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When the forest falls: A case study of National Strategic Projects, dispossession of living space, and community resistance in South Papua

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Abstract

Indonesia's food and energy National Strategic Projects (Proyek Strategis Nasional, PSN) in South Papua target millions of hectares of forest, savanna, and wetland within landscapes containing extensive customary territories. This study examines how the scheme was designated and implemented in Merauke Regency and in its planned oil-palm extension to Boven Digoel and Mappi, how it has changed Indigenous *kampung* communities' access to land and forests, and how communities have resisted. Using a qualitative, document- and media-based single-case design, we analyzed 46 publicly available items (legal instruments, court records, satellite-monitoring and civil-society reports, official statements, investigative journalism, and the paratexts, reported content, circulation, and reception of the documentary film *Pesta Babi*) published up to June 30, 2026. The materials were coded using accumulation-by-dispossession and access theory. The scheme rests on a sequence of instruments, from Presidential Regulation 40/2023 to a 2025 forestry decree releasing 486,939 ha of state forest, followed in 2025 by its relabeling from a PSN project to a four-regency national strategic program. Satellite monitoring recorded 22,272 ha of natural ecosystems, including 9,835 ha of primary forest, cleared within the Merauke PSN area between January 2024 and June 2025. Documented access losses were associated with forest reclassification, machinery, and compensation payments in the context of a military presence, rather than with formal extinguishment of customary rights, and community positions were divided. Resistance to the scheme took the form of complaints to human rights bodies, customary prohibition markers, and the film, which circulated through more than 1,800 screenings but whose representation was itself contested. The article operationalizes living-space dispossession through access mechanisms and legal-administrative processes, documents administrative relabeling of the continuing program, and recommends that the deliberation-and-agreement procedure of Article 43(4) of the Papua Special Autonomy Law precede forest release and land acquisition.

Introduction

Forests are central to Indonesia's environmental and social fabric, and the island of New Guinea holds the largest remaining share. In 2019, about 34.29 million hectares (Mha), or 83% of Indonesian New Guinea, was still covered by old-growth forest, and about 0.75 Mha had been cleared since 2001, with industrial plantations and roads accounting for a growing share of the loss (Gaveau et al., 2021). New Guinea also has the richest island flora recorded worldwide (Cámara-Leret et al., 2020). In South Papua, the province created in 2022 from Merauke, Boven Digoel, Mappi, and Asmat regencies, these forests form a mosaic of lowland and peat-swamp rainforest, Melaleuca swamp forest, wooded savanna, natural grassland, and mangrove (TheTreeMap, 2026).

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The legal status of these landscapes is layered. Most land is designated by the state as forest estate (*kawasan hutan*), part is classified as non-forest land (*Areal Penggunaan Lain*, APL), and much of both is claimed by Marind-Anim, Yei, Maklew, Awyu, Muyu, and other Indigenous clans as customary territory (*tanah ulayat*). Since Constitutional Court Decision 35/PUU-X/2012, customary forests are no longer part of the state forest estate, but their recognition requires further administrative steps that remain incomplete in most of Papua (Myers et al., 2017). For *kampung* communities, these forests supply sago, game, fish, building materials, and medicines and anchor clan identity (Chao, 2018, 2022); sago, in particular, is a staple that underpins household food security across lowland New Guinea (Ehara et al., 2018).

The current wave of conversion has a longer history. The Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE), launched in 2010, was justified through a food-security discourse that made large-scale customary land acquisition appear acceptable (Ito et al., 2014). The present scheme, however, rests on a distinct legal and institutional regime: Presidential Regulation 40/2023 set national targets of 700,000 ha of new sugarcane land and 1.2 million kiloliters of bioethanol by 2030 (Bloomberg Technoz, 2023); Coordinating Ministerial Regulation 8/2023 added the Merauke food and energy development area to the PSN list; and Presidential Decree 15/2024 created a task force for sugar and bioethanol in Merauke (Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024). In 2025, the Merauke project was removed from the PSN project list and redesignated as a national strategic program for food, energy, and water self-sufficiency covering Merauke, Mappi, Asmat, and Boven Digoel (Riberu, 2025; VOI, 2025). Government planning figures reported in 2025 allocate 1,000,000 ha to rice, 633,000 ha to sugarcane, and 382,759 ha to oil palm for biodiesel in Mappi and Boven Digoel (Saturi, 2025a).

The government presents these projects as serving national food sovereignty, reduced sugar imports, the energy transition, and regional employment (Bloomberg Technoz, 2023; Tenggara Strategics, 2026), and some customary clans have publicly declared their support in return for involvement and compensation (Pemerintah Kabupaten Merauke, 2025). Independent monitoring, by contrast, attributes 24% of all primary forest loss in Indonesian Papua in 2024 to the Merauke PSN area (Gaveau, 2025), and civil-society organizations and United Nations special rapporteurs have raised concerns about consultation and the presence of security forces (Mongabay, 2025; Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024). Comparable agro-industrial expansions elsewhere show that formally authorized land acquisition frequently coincides with livelihood loss and conflict (Berenschot & Loughlin, 2025; Scheidel et al., 2023).

Existing scholarship explains how dispossession was legitimized under MIFEE (Ito et al., 2014), how oil palm has reshaped Marind food systems and cosmology (Chao, 2018, 2022; Sarang et al., 2024), and how West Papuans resist extractive capitalism (Malinda, 2025), building on a wider literature on Indonesian agrarian movements (White et al., 2023). The primary gap this article addresses is the absence of an evidence-traceable analysis that follows the legal-administrative chain of the 2023–2026 scheme through to documented changes in community access, distinguishing what instruments authorize from what has been realized on the ground. A related gap concerns the role of cultural production, specifically the 2026 documentary *Pesta Babi: Kolonialisme di Zaman Kita* (Pig Feast: Colonialism in Our Time), in contesting that chain. The film's recent release partly explains this gap, but its recency is not in itself a theoretical novelty.

The study asks three questions: (RQ1) Through which legal-administrative instruments and stages has the food and energy scheme been designated and implemented in South Papua between 2023 and June 2026? (RQ2) How have these instruments changed Indigenous *kampung* communities' access to and control over land and forests, as documented in the corpus? (RQ3) What forms of resistance have emerged, and how does *Pesta Babi* function as a mode of representation, a form of testimony, a counter-archive, and a mobilization device? Correspondingly, the objectives are to reconstruct the instrument chain and distinguish planned, designated, and realized areas; to trace access mechanisms to specific decisions, actors, places, and dates; and to analyze resistance practices, including the film. The article operationalizes living-space dispossession, an expression derived from the Indonesian phrase *perampasan ruang hidup*, as an analytical framework linked to access mechanisms and legal-administrative processes, documents the regulatory relabeling associated with the continuing program, and offers policy recommendations tied to these findings.

Literature review and conceptual framework

Living-space dispossession and related concepts

This section distinguishes four concepts. Land grabbing denotes the acquisition of control over large areas of land by powerful actors, irrespective of whether it is lawful (Berenschot & Loughlin, 2025). Land

dispossession refers to the transfer of possession or rights away from prior holders through expropriation, purchase, or coercion (Levien, 2013). Loss of access refers to a decline in the ability to derive benefits from land and resources, which can occur even when rights formally remain intact (Myers & Hansen, 2020; Ribot & Peluso, 2003). We use living-space dispossession, derived from the Indonesian phrase *perampasan ruang hidup*, to refer to the loss or restructuring of an integrated socio-ecological territory (land, forest, water, food sources, sacred sites, and the clan authority that governs them) through which a community reproduces its life. The expression is not new, and this article does not claim to originate it; rather, it develops the term's analytical specification. Living-space dispossession differs from related concepts not so much in scope as in its analytical standpoint and object. Land grabbing centers on the acquiring actor and the scale of control, while land dispossession centers on the transfer of rights. Living-space dispossession, by contrast, centers on a community's capacity to reproduce an integrated socio-ecological life, including access to food, water, and sacred sites, the meanings attached to them, and the customary authority that governs them. As with loss of access, it can occur even when formal rights are not legally extinguished; unlike conventional applications of the loss-of-access concept, however, it treats these resources as an interdependent territory governed by clan authority rather than as separate benefit streams.

Two clarifications follow. First, compensation and dispossession can coexist: payments to some clans do not preclude a loss of access for others. Second, collective customary rights (*hak ulayat*), held by a clan or community, differ from individual rights held by members, and the social consequences documented in this article should not be interpreted as the legal extinguishment of either. Whether specific acquisitions were lawful is a separate legal question that this study does not adjudicate.

Accumulation by dispossession and regimes of dispossession

Harvey (2003) describes accumulation by dispossession as the release of assets, including common land, into circulation through commodification, privatization, and state power. Rather than reducing it to transfers "without equivalent compensation," we operationalize three mechanisms: commodification (turning territory into a tradable or bankable asset; Li, 2014), exclusion (removing or restricting prior users), and the restructuring of control (shifting decision-making authority over land to state agencies and firms). Levien (2013) adds that dispossession is organized through historically specific regimes that combine state purposes with means of coercion. Berenschot and Loughlin (2025) distinguish eminent-domain-based, curtailed-tenure-based, and coercion-based regimes and place Indonesia in the second category, in which most land is designated as forest estate and companies acquire land under permits that leave customary claimants with little recourse (see also Berenschot & Dhiaulhaq, 2023).

Access theory as an analytical tool

Ribot and Peluso (2003) define access as the ability to benefit from things and distinguish rights-based access from structural and relational mechanisms, including technology, capital, markets, labor, knowledge, authority, social identity, and social relations. Reviewing two decades of applications, Myers and Hansen (2020) caution that the theory is often used as a list of labels. To avoid this, we trace each mechanism retained in our analysis to who controls what, the decision or action that changed access, its location and date, the type of evidence, and the consequences for rights-holders (see *Data analysis* and Table 4).

Legal framework for customary rights, PSN and consent

Article 18B(2) of the 1945 Constitution recognizes customary-law communities and their traditional rights as long as they remain alive and consistent with national development; Article 28I(3) protects cultural identity and traditional rights; and Article 33(3) places land and natural resources under state control for the greatest prosperity of the people. The Basic Agrarian Law (Law No. 5/1960) allows state control to be delegated to customary communities (Article 2), recognizes *hak ulayat* where it still exists and does not conflict with the national interest (Article 3), and gives all land rights a social function (Article 6). For Papua, Article 43(4) of the Special Autonomy Law (Law No. 21/2001, as amended by Law No. 2/2021) requires that the provision of customary and individual land "for any purpose" be carried out through deliberation with the customary community to reach agreement on the surrender of the land and its compensation. Constitutional Court Decision 35/PUU-X/2012 excludes customary forests from the state forest estate, although it does not by itself delimit any particular territory.

PSN status confers procedural advantages, including accelerated licensing and land acquisition (Government Regulation No. 42/2021), and land for development in the public interest may be acquired under Law No. 2/2012. Internationally, Articles 19 and 32(2) of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous

Peoples (UNDRIP) call for free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) before measures and projects affecting Indigenous lands. Indonesia voted for the Declaration, but it is not a binding treaty, so its domestic force depends on national norms such as Article 43(4). The legal problem examined here is therefore not the absence of a rule but a gap between existing safeguards and their implementation, together with ambiguity in how unregistered customary claims are treated when state forest is released (Hariri et al., 2025; Yuwono, 2024). Lack of registration is not treated in this article as evidence of an absence of rights.

Prior studies in Papua and comparable contexts

Prior literature on agribusiness in Papua can be organized around three strands. The first concerns policy discourse and legal-administrative mechanisms: Ito et al. (2014) show how MIFEE was constructed to appear socially acceptable despite enabling large-scale customary land acquisition, while Abdulgani (2025) shows how recent food estates combine state capital with coercion. The second strand concerns the socio-ecological and spiritual consequences of dispossession for Indigenous livelihoods. Drawing on long-term ethnographic research in Merauke. Chao (2018, 2022) showed how oil-palm expansion produces what she terms gastrocolonialism: the marginalization of Indigenous forest food systems through a racially inflected development narrative. Sarang et al. (2024), meanwhile, emphasize the cosmological dimensions of forest loss for the Marind. The third strand concerns resistance: Malinda (2025) conceptualizes West Papuan responses to extractive capitalism as open struggle whose effectiveness depends on alliances, while Berenschot and Saraswati (2024) find that Indonesian land claimants often use muted, custom-based language because legal avenues are unreliable. The studies reviewed for this article were identified through Scopus and Google Scholar searches combining the terms "Merauke," "Papua," "food estate," "PSN," "dispossession," and "oil palm" and covering the period 2014–2026. Most focus on Merauke and examine one dimension at a time; none analyzes *Pesta Babi*, which appeared only in 2026.

Comparative studies help identify mechanisms rather than prove their presence in Papua. In Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor, dispossession operated through planning and land-use reclassification that preceded acquisition (Krueanuan & Seemung, 2026); in Cambodia, land was rezoned for speculative, nonproductive uses (Loughlin & Milne, 2025); in a Bunong community in Cambodia, resistance depended more on leaders' affective labor than on legal recognition (Hak et al., 2022); and in Nasarawa South, Nigeria, divisions between farmers and pastoralists weakened collective resistance (Nwankwo & Upton, 2026). Globally, Scheidel et al. (2023) find that land dispossession and livelihood loss are each reported in roughly half of 1,044 documented environmental conflicts involving Indigenous Peoples. These cases differ from South Papua in their tenure regimes (state concession land in Cambodia, statutory customary tenure in Nigeria, and private and state land in Thailand) and evidence bases, so they are used here as heuristic comparisons.

Documentary film as testimony, counter-archive and mobilisation

Documentary film represents events through selection, framing, and editing, and it mediates rather than transparently records the testimony it contains (Nichols, 2017). Campisi (2024) reviews South American documentaries on resource extraction that serve as counter-narratives to official accounts, while Spiegel (2021) shows how Indigenous visual practices of witnessing contest state and corporate imagery. Building on this work, we analyze four functions: representation (framing devices and claims), testimony (whose voices appear and how they are mediated), counter-archive (what is recorded that official records omit), and mobilization (circulation, screenings, and the responses they provoke). In this study, the four functions are not equally well evidenced. Because the audiovisual text was not coded (see *Sampling design and data collection*), representation, testimony, and counter-archive are inferred from the film's title and credits, the directors' statements, and independently reported content descriptions; these interpretations are therefore provisional. Mobilization, by contrast, is supported by documented screening, disruption, and reception records and is the best-evidenced function.

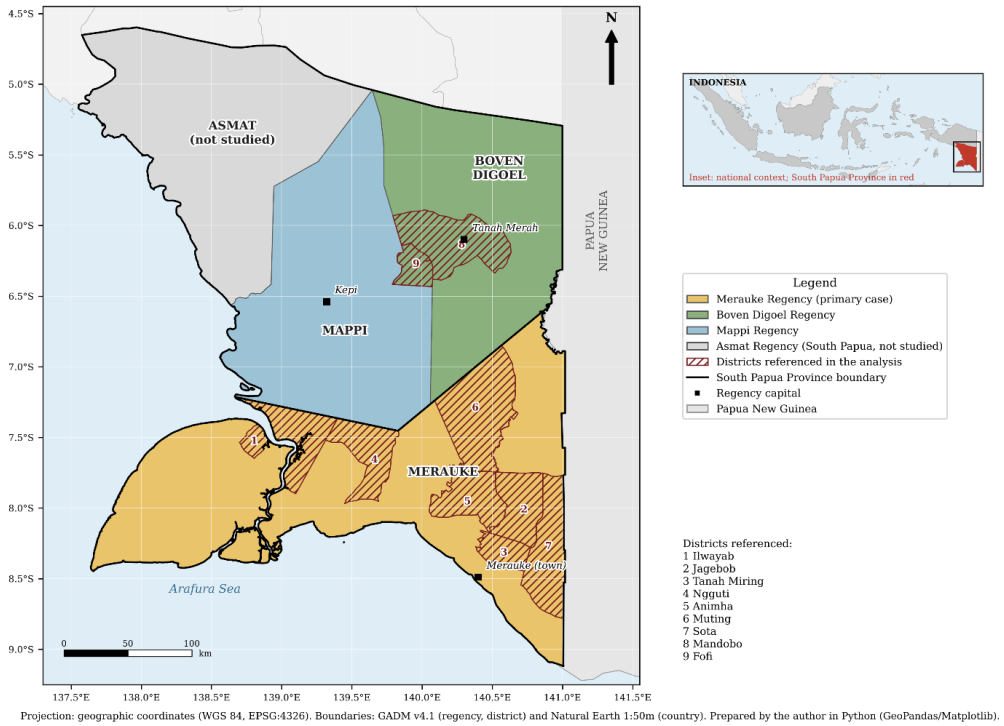
Materials and methods

Description of the study area

The study area lies in South Papua Province, between approximately 137°E and 141°E longitude and 4.6°S and 9.1°S latitude (Figure 1). Merauke Regency is the primary case because the PSN instruments, concession-related clearing, and most documented conflicts are located there, particularly in the districts of Ilwayab, Jagebob, Tanah Miring, Ngguti, Animha, Sota, and Muting. Boven Digoel and Mappi are included as secondary units: government plans allocate 382,759 ha for oil-palm cultivation for biodiesel in these two regencies under the 2025 self-sufficiency program (Saturi, 2025a), and Boven Digoel is the setting for Awyu

litigation against a provincial environmental permit for a private oil-palm plantation. That litigation is not directed at any PSN instrument; it is treated throughout as a related non-PSN agrarian case that provides regional context on the procedural barriers facing customary claimants, not as evidence of resistance to the focal scheme. Evidence is therefore uneven: findings about land clearing refer to Merauke, whereas Boven Digoel and Mappi are analyzed mainly at the level of planning instruments and, for Boven Digoel, related non-PSN litigation. Asmat, which is also included in the 2025 program, is outside the scope of this study.

Based on calculations using GADM v4.1 boundaries projected to UTM Zone 54S, Merauke covers approximately 43,800 km², Boven Digoel 23,600 km², and Mappi 25,800 km². Official figures differ because of differences in boundary datasets (e.g., 46,791.63 km² for Merauke and 28,518 km² for Mappi; (Biro Ekonomi dan Administrasi Pembangunan Provinsi Papua Selatan, n.d.). Mid-2024 populations were approximately 246,400 in Merauke, 112,100 in Mappi, and 70,400 in Boven Digoel (Biro Ekonomi dan Administrasi Pembangunan Provinsi Papua Selatan, n.d.). Indigenous *kampung* economies combine sago processing, hunting, fishing, and small-scale gardening, while Merauke also contains long-established transmigrant rice-farming areas near the regency capital (Chao, 2018; Ito et al., 2014).



Projection: geographic coordinates (WGS 84, EPSG:4326). Boundaries: GADM v4.1 (regency, district) and Natural Earth 1:50m (country). Prepared by the author in Python (GeoPandas/Matplotlib).

Figure 1. Study area: Merauke, Boven Digoel and Mappi regencies in South Papua Province, with the districts referenced in the analysis and national context (inset)

***Source*:** (Prepared by the author from GADM v4.1 administrative boundaries and Natural Earth 1:50m country boundaries; WGS 84 [EPSG:4326]. Concession boundaries are not shown because verifiable concession geodata were not publicly available at the data cutoff [see *Policy implications, limitations and further research*]).

Research design

The study uses a qualitative, instrumental single-case design (Stake, 1995) with embedded units of analysis (Yin, 2018). The case is the food and energy PSN scheme in South Papua, from its designation in 2023 to the data cutoff of June 30, 2026. The embedded units are (a) the legal-administrative instruments that designate and implement the scheme; (b) documented changes in access at the *kampung* level; and (c) resistance practices, including the documentary film *Pesta Babi*. The design is document- and media-based: no interviews or fieldwork were conducted, and the earlier description of the study as combining in-depth interviews with document analysis has been withdrawn. How the interview-related passages came to be included in the original submission is explained in the Transparency Statement. *Kampung*-level experience is therefore examined only as reported in published sources.

Sampling design and data collection

A purposive corpus covering materials published between January 2023 and the data cutoff of June 30, 2026 (plus earlier legal instruments still in force) was assembled using four routes: (1) official legal databases

(peraturan.bpk.go.id and the JDIH portals of coordinating ministries) and the Supreme Court decision directory; (2) the websites of monitoring and civil society organizations working on the case (Nusantara Atlas/TheTreeMap, Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, and Trend Asia); (3) news and investigative outlets with sustained coverage (Mongabay, Jubi, Tempo, Kompas, CNN Indonesia, and The Jakarta Post) and human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch and Human Rights Monitor); and (4) Scopus and Google Scholar for analytical literature. Search queries combined the terms "PSN Merauke," "food estate," "swasembada," "Boven Digoel," "Mappi," "Awyu," "Marind," "Yei," "salib merah," "Pesta Babi," and "Komisi Nasional Hak Asasi Manusia (Komnas HAM)" in Indonesian and English.

Items were included if they (i) concerned the food and energy scheme or related land disputes in the three regencies, (ii) identified an author or issuing institution and a date, and (iii) specified the location or project to which a claim referred. Opinion pieces without new factual content, undated material, unverifiable social media posts, and duplicate reports were excluded. To counter confirmation bias, the search deliberately sought government statements, government responses to complaints, and reports of community support for the projects. The final corpus comprises 46 items (Table 1; inventory in Appendix A; complete audit trail in Supplementary S1 and S2). Scholarly literature is used to interpret the corpus and is not counted as data. Some official documents (e.g., the government's reply to the UN special rapporteurs and Komnas HAM findings) were accessible only through media reports, and the 2025 forestry decrees were analyzed through reports by monitoring organizations. These items were coded according to their origin and classified under access mode B (indirect access through a named intermediary; see *Data analysis*).

Table 1. Composition of the research corpus (cutoff 30 June 2026)

Category	n	Examples	Evidence type
Legal and policy instruments	15	1945 Constitution; Law 5/1960; Law 21/2001 as amended by Law 2/2021; Perpres 40/2023; Permenko 8/2023 and 16/2025; Keppres 15/2024; Inpres 14/2025; MK Decision 35/PUU-X/2012; UNDRIP	E1-A (9); E1-B (6)
Court records	3	PTUN Jayapura 6/G/LH/2023/PTUN.JPR; PTTUN Manado 92/B/LH/2023/PT.TUN.MDO; MA 458 K/TUN/LH/2024	E1-A (1, directory); E1-B (2, via published analysis)
Satellite-monitoring and civil-society reports	4	Gaveau (2025); TheTreeMap (2026); Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat (2024); Trend Asia (2025)	E2-A; E3-A
Official and human-rights-body statements	5	Merauke Regency Government (2025); UN special rapporteurs' letters and government reply (2025); Komnas HAM (2025)	E1-A (1); E1-B (4)
News and investigative reports	11	Mongabay; Jubi; Surya Papua; Wene Buletin; VOI; The Jakarta Post; Greenpeace Indonesia	E3-A; E4-B
Film and reception materials	8	Official release of *Pesta Babi* (2026); director statement; synopsis; screening-disruption and complaint reports	E3-A; E4-B; E4-A for release metadata only
Total	46		

***Note*:** (Evidence origin [E1–E4] and access mode [A = consulted in original form; B = accessed indirectly through a named intermediary; number of items in brackets] are defined in the *Data analysis* subsection. E5, researcher interpretation, is applied in the analysis, not to sources. Item-level details are given in Appendix A and Supplementary S1).

The film was identified through its official public release on the Watchdoc and JubiTV YouTube channels on May 22, 2026 (approximately 95 minutes; in Indonesian with subtitles; directed by Dandhy Dwi Laksono and Cypri Paju Dale; Laksono & Dale, 2026), following a premiere and community-screening campaign that began in March–April 2026 (Human Rights Monitor, 2026). Consistent with the documentary research design, the object of analysis is the film's public representation, paratexts, documented content, circulation, and reception rather than the audiovisual text itself. The elements taken directly from the official release are limited to its title, credits (directors and producing organizations), running time, language, and release channels and date. The audiovisual content was not systematically viewed and coded for this study: no timestamped scene-by-scene analysis or shot-level coding was undertaken, and no transcript was prepared. Accordingly, no claims are made about specific scenes, speakers' words, shots, or editing choices. Statements about the film's content

rely on the published synopsis, the directors' statements, and content descriptions reported in at least two independent sources. Table 5 identifies the evidentiary basis for each function.

Ethical considerations

The study did not involve interaction with human participants; it uses only publicly available materials, so formal ethical clearance was not required. To limit potential harm, private individuals quoted in media reports are identified by role and location rather than by name, and no personal images are reproduced. This is particularly relevant because, on May 29, 2026, a Marind woman featured in the film filed a police complaint alleging that her likeness had been used without her consent (CNN Indonesia, 2026b). Appearance in a film is therefore not treated as consent to research use. The author has no affiliation with the filmmakers, companies, government agencies, or civil-society organizations whose materials are analyzed but acknowledges that much of the available evidence is produced by organizations critical of the projects. This potential source imbalance is addressed through the search for divergent evidence and the evidence typology described below.

Data analysis

The analysis drew on qualitative document analysis (Morgan, 2022) and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and proceeded in four steps. First, each item was entered into a structured spreadsheet (Supplementary S1) recording its source, date, geographical location, project or instrument, evidence origin and access mode, persistent identifier (URL, DOI, or case number) where available, and the identifiers of the claims extracted from it. The extracted claims and their codes were recorded in the coding matrix (Supplementary S2). Second, claims were coded deductively using codes derived from the *Literature review and conceptual framework* (instrument type; commodification, exclusion, and restructuring of control; the access mechanisms of authority, technology, capital, knowledge/information, and social relations; and the four film functions). Inductive coding was also used to identify patterns not anticipated by the framework (e.g., program relabeling, tali asih compensation, and customary sasi markers). Appendix B provides the codebook with examples. Third, each coded claim was assigned an evidence type: E1 (legal or official record); E2 (remote-sensing measurement); E3 (investigative or journalistic finding); E4 (testimony or statement by a participant or party, as published by others); and E5 (researcher interpretation). Fourth, codes were grouped into themes corresponding to RQ1–RQ3. Supplementary S2 is a selected analytical matrix: it contains every coded claim on which the findings reported in this article are based, with each claim linked to its corpus items and manuscript location; it does not contain the complete output of first-pass coding.

Each item is classified along two separate dimensions: the origin of the information (E1–E4) and its mode of access, either A (consulted in its original form from the issuing source) or B (known only indirectly through a named intermediary). The government's reply to the UN special rapporteurs, for example, is coded E1-B, indicating an official-source claim accessed indirectly through Mongabay (2025), rather than a primary record. Credibility was addressed through source triangulation: a claim is reported as a finding only when it is supported by at least two independent sources of different types or by a primary record. For this rule, a primary record is either an E1-A item or a remote-sensing measurement published by the organization that generated it (E2-A). E2-A measurements are treated as primary only for the extent, location, and timing of land-cover change, never for its cause, ownership, or legality, and they are always reported with their measure, period, geography, and source. The main E2 figures (e.g., 5,936 ha and 22,272 ha) come from a single monitoring organization, Nusantara Atlas, whose two publications in the corpus are not treated as independent of each other. E1-B items are not treated as primary records; they are reported with attribution and, where possible, alongside a source of a different type. Other single-source claims are reported with attribution (e.g., "reported by"). Media reports that repeat the film or statements by the same speaker are not treated as independent corroboration. Counter-evidence, such as clan declarations of support and government denials, is reported alongside critical sources. Figures are always reported with their measure (plan, designation, or actual clearing), geography, period, and source. Figures 1 and 2 were prepared by the author using Python (GeoPandas and Matplotlib).

Results and discussion

The legal-administrative chain: from PSN designation to a national strategic programme (RQ1)

The scheme was built through a sequence of instruments issued by different authorities (Table 2). MIFEE (2010) was a predecessor initiative with its own legal basis; it is treated here only as historical context, not as a PSN or as a stage in the instrument chain. The current scheme began with national sectoral targets (Presidential Regulation 40/2023), which do not designate specific sites. Site-level designation followed

through the PSN list (Coordinating Ministerial Regulation 8/2023), a dedicated task force (Presidential Decree 15/2024), and forestry decisions in 2024–2025. On September 24, 2025, Permenko 16/2025 removed the Merauke food and energy development area, previously PSN project No. 112, from the PSN project list and instead listed a food, energy, and water self-sufficiency program covering Merauke, Mappi, Asmat, and Boven Digoel (Riberu, 2025; VOI, 2025). The director of Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat described this change as a policy that had merely "changed its robe" (Riberu, 2025).

Table 2. Chronology of the main instruments designating and implementing the food and energy scheme in South Papua

Date	Instrument	Authority	Object and content	Relevance and status
2010	MIFEE launch	Central government	Integrated food and energy estate in Merauke	Historical antecedent with a distinct legal basis; not a PSN and not part of the chain analyzed (Ito et al., 2014)
June 2023	Presidential Regulation (Perpres) 40/2023	President	Acceleration of sugar self-sufficiency and bioethanol supply; targets of 700,000 ha of new sugarcane land and 1.2 million kL of bioethanol by 2030	National targets; no site designation (Bloomberg Technoz, 2023)
November 2023	Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Regulation (Permenko) 8/2023	Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs	Amends the PSN list to include the Merauke food and energy development area	PSN designation (Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024)
April 19, 2024	Presidential Decree (Keppres) 15/2024	President	Task force for sugar and bioethanol self-sufficiency in Merauke	Implementing body (Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024)
July 12, 2024	Ministry of Environment and Forestry Decision SK 835/2024	Minister of Environment and Forestry	Approval of forest-area use for food-security infrastructure (13,540 ha)	As reported by Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat (2024)
2025	Minister of Forestry Decisions SK 430/2025 and SK 591/2025	Minister of Forestry	Change in forest function (175,009 ha) and release of 486,939 ha of state forest to non-forest land (APL)	Reported by Trend Asia (2025) and TheTreeMap (2026); full texts not publicly available
August 5, 2025	Presidential Instruction (Inpres) 14/2025	President	Acceleration of the development of food, energy, and water self-sufficiency areas, including South Papua	Program mandate
September 24, 2025	Permenko 16/2025	Coordinating Ministry for Economic Affairs	Removes the Merauke area from the PSN project list; lists a self-sufficiency program for Merauke, Mappi, Asmat, and Boven Digoel	Redesignation (Riberu, 2025; VOI, 2025)

Note: (Dates are those reported by the cited sources. The study did not assess the legality of individual acquisitions).

Three findings follow. First, the planned footprint varies across plan versions and geographical areas (Table 3). In 2024, *Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat* reported 541,094 ha of sugarcane concessions held by ten companies and a one-million-hectare rice plan in Merauke; government figures reported in 2025 also included

livestock, other food crops, and 382,759 ha of oil palm in Mappi and Boven Digoel; and the June 2026 reconstruction by TheTreeMap (2026) maps 2.32 Mha in Merauke alone, including existing oil-palm concessions that predate the PSN. These figures represent plans rather than legal designations or actual land clearing, and they cannot be summed across versions. An earlier version of this article reported a single total of 2–2.5 Mha across three regencies; that figure has been withdrawn because no single traceable plan supports it.

Table 3. Planned land allocation for the food and energy scheme, by plan version (hectares)

Sector	Version A: Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat (2024), Merauke	Version B: Government figures reported by Saturi (2025a), four regencies	Version C: TheTreeMap (2026) reconstruction, Merauke
Rice	1,000,000	1,000,000	882
Other food crops	–	349,944	–
Sugarcane (bioethanol)	541,094	633	531,471
Oil palm, new (biodiesel)	–	382,759 (Mappi and Boven Digoel)	228,411
Oil palm, existing concessions	–	–	260,482
Livestock	–	373,578	272,482
Infrastructure	13,54	2,483 (roads 1,926; airport 180; port 377)	Not itemised
Customary protection	–	–	55,335
Stated or arithmetic total	Not stated	2,741,764 (arithmetic sum)	2,320,000 (stated; 2,230,181 itemised)

Note: ('–' = not reported in that version. Categories may overlap (e.g., infrastructure within plantation areas), versions differ in geography and date, and none constitutes a legal designation of concession boundaries. Realised clearing is shown in Figure 2).

Second, the step that most directly converts forest into allocable land is forest reclassification, which takes place in landscapes where customary claims are documented. SK 591/2025 released 486,939 ha of state forest to non-forest status, including nearly 300,000 ha of primary closed-canopy forest (TheTreeMap, 2026). Because verified data on the overlap between the released area and customary territories were unavailable, the release is a documented legal fact concerning state forest, but the available evidence does not establish that the entire released area consists of customary forest. The corpus contains no record of deliberation with customary communities under Article 43(4) of the Special Autonomy Law preceding this release. In its reply of May 6, 2025, to the UN special rapporteurs, the government stated that the project complies with national law and that FPIC had been obtained, whereas the rapporteurs' letters of March 7, 2025, and Komnas HAM's findings of June 25, 2025, pointed to inadequate consultation and communication (Mongabay, 2025; Wally, 2025). The legal mismatch identified here is thus between an existing norm (Article 43(4)) and the documented sequence of administrative acts, not a legal vacuum.

Third, the 2025 change in legal category can be documented, but its consequences can be established only in part. Before September 24, 2025, the Merauke food and energy development area was an individual project on the PSN list, eligible as such for the facilities that Government Regulation No. 42/2021 attaches to PSN projects (see *Legal framework for customary rights, PSN and consent*), and implemented through the task force created by Presidential Decree 15/2024 and the 2024–2025 forestry decisions. After that date, the project entry was removed, and a four-regency program was listed in its place under the mandate of Presidential Instruction 14/2025 (Riberu, 2025; VOI, 2025). The corpus documents four aspects of this change: (a) the legal category changed from project to program; (b) the geographic scope widened from one regency to four; (c) the planned land demand was not reduced (Table 3, Version B); and (d) clearing in the sugarcane concessions continued to December 2025 (TheTreeMap, 2026), with a company project leader stating that operations would continue because "only the nomenclature changed" (Riberu, 2025). The corpus does not establish which facilities ceased or began to apply: VOI (2025) reports that removal from the project list ends access to PSN licensing facilities, whereas the director of *Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat* described the change as a policy

that had merely "changed its robe" (Riberu, 2025). Neither the annex of Permenko 16/2025 nor any rule specifying program-level facilities was available at the data cutoff. The corpus also does not show a transfer of decision-making capacity between agencies; neither the dissolution of the task force nor the revocation of the forestry decisions was reported. Nor does it show any change in community access attributable to the relabeling itself. In Berenschot and Loughlin's (2025) terms, the case combines features of a curtailed-tenure regime (company acquisition on land where customary rights are weakly recognized) with state-led designation and military facilitation that are more typical of eminent-domain regimes. Formal authorization, in this reading, is the instrument through which access is reorganized; whether particular acquisitions were lawful requires case-by-case legal examination that lies outside the scope of this study.

Accordingly, we use regulatory relabeling descriptively to refer to a documented change in the legal-administrative category under which a land-demanding scheme is governed while its planned land demand and on-the-ground clearing continue. We do not claim that the 2025 relabeling was itself a mechanism of dispossession; the mechanisms through which access changed are those traced in *Changing access and living-space dispossession (RQ2)*. A possible implication, advanced as interpretation (E5) for further research, is that such relabeling makes it harder for affected communities and oversight bodies to identify which legal framework, facilities, and accountability channels apply. Because MIFEE rested on a different legal basis, the transition from MIFEE to the 2023 PSN is not treated as relabeling. The 2025 change resembles the pre-acquisition reclassification documented in Thailand (Krueanuan & Seemung, 2026) and rezoning in Cambodia (Loughlin & Milne, 2025) only insofar as a change in administrative category accompanies continued land demand.

Changing access and living-space dispossession (RQ2)

Observed land clearing remains much smaller in extent than planned allocations but has proceeded rapidly (Figure 2). Satellite monitoring recorded 5,936 ha of primary forest loss within the Merauke PSN area in 2024, reported as 24% of the 25,300 ha lost across Indonesian Papua that year. It also recorded 22,272 ha of natural ecosystems cleared in the Merauke PSN area between January 2024 and June 2025, including 9,835 ha of primary forest; the remainder comprised Melaleuca swamp, savanna, and grassland (Gaveau, 2025). By the end of 2025, clearing had reached 22,006 ha within the PT Global Papua Abadi sugarcane concession and 8,285 ha within the PT Murni Nusantara Mandiri concession, while a further 10,525 ha had been converted for rice cultivation and road construction (TheTreeMap, 2026). Not all land-cover change is attributable to the PSN: existing oil-palm and pulpwood concessions predate it, and 169,903 ha within the 2.32 Mha footprint burned between 2019 and 2025 (TheTreeMap, 2026). These figures describe different measures of land-cover change within their respective geographic areas and periods and should not be interpreted as evidence that all observed changes were caused by the PSN.

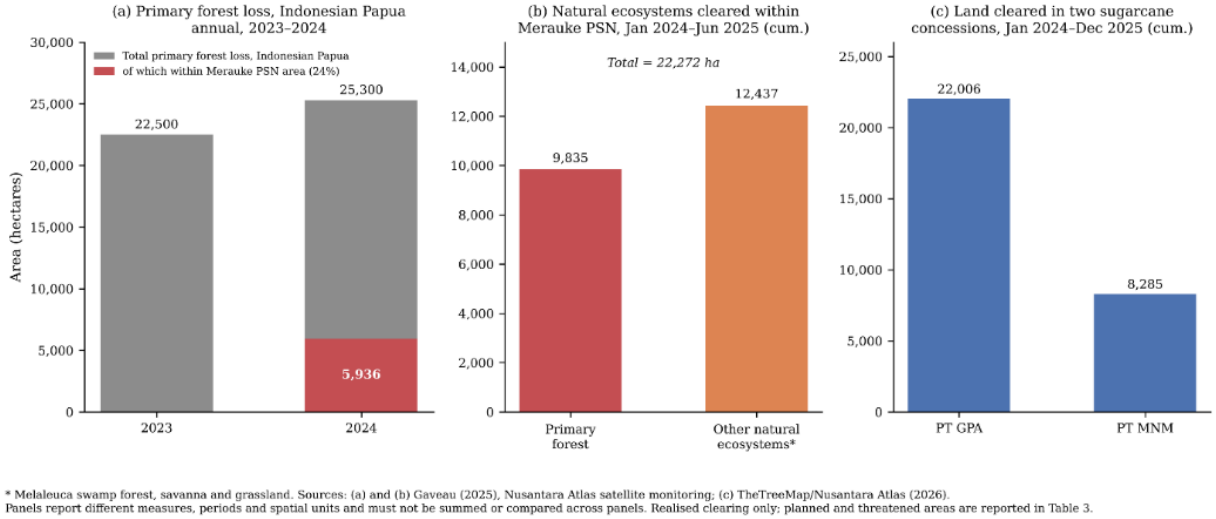


Figure 2. Realised land clearing associated with the food and energy PSN in Merauke, 2023–2025: (a) annual primary forest loss in Indonesian Papua and the share within the Merauke PSN area; (b) natural ecosystems cleared within the Merauke PSN area, January 2024–June 2025; (c) land cleared in two sugarcane concessions, January 2024–December 2025

Source: (Prepared by the author from Gaveau (2025) for panels (a) and (b) and TheTreeMap (2026) for panel (c). Panels use different measures, periods and spatial units and are not additive).

Table 4 traces how these changes altered access. Rights-based access was not formally extinguished: customary claims remain legally recognizable following MK Decision 35/PUU-X/2012. Instead, access was reorganized through structural and relational mechanisms. Authority over land shifted through the forestry decrees; technology was used to enclose and fragment territories, with Jhonlin Group deploying approximately 2,000 excavators (Tenggara Strategics, 2026) and construction of the 135-km Wanam–Muting road reaching 40 km by June 2025 (Gaveau, 2025); capital entered through one-time compensation; and a military deployment accompanied the scheme, which the government characterizes as security support. Table 4 distinguishes what the sources document (D) from the author's interpretation (E5). For example, the possibility that the military presence reduced communities' capacity to refuse is an inference drawn from the documented deployment and Army signage on clan land, rather than an established fact.

Table 4. Access mechanisms documented in the corpus (Merauke unless stated)

Mechanism	**Who controls what**	**Decision or action; place and date**	**Evidence (type)**	**Consequence for rights-holders: documented (D) or interpreted (E5)**
Authority (land classification)	Ministry of Forestry; Coordinating Ministry	SK 591/2025 release of 486,939 ha; Permenko 8/2023 and 16/2025; 2023–2025	TheTreeMap (2026); Trend Asia (2025); VOI (2025) (E1-B)	D: 486,939 ha of state forest legally released to APL and thus allocable for non-forest use; customary claims documented separately in affected localities (e.g., Jagebob, Ilwayab), but no verified overlap geodata, so the released area is not shown to be customary forest. D: no record of an Art. 43(4) deliberation in the corpus (absence in the corpus, not proof of absence)
Technology	Contractors (Jhonlin Group) and concessionaires	c. 2,000 excavators; Wanam–Muting road, 40 of 135 km by Jun 2025; Ilwayab, Ngguti, Muting	Tenggara Strategics (2026) (E3-A); Gaveau (2025) (E2-A); Wally (2025) (E4-B)	D: clearing within 200–300 m of customary markers (Jagebob, May 2025) and loss of food, water and hunting areas reported by residents (E4-B). E5: enclosure and fragmentation of the wider sago, hunting and water territory
Capital and compensation	PT MNM and other firms	*Tali asih* to 22 clans (47,102 ha), Animha, Jagebob, Sota, Feb 2025; Rp16 million to a hamlet head, *Kampung* Senayu Soa, 2025	Merauke Regency Government (2025) (E1-A); Wally (2025) (E4-B)	D: payments to clans and individuals; promised programmes reported unrealised; disputes within clans reported (E4-B). E5: collective territory converted into clan-level or individual transactions
Coercive presence and social relations	Indonesian Army (TNI)	Three battalions (2,073 soldiers) deployed from Nov 2024; Army signage on Yei clan land citing a customary release letter dated 5 Jun 2025, Jagebob	Saturi (2025b) (E3-A); Wally (2025) (E4-B); UN letters via Mongabay (2025) (E1-B)	D: deployment and Army signage on clan land; government characterises the presence as security support (E1-B). E5: possible reduction in communities' capacity to refuse; not directly documented
Knowledge and information	Government agencies and firms	Yei leaders' joint statement of 7 May 2024 reported unanswered; Komnas	Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat (2024) (E3-A); Komnas HAM via	D: joint statement reported unanswered; Komnas HAM finding of poor communication; government

	HAM finding of poor communication, 25 Jun 2025	Wally (2025) (E1-B)	claim that FPIC was obtained, disputed by UN special rapporteurs. E5: communities' limited ability to assess plans before clearing

Note: (Origin: E1 legal/official record; E2 remote sensing; E3 investigative finding; E4 testimony or statement; E5 researcher interpretation. Access: A = original; B = indirect. In the last column, D marks consequences documented in the sources listed in the fourth column; E5 marks the author's interpretation).

The documented consequences for living space are reported here as testimony, not as measured outcomes. A woman from *Kampung* Wobikel in Ilwayab told Mongabay that 'the places where we look for food are gone' (Saturi, 2025a); a Yei clan rights-holder in Jagebob reported heavy equipment clearing forest within 200–300 m of customary warning markers in May 2025 and said his clan had not been consulted; and a hamlet head in *Kampung* Senayu Soa reported shrinking clean-water sources and hunting grounds (Wally, 2025). Residents' accounts of river pollution have not been matched by water-quality measurements in the corpus, so pollution is not asserted as an established fact. Earlier ethnography on oil palm in Merauke (Chao, 2018, 2022) helps to interpret why such losses are experienced as threats to kinship with forest beings and to food sovereignty, but it predates the current scheme and is used here as interpretive context rather than as evidence of PSN impacts.

Responses were not homogeneous. Twenty-two clans in Animha, Jagebob and Sota publicly declared support for the PT MNM concession on condition that there be no coercion and that future generations be involved (Pemerintah Kabupaten Merauke, 2025), while other clans and the Yei leaders' joint statement rejected the projects (Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024). The corpus also reports disputes within communities between members who accepted payments and those who refused (Wally, 2025). Evidence on differences by gender and generation is too limited in the corpus to analyse. These divisions mirror the Nigerian case, where fragmented customary authority weakened collective resistance (Nwankwo & Upton, 2026), and they qualify any reading of affected communities as a single actor. For Boven Digoel and Mappi, the corpus documents planned oil-palm allocations, including about 245,436 ha in Boven Digoel (Trend Asia, 2025), but no PSN-related clearing, so claims about living-space loss are confined to Merauke.

Resistance and the film *Pesta Babi* (RQ3)

Three forms of resistance to the focal scheme are documented. The first is institutional. In Merauke, complaints were taken to Komnas HAM, which reported receiving 60 cases, 20 of them concerning economic, social and cultural rights, and issued a recommendation letter on 17 March 2025 (Saturi, 2025b), and to UN special rapporteurs, nine of whom wrote to the government and a developer on 7 March 2025 (Mongabay, 2025). Up to the data cutoff, the corpus contains no litigation directed at the PSN or programme instruments examined here.

Related non-PSN agrarian litigation (regional context). In neighbouring Boven Digoel, an Awyu clan representative challenged the environmental feasibility decision for PT Indo Asiana Lestari's 36,094-ha oil-palm plantation in Mandobo and Fofi districts. The Jayapura Administrative Court rejected the suit on 2 November 2023 (6/G/LH/2023/PTUN.JPR), the Manado High Administrative Court upheld that ruling (92/B/LH/2023/PT.TUN.MDO), and the Supreme Court rejected cassation on 18 September 2024 (458 K/TUN/LH/2024), largely on the ground that the 90-day filing period had lapsed, with one dissenting judge (Greenpeace Indonesia, 2024; Hariri et al., 2025). This case concerns a provincial environmental permit for a private plantation, not a PSN instrument, and it is therefore not counted as resistance to the focal scheme. It is reported because it shows the procedural barriers, notably short filing deadlines, that customary claimants in the region face when they turn to the courts.

The second form is customary and symbolic. Reports from December 2025 describe a village elder and residents of *Kampung* Tagaepe, Ngguti District, planting red wooden crosses along the route of the PSN road, explaining that 'the dignity of the Malind is costly' (Kobun, 2025); Maklew clans in Wanam, Ilwayab, planted red crosses together with *sasi* markers of young coconut leaves, describing them as "a symbol of mourning" for future generations who would lose their land (Howay, 2025); and a Yei clan in Jagebob placed *sasi* to mark refusal (Wally, 2025). These markers communicate refusal by those with customary authority over the land, but they do not in themselves establish boundaries, ownership or legal effect. They resemble the affective repertoires through which Bunong leaders sustained resistance in Cambodia (Hak et al., 2022) and the muted, custom-based claim-making that Berenschot and Saraswati (2024) identify in Indonesia.

The third form is cultural production. *Pesta Babi* was produced by a coalition of *Ekspedisi Indonesia Baru*, Watchdoc, Jubi, Greenpeace Indonesia and the Merauke Legal Aid Institute (Human Rights Monitor, 2026). Table 5 summarises the four functions and the evidential basis of each. Because the film itself was not coded, the first three are treated as provisional inferences from paratexts and reported content, whereas mobilisation is documented directly.

Table 5. Functions of the documentary *Pesta Babi* and their evidential basis (paratexts, reported content, circulation and reception)

Function	Indicator in verified materials	Source(s)	Evidential basis and interpretive limit
Representation	Title inverts the customary pig feast, a ritual of gratitude and inter-clan reconciliation, into a metaphor of corporate and state "feasting"; directors frame the case as colonialism	Suara.com (2026); CNN Indonesia (2026a)	Basis: title and directors' statements (paratext); inferred, not scene-coded. Frame chosen by filmmakers; not a community-wide self-description
Testimony	Reported (not directly coded): Marind and Yei land defenders appear and speak; filmmakers' narration links local cases to national policy	Suara.com (2026); Human Rights Monitor (2026)	Basis: secondary content descriptions only; provisional. Testimony mediated by selection and editing; a featured protagonist later disputed consent; government, company and supportive-clan voices could not be verified as included
Counter-archive	Reported content descriptions include shipments of excavators under security escort, red crosses and disappearing sago forest	Suara.com (2026); Human Rights Monitor (2026)	Basis: secondary content descriptions only; provisional. Archival potential is distinct from admissibility as legal evidence
Mobilisation	More than 1,800 screenings before online release; at least 15,000 registrants; online release 22 May 2026; at least 21 disruptions by 12 May (press count) and 52 locations with obstruction (organisers' count)	Human Rights Monitor (2026); Indra (2026); Ganguly (2026)	Basis: screening, registration, disruption and complaint records from independent sources; best evidenced. Reach and disruption do not demonstrate policy influence

Note: (No timestamped scene analysis was conducted [see *Sampling design and data collection*]. The audiovisual text was not coded; representation, testimony and counter-archive are inferred from paratexts and secondary content descriptions and are therefore less strongly evidenced than mobilisation).

The film's mobilising function is the best documented. Screenings were cancelled or dispersed in Lombok, Yogyakarta and Ternate, where a local military commander halted a screening citing 'sensitive and potentially provocative content', and the Army Chief of Staff justified such actions on 'security considerations' (Ganguly, 2026; Indra, 2026). Online release on 22 May 2026 ended the film's reliance on community screenings, which the earlier version of this article had wrongly described as its only channel. The film's representation was itself contested: on 29 May 2026 a featured Marind protagonist filed a police complaint against the director and the head of the Merauke Legal Aid Institute for alleged fraud and misuse of personal data (CNN Indonesia, 2026b), and the director responded that the team had worked openly and that the complaint diverted attention from the film's subject (Medcom, 2026). The circumstances of the complaint are disputed, and this study takes no position on them. Analytically, however, the episode shows that a counter-archive is not a neutral container: whose testimony it holds, and on what terms, becomes a site of struggle.

Campisi (2024) and Spiegel (2021) show that documentary and visual practices can serve Indigenous and campesino struggles as counter-narratives; *Pesta Babi* shares this repertoire, but its case adds evidence that

such counter-archives can be contested from within the communities they represent. The claim that the film weakened the legitimacy of the PSN is advanced here only as an interpretive proposition (E5); assessing it would require reception analysis and a documented policy response, neither of which existed at the data cutoff.

Theoretical contribution

The findings extend existing scholarship in three ways. First, rather than introducing a new concept, they operationalise *living-space dispossession*, an expression derived from *perampasan ruang hidup*, by specifying it as a process in which access to food, water and meaning is reorganised through structural and relational mechanisms before, or without, the legal extinguishment of customary rights, which refines the rights/ability distinction of Ribot and Peluso (2003) for contexts of curtailed tenure. Second, they document *regulatory relabelling* within a regime of dispossession (Levien, 2013; Berenschot & Loughlin, 2025): the 2025 re-designation of the Merauke PSN project as a four-regency national strategic programme changed the scheme's legal-administrative category while its planned land demand persisted and expanded geographically. The corpus supports this as an administrative finding associated with the continuing programme; whether relabelling alters facilities, accountability and, through them, access is a proposition for further research rather than a demonstrated mechanism. Third, on the basis of documented circulation and reception rather than scene-level analysis, they suggest that cultural production can serve as a mobilising and contested counter-archive whose value depends on the consent relations through which testimony is recorded; the representational and testimonial functions remain provisional until the film itself is systematically analysed. Together, these contributions indicate the analytical usefulness of accumulation-by-dispossession and access theory when the mechanisms are traced to specific instruments, actors, places and dates.

Policy implications, limitations and further research

Four recommendations follow from the findings. (1) Before any further forest release or the issuance of land titles (*Hak Guna Usaha*) in the scheme's areas, the Ministry of Forestry and the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs and Spatial Planning should require participatory mapping of affected customary territories and documented deliberation and agreement with the rights-holding clans under Article 43(4) of the Special Autonomy Law, with minutes and maps made public; this follows from the absence of such records for SK 591/2025. (2) The Coordinating Ministry and the provincial government should publish the 2025 forestry decrees, concession maps, environmental approvals and compensation agreements in an open spatial portal, so that plan versions (Table 3) can be reconciled with realised clearing (Figure 2). (3) An independent grievance and remedy mechanism, involving Komnas HAM and the provincial Papuan People's Assembly, should handle disputes over compensation and intra-clan consent documented in *Changing access and living-space dispossession (RQ2)*. (4) The military's role should be limited to security functions under civilian oversight, and public screenings of documentaries should be protected as lawful expression, while disputes over individual consent in films are resolved through processes that respect both the individuals concerned and the public interest. Although UNDRIP is non-binding, Articles 19 and 32(2) provide interpretive guidance for implementing Article 43(4) consistently with FPIC, whose voluntary application in Indonesian plantations has proved weak without external oversight (Afrizal et al., 2023).

The study has four limitations. It relies on documentary and media sources, so *kampung* experiences are known only as reported and selected by others, and many sources are produced by organisations critical of the projects. Coverage is uneven: clearing and conflict are documented mainly for Merauke, and Boven Digoel and Mappi are analysed largely at the level of plans and, for Boven Digoel, related non-PSN litigation. Several official documents, including the 2025 forestry decrees, were available only as reported by monitoring organisations. The film's audiovisual text was not coded; its analysis rests on paratexts, reported content, and documented circulation and reception. Future research should include ethically approved fieldwork in each regency with attention to gender and generational differences, systematic scene-level and audience-reception analysis of the film, and spatial analysis using official concession and customary-territory data once these are disclosed.

Conclusion

Regarding RQ1, the food and energy scheme in South Papua was designated through a sequence of instruments from Presidential Regulation 40/2023 to a 2025 forestry decree releasing 486,939 ha of state forest and was relabeled in 2025 from a PSN project in Merauke to a national strategic program spanning four regencies, a change in legal category that the corpus documents without showing that it altered the facilities or access arrangements applying to the land. Regarding RQ2, between January 2024 and June 2025, the Merauke PSN area lost 22,272 ha of natural ecosystems, including 9,835 ha of primary forest, and the corpus documents

losses of access to food sources, water, and hunting grounds associated with reclassification, machinery, and compensation, in the context of a military presence, rather than with formal extinguishment of customary rights; community positions were divided. Regarding RQ3, resistance to the scheme took the form of complaints to human rights bodies, customary prohibition markers, and the documentary *Pesta Babi* (related non-PSN litigation in Boven Digoel is treated as regional context only), whose mobilizing reach is well documented but whose representation was contested by one of its protagonists.

Theoretically, the study operationalizes living-space dispossession through access mechanisms and legal-administrative processes, showing the analytical usefulness of accumulation-by-dispossession and access theory for this purpose, and documents the regulatory relabeling associated with the continuing program as an administrative finding rather than a demonstrated mechanism of dispossession. In policy terms, the findings indicate that the deliberation-and-agreement procedure already required by Article 43(4) of the Special Autonomy Law, together with public disclosure of decrees and maps, should precede any further forest release and land acquisition in South Papua.

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Authors' Contributions

The author conceived and designed the study, compiled and analysed the corpus, prepared the figures and tables, and wrote and revised the manuscript.

Transparency Statement

The author affirms that this manuscript is an honest, accurate and transparent account of the study, that no important aspects of the study have been omitted, and that the change of research design from the original submission (from a design described as combining interviews and documents to a document- and media-based design) is explained in the *Research design* subsection. The interview-related passages of the original submission (key informants, sampling procedures, informed consent, saturation and the reference to primary research data) described an interview component that had been planned and drafted in template form before data collection but was never carried out; they were retained in the submitted version in error. No interviews, fieldwork or unpublished material of any kind were used, and no finding, quotation, code or conclusion in this article is based on such material.

Data Availability Statement

All data analysed are publicly available documents listed in Appendix A. The corpus inventory (S1), analytical coding matrix (Supplementary S2) and codebook (S3) accompany this article as a supplementary workbook (DRSJ-2026-184_Supplementary_Corpus_and_Coding.xlsx).

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

During the preparation of this work, the author used Claude (Anthropic; Claude Opus 5.5) to assist with drafting and translating earlier versions of the manuscript (including the interview-related template text later withdrawn), literature and source searches, checking bibliographic metadata, restructuring the manuscript in response to the reviewers, language editing, and writing the Python code used to draw Figures 1 and 2. After using this tool, the author reviewed, verified against the original sources and edited all content as necessary, and takes full responsibility for the content of the published article.

Statement of Originality and Plagiarism-Free

The author declares that this article is an original work that has not been published elsewhere, is not under consideration by any other journal, and is free from plagiarism. All references and citations have been properly acknowledged according to the applicable standards.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest related to this research, authorship, or publication.

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Presidential Regulation No. 40 of 2023 on Acceleration of National Sugar Self-Sufficiency and Provision of Bioethanol as Biofuel.

Coordinating Minister for Economic Affairs Regulation No. 8 of 2023 on the Amendment of the List of National Strategic Projects.

Presidential Decree No. 15 of 2024 on the Task Force for the Acceleration of Sugar and Bioethanol Self-Sufficiency in Merauke Regency, South Papua Province.

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Appendix A. Research corpus inventory (n = 46; cutoff 30 June 2026). Source, date, location, instrument, persistent identifier and extracted claims for each item are given in Supplementary S1

ID	Category	Item	Evidence origin / access (A original; B indirect)
L1	Legal	1945 Constitution, Arts. 18B(2), 28I(3), 33(3)	E1-A
L2	Legal	Law No. 5/1960 (Basic Agrarian Law), Arts. 2, 3, 6	E1-A
L3	Legal	Law No. 21/2001 as amended by Law No. 2/2021 (Papua Special Autonomy), Art. 43	E1-A
L4	Legal	Law No. 2/2012 (land procurement for public interest)	E1-A
L5	Legal	Government Regulation No. 42/2021 (PSN facilitation)	E1-A
L6	Legal	Presidential Regulation No. 40/2023 (sugar and bioethanol)	E1-A
L7	Legal	Coordinating Ministerial Regulation No. 8/2023 (PSN list)	E1-B (via Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024)
L8	Legal	Presidential Decree No. 15/2024 (Merauke task force)	E1-B (via Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024)
L9	Legal	Decision SK 835/2024 on forest-area use for food-security infrastructure	E1-B (via Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat, 2024)
L10	Legal	Minister of Forestry Decision SK 430/2025 (change of forest function)	E1-B (via Trend Asia, 2025)
L11	Legal	Minister of Forestry Decision SK 591/2025 (release of state forest)	E1-B (via TheTreeMap, 2026)
L12	Legal	Presidential Instruction No. 14/2025 (self-sufficiency areas)	E1-A
L13	Legal	Coordinating Ministerial Regulation No. 16/2025 (PSN list)	E1-B (via VOI, 2025; Riberu, 2025)
L14	Legal	Constitutional Court Decision 35/PUU-X/2012	E1-A
L15	Legal	UNDRIP, Arts. 19 and 32(2)	E1-A
C1	Court	PTUN Jayapura 6/G/LH/2023/PTUN.JPR	E1-B (via Hariri et al., 2025)
C2	Court	PTTUN Manado 92/B/LH/2023/PT.TUN.MDO	E1-B (via Hariri et al., 2025)
C3	Court	Supreme Court 458 K/TUN/LH/2024	E1-A (Supreme Court directory); holding also via Greenpeace Indonesia (2024)
M1	Monitoring	Gaveau (2025), Nusantara Atlas	E2-A
M2	Monitoring	TheTreeMap (2026), Nusantara Atlas	E2-A; E3-A
M3	CSO report	Yayasan Pusaka Bentala Rakyat (2024)	E3-A
M4	CSO report	Trend Asia (2025)	E3-A
O1	Official	Pemerintah Kabupaten Merauke (2025), support declaration of 22 clans	E1-A
O2	Human-rights body	UN special rapporteurs' letters, 7 March 2025	E1-B (via Mongabay, 2025)
O3	Official	Government reply to UN special rapporteurs, 6 May 2025	E1-B (via Mongabay, 2025)
O4	Human-rights body	Komnas HAM recommendation letter, 17 March 2025	E1-B (via Saturi, 2025b)
O5	Human-rights body	Komnas HAM findings, 25 June 2025	E1-B (via Wally, 2025)
N1	News	Saturi (2025a), Mongabay Indonesia	E3-A; E4-B
N2	News	Saturi (2025b), Mongabay Indonesia	E3-A
N3	News	Mongabay (2025)	E3-A
N4	News	Wally (2025), Jubi	E3-A; E4-B
N5	News	Riberu (2025), Jubi	E3-A; E4-B
N6	News	Kobun (2025), Surya Papua	E3-A; E4-B
N7	News	Howay (2025), Wene Buletin	E3-A; E4-B
N8	News	VOI (2025)	E3-A
N9	News	Bloomberg Technoz (2023)	E3-A
N10	News/analysis	Tenggara Strategics (2026), The Jakarta Post	E3-A
N11	Press release	Greenpeace Indonesia (2024)	E3-A

ID	Category	Item	Evidence origin / access (A original; B indirect)
F1	Film	Laksono & Dale (2026), official public release, 22 May 2026; title, credits, running time and release details only (audiovisual content not coded)	E4-A (release metadata only)
F2	Film paratext	CNN Indonesia (2026a), director statement	E4-B (via CNN Indonesia, 2026a)
F3	Film paratext	Suara.com (2026), synopsis	E3-A
F4	Reception	Human Rights Monitor (2026)	E3-A
F5	Reception	Indra (2026), The Jakarta Post	E3-A
F6	Reception	Ganguly (2026), Human Rights Watch	E3-A
F7	Reception	CNN Indonesia (2026b)	E3-A; E4-B
F8	Reception	Medcom (2026)	E4-B

Appendix B. Codebook (abridged; full codebook in Supplementary S3)

Code	Definition	Origin	Example (corpus ID)
Instrument	Legal or administrative act designating or implementing the scheme	Deductive	Permenko 16/2025 re-lists Merauke as a programme (L13)
Plan / designation / realisation	Status of an area figure	Deductive	2.32 Mha planned vs 22,272 ha cleared (M1, M2)
Commodification	Territory turned into allocable or tradable asset	Deductive	Release of 486,939 ha to APL (L11)
Exclusion	Prior users removed or restricted	Deductive	Clearing near customary markers in Jagebob (N4)
Restructuring of control	Decision authority shifts to state/firms	Deductive	Task force under Keppres 15/2024 (L8)
Access: authority / technology / capital / knowledge / social relations	Structural-relational mechanisms (Ribot & Peluso, 2003)	Deductive	Excavators (N10); tali asih (O1, N4); TNI signage (N4)
Regulatory relabelling	Documented change of legal-administrative category while planned land demand persists (descriptive; not coded as an access mechanism)	Inductive	Permenko 16/2025; 'changed its robe'; 'only the nomenclature changed' (L13, N5, N8)
Customary refusal markers	Salib merah, sasi	Inductive	Tagaepe, Wanam (N6, N7)
Community support / division	Declarations of support; intra-clan disputes	Inductive (divergent evidence)	22 clans (O1); disputes (N4)
Film: representation / testimony / counter-archive / mobilisation	Four functions (Documentary film as testimony, counter-archive and mobilisation)	Deductive	Screenings and disruptions (F4–F6); consent dispute (F7, F8)