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Spatial planning and distribution of benefits of forest resources in Tanjung Jabung Barat: an opinion



Highlights

Tanjung Jabung Barat Regency

Conflict over control and ownership of land in Tanjab Barat Regency

Benefits sharing of forest resources: perspectives from Theory of Access

Having a good Regional Spatial Land-use Planning (Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah = RTRW) maybe the only opportunity to achieve low (carbon) emission development. Institutionally, as a formal 'rule of the game' in providing guidance to regional development, RTRW is very often weak and failed due to the processes involved in its birth. RTRW is not just a legal document to legalized utilization and allocation of natural resources. It depicts, more importantly, rights and access to different component of natural resources. This brief contains opinion of the writer to first identify and understand issues on distribution of natural resources benefits depicted in RTRW of Tanjung Jabung Barat Regency. Theory of Access was used as a framework to map out allocation and distribution of benefits of land and forest resource to achieve low-carbon-emission development.



Revision of RTRW commonly occurs in Indonesia as has also happened in Tanjung Jabung Barat Regency. Through Regional Decree No. 8 Tahun 2008, Tanjung Jabung Barat increased the number of districts from 13 to 5 districts¹. This change affected on allocation and distribution of benefits natural resources.

Tanjung Jabung Barat Regency

Tanjung Jabung Barat regency is located in the eastern part of Jambi Province with a total area of 5010 km² and length of coast + 45 km. Mining is the main product of natural resources comprising of oil, natural gas and coal. Other important natural resources products are derived from agriculture and forestry sectors, including large and smallholder scale plantations. Total forest

1 RPJM (mid-term development planning) Kabupaten Tanjung Jabung Barat 2006-2011.

area is 246,602 ha. According to its function and purpose, forest area in Tanjung Jabung Barat comprise of: Cagar Alam (Nature reserve) 85 ha, Bukit Tigapuluh National Park 9,900 ha, Protected Forest on Peat 16,995 ha, Limited Forest Production 41,995 ha and Permanent Production Forest 178,605 ha².

Similar to other places in Indonesia, forest area in Tanjung Jabung Barat is currently under threat from large-scale activities such as illegal logging, oil palm companies and industrial timber plantation concessions. Currently, three companies have received concessions to manage industrial timber plantation in the Production Forest area: PT. WKS (Wira Karya Sakti), PT. RHM (Rimba Hutani Mas) and PT. WT (Wana Teladan). Oil palm production in the area has significantly increased from 10,962 Mg in 2005 to 183,201 Mg in 2007³. Global demand of oil palm has also increased demand for land for oil palm plantations.

Conflict over control and ownership of land in Tanjab Barat Regency

Prof. Hariadi Kartodihardjo in his presentation on 'Forest and Spatial Planning' underlines several weaknesses of RTRW. As a legal and formal 'rule of game' for regional planning, RTRW has failed to represent the interest of various stakeholders

2 Development Plan FM Model Sungai Bram Hitam, Tanjung Jabung Barat Regency, Jambi Province, 2009.

3 RPJM Kabupaten Tanjung Jabung Barat 2006-2011.



particularly on issues related to providing equal opportunity to utilize natural resources including forest resources and land. The failure in representing all stakeholders triggered conflict over control and ownership of land and natural resources.

Land conflicts in Tanjung Jabung Barat surfaced due to overlapping land claims from different stakeholders. Local community laid their claim to gain, maintain and extend their livelihood sources and to increase their income.

Based from discussion with relevant stakeholders, most land conflicts occurred between local community versus local leaders and local community versus private companies. For example, conflict in Management Unit of Peatland Protected Forest (Kesatuan Pengelolaan Hutan Lindung Gambut = KPHLG) of Bram Hitam arose due to disagreement between Forest Agency and local community over the status of the forest area. Community of Bram Hitam Kiri deny the status of the land that they manage and cultivate as Peatland Protected Forest. Local community argued that there were no 'border sign' and no warnings were given by the Foerst Agency when they started to open the area. Up to now, forest encroachment and loggings by local community still occur in the claimed KPHLG area.

Similar event occurred in Senyerang district, Tanjung Jabung Barat. Local community claimed ownership to 7.224 ha concession area of PT. WKS. Local community argued that the area they

claimed was categorized as non-forest area or Other Land Uses (Areal Penggunaan Lain = APL) in Regional Planning Decree of 1993 which currently is still in the revising process. From Forestry Department perspective, the area claimed by local community is a Conversion Production Forest (Hutan Produksi Konversi=HPK) based on TGHK (forest allocation consensus) in 1986 and integration map between RTRW and TGHK ('padu serasi') in 1999.

Benefits sharing of forest resources: perspectives from Access theory

Jesse C. Ribot and Nancy Lee Peluso in 'Rural Sociology' journal (2003) defined 'access' as the ability or opportunity to benefit from this (in this case land or forest resources). Consideration on who own the right and who do not own the right is very important in the process of developing or revising RTRW. Particularly from the standpoint of why and how the 'rights' were granted.

Looking at the various conflicts events that occurred in Tanjung Jabung Barat, we can identify several stakeholders involved and their different interests. When RTRW or any other forestry policies were unable to provide guidance or control in managing natural resources (lack of enforcement), a certain condition will occur where interaction between actors or network, politics or interests, policy practitioner or private companies (web of power) will be more dominant and will

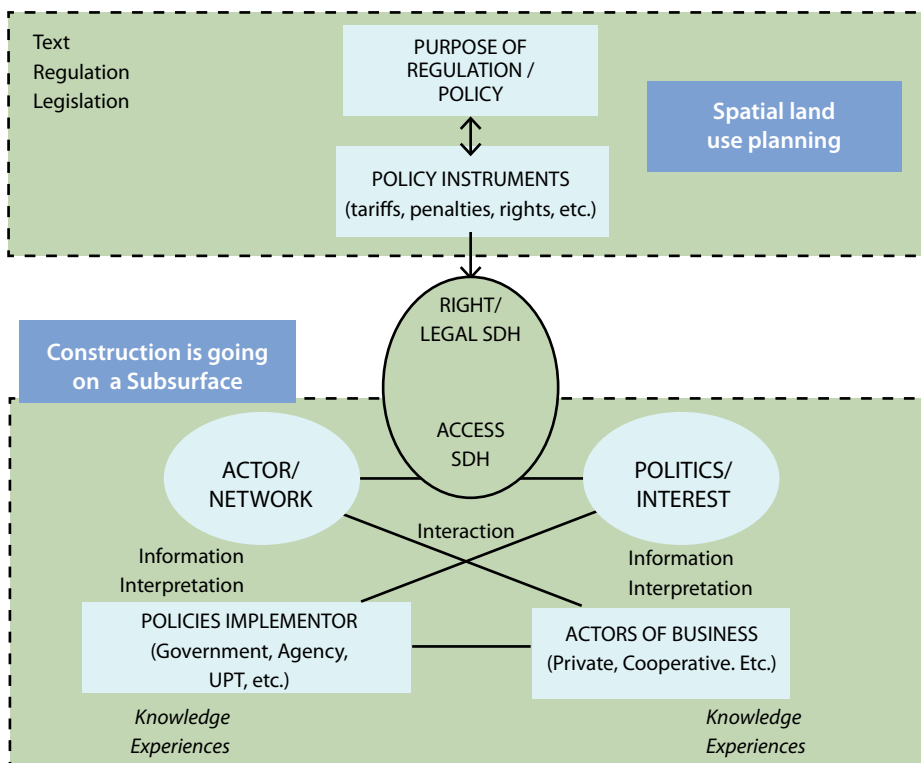


Figure 1. Illustration of access theory (modified from Prof. Hariadi Kartodihardjo)



become hidden controller in distribution of forest resources benefits (see Figure 1).

It is still need to be tested if the government of Tanjung Jabung Barat is perceived as an institution with strong control and power (bundle of power) on ownership, utilization, allocation and distribution of natural resources, parallel to the Central Government. On the other hand, individuals, community or institutions such as private companies, NGO or local government agencies, try to maintain their access to land and natural resources through Regency government. Low access to information caused the lack of local community knowledge on land status and consequently set off conflict over control and ownership. Local community attempted to gain right to manage land through individual/communal/customs which very often contradict to State policies. This is largely due to lack of State recognition on the importance of community involvement in the development of RTRW. In contrast, big companies with access to financial capital, technology, market, labour and information have better positioning in gaining access to manage and utilize natural resources

and eventually gaining right based access to part of forest area.

Another concern is unresolved issue of forest governance that is the tendency of policy makers to distribute forest benefits unevenly between stakeholders (local community and large companies). The 'web of power' very often modify or revise delineation of status and function of forest areas and thus modifying the rights to utilize and access land and forest resources, adding further negative effect to the implementation of RTRW as development guidelines in the region.

There are still plenty to understand on the mechanism of 'web of power' in the context of RTRW and distribution of land and forest resources benefits using the framework of 'Theory of Access'. This brief analysis is just the tip of many issues and problems that underlies the ineffectiveness of RTRW. Hopefully, the process of RTRW development in the future will use participatory and local approach to include all stakeholders including local community to achieve the goal of just and sustainable regional development.

