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# Men, Women, and Environmental Change in Indonesia: The Gendered Face of Development Among the Dayak Benuaq

Michaela Haug

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The increasing penetration of global capitalism, ambitious development efforts, and related environmental change have significantly transformed Kalimantan and its indigenous population, commonly referred to as Dayak, during the last decades. This article analyzes these processes from a gendered perspective and explores how gender relations among the Dayak, who generally are characterized by well-balanced gender relations, have been influenced by what is commonly referred to as 'development'. A review of the existing literature shows that new asymmetries between men and women are emerging mainly due to different ways of inclusion in new economic systems. Based on research among the Dayak Benuaq, the article shows that far-reaching gender equality has been so far upheld within Benuaq society while gender gets interwoven with an increasing variety of inequalities. I argue that in order to capture this complexity, research on the gendered impacts of development should a) aim for a better understanding of the intertwining of gender with other aspects, such as ethnicity, class, age, or education, b) pay more attention to how these aspects play out in different contexts, and c) differentiate more clearly between gender ideals, norms, and actual practice.

**Keywords:** Development; Environmental Change; Gender; Indigenous Peoples; Kalimantan

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the last decades, the island of Borneo and its societies have undergone rapid and profound change. Deforestation and the degradation of the natural environment has been accelerated by the increasing integration of even small communities into the global capitalist economy, the expansion of state control, ambitious plans of national and local governments to generate income and to boost economic growth through natural resource extraction, growing mobility, as well as the increasing commodification of land and other natural resources (Cleary & Eaton, 1992; Padoch & Peluso, 1996; Tsing, 2005). For the indigenous population, commonly referred to as Dayak, these changes often imply the loss of land and other natural resources, increasing dependency on wage labor, and a shift towards life in (semi-)urban centers (Cramb et al., 2009; De Koninck & Bissonnette, 2011; Sercombe & Sellato, 2007).

These transformations (re-)produce diverse economic, political, and social inequalities. This occurs, for example, through new processes of exclusion (Hall, Hirsch, & Li, 2011) as well as through the "adverse incorporation" (Hickey & Du Toit, 2007) in new economic systems. So far, the inequalities most extensively

addressed in this context in Kalimantan have been the marginalization of the local population vis-a-vis the state and (trans-)national corporations, increasing economic disparities between local elites and average villagers, and inequalities related to ethnicity (Duncan, 2004; Fried, 1995; Peluso, 2003). The latter are of increasing importance especially since decentralization, when ethnicity gained new prominence within local politics as well as through the revitalization of Dayak culture which has partly been directed against claims and demands of migrants from other parts of Indonesia, thus fueling violent conflicts in some areas of Kalimantan (Davidson, 2003; Oosterheld, 2004; Peluso, 2003; van Klinken, 2002). It has further been described how the integration into global capitalism, mainly in the form of commercial logging, mining, and the expanding oil palm industry, leads to conflicts and various forms of resistance (De Koninck & Bissonnette, 2011; Haug, 2014a; Potter, 2009). However, what remains unclear is, what role gender plays within these processes and how gender intersects with other elements of multiple and fragmented identities such as ethnicity, education, or age in the (re-) production of various kinds of inequalities.

The aim of this contribution is thus to explore these recent processes of environmental and societal change from a gendered perspective. I explore how the lives of men and women have been impacted and how gender relations have been influenced by development. The indigenous groups of Kalimantan, commonly referred to as Dayak, are of particular interest as they are characterized by far reaching gender equality.<sup>1</sup> The limited number of studies documenting the impact of recent economic and environmental change on Dayak gender roles, gender identities, and gender relations reveal heterogeneous outcomes. However, their overall tenor is that new asymmetries between men and women are emerging and that women tend to be more negatively affected by this environmental change than men.

Taking the Dayak Benuaq as an example, I show that the Benuaq have so far upheld far-reaching gender equality despite manifold external influences. I argue that gender is interwoven with a growing variety of inequalities. In order to understand the gendered impacts of development, a complex perspective has to be considered. For example, I view the still prevailing essentialist focus on women as misleading. Research exploring the gendered impacts of development must include male perspectives and aim for a better understanding of the intertwining of gender with other categories of differentiation, such as ethnicity, age, education, or social status and pay more attention to how these play out in different contexts.

Data for this article was collected during 22 months of field research in Kutai Barat between 2004 and 2007 and during two shorter periods of field research in 2009 and 2011. My initial research was an integral part of a CIFOR-BMZ research project<sup>2</sup>, which analyzed the impacts of regional autonomy on the well-being of forest dependent communities. I conducted fieldwork mainly in the three Dayak Benu-

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1 Despite the great linguistic and cultural diversity of the various Dayak groups, the available literature supports the general argument that Dayak societies are characterized by rather well-balanced gender relations. This will be further elaborated below.

2 The research project "Making Local Government More Responsive to the Poor: Developing Indicators and Tools to Support Sustainable Livelihood under Decentralization" was financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and carried out by the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in cooperation with the University of Freiburg in Germany.

aq villages Engkuni Pasek, Jontai, and Muara Nayan (Haug, 2010).<sup>3</sup> I used a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods, for example, participatory observation, formal and informal interviews, two comprehensive household surveys, and a wellbeing survey. The wellbeing survey, which I refer to below, covered a total of 300 people with equal proportions of young people, parent and grandparent generations, as well as equal proportions of men and women, all of which were chosen randomly. During my research on poverty and decentralization, gender emerged as an interesting aspect that I start to explore in this article.

In order to locate the discussion on gendered development in Kalimantan within a broader framework, I start this article with a brief overview of the gendered impacts of development in Southeast Asia before summarizing what is known so far about its impacts in Kalimantan. I then turn to my own research among the Dayak Benuaq, and describe their gender relations and how recent economic and environmental developments have impacted them. Finally, I point out relevant questions for further research on the gendered impacts of development in Kalimantan.

### GENDER, DEVELOPMENT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The increasing penetration of global capitalism into rural areas of Southeast Asia is supported by national governments as part of ambitious development agendas which often accelerate the extraction of natural resources (e.g., mining, oil palm plantations) and lead to far-reaching environmental transformations. Globalization, development, and environmental change are hence deeply intertwined in the daily experiences of men and women living in the rural areas of Southeast Asia and elsewhere. Three different bodies of literature address the gendered impacts of these processes. First, there is a broad feminist scholarship on *gender and globalization*, which explores how changes implied by globalization impact women, men, families, and gender relations, paying special attention to work relations and the (in)compatibility of productive and reproductive activities (summarized in Acker, 2004). A second body of literature, addressing *gender and development*, can be traced back to Ester Boserup's seminal work *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970). Despite the broad variety of studies that can be found within this category, a great number focuses on women in the Global South and/or the gendered impacts of specific development measures and development projects (Elson, 1995; Stevens, 2000; Trankell, 1993). The third body of literature has developed around the *gender and environment nexus*. Ecofeminist approaches that related the oppression of women and the exploitation of nature to patriarchal-capitalistic domination (Shiva, 1989) have meanwhile been heavily criticized in academia (Archambault, 1993; Leach, 2008) but they still seem prevalent in the field of practice. Recent work on gender and environment is strongly influenced by feminist political ecology which focuses on gender specific environmental knowledge, the role of gender in determining access to and control over natural resources as well as the gendered nature of environmental politics and social movements (Elmhirst, 2011; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996). Inspired

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3 As agreed with the villagers I use pseudonyms for the names of informants but regular names for places and locations.

by an increasing attention to the physical, sensory, and functional possibilities and capacities of materials (Miller, 2005), the materiality of the natural environment and human bodies becomes currently included in research on gender and environment (Barad, 2003; Elmhirst, Siscawati, & Basnett, 2015). As development, globalization, and environmental change are intimately intertwined, I do integrate literature from all these strands in my further discussion of gender and development in Southeast Asia in general and Kalimantan in particular.

Research on gender in Southeast Asian societies reveals a great diversity and has contributed to challenging dominant assumptions within the anthropology of women and gender. One of these dominant assumptions is the dichotomy of domestic and public brought forward by Rosaldo (1974). Ethnographies from Southeast Asian societies have shown that the domestic realm of life can be very powerful, as for example, among the Minangkabau in Sumatra (Sanday, 2002). They have also emphasized that control over economic resources is not automatically associated with higher social status (Anderson, 1972; Keeler, 1990), and that there are various societies which simply do not make the distinction between domestic and public, like the Dayak Gerai (Helliwell, 1993, p. 268).

It is thus not surprising that research on the gendered impacts of development in Southeast Asia, which largely focuses on women, also reveals a heterogeneous picture: Industrialization, urbanization, labor migration, and the increasing market integration of rural areas can have both empowering effects on women and (re-)produce and strengthen gender asymmetries (Rydstrom, 2010; Williams, 2007). Several researchers have emphasized that other factors such as class, age, and education highly influence the impact of development on women's lives (Helliwell, 1993; Karim, 1995) and we can assume that the same is the case for men. Aiwa Ong, studying female factory workers in Malaysia, argues that development is very unevenly experienced and distributed; even in the same community some women may benefit while others lose. Also, "for the same women the consequences may be contradictory, opening up new possibilities for social and physical mobility and introducing new freedoms, but also imposing new pressures and constraints" (Ong, 1987, cited in King, 1999, pp. 161-162). Research on agricultural modernization and increasing wage labor also shows great complexity: It is mainly young women who leave rural areas in search of wage labor while married and older women stay in (or return to) the village and are more engaged in agriculture (King, 1999, p. 162). The increasing mechanization seems to have different effects on male and female labor. While the introduction of mechanical harvesting and transplanting methods has often tended to displace women from agriculture (Scott, 1985; Wong, 1987), the mechanization of field preparation has reduced the workload of men (Rigg, 1997).

Ester Boserup (1970) has argued that colonial rule and the advance of capitalism have pushed rural women out of agriculture and confined them to the domestic realm. Such processes have also been documented for Southeast Asian societies. For example, Robinson (1986) shows how men and women were "co-partners in agricultural production" (p. 65) in Soroako, Sulawesi, before nickel mining provided employment predominantly to men. Several researchers argue that also state development programs as well as NGO programs and projects often (re-)produce gender asymmetries (Van Esterick, 1995). Such programs are often ignorant of the respective societ-

ies' understanding of gender or work, customary land tenure systems, and the local gendered division of labor. Consequently, they often locate women in the domestic sphere, while they automatically assume men as local authorities and landowners (King, 1999; Van Esterik, 1995). This ignorance tends to undermine the authority and the rights of women among ethnic minorities and indigenous groups (Klein-Hutheesing, 1995; Siscawati, 2014).

## GENDERED IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT IN KALIMANTAN

### Marginalizing Dayak Culture

To understand how development has encompassed Kalimantan, it is crucial to consider the position of Kalimantan and its people within the Indonesian nation state. During pre-colonial times, the Indonesian archipelago was characterized by emerging and declining centers and peripheries. With the advent of colonialism, however, the island of Java emerged as a single center while the surrounding islands were increasingly more transformed into the state's periphery. After Indonesian independence and short debates about federalism during the 1950s, the central position of Java and the capital Jakarta have been further strengthened, culminating in the highly centralistic *Orde Baru* (Haug, Rössler, & Grumbles, 2017). While Java and Javanese culture have been constituted as the "showcase of development" (Tsing, 1993, p. 23), the outer islands, like Kalimantan, have been constructed as the margins of the state, being "in need of 'development'" (Li, 1999, p. 11).

The New Order regime (*Orde Baru*) consequently represented itself as a government of progress, bringing development to the Indonesian periphery and its inhabitants. Development (*pembangunan*) became a crucial discourse (Arnscheidt, 2009, pp. 117-124) and the indigenous population became one of that doctrine's objects. The Dayak were classified as one of Indonesia's isolated communities (*masyarakat terasing*) whose way of living was considered not in accordance with the standards of modern Indonesia. The goal of the government was to develop these groups and integrate them into the social and cultural mainstream of the country. In practice, this meant that Dayak, as well as other indigenous peoples throughout the Indonesian Archipelago, faced severe discrimination and assimilation policies (Duncan, 2004). These included resettlement schemes, which encouraged Dayak to settle in one family houses and partly forced them to destroy their longhouses as these were considered dirty, unhealthy, dangerous, and a breeding ground for communism. The promulgation of the law UU No. 5/1979 on village administration was of major significance in this process. By standardizing village structures as per the Javanese model, it destroyed local political institutions and traditional forms of leadership and social organization. Further development efforts attempted to eliminate autochthonous Dayak belief systems as these were excluded from the official definition of religion. Thus, the Dayak experienced a heavy pressure to convert either to Islam or Christianity (Henley & Davidson, 2007, p. 10). Finally, a variety of development efforts aimed to persuade Dayak people to abandon swidden agriculture which was considered unproductive and unsustainable. Programs to get Dayak into wet rice cultivation were often combined with transmigration programs, which were aimed at relieving the population

pressure on Java, Bali, Madura, and Lombok while simultaneously expanding central control and a nationalist vision of development (Hoey, 2003, p. 110). Transmigration programs created ecological damage (e.g., the 1 million ha rice project in Central Kalimantan; Kartodiharjo & Jhamtani, 2009, pp. 47-49) and in several cases contributed to tensions between migrants and indigenous groups (Duncan, 2004).

The New Order government increased state control over natural resources through issuing sectoral laws on forestry, mining, oil and natural gas, irrigation, and fisheries, which all facilitated resource exploitation by state and private interests (Lucas & Warren, 2000; Thorburn, 2004). In Kalimantan, natural resources, most notably timber, oil and gas, gold, and coal were extracted to generate national economic growth and to benefit the center (Charras, 2005), while benefits for the local population remained limited. Instead, customary rights to land and forests were increasingly marginalized, and millions of hectares of communal forests, fallow land, and forest gardens were given to logging companies or converted to commercial agriculture, jeopardizing the livelihoods of the local population (Dove, 2006).

With the turn of the century, democratization and regional autonomy have brought manifold changes to Kalimantan. Through the 'blossoming' of new administrative units,<sup>4</sup> many new political and administrative centers were created throughout Kalimantan, endowed with new political authority and new economic opportunities. Dayak people – seen as a whole – have been empowered, with some Dayak groups becoming ruling majorities in newly created regencies (Haug, 2017), and Dayak identities becoming (re-)constructed in various ways (Widen, 2002). The resource-rich regions of Kalimantan further profited from fiscal decentralization and some local governments have undertaken great efforts to improve service provision and local infrastructures. However, not all citizens have benefited equally from these changes. New processes of marginalization on regency and village levels lead to increasing inequalities (Haug, 2017). Furthermore, democratization and decentralization have not automatically reversed ecologically destructive practices of natural resource exploitation that emerged during the New Order (Warren & McCarthy, 2009, p. 227). Development in Kalimantan continues to be focused on the extraction of natural resources and the conversion of forests for commercial agriculture. Mining will be of special importance for the future development as the masterplan for acceleration and expansion of Indonesia's economic development (MP3EI) for the period 2011-2025 designates Kalimantan as the center for the production and processing of national mining and energy reserves (Government of Indonesia, 2011).

### **Gender (In-)Equality, Development, and Environmental Change among the Dayak**

Research on gender among Dayak societies so far remains limited, fragmentary, and often raises more questions than answers (Sutlive & Appell, 1991, p. xi). However, despite the linguistic and cultural diversity of Dayak societies, the available literature documents the broad existence of well-balanced gender relations. Ethnographies describe, for example, far-reaching gender equality among the Iban (Mashman, 1991),

4 Although this phenomenon is found all over Indonesia, it is most striking in the Outer Islands. While between 1996 and 2007 the number of regencies increased by 7.8% in Java and Bali, it rose by 82% in Kalimantan (Brata, 2008).



Rungus (Appell, 1991), Gerai (Helliwell, 2000), Meratus (Tsing, 1990), and Kenyah (Colfer, 1981, 1985, 1991, 2008). This does not mean that Dayak societies are free of gender inequalities, but rather that the gender inequalities, if present, are small and often eclipsed by other categories of differentiation, for example, class in Central Borneo (Rousseau, 1991, p. 409). Gender asymmetries exist to varying degrees among the different Dayak groups and are most often found in the political domain. For example, Schneider and Schneider (1991) describe gender relations among the Selako as rather egalitarian in terms of the social relations between the sexes, however, men tend to be awarded more prestige than women and dominate political and religious positions.

The balance between men and women is produced through different practices. While some Dayak groups tend to minimize differences between men and women, others perceive them as clearly different but complementary. The Ngaju, for example, belong to the latter. For them, 'male' and 'female' are viewed as opposing domains, which together comprise a "unity in duality" (Schiller, 1991, p. 416). Appell (1991) argues that among the Rungus sex roles are not identical, but they are equivalent and both behaviorally and ideologically of equal importance for societal functioning: "for each skill exhibited by a male, there is an equally important one possessed by the female" (p. 10). Tsing (1990), who has worked among the Meratus Dayak in Central Kalimantan, has pointed out the discrepancy that can exist between gender imagery on the one hand, and the realm of practice on the other. Even though gender symmetry is an important aspect of Meratus customary law and no rule or gender stereotype exists that excludes women from political activity, few women hold political office. "The performance standards necessary to create political centrality in Meratus forums privilege male talents. [As a result] women, and less assertive men, become the audience for male 'stars'" (Tsing, 1990, p. 98).

Colfer has conducted research among the Dayak Kenyah in East Kalimantan since the late 1970s (most recently, Elmhirst, Siscawati, & Colfer, 2016) and describes their gender relations as "comparatively egalitarian" (Colfer, 2008, p. 183). The high status of Kenyah women is essentially linked to their "equality or even preeminence in economic matters" (Colfer, 2008, p. 189) and the well-balanced relationship between men and women is further strengthened by the Kenyah's respect for individual autonomy. However, Colfer (2008) describes how the equality of men and women in swidden agriculture has eroded through the introduction of chainsaws and outboard motors, as these have altered the relative contribution of the sexes to rice production and as such undermined an essential basis for the high status of women. Chainsaws are only operated by (some) men and increased the efficiency of male work, while the tasks conducted by women continue to be undertaken with traditional technology. The outboard motors further decreased women's autonomy vis á vis men, as women hardly travel alone with the heavy engines. Furthermore, government officials and extension specialists repeatedly directed agricultural planning and training towards men, ignoring the strong role of Kenyah women in agriculture. While Colfer (1985) has initially expressed the fear that these processes will inevitably lead to increasing gender asymmetries among the Kenyah, she meanwhile expresses some cautious optimism that Kenyah women will retain a relatively high status, mainly due to young women's passion for education (Colfer, 2008).



Migration to urban centers has been an important factor influencing Dayak gender relations. So far, this phenomenon has mainly been explored in the Malaysian part of Borneo as many Dayak have moved to the coastal towns of Sarawak and Sabah. The contributions to the edited volume of Hew (2007) show that the experience of moving to town is ambivalent and “often uneven across class, ethnicity, age, marital status and location” (Hew, 2007, p. 140). Having grown up in relatively gender egalitarian rural environments, many Dayak women experience difficulties with the unfamiliar gender hierarchies in Muslim dominated urban centers. Similarly, Sutlive (1991) described the migration of Iban into the city of Sibu in Sarawak which made traditional inequalities in Iban society more apparent as “traditional prescriptions and opportunities for achievement . . . have given way to economic and political systems with uneven advantages for males” (p. 497). Sutlive also mentions that with urbanization, prostitution has become a new income source for women and that domestic violence seems to have become an issue.<sup>5</sup>

Prostitution and domestic violence are also major issues discussed in a study exploring the gendered impacts of coal mining in East Kalimantan where one of Indonesia’s largest coal mines (in Kutai Timur regency) has created far-reaching environmental change, caused processes of urbanization, and lead to an influx of migrants from other parts of Indonesia (Lahiri-Dutt & Mahy, 2008). This study shows that women have profited from employment opportunities and infrastructure improvements in and around the mine, but also that “decreased opportunities from land-based livelihoods [led] to a lowering of women’s status within the family and society whilst increasing their work burdens” (Lahiri-Dutt & Mahy, 2008, p. 1). Furthermore, alcoholism and domestic violence against women increased. Several women experienced an increasing dependency on males and complained about a lack of decision-making power at the community level. The study included Dayak communities affected by the mine, but it is notable that the majority of informants seemed to be migrant women.

The expansion of oil palm as a major driver of economic and environmental change in Kalimantan has fostered interest in the gendered dimension of this industry. Research in West Kalimantan (Julia & White, 2012; Li, 2015) and with several Dayak communities in East Kalimantan (Elmhirst et al., 2015) suggests that large investments in oil palm have produced new gender inequalities, mainly due to the weak presence of women in public decision making processes, the exclusion of women from formalizing land rights, and disadvantageous labor regimes. Elmhirst et al. (2015) and Li (2015) further emphasize that the gendered impacts of oil palm can differ highly according to other aspects like age, ethnicity, the availability of land and capital, as well as between smallholdings and plantation schemes.

In sum, the number of studies that explore the rapid economic and environmental changes in Kalimantan from a gendered perspective is still rather small.<sup>6</sup> Despite some variations, the common tenor is that new gender asymmetries tend to emerge because of environmental and economic change.

5 It has been argued that Bornean societies are characterized by an absence of sexual violence (Helliwell, 2001; Sutlive & Appell, 1991).

6 I have limited this literature review to academic publications and have not included reports and so called ‘grey literature’ from NGOs.

## MAINTAINING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE FACE OF CHANGE AMONG THE BENUAQ

The Benuaq belong to the Barito linguistic family of southeastern Borneo. Until the early 20th century, they had a stratified social order which distinguished between nobles, commoners, and slaves. Since then, the increasing integration into the monetary market economy and the Indonesian national administration produced a new dispersion of power and prestige (Gönner, 2002, p. 51; Massing, 1981). Most Benuaq practice an extended subsistence economy (Gönner, 2001, p. 171) which is characterized by a combination of swidden agriculture, extracted and cultivated forest products, and additional wage labor. The religious life of the Benuaq is dominated by their autochthonous religion (Venz, 2012) and Christianity, which are connected in a complementary way.

### Gender Among the Dayak Benuaq

Gender equality represents a contested term, and feminist debates about the 'equality' of men and women have produced rather contrary positions. While liberal and Marxist feminists perceive gender equality as the social insignificance of sexual differences, radical feminists insist that there are essential differences between men and women and attempt to increase women's status by reversing those values that favor only masculinity (Du, 2002, p. 3). Spiro (1980) distinguishes between the "identity" and the "equivalence" meaning of equality. According to the latter, men and women are equal as long as their differences are held to be equally valuable. Accordingly, Du (2002) defines "a gender egalitarian society as one whose dominant ideology, institutions, and social practices value its male and female members equally, regardless of the roles they play" (p. 9). Building on this equivalence meaning of equality, I argue that Dayak Benuaq gender relations are characterized by a far-reaching gender equality.<sup>7</sup> This argument is based on the following observations: Specific gender roles do exist in Benuaq society, but they are not strictly followed and often overlap. While women do in general more housework than men and often take care of small children, it is not unusual for men to wash their own clothes, to cook, or to take care of babies, toddlers, and older children. Both men and women make important contributions to economic production. Men and women fulfill equally important roles in swidden agriculture and agroforestry and today both young men and women increasingly seek employment outside the village. Men and women do have equal rights and access to land and other natural resources according to customary law. Furthermore, customary inheritance law neither privileges male nor female children. Similar to the Kenyah (see above), the Benuaq highly value individual autonomy, and personal authority is based more on age and personality than on gender. The autochthonous religion of the Dayak Benuaq encompasses both male and female creator spirits. Healing rituals

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<sup>7</sup> Gender relations which are not characterized by male dominance have also been termed as gender symmetries when areas of male dominance are opposed by powerful female domains (e.g., DeJong, 1998; Metje, 1995). The term gender complementarity is often used to stress that male and female complement each other to form a unity, while the adjective egalitarian is used to emphasize the absence of institutionalized hierarchies between men and women.

are carried out by female and male specialists, while death rituals are conducted by men only.

The existence of Benuaq terms for polygyny (*penuyaang*) and polyandry (*pemad-uq*) suggests that both forms of marriage have been practiced in the past. Standard today is a monogamous marriage. Although sexual relations before marriage are restricted for young men and women, virginity is not valued as among several other Dayak groups of Central Borneo (Rousseau, 1991). Marriages can be divorced with few problems and neither men nor women experience a decline in status by divorce. The Benuaq have a bilateral kinship system. Previously, an uxorilocal post marital residence pattern prevailed. Today, young couples prefer to set up their own household, given that they can afford to do so. There is no preference for children of any sex, many couples express the wish to have at least one child of each sex. Girls and boys have equal access to education, given that parents have the financial means at all to school their children. Education is highly appreciated and has significantly increased with the improved availability of primary as well as higher education since decentralization (Haug, 2010). Female mobility is not restricted but has improved as a consequence of the shift from transportation by river to road. While women seldom travel alone on boats with outboard motors, they enjoy riding motorbikes. During my field work I met several women who use motorbikes to commute on a daily or weekly basis between their workplace and the village.

The most significant imbalances between men and women among the Benuaq can be found in the political realm. Although there are no formal restrictions for women and there are some outstanding female leaders, formal political leadership is mainly in the hands of men. However, women are actively engaged in all kinds of political fora that I attended, for example, the newly created village parliaments (*Badan Perwakilan Kampung*) or village meetings (*musyawarah kampung*). So far, I have not found any satisfying explanation for this imbalance. For the Meratus, Tsing put forward the reason that performance standards necessary to create political centrality privilege male talents (see above), however, this reason seems unsuitable for the Benuaq. Several of my (male and female) informants argued that women rarely want these positions because formal leaders have to spend many hours, especially during the evenings and often late into the nights, away from their families to attend rituals, meetings, and dispute settlements. These (partly not formal but moral) obligations are seen as conflicting with other tasks, primarily their role as (grand)mothers.

### **The Complex Intertwinement of Gender, Age, and Education**

I have argued so far that road construction and the increasing availability of motorbikes have increased female mobility. Taking a closer look reveals that age matters as well. While most young people can drive a motorbike, many of those belonging to the elder generation cannot. Roads and motorbikes have increased primarily the mobility of young (and middle-aged) men and women. It is also the younger generation that most often engages in wage labor. In many households, the parents (or grandparents) concentrate on swidden agriculture and agroforestry activities while their sons and daughters seek jobs to provide for the increasingly important and more regularly needed cash income. In this context, women and men are integrated differently in

the gendered socio-economic systems of logging activities, coal mining, or oil palm plantations. Wage labor for both men and women is often linked to ambiguous experiences. While they are empowered by their earnings and their experiences outside the village, they often find themselves placed in exploitative work arrangements and unfavorable positions within unfamiliar (gendered) hierarchies. Imagining young women spraying pesticides on oil palm plantations and young men working in the logging industry, all of which have minimal security standards, illustrates that health risks are different but equally tangible for male and female bodies.

The importance of age is also reflected in representations of wellbeing. The wellbeing survey which I conducted in the three research sites revealed that wellbeing varied only slightly by gender but widely by age. While the percentage of people enjoying a good life remained relatively stable in all three generations, the proportion of people who felt they suffered a bad life increased from 33% among the young people to 46% in the parent generation to 56% in the grandparent generation (Haug, 2010, p. 153). This trend was extreme in the village of Muara Nayan, where 95% of the grandparent generation stated that they lived a bad life. Instead of providing a better future for their children and grandchildren, the elder generation of Muara Nayan witnesses them faced with more and more problems, for example, the loss of land to oil palm plantations, the loss of gardens through forest fires, and increasing water pollution caused by nearby open-pit coal mining. The elder generation thus feels especially worried that the general condition in the village is spiraling downwards (Haug, 2014c).

Besides age, education and family relations play an important role in the context of newly emerging inequalities. When the regency Kutai Barat came into existence in 2001, a large number of office jobs needed to be filled. This provided a great opportunity for the well-educated community members. For example, in the village of Engkuni Pasek, which has an unusually high level of formal education<sup>8</sup> and is located close to the new administrative center, at least 30% of the households had members who got new jobs in Sendawar, mainly as civil servants or teachers. Men and women enjoyed these new job opportunities equally which were further supported by the close personal links between several families in Engkuni Pasek and the first district leader Rama A. Asia (Haug, 2017).

In Jontai, gender was yet again interwoven with other aspects in the context of the logging boom which followed decentralization. People in this village benefited (temporarily) from fee payments and the opportunity to engage in self-organized logging. However, these benefits were distributed very unevenly. As I have shown elsewhere (Haug, 2014b, 2017), it has been the (mainly male) village leaders and several 'tough' young men who gained the largest profits. Benefits from the logging boom were thus not only gendered but largely influenced by age, formal authority, physical strength, and individual characteristics.

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8 This can be explained through a Catholic missionary school which was founded in this village in the 1950s.

## CONCLUSION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The situation in the three study sites shows that gender intersects with age, education, and various other aspects. It further reveals that gender relations among the Benuaq have been influenced by state development policies, the growing presence of Indonesian national culture, and Christian proselytization – all of which are characterized by differing gender concepts and different gender hierarchies. The market integration of small and until recently rather remote communities leads to an increasing inclusion of the Dayak Benuaq in new economic and social systems which are characterized by different norms, values, and gender hierarchies. Gender is thus not only intertwined with ethnicity, age, education, and other elements of multiple and fragmented identities but is also negotiated in increasingly varying contexts. Being a man or a woman can have different meanings within one's family, within the village, in a logging camp, or in a local government office.

Insights into indigenous concepts of gender, work, and the complementarity of masculine and feminine identities in Southeast Asia have challenged common notions of gender based on predominantly Western concepts. Indigenous concepts and perspectives should thus be placed center stage of future research on gender in Kalimantan. Already in the 1990s, Van Esterick (1995) argued that women's NGOs in Southeast Asia have embraced Western gender and development discourse (often in order to receive funding) at the expense of local language, concepts, and perceptions. She consequently urged that "terms such as development, work, gender, and equity must all be deconstructed and interpreted through indigenous logic" (p. 257). This is still a cogent demand and should motivate and inspire future ethnographies.

Research at the nexus of gender, development, and environmental change in Kalimantan should pay attention to including men as well. Currently, research on the gendered impacts of development still largely focuses on women, with some recent exceptions (Großmann, 2015). NGO literature tends to depict Dayak women as an especially vulnerable group. This reflects social injustices caused by prevailing gender inequalities in Indonesia, but it also demonstrates the need for activists to often simplify complex relations in order to raise awareness for pressing matters and expose social injustices to an audience not familiar with the issues at hand. Elmhirst et al. (2015), however, show how revealing it is to overcome "overly simple dualisms such as . . . male capacities and female vulnerabilities" (p. 3). By facilitating links among different activist communities, such a perspective may be enriching for campaigns against gendered injustices.

The anthropological interest for the "differences within" (Moore, 1993) has gained new affirmation through the recent popularity of intersectionality (Lykke, 2010) which represents a crucial approach for most recent studies. As almost all studies on gender and development reveal great ambiguities as well as the intertwining of gender with other categories of differentiation, future research on gender and development in Kalimantan should more consequently address intersectionality and explore the (re-)production of gendered inequalities as intertwined with age, ethnicity, education, class, and other aspects. Drawing on the insights by Tsing (1990), future research should also carefully distinguish between a) the ideational level (What values, qualities, and characteristics are assigned to men and women?), b) the normative

level (Which rights, roles, and responsibilities do men and women have according to a specific normative order?), and c) the level of everyday practice (How are the concepts at the ideational level and the rights and duties expressed at the normative level realized in everyday social practice?). This might lead to an analysis of how new labor arrangements within families and households challenge and change existing gender identities, gender roles, and gender relations, and to what extent this leads to changes in gender ideology, institutions, and social practices.

Calls to pay attention to the differences amongst women and amongst men, to the discrepancy between ideals and practice, as well as to the contextuality of gender relations have been repeatedly voiced. But this does not mean that they have become any less important. Quite the contrary, with the ever more rapid pace of economic, societal, and environmental change, it is of utmost importance to understand the role played by gender in the (re-)production of inequality on one of Southeast Asia's most important development frontiers.



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