

Configuration of Multi Actors in Power Access at the Construction Phase of the Asahan 3 HEPP Project

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Abstract: The background of this research is to answer the problem of why development projects that are in accordance with the principles of sustainable development goals for providing renewable and environmentally friendly energy, overcoming the shortage of electrical energy for industry and households, driving the economy for the creation of prosperity, in reality do not run smoothly. By taking the case of the Asahan 3 hydropower plant project (Asahan 3 HEPP Project) which is currently in the development process, the researcher tries to answer it with the assumption that the development project is a limited socio-economic resource and is contested by many parties (multi-actor). The researcher uses the arena concept from Bourdieu and the power concept as the basis for thinking, and the access theory from Ribot and Peluso as the basis for the analysis. The approach used in the methodology is multi-actor ethnography with qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. This study resulted in the findings that the practice of spectacular accumulation of multi-actor to obtain, maintain and control access to projects contributes to the achievement of development targets and progress. Multi actors from the community around the company, to nomads at the regional and national levels participate in the contest to benefit from the project's presence.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Jokowi government in 2015 launched a strategic national electricity program with a capacity of 35,000 MW, to overcome the shortage of electrical energy supply for households and industry at that time, and long-term energy needs in accordance with the national economic growth target. In accordance with the spirit of achieving the global goals of sustainable development and commitment to emission reductions, the national policy is to increase electrical energy from environmentally friendly sources and renewable energy such as Hydroelectric Power Plants (PLTA).

To make the national electricity program a success, the government is accelerating by collaborating with the private sector to produce electrical energy, and revitalizing development that had stalled. One of them is the Asahan 3 HEPP Project (2 x 87 MW) which is located on the border of Asahan Regency and Toba Regency in North

Sumatra by utilizing the potential of the Asahan River. This project had stopped its construction process in the pre-construction stage due to problems in land acquisition, and resumed land acquisition in 2018, and is currently entering the construction stage with a completion target in early 2024.

Socially, the challenges faced at the construction stage were social disturbances in the form of demonstrations, stopping the fleet and access to material and labor mobilization, threats and suppression. Based on GTF Asahan 3 data, from July 2019 to December 2022, there were 131 times of disruption to work operations. These disturbances took the form of demonstrations, the stoppage of the fleet of material and labor carriers, and the cessation of work at the project site. A series of actions above, which have an impact on the achievement of targets and work progress.

However, on the other hand, all parties in the government and the surrounding community stated that they supported the presence of the project for the

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public interest and to improve the welfare of the community. This is stated in the AMDAL document, the results of socio-economic studies, and the results of environmental management monitoring that cover social aspects.

This raises the question, why do all parties state that they support the presence of the project in their area, but social disturbances are still high. To answer this question, the researcher examines the actors involved and their interests in order to map out actors, interests and strategies.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the configuration of the multi-actor who practices spectacular accumulation to obtain, maintain and control access in the Asahan 3 HEPP Project, I examine some literature as a rationale and analysis tool. Starting from referring to the concept of Arena from Foucault (Udasmoro, 2020) and the concept of Power from Foucault (Astuti, 2013). Bourdieu defines Arena or Field as a space where social actors/agents compete with each other for various material resources and symbolic power. Meanwhile, Foucault views power as a resource that is owned by everyone, whose manifestation is in the form of power relations. The occurrence of inequality in power relations due to the unequal ability of the subject to accumulate sources of power.

Next, examine the meaning of development through the study of Tania Li (2012). Tania Li mention development for the purpose of increasing prosperity the "Will to Improve". In practice, programs designed to improve the prosperity of the poor are actually not value-free, the people targeted by the program are not empty spaces that can be filled with anything, development actors who he calls community guardians are also not free from group interests.

The target community of the program that is not an empty space is also expressed by Lubis (2017). His dissertation research in Kapuas Regency, Central Kalimantan Province, found that people who wanted to change their behavior and habits from burning forests to being subjects who guarded the forest, through a program with globally designed ideas and large funds from foreign aid, ultimately failed. The cause of the program's failure, according to Lubis, was the occurrence of a frictional environmental phenomenon, namely efforts to form new subjects through discipline with a series of ideas, mechanisms and technology that did not run smoothly when in contact with the program's target community who

were pragmatic with myopic cultural behavior. There is no open resistance to the program, on the contrary it is entered into the program as part of it (goes hand in hand) but has a different purpose. The practice of burning was still going on, but the subject admitted that the perpetrator was not himself but someone else who was not identified.

The next examination of the literature is the work of Tsing (2011), especially regarding the practice of Spectacular Accumulation, where actors at the local, regional, national and global levels try to get the maximum benefit from an issue. This illustrates that there are many actors (multi-actor) whose existence cannot be seen in an isolated area and is limited to certain administrative areas. But these actors, can be at various levels from local to global.

The next step is to look at the actors based on their importance to the resources in the project based on the right analytical tools. Understanding the phenomenon that occurs is multi-actor trying to obtain, maintain and control access, so to understand it the researcher uses Access Theory from Ribot and Peluso (2003). The basis of this theory is based on Foucault's concept of power by interpreting access as a person's ability to benefit from something. On this matter, Ribot and Peluso see access not only based on rights as in Ownership Theory (Bromley, 1991), but also on ability through networks and a bundles of power owned. The set of powers in question are technology, capital, knowledge, labor, authority, social identity and social relations.

So that the wider the social network they have and the more sources of power they have within them, the greater their ability to obtain, maintain and control access. In fact, the ability of each actor is not the same in accessing these sources of power so that power relations between actors are almost always asymmetric and inequalities (Ribot & Peluso, 2003).

3 RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses an ethnographic approach as part of a qualitative research. In particular, the multi-actor ethnography as described by Little (2007) is based on the following considerations: (1) The plurality of social-environmental interactions in which the group lives, (2) The subject of the study is not only one social group but several groups at once, (3) The geographical scope of the study is not only limited to the biophysical environment of local social groups but also depends on several levels of socio-political articulation related to the issue of the study.

By taking the social setting of the Asahan 3 HEPP Project, data collection was carried out based on participatory observations, in-depth interviews and document studies from various sources. Meanwhile, data analysis was carried out qualitatively through categorization, data reduction and conclusions.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Asahan 3 HEPP Project (2 X 87 MW), which is currently entering the construction phase. This project is part of the national strategic 35,000 MW electricity program launched by President Jokowi in 2015. This project requires a large area of land for road access, main construction and transmission sites. Deininger in McCharty, Vel & Afiff (2013) mentions that locations where large-scale land acquisitions will always be at high risk, both from social and environmental aspects.

One of the social risks is disruption to project operations from actors around the project to get the maximum benefit from the project's presence. The profit maximization is to obtain, maintain and control access to project resources, namely labor and work participation.

The social map of actors in the project can be grouped into two groups of powers, namely (1) Development Authority, (2) Stakeholders Power. The development authority is the project owner who is authorized by the government to supply electrical energy, namely PT. PLN (Persero) and the executor of the work consisting of the main contractor and sub contractors. Meanwhile, the power of stakeholders is the actors who come from various elements of the government and the surrounding community. Government elements around the project such as sub-district and village administrations, including elements of the Military and Police unit who serve as "Babinsa" and "Babinkamtibnas". Meanwhile, community elements are various organizations, groups and individuals who actively participate in the contest to obtain, maintain and control access to the project.

The group of actors from the development power has an interest in ensuring a conducive security situation in the sense that there are no social disturbances that will disrupt the achievement of targets and progress. For this reason, the construction stage is reached in accordance with the stipulated time and the contractor benefits from the work. Meanwhile, the power of stakeholders such as Village Heads, NGOs, Youth's Organization, and influential

individuals carry out various access strategies based on rights and abilities which are described as follows.

4.1 Rights-Based Access Mechanism

The strategy of actors to obtain, maintain and control access based on rights-based access mechanisms is the provisions contained in the Environmental Impact Analysis (AMDAL) document for the Asahan 3 HEPP Project. The provisions in this document are an obligation for the project party to fulfill them as a legal obligation. Among them are regulated related to placing the surrounding community as a priority for local workforce recruitment. It is further regulated in the acceptance mechanism through mutual agreement between project representatives and village government representatives. To run it, an institution was also formed, namely the Asahan 3 HEPP Project Cooperation Committee.

4.2 Power-Based Access Mechanism

The strategy of actors through power-based mechanisms is based on social networks and a set of sets of power (Ribot & Peluso, 2003), according to research findings described as follows:

a. Social Identity

The use of identity as a basis for power to obtain, maintain and control access, is identification as indigenous peoples as opposed to immigrants. Furthermore, the original population was also raised again the category between the natives who live in the village with the natives who live in province & nation's capital. Actors who use social identity as the basis of power for access identify clans categorized as land clans, namely Panjaitan and Marpaung in Tangga Village, and Siagian and Hutagaol in North Meranti Village.

b. Authority

Actors who use authority as the basis of power for access can be seen, among others, from the position of the village coconut who receives monthly funds from the project, which is known as coordination money. On behalf of the village head, this actor uses his authority to recommend someone in local recruitment, and work packages. By stating that the village head who knows the people who need it most should be prioritized, he gives legitimacy for the people he calls to take precedence over the others. However, in practice often the people who are recommended are relatives.

c. Knowledge

Knowledge as the basis for access power can be seen from village officials who have knowledge of the location of the main construction site and transmission according to the project design, have benefited by purchasing land from residents cheaply, and have received multiple benefits when receiving compensation from the project. Knowledge is also used to accumulate profits by planting trees from the start at the point of the construction site which when calculating and paying for it makes a big profit.

d. Capital

The ability to gain access is based on capital ownership, marked by local entrepreneurs who combine with other powers such as social identity and knowledge, local actors succeed in gaining access and benefits in the procurement of goods and services in the Asahan 3 HEPP Project.

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4.3 Multi-Actor Access Power Relations

The power relations between development actors and stakeholders are realized in accordance with their respective interests to obtain maximum access as described by Tsing (2011) as spectacular accumulation. The power of development with an interest in a conducive situation exercises its power through regulation which Foucault calls governmentality (Astuti, 2013). Meanwhile, stakeholders exercise their power through various strategies that are assessed according to their respective objectives. Community elements from organizations such as NGOs and Youth's Organization carried out demonstrations, stopped the material transporting fleet and other forms of operational disturbance to force the project's objectives to be accommodated. Meanwhile, actors from government elements negotiate access through forms of support or delay the signing of documents required by the project party.

Among the actors in the community in the access contest, among others, mutually negate the pattern as follows: (1) Actors who appear as project supporters and above that have the ability to control access and at the same time exclude actors who are competitors. (2) Actors who carry out resistance to supporting actors through delegitimization while at the same time trying to gain access by carrying out a series of disturbances and demands. (3) Actors build cooperation with supporting parties who control

access, and on other occasions become part of groups that carry out resistance.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The Asahan 3 HEPP Project is a limited socio-economic resource both to be able to provide opportunities for everyone. For this, there is a struggle for access by multi actors by maximizing efforts through rights as well as social networks and basic access powers such as social identity, knowledge, capital, authority, and social relations. Differences in the ability of actors to accumulate access, both in terms of rights and capabilities, lead to disparities in the access they have. Among them are causing resistance and mutual negation among actors to be able to obtain, maintain and control access, some of which are excluded.

This study found that interference by stakeholders is not aimed at permanently stopping project operations, but the interference is aimed at gaining, maintaining and controlling access as part of an effort to accumulate benefits from the presence of development projects in their area.

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