

Contribution to discussion 24 January

By Douglas Sheil

The discussion of Madhav Gadgil by Irene, Bianca and Jeannette (real impact comes from outside and local communities are often the losers) is the starting point for much of our research in Kalimantan.

1. We started with the problem that "Policy and decision makers are poorly guided on how to address the needs of local communities and biodiversity in landscapes." While the characteristics of forest landscapes are usually critical to the people living there, the details of these relationships are generally not accessible or well recognised by outsiders. This gap in understanding means that outsider-led interventions often cause undesirable impacts and conflict. We're still feeling our way in this topic. But in some ways we are acting as the intermediaries in ensuring a better recognition of local needs. Ideally, local people would play this role themselves, but there are numerous barriers to this (that also would make an interesting discussion).
2. Ultimately we are not interested in an "enabling environment" for joint biodiversity assessment. We are interested in developing an "enabling environment" for better outcomes (for the stakeholders, for the environment, for the future etc). Joint biodiversity assessment may be part of this process for achieving these outcomes, but is not an end in itself. If we were to focus on these broader issues, we would start to discuss "co-management" as noted by Madhav Gadgil.
3. I thought I could offer some examples of the positive impacts we are hoping to achieve. The best way to do that is share some of our initial conclusions. We are very keen to know the best way to present these ideas and have a wider influence. Please let me have your ideas!

Our fieldwork was funded by ITTO so our initial evaluations have tended to emphasise changes in forestry practices that would benefit local people but I think we have real potential to have influence as we (CIFOR) have good relationships with many of the major actors and stakeholders. It should be remembered that forestry in Indonesia paid scant regard to local communities for many decades, and though the system is changing, it takes a while for everyone to catch up, though willingness is often there.

Some results with implications:

Unlogged forest is considered the 'most important' land for communities, both in general and for all classes of uses and values that we assessed. Logged-over forest is given a low preference. There appear to be a number of reasons for this. These include the diminished level of key resources, reduced physical accessibility and reduced access rights. For example timber resources for local building are no longer legally accessible even though these areas are often close to the communities. Even if they had the right to cut the timber the best wood has often been taken already and the damage to the forest makes access difficult. Pigs, a preferred food species are said to decline in logged areas.

The surveys show that many people in the region are troubled by a perceived decline in many other highly valued resources. They consider concession logging to be a major cause of this. Roads, trails and heavy machinery frequently damage sites of specific importance to the communities (such as grave sites, old village sites with their extensive fruit groves).

An example of an important resource that has become scarce is rattan. A significant factor in its decline is Government logging regulations (TPTI) that require concession holders to repeatedly slash all undergrowth and climbers, in a misguided effort to encourage regeneration within the concessions. Not only does this include many useful and prized species, such as rattan, but also timber seedlings are often slashed along with the rest. Even if applied properly, the silvicultural benefits of this regulation are dubious and the biodiversity impacts are considerable and clearly hurt local communities. The policy should be revoked.

Many households are vulnerable to crop failures, floods, etc. and are dependent on wild foods for certain periods of the year. In this context, the protection of certain emergency foods (e.g. Sago) is critical, especially to some Punan groups [1]. In the primary forest, this is not a problem, and local management practices ensure the survival of harvested plants. But in forest where logging is taking place the resource is threatened. The main local sago (*Eugeissonia utilis*) tends to grow on ridge tops - exactly the areas where skidding machinery is used to extract logs on the undulating local terrain. We believe this is the kind of information that is needed to make more informed and balanced decisions about forest conservation and land use - and which the survey approach aims to elucidate. Protecting these palms appears possible if the need is recognised. Similarly, the cessation of understorey slashing would greatly increase the value of logged-over forest to local communities and to many elements of the rich local biota. There are many other examples.

Though our methods emphasise quantitative approaches our surveys also provided a rich source of anecdotes and illustrations that can be used to make specific points. For example a shortage of preferred construction materials (e.g., 'ulin' *Eusideroxylon zwagerii*) and boat building materials is already being felt in many communities. In Seturan village we heard that people from the nearby village of Tanjung Nanga have been caught stealing timber from Seturan lands. Much of the 'ulin' in the Tanjung Nanga territory has been harvested and, in addition, a fair amount may have been lost in a large fire in the early 1980s. One interesting response to this resource depletion is that in Seturan some communities promote de facto protected areas where there is mutual agreement on the need to keep forest cover, and on the obligations and rights that provide these.

We note that some of the results of our studies imply possible win-win situations where everyone can gain. Examples of more obvious win-win opportunities include the protection of sago and other forest values during harvest planning [2], the prevention of understorey slashing, and the identification of protected areas that can be respected by all major stakeholders (grave sites, birds nest caves, springs).

We found that graves of Merap groups are often visible, with older graves associated with large urns, urn-holders, platforms, and more recently marked ground burials. All forest product collections seem to be prohibited within an area of ca. 1 ha or more of such sites, though it was also implied by some informants that this was voluntary. Such sites often survive as remnant forest patches in more intensively cultivated areas. Despite this, the destruction of gravesites by timber concessions is common, and has caused local resentment [3]. Protecting such sites appears simple and uncontroversial, is important to local communities, would be easy to implement, would provide forest refuge areas with conservation significance, and would help avoid local conflict and discontent that currently threatens community-company relationships.

The local priorities and concerns, though relatively uncontroversial once elicited, were not recognised in advance (by those making the interventions). These examples are not part of a pre-prepared list but are uncovered through a process of identifying what is important locally through discussions, and more structured exercises, with those concerned. Solutions and compromises that better reflect local needs can now be sought, and these solutions can be planned and assessed. Without the initial diagnosis we would be stuck with our general and well-intentioned outsiders guesses, or brief enquiries that too often fail to address what actually matters. Will the "enabling environment" be adequate to achieve positive impacts...? I hope so.

[1] We found this dependence on sago to be difficult to elicit as it is considered something shameful amongst the local groups. Richer Dayak groups sometimes refer to poorer Punan as "sago eaters" in a derogatory way, meaning that these Punan (and especially other groups) will often fail to admit this dependence in any brief and public exercise. Luckily, our multi-pronged approach identified this discrepancy and we were able to seek understanding of it.

[2] We assume here that concessions have a right to be harvesting these forests, despite the prior claim of the indigenous communities. This position, though far from just, accepts a de-facto reality in Indonesia at the moment. However, governmental decentralisation means this will be increasingly

challenged. It can be noted that local communities welcomed our research as we were concerned with them and their needs and our documentation provides them with a feeling of greater legitimacy in the forest landscape.

[3] We checked comments by company representatives that these claims were fabricated and it was clear after visiting sites that they were not. We even visited one site before it was destroyed and later saw the bulldozer trails.