

Indigenous People's Perception on the Commodification of Genetic Resource and Traditional Knowledge

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Concern raise on access and benefit sharing (ABS) policy that it could lead to commodification of culture which might be dangerous for the integrity of the culture itself. However, several studies argue that commercialization of culture is not always a bad thing for community. Using qualitatively driven mixed methodology, This research aim to understand how the indigenous people actually perceive their genetic resource and traditional knowledge related to it. Based on indigenous capitalism theory, three hypotheses are used to answer this question. The first one is the indigenous people perceive their genetic resource and traditional knowledge as economic comodities, the second hypothesis is that even though they perceive the resource as economic commodity, they will have some mitigating value which limit the commercialization. The last hypothesis is when commercialization occur, there will be dual premise of subsumption and self determination.

This research finds it is plausible the indigenous people perceive genetic resource which is not protected by customary law as economic commodity. Meanwhile, for the traditional knowledge, the community does not perceived them as economic commodities as knowledge is usually shared freely among people both inside and outside community. However, when resource is given, it is observed that reciprocity is expected ideal behaviour. In case the resource is commercialized, some mitigating value which possibly limit the commercialization over the resource are; a) the sacred forest can not be disturbed; b) Reciprocity is adjusted to the person condition and ability; c) different treatment between personal use and commercial use; d) long term relationship is preferred rather than short term compensation; e) ensuring the regeneration of the plants; f) No intellectual property right that will limit knowledge sharing. For the last hypothesis, this research find that even though ABS policy have provided several self-determination tools for indigenous people to control commercialization, the tendency to privatize genetic resource and traditional knowledge through benefit sharing agreement will push indigenous people toward the subsumption to the universal system of capitalism. In this ABS policy indigenous people will have to decide how far they will compromise their value.