

A Puzzling Confluence

Conservation and Tourism Development in Komodo National Park, Indonesia



Thursday 24 September 2020 14:00 (JST TIME)

This presentation examines the confluence of conservation and tourism development projects in Komodo National Park – the natural home of the renowned Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*) and the ways local communities deal with its impacts. While the establishment of the park as a nature reserve in 1980 has indeed stirred processes of enclosure, dispossession, and dissolution of the commons of the native population, it still lacked the element of accumulation as the territory was transformed into a new commons —i.e. a new frontier of unique ecological and tourism-economic values. Governed under the conservation regime, locals can still use resources in the park through traditional and non-traditional resource uses such as the tourism economy. The arrival of ecotourism projects in recent years, however, has induced new waves of accumulation by dispossession by state and corporate actors. Interestingly, local communities have been resisting these processes by incorporating conservation and ecotourism paradigms— beside their tribal claim of unique inter-species companionship with the Komodo dragon. These communities defend the old and new commons from privatization and secure their access to its use and benefit, both through community-owned tourism business and through conventional fishing livelihood. Based on engaged ethnographic research in the Komodo National Park in Flores, Indonesia, this presentation contributes to the discussion on the interlinkage between conservation, development, and multiple forms of interspecies co-existence.

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Social anthropologist with research and professional interests in the politics of development, endogenous transformation, and interspecies companionship. He completed his Ph.D. at the Institute of Social Anthropology at Bern University in Switzerland in 2018. He is currently a Postdoctoral fellow at Center for Southeast Asian Studies (CSEAS), Kyoto University. At CSEAS, he is working on a book manuscript from his dissertation while embarking on a new research project that examines social, cultural, and ecological transformations brought by the introduction of large-scale tourism development and conservation projects in the Islands of Flores, Indonesia. At the core of this research is an investigation of the entanglement between conservation, eco-tourism, and interspecies companionship in Komodo National Park, the home of Komodo dragons (*Varanus komodoensis*) and their companions, including humans.

COMMENTATOR: ISHIKAWA NOBORU (CSEAS)