



Can Decentralization and Localism Increase the Effectiveness of Indonesia's Forest Rehabilitation Effort? Special Case in Customary and Community-Owned Forest in Indonesia

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Abstract. Decentralization is often seen as an opportunity to bring a localism approach into practice. As Indonesia experiences rapid decentralization, there is hope that localism will help to improve forest management. However, the rapid process of this decentralization has not shown promising signs, especially given the capacity of local governments in embracing localism to promote a sustainable forest management. This paper presents three provincial case studies – East Kalimantan, West Java, and Central Java– that have been used to assess this issue. These provinces are selected based on important characteristics in forest management – population growth, percentage of poor people, forest areas and agricultural expansion as well as the type of forest utilization permit given to the province. From these varieties of provinces, the results show the need for local government to increase the support for the localism that has been growing in a decentralized environment. In addition, localism is proven to make a difference in forest management, especially in customary forest management in West Java and East Kalimantan. The fact that there are pockets of community to defend and carry out their version of localism is encouraging.

Keywords: Decentralization · Government Policy · Customary Forest · Community Forest · Localism · Deforestation

1 Introduction

Deforestation in Indonesia is an important issue not only for the country but also for the rest of the world. This is because, at the turn of this millennium, Indonesia had the third largest area of rainforest in the world [1]. At the same time, Indonesia is also the world's highest emitter of greenhouse gases as a result of this land use change from natural forest [1]. Population growth and agriculture-dependent economic activities have been seen as major factors in Indonesia's deforestation.

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Managing deforestation in Indonesia may become harder as the country decentralized in 2001. Studies found that decentralizing forest management has not been an easy task for many developing countries [2]. Furthermore, the decentralization process is getting harder due to improper decentralization plan, like Indonesia where these countries changed from one of the most administratively centralized countries in the world to one with a relatively high level of decentralization compared with other developing countries stated by World Bank on 2003. The Indonesian decentralization that was formalized by Indonesian Law No 22/1999 and Law No. 25/1999 where most of the authority was transferred to district-level governments, surpassing those at the provincial-level. In addition, the implementation of decentralization followed the recovery of Indonesia from the socio-economic crises in 1998 following the collapse of 32 years totalitarian Suharto regime. The drastic delegation of power may create autocracy at local government.

Local bureaucrats, businesses and communities may not be ready to work in a decentralized system. Therefore, in forestry, the transition of institutions has only been partially decentralized in order to smooth the process [1]. As the main authority for forest areas remained with the Ministry of Forestry, the authority of local governments to issue business permits in conservation forest area often created some conflict with the central government.

There is a more positive story that emerges from the implementation of decentralization. For example, there have been rapid and massive responses from some communities and traditional tribes to undertake sustainable forest management. The movement is driven by negative experiences related to the direct impact of deforestation [3]. This phenomenon has raised the question of whether there is an opportunity to reduce the rate of deforestation through decentralization as its implementation may bring localism to forest management.

This article aims to see whether decentralization in Indonesia has led to localism in forest management and hence, assess whether localism plays important role in forest management. Therefore, at this stage, we have not looked at the overall impact on the deforestation rate. We examine three different provinces to provide picture on how the local governments and communities may adapt to the new governance system and its impact on forest management. This analysis is an important contribution given the impact of decentralized governance on various environment management systems in various regions in Indonesia could be similar and therefore, can learn from this study.

2 Literature Review

Localism can be defined as the transfer of some or all decision-making, power, resources and functions from central to local communities [4]. In the literature, this definition is actually more specific to community localism that involves the devolution of rights and support directly to citizens in communities to allow them to engage in decisions and action [4]. This involves community leaders, voluntary groups, neighborhood residents and civic associations in the policy decisions [5].

More precisely localism is:

“An umbrella term which refers to the devolution of power and or function and or resources away from central control and towards front-line managers, local democratic

structure, local institutions and local communities, within agreed framework of minimum standards” [4].

Implementing localism approach could pose some benefits. The most apparent benefits are from a multi-level governance structure through the acknowledgement of local needs, local problems and local knowledge that could give clear guidance to bureaucrats and clear ownership to communities [6]. Without decentralization, there is almost impossible to expect the appropriate environment for the implementation of localism.

Localism arguably allows for the introduction of a new approach in governing local areas. As one of the indicators, local civil society organizations and market-related associations has been able to involve in the community activities as well as representation and the number of these civil and non-government organizations dramatically increased. Many developed countries have been implemented more independent local communities where local government surpasses central government authority to empower citizen initiatives stated by Rhodes on 1996 and business initiatives. Many countries implement localism in various degrees. In Indonesia, power is delegated even more to the lowest level of government, village, where the village head is allowed to exercise larger power without consultation with higher bureaucracy. China, as a big communist country uses decentralization framework to govern the country stated by Bardhan on 2002.

The implementation of decentralization that emphasized on localism perspective is not free from problem. One major problem in the implementation of decentralization is weak administrative capacity of the newly powerful local governments [7]. Participatory governance is also required not only “decentralized design principle” but also demand understanding on “cultural meaning and political identity” [5]. Unequal community capacity and weak democratic control on accountability structure may also hinder the implementation [4].

The localism approach may not be substantially affected by the same issues faced by the implementation of decentralization. This is because while discussion about the decentralization process has focused on the conduct of the government especially in terms of efficiency in service delivery and transparency as stated by Rodríguez-Pose and Ezcurra on 2011, the localism approach has put more focus on community involvement as a means of bottom-up governance. Therefore, discussions about the implementation of localism should focus on how to involve and engage the community in the decision-making that will affect them [6]. The lack of capacity in local policy-making institutions will certainly have an effect on localism, Dare [6] argues that the lack of understanding about the importance of community in localism by both policy makers and community members has resulted in any attempts to implement localism becoming empty promises.

One thing that could affect community involvement is how much the local government would welcome their input in reality. At certain points, community involvement can be seen as a hindrance to the local government especially when both formal elected representations at the legislative assembly and new system are often not ready in accommodating this new participation in the governance activity [8]. In UK, Taylor found that the politician become unsure about their role and felt threatened by the power of this new community representative model.

Localism in newly decentralized countries faces huge challenges as a result of changes in degree of devolution power between central and local government. For example, Indonesian central and provincial tiers of government have sought to reclaim some of the powers lost in 2001. Antlöv and Eko found that implementation of localism could be threatened by legitimacy and power loss of the village council as the village heads are no longer accountable to these councils through the operation of new decentralization regulation. Localism without community participation and village head support will be an empty promise. This example supported the fact that some countries implement only a limited portion of Hilderth's [9] required strategies of effective localism: managerial, representative and community.

So far, the discussion in this section shows how the localism approach, may have changed and been affected by the implementation of decentralization. The question is how these changes may affect the management of forests in Indonesia. Commenting on Dare [6], Evans et al. [10] argue that land and forest management will be far more efficient by implementing local wisdom or localism than by using the traditional top-down approach. However, comprehensive and institutional frameworks take tremendous time and effort to be effectively performed. Its implementation however, is not free from challenges, Lane and Corbett [11] found that localism can also jeopardize community-based environmental management success when too much emphasis is put on the democratic process, as the people who are directly affected by the changes in the forest can be the minority and may not become part of the local elite.

There has been an increasing trend of decentralization in forest management since 1980s [2, 12]. The main argument to support the decentralization in forest management is similar to the argument for the decentralization in public service deliveries, a more efficient, flexible, equitable, accountable, and participatory governance [12]. Nevertheless, the negative impact on local-forest-dependent-people is one main factor that has increasingly been used to argue the importance of decentralizing forest management [13]. Local communities' knowledge could greatly contribute to institutional setting of forest management [12].

The role of localism comes from the triangulation between business, community and government. The huge challenge in implementing localism to achieved effective decentralized forest governance took place due to domination of political and economic from the elites, and a weak rule of law in regards to forest management [14]. The indigenous local people who actually lived in the forest become a minority in the engagement process [11].

3 Research Methods

Given the challenge in implementing localism on forest management, this study will assess how the decentralization in Indonesia has led to localism in forest management by presenting two study cases. Dare [6] argues that the adaptive governance framework is useful in this assessment because it critically identifies the benefit and limitation in the process. Therefore, our evaluation is based on adaptive governance aspects presented by Folke et al. [15]. These aspects involve changing attitude toward shared vision, leadership development, evaluating and monitoring outcomes, creating communication and

cooperation as well as supporting flexible institutions and multilevel governance system. Other important aspects include whether the changes could build and feed knowledge to the stakeholder so they will be ready for any uncertainty. Dare [6] assess these aspects in four dimensions – social entrepreneurship and inclusion, economic entrepreneurship and inclusion, the quality of community governance and the individual capability. These dimensions are based on the assessable outcomes from implementing those adaptive governance aspects. From those four dimensions, we are not looking at individual capability as we lack any information regarding this dimension.

The research applied document analysis to look at what has happened to localism in forest management after the decentralization and apply “descriptive case studies” or “Illustrative case studies” where the use of documents such as newspaper articles and reports are common [16]. The selection of provinces is based on important characteristics in forest management identified by Geist and Lambin [17]. They argue population growth and agricultural expansion as the main factors of deforestation. The analysis on selected provinces in Indonesia also looked at the type of forest policy in a particular province – timber producing and non-timber producing – according to the permit given to the province. In addition, the analysis also considered the rate of deforestation in the area. The time frame for the study is from 2001 to 2015 to encompass the decentralization process.

The above criteria led to two provinces being identified to use as case studies for this work. West Java is non-timber-producing province with high population density and relatively high share of agricultural sector. We will then look at East Kalimantan a very contrast province as it is timber-producing province with low population density. The share of agricultural sector of East Kalimantan is below the two previous provinces but this is mainly due to the contribution of mining. Excluding mining sector, the share of agricultural sector in this province is actually similar to those in West Java.

4 Results and Discussion

East Kalimantan has the smallest population (3.5 million people) among the selected provinces, and the province covers a vast amount of land (19.5 million hectares). This province has substantial forest cover (13.4 million hectares) compared to the rest of the selected provinces, both as a proportion of total land area and in absolute terms. These features are typical of timber-producing provinces. The non-timber-producing provinces – West Java – has smaller land areas (each around 3.5 million hectares), less forest cover (650 thousand and 1 million hectares, respectively) and larger populations (40 and 32 million people, respectively). The high population brings both large local government budgets and large numbers of poor people. Another important characteristic is the change of the forest coverage. During 2006–2011, West Java manage to add around 0.3 thousand hectares of its forest, while East Kalimantan loss around 90 thousand hectares.

4.1 Province of West Java

Localism in forest management in West Java is supported the community localism through community-based forest management (CBFM) program. This CBFM is stated on government regulation No. 34/2002 on forests and forest management plan, the forest utilization and the forest region exertion. With this regulation the central government tries to ensure that the community would have a say in the management of the forest although the different schemes mean that there are different levels of involvement in different forest area. In 2015 the Ministry of Forestry set a target of 40 million hectares for development of CBFM through Village Forestry and Forest Management Units. Village forestry is mostly located in West Java province.

West Java is a non-timber-producing province and the forest management in this province is more affected by population growth and density. Another factor that may affect forest management in the province is the rapid growth in the industrial profile. The national statistic (2001–2015) showed that local government has been maintaining its largest portion (60%) of manufacturing industry in Indonesia. The high share of manufacturing industry in West Java can be traced back to the 1990s when four new industrial regions (Tangerang in 1993, Bekasi in 1996, Depok and Cilegon in 1999, and Banten in 2000) were established [18]. These cities have been developed to accommodate industry in the rapidly developing capital city, Jakarta. As the result, these four regions experience rapid industrial followed by population growth. Around 90% of automotive manufacturing in Indonesia is located in this province [19]. In 2012, for examples, around 80% land sales in this province were dominated by industrial zone sales [20]. The growth in manufacturing industry has pushed the government to release land not only for industrial purpose but also for the housing of the job seekers. Although limited, the availability of mining endowments has also been encouraging small-scale illegal mining activities that may affect forest managements [21].

All these activities provide a context for considering how difficult it may be for localism to play a role in reforestation efforts in this province. In this case, decentralization seems to increase the problem due to misuse power of the local authorities. Arman [21] found that local authorities use small-scale and medium-scale illegal mining for economic gain by imposing illegal levies. The local government also issued land use change permits to fulfil the demand for settlement, tourism and industrial areas, which are believed to have caused the rapid loss in forest cover [22]. In this case, decentralization may also prevent localism from taking place in forest management since it is the local government that denied customary forests their proper rights as stated by Thantowi et al.

There are positives stories coming out from the decentralization due to several efforts of local people to preserve the forest. Some have been successful in this province. Asdhiana [23] reported that Kampung Naga, a traditional village in the West Java Province has been able to conserve 2.5 hectares of forest without any assistance from government. This achievement is remarkable due to its location, which is located closely to the city. Many private and government institutions have been trying to convert these areas into timber (logging) industrial areas [23]. The decentralization of forest management could also bring massive economic, social, and ecological benefits to the local-forest dependent people. Community based forests management (CBFM) in province of West Java

has been provided those three benefits. Economically private forests provide benefits, the data in 2009 showed that the total area of 3.5 million hectares of community forests produced nearly 30 million m³ of timber logging [24]. This community forest also supports social activities in performing CBFM in West Java which are usually carried out in degraded and critical land [24]. Nevertheless, weak institutional capacity of the community-forest institutions has hampered CBFM contribution to reforestation effort. The lack of experience from the community and incompetence support from current government has resulted in artificial community involvement, but some changes has gradually occurred [24].

4.2 Province of East Kalimantan

The forest in this province has been exploited since 1971. Timber exploitation escalated rapidly between 1966 and 1971, providing massive job opportunities to local people. Government tried to limit forest exploitation by giving permit to limited institution. In 1967, the law on forestry “firmly established control of government over forest lands”. With this provision, local people’s access to timber for extraction was limited as the big timber industries owned the licenses. Therefore, limited numbers of local people received substantial benefits from the high demand for, and hence high price of, wood and mining products at the international level [25].

East Kalimantan is a province the highest deforestation. It has the highest government expenditure for forestry in Indonesia but still facing deforestation. As a timber producer province, East Kalimantan has a very imminent problem stemming from large proportion of industrial forest in Indonesia. Between 2001 and 2011, this province issued 69 large-scale forest utilization permits on average each year which represents the greatest number of tis kind of permits in Indonesia. Mining and agricultural activities pose another big challenge to forest management. This province has superior quality petroleum, iron ore, and gold, as well as the highest quality coal in Indonesia [26]. Varkkey [27] found that local government prefers to have large-scale industrial palm oil plantations as they argue the plantations restore degraded land as well as provides income for numbers of local people. The policy of transmigration also contributes to the problem in forest management. Up until 2011, 60,832 hectares of forest areas were released for transmigration areas stated by Ministry of Forestry. These transmigration areas were developed with a focus on agricultural expansion, especially palm oil plantation development [26]. The hazard should increase because some transmigration areas are built in forest protection areas. This situation has also been affected the composition of indigenous in the area as these people who have more interest in preserving the forest are the minority group. This is similar to the finding of Lane and Corbett [11] in Australia, a greater authority at a local level could not help the indigenous people to preserve forest. The indigenous people often lose their voice to manage their environment in a democratic system since they have become minority in their own land.

The further threat in East Kalimantan came from the need to use natural resources for individual benefit and local economic gain in East Kalimantan [28]. The obligation to be self-sufficient in revenue was found to be usually of great importance referred to by the local officials, and achieved through issuing small timber and mining concessions to increase timber levies, regardless of the spatial plan stated by Indonesian Corruption

Watch on 2004. Local officers issued massive and increasing number of small- and large-scale timber and mining concessions every year [25, 28].

Local people have tried to implement customary forest but many problems exist. A definitive and formal legal standing for customary forests was not exist. Zakiya [29] posted that the government has actually supported this effort since 2009 and there are some positive signs albeit limited. This support of local government is crucial. Warren and McCarthy [3] found that local government's rejection to support community effort could spoil the result. This finding related to land conservation in remote and steep areas by traditional tribes that could minimize logging and mining activities in many remote areas that were well hidden by the high forest density, with hilly and sloping area cover [3]. The conservation effort was found to be also affected by the long and wide rivers as the main means to transport legal and illegal timber and mining products [25].

Despite the many issues faced, East Kalimantan still show some success in managing the forest. One of the examples is Dayak tribes in six Wehea villages that declared an area of 300.000 hectares of customary forest in East Kutai, East Kalimantan Province on August 12, 2015 [30]. Sandi [30] stated that the management of customary forest has demanded the termination of new permits and withdrawal of current permits for all types of businesses. Another example is Komunitas Adat Muara Tae of Dayak people that has been awarded the Equator prize by the United Nations Development Program in 2015 [31]. The prize was awarded due to the success in conserving 4,000 hectare of customary forest from oil palm plantation, mining and logging activities. This international recognition has helped in framing more specific regulation on customary forests. Therefore, the success of indigenous sustainability land and forest management determined by cohesive kinship relationship, support of various stakeholders, clear property right as well as financial transparency and accountability.

The international and local networks also have helped localism implementation. For example, the Wehea tribe, established local and national network in term of funding, cooperation and acknowledgment. Djoka [32] found that the persistent conservation effort of 38,000-hectare forest was acknowledged internationally as Wehea protection forest and received the third place for the Schooner prize in 2007 from The Nature Conservancy (TNC). This prize contributed more to their conservation effort as this prize also came with funding to continue their conservation effort. Niel Makinuddin, Manager TNC-Orangutan Conservancy Service Program (OCSP) Kalimantan Program concluded that the prize was awarded based on proper cooperation between customary communities, local government and business organization [32].

The observations indicate that although the provinces facing various issues there are changing in more adaptive governance in forest management since the decentralization took place. The involvement of these local communities and "limited" government support is a sign that localism has been growing. Despite the negative interest of other stakeholders in utilizing the forest, decentralization has encouraged a localism approach in forest management.

One issue that has been dominant in hampering the application of localism to achieve better forest management in the case studies is the dominant aspect of managerial localism in form of local government has authority in managing and utilizing forests. Barr

et al. [1] noted that, despite decentralization, many timbers, mining and industrial plantation concessions have been preserved. The current forestry rehabilitation effort has failed to achieve its goal because local government objectives have still prioritized economic achievement and revenue over forest rehabilitation through the maximum use of logging concession [1]. This is especially true in East Kalimantan where the forest utilization has become the main source of economic growth. This type of forest governance is common in most tropical forest in developing countries [33]. The threat is widened by the existence of Illegal logging, mining and palm oil plantation development. This is the main misuse of power that causes massive deforestation in timber-producing provinces [25, 28]. Andersson et al. [12] pointed out that the transfer from central government could be the key. In particular, the transfer of the incentives for ‘reducing emissions from deforestation and for degradation’ (REDD) could be a viable option.

5 Conclusion and Future Scope

Localism, or prioritizing the local community in decision-making processes, has been seen as a more effective way to manage natural resources such as forests. There is some hope that the Indonesian decentralization process can deliver the implementation of this approach. Nevertheless, the case studies presented here show that there are challenges such as local government capacities; the financial needs of local government as well as local elites; and the interests of business groups in the forest areas. Most of the finding in these three case studies echo the finding generated from other developing countries such as in Central and South America although the extent of the challenge and the presumed benefits of early decentralization vary for different local populations. The discussion leads us to see different actors, powers and accountability could emerge as the essential elements of a framework that can improve the effectiveness of forest management in decentralization era.

The success of localism may be affected by level of social trust achieved. In our study cases, the effectiveness of sustainability in customary land and forests has been crucial in conservation efforts. Customary forest in East Kalimantan and West Java as a traditional and closed organization had stronger social capital, solid organization, and dependence on forest products that lead them to better forest management [34]. Therefore, securing property rights to customary or community land should increase the effectiveness of forest management. On the other sides, community-owned forest in West Java has shown less success due to its open and modern organizational type. Nevertheless, the existence of accountable heads of community that manage this customary or community-owned forest is a crucial factor to the success of localism [2].

The quality of network also determines the success of localism. The international network established by the head of customary forest in East Kalimantan as well as tourism booming in Kampung Naga, West Java have supported Folke [15] finding on importance of network. The tribe has received the Schooner prize in 2007 from TNC which contributed more to their conservation effort as this prize also came with funding to continue their conservation effort [32]. The proper collaboration between customary communities, local government and business also has helped the sustainability of localism implementation.

Some positive points can be elicited from these case studies. The positive finding support Dare [6] on dimensions of adaptive governance. The success community-owned forest and indigenous forest have done a process of in achieving social and economic entrepreneurship and inclusion. They have knowledge, skill, and resources and generate genuine creativity to ascertain the social-economy development. The quality of communication governance is shown in social accountability of leader of community-owned forest and indigenous forest on their communities and tribe member. Lastly, each member has shown big commitment to update skill, knowledge and resources that support the development.

The future success of this approach requires fundamental institutional change, such as government accountability and transparency, public participation in policy making and democratization. The finding from case studies where local community empowerment and the involvements of local civil society organizations and market-related associations plays important roles in land and forest conservation, take place in many countries [34].

Those facts show that localism is not an empty promise. The study cases should help the localism implementation in all developing countries. One of the key-important factors is high commitment from the leader that should lead his/her society member to do so. The commitment leads all members to update their knowledge, skill and resources to sustain the localism. Another important factor is network building. The international and local network building should bring not only legal advice but and funding to sustain the localism effort.

There are some notable limitations of this study. The study needs to further explore the experience from the stakeholder directly. By doing so, we would understand the motivation and the dynamic that was not captured by the written document or news. This is important to see whether the trend shown will be maintained in the future.

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