# THE INTERACTION OF COMMUNITY CONFLICTS AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN WEST KALIMANTAN

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## Abstract

Violence conflicts occurred in Indonesia, in particular, West Kalimantan, were associated with ethno-communal motives. At some points, the incidents linked to the role of the built environment. A study in the local context conflicts could provide an opportunity for a better understanding. This paper aims to present the story of conflict in West Kalimantan, which mainly happened in Sambas, from the urban development perspective. It attempts to show the interplay between the conflicts and the urban/spatial development. Using case study approach, the research utilised three data collection techniques: deep guided interview, observation, and survey. It interviewed fifteen key persons representing four different stakeholders: government, planning practitioners, academics, and local leaders. It documents the built environment elements of the location. It distributed 200 questionnaires to check the perception of people toward conflicts and the built environment. The finding demonstrates that somehow communal conflicts have linked to four elements: ethnicity, land ownership, wealth, and social status. The built environment could promote a positive urban environment in mitigating potential conflicts in the future.

**Keywords:** West Kalimantan, conflict, built environment, urban development.

## *Abstrak*

### *Dinamika Konflik Komunal dengan Pembangunan Wilayah Perkotaan di Kalimantan Barat*

*Konflik-konflik kekerasan yang terjadi di Indonesia, khususnya Kalimantan Barat, diasosiasikan dengan motif etnis-komunal. Di beberapa titik, insiden muncul terkait dengan peran lingkungan binaan. Tulisan ini bertujuan untuk menyajikan kisah konflik di Kalimantan Barat, yang khususnya terjadi di Sambas, dari perspektif pembangunan lingkungan perkotaan. Penelitian ini menggambarkan interaksi antara konflik dan pembangunan perkotaan dalam konteks ruang dan arsitektur. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus, penelitian ini menggunakan tiga teknik pengumpulan data: wawancara mendalam terpandu, observasi, dan survei. Penelitian ini mewawancarai lima belas orang kunci yang mewakili empat pemangku kepentingan: pemerintah, praktisi perencanaan, akademisi, dan pemimpin lokal. Penelitian ini mendokumentasikan elemen lingkungan terbangun. Penelitian ini juga menyebarkan 200 kuesioner untuk melihat persepsi masyarakat terhadap konflik dan lingkungan binaan. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa konflik komunal telah dikaitkan dengan empat elemen: etnis, kepemilikan lahan, kekayaan, dan status sosial. Pembangunan lingkungan binaan mempunyai peran mendorong hubungan masyarakat secara positif untuk mengurangi potensi konflik di masa mendatang.*

***Kata kunci:*** *Kalimantan Barat, konflik, pembangunan perkotaan, lingkungan binaan.*

## Introduction

The West Kalimantan Province covers a total area of 146,807 km2. The province has some urban areas such as Pontianak City, Kubu Raya, Singkawang, and Sambas (BPS.Sambas, 2016a). The statistics in 2016 shows that, in particular, Sambas District's has 526,367 population with the population density of about 121 people/km2 within 6,395.70 km2 (BPS.Sambas, 2016b). In term of development, the Human Development Index (HDI) is 65.92, which is quite low. The HDI also indicates that the education level in Sambas is quite low with an average of 6.67 years formal education per person (BPS 2016). More than 45% of its population does not experience elementary education degree, and only about 26% hold elementary education degree (BPS.Sambas, 2016a). Sambas presents three larger ethnic groups in West Kalimantan: Dayak (22.35%), Malay (19.45%), and Chinese (9.6%) (BPS, 2000 in Koeswinarno, Setyo, Dwiyanto, & Abdullah, 2004). The rest of the population contains Javanese (6.5%), Madura (5.55%), and others (36.55%). This figure demonstrates the ethnicity composition in West Kalimantan (Koeswinarno et al., 2004).

The perception towards ethnicity in West Kalimantan is strong, either in-group or out-group (Arafat, 1998). The awareness of ethnicity differences and existence becomes a critical discussion in the urban development context. For example, the urban settlement often presents clear segregation among ethnicities. Not only that, but the development of building to represent particular ethnic groups also offer a conscious existence within the urban area. In addition to that, the occupation distribution also shows a pattern in which it associates with ethnicities. Another example presents how several public buildings compete to represent a specific social existence within the urban centre. Interestingly, the history notes that physical conflicts often occurred between the ethnic groups.

Violent conflicts occurred repetitively in West Kalimantan, at least eleven times within 63 years, between 1933 and 1999. In means, conflicts likely arise in every six years (Koeswinarno, 2006) or up to every 30 years (Alqadrie (2011). Most of the disputes involved Dayak and Madura ethnic groups (Koeswinarno, 2006, p. 193), due to lack of communication and social interaction between Dayak and Madura, compared with another ethnic group (Arafat, 1998, p. 272). This interaction in traditional norm, occupation, politics, religious activity, art or sports activity happens less frequently. Both ethnic groups, Dayak and Madura, appeared as significant contributors in most conflict. However, the last conflict in 1999 in Sambas also involved Malay ethnicity. The conflict between Malay and Madura ethnic groups had an even more significant magnitude.

The recent conflict might have happened almost 20 years ago, but the implication still feels nowadays. The incidents might have a strong socio-political motive, but at some points, it also touches upon the practice of urban development. This paper aims to presents how communal conflict has affected or has been influenced by the built environment. In turn, this study expects a hint on how to respond to this situation from the urban development point of view.

## The interaction between social conflicts and the built environment

Social diversity in an urban environment could influence the relationship among the communities. This might lead to a cross groups friction with various reasons and turn into violent conflicts. A number of examples demonstrate that this situation could risk urban and rural environments. Some cases have clear political motives, but some incidents also appoints to urban development issues. For example, violent conflicts link to a dispute over natural resources, agricultural land, segregation, ethnicity and religious matters, development gap, and so on.

In response to this, the urban development would ideally deal with the situation by focusing on five aspects: (1) the proximity between different socio-cultural groups in term of physical and psychological distances, (2) territoriality: the state of physical and legal boundaries, (3) economic interdependency, (4) symbolism: the expression of cultural differences, and (5) centrality: the sharing of authority and power (Bollens, 2006). In short, a good quality urban system takes into account the relationship between social, physical, economic, cultural, and political practice within an urban setting. The urban policy becomes a strategic key for building inter-group relations, either towards a peaceful or violent environment.

In this context, an urban designer and planner, for example, would function in shaping an excellent urban environment which accommodate multi-cultural relationship through five approaches (Bollens, 2006): (1) to encourage flexibility and porosity of the urban form to allow civic integration; (2) to engage with marginal groups by promoting public participation during the planning process; (3) to allocate sufficient opportunity for the community to express their cultural and historical existence; (4) to create a sense of equal community in public spaces to respond to all socio-cultural groups; and (5) to link all the socio-cultural groups at an institutional level, horizontally and vertically, to encourage peace and understanding across the society. This proposal provides a hint of urban development strategies to respond to social diversity issues and potential conflict.

The UK example highlights the necessity of social diversity and cohesion issues in relation to urban development (ODPM, 2004). The sustainable development agenda is designed to consider socio-cultural aspects which particularly associates with (1) a sense of shared identity, (2) engagement and respect among different culture, (3) neighborly environment, (4) opportunities for social activities, (5) a sense of security from crime and anti-social behaviour, and (6) social inclusion. The main agenda of the review aims at dealing with the issues of natural resources, environment, social cohesion and integration, and economic prosperity.

An example from Northern Ireland demonstrates how conflicts have encouraged divided communities with a continuous division in political, cultural, geographical, and socio-economic dimension (Murtagh, Graham, & Shirlow, 2008). The urban planning practice have been influenced with a long history of conflicts; the practitioners have to incorporate the issue of conflicts into the urban planning and design at the city level.

## Methodology

This research is based on the Case Study technique to limit the scope to which experienced conflicts at a communal level. The data collection used three approaches: guided open interview with stakeholders, observation, and survey. First, the interview involved fifteen participants in total from four different stakeholders: government (or authority related to Urban Planning), Researcher or NGO, academics (including urban planner practitioner), and local leader from cross-cultural community. It covers three broad questions: how was the situation before the recent conflicts, how was the situation during the conflicts, and how do you expect the future of the place after the conflicts. The questions discussed a broad area so that the respondents would have the opportunity to tell the story from various perspective. In analysing the interview transcript, this research uses the approach developed from the Grounded Theory Style. It analysed the 'open coding' to find the essential key points which represents the emerging issues from the data. The finding is visualised through a diagram to illustrate the interaction between various factors. The observation aimed to visualised the issue, in pictures, diagram, or graphical maps. Secondly, the observation was used to explore the physical elements of the built environment. It portrayed the architecture, public space, housing, and other elements which were mentioned by the interviewee. Thirdly, the survey approached 200 participants to distribute the questionnaires. The questionnaires aim to explore the issue which might link to social conflicts. The questionnaires were summarised and presented descriptively.

## Results and Discussion

The interview covered three main areas related to the research: Sambas, Singkawang, and Pontianak. The respondents often associate the recent conflicts with ethnicity differences. Sambas and West Kalimantan has a long history of communal conflicts. Dayak and Madura ethnic groups often get involved in most of the conflict but the Chinese group was also engaged in a number of incidents. The most recent conflicts, however, has openly involved the Madura and Malay ethnic groups. Both Malay and Madura represent the same religious group. The involvement of Malay ethnic groups has never happened in the previous violent conflicts.

In response to violent conflicts, the interviewees argued that it often focused on short-term response such as reconciliation programmes and stopping the conflicts to spread further. For example, the government provided spaces for resettlement programmes in some areas including Tebang Kacang, a place near Pontianak. After the recent conflicts, the Madura ethnic group can only visit Sambas. An imaginary boundary emerged in blocking them to come back and stay in Samas. Some of them now live around the outskirt of Pontianak. They settle down in new settlement areas.

Along with that, Sambas has been divided into three different administrative districts. Previously, Singkawang was the capital city of Sambas District, the centre of local governance. After then, Singkawang has become an independent

township, along with the formation of another two new districts Bengkayang and new Sambas (Figure 1). Although the recent conflicts did not take place in Singkawang, the city holds a strategic position during the reconciliation process. Most of the discussion among the cultural groups took place here. Singkawang currently positions itself as a multicultural urban environment in response to the diverse existing cultural groups. On the other hand, Pontianak appears as the main urban environment in West Kalimantan. Although it did not experience an open violent conflict, the urban environment has become a contestant space for representing the existence of different socio-cultural groups. The awareness of socio-cultural groups existence in this place increases, particularly after the recent conflicts.

Most of the interviewees believe that the district division is ideal to respond to the issues of imbalance development, environment, and so on, in the rural and urban area. For example, Sambas and West Kalimantan, in general, experience difficulties which related to environmental elements such flood, clean water provision, drainage, education, infrastructure provision, and so on.

The interviewees also noted the role of the cultural organisation in shaping better social cohesion. Cross-cultural organisation provides communication media between different groups. On the other hand, single cultural organisations accommodate internal bonding. For example, at least three cultural organisation groups exist in Sambas now, MABT (*Masyarakat Adat Budaya Tionghoa*, Chinese Cultural Community) MABD (*Masyarakat Adat Budaya Dayak*), and MABM (*Masyarakat Adat Budaya Melayu*). These ethnicities get involved in a number of ways including social events. However, Sambas has limited multicultural event. While Singkawang and Pontianak currently have developed a number of successful social-cultural events, such as Cap Go Meh Festival, Lebaran Festival, and so on. Not only social events but also a cultural tradition at the neighbourhood level could promote interaction between different ethnicities. For example, the government has developed some activities to unite the community, including scout camping, sports tournament, and so on.

An argument appeared during the discussion with the respondents that they mostly 'blamed' particular cultural groups in the recent conflicts. In another word, the recent conflicts would have nothing to do with three main etnic groups in West Kalimantan. The history, however, tells the opposite that conflicts in the past had involved most of these groups. This highlights that, in general, the area needs to consider cross-cultural communication in many ways.

In term of traditional custom, the interviewees also associated the issue of development in Sambas with physical elements. For example, Sambas' urban area has gradually lost its traditional houses due to new physical development (Figure 3). Currently, only the Sultan Palace in Sambas presents the Malay traditional tangible cultural symbol. On the other hands, the heritage movement in Singkawang is currently more apparent (Figure 4).
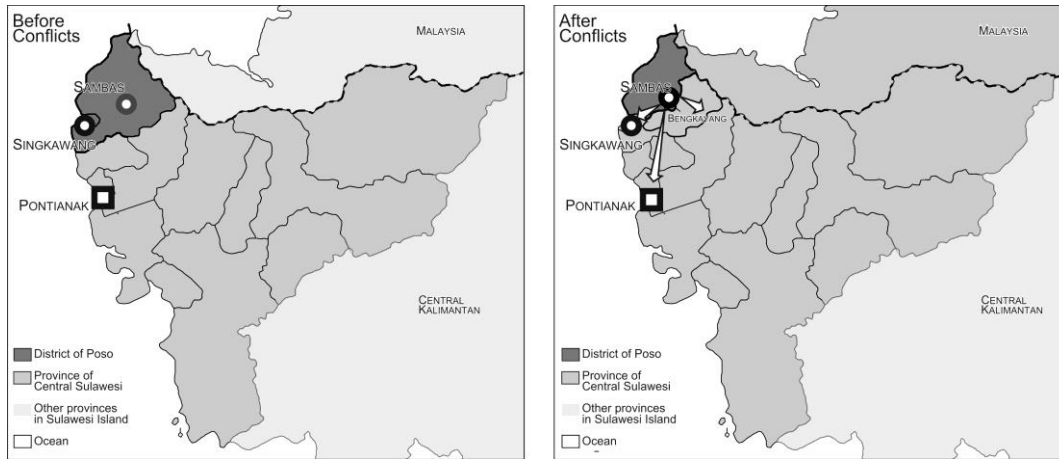
**Figure 1. Administrative change in Sambas District after the conflicts**
Source: Setiawan (2014)



**Figure 2. Development along riverbanks; (b) New markets**
Source: Field observation, taken in January 2012; Setiawan (2014)



**Figure 3. Sambas Sultan Palace; (b) Traditional Malay house**
Source: Field observation, taken in January 2012; Setiawan (2014)

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**Figure 4. (a, b) A Church, a Chinese Temple, and a Mosque in Singkawang urban area.**
Source: Field observation, taken in January 2012; Setiawan (2014)

The city has developed some initiative to conserve its heritage and traditional buildings and houses. For example, recently a revitalisation scenario has been done to develop an ex-old cinema into Singkawang Cultural Centre. The centre has provided a new structure outside and old inside in Singkawang which promotes cultural diversity – Chinese, Malay, and Dayak culture. In this case, the initiatives have invited more economic activities. Not only the traditional market and shopping streets but also new economic activities have increased. They provide interactional spaces for the communities.

The most recent conflicts in Sambas seems to have a stronger association with ethnicity differences rather than religiosity. However, the ethnicity in Sambas and West Kalimantan, in general, is strongly linked to religiosity. For example, the city centre in Singkawang presents the harmonious relationship between three major ethnic groups in its house of worship. For this reason, some meetings between different ethnicity representatives during the reconciliation process took place in Singkawang.

### 'Urban' and spatial planning
In addition to the complicated muliticultural relationship, the development process often does not follow the planning policy. In contrast to the ideal urban planning approach in response to conflict  (Bollens, 2006), 'natural process development' appears to be more preferable in most cases. Post-conflict responses concentrate more on short-term responses such as reconciliation processes or resettlement programmes. Settlement segregation might not be avoidable, but it should not cross the boundary of 'solidarity and security' (Neill & Schwedler, 2001, p. 209) to the point where both become void across community groups. To mediate this segregation, 'neutral space' at various scales of development, and forms have to be more accessible to everyone (Gaffikin, Morrissey, & Sterrett, 2001).

### Urban design
At the urban design level, the interview indicates that the development should anticipate a stronger stereotype emergence. Since that segregation already exists, urban development could focus on public or open space as a shared space. A public place would provide an arena for multicultural communication and activities. Public space improvement includes public amenities or public space

elements. Better public space should also accommodate the informal sector not to overtake its publicness.

> *How does the emerging of communicational space? The communication, if we line up, it's meant so that they can see each other there, have chatted. Everything is there, some activities are there. It's so rich; there are Malay, Madura, and all kinds. I've not seen anything like this anymore. And there isn't something like..."oooo here is a communication between them". Sort of thing. [SAM-15-URP][sic]*

The development of public space would improve the imageability of the urban environment. It could also incorporate the program with street furniture provision. In addition, the interview also mentions the idea of using heritage conservation to create the uniqueness of the urban environment. This would support the tourism industry. This improved imageability, in turn, would attract more visitors.

## Architecture and Heritage

The interviewees also appoint on the role of architecture as a critical tangible cultural symbol, particularly the existence of heritage architecture. They argue that cultural differences must manifest through a more tangible object to express a particular ethnic group identity.

> *So, once I met with a Head Minister of Malaysia, similarly to the Governor. He said, Mr. Burhan, please do not build your Sambas following the way we built Sarawak and Kucing (Malaysia). Melayu Kampong is becoming extinct now, evicted by modern buildings. I was visited by the Netherlands. He said, Mr. Burhan can I buy all those houses starting from the bridge up to near the palace. I want to make a hotel, but it will not change it. Yes, the hotel will use the old houses. He wanted to preserve the Malay sites. And indeed, the Malay house model is now somewhat difficult to build because the building materials are now limited. The wood has been depleted, ironwood, shingle roof also. [SAM-05-LLD][sic]*

Most of the interviewees are aware that the existence of an architectural symbol could create stronger cultural identification. This approach has been applied in Belfast for post-conflict redevelopment strategy (McEldowney, Sterrett, & Gaffikin, 2001). The government has proposed a specific urban development intervention such as building and urban regeneration to encourage more social cohesive space (Gaffikin et al., 2001).

The use of urban level development in mediating interaction has been discussed by Jane Jacobs (1961). Urban public spaces could attract attention from people to use it. The attention would encourage 'involvement, participation, sense of responsibility, feeling attachment, and also natural surveillance' (Jacobs, 1961, p. 42). The activity would promote the neighbourhood level relationship, encourage children to take care of the spaces, and also help the environment to protect people; both visitor and the dweller (Jacobs, 1961, p. 129). In other words, a comprehensive micro level physical development, which incorporates economic and physical development with social sensitivity, has the potential to improve the sense of 'safety'. In this case, the urban design needs to enhance three elements: 'attraction, accessibility, and amenity' (Bradshaw, 1996, pp. 115-116). The improvement of 'attraction' includes the development of residential, business, retails, arts and cultural facilities, as well as other social infrastructures, such as education and health facilities. The 'accessibility' component includes the access

to and from the urban centre and its network with transport facilities — the 'amenity' links to 'how pleasant a place [is] to be' (Bradshaw, 1996, p. 116). The amenity, in particular, encompasses a specific 'identity' of a place, and 'security', by ensuring good maintenance of the place.
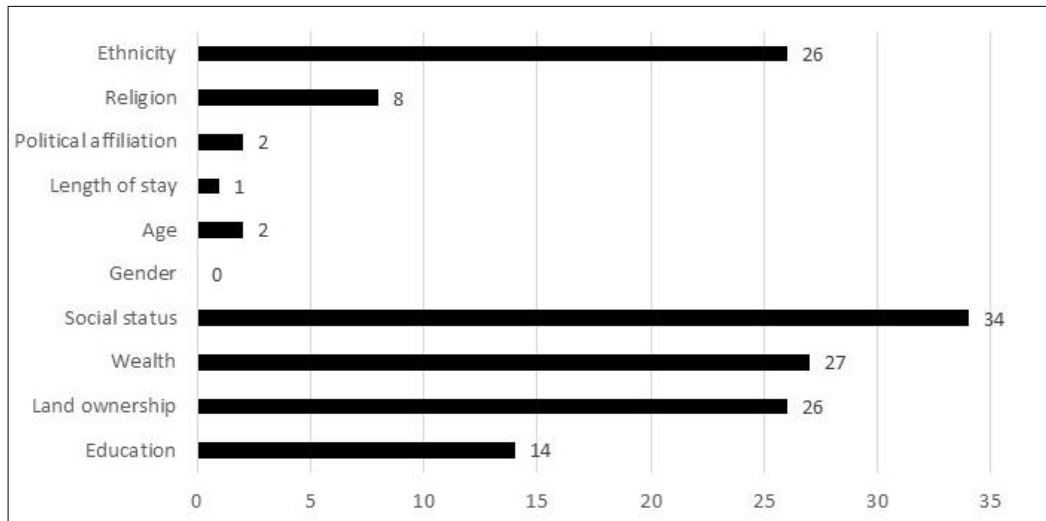


**Figure 5. Simplified Rich Picture Diagram: Conflict in West Kalimantan**
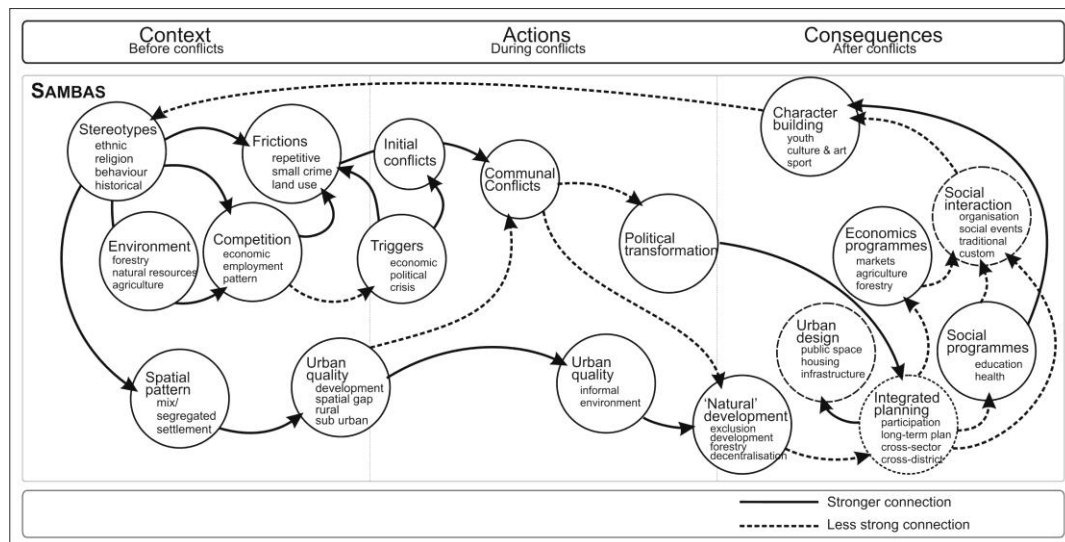Source: (Setiawan, 2014)



**Figure 6. Related issues to the conflict in West Kalimantan**

Similarly, social cohesion suggests the development of physical 'collective shared identity' (McEldowney et al., 2001, p. 115). In Belfast, an 'open-minded' urban environment has positively improved the collective pride of a place and 'community integration' (McEldowney et al., 2001, pp. 115-116). Collective identity utilises the role of architecture in addressing traditional or new function, which extend to display public pride at the local and city scale. Successful public space would support its physical improvement (regarding practicality and visual) and invite more activities (Neill, 2004). Figure 5 presents a simplified diagram

showing the dynamic between communal conflict in West Kalimantan with the built environment.

**Perception towards conflicts and the built environment elements**
The discussion from the interview somehow confirms the finding from the survey (Figure 6). The study shows that social conflicts link to four major components: ethnicity (19%), social status (24%), wealth (19%), and land ownership (19%). This appearance of four elements might indicate that urban development needs to respond to these to mitigate the potential conflicts. This finding also demonstrates that conflicts are less associated with political affiliation, gender, age, education, or even whether people are native to the area.

## Conclusion

This paper argues that the complexity of communal conflicts at some points links to the built environment. In response to the recent conflicts, the research uncovers a relatively wide area of discussion and opportunity. The conversation with the stakeholders in West Kalimantan discovers that the conflicts have been associated with the element of the built environment. Conflicts have caused the division of Sambas, in particular, into three different administrative area. Within three new areas, the finding confirms that in urban development practice have the future to respond to the potential conflicts. For example, the role of urban heritage and local tradition could help to increase the awareness of socio-cultural existence. The urban public space could provide space for interaction and celebration the cultural diversity. The development agenda needs to manifest the multicultural environment into the built environment. These findings match the figure from the survey that conflicts were associated with social status, land (property) ownership pattern, wealth, and ethnicity.

## Acknowledgements

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