



Intersectional Identities and Land Dispossession A Qualitative Analysis of How the Gendered Politics of Land Dispossession has affected Indigenous Women in Southeast Asia

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Abstract

Land grabbing has long been present in Southeast Asia, but with the spike in commodity prices in 2008, land grabbing intensified. The procedure is highly problematic as it often occurs at the expense of peasant farmers, land stewardship, food sovereignty, and human rights. So far, the literature has paid insufficient attention to the vulnerability of indigenous women and their intersectional vulnerability of gender and ethnicity when facing land dispossession. Such neglect poses far-reaching analytical limitations and questionable political implications. It is essential to bridge the gap between land-grabbing studies and the gendered implications of land dispossession on indigenous women to generate more nuanced analyses of the issue. Through a qualitative in-depth comparative analysis of the general implications of land dispossession on indigenous women in Southeast Asia and two case studies of the Cordillera Administrative Region in the Philippines and Kalimantan in Indonesia, the paper tries to answer how does the gendered politics of land dispossession affect indigenous women? It finds that indigenous women have higher physical and economic vulnerabilities due to land dispossession than non-indigenous women. These vulnerabilities are further heightened due to the lack of representation in decision-making. However, how these vulnerabilities play out highly depends on national and local factors.

Keywords

Indigenous peoples; indigenous women; land dispossession; intersectionality



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1. Introduction

Land grabbing studies early established themselves as a politically charged, high-profile and diverse field that underscored Southeast Asia as a particular concern (Schoenberger et al., 2017). Although both policymakers and academics have been careful not to present a concrete definition of land grabbing, it can broadly be defined as the control over larger than traditionally held areas of land by an actor acquired by any means, both legal and illegal, for large-scale projects (Baker-Smith & Attila, 2016: 2). Land grabbing has long been present in Southeast Asia, but with the spike in commodity prices in 2008, the practice of land grabbing intensified. Concerns over food shortage and a scarcity of investment in agriculture led the World Bank and many Southeast Asian governments to promote large-scale land deals (Hirsch, 2020: 349). It was perceived as necessary to reallocate land to individuals, companies or other actors who could organise such profitable large-scale farming. The “grabbing” of land was seen as a crucial aspect to enabling large-scale commodification. However, land grabbing is not exclusively used for large-scale farming. It has also become a common practice to enable other activities dependent on large land areas, such as speculation, extraction and resource control.

Regardless of the underlying purpose for land grabbing, the procedure is highly problematic as such reallocation of land usually occurs at the expense of peasant farmers, agroecology, land stewardship, food sovereignty and human rights (Baker-Smith & Attila, 2016: 2). Though the severity of the consequences arising in the aftermath of land grabbing are known, little work has been done to systematically outline these consequences. This paper aims at exploring how one specific group, namely indigenous women, has been affected by the consequences of land grabbing.

In the aftermath of the global land grab, as the period from 2008 came to be known, the literature on land grabbing proliferated. However, the literature has primarily focused on procedures that shape land grabbing, such as land tenure and land reforms, and given little attention to the consequences of land grabbing, such as land dispossession (Schoenberger et al., 2017). Further, within this already limited scope of work on the implications of land grabbing, perspective including the gendered politics and gendered implication of land grabbing is even further limited. In recent years there has been a noticeable increase in published work on the issue. Nevertheless, gender and the gendered implications of land grabbing continues to be overlooked in the literature. This paper argues that not acknowledging the specific position of women draws on a faulty assumption that “local communities” are

homogenous groups with similar interests and identities. This is problematic because the politics concerning land grabbing and land dispossession builds on changes which are all subject to gender inequality and gendered assumptions. Thus, women are inherently affected differently than men. Looking at local communities as homogenous groups overlooks this crucial aspect.

The neglect of the gendered implications of land grabbing is even more problematic when gender intersects with group affiliations that are notably more vulnerable to such practices, such as indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by discrimination and oppression based on their ethnicity (Park & White, 2017). This has rendered them part of the poorest groups in their societies, most politically disempowered and socially and culturally victimised. Further, indigenous women are even more discriminated against and marginalised based on the intersectionality of their gender and ethnicity (Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), 2019: VIII).

Such neglect of the specific and particular vulnerability indigenous women face in the aftermath of land grabbing and land dispossession poses far-reaching analytical limitations and questionable political implications. If one aims at creating a coherent picture of the implications of land grabbing, such narratives must be included. Thus, there is an urgent need to further acknowledge and systematically outline these vulnerabilities, both in the academic literature and policy recommendations and initiatives. Only when the vulnerable position of indigenous women and the specific consequences they experience is acknowledged can one hope to produce effective and appropriate political initiatives regarding land grabbing and land dispossession.

Thus, it is essential to bridge the gap between land grabbing studies and the gendered implications of land dispossession on indigenous women to generate more nuanced analyses of the issue. It is this intersection between gender and ethnicity this paper sets out to investigate. Thus, the paper asks, *“How does the gendered politics of land dispossession affect indigenous women?”*

In what follows, the paper aims to answer the research question set out above. The paper applies a feminist agrarian economic theory as the guiding theoretical framework. This framework is outlined in chapter two. Further, the paper presents a qualitative in-depth comparative analysis of the general implications of land dispossession on indigenous women in Southeast Asia followed by two case studies of the Cordillera Administrative Region in the

Philippines and Kalimantan in Indonesia, respectively, to illustrate how the general regional trends unfold at the local level. Chapter three presents a further description of the methodology used, chapter four presents the results of the in-depth comparative analysis, and chapter five presents the results from the two case studies. Finally, the sixth chapter will conclude on the implication of the findings and the need for further research.

2. Literature Review and Theory

2.1. Defining the Concepts: Land Dispossession and Indigenous Peoples

Building on Levien's (2017: 1) definition of the phenomenon, this paper defines *land dispossession* as the practice where the state makes people relinquish their land and landed resources involuntarily, irrespectively of whether the land is under formal or informal tenure. It should be noted that this definition makes an important differentiation between land that has been acquired through voluntary sale and coercion. Authors, such as Hall et al. (2011), Hall (2012) and Li (2014) have all argued that the line between coercive and voluntary sale is blurred and that sales can be forced by other actors than the states. This paper does not want to undermine the strong and important dynamics of such coercive sale. Nevertheless, the categories are necessary to distinguish between the large scale of coercive dispossession and willing sellers.

Secondly, in regards to *indigenous peoples*, intergovernmental organisations and scholars have provided an increasing body of definitions to conceptualise the group. However, these definitions have often remained broad in scope, and as a result, indigenous peoples as a group are often presented as a vaguely defined group (United Nations (UN), 2007; World Bank, 2019). The vague definitions have one troubling implication – other minority groups such as ethnic and cultural minorities can claim to be indigenous peoples and further claim legal, political and economic rights reserved exclusively for indigenous peoples. Thus, to separate non-indigenous minorities and indigenous peoples, this paper will draw on the comprehensive definition provided by Jansen and Jiménez (2017). Thus, indigenous peoples are defined as “Persons that were living in a specific region before colonising powers invaded their territory. Today that refers to peoples that descend from or have some historical, territorial, cultural and/or linguistic continuity with those original (pre-colonial) inhabitants” (Jansen & Jiménez, 2017: 26).

2.2. Literature Review: Identifying the Gaps in Land Grabbing Studies

The literature on land grabbing has, over the last decades, grown substantially both in size and in scope. Many scholars have emphasised what they see as an important connection between land grabbing and neoliberal capitalist policies. Further, these scholars have argued that this connection was further strengthened during the commodity boom in 2008, resulting in a rapid increase in land grabbing in the region (Hirsch, 2020; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Pichler, 2016; Pichler & Brad, 2016). Kunz et al. (2016) illustrate how neo-capitalist objectives seeking to maximise capital and increase economic growth have been used to legitimise land grabbing. They argue that small-scale farming has come to be seen as ineffective and hindering economic growth. In contrast, large-scale farming is seen as efficient and fostering development and economic growth. Thus, small-scale farming has to forgo to enable large-scale farming in the name of economic growth. Such rationale, they argue, is further strengthened by the rhetoric used by international organisations such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank. Thus, land grabbing becomes an essential part of pursuing and enhancing national development aims presented in a neoliberal capitalist framework.

Though the link to neo-capitalism might be both correct and powerful, other scholars have highlighted that it overlooks how land grabbing can be used to strengthen state-building and state control (Peluso & Lund, 2011; Pichler, 2016; Pichler & Brad, 2016; Woods, 2011). Land grabbing cannot simply be seen as a means to enhance development as such practices are also tightly connected to state-building and state control. In Myanmar, land grabbing has been a tactic used to enable the militarisation of territory in areas populated by the regime's opposition. Thus, through land grabbing, the state can strengthen its power and control the opposition or other forces they deem inappropriate (Woods, 2011). Further, Peluso and Lund (2011) have argued that this is a broader trend in Southeast Asia in general and not necessarily specific to Myanmar. Following this notion, land grabbing is a strategy used by the state to control fragmented and graduated sovereignty by militarisation of specific areas.

Other scholars have emphasised the link between land grabbing and environmental protection rather than state power and economic aims. This is increasingly being referred to as *green grabbing*. Pichler and Brad (2016) distinguish green grabbing from land grabbing motivated by economics or state power as green grabbing acquires land to pursue environmentally-friendly policies rather than leasing it out to plantations and investors. One such green grabbing initiative that has been heavily criticised is the Reducing Emission from

Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). REDD has been criticised for increasingly driving land grabbing in Southeast Asia and consequently increasing land dispossession. Additionally, it has been noted that such policies tend to benefit “middlemen” – non-governmental organisation and carbon trader – rather than the farmers of the land (Peluso & Lund, 2011).

Other scholars have emphasised that green grabbing has provided small-scale local farmers with more autonomy and a larger place in decision-making procedures than what they would have possessed without such initiatives (Pichler, 2016: 184). It should be emphasised that such arguments are based on a comparison between green grabbing and land grabbing for other purposes. Thus, green grabbing might provide local farmers with more autonomy and decision-making power than land grabbing for other purposes. However, this is not to say that green grabbing is a desirable process.

What is striking is how the literature on land grabbing has paid substantial attention to land tenure and land reforms. The literature has effectively focused on the ownership of the land, denoted land tenure, and the reforms introduced to alter such land tenure, denoted land reforms (Schoenberger et al., 2017). The implications of land grabbing, such as land dispossession, has gained limited attention (Leiven, 2017). Though there is a growing literature, it is relatively scarce compared to the two above-mentioned issues.

Additionally, within the relatively scarce literature on land dispossession and its implications, its gendered implications are even further neglected. Looking at an extensive overview of land grabbing studies published by Schoenberger et al. (2017), it is evident that the gendered nature of the issue has been largely omitted. The overview analyses an extensive amount of works on different areas of land grabbing studies. However, the overview is presented without once making explicit reference to women, gender or gendered implications. The lack of acknowledgement of the gendered aspect of land grabbing in Schoenberger et al. (2017) extensive overview illustrates how the pool of work on the topic does not deal sufficiently, if at all, with the gendered aspect of the problem.

There has indeed been a move in recent years to increasingly include the gendered implications of land dispossession. However, this field remains meagre in relation to the vast amount of research on almost every other aspect of land grabbing (Park & White, 2017). The lack of acknowledgement of the gendered implications of land grabbing is problematic primarily because it builds on an underlying assumption that “local communities” are

homogeneous groups sharing similar interests, identities and aims. Overlooking this aspect poses far-reaching analytical limitations and poses questionable political implications as it neglects the specific vulnerability of women to such practices. The social relations, dynamics of production and reproduction, power and property in agrarian formations and their process of change are all subject to gender inequality and gendered assumptions (Park, 2019). Thus, women are inherently affected differently than men. The “gender blindness” present in much of the literature is troublesome as the literature that does exist on the topic indicates that women are more negatively affected than men by such practices (Daley & Pallas, 2014). Thus, there is an urgent need to give more attention to this aspect to create more nuanced and holistic analyses of land dispossession.

There has been quite substantial work within land grabbing studies on indigenous peoples, and the implications land grabbing has on these groups. However, the work has not sufficiently accounted for the gendered implications of land dispossession and the specific consequences such practices have on indigenous women. The importance of including the narratives of indigenous women and the consequences they suffer due to land dispossession arises from the fact that indigenous women find themselves at the intersection of two vulnerable groups as both women and indigenous peoples. Thus, indigenous women face both the issues related to their gender and the issues related to their ethnicity, putting them, arguably, in one of the most vulnerable positions in relations to land dispossession (AIPP, 2019: VIII). By presenting a systematic overview of how the gendered politics of land dispossession has affected indigenous women, the paper aims to bridge this gap in land grabbing studies and create a more holistic picture of the situation.

2.3. Framing the approach: A Feminist Approach to Agrarian Political Economy

To assess the implications of land dispossession on indigenous women, one needs a theory that enables an assessment of the agrarian changes as well as the incorporation of gender and the gendered implications. The paper will apply what it refers to as a feminist agrarian political economic theory, using both an agrarian political economic theory to assess the implications of agrarian policies of land dispossession and feminist political economic theory assessing the gendered implications of such policies.

By using an agrarian political economic theory centred around capitalism and development, the thesis is able to assess agrarian changes in the modern world, such as land dispossession. Applying such a theory, according to Bernstein (2010), allows for an investigation into “social relations and dynamics of production and reproduction, property and power in agrarian formation and their process of change, both historically and contemporary” (Bernstein, 2010: 1). However, while this theory allows for a good insight into the implication of land dispossession, it does not enable the focus on gendered implications necessary to answer the research question posed above. The theory does not incorporate aspects such as difficulties of unequal power relations, patriarchal agrarian and environmental agendas. Thus, the agrarian political economic theory provides a good framework for assessing agrarian change and development more generally. However, the lack of attention given to gender and its implications deems the theory too narrow to answer how the gendered politics of land dispossession affects indigenous women.

The inability of agrarian political economic theory to assess the effect of land dispossession on indigenous women stems from its underlying assumptions of dichotomies such as public/private and commodified/non-commodified (Park, 2019). Such theories do not pay sufficient attention to the intersection of these dichotomies and the blurred boundaries between the two spheres (O’Laughlin, 2009). When investigating issues concerning indigenous peoples, the fluidity of boundaries between commodified and non-commodified becomes increasingly important. Witcherich (2015) illustrates this by highlighting how indigenous peoples have historically been redefined and integrated as economic actors to fit what she categorises as neo-liberal theories. Due to the uncommodified nature of certain aspects of indigenous cultures and activity, when incorporated into such neo-liberal theories, indigenous groups have been cast as unequal partners on unequal terms, in comparison to their opposing neo-liberal commodified economic actors, or worse, they are excluded and expelled due to their

“inefficiency”. Therefore, this paper deems it essential that the theory at hand enables a breakdown of such traditional dichotomies to generate a more nuanced picture.

For these reasons, a feminist political economy is better suited, as it presents such breakdowns. A feminist political economic theory aims at unpacking the “systemic relations between the domestic, economic and political structure” (Razavi, 2009: 188). Through such a focus, it can go beyond dichotomies as public/private and commodified/non-commodified as above-mentioned.

Further, a feminist framework would allow the paper to go beyond simply looking at the issue of women regarding land dispossession. Instead, it would enable the thesis to investigate the implication of the gendered politics of land dispossession. This allows the paper to look at how political, social and economic forces shape potential gender inequalities regarding land dispossession and illustrate their implications not only for women but also for the community as a whole. Thus, a feminist framework moves beyond simply identifying the issues of land dispossession for women and allows the paper to look at the gendered implications of land dispossession (Deere, 1995).

Nevertheless, the feminist political economic theory is too simplistic to allow for a holistic picture of the agrarian situation in Southeast Asia concerning land dispossession. Thus, this paper sets out to apply a feminist agrarian political theory that includes the aims of both agrarian political economy and feminist political economy while correcting the shortcomings of the theories as presented above. Park defines the aims of such a feminist agrarian political economic theory as: “an approach that investigates how gender, class social relations and dynamics of production and reproduction, property and power are mutually constituted in agrarian formations and their processes of change” (Park, 2019: 48).

3. Methodology

To fully understand the effect land dispossession has on indigenous women, this paper applies a qualitative comparative method. It will conduct a comparative analysis of the broader region of Southeast Asia followed up by a comparative case study of the Philippines and Indonesia. By combining the two approaches, the paper hopes to illustrate both the universal vulnerability of indigenous women in the region while also highlighting the uniqueness between different regions, their women and their issue concerning land dispossession. Thus, the methodology was chosen as it was deemed to minimise the possibility of generating both

false universalism and false uniqueness. In other words, the methodology chosen enables the paper to illustrate similarities across the region while highlighting that there are important contextual factors to be taken into account.

As pointed out in the literature review and theory section, there seems to be a lack in the literature on the specific issues that face indigenous women regarding land dispossession due to their intersectional vulnerability. Thus, the comparative analysis aims at creating a clearer picture of these issues by conducting an in-depth comparative analysis drawing on secondary and primary literature. Thus the analysis will draw on the literature on the gendered implications of land dispossession and how this applies to indigenous women.

The second section of the analysis will conduct a comparative case study between the Philippines and Indonesia. This analysis will base itself on an intersectional approach analysing the intersection between gender and ethnicity. This method was chosen because it enables the exploration of the intersectionality between gender and ethnicity, which, as discussed in the earlier chapters, is missing in the current scholarship. Such an assessment is enabled as an intersectional approach builds on the assumption that multiple identities, here gender and ethnicity, can co-exist and co-generate complex outcomes, rather than strictly ordering such identities into different categories which are mutually exclusive or ordered hierarchically, e.g. issues of women more pressing than issues of indigenous peoples or vice-versa. The analysis will use primary data collected by the Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) drawn from personal accounts by indigenous women. Drawing on life-stories allows the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity to emerge in the way the indigenous women tell their stories (Christiansen & Jensen, 2012: 114). Thus, by applying such an intersectional method, the thesis can explore the intersectional vulnerability indigenous women are subject to as a consequence of land dispossession.

The paper aims at addressing two issues through the intersectional comparative case study. Firstly, the case studies will allow the paper to illustrate how the broader trends from the first section of the paper unfold at the local level in different contexts, creating a more tangible picture of the situation. Secondly, based on the comparative case study, the paper is able to illustrate potential differences and their contextual importance. These two aspects – the universal nature and the context-specific nature of the implications of land dispossession on indigenous women – might seem contradictory. However, only by illustrating the universal

issues pressing on indigenous women at a regional level while also acknowledging the diversity and uniqueness of cases can a holistic picture be created.

The two cases, the Philippines and Indonesia, were chosen according to the most similar system design. Both countries have close proximity in regime type (Freedom House, n.d.), similar level of state income (World Bank, n.d.), growing level of decentralisation (Choi, 2019) and existing framework to ensure the protection of indigenous peoples and their rights (UN, 2020). Further, both states have seen a recent trend of militarisation of indigenous peoples' land areas and criminalisation of indigenous peoples (UN, 2020). However, they differ as the two regions have used land dispossession to enable two different industries. In the Philippines, land dispossession has enabled dams and mining projects, whereas, in Indonesia, it has enabled mainly plantations. Thus, by looking at the two countries, the paper will be able to identify specific consequences of land dispossession on indigenous women and whether the different purpose of the land dispossession influences the implication land dispossession has on indigenous women.

Thus, based on the combination of in-depth comparative analysis of broader trends at a regional level and case studies to illustrate the contextual elements on local levels, this paper will enable a reassessment of the data presented in a gendered framework and be able to look into the before embarking on the next chapter, two limitations regarding the methodology have to be addressed. Firstly, the analysis is heavily dependent on primary data produced by Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) as most of the primary data is drawn from the four volumes of *HerStory* (2019, 2016, 2014, 2013) published by them. These four volumes consist of a large number of interviews with indigenous women on land and land dispossession issues. It has to be acknowledged that the heavy reliance on data retrieved from AIPP and limited variation of sources is a limitation within the methodology. Ideally, the paper would draw on different data sources to exclude potential biases that could arise by retrieving data from primarily one source. However, due to the lack of literature and work conducted on land dispossession and indigenous women, primary sources on the topic are scarce. Thus, the limited amount of work conducted on the issue is reflected in the lack of variety in sources used. However, due to the substantial number of interviews and their regional diversity, the paper argues that its findings still have external and internal validity.

It is important to note that indigenous women cannot be assumed to be a homogenous group of actors. The intersectional axes of power and social difference give indigenous women subjectivities and positionalities far from homogenous (Park, 2019; 221). However, indigenous women are subject to some overarching systematic vulnerabilities simply because they are born women. These are the vulnerabilities the first part of the paper on regional trends sets out to identify. The way these vulnerabilities play out and the severity of these vulnerabilities differ between different groups and countries, as the case studies set out to illustrate.

Further, the paper was not able to conduct fieldwork or interviews with indigenous women. Such data collection would have increased the validity of this thesis. However, through AIPP's (2013, 2014, 2016, 2019) HerStory, the paper has been able to include indigenous women's voices and experience to a large extent. The AIPP has intentionally attempted to directly translate the interviews with only minor technical editing to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the indigenous women's stories and experience (AIPP, 2019: IX). Thus, although the paper is somewhat limited due to the lack of fieldwork and interviews, the AIPP (2013, 2014, 2016, 2019) data collection largely compensate for this shortcoming. The ability of the data collection to create a space for indigenous women to voice their concerns and issues places the four volumes at the heart of the analysis.

4. The Implication of Land Dispossession on Indigenous Women in Southeast Asia

This section presents a systematic overview over what it has identified as the three main vulnerabilities within the intersection of gender and ethnicity of indigenous women in relations to land dispossession: economic vulnerability, physical vulnerability and the amplification of the two former elements due to the lack of political representation of indigenous women at different levels of decision-making.

4.1. Indigenous Women's Economic Vulnerability

Drawing on the Land Matrix (2013) and the analysis presented by Doss et al. (2014), it is clear the land dispossession has specific consequences on the poorest in society and especially women. In most Southeast Asian states, women have relatively lower cash income vis-à-vis men. This inequality in cash income is further heightened as a consequence of land dispossession. After land has been reallocated to be used for large-scale projects, women

usually do not qualify for entering the workforce of the new projects. Thus, women who already have a lower cash income often lose their income or suffer severe reductions in their income due to land dispossession (Doss et al., 2014: 7).

This reduction in relative cash income for women due to land dispossession is vital because the market privileges those with the economic means to buy land rights (Daley, 2005). Thus, because women generally have a lower income than men, an income that is further reduced in the aftermath of land dispossession, they are less likely to gain new land or claim rights over the land they formerly used to prevent future land dispossession. The ability to gain land rights through the market by economic means is a crucial aspect as it is one of the only ways for women in Southeast Asia to gain land rights. It has been a trend within Southeast Asian states to uphold the traditional lack of land rights for women and undermine their existing land rights (Park & White, 2017: 1105). Hence, land dispossession harms women as it takes away their current cash income and largely prevents them from gaining new cash income. Further, reduction in income, in turn, reduces women's likelihood of gaining land rights, in addition to the hindrances they already face due to legal and political obstacles.

Such economic vulnerability is further amplified for indigenous women as they find themselves at the intersection of the two most economically vulnerable groups as women and indigenous. Historically, indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia have been disproportionately represented among the poor and are still regarded as being among the poorest of the poor. Therefore, when land dispossession alters women's relative income, this has substantial implications on indigenous women as their income before land dispossession is already highly disadvantaged as indigenous (ILO, 2017).

The burden and vulnerability of such economic disadvantage of indigenous women are even more problematic as within many indigenous communities, the responsibility of sustaining the family lies with the women (AIPP, 2010). Their traditional livelihood usually takes the form of food gathering, agricultural production, and herding, among other activities. These are activities that are greatly limited by land dispossession. Consequently, land dispossession leaves indigenous women in a position where their livelihood is heavily restricted. At the same time, their ability to join the workforce of the new large-scale project is also heavily restricted. Thus, putting indigenous women in an extremely economically vulnerable position.

However, the gendered politics of land dispossession and the implication for indigenous women in the form of lost or reduced possibility of traditional livelihood, reduced possibility of cash income and issues of joining the new workforce on large scale projects are not merely an issue for indigenous women. Due to the reliance on indigenous women to sustain the household, the implications on indigenous women have further consequences on indigenous communities' livelihood in general. By increasing the economic vulnerability of indigenous women in the aftermath of land dispossession, indigenous communities suffer reduced economic security and food security (UN, 2020: 6).

Compensation programs aiming to take care of the reduced food and economic security of indigenous peoples, which arises from the gendered politics of land dispossession, have been incorporated in many development plans across Southeast Asia. Such programs aim to support indigenous groups that are subject to forced land dispossession by providing them with access to services and the market, improving their food security and productivity, and generally their standard of living. However, many of these programs have had the opposite effect. The resettlement programs, as they have become known, have often increased poverty, malnutrition and lead to a higher mortality rate (AIPP, 2010: 12). Further, in many Southeast Asian states, indigenous peoples lack identification papers or birth certificates which effectively exclude them from social service schemes (ILO, 2017: 8). Thus, the initiatives set up to reimburse indigenous peoples for the implications put on them by the gendered politics of land dispossession have been largely unsuccessful.

4.2. Indigenous Women's Physical Vulnerability

Land dispossession can often be an incredibly violent process, where killings and physical harassment are common. The frequency of violence has intensified in recent years with the increase in militarization of conflicts related to land dispossession, which entails that the military is increasingly involved in conflicts over land dispossession (UN, 2020). However, the violence that takes place is heavily gendered. Reports have shown that men are far more likely to get killed than women. Although women are less likely to get killed, they are specifically vulnerable to physical violence in the form of sexual harassment, rape, and other atrocities (AIPP, 2010: 12). Such physical violence towards women has also intensified due to the increased militarisation, as sexual violence towards women is an increasingly common tactic used in militarisation by state officials (AIPP, 2010: 12). Thus, land dispossession and

the rising militarised nature of the process increase women's physical vulnerability through gender-based violence.

Although sexual violence is a tactic used towards women in general, the UN (2020) has reported that indigenous women are much more likely to be victims of sexual violence than non-indigenous women. Although data on the issue is hard to gather, it is assumed that six out of three indigenous women will experience sexual violence at least once throughout their life (Statistics Canada, 2022; 1). The increasing trend of militarisation of indigenous peoples' land and criminalisation of indigenous peoples in Southeast Asia and the known connections between the two and sexual harassment have further heightened the physical vulnerability of indigenous women (UN, 2020). Thus, the historical predisposition of indigenous women towards sexual violence and the increase in practices known to deploy such gender-based violence renders the physical vulnerability of indigenous women high.

The physical vulnerability of indigenous women is further heightened in recent years following their increased participation in human rights activism. As indigenous women are seen as less likely to be killed than their male peers, they are often put at the forefront of protest and demonstration to represent their communities (Park & White, 2017). This further increases their physical vulnerability. Although they are less likely to get killed, participating in protest and activism increases their likelihood of being victims of sexual violence and other forms of gender-based physical violence.

4.3. Indigenous Women's Lack of Representation in Decision-Making

Although the two vulnerabilities presented above, economic vulnerability and physical vulnerability, are substantial on their own, the lack of representation of women in decision-making is further intensifying these vulnerabilities. Although women's participation has significantly improved in recent decades, women remain underrepresented in political institutions at all levels – national, regional and local – throughout the region (Choi, 2019: 225). Such lack of women's representation and participation in decision-making has been directly connected to the limited degree to which they are accounted for in land deals and land dispossession compensation programs. When women are not represented in the decision-making procedure, development programs and policy initiatives have often been insufficient in accounting for the specific vulnerabilities and implications they pose on women (Daley & Pallas, 2014: 184).

This being said, the representation of women varies significantly within the Southeast Asian states. In 2019, the Philippines (29,5%) and Vietnam (26.7%) both had higher figures at the national level than the global average (23.4%), whereas in Thailand, under 5 percent of the political officials were women. The regional average of women in legislative positions in 2019 was 19,7 percent. Thus, there is indeed a great variety of women's legislative representation within Southeast Asian states (Choi, 2019: 231).

It is worth mentioning that the connection between the representation of women and increased attention given to women's interest is contested. Such an argument builds on a disputed assumption that descriptive representation is inherently good. Descriptive representation – the idea that a group elects an individual who reflects their own experience or characteristics, in this case, gender, to represent them – has been criticised by several authors (Bird, 2005; Pantoja & Segura, 2003). Choi (2019) highlights how in the Philippines, the relatively high numbers of women representation at all levels have not led to a similar increase in representation of women's interest. Instead, it has been argued that in certain instances, women are used as "term breakers" or "political alternates" (UN, 2020). Thus, the women are not represented as a political candidate but merely as someone who can keep the seat to protect their family's interest in the government until a male member can run for a seat. Thus, merely looking at the number of female representatives at the legislative level might create a faulty picture of the increased representation of women's specific vulnerabilities, as women do not necessarily represent women's interest.

Thus, one needs to shift the attention towards how well women's interests are represented instead of female representatives. If one looks at the issue from a perspective of representation of women's interests, it becomes clear that regardless of the varying degree of women in legislative positions in Southeast Asia, women's interests remain heavily underrepresented across the region. The lack of representation of women is, arguably, one of the underlying reasons for the continuation of "gender blind" land deals and framework to compensate for land dispossession (Daley & Pallas, 2014; UN, 2020). Thus, the lack of representation of women's interests has the potential to intensify the already vulnerable portion of women concerning land dispossession.

For indigenous women, representation of their interest and opportunities to express their specific vulnerabilities is even further restricted as indigenous peoples. In addition to the under-

representation of women's interest, indigenous peoples as a group have long been struggling with gaining political representation in Southeast Asia. Reports have been issued documenting how indigenous peoples are actively excluded from the political sphere (UN, 2015). Further, many indigenous governance systems in Southeast Asia are traditional only for men (AIPP, 2017). Women are seen as inferior and weak, and in many indigenous communities, they have effectively no voice in political affairs (AIPP, 2014, p.12). Thus, the limited political space open for indigenous women makes it hard for these groups to voice their specific vulnerabilities due to land dispossession.

This chapter has illustrated that indigenous women have specific economic and physical vulnerability regarding land dispossession. The limited available opportunities for indigenous women to seek change through active political participation further heighten these vulnerabilities. The lack of participation also allows the "gender blind" policies concerning land dispossession to continue. This is problematic as the lack of representation of women's interest results at best in a continuation of the status quo of women's vulnerabilities and, at worst, an intensification of them.

5. Case Studies: Regional Trends Unfolded at the Local Level

Although there are regional trends in the intersectional vulnerability of indigenous women as illustrated above, the issue is also heavily context specific. This chapter illustrates how indigenous women's specific vulnerabilities, as presented in chapter 4, have taken place at the regional level in the Cordillera Administrative Region in the Philippines and the Kalimantan in Indonesia. By drawing on records of personal accounts and events by indigenous women, the chapter investigates the limited but existing political space open for indigenous women to voice their experience with land dispossession and its implication.

5.1. Cordillera Administrative Region, the Philippines

The indigenous human rights defender Betty Belen emphasised that indigenous women in Cordillera experience a triple burden of land dispossession. First, they are exposed to physical harassment, both sexual and non-sexual, second, they lose their livelihood, and third, they lose their food security (AIPP, 2017a). Human right defender Bae Annabel Mansiguiao further emphasises that the physical harassment of indigenous women has increased due to the heightened militarisation of issues concerning land dispossession in the region (AIPP, 2017c). Indigenous women report that soldiers are groping women on the accusation of them hiding

money in their groin or holding them at gunpoint until they do as the soldiers say and want (AIPP, 2019). Thus, the physical vulnerability, sexual and non-sexual, of indigenous women in the Philippines is concerning.

Further, although indigenous women's loss of livelihood and food security, as reported by Belen (AIPP, 2017a), is problematic on its own, the restricted accessibility of social security systems for indigenous women in the regions makes the implications of such loss even greater (AIPP, 2016). When faced with such losses, indigenous women have attempted to apply for social security schemes but are commonly faced with rejection (AIPP, 2019; AIPP, 2013). In some instances, whole villages have been refused social security schemes, even though they are qualified (AIPP, 2013). The reported difficulties of indigenous women and their communities to gain social security benefits highlight the high economic vulnerability of indigenous peoples and women and how it seems to be a neglected area of the government (AIPP, 2014).

Several indigenous women have taken matters into their own hands in the void of political acknowledgement and lack of social security schemes available to them. When a group of indigenous women were economically exploited at work and did not receive their rightful support through the judicial system, they decided to resolve the issue themselves. They unionised and educated themselves on their rights to gain the knowledge and leverage to negotiate over their terms. Slowly but surely, they were able to gain increasingly more rights through their activism and union work (AIPP, 2013: 11-13). Similar examples of reported internal resolution by indigenous communities due to neglect by the judicial system include issues concerning child predators (AIPP, 2019: 26) and rapists (AIPP, 2013: 62).

Further, indigenous women within the region have also been very active in protests and activism regarding land grabbing. Though it is difficult for indigenous women in the Philippines to gain political representation, as they are actively being oppressed and subject to criminalisation (AIPP, 2014: 7), these women have been at the forefront of protests against land dispossession. Although this has led to increased empowerment and agency of indigenous women, it also increases their physical vulnerability. There are always risks associated with protest. However, due to the increased criminalisation of indigenous people, indigenous activism is especially subject to harsh scrutiny by the government (AIPP, 2016; AIPP, 2013). Leticia Bul-at explains how her village mates, both men and women, were imprisoned due to their peaceful opposition against a new dam project (AIPP, 2016). Further, the increased

gender-based violence in the region makes such protests additionally costly for indigenous women. However, this is a risk increasingly more indigenous women are willing to take to ensure a better future for their children (AIPP, 2019).

Thus, within the Cordillera Administrative Region, indigenous women's physical and economic vulnerability remains high, political representation remains low, and there are increasing trends of militarisation and criminalisation. Despite this, indigenous women are actively opposing their current situation through protest and activism. Many indigenous women activist have been asked, "Why do you put yourself at such risk when you get nothing back?" Bai Madalna Kundag's clearly illustrates why:

"We, the women, will boldly struggle to defend our ancestral lands. Because our struggle is for our children and the youth, for them not to be laughed at and be discriminated. Let us not allow them to grab our lands. (...) Let us not be slaves, we should resolutely fight."

(AIPP, 2017b)

5.2. Kalimantan, Indonesia

Assessing the specific experience of land dispossession by indigenous women in Kalimantan is challenging due to the lack of organisation at the local level to enable these voices to be heard. In local communities, low levels of political organisation of indigenous women are still the norm, leaving indigenous women at the community level as informal groups lacking representation. At the national level, there is indeed a growing network of indigenous women activists fighting for the recognition of the specific vulnerabilities of indigenous women regarding land dispossession. However, these activists are limited due to their small number and lack of connection to the local levels (AIPP, 2020). Regardless, the limited visibility of indigenous women in Kalimantan should not be perceived as a consequence of lower levels of specific vulnerability. Instead, it is a powerful illustration of the lack of representation and acknowledgement of such vulnerabilities.

The indigenous women within the Kalimantan region are indeed subject to increased economic vulnerability due to land dispossession. Within the indigenous communities, the women are seen as the ones responsible for the family's welfare through food gathering, small-scale farming and herding. However, with the establishment of large-scale plantations in the region, indigenous communities have been displaced away from the natural resources

destroying their livelihoods. Further, it is difficult for indigenous women to get jobs at the newly established plantations. Indigenous women lose their livelihood and are restricted when seeking new sources of income to sustain their family. Thus, reduction of livelihood and limited ability to get hired at the plantations increases the economic vulnerability of indigenous women substantially in the aftermath of land dispossession (AIPP, 2014: 6-8).

Additionally, the establishment of large-scale plantations has unintentionally been the source of recurring great forest fires. The first fire took place in 1997 and lasted an entire year. Since then, they have been a recurring phenomenon (AIPP, 2016: 55-60). These fires are extremely harmful due to their pollution and destruction, and in 2015 more than ten people died due to the fires (AIPP, 2016: 57). One of the issues for indigenous women regarding the forest fires is the destruction of their rubber farms. These rubber farms are one of the only independent sources of income for indigenous women in the aftermath of land dispossession. When these are destroyed due to forest fires, in addition to the reduced food security and livelihood of the wider community, it places indigenous women in a highly economically vulnerable position (Levien, 2017: 15). Thus, indigenous women's already vulnerable economic position is further heightened due to the damage caused by the forest fires.

It is also difficult to assess the physical vulnerability of indigenous women as a consequence of land dispossession due to the lack of reporting on the issue by women themselves. The lack of disaggregated data on the intersection of ethnicity, gender, and race has several explanations, including lack of legal recognition as indigenous peoples, historical discrimination, and lasting tabus regarding sexual violence (Network of Indigenous Women of Asia & AIPP, 2021; 8). However, the limited reports that exist on the issue illustrate that both sexual and non-sexual are prevalent (Levien, 2017). However, the physical vulnerability of indigenous women in Kalimantan is not limited to physical violence. Their physical vulnerability is further heightened as the number of indigenous women suffering from skin diseases and cancer resulting from pesticides used at the plantations increases (Ranu Welum Foundation, n.d.). The women who can get one of the few jobs offered at the plantations effectively increase their physical vulnerability while trying to reduce their economic vulnerability, as they are exposed to chemicals causing them severe health issues. This problem illustrates the complicated interplay between the two dimensions of vulnerabilities that indigenous women are subject to.

Therefore, within the Kalimantan region, indigenous women's physical and economic vulnerability remains high. Further, due to the limited degree of local organisation and mobilisation of indigenous women's perspective and voices, these vulnerabilities are not as visible as they may be in different regions. This, in turn, allows the government to overlook the issues in policy recommendations and initiatives. The specific use of land for plantation has specific consequences, such as fires and the use of pesticide, which further heightens the vulnerability of indigenous women in the region.

6. Conclusion

The focus of this research was to systematically analyse the specific vulnerabilities of indigenous women regarding land dispossession. As such, this thesis aimed at answering the following research question: *How does the gendered politics of land dispossession affect indigenous women?* This inquiry was explored based on a feminist agrarian political economic theory through an in-depth comparative analysis of the general trends in Southeast Asia. Further, the paper illustrated how these trends unfolded within two regions, Cordillera Administrative Region and Kalimantan. Ultimately, the findings show land dispossession increases the economic and physical vulnerability of indigenous women due their intersectional vulnerability as women and indigenous peoples. These two vulnerabilities are further amplified due to the limited political space available for indigenous women to voice their experience and concerns.

While illustrating the presence of economic and physical vulnerability and lack of political representation of indigenous women, the two case studies also illustrated how these trends unfold differently between the two local communities. In the Cordillera region, economic vulnerability is further heightened due to the lack of available social security schemes. In contrast, in Kalimantan, it is further heightened by the loss of rubber farms due to forest fires caused by the plantations. Further, in Cordillera, the physical vulnerability of indigenous women is primarily linked to physical violence, both sexual and non-sexual. However, in Kalimantan, the physical vulnerability is connected to violence and increasing health issues arising from work available to them in the aftermath of land dispossession. Thus, the case studies illustrate that although there are broad universal trends, the way they unfold hinges on contextual factors.

The main strength of this reproach is that it aims to fill a notable gap in land grabbing studies on land dispossession and its effects on indigenous peoples. This contributes to the understanding of how the specific vulnerabilities of indigenous have a significant effect on the local communities. Further, the paper illustrates how neglecting these vulnerabilities undermines the economic vulnerability of indigenous women and indigenous communities more broadly. As such, the thesis establishes the acknowledgement of the regional trends of indigenous women's vulnerability and its implications as a key concern to be dealt with.

This paper has only scratched the surface of what needs to be uncovered on the topic. By systematically analysing the specific vulnerabilities of indigenous women regarding land dispossession, this thesis has presented a starting point to conduct further research on the topic. However, as the case studies illustrate, how these trends unfold at the local levels varies and are dependent on local and national factors. Thus, to create a holistic picture of how land dispossession affects indigenous women in Southeast Asia, further research into the local context needs to be conducted. This is essential both for the accuracy of the academic literature to create a comprehensive picture of the situation and for policy-makers to generate successful policy initiatives which suit the local situations.

Indeed, before the specific situation of indigenous women is acknowledged, policies and political initiatives on the issue can never reach their full potential. This is due to the significant social and economic implications the specific vulnerability of indigenous women causes on their broader communities. If development programs do not acknowledge the key role of indigenous women in the welfare of indigenous communities, any attempt at creating a sufficient and successful compensation program will fail. Thus, if political initiatives hope to be successful, the specific vulnerabilities of indigenous women as presented in this research needs to be included.

Ultimately, the value of this research is that it aims at creating a starting point for exploring how the gendered politics of land dispossession affects indigenous women and implicitly their local communities more broadly. In answering one question, inevitably, many more arise. More research is needed, and without it, the political initiatives will most likely continue to be unsuccessful. What the thesis has made abundantly clear is that land dispossession rarely makes things better for indigenous women and, in most cases, makes things worse.

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8. Appendix

Table 1: Overview over interviews used in the case studies

| Name | Ethnicity | Region | Source | Page number |
|-------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Magdalena Tambiac | Kankan'ey | Cordillera Administrative Region | AIPP (2013) | pp. 11-15 |
| Belinda | Kankan'ey | Cordillera Administrative Region | AIPP (2013) | pp. 29-31 |
| Rose | Bontoc | Cordillera Administrative Region | AIPP (2013) | pp. 58-63 |
| Mardiana Deren | Dayak Ma'ayan | Kalimantan | AIPP (2014) | pp. 6-8 |
| Christina Camiling | Maeng-Itneg | Cordillera Administrative Region | AIPP (2014) | pp. 9-14 |
| Petra "Tannaw" Macliing | Bontoc | Cordillera Administrative Region | AIPP (2014) | pp. 15-17 |
| Leticia Bula-at | Naneng | Cordillera Administrative Region | AIPP (2016) | pp. 26-31 |
| Baket Endena Cogasi | Kankana-ey | Cordillera Administrative Region | AIPP (2016) | pp. 48-50 |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--|------------------------|-----------|
| Beatrice Belen | Uma | Cordillera Administrative Region | AIPP (2016) | pp. 51-54 |
| Emmanuela Shinta | Dayak Ma'anyan | Kalimantan | AIPP (2016) | pp. 55-60 |
| Betty Belen | n.n. | Philippines, region unknown | AIPP (2017) | [Video] |
| Bai Madalna Kundag | n.n. | Philippines, region unknown | AIPP (2017) | [Video] |
| Bae Annabel Mansiguiao | n.n. | Philippines, region unknown | AIPP (2017) | [Video] |
| Iv Joy Soland (Inayan Watch) | Kankanaey | Cordillera Administrative Region | AIPP (2019) | pp. 26-31 |
| Devi Anggraini | n.n. | Indonesia, region unknown | AIPP (2020) [Video] | [Video] |