee of land rights.

We see that started from a shared concern between the three levels of social power: the local government of Merauke, the national association of corporations, and several international

¹⁹ Komite Aksi Peningkatan Produktifitas Pangan, Energi dan Mineral

²⁰ “Diharapkan dapat diperoleh solusi yang tepat dan koordinatif dari sisi regulasi dan praktik dalam alokasi lahan pertanian, perkebunan, peternakan dan perikanan, penyediaan infrastruktur pendukung yang memadai, penyediaan pupuk dan benih unggul, revitalisasi industri pengolahan pangan, dukungan lembaga pembiayaan berikut dukungan optimal pada bidang penelitian dan pengembangan sektor pangan. Seluruhnya bermuara pada terpenuhinya kebutuhan pangan tidak saja nasional, namun juga regional hingga dunia, secara berkelanjutan.”

bodies, the President, then, have mobilized and knitted it all together into a social relation that produce consent on the idea of the crisis as an opportunity. The power of Papua local politics as represented by the District Head of Merauke, the power of capital launched by KADIN, and the power of international organizations (UN and the World Bank) have justified investment as the solution for the world food and energy crisis. However, it requires another mechanism by which consent to practice, where ideas will be embodied in the practice; a practice that direct and structure society. Certainly, this would call for more policy instrument, such as: the spatial planning, as pointed by KADIN.

Only a month after Yogyakarta meeting, President Yodhoyono made a specific instruction²¹ to Minister of Public Works and Papua Governor to set up a spatial plan of Merauke, which will include two other districts: Mappi and Boven Digul and to be called as the Greater Merauke, to prepare land for agricultural investment. The Minister of Public Works has an authority to lead National Spatial Planning Coordinating Agency (BKPRN) to produce a recommendation on spatial plan for Merauke and its surrounding area. Why spatial plan seems to be a very important tool to translate ideas into practice?

As cited by Gunder (2010:299) urban, regional, or spatial planning is specifically about making choices about how we use land – it's about governing space (Cowell and Owen, 2006). Planning is the ideology of how we define and use space. This is a space currently dominated by the values and logic of global capitalism: neoliberalism. The doctrine of neoliberalism is in many ways the reassertion of a classical liberal economic argument: society functions better under a market logic than any other logic, especially a state-directed one (Purcell, 2009: 141 in Gunder 2010). In sum, spatial planning today is an articulation of neoliberal ideology in governing the space. In this ideology, Bengs (2005) argues that planning theory, and hence spatial planning, is simply facilitating the governance motives of neoliberal globalization, with the concept of 'bottom-up' communicative planning being deployed to especially empower key stakeholders in articulating their wants and hegemonically achieving them. The state must facilitate the process of collaborative or communicative planning to ensure that decision-making practices are widely accepted as 'democratic' but that do not (or cannot) fundamentally challenge existing relations of power (Purcell, 2009: 141).

The Law of Spatial Planning in Indonesia has just been revised in 2007.²² While it reflects the trend of greater local autonomy after the implementation of decentralization in 2001, the new law aims to ensure that local power does not supersede national authority in governing

²¹ Presidential Instruction No. 5/2008 on Focus of Economic Program 2008-2009.

²² Law no. 26/2007 on Spatial Planning as a revision of Law No. 24/1992

the space.²³ Therefore, it emphasized the administrative hierarchy of national to local governments and its top-down process of planning. Simultaneously, the inclusive process is another new feature of the law; public participation is mandatory in the stage of planning, implementation, and monitoring of space utilization. According to the law, a development plan, particularly an investment planning, is only made effective by the spatial plan. It is clearly stated in the article 20 that the National Spatial Plan is a reference to determine function and location of space for investment purposes.

It is through such logic that spatial planning became a powerful tool to direct and specify the geolocation of capital investment. The spatial plan is the instructive mobilization of ideas into practice. Therefore, this is the room to place negotiations and contestations in order to achieve conformity: the space of control that should be entrenched. Then, we can see that the crucial process of constitution of the MIFEE is located precisely in the process of national to district of Merauke spatial planning processes. However, the term of food and energy estate was not used in the National Spatial Plan. In fact, the MIFEE was never used as an official term in any policies and regulation issued after including in Merauke and Papua Province Spatial Plan. Bayu Khrisna Murti, the Vice Minister of Agriculture stated that “The name MIFEE did not suddenly appear. For the last three years within many meetings in the Coordinating Ministry of Economics, the concept of the Merauke Integrated Rice Estate (MIRE), proposed by the Merauke District Head in a connotation of rice basket, has been expanded to include other crops, such as: maize, sugar cane, and soybean. The name is used for the sake of popularity to get investors’ attention, and to emphasize that the area will be managed by corporations. Therefore, the term was never used in official documents.”²⁴ Clearly, the state realizes that a careful selection of terminology is an important factor to naturalize the idea of estate. The term estate is commonly used in Indonesia for housing complexes built by the private sector targeted for the middle to upper classes or called as real estate, while housing complexes for the lower strata is usually built by the government and have different names. Using the established presumption, the food and energy estate is visibly stated the exclusionary nature of the area, which is corporate agriculture. It is, therefore, impossible to be mentioned in the spatial plan since it will not invite public consent, as required,

²³ See point c of the consideration part of the Law: “.....along with decentralization policy that gives a greater autonomy to the local government in spatial planning, this authority needs to be regulated to ensure an integration and harmony between locals and local to national” (*bahwa untuk memperkukuh Ketahanan Nasional berdasarkan Wawasan Nusantara dan sejalan dengan kebijakan otonomi daerah yang memberikan kewenangan semakin besar kepada pemerintah daerah dalam penyelenggaraan penataan ruang, maka kewenangan tersebut perlu diatur demi menjaga keserasian dan keterpaduan antardaerah dan antara pusat dan daerah agar tidak menimbulkan kesenjangan antardaerah*)

²⁴ A local journalist reported in “Merauke Bukan Urusan Semalam”. Tempo Interaktif, February 22, 2010.

but resistance instead.

The most authoritative body, which validates spatial plans, is a national body called the National Spatial Planning Coordinating Agency (BKPRN). It consists of 14 ministries with the Coordinator Minister for Economy chairs the agency. After President Yudhoyono issued an instruction to put Merauke into a spatial plan, BKPRN received a draft in September 2009. In May 2010, BKPRN produced a recommendation, which consists of six points:

1. to delineate the Merauke area, which includes 18 subdistricts in the district of Merauke, Mappi and Boven Digul;
2. to provide land for sustainable food crop farming,
3. to establish clusters of production centers, which include 10 clusters
4. to prioritize land utilization in the non-forest land and forest land allocated for production forest.
5. to develop strategic cooperation and put a priority to infrastructure development
6. to put attention to land rights and local community institutional issues, and other issues, such as: alternative energy development, easy permit as an incentive for investment, natural disaster alert, agropolitan concept, etc.

To ensure acceptance and conformity to this recommendation, a coordination meeting was held by BKPRN in Jayapura on June 6th, 2010. This meeting tried to reconcile pros and cons about the idea of scale. How much land should be allocated was the main contested issue. The Papua Provincial government insisted to limit land allocation only to 500,000 hectares of 1.2 million hectares proposed by the Merauke District government, who were backed by the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Public Works. The provincial government considered the President's pledge in the Copenhagen UNFCCC convention to reduce emission to 26% as the argument to limit the area of MIFEE, which was supported by the Ministry of Forestry. On the other hand, the Merauke government launched the argument of feed the nation and feed the world policy to justify the allocation of 1.2 million hectares land. The meeting failed to come to an agreement on the issue of scale. Then, it was followed by another meeting in Jakarta, which resulted in a temporary reconciliation of 550,000 hectares proposed by the Papua Governor, until a further approval of forest conversion from the Ministry of Forestry.

While all of this debate on 'how much land' was still boiling, the Ministry of Agriculture submitted a grand design of MIFEE to the President on June 2010. It was immediately followed by the Grand Launching of MIFEE on August 2010 without waiting for a legal status of Papua Province Spatial Plan.

Denaturalizing Dispossession through Multiple Sites of Activism

One of the activists' strategies to launch a counter-movement is by constructing a counter-discourse. The Office for Justice and Peace of the Archdiocese of Merauke (SKP-KAM); Papua NGOs Cooperation Forum (FokerLSM); Papuans Solidarity to Reject MIFEE (Solidaritas Rakyat Papua Tolak MIFEE (SORPATOM); the Indigenous People's Alliance of Indonesia (AMAN) have built alliances to reject the MIFEE on the ground of genocide, ecological destruction, and marginalization.

The countermovement groups argues that this project is likely to contribute to the marginalization of indigenous Papuans by taking over the customary-owned land and resources which provide their livelihoods. It is also likely to exacerbate existing human rights grievances, and accelerate environmental deforestation and degradation. The discourse of genocide was brought by AMAN to the international level, as they made a statement before the 9th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, in New York, on 23 April 2010. AMAN representative Arifin Saleh told:

that ".....this food industry [MIFEE] is estimated to bring 6.4 million workers to Merauke and West Papua in general. The total population of West Papua is only 4.6 million people. 2.2 million of this population is indigenous, and 70% lives in remote areas. With a population of only 174,710 in Merauke, these plans will acutely threaten the existence of indigenous people within these areas, turning them into a minority in number, even leading to extinction in the future. This is, as we may say, structural and systematic genocide. This is unacceptable."

AMAN also requested the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of Indigenous Peoples to conduct a thematic study on development projects including MIFEE and their impacts on cultural integrity and the human rights situations of indigenous peoples.

Campaigns against the MIFEE have been launched internationally by making links to international organization, not only by AMAN, but also by local alliance of SORPATOM. The woman leader of SORPATOM, Rosa Moweind Gebze, was invited by War Resisters' International (WRI)²⁵, to give a talk in London. She reported that the Malind people's land is being auctioned off to over 30 commercial investors without prior consent from the Malind landowners. "Indonesia doesn't want our people, they just want our land." She insists that Papuan self-rule is the only way to resolve the human rights violations that continue to plague indigenous Papuans.

²⁵ an international network of pacifist and antimilitarist organizations with more than 90 affiliates in more than 40 countries (<http://www.wri-irg.org/>)

At the grassroots level, YASANTO and SKP Merauke actively advocate the impact of the MIFEE on the Malind land.²⁶ Their advocacy in Onggari clan rejected the release of land for the MIFEE. Another seven villages in the Okaba subdistrict turned down an offer from a Korean company to sell their land. In the village of Domandai, Malind subdistrict, where Radjawali Group intended to release 22.900 ha land from 7 clans, a rejection by a member of one clan during the ceremony was also canceled the land selling to the company.

Public discussions to consolidate cooperation by engaging in film making, participatory mapping, and training on FPIC were also chosen as methods by the alliance of NGOs called KOMALI (Komunitas Masyarakat Adat dan Lingkungan) to form a counter-movement by campaigning against the negative effects of the MIFEE is the objective to make MIFEE ubiquitously known by various level in local, national and international society.

Conclusion

By offering a critical analysis of the policy discourse about the MIFEE, we have explored the ways in which dispossession by displacement was made socially acceptable. We focused on the policy discourse about the creation of the corporate agricultural estate because it is through this discourse that the violent process of dispossession by displacement was naturalized. As De Angelis (2004: 82) argues, “If capital encloses, it cannot do it without a corresponding discourse.... The discourse of enclosures, in other words, must present itself not as a negative force, one that separates, brutalizes, and disempowers; but, on the contrary, it also has to wear the mantle of rationality, and project a vision of the future that *makes sense* to a multiplicity of concrete subjects.” As shown above, the policy discourse is predicated on the promise made by the state that the world food and energy crisis can be turned into an opportunity through the refined concept of the corporate agricultural estate. From the beginning, the policy discourse appealed to corporate actors such as Panigoro; Merauke was viewed as an idea space for the new circuit of capital accumulation because the frontier lands “have almost never been touch by agriculture.”

To further illustrate this, we identified the constant and continuous processes in the policy discourse which naturalized the violent process of dispossession by displacement. Such processes include the problematization of the existing agricultural techniques and resource

²⁶ Reported by Jago Bukit, the secretary of Komali on December 1, 2010 posted in AMAN mailing list

utilization methods in Merauke, the deployment of the refined concept of the corporate agricultural estate that turned the world food and energy crisis to opportunity, and imposed “consent” based on legality of spatial planning.

We have identified three important “diagnostic events,” which linked many inter-related events and social processes, giving birth to five policy instruments to justify MIFEE as well as its resistance. The whole policy process was orchestrated to change the structure of land holding, which covers up to 1.2 million hectares, from the control by the local community to the control by the state through the planning process called spatial planning. This enormous transfer of land control requires a decision and initiative from the very top hierarchy of the state power (the President himself) to ensure that uprooting community from its social and spiritual ties to land is a legitimate process. The process has mobilized many actors from various levels in order to get consent and naturalize dispossession through two mechanisms: 1) goal and priority setting as a industrial development project, which is defined by the MIFEE grand design and spatial plan. This was born from the deployment of the refined concept of corporate agricultural estate along with the food and energy crisis; 2) transformation of land control through the highest decision, which involves consent from 14 ministries, as articulated by the BKPRN recommendation for the MIFEE.

The processes to naturalize land dispossession is never complete. It will always contain contradictions, as Roy (2010) asserts that in the time of Empire, it rules through coercion and violence, but it also rules through consent and culture. The hierarchical and sequential process of development planning always involve different lead actors at different levels (inter-sectoral actors: ministry of public works, ministry of agriculture, ministry of forestry, head of districts, governor, etc.) that enliven the contestations, competitions, which actually energize the market to be always come up with new ways of accommodative mechanism as the core of expansive capitalism process: a creative destruction. However, as Polanyi (1944) said, this will invite resistance that may come as unpredictable actions, which could make the process difficult to end, since it will call for continuous struggles, negotiations, and contestations.

The subtitle of the World Bank’s report *Rising Global Interest in Farmland* asks “Can it yield sustainable and equitable benefits?” Based on our study, the outlook is grim for the win-win situation as claimed by the World Bank. It is not hard to predict that the MIFEE which plans to bring in “surplus” labor from Java and elsewhere to work in the estate will marginalize indigenous people as this happened in the past. The MIFEE is not different than previous “development” projects which intended to modernize and raise living standards of Papuans.

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