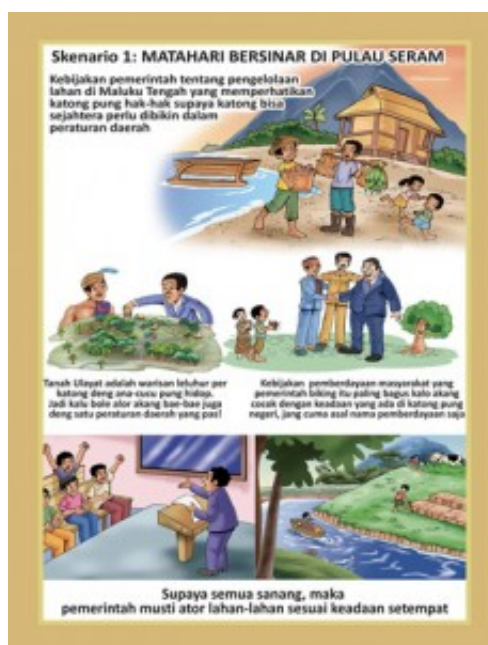


Creating different land-use scenarios to reduce conflict

Prospective participatory analysis has helped communities on Seram Island, Indonesia, see the likely results of decisions about land use and provided a focus for their efforts, says Nining Liswanti

According to Nining Liswanti, a researcher with the Center for International Forestry Research who was presenting at the [6th Annual International Ecosystem Services Partnership conference](#) in Bali, Indonesia, 26–30 August, the high biodiversity and traditional agro-ecosystems of the island of Seram are both under threat from attempts by agribusinesses to convert ecosystems to oil palm and other monocultural commercial crops.

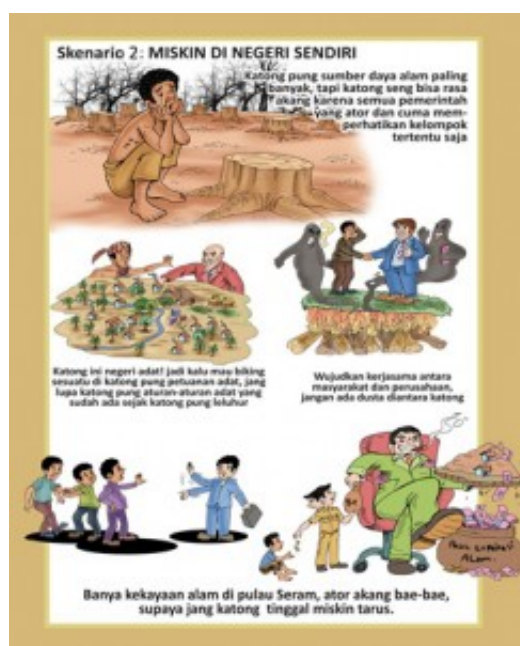


Scenario 1: Desirable

Seram is in the Indonesian province of Maluku, just to the north of the smaller but better known Ambon Island. Local myth calls Seram the 'nusa ina', or mother island, from which all the people of Central Maluku once came. The Alifuru people are indigenous to Seram but there is now a mixed population who embrace Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism and animism. One group follows a form of Hinduism. The communities of all types generally support strong customary rules, or 'adat', that regulate land tenure.

Seram features high biodiversity, particularly in the east in Manusela National Park, which covers 1890 km², around 11% of the island. Of the 117 species of birds on Seram, 14 are endemic, that is, found nowhere else on Earth. The island also features both Asian mammals and Australasian marsupials. Nine of the 38 mammal species are endemic and

several of these live only in the mountains. All are categorised as ‘threatened’. As well as the mountain forests, there are three other ecosystem types: coastal, swamp and lowland forests.



Scenario 2: Poor in their own country

The Center’s team set out to determine how all the multiple demands being put on the island of Seram could be taken into account when decisions were made by communities, governments and businesses. To do this, the researchers used a technique known as ‘prospective participatory analysis’ with their colleagues from the University of Pattimura in Ambon. The study took place in 20 villages with a total of 556 households containing 9276 people from both indigenous and internal migrant backgrounds.

The main issue that came up was the pressure to convert forests and other traditional land uses to oil palm, which fuelled conflict between local residents and agribusinesses, state-owned enterprises and governments, with the right to land underlying the conflict.



Scenario 3: Struggle without end

To better address these issues, the team brought together representatives of governments, the community, companies, academic institutions and NGOs to discuss the various needs and demands. From this, four scenarios were produced that combined the biophysical and socioeconomic information to show the effect of different decisions about the use of land. The four scenarios—which were given self-explanatory titles: 1. Desirable; 2. Poor in their own country; 3. Struggle without end; 4. Irresponsible policies—were shared widely to raise awareness of the issues and promote the scenario with which most people agreed.

The next step from here is to integrate the preferred scenario's action plan in the district government's mid-term plan, soliciting commitments from everyone involved to ensure it is implemented. A dialogue about land-use planning between the provincial and national governments also needs to gather momentum, with a revision to the current land-allocation map required and made more operational at district level while being promoted nationally.



Scenario 4: Irresponsible policies

The major challenges to this process are who will pay for the cost of participation once assistance from donor agencies has ended, especially the cost of monitoring progress in the future; and how the new process can be fully institutionalised as part of the government's planning, including ensuring that the desirable scenario isn't hijacked along the way. The district has a new head, too, who will need to be fully informed of the process and its results.

As for the prospective participatory planning analysis itself, the team concluded that it was a good tool for bringing people from different backgrounds and social statuses together to share their views and collaborate to change the future. In particular, local government staff have a better understanding of the communities' needs and priorities thanks to the process, which they can use when preparing district regulations on land uses.

Edited by Robert Finlayson



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