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# Civil Society Dialogue in the Context of the Belt and Road Initiative



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of the Belt and Road Initiative

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## 逆水行舟 – Three years of challenges in civil society dialogue

The 3,5 years of this project have been a tremendous challenge for Stiftung Asienhaus's China-Programme. Leaving the EU-China NGO Twinning Programme after seven years behind, we ventured into a new focus area to support transnational civil society dialogue from the bottom up in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative in Southeast Asia.

With Covid-19 spreading globally from late 2019 onwards, our project concept gradually collapsed like a house of cards. Travelling became impossible and so were analogue encounters between civil society representatives – the central method of Stiftung Asienhaus's civil society work with Asia. The subsequent digital reset enabled us to reconnect with our friends and partners, albeit in an entirely different way.

### Civil Society Dialogue in the Context of the BRI

With this project we intended to invite civil society organisations from China, Southeast Asia and Europe to enter a dialogue on the environmental and social implications of the Belt and Road Initiative. The project was aimed at enabling spaces of exchange, learning and solidarity for civil society organisations and at improving the sustainability of Belt and Road Initiative investments together with stakeholders involved.

We are still convinced that civil society dialogue across cultural and political borders improves organisational capacities, cooperation potentials and action-oriented research towards the common goal of sustainability. To this

end, our project offered a threefold exchange experience with a workshop in China, a fieldwork period in Southeast Asia and a conference in Europe. Moreover, we planned to give civil society organisations the opportunity to develop their global strategy for a rising China and to strengthen their voices on a global governance level.

We sought to contribute to the promotion of Chinese, European and local civil society participation in BRI projects in Southeast Asia. Our project goals were the improvement of the capacities of Chinese, European and Southeast Asian civil society organisations concerning their internationalisation and cooperative abilities. Moreover, we wanted to facilitate international cooperation, exchange and changes in perspective between civil society organisations from China, Europe and Southeast Asia about BRI projects. Ultimately, civil society perspectives should be visible in the development policy discourse on the BRI.

However, things went quite differently.

### Pandemic start

Initially, the project design included three core components. First, we wanted to kick off the project with a week full of engagements and workshops in the Southwest of China. In Kunming participants were meant to get to know each other, develop their working language and common ground for cooperation and learn about Chinese perspectives on the BRI.

Second, a four-to-six-week joint fieldwork period in either Myanmar or Indonesia was meant to offer civil society



Chinatown in Jakarta

organisations from these countries, China, and Europe to learn about issues of social and environmental justice and build up civil society spaces for engagement with Chinese stakeholders from the ground.

Finally, a conference in Berlin or Brussels was planned to provide participating organisations with a platform to present their findings and share them with decision makers.

On the contrary, when the project started in May 2020 international travel had already been stalled. Countries struggled with finding the right approach to protecting their populations. China took the most isolationist direction. In any case, the original timeline and a kick-off in China became impossible. Moreover, bureaucracies and consulates in Germany and China were hit by local lockdowns, making the work on official documents to file a temporary activity record even a challenge in Germany.

## Digital Reset

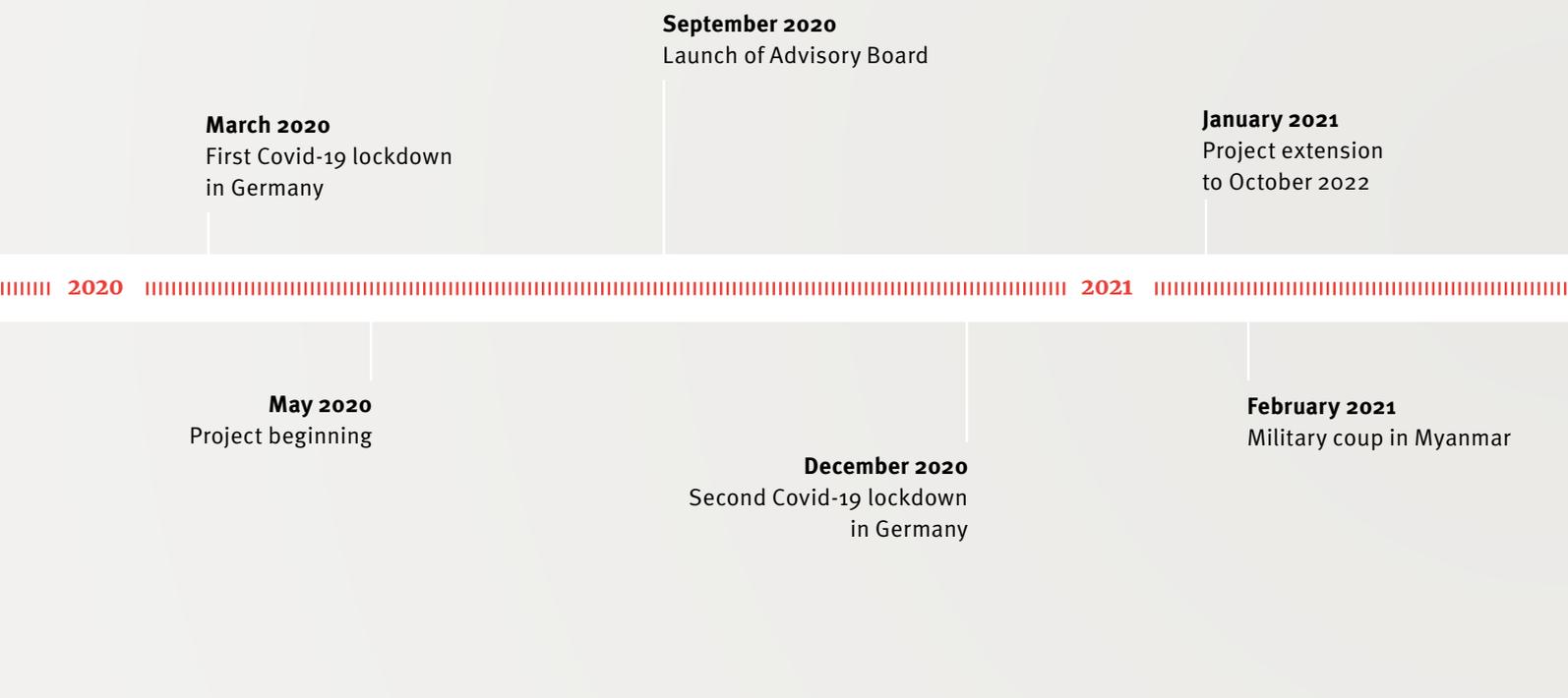
The analogue encounter of civil society representatives we were used to from projects like the EU-China NGO Twinning Programme (2012–2019) was not possible in the fore-

seeable future. Dialogue formats needed to be translated into the digital realm. The digital realm offered alternatives to meet and see each other again. At the same time, it implied compatibility and security issues.

We took up the idea of providing Chinese perspectives on the BRI and establishing a work language for our participants by starting a digital event series for the public called *Stiftung Asienhaus Asks Chinese Civil Society*. In a first instalment, Chinese civil society representatives were invited to focus on the term ‘Green BRI’, chin. 绿色一带一路. In a second session, representatives discussed the term ‘High-Quality BRI’, chin. 高质量一带一路. The series concluded with a session on ‘Digital BRI’, chin. 数字一带一路.

The series showed how Chinese civil society organisations worked with these key BRI terms, where they offered opportunities for local civil society actors in BRI host countries and where they were applied by BRI stake holders to whitewash investment projects. The going out of Chinese companies externalised Chinese domestic participatory mechanisms, or lack thereof vis-à-vis civil society. They were characterised by a top-down approach, discourse power and corporate reputation building. Chinese civil society organisation possessed the unique knowledge, where and how local communities in Southeast Asia could utilise these mechanisms to their own advantage.

## Project trajectory



## Fieldwork in Indonesia

From the original project components, the second was realised between August and October 2022. Together with our Advisory Board we selected four civil society organisations from Indonesia to work on Chinese investment projects in the country. The coup in Myanmar in February 2021 had rendered the local situation totally unsafe for local civil society organisations let alone a dialogue with transnational civil society.

In early August 2022, the four accepted grantee organisations introduced their proposed fieldwork projects to each other. The organisation Gudskul took up the issue of plastic waste in Indonesia, which often consists of product exports from China. Through course work and art collaboration, Gudskul started a conversation between artists and environmental practitioners from Indonesia and China in order to find new perspectives on how we can think about plastic waste from our respective contexts.

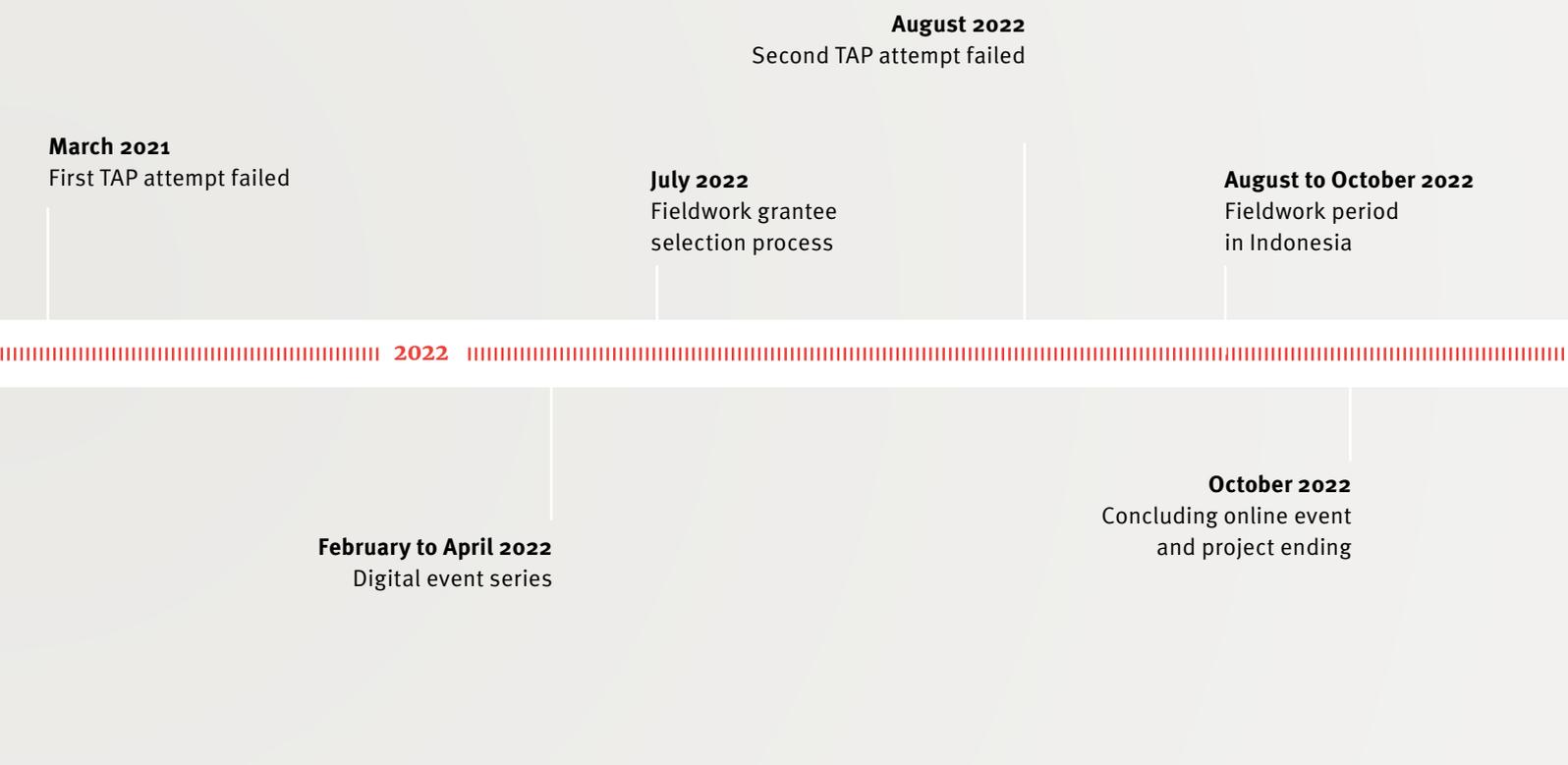
Sarbi Indonesia Institute conducted research on the Kayan River Hydropower Plant Development Project in Northern Kalimantan. The organisation specifically addressed the transparency issues around the plant and its social and environmental impact. Sarbi's findings shall serve as the

basis for a multi-stakeholder dialogue including Chinese stakeholders, local communities, and civil society representatives in the future.

Walhi Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTB), a regional chapter of Walhi, planned to work on the Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ) on the island of Lombok. The SEZ's development has resulted for instance in local land issues. Walhi NTB worked on the SEZ's current situation, its investment and financing background and how it impacted on local livelihoods. At the same time, the organisation wanted to empower local communities through multi-stakeholder dialogues.

Hutan Rakyat Institute continued its work on community inclusion in BRI projects in Indonesia. The organisation's focus lay on the opening up of more dialogue and consultation platforms for banks, investors, contractors, universities and civil society organisations, both from Indonesia and China. Field visits to communities whose livelihoods have been impacted on by the construction of the Jakarta-Bandung High-speed Rail were also conducted.

During their project implementation, the Indonesian NGOs attended monthly online meet-ups organized by Stiftung Asienhaus with trainers from the Chinese civil society



sphere. This way they strengthened their capacities on such issues as gender mainstreaming, communication with Chinese state and private stakeholders, campaigning, etc.

At the same time we matched them with staff from Chinese NGOs that had valuable expertise and experience in their work sectors. On the basis of the peer-to-peer learning methods applied in zoom meetings new perspectives of engaging with Chinese BRI projects were discovered.

## Transnational dialogue

This documentation comprises the fieldwork reports of our grantees. We hope that the volume offers a glimpse at what happens in BRI projects from the bottom-up. Clearly, we need more networking, solidarity, and cooperation amongst civil society organisation on a transnational level – including Chinese organisations.

This project ended after a trajectory completely different from its initial design. However, the core remained: bringing civil society actors together to strengthen their capacities, their knowledge, and their position vis-à-vis other

stakeholders, on the way to more social and environmental justice in this world.

This project has just been the beginning in the quest to understand more about ‘Global China’ from a particular civil society perspective informed by the experiences of people affected most by Chinese overseas investments. Stiftung Asienhaus is going to remain dedicated to this end.

*Joanna Klabisch and Christian Straube*



逆水行舟 chin. nìshuǐ xíngzhōu, eng.: navigating a boat against the current. The meaning behind this Chinese proverb is to work hard when the conditions or environment are unfavorable.

# Promoting Social and Environmental Sustainability Through Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues in the Belt and Road Initiative in Indonesia

## Introduction

In the midst of 2021, Hutan Rakyat Institute (HaRI), in cooperation with Asia Society Policy Institute, conducted a preliminary study on BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) projects in Indonesia. The research examined how the stakeholders involved in BRI projects engaged with local communities, in particular those impacted by the projects.

Through a series of field visits to three project locations, interviews and dialogues with different parties, some important findings came to light, among others, that above all many Chinese stakeholders in BRI projects, such as banks, investors, and contractors did not conduct sufficient due diligence and complaints mechanisms for the affected communities were often unavailable. As a result, conflicts among parties were unavoidable. In particular the pre-project implementation of social and environmental assessments was not carried out in accordance with international standards. We also discovered that impacted communities were neglected until the projects' completion.

This preliminary study suggests that the communities and all other stakeholders like investors, implementing companies, government representatives as well as local, Chinese and international civil society needed a common dialogue platform. This would also ensure access to relevant information for all parties, especially the impacted communities (Free Prior and Informed Consent).

To understand the patterns behind these cases it was necessary to expand and scale up the study to other locations. We needed to connect with more communities living along the Jakarta-Bandung High Speed Rail project, the case of our first research project and make their voices heard by the public and stakeholders involved.

The projects main focus however was on creating a national consultation on BRI in Indonesia, by involving relat-

ed stakeholders as well as the affected communities, CSOs in China and Indonesia, and academics. A field visit to the communities affected by the high-speed rail project was conducted in order to deepen understanding of the cases and to engage the directly affected communities in the consultation.

## Field Work (visit to and discussion with the CSOs and the affected communities)

During the project period, visits were made to various civil society organizations in North Sumatra, Jakarta, Bogor, and Bandung. These visits were carried out in order to invite the parties to be involved in a common platform to respond to critical issues in the BRI projects in Indonesia. The lack of compensation to the affected members of the local communities whose houses and access to water were damaged as a result of the blasting and drilling for Jakarta-Bandung High Speed Rail project.

The result of the visit was an update regarding cases specifically monitored by HARI, for example on the yet unresolved situation in West Java, including the absence of free prior informed consent (FPIC) with the locals. The update of the situation in the ground has been published on the official website of HARI: <http://hari.or.id/news/2022/11/korban-proyek-kereta-cepat-jakarta-bandung-belum-mendapatkan-perhatian/>. The latest updates of the affected communities per October 2022 stated that there is still no compensation distributed by the *Kereta Cepat Jakarta Bandung* (KCJB) Consortium or Jakarta Bandung Speed Train, there was still no channel and mechanism available for the communities to submit their complains.

From our visits we found out, that support was obtained from various CSOs in Indonesia and from international civil society.



*Jakarta-Bandung Speedtrain Railway, a view from the entrance to the impacted village*

## A. National Consultation

Preparations for a national consultation have been carried out from July through October 2022. This event has received a broad positive response from the HARI networks both nationally and internationally. Co-organized with WALHI's national chapter, the event took place on the 20th and 21st of October at Amaris Hotel in Jakarta and engaged a number of national and international organisations such as WALHI West Nusa Tenggara, WALHI North Sumatera, WALHI West Java, Sarbi Institute, BHRRC, University of Indonesia, Stiftung Asienhaus, ASPI (Washington), and others. In addition, a short field visit was carried out to one of the communities affected by the Jakarta-Bandung high-speed rail project on 22 October 2022.

The national consultation was designed as a closed doors hybrid event following the request of several partners who were concerned about their safety during the consultations.

The following are some highlighted key points from the consultation:

- a. The attending civil society organisations will discuss the possibility of initiating a monitoring platform on the BRI projects in Indonesia and of forming an organized working group in the future;
- b. A working group would be established under the coordination of WALHI and HaRI Institute. The G20 Summit in Bali in November 2022 and the AIIB's tenth anniversary meetings in 2023 in Indonesia shall be used as opportune moments to address BRI projects with various parties;
- c. The engagement of CSOs in Indonesia will be expanded beyond those who have participated in the preliminary event;
- d. Advocacy will be expanded to executive and legislative levels;
- e. Advocacy will focus on evidence generation by conducting further research related to environmental and social issues around BRI projects in Indonesia.

## Future Collaborations with the Chinese Peers

During the preparation of the consultation, HaRI Institute has been in touch with a couple of Chinese peers which have contributed a lot in making recommendations to the national team on potential challenges when doing BRI advocacy. HaRI Institute has been benefiting from the discussion and potential collaboration talks with the Chinese peers in advancing its advocacy towards the BRI agenda in Indonesia, including how to involve the Chinese stakeholders in broader sense and not limitedly to CSOs.

The potential future collaboration has relevance with recommendation raised by the participants of the national consultation to initiate a monitoring platform on the BRI projects in Indonesia. An intensive discussion will be held in the near future by inviting the existing Chinese peers and the national coalition. Prior to establishing a common platform, HaRI Institute would like to invite the CSO coalition to sit and discuss the potential and challenges of instituting the platform. In addition to the common platform, a worth noting recommendation should include a communication initiative for CSO coalitions to strengthen a multi-stakeholder collaboration that inclusively engages “others” (e.g., government, corporates, financial institutions) in the BRI’s sustainability agenda.



*National Consultation in Jakarta*

HARI or Yayasan Hutan Rakyat Indonesia is a non-profit organization engaged in environmental conservation, socio-economic capacity building, and policy reform in achieving ecological justice. The organization’s main strategies are studies, advocacy, campaigns, and direct assistance to communities.



*Villagers shows documented cracks in his house which were caused by the speedrailway tunnel construction*

# „Green Development“ is not always Green

Considering the Development Plan of the Kayan River Hydroelectric Power Plant.

## Introduction

The history of dam construction is as old as human civilization. In ancient Chinese mythology, the story of building a dam to block a flood has been told, but it broke and caused an even larger disaster. This story shows the long history of some of the possible impacts of dam construction and attempts to control the flow of rivers<sup>1</sup> have.

For thousands of years, humans around the world have been constructing dam-like structures to impound water for drinking and irrigation, to retain and control floodwaters. In modern times, dams are also built to provide hydroelectric power, enable recreational activities, and for various other purposes<sup>2</sup>.

For Indonesia, the construction of hydro-electric power is not. However, it is known that the planned construction of the Kayan hydropower plant in Bulungan Regency, North Kalimantan Province will be the largest hydropower project ever built in Indonesia to date.

Learning from experience so far, the development of hydropower plants always causes various negative environmental, social and governance impacts. Resolving the problems surrounding these issues through improper means like inadequate compensations schemes, should no longer be done. Malaysia delayed the construction of the Baram hydropower plant in Sarawak over sustainability issues, the Indonesian government should not hesitate to follow its example in this case.

This study was carried out quickly to provide preliminary information that one of the mega projects carried out under the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) will have significant environmental and social impacts. Support for further studies is highly appreciated.



*Kayan river*

## Damming the Kayan river

Damming the Kayan river, let alone up to 5 levels in a row to be transformed into a hydroelectric power plant is something extraordinary, a big dream and not a job that can be rushed. The total area claimed by the developer (PT. Kayan Hydropower Energy) is 190,600 hectares, only slightly below the area of the Capital of the Archipelago (IKN). The area in question is above the average area of the 5 largest coal mines in Indonesia as well as the area of the 5 largest dams in Indonesia, if combined into one.

Located far away in the province of North Kalimantan on Borneo, the Kayan river is essential for the livelihoods of the Dayak Kenyah people. It is irreplaceable to them. Being the source of their sustainable lifestyles for generations, the Kayan river has shaped the cultural civilization of a unique river community. Its historical roots can be traced back to the prehistoric era through archaeological dig sites along the river unearthing stone tombs in the shape of square vessels, neolithic stone tools in the form of square axes and shoulder axes, as well as the remains of long-abandoned villages.

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- 1 Wang, Pu; Dong, Shikui, and Lassoie, James P. 2014. *The Large Dam Dilemma: an Exploration of the Impacts of Hydro Projects on People and Environment in China*. Springer.
  - 2 Rainer, Halga; White, Alison; and Lanjouw A., 2013. *State of The Apes 2013: Extractive Industries and Ape Conservation*. Cambridge University Press.

The forest vegetation covering of the Kayan River Basin is one of the last remaining lowland tropical rainforest ecosystems globally, located on the third largest island in the world. The forest in the heart of Borneo has managed to withstand the surrounding development in Indonesia almost unharmed, making it the last surviving tropical rainforest ecosystem on the planet.

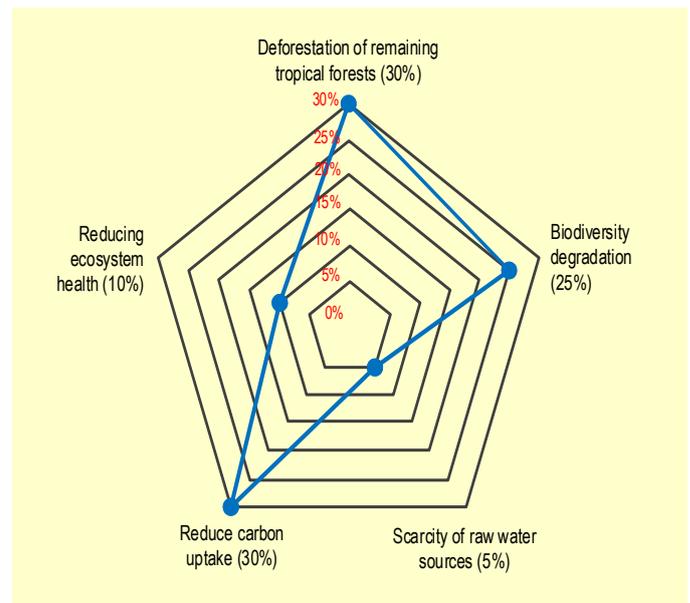
Following the river upstream is the Kayan Mentarang National Park ecosystem that extends into the central mountainous area of the island of Borneo, also building a natural border between Indonesia and Sarawak, Malaysia. This national park ecosystem is connected to the Betung Kerihun National Park ecosystem in West Kalimantan Province, being one of the last strongholds that contributes oxygen to the world's lungs and thereby assisting in the fight against global warming.

For thousands of years, the tropical rainforest ecosystem of the heart of Borneo has been home to millions of species only found in this area, and some of them we might not even have discovered yet. This unimaginable biodiversity has played an important role in food security, pharmacy, the cosmetic industry and many other economic sectors as well.

The Kayan shores, up to the rivers' upper reaches has been inhabited by humans for generations and influenced the local cultures in yet to be revealed ways. Various arts, dances and cultural patterns have been created symbolizing a harmonious relationship with the universe and are inspired by the local fauna. Living in what is known as tana' kejin, meaning the land where people dance. The people of the Dayak Kenyak tribe are well known for their rich dance culture, their carvings and crafts, and architectural design which are quite unique compared to other Dayak ethnicities.

All of this, the flora and fauna, as well as the indigenous cultures will be lost when the Kayan river hydropower plant should be realized.

All stakeholders believe that the mega-project cannot be withdrawn, regardless of the obstacles, and risks. This article will most likely not change the course of this development project either. However, the results of studies, the impacts that can occur, and the environmental and social risks behind this project need to be revealed so that we can all fully understand hydropower as the less than sustainable option it is. We need to produce clean energy. We need sources that are environmentally friendly, and socially just. We must however also have the courage to admit that the options we have, in this case hydropower, are not always as environmentally friendly as they are portrayed!



*Environmental Impact*

## Environmental Impact

Peraturan Pemerintah (Government Regulation) PP No. 22 of 2021 concerning the Implementation of Environmental Protection and Management, states the following activities: (a) changing the shape of land and landscapes, (b) exploitation of renewable natural resources, (c) development processes that affect the natural environment, the artificial environment, and socio-cultural environment, (d) development processes that have the potential to cause environmental pollution and/or damage, and (e) development processes that may affect natural resource conservation areas and/or local cultural heritage areas, have significant impacts on the local environment and are therefore strictly regulated.

The construction of the dam meets these five criteria.

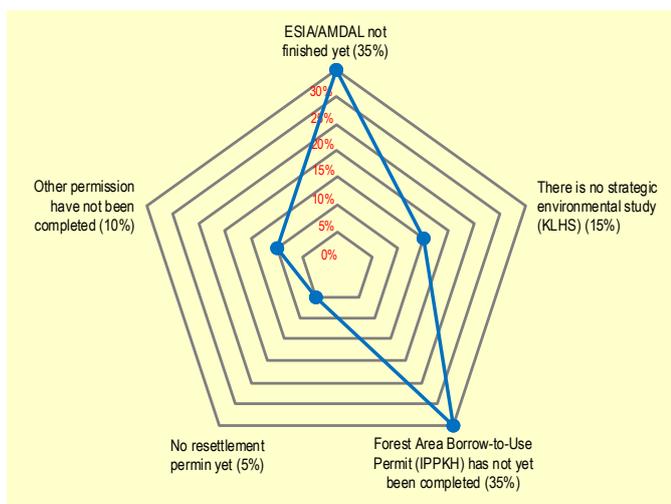
Based on the results of our small field research, we can confidently state that there are five environmental impacts that can occur, namely (a) deforestation, (b) increased emissions, (c) biodiversity degradation, (d) scarcity of raw water sources for the community, and (e) reduced ecosystem health. According to Indonesian law, deforestation is a permanent change from a forested area to a non-forested area caused by human activities, such as logging, fires from land clearing, or the loss of forest function due to drowning in a reservoir inundation area. Deforestation in the Kayan river area is not just caused by cutting down forest for construction activities, but also the loss of forest that sinks into a reservoir inundation area.

## Regulatory Compliance Aspect

Dam construction according to the criteria in PP no. 22 of 2021, are under the obligation to conduct an AMDAL study. An AMDAL, Analisis Mengenai Dampak Lingkungan, is a study focused on environmental and social impact assessment (based on World Bank group, AMDAL mirrors the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment, ESIA). This study is compulsory and should be implemented long before the ground-breaking is carried out. To date, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry has not issued their so called environmental approval for the Kayan hydropower plant based on an AMDAL study, which according to the Ministry has been carried out, but we have been unable to obtain.

Environmental approval means a legal permit from the Ministry of Environment and Forestry which has evaluated the results of the AMDAL study, and then approved the environmental management plan and environmental monitoring plan to be carried out by the Kayan Hydroelectric Power Plant.

It is not only the obligatory environmental permits (AMDAL approval) that have not been fulfilled by the Kayan Hydropower Plant but during a multi-stakeholders meeting, which included government representatives, it was stated that there are still several mandatory legal requirements that have not been fulfilled, namely: (a) Permits to borrow-to-use forest areas are not yet fully owned, (b) Permits for relocation (relocation) of residents have not been taken care of, and (c) diverse permissions are still needed. Meanwhile, a more comprehensive study that has a broader scope than the AMDAL has also not yet been implemented.



Compliance

## Socio-Cultural Impact

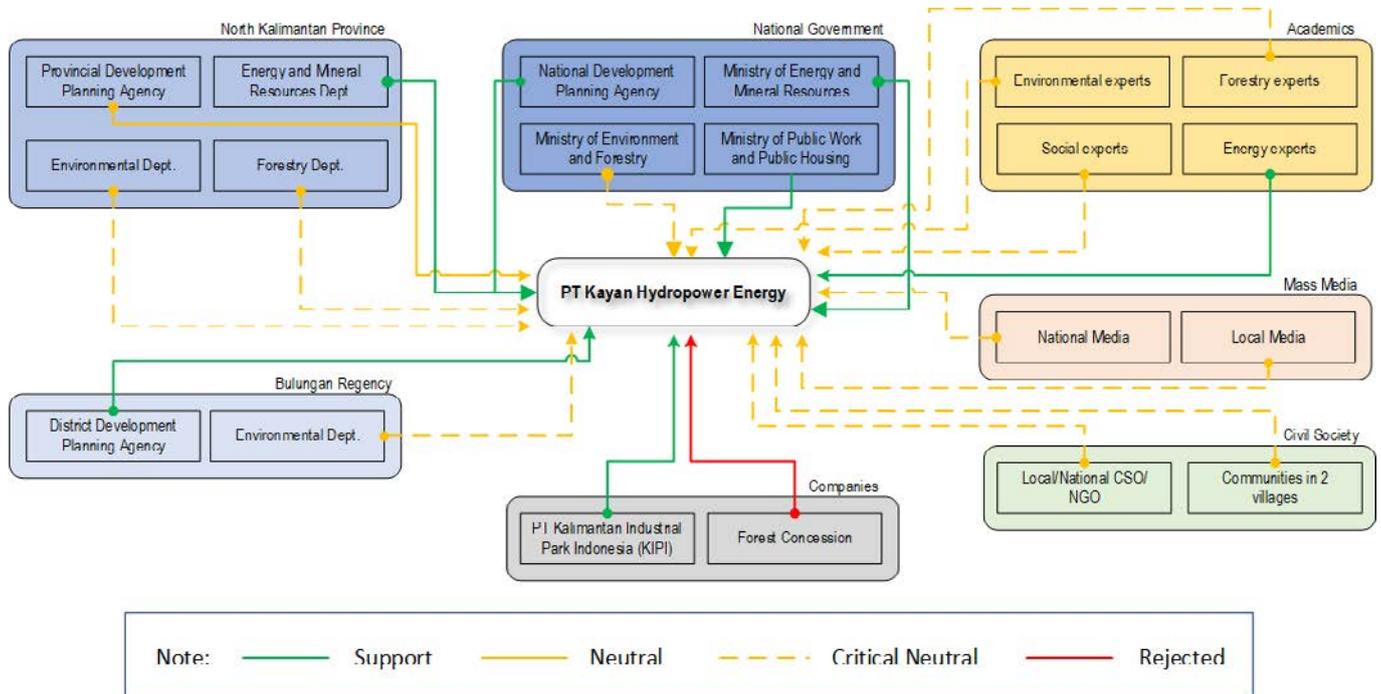
The forest village communities involved are highly dependent on local forest ecosystems and resources. The location of the two villages is also on the border of the Kayan river and opposite each other, where Long Peleban is on the left side of the Kayan river upstream, and Long Lejuh is on the right side. For the two villages, the Kayan river which measures 575 km from upstream to downstream is the "vein" of their life, as reflected in the name of their tribe, Dayak Kayan.

Based on the results of our small field research, there are a number of socio-cultural impacts that could befall them, such as (a) loss of sustainable livelihoods, (b) loss of religious/cultural sites, (c) psychological problems for Dayak women, (d) the emergence of social conflicts or horizontal conflicts with residents in the relocation area, and (e) changing their typology from river culture communities to mainland communities. The five socio-cultural impacts are even suspected to already have begun to take effect. Some communities in the potential relocation sites are starting to show signs of resistance to the arrival of potential migrants to their village locations.

## Aspect of Compliance with Governance

One of the main stages in conducting an AMDAL study, involves public consultation activities with the people who will be affected by the project. According to international regulations, this stage is part of the FPIC (free, prior, informed and consent) mechanism. The communities of the two villages affected by the project stated that the FPIC mechanisms had not yet been fully implemented. Although the developer has invited several community representatives to visit a similar project in China, the visit should not be interpreted as a form of approval from the entire community on the project plan.

In addition, stakeholders admitted that there were still several things that showed that project governance had not met the principles of GCG (good corporate governance). These include (a) not providing a grievance mechanism, (b) not carrying out public disclosure properly, (c) not preparing accessible ESMS (environmental and social management system) documents, and (d) therefore not supporting the creation of public transparency as a whole.



### Stakeholder Mapping

## Social Mapping Analysis

This study succeeded in mapping out the social roles of each stakeholder, as well as their responses to the Kayan hydropower project plan. In general, there is only one stakeholder who firmly refuses the dam construction, namely the Forest Concession. While other stakeholders are neutral, or critically neutral and support the existence of the project.

The project implementation is stagnating in different localities, which is the reason that construction activities in the field have not shown progress. This is increasingly causing social unrest, uncertainty and suspicion in the community.

Efforts to accelerate its development through plans to make it a National Strategic Project might potentially violate regulations and protective standards.

## Conclusion

The results of in-depth interviews, distributed questionnaires and rapid field observations, obtained four aspects of life that have the potential to be negatively impacted by the Kayan hydropower development plan, namely (a) aspects of the impact on the environment and local ecosystems, (b) aspects of socio-cultural impacts on indigenous peoples' lives, (c) regulatory aspects that have not been fulfilled, and (d) aspects of project governance that have not shown openness to the public.

This fact is compounded by the behavior of project developers who are completely closed off to communication, they have so far also been unwilling to talk with the District and Provincial Governments.

## Recommendation

1. We encourage the immediate implementation of academic studies of the four aspects affected by the presence of the project in a comprehensive, transparent and multi-stakeholder manner.
2. We encourage project developers to make all information accessible to the public.
3. We encourage investors to evaluate the overall project plan through their support for the two efforts above.
4. We encourage the Government of Indonesia not to make the Kayan Hydroelectric Power Plant a National Strategic Project without first complying with all applicable laws and regulations.

# Research and Study Activities on the Mandalika Special Economic Zone, a BRI project

The Mandalika SEZ Development Project and the threat of social and environmental deterioration for the communities

## Context overview

The Mandalika Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is one of Indonesia's so called "Super-Priority Tourism Destinations", developments projects on the island of Lombok in. It is in a large part funded by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). AIIB is a bank whose largest share of 85 Country member is owned by China, which is 26.3% of shares. Thus, of course, China has a considerable economic interest in the development of a SEZ in Mandalika-Central Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. The project is also categorized as a part of the Belt Road Initiative (BRI) in China also known as 一带一路 pinyin: yi dai yi lu, eng.: One Belt One Road (OBOR).

Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI) in West Nusa Tenggara took the initiative to advocate for those impacted by the Special Economic Zone Development in Mandalika. During the development process environmental sustainability management standards were not upheld, relocation for affected communities has been improperly handled, and human rights violations have become a serious issue, especially in the settlement of land conflicts, protection of the community's socio-economic and cultural heritage, as well as the safety of women and children. The objective of the development of the Mandalika SEZ is oriented towards economic improvement, it contrasts with the substandard development process and financing protection system required by the AIIB.

## Research and field studies

The focus of this 3-month program, was on research and field studies related to the development of the Mandalika Special Economic Zone towards social and environmental development in Mandalika. In the process interviews, focus group discussions, virtual meetings with the related parties, field trips, and data collection including the ITDC Indonesian Tourism Development Corporation, a State-Owned Indonesian Enterprise (BUMN/Badan Usaha Milik Negara) which acts as the administrator of the Mandalika



*Construction in the Mandalika Special Economic Zone area in Lombok*

special economic zone infrastructure development project, were conducted. Likewise, we collected information from the government of Central Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province as well as data on regulations from the Republic of Indonesia, especially regarding to the Mandalika SEZ.

Some of the results of the studies and assessments are the existence of land conflicts, environmental damage and adverse impacts on the economic situation of residents which are currently in decline because most of the economic access is no longer available to them as farmers, fishermen and breeders and relocation is not feasible. 2018 the Indonesian Government claimed to have carried out land acquisition with a compensation scheme and evicted residents, according to our research this was however the first eviction with no compensation. 2019 the second eviction and in 2021 the third eviction followed. The eviction caused residents who did not agree with the compensation method, to remain on their land by first seemingly complying and moving away and then returning to their land. There were nearly 100 people, or about 36 households, left living next to the construction site near the circuit. During the March 2022 MotoGP event, members of the Indonesian police and security forces had full control over the area and even camped in the houses and around the settlements of



*Discussing impacts of the SEZ with the remaining local communities*

people affected by the project. Local community members are being prevented from asserting their land rights and their demands of fair compensation and dispute resolution remain unheard.

In addition, the results of field investigations also found: 200 hectares of swamp, 10 mountains/hills, 11 bays, irrigation channels, etc. that were filled in, removed, converted, and damaged due to the development of the area including mangrove areas of which 80% have been degraded.

As for employment, the government and ITDC promise to provide numerous jobs, for the total of 58,700-70,000 people needing a source of income in the Mandalika area. However, the fact is, that employment is not widely available, accommodation and other tourism service businesses, are currently not fully operational, the jobs available at this time are only temporary work, namely construction labor and tactical personnel when there are events, with very low wages and without work contracts. The labor recruitment system applied in hotels and restaurants is an apprenticeship system, which means there is no guarantee of receiving decent wages.

The overall results of the research, field studies and literature studies were discussed and shared at several meet-

ings, disseminated and presented to local governments, WALHI NTB functionaries, local and national CSO networks as well as the media or journalists who intended to and support our campaigning on the negative impacts of the implementation of the development of the Mandalika Special Economic Zone particularly on the Kute Village, Mertak Village, Sengkol Village and Sukadana Village. We included recommendations for the future as we intend to conduct joint advocacy for affected communities and areas by the development, both regional, national and even international level of advocacy.

## Project Implementation

1. After a coordinating kick off meeting WALHI NTB and WALHI National assembled a working team to conduct the studies, field investigations and literature studies related to the Mandalika special economic zone, both on the national and regional levels of West Nusa Tenggara. The results of the literature study have been compiled in the form of an arrangement of regulations and policies. Along with the results of studies from different parties one common document was created.

This preparatory meeting was followed by three days of socializing with the affected communities in the remaining village centers to build trust and make sure all groups were included.

2. Activities in the field:

- Field observations, meetings with affected community groups and families, conducting focused and contextual discussions related to land history and land conflicts, identification of policies or regulations regarding the Mandalika SEZ,
  - interviews with small merchants and street vendors, small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, hotels workers, construction workers around the circuit, ITDC employees and affected community who lives close to the Mandalika circuit,
  - visits of the relocation locations for the community that have been determined by ITDC as well as the temporary relocation sites, conducting discussions for initial analysis, data review and information entries, etc;
  - Intense consultation meetings with the communities living around the Mandalika zone in order to strengthen the data and information that had been collected and obtained from the affected communities surround of the Mandalika zone.
3. Literature study carried out at both regional and national levels on: AIIB Safe Guards, Indonesian Environmental Laws and Regulations 32/2019, 52/2014, 2 and 3/2017 all on environmental and development issues, the Presidential Degree No 46/2014 on the Mandalika SEZ and its' land history.
  4. Dissemination of the results as a public consultation involving WALHI National, WALHI NTB, local CSO Networks, affected communities, academics and media/journalists. This includes conducting a field trip with the participants of the dissemination forum to meet the communities and show solidarity.
  5. Consultation with Chinese NGO on Special Economic Zone administration, AIIB standards grievance mechanisms, Belt and Road project management and environmental standards in China.
  6. Finalization of narrative reports, research results and field studies.



Relocation Site

## Recommendations

1. **Conducting more in-depth and comprehensive studies and investigations;** This study and research work has provided enough information, knowledge and space for us to explore various information channels and recover substantial facts from the development of the Mandalika SEZ. However, more information to be used in and broaden advocacy activities and other forms of defense and empowerment for the community could still be discovered. Therefore, we recommend further investigation.
2. **Advocacy and Campaign:** Advocacy and campaign work is urgently needed by the affected communities of the Mandalika zone. Land disputes cases (Land Acquisitions) have not yet been resolved, there's involuntary resettlement, as well as environmental damage around the project zone. Campaigns might help push for reforestation and revitalization of mangrove areas, environmental assessments and management, etc. Continued cooperation with Chinese NGO to encourage transnational knowledge of the issues on the ground in Indonesia should be part of the Campaigning effort.
3. **Empowerment** of the communities around the zone by raising awareness and organizing trainings and providing the expertise to support local economic activities, among others:
  - a. Awareness and Organizing; Awareness and organizing activities are one of the indispensable works that are needed in the entire series of advocacy work in this area. With a series of activities knowledge of the substance of all the circumstances that exist in their midst will be shared, awareness of the potential risks they may face raised, as well as awareness and provision of

knowledge of things and actions that can be done in each of these circumstances shared. The establishment of community organizations can be used as a vehicle to ensure that we can mobilize them in every plan and activity together.

- b. Paralegal and Advocacy Training; this activity is part of capacity building for the community to have the basic ability to advocate for themselves in the midst of existing vulnerabilities, both security vulnerabilities and other socio-economic aspects.
- c. Economic Empowerment; Economic empowerment, is an integral part that cannot be separated from the daily life of the community around the area.

Economic empowerment can be carried out starting from awareness activities and knowledge acquisition, as well as practical capacity in identifying economic potential that can be developed, as well as basic and practical knowledge to build production economic businesses, both individually and in groups.

The development of cooperatives of community groups around the area is also one idea that may be strategic enough to sustain and develop any economic plans that are built together.

- d. Job training and various community training and education activities; providing facilities and conducting job training activities, training and, various other community education activities are also crucial things that can be done, as a practical provision effort for the community to be able to adjust to the development of existing conditions in their environment, and also as a provision so that they have the knowledge and practical ability to access jobs that are expected to be widely open in the Area today and in the future.

Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (Indonesian Forum for the Environment) was founded in 1980 and joined Friends of the Earth in 1989. WALHI is the largest and oldest environmental advocacy NGO in Indonesia. WALHI unites more than 479 NGO's and 156 individuals throughout Indonesia's vast archipelago, with independent offices and grassroots constituencies located in 27 of the nation's 31 provinces. WALHI works on a wide range of issues, including agrarian conflict over access to natural resources, indigenous rights and peasants, coastal and marine, and deforestation. WALHI also has several cross-cutting issues such as climate change, women and disaster risk management.

# Plastic Reincarnation

Plastic waste is still a difficult problem to solve. Citing data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) 2021, Indonesia's plastic waste reaches 66 million tons per year, a high percentage of the plastic products are imports from China. We are encouraged to think of a variety of ways to reduce the presence of plastic waste in society's daily lives: raising awareness of the impact plastic has on our environment, reducing the use of plastic products e.g. in the food industry, recycling, and finding creative ways to upcycle plastic waste in a collaboration with the community.

Gudskul initiated several educational programs, one of the programs is *Short Course*, a bi-monthly program for everyone to dig deeper into one of the aspects of contemporary arts and culture. Each subject is designed by artists (with diverse focuses like found objects, media arts, performance, and public art), archivists, art handlers, cultural activists, fashion designers, illustrators, photographers, poets, researchers, songwriters, video jockeys, etc... These professionals are encouraged to see the Short Course program as a pedagogical lab to distribute their knowledge and experience among the communities as well as harvest new material. By the end of the courses, the participants will be presenting their process of learning in the form of artwork exhibitions, or other possible output.

The edition of the Gudskul Short Course titled "Plastic Reincarnation" aims to promote dialogue between artistic practices and environmental concerns. The community's awareness of environmental knowledge will rise through sharing sessions led by environmental practitioners. On the other hand, community imagination and creativity can be sparked by artist-led workshops. Gudskul invites environmental activists and artists who are actively recycling or upcycling materials to share their knowledge with the community about the impact of plastic waste on society today, how to upcycle it into a work of art. The participants of the Plastic Reincarnation Short Course also included staff from the Public Infrastructure and Facilities Management Department of Jakarta. The end result were a mobile workshop and art exhibition that is also permanently accessible online.



Promotional poster for Gudskul's Upcycling Workshop

## Objectives

Through "Plastic Reincarnation" Gudskul aims to contribute to society's increased awareness of plastic use by participating in this series of activities; exploring and fostering the community's imagination and creativity through the upcycling of plastic waste, as well as finding opportunities to make a financial impact through a variety of artwork and products.



Community members working on their upcycling projects

## Outcome and impact

In this Plastic Reincarnation short course project, Gudskul and the participants learned more about the plastic waste phenomenon and how artists and environmental activists respond to it. We also learned that there are similar initiatives in China, amongst them our cooperation partner HB Station, Guangzhou as well as Precious Plastic, Shanghai. Bringing these experiences into an art exhibition and public workshop will amplify the awareness in the community about plastic waste and how to upcycle. These experiences also raise an artistic sensibility on how the upcycling process of plastic can further demonstrate the potential for artistic innovation while also offering a function as a method that anyone can apply.

## Activities

### 1. Workshops and Sharing Session

#### Exchanging Knowledge Session with Labtanya

Gudskul invited Adi Wibowo from Labtanya, a social and ecological design studio that develops various research methods and experiments with the urban community, on October 8, 2022. Adi shared about his lab's "City without Garbage" program at this first meeting and how waste

connects to the global climate crisis. He presented a case study on "edible spoons", which was one aspect of his presentation that we found to be very intriguing. He mentioned opak, chips, and crackers as alternatives to plastic spoons for serving food. Adi explained that the traditional Indonesian cutlery was now popular again and used as if it was the latest invention. The same is happening in China with traditional tea/water bottles.

#### Exchanging Knowledge Session with Sumpah Sampah and Get Plastic

For the second session on October 9, 2022, Gudskul invited *Get Plastic*, an organization engaged in environmental issues, one of their practices is to process plastic waste into fuel through pyrolysis machine technology. Additionally, to *Get Plastic*, Gudskul also invite Azis from Sumpah Sampah (Garbage Oath), an organization that has been engaged in recycling plastic waste into products that, are useful, as well as providing plastic waste processing machines since 2019.

Sumpah Sampah is a startup that makes tools for home and business waste management. Kang Azis shared his and his friends journey managing Sumpah Sampah and how the tools they created were utilized by a number of businesses, including *Freepoint*. In contrast to Sumpah Sampah, *Get Plastic* shared how they learned to make various tools and machines on their own and improves their plastic waste machine to turn plastic waste into gasoline that can be



Visualisation of recycling and upcycling processes

used for vehicle fuel and other purposes. In this second meeting, participants and facilitators discussed how new pollution arises with plastic waste management activities as well.

### Workshop with GudRnD and Stuffolabs

October 15, 2022 during the third session, GudRnD and Stuffolabs co-hosted a workshop in their studios. During this meeting, participants were inspired to give plastic waste a new life using home-scale tools like kitchen ovens. This time, the participants also met facilitators from Artlab and *Unconditional Design* after visiting the workshop. At this meeting, participants were asked to imagine and translate their Short Course findings and process into rough sketches, a simple picture of what, they will make for the final presentation and how to deal with it in the Gudskul Gallery, where 80% of participants have never experienced the atmosphere of exhibiting in a gallery.

On October 26, 2022, In this meeting, GudRnD and Stuffolabs invited the participants to focus their ideas into making their art works for the final presentation. One by one the participants were asked to present what they did and commented on each other's work. This became an interesting discussion between the participants and GudRnD/ Stuffo labs.

## 2. Radio broadcasting

*Blackbox Carbon*, a program initiated by the *Carbon Journal* invited participants who are involved in Plastic Reincarnation to share stories and describe the process of their participation in this short course. Through their casual-discussion approach, *Blackbox Carbon* tried to dig deeper into the stories of participants in finding ideas, techniques and methods in making their artworks. This session also provided a space for participants to reflect on their experiences over the 30 days. The conversation was broadcast live in <https://ruru.radio/> on October 26, 2022 at 19.00 WIB.

## 3. Plastic Reincarnation Exhibition

After several sessions, and an intensive working group between the participants, Gudskul organized an art exhibition. The Plastic Reincarnation exhibition shows the culmination of a brief journey that lasted less than thirty days to produce the final presentation. We are grateful for people's persistent desire to learn, share knowledge, and of course, raise awareness about plastic waste management, which is relevant to our daily life. In this exhibition opening, Gudskul also organized a plastic market which invited local producers to upcycle material. The exhibition opened on October 28, in Gudskul Gallery with around 40 people attending. The opening of the exhibition was enlivened by rap and acoustic music performances by a member of PPSU (Public Infrastructure and Facilities Management) Duri Pulo.



*Community members, trainers, activists and artists of Plastic Reincarnation*

#### 4. Mobile Workshop

The series of workshops which were held in several places in Jakarta were conducted to create direct interaction with the communities of Jakarta. One of the aspects considered for organizing a

mobile workshop was to specifically invite women and children to the Plastic Reincarnation workshop. In the workshop, Gudskul felt the participants enthusiasm most deeply, because the upcycling practice is relevant to the realities all of us face on a daily basis, about waste management, about changing and adding functions to broken goods, and producing upcycled goods with simple tools and methods. Gudskul held this workshop for 3 days in Central Jakarta, South Jakarta and Depok.

- October 29th 2022, Ciliwung Depok Community, 20 participants
- October 30th 2022, Kampung Duri Pulo, Central Jakarta, 15 participants
- October 31st 2022, Women from Family Welfare Empowerment in Jagakarsa, 12 participants

#### Future plans and sustainability of the project

Conversations between environmental practitioners and artists from Indonesia and China will provide a fresh perspective on how we can think about our contexts and strategy throughout the process. Waste plastic upcycling might bring ideas, which could lead to future collaborative projects.

Co-learning with Precious Plastic Shanghai, a community of local recyclers that develops solutions to turn plastic waste into a precious material in Shanghai would help to understand more of the contexts and share knowledge, from the perspectives of China and Indonesia. Gudskul sees more opportunities to collaborate in the future, for example; workshop exchanges, finding a platform of distributing upcycling knowledge (materials, techniques, methods, technology, etc). During the capacity building sessions organized by Stiftung Asienhaus, one of the trainers also suggested Gudskul connect with Break Free from Plastic Movement, a global movement envisioning a future free from plastic pollution. For Gudskul, these opportunities can sustain the practice of upcycling, and connect us to a broader network of a similar spirit.

## A special *Thank You* goes to our Co-Facilitators:

### 1. Gud RnD

This group aims to provide alternative knowledge by experimenting and engineering. This experiments in various areas of waste upcycling including indoor hydroponics, electronics, mechanics and plastic packaging recycling. Currently, GudRnD is focusing on recycling several types of plastics to make daily products with an exchange transaction system with plastic packaging. GudRnD is open to collaborating and sharing experiences and knowledge.

### 2. STUFFO/labs

The main focus of STUFFO/labs is to upcycle material, reuse art event banners to keep the memory of the event and transform it into durable and artistic bag design. STUFFO/labs also use fused plastic bags to preserve the environment from plastic waste. The Stuffo Workshop invites participants to experience processing upcycled materials such as banners and plastic bags into cool, handmade bags.

Stuffo Labs also shares their knowledge and educates the public about manufacturing techniques and insights on how to participate in protecting the earth by processing crackle plastic bags in our “PLASTIC OPERATION” workshop.

### Gudskul

The Collective Study and Contemporary Art Ecosystem is a public learning space formed by three art collectives in Jakarta: ruangrupa, Serrum and Grafis Huru Hara (GHH). Since the early 2000s, the three have been active in the field of contemporary art by exercising collective and collaborative work. In 2015, these collectives agreed to form a joint ecosystem incorporating values emerging from the collective process: equity, sharing, solidarity, friendship and togetherness. The objective of this learning space is to spread the elan of art-cultural work to individuals in order to spark initiative among the public. If we believe art and artists should not only engage with themselves, then to become a collective and work collaboratively is one of the ways to position oneself within the public, either on a discursive or practical path. By using this approach, artists organically become producer, mediator, distributor, while at the same time, developing networks.

<https://gudskul.art/reinkarnasiplastik/>

# Conclusion



## Recap and Outlook

While the multitude of adaptations that we had to impose on our project design, cooperation partners and the subsequent short implementation time challenged all of us, the final results of the “Civil Society Dialogue in the Framework of the Belt and Road Initiative” still showed successes and sustainable improvements.

Towards the end of the project, we had the opportunity to join the Indonesian NGOs in Jakarta to participate in Walhi’s and HaRI’s collaboratively planned consultation platform: Konsultasi Nasional. The opportunity to engage directly with the participating NGOs, who all joined, and other local organizations, international NGOs in Indonesia’s capital as well as people directly impacted by BRI projects was exactly what we had hoped to provide for our participants and their peers from China. Unfortunately, only one of our trainers could be present in Jakarta, other Chinese peers joined the closed event virtually.



*Gudskul art collective, Jakarta*

The difference to the solely online format was significant. Connections were made while sharing spicy Indonesian snacks during the coffeekbreaks, common work topics discovered through glimpses at each other’s conference notes and trust built while facing the devastation of uncontrolled development work too close to people’s fragile homes and livelihoods.

The impacted communities we visited on our fieldtrip to Bandung were full of hope that the combined support of local, Chinese and European NGOs might still help them achieve some form of justice. Facing such expectations is humbling but it also motivates us to continue to open and strengthen transnational NGO spaces, build the capacities needed to truly understand and trust each other and work on common goals of environmental and social justice in the context of the BRI.

We are grateful that our funders Bread for the World and the Ford Foundation, Beijing Office supported us in our endeavor and in turn trusted us to deliver on our project goals despite all the difficulties of the last year.

Motivated by these results, we are looking forward to the new project which started November 2022:

### The climate crisis Global China and Civil Society Advocacy in Asia

South and Southeast Asia are severely affected by the consequences of the global climate crisis. Rising sea levels and extreme weather phenomena threaten the livelihood of many people in the region. Human-induced environmental destruction is exacerbating the threat.



Visiting impacted communities in Bandung

In Indonesia, for example, agricultural monocultures, such as palm oil, and industrial resource extraction, such as coal, rare earths and raw materials for cement, are threatening the habitats of nature and people. In Nepal, deforestation, over-pasture, and over-fertilization in agriculture lead to soil degradation, flooding, and water pollution. These various forms of overexploitation simultaneously cause enormous greenhouse gas emissions and have disastrous consequences for human health, food security and the livelihoods of local people.

China is not only responsible for a large part of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions within its own borders. Through Chinese foreign investments for example within the framework of the New Silk Road Initiative, investment projects with climate-damaging consequences are also being implemented in other countries.

Xi Jinping has promised his government would take on a leading role in the fight against climate change and has ruled out further financing of e.g. coal-fired power plants abroad beginning 2021. Regardless, Chinese companies operating abroad lack information transparency, monitoring and communication channels, and experience in dealing with local stakeholders. They have no or poorly developed structures to involve the affected population, local and international civil society in the implementation of climate protection measures.

Within China, channels for civil society engagement with Chinese companies and authorities in the areas of environmental protection and climate change do exist. However, due to the framework conditions for civil society organizations and the different understanding of 'civil society action' in China and other Asian countries, there are hardly any transnational collective activities so far. The basis for this are confidence-building measures and a critical negotiation process on common methods, topics and interests between civil society organizations in China and other Asian countries.

One starting point is the development of a common working language, e.g. by cooperatively questioning governmental concepts on climate change and environmental protection or by referencing universal concepts such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals number 13 and 15. This is what we hope to achieve with civil society organizations from Indonesia, Nepal and China, as well as supporters globally.

We are looking forward to the implementation of this project and grateful for Bread for the World's continued support.

Please follow our progress on [www.asienhaus.de](http://www.asienhaus.de)

Joanna Klabisch



Stiftung  
**Asienhaus**

# Blick

# Wechsel



## Civil Society and China: Shrinking Space, More Need for Dialog

By Joanna Klabisch and Christian Straube

April 2021,  
translation  
October 2022

Civil society in China is diverse and in a state of upheaval. While organizations in the country act quickly and effectively in crises such as earthquakes and epidemics, from an international perspective they tend to act covertly and hand-in-hand with the state. Their approach arises from a different understanding of civil society engagement and a restrictive legal framework, which was extended to civil society exchanges with other countries in 2017. A report on—and an attempt to mediate between – shrinking civil society spaces and the growing need for dialog with China.

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By mid-February 2020, the provincial capital of Wuhan in central China had already been sealed off for more than three weeks. The local government was overwhelmed by the outbreak of the novel corona virus in this city of millions. Civil society forces stepped in and organized services ranging from social assistance and quarantine control to transportation and food supply in

the locked-down city. The digital realm played a central role in their activities.

“Compared to the rigid behavior of state institutions, which clung stubbornly to prescribed procedures and proved incapable of learning, adept people from civil society are really far superior. Their approach is based on real conditions, it is



Stiftung  
**Asienhaus**

# Blick wechsel

July 2020



## China, the Belt & Road Initiative and waste management

Andreea Leonte

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) should bring the global waste issue into the spotlight, I argued together with He Linghui in a joint paper.<sup>1</sup> It was a result of our participation in Stiftung Asienhaus' 2018 EU-China NGO Twinning Programme. In this Blickwechsel, I outline how China should address the issue of municipal solid waste (MSW) along the BRI.

The man-made waste crisis is impacting ecosystems on both land and water, causing permanent damage. From its position as the world's second biggest economy as well as the world's second biggest municipal solid waste (MSW) producer, China could become the leader in the global transition to a circular economy with the ultimate aim of turning Earth into a "zero waste planet".

Globalisation has enabled goods to become waste thousands of miles away from where they were created. Therefore, waste management represents a global problem and even a global threat. This is why waste requires multilateral engagement and can no longer be viewed solely as a local responsibility.

[Download](#)

## About this publication

This publication documents the project results of the China-Programme's project: Civil Society Dialogue in the Context of the Belt and Road initiative. From 2020 onwards we invite civil society organisations from China, Southeast Asia and Europe to enter a dialogue on the environmental and social implications of the Belt and Road Initiative. We aimed at enabling spaces of exchange and learning for civil society organisations and at improving the sustainability of Belt and Road Initiative investments together with stakeholders involved.

Civil society dialogue across cultural and political borders improves organisational capacities, cooperation potentials and action-oriented research towards the common goal of sustainability. The project seeks to contribute to the promotion of Chinese, European and local civil society participation in BRI projects in Southeast Asia. In this sense, the China Programme contributed to the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17 'Partnerships for the Goals'. From a cross-sectional perspective, the project also touched upon SDGs 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 16.



The logo depicts a Gordian knot. It represents the difficulty of promoting civil society dialogue across political systems. Through the methodology proposed in this project, we seek to create a framework that enables spaces for civil society dialogue in the context of the Belt and Road Initiative. The logo comprises three loops. They stand for Europe, China and Southeast Asia.

## About the Stiftung Asienhaus

The **Stiftung Asienhaus** follows the principle of »Connecting People, Promoting Insights, Shaping the Future« and contributes to build bridges between civil societies in Asia and Europe. The Stiftung Asienhaus is committed to the implementation of human rights, the strengthening of social and political participation, as well as the protection of social justice and the environment.

## About the China-Programme

The **China-Programme** is an innovation and knowledge platform for civil society dialogue with China. It is active in education, outreach and networking, as well as the implementation of dialogue programs. The goal of our work is to provide in-depth knowledge about China, its civil society and its changing role in the world. This is done against the background of realizing dialogue in China, a cooperative knowledge creation together with Chinese actors, a Europe-China policy and a multilateral global climate policy.