

# Contestation and Representation Claims: Analyzing Companion Groups of Anak Dalam Indigenous Community in Jambi Province

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## Abstract

*Theory of “the representative claim” opens up the political space of representation beyond the formal realm, and contestation over representation can take place both in the electoral and non-electoral arena. This contestation takes the form of narrative claims to justify and legitimize the representation carried out on the claimed constituents. This research analyzes the contestation between the NGOs who facilitate the Anak Dalam Tribe Indigenous Community (Suku Anak Dalam, or SAD) as a non-electoral representation actor in the alleged conflict between the SAD Indigenous Community and one of the palm oil companies in Jambi Province. Using a qualitative approach to obtain depth of data and analysis, this research shows that in the contestation of claims between companion groups, at least three claims are produced, namely representation claims, misrepresentation claims, and representation claims of interests or values. Contesting claims center on differences in views regarding the best way to improve the welfare of the SAD Indigenous Peoples. This claim itself produces various responses of acceptance and rejection by the constituents – the SAD Community – which the companion group claims to be the group they represent.*

**Keywords:** Representation Politics; Representative Claim; Suku Anak Dalam, Indigenous Peoples.

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## Introduction

The realm of representation does not only relate to representatives from the formal, electoral sector, but also non-formal (non-electoral) such as civil society (Lay, 2018). Civil society groups including *Non Governmental Organisation* (NGOs) are often considered as a speaker or representative for groups that are marginalized or powerless and excluded in the decision-making process (Hahn & Holzscheiter, 2013). Just as representation in parliament is contested, the realm of non-electoral representation is also full of contestation. As explained by Kopecký & Mudde (2003) who say that NGOs are not homogeneous entities, but are heterogeneous and sometimes oppose each other. This competition takes the form of control of narrative

as a non-material resource and source of legitimacy and for actors who claim to represent it (Holzscheiter, 2005).

Along the way, the play narrative and meaning that shows one's superiority becomes a form of representation to gain access to powerful non-material resources and defeat other narratives issued by other groups with a similar agenda. This means that sometimes contestation takes the form of narrative competition among different groups that focus on the same field, including civil society groups that facilitate the indigenous people of the Anak Dalam Tribe (SAD).

As a minority group, the indigenous community of Anak Dalam Tribe (Suku Anak Dalam, SAD) has attracted the attention of civil society groups. Since the 90s, various parties have involved and facilitated SAD so that they are familiarly called



the “companion group (*kelompok pendamping*)”.<sup>2</sup> These groups are actively engaged in education, empowerment, and advocacy for customary rights, including customary land, which has become a chronic conflict in the palm oil area in Jambi Province (Asra et al., 2017; AMAN, 2012; Fitria, 2020). As will be shown in this article, this companion group is not homogenous, but consists of different groups with similar vision and mission.

This paper analyzes the contestation of representation claims from SAD companion groups in cases of alleged conflict between several groups of the SAD community and one of the palm oil companies in Jambi Province in 2022. The author found that there was a contestation in the narrative claims regarding the living conditions of the SAD community,

their relationship with the company, and the best way to advocate the SAD community itself. This contestation sharpened when allegations of conflict emerged, sharpening discourse competition among the groups.

Using qualitative research methods with data collection strategies in the form of in-depth interviews with related parties, this paper emphasizes narrative analysis using Michael Saward’s theory, *The Representative Claim*. The author focuses on analyzing the dynamics of representational claims produced by SAD indigenous community companion groups, and the claim contestation that occurs, especially when issues of alleged conflict arise. In addition, the author explores the claims responses produced

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2 Information from local government from two districts in Jambi Province during the author’s 2022 field research



by looking at responses from their constituents who are the target audience of the accompanying groups.

## Results

### About Conflict: Who was Involved in the Conflict?

The relationship between the SAD community and palm oil company operating on their livelihoods is quite dynamic. This relationship is sometimes filled with tension but not always. One of the companies that has this relationship is Company X which is located in Jambi Province. The tension was triggered by the decreasing number of forests as a source of livelihood for the SAD community, converted to palm oil plantations. Small-scale conflicts began to occur frequently between security officers who work for the company and the SAD indigenous community because of their

activity of picking up palm fruit kernels that fell from trees on the company's land.<sup>3</sup> The root of the problem relates to different concepts of land ownership. According to the SAD community, anyone has the right to have fruit in nature, especially if it is in their area of life. Meanwhile, the company views that all natural products in their area belong to the company, according to the permit they possess. In 2018, Human Rights Watch issued a statement that the presence of palm oil companies had eliminated the livelihoods of the SAD indigenous people (Sitanggang, 2021).

In 2017, the company hired a public consultant, Daemeter, to analyze the situation so that it could better mitigate the company's relationship with the SAD Indigenous

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<sup>3</sup> Information from Tumenggung, guardian groups, and local government in direct interviews, March 1-8, 2022.



Community.<sup>4</sup> The results of the consultant's analysis stated and recommended the company to provide living space for the SAD indigenous community living in Company X's operational area. Based on these recommendations, the Company made various CSR programs, from health, education, and economic support. The hope is that this program can reduce conflict and make coexistence possible between the SAD indigenous community and Company X.

Although there have been efforts to fulfill Daemeter's recommendations, apparently the friction has not disappeared. Sparks appeared again when one of the companion groups, namely Companion Group 1 which focuses in the environmental sector, sent a written report in the name of

the impacted SAD indigenous communities to Komnas HAM in September 2019 regarding human rights violations that occurred against the groups around Company X's HGU area<sup>5</sup> (Project Multatuli, 2021; Komnas HAM, 2021). In response to this, the government under the ministry that is responsible for land and special planning (will be called Ministry A) dispatched a team to the field in June 2022. Discussions were then held with the SAD indigenous community in the Air Hitam area which was the object of the report and the local regional government. However, official representatives from the relevant SAD indigenous community groups were absent, and the absence of reports submitted to the regional government meant that discussions did not reach a strong legitimacy.

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4 Information from Company X and Companion Group 4 in a direct interview on March 5, 2022.

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5 Information from Company X and Companion Group 4 in a direct interview on March 5, 2022, and supported by an article from Project Multatuli.

Exploring the complex nature of the conflict, Komnas HAM then decided to conduct a more in-depth study in 2022 by doing a field visit. In response to this, the Ministry A then collaborated with an independent institution that will be addressed as Institution C to conduct field research. Institution C is usually engaged in mediating agrarian and natural resource conflicts. With consideration that the information and data from the companion group's complaint report and government documents cannot yet be verified as conflicting, this study then focuses on verifying the alleged conflict report. The results of the Institution C research concluded that there was no conflict as reported by the companion group, and there were no human rights violations by Company X. Nevertheless, SAD Indigenous Community indeed face massive

dispossession due to reduced living space and modernization clashes due to land control by Company X (Institution C, 2021).

Even though the results of Institution C's field research show that there is no evidence on the conflict between several SAD Indigenous Community Groups and Company X, their research has succeeded in highlighting the process and dynamics of claims of representation from the advocacy groups who claim to be representatives. Due to different results between Institution C and the report sent to Komnas HAM, the conflict can be labelled as "alleged conflict" and this article uses this term.

From those various reports, it shows that both the SAD Indigenous Community Group and the accompanying group are not homogeneous units. There are at least four groups (*rombong*) and four companion groups that are involved in this



alleged conflict. First group is who reported to Komnas HAM; the second group is the local civil society group who claims the opposite. Third group is focusing on education while the last group is the advocacy group with most of its members coming from the Third Group. Most companion groups involved representing a different group of the SAD Indigenous community. Thus, the claims become very dynamic with various actors involved in it and contestation is inevitable.

### **Expressed and Implied: Mapping and Analyzing the Elements of Representation Claims**

The representative claim theory by Saward (2006) focuses on the claim making process. The process of making a claim and the events after the claim is made can be mapped as follows:

*A **Maker** of representation (M) puts forward a **Subject** (S) which stands for an **Object** (O) which is related to a **Referent** (R) and is offered to an **Audience** (A).*

Makers of representational claims (Makers) produce claim narratives regarding one party as a representative (Subject) of certain constituents who are described as requiring representation (Objects) (Saward, 2010). An object is an image of a Referent – here a person, group, or something else in the real world. The narrative of the claim is then directed to the audience. The audience can be referents (constituents) and other groups outside it. A successful claim is one that the audience responds to.

The mapping of the accompanying group's representation claims can be seen as follows.



## Companion Group 1:

[Companion Group 1] ... (name of organization) **(M)** is a companion group **(S)** from marginalized indigenous tribes who are marginalized by narrowing living space, low levels of welfare, and beginning to fade their identity due to the impact of development that is not in accordance with their identity **(O)**, one of them is the SAD indigenous community **(R)**. This group's activities involve various interested parties at various levels, from local to international **(A)**.

Here, Companion Group 1 claims as an assistance to the SAD indigenous community whose existence is threatened due to the depletion of forests which causes the loss of their livelihood space. The loss of forests not only causes the SAD indigenous community group to lose their place to live, but also their source of livelihood,

even customs and culture that are connected to the existence of the forest. Currently, Companion Group 1 is advocating for assistance to begin the transition from hunting and gathering communities to farmers by providing subsistence land. One performative form of this representation claim is a letter of demand to Komnas HAM that Company X provide land which is part of the company's core land for the livelihood of the SAD indigenous community.

## Companion Group 2:

[Companion Group 2]... (name of organization) **(M)** is an institution that focuses on research and community empowerment, especially SAD indigenous communities **(S)** which has difficulty in carrying out cultural and economic transformation due to minimal intervention. Supporting





Group 2 then formed the “SAD Partnership Forum” as a catalysator for all parties to work together in empowering the SAD indigenous community (**O**). The SAD indigenous community (**R**) needs encouragement and intervention to adapt to the conditions of forest loss and the demands of the times. Synergy from all parties is needed for the success of the program, including the government, companies, and other support groups (**A**).

### **Companion Group 3:**

[Companion Group 3]... (name of organization) (**M**) is an NGO in the field of education for SAD indigenous communities. So far, the SAD indigenous people have found it difficult to receive education and are not accommodated by the government due to the lack of an educational concept that adapts to the needs and lifestyle of the

SAD indigenous people and their different cultural contexts (**S**). Our main focus [Companion Group 3] is to provide education for the SAD indigenous community in accordance with the wishes and needs of the SAD indigenous community (**O**). SAD indigenous people (**R**), especially the Makekal Hulu group, admitted that the assistance from this group was very helpful to them. Currently, Companion Group 3 has been recognized not only by the SAD indigenous community itself but also by the government and internationally (**A**).

The representation claim by Companion Group 3 was not made explicitly. Furthermore, the representation claim was produced to support the Advocacy Group 4 advocacy group as “cadre”, referring to the SAD indigenous people who are the result of being assisted, Companion Group 3.



The uniqueness of this group lies in its curriculum which was created through discussions with the *rerayo* or elders of the SAD indigenous community group and involving the SAD indigenous community directly (participatory and inclusive). As a group that goes directly into the field and interacts directly, Companion Group 4 has the justification as a group that knows the conditions and problems of the SAD indigenous community well.

### Companion Group 4

[Companion Group 4]... (name of organization) **(M)** is an advocacy group that fights for the rights of the SAD indigenous people as a form of emancipation and proof that the SAD indigenous people are able to fight for their own rights **(S)**. The focus of this group is of course the SAD indigenous community, especially those located around

the Bukit Duabelas National Park (TNBD). which was previously threatened due to TNBD regulations that were not in accordance with community customs **(O)**. SAD Indigenous Peoples **(R)** must be involved and heard in policy making related to them by stakeholders and the community **(A)**.

In the representation claim for Companion Group 4, the justification for the representatives used comes from the same background as the group being advocated for, namely the SAD indigenous community. Although Companion Group 4 only contains members from the Makekal Hulu group and no representatives from other groups such as Air Hitam and Kejasung, claims show they are advocating for all SAD indigenous groups. This is also



demonstrated by the advocacy movement regarding the division of TNBD zones which ultimately binds all SAD community groups.

From the explanation in the 4 cases above, the elements of representation claims by the four companion groups can be mapped as follows.

**Table 1. Mapping of Companion Group Representation Claim Elements**

	<b>Claim Makers</b>	<b>Claimed Representative</b>	<b>Claimed Constituency</b>	<b>Claimed Linkage</b>
Companion Group 1	Non-electoral representation	Companion Group 1 claims itself as a companion group (representation).	SAD indigenous people.	An advocacy group that has long accompanied the SAD indigenous community.
Companion Group 2	Non-electoral representation	Does not claim to be a representation. But initiating social change through the SAD Partnership Forum involving local governments and companies.	SAD indigenous people.	Justification of claims based on research results.



Companion Group 3	Non-electoral representation	Companion Group 3 as an educational NGO.  Companion Group 4 as an advocacy group.	SAD indigenous people.	The relationship comes from the relationship established with the one of the SAD Indigenous group and the Companion Group 4.
Companion Group 4	Non-electoral representation	Companion Group 4 claims to be an advocacy group for the SAD indigenous community.	SAD indigenous people.	The relationship between SAD groups and society is not explicitly stated. But the justification is because they comes from similar backgrounds.

From the table above, there are several points that we can conclude. First, the focus of this research is *claim makers* as a form of non-electoral representation. In other words, this time the focus is on companion groups as claim producers outside the electoral institution. In the representation

claims section, *claimed representatives* include two institutions, namely Companion Group 1 and Companion Group 4, which in itself, means there is explicit recognition. Meanwhile, the other two companion groups



(Companion Group 2 and Companion Group 3) did not explicitly declare themselves to be a representative.

Broadly speaking, there are at least two forms of claims that occur, namely complete claims with a clear representative subject and stated explicitly by the companion group, and incomplete claims with a narrative of not naming oneself as a companion but carrying out mentoring activities. In other words, an accompanying explicit narrative can be found in groups with complete claims. Groups with incomplete claims often require further in-depth research and examining the implied meaning in the narrative of their representative claims.

## **Dynamics of Claim Contestation: Conflicting and Constituent Responses**

### **1. Claim Types and Friction Points**

Guasti & Giessel (2019) divide claims into four types, representation claims, misrepresentation claims, claims for certain interests or values, and proclamations. This division is carried out based on the main semantic features of the claims produced. The accompanying group produces at least three types of representation claims, namely claims for representation, misrepresentation, and claims for certain interests or values.

The research results show that Companion Group 1 issued two different types of claims, namely representation claims and misrepresentation claims.

Representation claims are identified through statements made during the data collection process through interviews.

*"If we ask about our attitude, as those who accompany orang rimbo (the jungle people) (another name for the SAD community), we recommend that the government and companies develop the livelihoods of the jungle people. Not just a house, but a livelihood," (Informant Interview 1, March 8, 2022).*

In this statement, the claim maker clearly states that he is a companion who speaks for the interests of the SAD indigenous community. A claim is included in a representation claim when the claim maker speaks on behalf of or in the interests of constituents and gives an indication of the

existence of a representative and constituent relationship between them. So, the claim above includes a representation claim.

Claims of misrepresentation were also produced by Companion Group 1 in interviews. The claim reads as follows:

*"...they set up a partnership forum. Even though this forum invites other parties, management remains with them – local NGOs. Forums are the same, if the activity is not related to Company X, they don't move. This forum was greatly utilized during the visit of the Deputy Minister [from Ministry A]. They made a press conference, Company X," (Informant Interview 1, March 8, 2022).*

The statement above shows the accusations of Companion Group 1 against one of the members of the accompanying Group 2, who was deemed



to be biased towards a company which (according to the claims of Supporting Group 1), was in conflict with the SAD indigenous community. Claims that contain accusations that representatives other than themselves (the claim maker) do not represent constituents well are called misrepresentation claims. This means that Companion Group 1 produced a misrepresentation claim.

Companion Group 2 is an unique NGO. Facts on the ground show that his name is not well known, but their program, namely the SAD Social Development Partnership Forum, has become a guide in SAD indigenous community development programs by the regional government and Company not an implementing agency but a catalyst to synergize parties who care about the welfare of

the SAD indigenous community. Some other statements indicating claims of representation are as follows:

*“We have seen, so far, their failure to carry out transformations in terms of culture, production patterns and various things so that they remain like this. Minimal policy intervention. **We must encourage the acceleration of their social change.** Everyone has to do it. Companies have funds, through CSR programs, but sometimes they don’t know what they want to do. The government is always limited by the budget, but they have power, those who have territory, they can protect it according to regulations. NGOs, have militant souls.*



*Why not collaborate?”  
(Informant Interview 2,  
March 8, 2022, underline  
from the author).*

The above statement refers to claims of representation of interests (*claim of interests/values*), where the claim maker speaks about constituents without claiming a representational relationship with the constituents. Here, Companion Group 2 does not explicitly claim to be a representation, but claims are issued and actions are taken in the form of a program. This program is believed to be the most appropriate answer to facing existing problems. This indicates the group is part of the representation group.

Companion Group 2 also produced claims of misrepresentation in the form of accusations leveled at the Support Group:

*“Because one of the companion group, if I may say so, the person who was the biggest sin against SAD was [Companion Group 1] who pushed for a change in the status of National Park. Then [because of that] the SAD is pushed out,”  
(Informant Interview 2,  
March 8, 2022).*

The statement above is a claim of misrepresentation made by Companion Group 2 when discussions regarding the issue of alleged conflict between the SAD indigenous community and Company X arose. This claim was followed by another statement regarding how the Companion Group 1 program had not had a significant impact even after years of assisting the SAD indigenous community.

Companion Group 3 emphasized that the focus of their institution is in the field





of education, both through the website and during interviews regarding the issue of alleged conflict between the SAD indigenous community and Company.

*“We [Companion Group 3] ourselves are related to [establishment] of the National Park, because of that, initially we advocated for the land of the jungle people, right? From there we started networking,” (Informant Interview 3, March 5, 2023).*

The claim above indicates a narrative of acting in the interests of the SAD indigenous community, namely advocating for the land of the SAD indigenous community. However, subsequently there were no claims regarding the relationship between Companion Group 3 and the SAD indigenous community regarding advocacy activities. Although when talking about

education, Support Group 3 firmly states that their movement aims to empower the SAD indigenous community. Thus, the statement above can be classified as a type of claim for representation of interests (*Claim of Interests/ Values*).

Companion Group 4 was identified as making claims of representation during interviews. The claim reads:

*“This [Companion Group 4], is a local organization that works, to fight for the rights of our own indigenous communities. So we are intermediaries between the jungle people themselves and external affairs. What we fight for, we voice to outside parties. In particular, we convey this to the government,” (Direct interview with Informant 4, March 5, 2022).*



From the statement above, there are two important things to note. First, there is a narrative of fighting for which can be interpreted as acting for certain interests. Second, the claim maker clearly states their relationship with the constituent, namely as an intermediary. From the two semantic features above, the claims produced are classified as representation claims.

However, if we delve further into the relationship between Companion Group 3, which does not claim to be a representative, and Companion Group 4, which claims to be a representation, there is a fairly close relationship.

All actions of Companion Group 4 are the result of discussions with Companion Group 3 because the administrators are advisors and teachers of the members and founders of Companion Group 4. So, even though they do not claim directly, Companion Group 3 also participates in the contestation indirectly through Companion Group 4.

The accompanying group produces at least three types of representation claims, namely claims for representation, misrepresentation, and claims for certain interests or values. The results of the analysis of these four companion groups can be read in the following table.

**Table 2. Forms of Companion Group Claims**

	<b>Representation Claims</b>	<b>Misrepresentation Claims</b>	<b>Claims to Interests or Values</b>
<b>Companion Group 1</b>	✓	✓	
<b>Companion Group 2</b>		✓	✓



<b>Companion Group 3</b>	✓		
<b>Companion Group 4</b>	✓		

From the table above, we can learn the types of claims produced by the companion group. Three of the accompanying groups produced representation claims, namely Companion Group 1, Companion Group 3, and Companion Group 4. Companion Group 2 did not produce representation claims but claims for interests, namely the interests of the SAD indigenous community. An interesting thing can be seen in the section on misrepresentation claims with two companion groups making claims attacking each other, namely Companion Group 1 and Companion Group 2. Thus, although there is contestation in terms of representation claims between companion groups in general, there are cases of alleged conflict between Company.

## **2. The Constituents Feedback: Various Responses to Representation Claims from the Audience**

Claims of representation will not work if there is no response from the audience. The audience here refers to the parties the claim maker wants to convince. In Guasti & Giessel (2018), there are two parties who are very important in seeing the response, namely constituents and related authorities. The response from the audience can be in the form of acceptance of the claim, but it can also be in the form of rejection. Furthermore, audience responses cannot be measured equally. In one case, constituents may accept the claim but the authority rejects it



and *vice versa*. In this case, the author will focus on responses to claims from constituents of the companion group, namely the SAD indigenous community.

## **Constituent Testimony: No Land Claims**

In theory *The Representative Claim*, constituents can be part of the audience. In the case of alleged conflict between Company In the initial conflict study process, there were several leaders of SAD groups or indigenous groups who were met and willing to be interviewed.

The loudest response came from the head of the group (*rombong*) of the SAD indigenous community, Tumenggung, which has a roaming area around the core plantation of the Company X. They really regret this because they feel they never signed it.

*"The fact that my name was listed there itself surprised me, because I don't think I ever signed it [letter of claim]. So, it's like they secretly took my name. This is what we experienced and honestly. We don't know who is suing or where. We as the community declare that there is no dispute," (Interview Tumenggung SAD 1, March 3, 2023).*

Apart from shock, other reactions that emerged from Tumenggung SAD 1 and the leaders were irritation and even anger. As head of the group, the name Tumenggung SAD 1 was given of course has quite a big significance. Apart from that, if any of their group members participated in the reporting, they felt that their authority as elders had been overstepped.



Furthermore, the land being sued is land within their territory so other groups should not have the right to make claims.

Regarding their welfare condition, this group considers that they are already prosperous enough that they do not need to demand anything. This is because the company's assistance includes monthly *jatah hidup* (jadup) (living allowance) which contains basic food packages, educational assistance from elementary school to university scholarships, planting assistance, and ambulance assistance and health services. Apart from that, each of them already has a house and is free to carry out all customs on the existing land. In short, they feel they have no problems with the company and are quite secure in terms of welfare.

Based on author field observations, there are indeed schools built specifically for the

SAD indigenous community. Statements from the children there also said that they were picked up by company cars for school, especially those who were carrying out the tradition of *melangun* or traveling the forest to express grief. The children also said that their teachers were very kind and patient so that even though they were a little lazy about wearing uniforms, they felt that school was not something bad.

The information from Group 1 and Tumenggung SAD 1 was also supported by Tumenggung SAD 2 who had the status of former Tumenggung. He resigned because he had converted to Islam and was deemed no longer qualified as a traditional leader. Despite this, he admitted that he was still part of SAD and this was acknowledged by other elders who were present at the time of the interview.



According to the former Tumenggung SAD 2, there was no conflict between his group and Company X. Just like the group from Tumenggung SAD 1, assistance in the form of basic food packages, health, agricultural program assistance and education has been provided by the company.

*"We were very surprised, because up until now we had not noticed any conflict between the company and the our community. Because, all of us as a community, feel that we have been helped," (Tumenggung SAD 2 Interview, March 3, 2023).*

Regarding land, Tumenggung SAD 2 said that currently they are facing a land crisis for livelihoods. Even though they can still hunting animals and collecting fruits in the forest, the former Tumenggung SAD 2 states their numbers have been steadily

decreasing in recent years. But the former Tumenggung SAD 2 said that they submitted their demands regarding livelihood land to the government. Besides the land, they also want the government to create a development programs that involve the SAD indigenous community in their planning stage.

Adding to the previous statement, Tumenggung SAD 3 also admitted that he did not know anything about the land claims because most of them were inside [the forest] than outside. However, he said that land demands were not something new. Considering the limited living space and the threat of declining welfare, this demand is not entirely wrong.

Personally, he chooses not to side with anyone. According to him, all parties involved were wrong. The company made a mistake because it initially



focused more on transmigrant people than on the indigenous SAD community. But the public is also wrong because they are only demanding now, after the company has been operating for years. As head of the SAD group which did not receive assistance from the company, Tumenggung SAD 3 chose not to comment much on this alleged conflict case. Apart from that, he chose a neutral position to maintain good relations with other SAD groups.

Different from the three *rombong* above, Tumenggung SAD 4 has other opinion. In a joint interview with Tumenggung SAD 4, he explained that there was indeed an agreement to report land claims due to the group's worrying conditions with Companion Group 1. However, based on several considerations, Tumenggung SAD 4 chose to

withdraw the claim. The first consideration is related to the assistance that the SAD Group 4 has received from Company X.

*“The problem with the Company X, actually, I have indeed tried to sue the Company X. However, no matter how hard I demand, the Company X will also help us as much as they can. So, [in the end] I feel reluctant. Apart from that, we were also influenced by some party [Companion Group 1], as supporters of SAD,” (Tumenggung SAD 4 Interview, March 6, 2023).*

Based on information from Tumenggung SAD 4, the condition of the *rombong* was quite worrying. Although there is assistance from Company X in the form of housing, guiding and access to develop plantation and health. However, this is not enough for several reasons. Firstly, plantation products,

namely cassava plantations, can only be harvested once every six months with the harvest only sufficient for one week's needs. Second, the loss of their livelihood area because theirs is not included as protected region as part of the Bukit Dua Belas National Park. Third, the number of animals that can be hunted has decreased so their income has also decreased. For these reasons, The SAD Group 4 considers education to be useless because they are already threatened with starvation before feeling the impact of education.

*"If you continue like this, let's be honest, all the groups in this region, both adults and children, gather us at the regent's office and just shoot us sir. Shot us dead, we couldn't eat either way. Well, that's it. Now, it's up to the government. If we want to sue*

*the Company X, they already helped us a lot," (Tumenggung SAD 4 interview, March 6, 2023).*

This statement illustrates the despair of Tumenggung SAD 4 regarding the welfare of his group. According to him, compared to others such as *rombong* SAD 1, 2, and 3 where they still have their forest areas since it is part of the national parks, hence protected, the *rombong* of SAD 4 is much sadder because they no longer have forests for their livelihood. With the difficulty of hunting, gardening or farming due to the small amount of land make Tumenggung SAD 4 quite pessimistic regarding the welfare of his group in the long term.

If simplified, then the constituent response to the companion group's claim is as follows:





**Table 3. Constituent Responses to Companion Group Claims**

<b>SAD Troupe</b>	<b>Claims of Worrying SAD Conditions</b>	<b>Farming Ability</b>	<b>Relationship with Company</b>	<b>The Existence of Conflict</b>	<b>Companion Group</b>
Tumenggung SAD 1	Not true	Can	Good	No conflict	Companion Group 2
Tumenggung SAD 2	Not true	Can	Good	No conflict	Companion Group 2
Tumenggung SAD 3	True	Can	Neutral	No conflict	–
Tumenggung SAD 4	True	Can	Good	No conflict	Companion Group 1

From the table above, it can be seen the constituent response to the claims produced by the companion group. First, regarding the general claim that the welfare conditions of the SAD indigenous community show differences, where two of the four groups stated that their group was quite prosperous and sufficient. These two groups are groups that receive full assistance from the company.

The other three claims are farming ability, good relations with Company X, and the existence of conflicts. Second, regarding the claim of the farming capability of the SAD indigenous community, all informants stated that they had the knowledge to farm even though they did not reject the mentoring program. Third, when discussing good relations with Company X, all informants from the constituent

sides stated that there is no conflict. Finally, regarding the existence of the companion group, two of the informants stated their closeness to the Companion Group 2 while the other mentioned mentoring by the Companion Group 1.

From the results of the analysis of the study above, it can be seen that the ongoing claims contestation has escalated into issues of alleged conflict. Each has narratives and claims to be the group that provides the best solution to the SAD indigenous community problems. The clashing point was found in the best solution in resolving the problems of the SAD indigenous community, with the two accompanying groups throwing claims of misrepresentation at each other.

The results of interviews conducted with various parties above show statements that are quite contradictory to the

information in the previous section. Some firmly rejected the existence of the conflict referred to by Companion Group 1, although some agreed that there were welfare problems. Several other parties said that a small conflict did occur, related to the extraction of palm fruit kernels (brondol) as stated by Companion Group 4, but stated that there were no problems between Company X and the SAD indigenous community.

On the other hand, there are several parties who are unhappy with the issue of this alleged conflict. Firstly, from Tumenggung SAD 1, former Tumenggung SAD 2, and Tumenggung SAD 3 whose names were included in the complaint letter without their knowledge. Tumenggung SAD 4 himself stated that he was interested in the land offer because their condition was much worse than the



Tumenggung SAD 1 and former Tumenggung SAD 2 groups, but decided not to include his name in the letter of demand.

Conflicting opinions regarding the existence of conflict, conditions of mutual accusation and suspicion between the accompanying groups. This condition did not interfere with the provision of assistance or assistance from each party to the SAD community under its guidance, but succeeded in causing disharmony between CSOs and even the potential for division within the SAD community itself. Thus, there is implicit competition that occurs between the companion groups. This competition then affects relationships among parties involved, whether between the SAD community and the company X, the SAD community and companion groups, as well as between the companion groups themselves.

The peak was the conflict that occurred in the alleged conflict between Company X and the SAD indigenous community.

## Conclusion

The realm of representational politics is described by Saward (2010) as a realm filled with contested claims between representational actors. Departing from the development of the political concept of representation, the representative world is no longer dominated by the arena of formal legislative institutions but instead becomes an informal space that can be entered by anyone, including civil society groups, like NGOs. These civil society groups appear in various forms, names, and various sectors. In this article, they are in the form of a companion group for the SAD Indigenous Community in Jambi Province.



Representation often takes the form of a “claim” to represent a group. In the context of this informal representational space, it also produces forms of representative claims for a group, including contestation between these claims. This happened with NGOs, the SAD Indigenous Community companion group. This contestation of claims is very prominent when cases such as alleged human rights violations and conflicts between the SAD Indigenous Community and Company X which operates in the SAD Indigenous Community’s living area occur.

There are three conclusions from this article. *First*, the representation claims produced by the companion group are not the same, because each of them produce their own narratives. The companion group

must have problem framing and creativity to promote their claims so that it is acceptable to the audience.

*Second*, in the relationship between parties who claim to be representatives and constituents, there are at least two variations of representation claims, namely express and implied representation claims. There are companion groups that state clearly (explicitly) their representation claims in the discourse produced; and, groups that do not state their claims clearly (implied). Express claims can be seen from claims in the form of representation claims and misrepresentation claims. Both claims clearly state the party representing (or not representing) and those represented. For claims of interest or value, ambiguity over the constituents may characterize these claims as implied claims. It should be



noted that both claims can be produced simultaneously. For example, Companion Group 2 produces representation claims for implied interests or values, and simultaneously issues misrepresentation claims that corner other companion groups. This shows the flexibility of claims within the world of representation itself.

*Third*, the dynamics of claim formation are full of contestation and involve many actors. Support Groups are required to convince their constituents of the validity of their claims. This is related to the assessment of the success of the claim, which is seen from the audience's acceptance. In this study, there were groups that succeeded in convincing their audience and getting their claims recognized, but there were also those that only succeeded in convincing part of the target audience. It

can be concluded that claims can be rejected or accepted by constituents with varying degrees of claim acceptance.

Acceptance and rejection of these claims is one of the causes of contestation because it is not uncommon for representative actors to attack opponents' claims to make their own claims more convincing. However, not all contestation takes the form of attacking each other and countering the opponent's claims as a whole. Claim contestation can also be carried out with groups who agree on several aspects, but choose different paths. In other words, contestation of claims also occurs at different levels.

In short, the various forms of representational claims, actors, and levels of acceptance and contestation describe the fluid world of representational politics in non-formal arenas. When all actors are free to enter



and have to share space, then contestation to dominate that space is inevitable. This is the essence of representation which departs from representational claims in the informal arena. It is not very relevant to map out who succeeded in making the strongest claim, but what is focused on is how the process of forming claims and competition between claims takes place, which has been shown in this article.



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