



## Between chili farms and an aerotropolis: the struggle against the new airport in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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### ABSTRACT

Yogyakarta International Airport (YIA), which opened on 28 August 2020, represents one of the largest infrastructure developments in the modern history of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. While, for some, the airport project was proof of the Indonesian government's commitment to invest in the region, to the farmers of the Temon area on which the airport now stands, it represented the threat of eviction and loss of their farmlands. Thus, in 2012, the Temon farmers formed an organization called *Wahana Tri Tunggal* to carry out anti-airport activities and protect their interests. The farmers were joined by activists of diverse ideological backgrounds, and together they continued to resist the development of the new airport until 2018, when they eventually decided to end the struggle. Based on interviews with farmers and activists who participated in the anti-YIA campaign, this article describes the attachment the farmers had to their land in Temon and the reason why they rejected the compensation package offered to them, the pluralistic composition of the anti-YIA struggle, as well as the recollections of the movement by its former participants.

### KEYWORDS

Yogyakarta International Airport; special region of Yogyakarta; aerotropolis; agrarian struggle; Indonesia

### Introduction

Part of the intent of post-colonial Indonesia's key legislation on land rights, the Basic Agrarian Law of 1960 (*Undang-Undang Nomor 5 Tahun 1960 tentang Peraturan Dasar Pokok-Pokok Agraria*), was to promote the 'social function' of land and rectify the disenfranchisement of small-scale farmers. Even though many of the socially progressive promises regarding land made during the Soekarno era were unrealized (Thorburn 2004), farmers of that time were able to engage, with some support from the Communist Party of Indonesia, in radical collective action, including that of occupying lands over which they asserted the right to farm. Such actions were strategic attempts to force the Soekarno regime to fulfil its promises regarding the rights of small-scale farmers, rights that would come to be influential in the formation of, and debates over, agrarian identity in Indonesia (Bachriadi 2011; Lund and Rachman 2017).

Whatever rapport that had existed between the spirited agrarian activism of the Soekarno era and the central government's approach to land diminished after Suharto's rise to power in 1965, as concerns such as those for smallholder rights, procedural