

Collaborative Local Forest Governance in Kalimantan, Indonesia

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1. The paradigm of autocratic forest governance by experts and its failure

- * Dominant opinion in tropical countries: The cause of tropical deforestation is slash and burn agriculture by ignorant local people. For this reason, educated "experts" such as government forest administrators, field managers of forestry companies and scientists should control and govern the forests. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to enclose forests by shutting out local people. Thus, the introduction of modern forest management technology and the education of the local people is useful in solving the problem.
- * Policies in line with this paradigm of autocratic governance by experts ultimately failed, and tropical forests deteriorated and disappeared considerably during the twenty years from the 1970s to the 1980s.

2. Attempts in East Kalimantan of Indonesia

- * Setting (national policy) : Decentralization of power led by districts following implementation of a series of the laws relating to decentralization (1999).
- * West Kutai District: This district has about the same land area as Taiwan, has a population of 150,000 and has prevalent illegal logging.
- * Establishment of working group for local forest management: The members consisted of 5 local representatives, 19 government officials, 2 scientists, 1 mining company representative and 1 NGO representative. This group proposed 52 actions to be implemented over the next ten years.
- * Examples of contents of the action plans: the establishment of a team for resolving disputes, reformation of customary laws into contents capable of dealing with current issues, providing opportunities for discussions with local people to enable investors in forestry projects to gain an understanding of customary laws, and modifying technical guidelines for forest management to be in line with the current situation.
- * Examples of realizing a system for forming consensus building mechanisms based on the participation of local people in natural forest regions where valuable forests remain are extremely rare and innovative in Asia.

3. Towards collaborative local forest governance led by the local people

- * Collaborative local forest governance: This system involves the management of local forests through cooperation among various stakeholders having interest in them. However, this system is not led by only those communities having customary laws.
- * Problems: Who is to be responsible for taking the initiative? Who is to speak on behalf of the local people? Who are the legitimate stakeholders?
- * Equal participation by all stakeholders: The voices of persons residing in forest regions are ultimately not reflected in government policies. A typical example is the establishment of national parks and other protected areas.
- * Principle of Involvement: This concept is to recognize the right to speak and decide of a stakeholder corresponding to the degree of involvement in forest use and management on the assumption that diverse groups of related parties are regarded as stakeholders (multi-stakeholder approach). As a result, the assigning of legitimacy to the opinions of outsiders can be agreed upon by numerous people.

4. Efficacy of the concept of “hierarchal watershed management”

- * A nested structure in the form of micro, meso and macro layers is plausible. In Kalimantan, this is equivalent to villages, sub-districts and districts. The meso (sub-district) level is unable to function effectively under the present circumstances.
- * It is important to break away from a layered basin management system, and form the existence of stakeholders (ex.NGOs) that are able to wedge it. Unrestricted movement between layers would be possible through collaboration among NGOs having different scales of activity, ranging from local NGOs to foreign NGOs. Their legitimacy would be ensured through the “Principle of Involvement”. As a result, management rigidity (or inflexibility) could be continuously avoided.