



Unraveling the threads: Palm oil, transmigration, and exclusion in Mantadulu, South Sulawesi

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ABSTRACT

Background: Palm oil plantations and transmigration in Indonesia, implemented since the New Order era until now, aim to boost economic growth with the intended consequence of improving community welfare, particularly for transmigrants and local residents. **Methods:** This study employed a case study approach focusing on Mantadulu Village in East Luwu Regency, South Sulawesi. Data was collected through secondary sources, including government documents, news articles, and reviews of research results on palm oil plantation expansion and transmigration in Sulawesi. The data was analyzed descriptively, with a focus on the historical context, conflict trajectories, and socioeconomic impacts. **Findings:** However, this study reveals a contrary outcome; the presence of PTPN XIV in Mantadulu Village, South Sulawesi has resulted in the exclusion of the surrounding community. This, in turn, has led to the confiscation of their production factors, widening the poverty gap for both transmigrants and local communities. The expansion of palm oil plantations, coupled with the transmigration program, created a surplus labor force, potentially leading to worker exploitation and reduced wages. **Conclusion:** The transmigration program and palm oil plantation expansion in Mantadulu Village have largely failed to improve the welfare of transmigrants and local communities as intended. Instead, these initiatives have increased the risk of poverty through land exclusion and unfavorable farming schemes. **Novelty/Originality of this Study:** The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the intricate relationship between the transmigration program and palm oil plantation expansion in South Sulawesi, an area often overlooked in existing research. It uniquely highlights the socio-economic conflicts and class dynamics arising from these programs, providing a fresh perspective on the grassroots impacts and conceptual challenges underlying transmigration and agricultural policies in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS: exclusion; palm oil; poverty; transmigration.

1. Introduction

The transmigration program in Indonesia began during the colonial era under the Dutch administration and continues to the present day (Elmhirst, 1999; MacAndrews, 1978). During the colonial era, transmigration played a crucial role in relocating people from Java, Bali, and Lombok to the outer islands to meet labor demands in development projects. After Indonesia gained independence, particularly under the Soeharto administration, known as the New Order regime, the transmigration numbers continued to rise compared to the initial administration under Soekarno (Widyatmoko & Dewi, 2019). Notably, between 1950-1959, the Soekarno era successfully transmigrated 227,360 people.

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Subsequently, during the eight-year plan from 1961-1968, the goal was to relocate 1.56 million people, averaging 195,000 individuals annually (Setiawan, 2006).

In the Soekarno era, transmigration served not only to address labor shortages and reduce population density but also aimed at national integration (Setiawan, 2006; Widyatmoko & Dewi, 2019). Moreover, during the Soeharto administration, the government implemented the Perkebunan Inti Rakyat (PIR) program, linking it with the transmigration initiative to alleviate poverty (Mukrimin, 2022). Sjarifudin Baharsjah, Soeharto's Minister of Agriculture, claimed overall success for PIR, asserting significant participation from both plasma (smallholder) farmers and the private sector (Prisma Magazine, 1993). PIR, specifically mentioned in the context of palm oil plantations in Indonesia, intertwines with discussions on the transmigration program. Palm oil serves as the main source of profitable vegetable oil globally. This plant thrives best in humid tropical areas, particularly in the vicinity of communities facing economic challenges (Sunderlin et al., 2005). The expansion of palm oil plantations in Indonesia gained momentum from the 1970s, notably in the 1980s through the PIR-Trans program and the five-year development plan (Repelita) (Nur, 2014; Widyatmoko and Dewi, 2019). This growth coincided with an increase in transmigrants. In Repelita III (1979-1984), the government successfully relocated 500 transmigrant families, followed by 350,606 families or 1,163,771 people in Repelita IV (1984-1989) (Setiawan, 2006).

The tandem development of palm oil plantations and transmigration programs is evident in various regions of Indonesia, including South Sulawesi. In 2022, the total palm oil plantation area in South Sulawesi reached 40,683 hectares, yielding 123,612 tons of CPO (Central Statistics Agency, 2023). According to the South Sulawesi Plantation Statistical data, nine districts in South Sulawesi were designated as oil plantation areas, namely Soppeng, Wajo, Sidrap, Pinrang, Enrekang, Luwu, Luwu Utara, Luwu Timur, and Palopo (Central Statistics Agency of South Sulawesi, 2023). Notably, North Luwu had the largest smallholder palm oil plantation area, covering 18,105 hectares, followed by East Luwu with 8,752 hectares, excluding data on state-owned and private plantations (Central Statistics Agency of South Sulawesi, 2023). These areas, historically part of Luwu district, have been the destination for transmigrants since the 1930s (Sahajuddin, 2019).

The transmigration and palm oil plantation programs aim to increase state income and contribute to improving the welfare of both transmigrants and local communities, as often stated by the government. Previous studies have noted rapid economic growth resulting from these programs since the New Order era, with success stories of transmigrants transforming into independent palm oil farmers through government and private sector support (Widyatmoko & Dewi, 2019; Mukrimin, 2022). Several studies have found that palm oil plantations create jobs for the landless and also provide higher incomes for smallholders, so the cultivation of this crop is considered a way to alleviate poverty (Dib et al., 2018; Gatto et al., 2017).

In the decentralization era, the transmigration mechanism shifted to an agreement-based approach between the sender and recipient provinces or districts, departing from the previous central government control through the Labor and Transmigration Agency (Widyatmoko & Dewi, 2019). The government introduced the Kota Terpadu Mandiri (KTM) program, focusing on developing transmigration areas to enhance economic welfare. The KTM program sought to transform transmigration areas into economic centers and public facilities hubs. Despite these changes, palm oil plantation expansion continues, aligning with sustained market demand. Compared to 2021, in 2022 domestic palm oil consumption increased by around 13%, reaching 20.9 million tons (Ahdiat, 2023a). The transmigration program also persists, with the government reporting around 5,701 registrants in October 2023 (Nasrul, 2023). This condition is influenced by the National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020-2024, which includes 52 national priority transmigration areas in the plan.

Transmigration contributes to economic growth by providing labor for palm oil plantations. Previous studies identified issues such as infrastructure construction, land rights, and settlement location establishment as organizational challenges rooted in

technical matters (Widyatmoko & Dewi, 2019). Additionally, local governments face the challenge of attracting palm oil plantation investors while ensuring profitability for regional income, especially in areas where palm oil plantations serve as the primary economic source (Mukrimin, 2022).

It appears that previous arguments have focused on technical implementation problems rather than delving deeper into grassroots societal conditions and the conceptual issues that underlie them. While the government and some view palm oil trees as symbols of prosperity and economic progress in villages, they may overlook underlying issues such as land grabbing, labor exploitation, pesticide-related health concerns, water pollution, deforestation, and other political-economic problems accompanying palm oil plantations (Abram et al., 2017; Hall et al., 2020; Castellanos-Navarrete et al., 2021). Widyatmoko & Dewi (2019) acknowledged earlier findings indicating that the transmigration program failed to bring prosperity to transmigrants and local communities, though they did not elaborate on this as an illustration of the current situation. Furthermore, analyzing class dynamics through a comprehensive examination of class location and relations is crucial for understanding grassroots problems (Habibi, 2022; Pye, 2019). Mukrimin (2022) categorized actors in the palm oil plantation issues in West Sulawesi but focused solely on their positions, omitting an exploration of class relations.

2. Methods

Few studies have explored the relations between the expansion of palm oil plantations and the transmigration program, especially in South Sulawesi—potentially none. The scarcity of relevant studies may stem from the perception that the plantation area in South Sulawesi is relatively small compared to provinces like Riau, Central Sulawesi, and West Sulawesi (Ahdiat, 2023b). Nevertheless, conducting this study is crucial because each region may present unique conditions, and attention to the situation in South Sulawesi is warranted. This paper discusses a case study from Mantadulu Village in East Luwu Regency, where a palm oil plantation area is managed by PTPN XIV. In recent years, the area has faced conflicts involving local communities, transmigrants, and the company. The study aims to portray the government's efforts to improve the welfare of both transmigrants and local communities. These efforts include the ongoing transmigration program and the expansion of palm oil plantations. However, it is evident that these endeavors have led to prolonged conflicts, potentially deepening economic disparities within the community (Serrano, 2023). This aspect will be explored through a case study conducted in Mantadulu. The data collection technique used involves secondary data gathered from various government documents, news articles, and reviews of research results focusing on the expansion of palm oil plantations and transmigration in Sulawesi, particularly in South Sulawesi. The data analysis includes classifying and interpreting the findings in relation to the objectives of this study. The data is presented descriptively, and conclusions are drawn based on the description.

The first section of this paper briefly discusses the historical background of the transmigration program and the expansion of the palm oil industry in Indonesia. It also explains the research methodology used in this study. The next section describes the relevant data that has been collected, which discusses the history of transmigration in South Sulawesi, particularly in Mantadulu Village, Angkona District, East Luwu Regency. In Section 3, the context of the entry of state plantation companies into Mantadulu is explained. In Section 4, the chronology of the conflict that occurred between the village community and the company is traced. Sections 5 and 6 explain the analysis of the research results, focusing on the topics of palm oil plantation and the exclusion process, as well as the capital expansion shaping Mantadulu's villagers' future. Section 7 draws overall conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Transmigration in East Luwu and the situation in Mantadulu

The Luwu Regency area originally encompassed the North Luwu and East Luwu Regencies, which were subsequently expanded and separated. The North Luwu Regency was established in 1999, followed by the creation of East Luwu in 2003, separating it from North Luwu and establishing it as an independent district. South Sulawesi had been a destination for transmigrants since the colonial era, especially in the Kalaena Valley and Tomoni River, which are now part of East Luwu Regency. In 1937, the Dutch administration decided several regions in Sulawesi as destinations for transmigrants from Java and Bali. According to resident assistant reports, several places were selected, namely Paria, Mapili, Muna, Tamuku, Kalaena, Tomoni or Malili, and Lamasi in Palopo (Sahajuddin, 2019).

After Indonesia gained independence, around the 1970s, transmigration to South Sulawesi still continued. In the Angkona District, East Luwu Regency, which at that time was still part of Luwu Regency, from May to October 1979, there were five waves of transmigrants. The first wave consisted of 100 families from Bali, followed by 100 families from West Nusa Tenggara (NTB), including Balinese, Javanese, Lombok, and Toraja in the second wave. In the third wave, an additional 100 families came from Java and Bali. In the fourth wave, 100 families from NTB arrived. In the fifth wave in October 1979, another 100 families from Balinese and Javanese arrived (Dharma, 2021). The number of transmigrants in Indonesia experienced a significant growth in the 1970 - 1980s as indicated in figure 1.

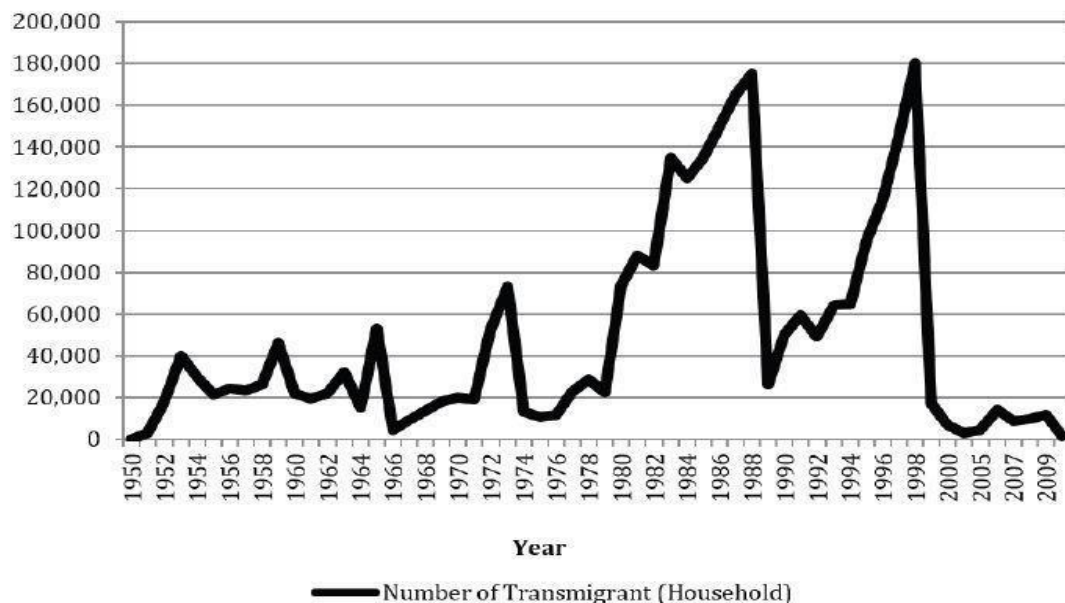


Fig. 1. Number of family transmigrants in Indonesia (1950 - 1980)

(These data, compiled from various sources including (Hardjono, 1977; Arndt, 1983; Ministry of Labour and Transmigration, 2016; Repelita), were extracted from the work of Widyatmoko & Dewi (2019)

In 1981, Muhammad Nuh, a transmigrant from Lombok, NTB, participated in the transmigration program alongside 500 families from Bali, Java, Lombok, and local residents from South Sulawesi. They arrived in Mantadulu Village, which was part of Angkona District (Rusdianto, 2017). According to an interview conducted by a Mongabay journalist with Muhammad Nuh, he stated, 'When I first came to this place, I didn't know what to do; everything was surrounded by swamps and water, and large trees still surrounded the village.' Months after their arrival, Muhammad Nuh and other transmigrants collaborated to build a simple bridge and ditches. They also cultivated vegetables for their daily needs. When waves of transmigration came to Mantadulu, there were no irrigation canals, and they solely relied on natural processes for rice cultivation (Rusdianto, 2018a).

In 1982, the transmigrants initially cultivated cocoa, but this endeavor was short-lived due to pest attacks. Faced with these challenges, some transmigrants opted to sell their land,

while others sought employment outside the village. Usman, a 52-year-old from Lombok and a team leader who brought 10 people in 1981, explained that during the transmigration period, each transmigrant was allocated 2 hectares of land, with 25 are for housing and a yard, 75 are for cultivation, and one hectare for rice fields. Additionally, they received basic food rations for two years. Initially, land rights for transmigrants were limited to usage rights, and it took 10 years to obtain ownership rights. In 1990, Usman sold his land before leaving Mantadulu, returned in 1992, and became a daily casual laborer with wages ranging from Rp.1000 to Rp.1.500 per day at PTPN in 1995 (Rusdianto, 2018a).

3.2 The context of palm oil plantation in Mantadulu South Sulawesi

The area and production of palm oil plantations in Indonesia increased significantly in the last decade. In 2012, the total area of palm oil plantation land was 9,230,072 hectares with a total production of 24,394,549 tons, while in 2022, it expanded to 15,338,556 hectares with a total production of 46,819,672 tons. The data is presented in tables I and II. These increases were in line with the export value of Crude Palm Oil (CPO) and Palm Kernel, which in 2012 had a total value of USD 19,112,654,000 and, ten years later, increased to USD 29,746,099,000 (see Table 3).

Table 1. Area and production of Indonesian crude palm oil by province and category of producers, 2012

No	Province	Smallholders		Government estates		Private estates		Total	
		Area (Ha)	Production (Ton)	Area (Ha)	Production (Ton)	Area (Ha)	Production (Ton)	Area (Ha)	Production (Ton)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1	Aceh	185 304	200 501	43 564	83 305	137 009	345 334	365 877	629 140
2	Sumatera Utara	407 432	1 218 165	308 751	1 076 015	466 436	1 705 783	1 182 619	3 999 963
3	Sumatera Barat	177 219	390 946	9 632	35 659	188 382	514 963	375 233	941 568
4	Riau	1 212 406	3 237 660	81 155	255 146	646 883	2 353 135	1 940 444	5 845 941
5	Kepulauan Riau	2 888	2 977	-	-	5 961	14 112	8 849	17 089
6	Jambi	361 480	899 672	24 954	88 950	268 022	813 814	654 456	1 802 436
7	Sumatera Selatan	367 922	1 027 533	50 276	152 885	467 315	1 309 093	885 513	2 489 511
8	Bangka Belitung	49 739	73 983	-	-	139 356	436 257	189 095	510 240
9	Bengkulu	193 410	473 918	4 507	15 783	113 369	332 999	311 286	822 700
10	Lampung	58 018	171 176	18 387	58 930	48 771	192 117	125 176	422 223
11	DKI Jakarta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	Jawa Barat	180	30	6 990	16 052	7 263	8 399	14 433	24 481
13	Banten	7 113	8 783	8 120	13 680	54	118	15 287	22 581
14	Jawa Tengah	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	D.I. Yogyakarta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	Jawa Timur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	Bali	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	Nusa Tenggara Barat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	Nusa Tenggara Timur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	Kalimantan Barat	256 335	444 934	61 943	209 387	392 178	880 093	710 456	1 534 414
21	Kalimantan Tengah	129 163	248 898	-	-	896 190	2 277 337	1 025 353	2 526 235
22	Kalimantan Selatan	60 201	115 592	14 178	28 256	357 757	915 092	432 136	1 058 940
23	Kalimantan Timur	159 616	172 169	44 456	153 439	463 802	755 397	667 874	1 081 005
24	Sulawesi Utara	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
25	Gorontalo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
26	Sulawesi Tengah	50 281	98 734	3 845	4 124	40 837	86 259	94 963	189 117
27	Sulawesi Selatan	15 501	24 387	10 297	20 257	2 525	5 939	28 323	50 583
28	Sulawesi Barat	54 323	113 233	-	-	42 139	136 376	96 462	249 609
29	Sulawesi Tenggara	4 196	70	4 944	3 966	36 538	12 444	45 678	16 480
30	Maluku	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
31	Maluku Utara	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
32	Papua	9 856	16 458	12 396	25 484	17 947	63 121	40 199	105 063
33	Papua Barat	10 941	34 065	2 891	7 687	6 528	13 478	20 360	55 230

Indonesia	3 773 524	8 973 884	711 286	2 249 005	4 745 262	13 171 660	9 230 072	24 394 549
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(Central Statistics Agency, 2013)

Table 2. Area and production of Indonesian crude palm oil by province and category of producers, 2022

No	Province	Government estates		Private estates		Smallholders		Total	
		Area (Ha)	Production (Ton)	Area (Ha)	Production (Ton)	Area (Ha)	Production (Ton)	Area (Ha)	Production (Ton)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
1	Aceh	31.450	77.549	184.491	442.373	258.991	459.727	474.933	979.649
2	Sumatera Utara	302.220	1.426.891	578.024	1.911.039	490.163	1.713.582	1.370.407	5.051.511
3	Sumatera Barat	7.828	30.762	180.403	705.324	251.672	675.536	439.904	1.411.623
4	Riau	75.158	393.686	1.030.781	3.527.238	1.762.164	4.818.207	2.868.103	8.739.131
5	Jambi	19.567	82.709	280.422	912.649	771.997	1.519.348	1.071.987	2.514.706
6	Sumatera Selatan	25.097	88.375	574.335	2.152.234	534.756	1.778.342	1.134.188	4.018.951
7	Bengkulu	830	2.923	97.931	305.045	319.346	1.069.003	418.107	1.376.971
8	Lampung	7.601	32.779	80.255	239.881	110.726	203.104	198.582	475.764
9	Bangka Belitung	-	-	159.501	656.973	90.651	209.722	250.152	866.695
10	Kepulauan Riau	-	-	6.354	17.273	1.326	1.409	7.680	18.682
11	DKI Jakarta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
12	Jawa Barat	11.255	28.082	4.248	4.857	263	380	15.767	33.320
13	Jawa Tengah	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
14	D.I. Yogyakarta	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15	Jawa Timur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
16	Banten	9.998	24.070	2.359	1.892	6.678	3.225	19.035	29.187
17	Bali	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	Nusa Tenggara Barat	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	Nusa Tenggara Timur	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	Kalimantan Barat	27.213	47.197	1.448.396	3.977.463	597.067	1.109.708	2.072.675	5.134.368
21	Kalimantan Tengah	-	-	1.808.538	7.332.030	397.298	1.031.733	2.205.836	8.363.763
22	Kalimantan Selatan	5.377	14.488	400.961	1.073.591	109.778	254.884	516.117	1.342.963
23	Kalimantan Timur	15.110	26.444	1.157.752	3.248.263	197.730	826.156	1.370.592	4.100.863
24	Kalimantan Utara	-	-	198.052	499.997	38.938	74.411	236.990	574.408
25	Sulawesi Utara	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
26	Sulawesi Tengah	-	-	83.080	297.379	59.137	139.055	142.217	436.434
27	Sulawesi Selatan	8.683	18.664	1.362	3.875	40.187	101.073	50.232	123.612
28	Sulawesi Tenggara	923	1.356	61.162	55.773	11.795	8.467	73.880	65.596
29	Gorontalo	-	-	14.186	12.187	4.923	4.256	19.109	16.443

30	Sulawesi Barat	-	-	39.031	123.985	108.443	263.567	147.474	387.552
31	Maluku	-	-	9.342	18.966	853	124	10.195	19.090
32	Maluku Utara	-	-	5.555	17.979	-	-	5.555	17.979
33	Papua Barat	-	-	45.892	72.464	27.387	22.396	73.279	94.860
34	Papua	-	-	124.419	602.360	21.138	23.192	145.557	625.552
Indonesia		548.311	2.295.975	8.576.838	28.213.089	6.213.407	16.310.607	15.338.556	46.819.672

(Central Statistics Agency, 2023)

Table 3. Export and import of CPO and kernel palm oil 2001 - 2022

Years (1)	Export				Import			
	CPO and other CPO		Palm kernel and other palm kernel		CPO and other CPO		Palm kernel and other palm kernel	
	Volume (Ton) (2)	Value (000 US\$) (3)	Volume (Ton) (4)	Value (000 US\$) (5)	Volume (Ton) (6)	Value (000 US\$) (7)	Volume (Ton) (8)	Value (000 US\$) (9)
2001	4.903.218	1.080.906	581.926	146.259	141	60	4.974	2.464
2002	6.333.708	2.092.404	738.416	256.234	9.499	3.267	2.377	1.508
2003	6.386.409	2.454.626	659.894	264.678	4.014	2.201	1.592	1.066
2004	8.661.647	3.441.776	904.327	502.681	4.320	1.937	3.564	3.157
2005	10.376.190	3.756.283	1.043.195	587.746	10.645	5.301	3.258	2.992
2006	12.100.921	4.817.642	1.274.039	616.476	11.416	6.554	3.638	3.225
2007	11.875.418	7.868.640	1.335.324	997.805	1.068	1.025	3.178	3.943
2008	14.290.686	12.375.569	1.356.880	1.423.958	8.822	5.013	2.172	3.940
2009	16.829.206	10.367.621	1.703.264	1.091.798	21.138	13.126	1.048	1.560
2010	16.291.856	13.468.966	1.572.286	1.727.693	46.720	37.801	1.362	2.208
2011	16.436.202	17.261.248	1.442.666	2.113.877	23.344	24.993	1.366	3.284
2012	18.845.020	17.602.168	1.460.374	1.510.486	616	831	640	1.216
2013	20.577.976	15.838.850	1.644.532	1.301.586	65.561	46.979	326	496
2014	22.892.224	17.464.754	1.479.833	1.540.690	299	393	0	1
2015	26.467.564	15.385.275	1.819.307	1.565.685	7.572	4.624	11	31
2016	22.761.814	14.366.754	1.576.490	1.910.524	2.658	4.116	18	28
2017	27.353.337	18.513.121	1.717.595	2.211.339	2.518	1.812	0	0
2018	27.898.875	16.530.212	1.772.904	1.701.531	806	914	39	69
2019	28.279.350	14.716.275	1.937.238	1.268.634	93.285	45.530	273	147
2020	25.935.257	17.363.921	1.698.177	1.328.356	957	939	664	676
2021	25.624.258	26.755.136	1.418.411	1.926.157	363	694	0	1
2022	24.989.929	27.738.517	1.337.464	2.007.582	382	1.401	126	327

(Central Statistics Agency, 2023)

In the last decade in South Sulawesi, both the total area and production of palm oil plantations have significantly increased, from 28,323 hectares with a total production of 50,583 to 50,232 hectares with a total production of 123,612 (refer to tables I and II). Unlike in most areas, where private companies possessed more palm oil land than state-owned companies, the situation was the opposite in South Sulawesi. Even though the largest area was smallholders' land, state companies held a larger share in palm oil land compared to private companies. In South Sulawesi, there were nine districts with palm oil plantations, namely Soppeng, Wajo, Sidrap, Pinrang, Enrekang, Luwu, North Luwu, East Luwu, and Palopo. Notably, North Luwu had the largest smallholder palm oil plantation area, covering 18,105 hectares, followed by East Luwu with 8,752 hectares, excluding data on state-owned and private plantations (refer to table IV).

In the plantation sector, smallholders/plasma palm oil plantations became the superior commodity in East Luwu. In 2022, the Angkona district was the largest producer of palm oil with a land area of 2,447.50 hectares and a production of 25,205.31 tons (East Luwu Regency Government, 2019; Central Statistics Agency of East Luwu Regency, 2023) (refer to figure II). The Angkona district was one of the operation locations of the state palm oil plantation called PT Perkebunan Nusantara XIV (PTPN XIV) in East Luwu, where PTPN had plantation land as well as a palm oil processing factory (East Luwu Regency Government, 2019).

PTPN XIV was established in 1996 based on Government Regulation number 19 of 1996, concerning the merger of PT Perkebunan XXVIII (Persero), PT Perkebunan XXXII (Persero), PT Bina Mulya Ternak (Persero), which became PT Perkebunan Nusantara XIV (Persero). This merger also included former development projects of PT Perkebunan XXIII (Persero) in South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, and Southeast Sulawesi (PT Perkebunan Nusantara XIV, n.d.). In North Luwu and East Luwu, PTPN XIV controlled 11,473 hectares of Cultivation Rights (HGU) of land, including 2,400 hectares in Mantadulu, East Luwu. PTPN XIV, formerly known as PT Perkebunan XXVIII, began entering Mantadulu Village, Angkona District, in 1994. The plantation in Mantadulu is also known as Malili Plantation/Unit Malili (refer to figures III & IV) (Nur, 2014; Rusdianto, 2018a; Rusdianto, 2021; PTPN XIV Website).

Table 4. Planted area of palm oil plantation 2021-2022 in South Sulawesi

Regency/ Municipality	Oil palm	
	2021	2022
(1)	(2)	(3)
Kepulauan Selayar	-	-
Balukumba	-	-
Bantaeng	-	-
Jeneponto	-	-
Takalar	-	-
Gowa	-	-
Sinjai	-	-
Maros	-	-
Pangkajene dan Kepulauan	-	-
Barru	-	-
Bone	-	-
Soppeng	40	40
Wajo	709	2811
Sidenreng Rappang	234	233
Pinrang	741	741
Enrekang	193	200
Luwu	198	237
Tana Toraja	-	-
Luwu Utara	23989	24414
Luwu Timur	8570	9287
Toraja Utara	-	-
Kota Makassar	-	-

Kota Parepare	-	-
Kota Palopo	4	4
Sulawesi Selatan	34677	37967

(Central Statistics Agency of South Sulawesi, 2023)

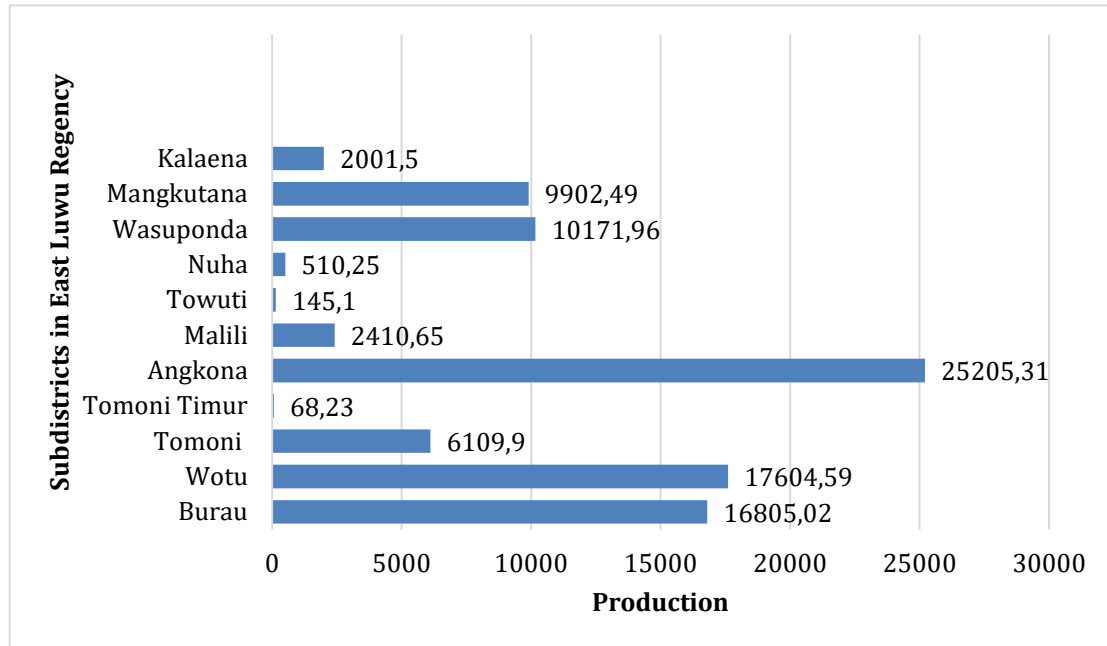


Fig. 2. Palm oil production 2022 in East Luwu Regency (Central Statistics Agency of East Luwu Regency, 2023)



Fig. 3. The location of PTPN XIV Mantadulu (PTPN XIV Website)

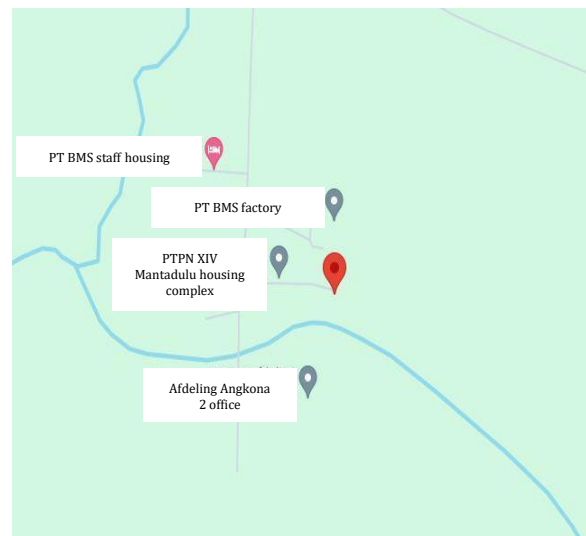


Fig. 4. The location of PTPN XIV Mantadulu (PTPN XIV Website)

In Mantadulu, PTPN XIV only had a plantation area without a factory to process palm oil into Crude Palm Oil (CPO). Subsequently, PTPN XIV collaborated with a private company, namely PT. Bumi Maju Sawit (BMS), to process the palm oil in the BMS factory. According to Andi Evan, Plantation Manager PTPN XIV Unit Malili, the production of palm oil in PTPN XIV was around 50-80 tons per day (Rusdianto, 2017; Iriani et al., 2021).

3.3 The conflicts trajectories

Mantadulu Village is a transmigrant area situated in the Angkona District within East Luwu. The distance from Mantadulu to Malili, the district capital, is approximately 60 km.

The population of Mantadulu is 2,353 people, and the village covers an area of 32.56 km², equivalent to more than 3,200 hectares (Central Statistics Agency of East Luwu Regency, 2023). Based on the collected data, the oil palm plantation area in Mantadulu comprises 2,447.50 hectares for plasma and smallholders, and an additional 2,400 hectares for PTPN XIV under HGU, but the total land area in Mantadulu is 3,200 hectares. Further direct confirmation and additional research are necessary to obtain more detailed data.

In 1994, PTPN XIV (formerly PT Perkebunan XVIII) initiated operations in Mantadulu, leading to the eviction of gardens owned by village communities, including transmigrants and local communities, as their land was taken over by the company. After the incident, the village community reported this to the Luwu Regency Government which then initiated a hearing with the village community and members of the regional people's representative council (DPRD). However, no significant results emerged from the meeting, and PTPN operations in Mantadulu persisted. Five years later, on June 4, 1999, the National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) sent a letter to the South Sulawesi Governor, urging immediate resolution of the case in Wana-Wana, Mantadulu Village. Unfortunately, the letter did not yield a significant impact on the villagers. In the same year, North Luwu was established, and Mantadulu became part of this new regency (Rusdianto, 2017).

The North Luwu Government took charge of the Mantadulu case, urging villagers to gather their land ownership certificates or other evidence letters. On September 21, 1999, approximately 200 evidence letters were submitted by the villagers to North Luwu governance. After some time, the villagers' evidence letters were returned, and 79 of them were missing (Rusdianto, 2017). Consequently, Nuh, one of the villagers who initiated the certificate collection, faced pressure from villagers to return the certificates, and he was even accused of selling the lost evidence letters "People say that, but look at the actual situation. I have nothing," Nuh stated to a Mongabay journalist (Rusdianto, 2017).

From December 11, 2000, to March 1, 2001, the National Land Agency (BPN) measured the disputed land. Based on the measurements, PTPN XIV acquired 52 land certificates from residents in Tawakua Village and 128 land certificates from Mantadulu Village as their land became part of PTPN XIV Plantation. Two years later, East Luwu was established, and Mantadulu became part of Angkona District, East Luwu Regency. Following the formation of East Luwu, the resistance movement from Mantadulu villagers intensified, with increased efforts to block access to the Palm Oil factory. In 2004, the movement succeeded in reclaiming 455 hectares of land from the company. However, after acquiring the land, the company imposed debts on the residents involved in the reclaiming as compensation for the company's palm oil trees. With the escalating movement, police terror against residents began to emerge, including attempts to harm those opposing the company through hired killers (Rusdianto, 2017).

On January 25, 2005, the Regent of East Luwu, Andi Hatta Marakarma, issued a decree to form a conflict verification team, followed by the establishment of a team to map community land within the PTPN XIV plantation three years later. Additionally, the land certificates of villagers in the transmigration area of Mantadulu were still recognized by BPN. In 2009, the Regent of East Luwu reiterated PTPN XIV's commitment to addressing the problem. PTPN XIV responded by arguing that their HGU in Angkona was replacement land for rubber plantation HGU in Baramase Villages, Walenrang District of Luwu. PTPN had proof of recommendation regarding location permits by BPN Luwu from the South Sulawesi Governor on July 9, 1990, and a letter from the Regent of Luwu in 1994 (Rusdianto, 2017).

The villagers whose land was affected by PTPN XIV, about 300 people, then filed a class-action lawsuit against the Company and East Luwu Regency Government. The first trial of the lawsuit was held on July 13, 2017. Additionally, approximately 500 hectares of land area in Wana-wana, Mantadulu Village, had not been cultivated by the company, so this also strengthened the collective movements. One of the witnesses in the trial summoned by the residents named Alo Gawen gave his statements to a Mongabay Journalist, "I came to East Luwu as a migrant. I worked as a contractor. I was the one who cleared all the residents' crops. There were cashews, bananas, breadfruit, and corn. A lot. So if someone says, in that place - Wana-wana - it's not cultivated land, that's wrong. I worked for almost three

months, clearing everything. At that time, I was just working. So I didn't care. Now, some friends like Mr. Yos (Yulius Moronda) contacted me asking to be a witness. I agreed. I will tell the truth," he said. Alo Gawen was a contractor of Gaya Bakti and Apasco, the companies that got work on land clearing in Mantadulu in 1994. Ultimately, at the decision hearing carried out on August 2, 2018, it was decided that the dispute was not accepted. It was rejected because of a provision that was considered formally flawed. The residents then made efforts to appeal to the High Court, Makassar (Rusdianto, 2018a; Rusdianto, 2018b).

There were two versions of the land grabbing process by PTPN XIV in Mantadulu. In the first version, residents were promised a prosperous life because the company would create plasma land, but in reality, everything was turned into a nucleus plantation. In the second version, assuming there was no prior socialization from the company, their land was immediately claimed. The villagers affected by PTPN XIV in Mantadulu were not only transmigrants from outside Sulawesi but also local people from the Pamona and Padoe tribes. Additionally, the presence of palm oil companies in Mantadulu not only led to conflicts but also caused environmental pollution. This is evident in the murky river flow around Mantadulu and the oil palm bunches from the factory that are washed away into the river. In several other areas in East Luwu, residents also experienced similar conflicts with PTPN XIV, particularly in Burau District and Mangkutana District (Rusdianto, 2017; Rusdianto, 2018a).

The East Luwu Regency Government was trying to increase income from the palm oil industry. The Regent of East Luwu, H. Budiman, when opening technical training on harvest and post-harvest for oil palm farmers, said, "So I hope that the speakers will convey to my friends how to increase this oil palm so that it can reach 40 tons per year per hectare. And maybe there will be activities so that my farmer friends can increase their income and prosper in the palm oil sector." This training process was a collaboration between institutions and companies to develop the capabilities of palm oil farmers in East Luwu (Warta Lutim, 2023).

3.4 Palm oil plantation and exclusion process

Palm oil expansion is rationalized by the government and corporations as a means to alleviate poverty because it will provide benefits to many people in rural areas (Obidzinski et al., 2012; Rist et al., 2010; Sayer et al., 2012). According to Li (2016) study and previous studies explained by Li, the argument for poverty alleviation has been refuted because the conditions obtained were actually the opposite. The Indonesian government claimed that 1.8 million hectares of palm oil plantation could absorb 1.8 million workers, but the study in Sambas District, West Kalimantan, in 2006 found that palm oil plantations of corporations with a land area of 199,200 hectares only employed 1,994 people. On the contrary, non-palm oil plantations of smallholders in Sambas covering a land area of 80,000 hectares provided livelihoods for 207,350 farmers — a significant disparity in numbers. Furthermore, there was a contract system that was detrimental to workers, and there was also a labor surplus, signifying an abundance of labor, which was also caused by the transmigration program. Nevertheless, jobs were scarce, compelling people to persist in working even though they were at a disadvantage (Li, 2016; Li, 2017).

In Mantadulu, we found the same social welfare problem but with a different context. Most of the transmigrants who had come from Java, Bali, Lombok, NTB, and so forth, to Mantadulu since 1979 hoped for a decent and prosperous life. The arrival of PTPN XIV in 1994 destroyed their hopes due to the land exclusion process that then occurred. Exclusion is a condition where a community is expelled, closed, or prevented from having access to land. This process is shaped by power relations and can be understood through the interaction of regulation, coercion, markets, and legitimacy (Hall et al., 2020). 'Exclusion is divided into three main types: 1) how certain parties maintain access to the land they own by preventing access by other potential users; 2) how certain parties who have access to land lose that access; and 3) how parties who do not have access are prevented from gaining access' (Hall et al., 2020).

According to the three main types that mentioned before, the exclusion in Mantadulu is included in the second type. They were transmigrants and also local communities who initially had access to land and even had official certificates, lost that access because of the arrival of PTPN XIV. The power disparity between the excluded rural communities and PTPN XIV can be observed through the process of interaction among regulation, coercion, markets, and legitimacy, which will be explained one by one.

"Regulation" here means official state rules related to land access (Hall et al., 2020). Based on the research data, it can be observed that the community possesses legitimate rights through land ownership certificates. However, this was subsequently confronted by PTPN XIV, which, notably, is a state-owned company. PTPN held evidence of location permit recommendations from the BPN in Luwu, issued by the Governor of South Sulawesi on July 9, 1990, and a letter from the Regent of Luwu in 1994. Therefore, they also had legal standing. Here, we can see how the legal evidence of land ownership held by the residents may be overshadowed by the legal documentation from a company supported by a more substantial financial strength, which, undoubtedly, would be deemed more advantageous by both the company and the state.

The next instrument is "coercion." Exclusion through coercion occurred due to the use of violence by repressive state apparatus such as the police and army or non-governmental actors like thugs, and so on (Hall et al., 2020). In the context of the Mantadulu case, coercion through police and hired killers existed. The police were used as a tool to manipulate cases against Mantadulu residents so that some of them could be criminalized, thus killing the spirit of the movement. Furthermore, residents who resisted were also haunted by terror from people who claimed to have been assigned to carry out the murder of residents considered leaders of the citizen movement. Even though their efforts were unsuccessful, it was likely that they would produce a terror effect.

"Market instrument" is the power of exclusion related to favorable prices and incentives for land claims. In palm oil plantation companies, especially in this study, this market instrument can be directly linked to the "legitimacy instrument." They are associated due to the significant contribution of the export value of CPO and Palm Kernel. Hence, the economic benefits obtained from the oil palm plantation industry have an influence on economic growth, providing legitimacy for continuous expansion. The market and legitimacy that then make the suffering of residents whose land is dispossessed by companies seem to be ignored in the interests of capital. All instruments form a chain that is interconnected and interacts so that the exclusion process can occur.

One of the central problems facing agrarian movements seeking to reclaim land or establish new ties to the land is the exclusion of land by the state and companies that employ repression and counter-mobilizations (Gilbert & Afrizal, 2018). In Mantadulu, these conditions are evident. In 2004, the resistance movement in Mantadulu intensified, with increased efforts to obstruct access to the Palm Oil factory. The movement successfully reclaimed 455 hectares of land from the company. However, following the land acquisition, the company imposed debts on residents involved in the reclamation as compensation for the palm oil trees owned by the company. As the movement continued to intensify, incidents of police terror and hired killers from the company against residents emerged. The contradiction among the state, the company, and the residents here constitutes the land exclusion dilemma and also offers insight into state and company violence against collective movements (Hall et al., 2020; Serrano, 2023).

3.5 Capital expansion: Shaping Mantadulu's villager future

The continuous expansion of the palm oil industry is driven by the logic of capital reproduction within the capitalist system (Pye, 2019). The capitalist production system can be conceptualized as a form of labor discipline that divides individuals into social classes based on their relation to the means of production. In this system, individuals without ownership of the means of production must sell their labor power to capitalists, who own

the means of production, in exchange for wages to sustain their livelihoods. Meanwhile, the capitalists employ them to augment their wealth (Mulyanto, 2018; Lima, 2022).

To perpetuate the process of exploitation and simultaneously address internal crises, capitalism necessitates a productive restructuring process that facilitates ongoing circulation. Productive restructuring manifests through three general movements: the rationalization of work organization, geographical and spatial dispersion of commodity production, and the regulation of labor legislation guided by neoliberal logic (Lima, 2022).

"The rationalization of work organization" refers to changes focused on maximizing profits by reducing production costs, enhancing competitiveness, and boosting production outcomes. In the business realm, these actions involve reducing labor costs, downsizing the workforce while increasing workloads, and externalizing work through systems such as outsourcing and subcontracting labor. All these practices are indicative of capitalist strategies (Wood, 2021; Lima, 2022).

The transmigration program plays a pivotal role in the success of these capitalist practices. The existence of a transmigration program that relocates many individuals to an area of capital expansion is advantageous for the capital accumulation process. This abundance of labor reserves allows for the discipline of workers and the reduction of labor costs (Li, 2016). The previously mentioned rationalization related to "the regulation of labor legislation guided by neoliberal logic" is evident in work systems such as outsourcing, which tend to disadvantage workers due to wage discrimination compared to permanent workers, and limited rights to organize.

"Geographical and spatial dispersion of commodity production" is a movement stemming from the capital's need for new investment spaces. Therefore, discussions about continuous expansion spaces are pertinent. These conditions are observable in Mantadulu, where smallholders are dispossessed and compelled to leave their land by a state company called PTPN XIV (Habibi, 2022). While advantageous for PTPN XIV, it is detrimental to the smallholders who lose their land and are left with the choice of either selling their labor to the company, if accepted, or seeking employment elsewhere.

Expropriation here is a part of the capitalist mode of production that has been expressed from time to time in large quantities. This is all caused by the need for capitalists to continue investing excess money so that they have to continue expanding spaces to maintain and expand the circulation of capital (Harvey, 2003). For David Harvey, it is called accumulation by dispossession, which means various forms of violent expulsion, the commodification of the commons, and privatization (Lima, 2022). In this study, the community in Mantadulu and the surrounding area, which has the potential to be planted with palm oil, has the potential to experience significant difficulties in life, especially in livelihoods caused by the exclusion process. Here we can use the term the double meaning of capitalism, which was conveyed by Marx and adapted by Harvey to contemporary conditions. Basically, what Harvey wants to convey is that in the contemporary capitalist economic system, workers can freely offer their labor to anyone in the market with a contract system that can be freely negotiated, but at the same time, they are not actually free because they have been freed from the means of production they own, in this case, land. Hence, it is necessary to sell their labor power to capital owners to survive (Harvey, 2020).

The plasma plantation scheme that the company touts as an excuse to steal villagers' land in Mantadulu and also in many other places is already problematic. The plasma scheme is where the company gives 20% of the concession land that has been planted with palm oil to be managed by smallholders in a debt system; this scheme is claimed to make the smallholders prosperous (Habibi, 2022; The Gecko Project, 2022). According to the investigation by Gecko (2022), they found that the plasma plantation scheme has pushed farmers into poverty, trapped them in huge debts, and bound them by contracts for decades that are not transparent and tend to harm them.

Plasma plantations can generate profits of more than Rp. 22 million per hectare each year, while independent farmers who work without company assistance can earn around Rp. 15 million per hectare every year. In fact, in some cases of plasma plantations, farmers only get an average profit of around Rp. 2.5 million per hectare per year. Some farmers even

did not get anything after more than 10 years in the plasma scheme (The Gecko Project, 2022). The condition can bring farmers into poverty, especially for those who only depend on income from the plasma. Furthermore, the debt system in plasma plantations can make farmers have debts to the company up to tens of billions.

Based on the investigation by The Gecko Project (2022), apart from giving their lands, the farmers who want to join the plasma scheme are also required to borrow from the company to finance the opening of their plasma plantation. The companies are actually targeting the debt to be repaid within 10 to 12 years, but in fact, after more than 10 years, quite a few farmers still owe tens of billions of rupiah. These findings also found that contracts between companies and farmers tend to be detrimental to farmers because the company has large control over the land and financing of plasma plantations.

One of the main problems faced by smallholders involved in plasma farming schemes in Indonesia is farmers' dependence on companies and their trapping in high debt schemes. The conditions in Northeast Colombia can serve as a basis for comparison and provide valuable insights for making recommendations to enhance the situation of smallholders in Indonesia. For some small-scale farmers in Northeast Colombia, palm oil plantations can provide their family life and also have prospects to diversify their cash crops. In addition, they are still carrying out the ecological sustainability of their environment (Serrano, 2023). Why do we get a different story here?

Small-scale farmers in Northeast Colombia have the opportunity to achieve autonomy from markets through state-led land access and support from multiscale organizations. This enables them to reduce costs and diversify income sources when engaging with global markets (Holt-Giménez et al., 2021; McMichael, 2013). Autonomy, in this context, refers to the ability to control decision-making regarding their lives and working conditions (Henderson, 2017; Serrano, 2023). State-led land access entails the procurement of land for farmers through agrarian reform initiated by the state (Serrano, 2023).

Additionally, a regional non-governmental organization known as Plan de Desarrollo y Paz Del Magdalena Medio (PDP), initially formed by the regional labor union and the Catholic Church, provides secure loans, subsidies, identifies mills for fruit purchase, and encourages farmers to form associations. Consequently, these farmers can maintain greater control over the production process compared to those participating in contract farming schemes with palm oil corporations, also known as plasma smallholders in Indonesia, where control is restricted by the company's decisions (Cramb & Curry, 2012; Serrano, 2023). The autonomy of the farmers here has a significant impact on improving their lives and avoiding the pitfalls of large corporate schemes. From this conditions, we can observe that another palm oil plantation that genuinely enhances the welfare of small farmers is possible (Serrano, 2023).

4. Conclusions

The expansion of the palm oil industry in Indonesia appears inseparable from the transmigration program. These initiatives, designed to stimulate economic growth and subsequently enhance community welfare, particularly among transmigrants and local residents, have yielded unexpected consequences. This study in Mantadulu Village revealed that rather than improving the well-being of transmigrants and locals, the transmigration program and the palm oil plantation expansion led by PTPN XIV heightened the risk of poverty. The exclusion process, driven by the logic of capital accumulation, resulted in the loss of essential factors of production, such as cultivated land.

The displacement of Mantadulu residents from their cultivated land compelled them to sell their labor to capital owners or seek employment outside their villages. Additionally, farmers ensnared in plasma plantation schemes faced an increased risk of poverty, especially those reliant solely on scheme-derived income. The inherent tendency of plasma plantations to yield smaller profits compared to independent farming further exacerbated the financial challenges. Moreover, the potential for farmers to accumulate significant debts,

reaching tens of billions of rupiah, presented a formidable obstacle within the plasma scheme.

Therefore, a reevaluation of the ongoing palm oil plantation industry expansion and transmigration program in Indonesia is imperative. The issue extends beyond technical implementation concerns, encompassing the conceptual basis driving these initiatives—the logic of capitalism. Without a thorough review, these programs may catalyze new conflicts within and between communities and companies, undermining poverty alleviation efforts in Indonesia. Recognizing the limitations of the data collected in this study, further research is warranted to explore additional dimensions, particularly through the collection of primary data. This is crucial for a deeper understanding of grassroots conditions, facilitating the identification and analysis of social class locations and relations. Understanding the dynamics of social classes is essential for a more comprehensive view of societal issues, enabling the identification of conflicts within communities. This information is instrumental in the analysis and mapping of actors in social movements, contributing to a more nuanced perspective on poverty alleviation in Indonesia.

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Author Contribution

The author was responsible for conceptualizing the research, collecting and analyzing data, and writing the manuscript. Additionally, the author reviewed relevant literature on transmigration and palm oil plantation expansion, interpreted the findings, and provided insights into the socio-economic impacts on local communities in Mantadulu Village.

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