**Managing Conflicts Over State-Forestland
Through Soft Systems Methodology:
The Case of Benakat Research Forest, South Sumatra**

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TRANSFORMING LIVES AND LANDSCAPES

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Introduction

- There are plenty of Indonesian forest areas lied in condition of not being governed and neglected. It was initially perceived as conflicting area due to government vagueness to deal with other stakeholder preferences on appropriate land-use for those resources.
- A well-known approach to systems design that focuses on explicating different perspectives is Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). It has been used widely and successfully in many complicate problem situations.
- Nevertheless, both Indonesian researchers and practitioners were still unfamiliar with SSM. Moreover in the case of forest management, SSM was considered as complicated and time-consuming approach. However, it is not always true.

Methods

Reading the Context

- Agroforestry Block is part of Benakat Forest Zone for Special Purpose (research). It was de jure controlled by Palembang Forestry Research Institute (PFRI), as an agroforestry research site.
- Most of the area had been converted to rubber fields by villagers from two villages within and surrounding Agroforestry Block. Villagers did not allow outsiders, esp. forestry officers, to use this land.
- Above situation and the current manifest conflict between villagers with PT. MHP were the reasons both researchers and managers of PFRI to elude from their jobs to take care of Agroforestry Block (Fig. 1)

Figure 1. Research site situation at Muara Enim District, South Sumatra.

The Design of SSM Application

This action research process was initiated and mainly facilitated by researchers of PFRI. It was called as reflective facilitation. The first design of SSM for this research was based on the classical stage of Checkland' SSM (Fig. 2). The process, then, was adapted to the situation based on participants involvement as well their willingness and capabilities.

The participants or the actors of this research process were the persons who represent the interest of salient stakeholders and other relevants.
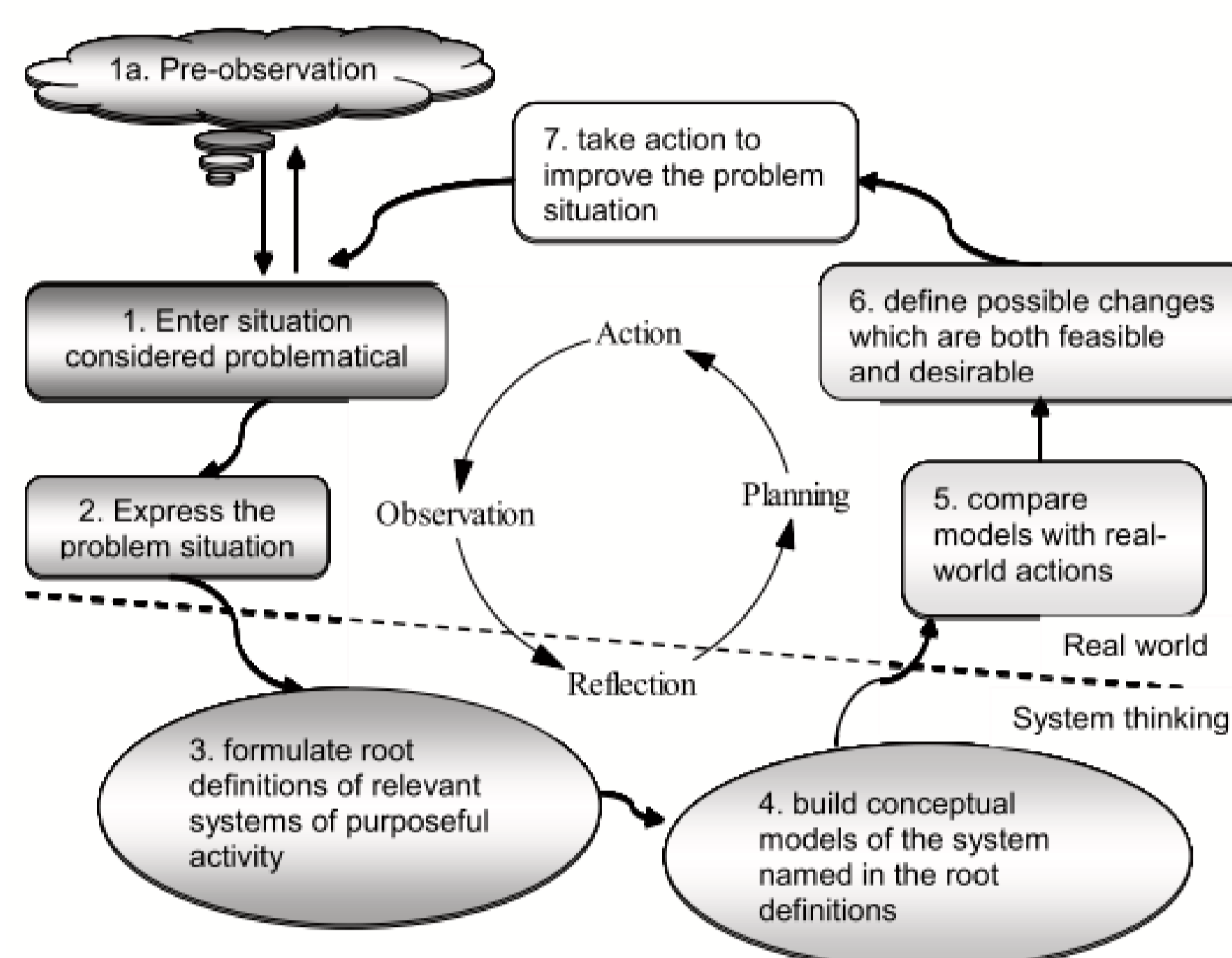

Figure 2. The basic design of SSM applied

Results

The salient process of SSM in this research.

• Understanding and expressing problem situation

It happened when all of individual different views on the existence of Agroforestry Block became appear, the discussion seemed to be chaotic, the actors intended to retreat from conference forum, but they were in satisfied in terms of their emotion after expelling some buried ideas in the front of their old opponent.

• Identification of possible solution on issue

Conflict led to the need of transformation

Current situation	Transformation (System that must be changed)	Future wish (HOPES)
Villagers were not comfort in the activity of cultivation within Agroforestry Block	Laws and Rules	Local communities should have comfort and serenity in cultivation of land as their right of citizenship
Agroforestry research could not be held at all	Research Program	Agroforestry Block must be a place of sustainable timber-based Agroforestry research
Most of villagers are still poor and have no other land to be cultivated	Farm management	Agroforestry Block as a Forest Zone must be useful for local villagers well being

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• System analysis on Agroforestry Block Management

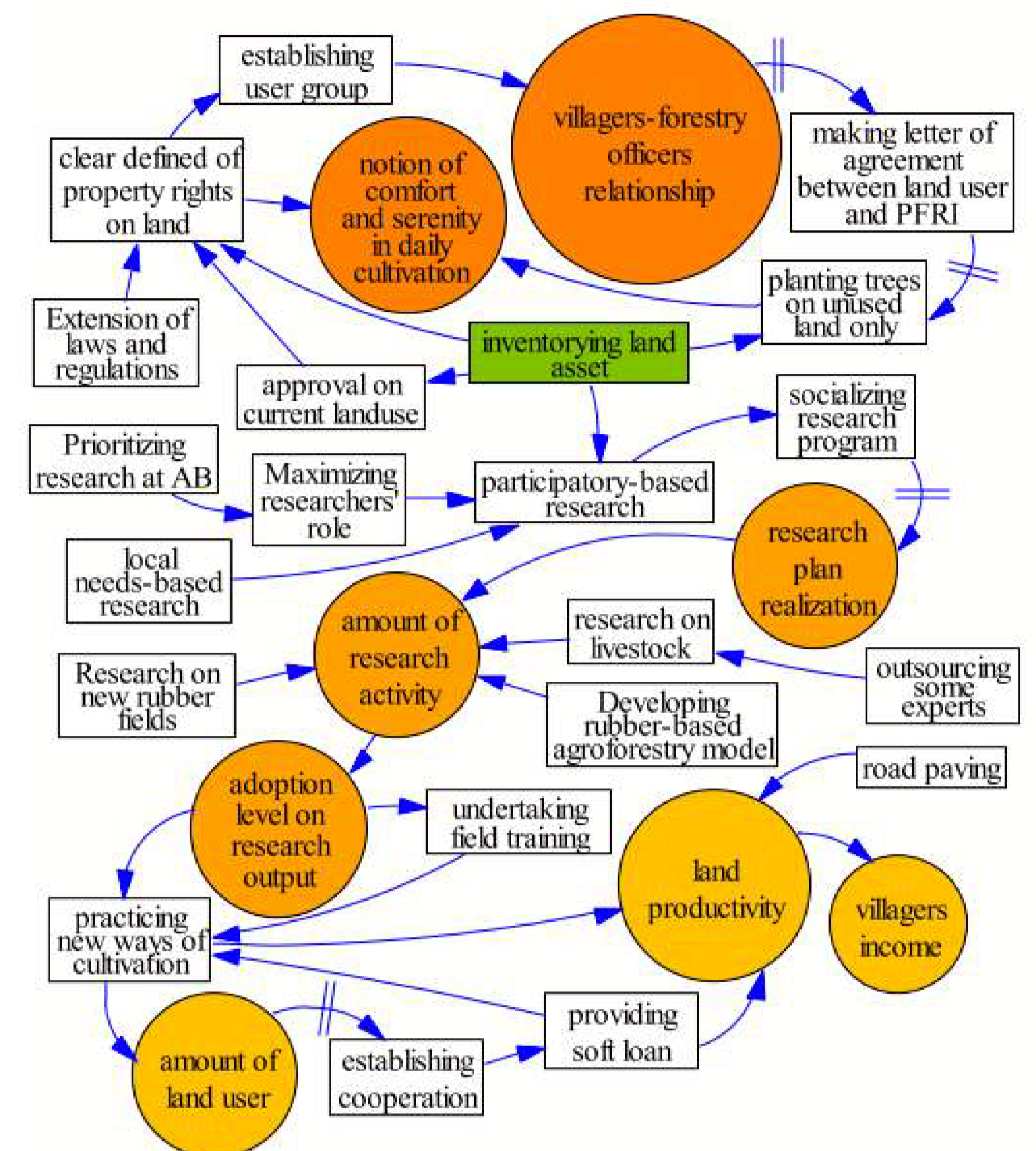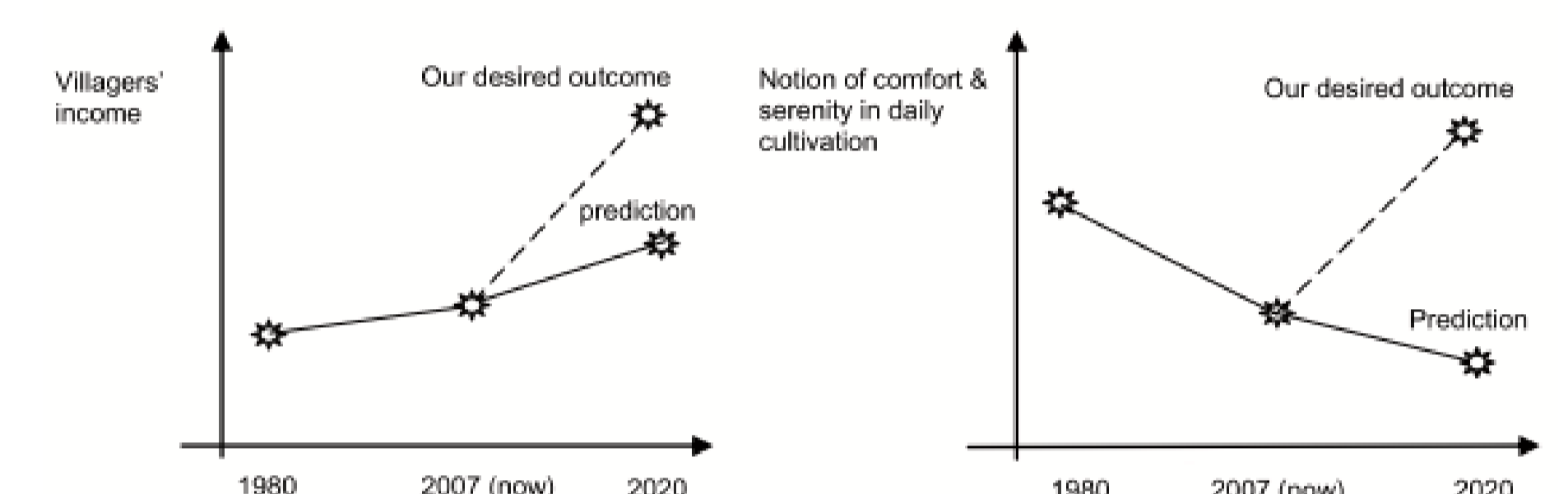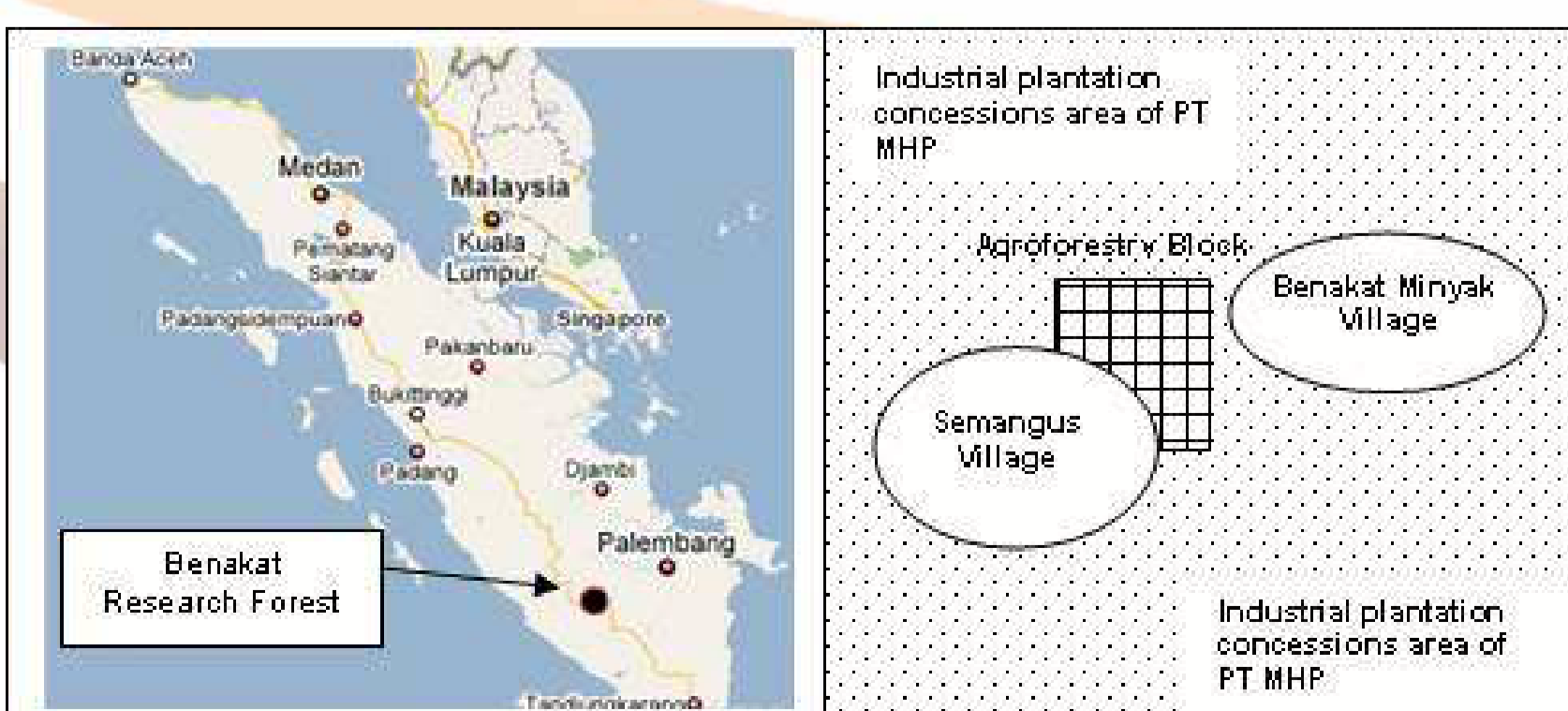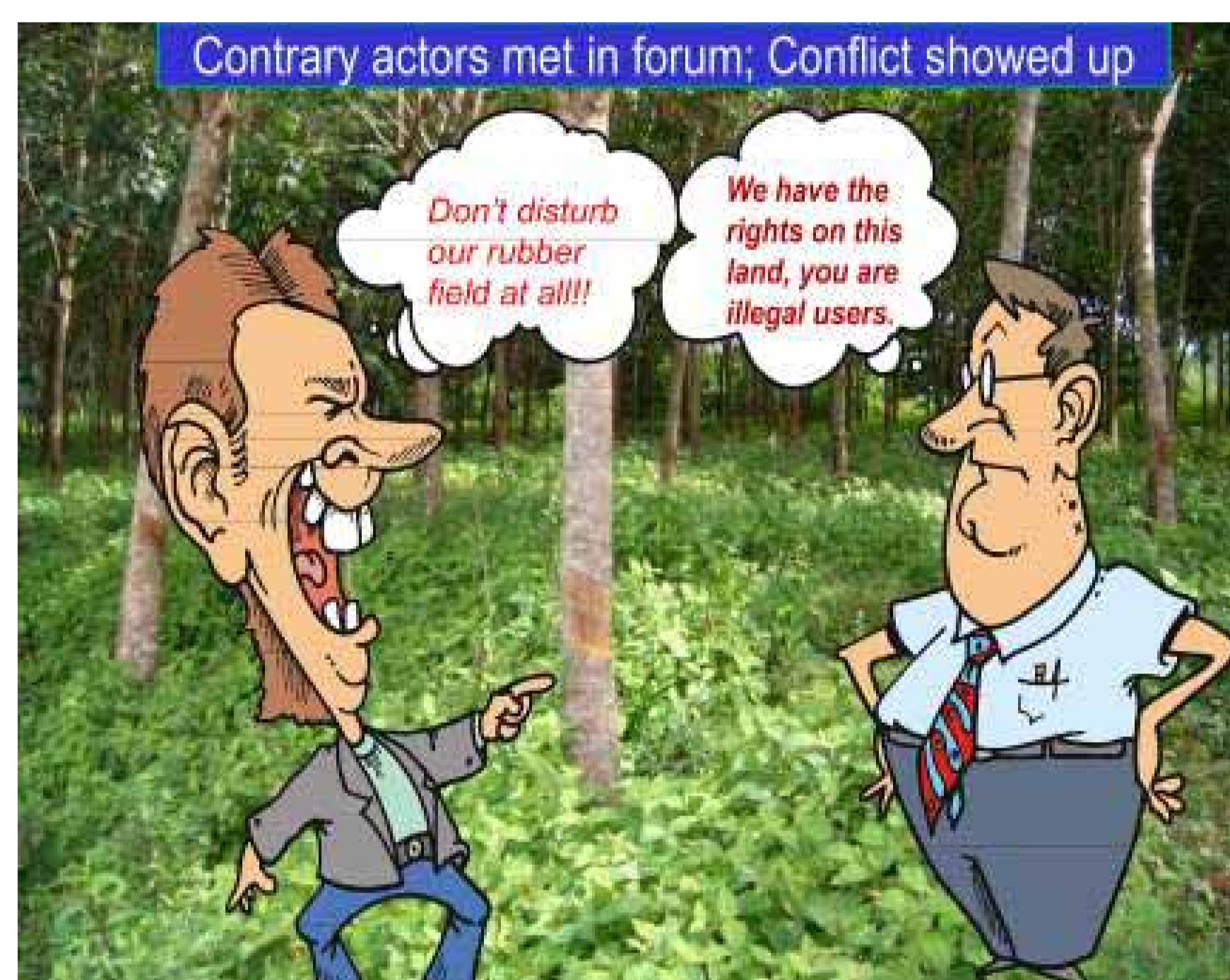Contrary Actors could arrange a conceptual model

Figure 3. Conceptual model for the future of Agroforestry Block Management

....And also done some simulation

• Choosing reliable scenario towards transformation

Actors decided to put on priority for the transformation of 'laws and rules'. Five proposed actions in 'laws and rules' conceptual model have been arranged in sequence step in direction to two transformation indicators. They were 1) inventorying land asset, 2) establishing user group, 3) making letter of agreement between land user and PFRI, 4) hold extension on forestry law and regulation, 5) planting trees on unused land.

• Taking action

Up to 2009, there were three steps of management for Agroforestry Block have being done, namely 1) inventorying land asset, 2) establishing user group, and 3) planting trees on unused land.

Conclusions

It's concluded that intervention phase of SSM which driven by reflective facilitation could enhance social learning among contrary actors, so that offered the action plan as new pathway to the future of Agroforestry Block.