Participatory mapping of customary forest use to influence spatial planning

Participatory mapping of customary land and forest use has proven to be an effective tool to empower indigenous peoples in view of claiming access rights to natural resources. The tool also has the potential to influence local spatial planning. This case study describes the positive and negative lessons learned from participatory mapping of forest use by Dayak people in Sekadau District, West Kalimantan, Indonesia.

PRINCIPAL ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED
JKPP (Indonesian Community Mapping Network), PPSDAK (Empowerment of Community-based Natural Resource Management), GRPK (People Movement on Village Empowerment), Sawit Watch, Oxfam Novib

Location
Sekadau District, West Kalimantan, Indonesia

Timeline of the case
2006-2013

TARGET AUDIENCE
Civil society organisations representing Indigenous Peoples; governmental bodies working with Indigenous Peoples; organisations involved in (participatory) mapping or spatial planning

KEYWORDS
Forestry, indigenous peoples, land rights, legal empowerment, territories
Good practices
towards making land governance more people-centred

This case study is part of the ILC’s Database of Good Practices, an initiative that documents and systematises ILC members and partners’ experience in promoting people-centred land governance, as defined in the Antigua Declaration of the ILC Assembly of Members. Further information at www.landcoalition.org/news/antigua-declaration-ilc-members.

This case study supports people-centred land governance as it contributes to:

- Commitment 3: Recognise and protect the diverse tenure and production systems upon which people’s livelihoods depend
- Commitment 5: Respect and protect the inherent land and territorial rights of indigenous peoples
- Commitment 7: Ensure that processes of decision-making over land are inclusive
- Commitment 9: Prevent and remedy land grabbing

Case description

Background and issues
In West Kalimantan, Indonesia, large tracts of forest have been converted into palm oil plantations, in particular after the timber boom ended in early 1990s. The creation of these palm oil plantations is only possible because governmental spatial planning does not address the interests and needs of the indigenous populations in a systematic manner.

Since Indonesia started decentralising its policy making in 1999, the socioeconomic and spatial planning is also decentralised (according Law No. 25/2004 for socioeconomic planning and Law No. 26/2007 for spatial planning). The development efforts of Indonesia are epitomised in these plans. One of the purposes of decentralised planning is to create favourable conditions for private investments. In the case of West Kalimantan investments are particularly directed to palm oil plantations.

The principal socioeconomic and spatial planning happens at national level (National Long-Term Development Plan RPJPN, National Spatial Plan RTRWN), provincial level (Provincial Spatial Plan RTRWP), district level (District Spatial Plan RTRWK), sub-district level, and village level – the higher plans guiding the lower ones. Currently, community participation in socioeconomic and spatial planning is marginal at all levels, including the village, sub district, and district levels. This weak participation is the result of: (1) a weak implementation of Law No.26/2007 on the decentralisation of Spatial Planning, (2) the overwhelming power of international investors, (3) lack of dialogue among stakeholders at the district and provincial level, (4) the lack of a formal mechanism that allows the participation of communities in spatial planning.
A project to improve community participation in spatial planning was set up by the Indonesian Community Mapping Network (JKPP) in the Sekadau District, a newly created district in the West Kalimantan province. Sekadau is predominantly inhabited by indigenous Dayak people. The Dayak control and manage their land and forests as common property, according a customary tenure system. Since their customary use of land and forests is not protected by formal titles, their customary tenure system is under threat. To the eyes of governments their lands result to be “idle” and, in the process of spatial planning, governments easily designate their lands and forests to commercial activities such as logging, plantations or mining.

Solution
Since 1996, JKPP has applied the technique of participatory mapping to make explicit the customary use of land and forest by local communities and to support their claims for recognition of this customary use. Participatory mapping is a process in which members of a community depict on a scaled map what they collectively perceive as their territory and what the salient physical, natural, and socio-cultural features of their territory are (IFAD, 2009). Both the process (participatory mapping) and the output (community map) are part of the solution. The participatory mapping process helps to raise the local communities’ awareness of their rights to natural resource use and their awareness of the power relations that surround these resources. The process fosters collaboration within the community and with the government. Ideally, the participatory mapping evolves into a participatory development planning process. The community maps themselves can inform the local and national government and its spatial planning.

In the present case study, JKPP used participatory mapping for the first time at sub-district level, in order to inform the formulation of a consolidated spatial and socioeconomic plan at sub-district level and to influence the spatial planning at district level.

Activities
The activities implemented by JKPP to influence the spatial planning in the Sekadau District followed a 4-step scheme:

A. Participatory mapping in 11 villages in the Nanga Mahap Sub-district
   » Socialization with the community through village gatherings; explanation of the technicalities and purpose of participatory mapping.
   » Formal letter of request from the community to ask for training and support in the mapping.
   » Planning of the participatory mapping: who will engage with this process, time schedule of the process, what the communities will contribute in terms of food, money and logistics.
   » Preparation to the mapping with trainings for spatial and stakeholder mapping.
   » The participatory mapping itself: collection of spatial data and community knowledge about the environment; sketching a scaled map; put geomorphological, natural and socio-cultural data on the scaled map.
   » Field survey to verify and correct the maps; community clearance of the maps and agreement on boundaries.
In some cases the customary rules (Adat\(^1\)) regarding natural resource use are made explicit and documented; this documentation not only serves to make the rules enforceable but above all to record the rules for the younger generations.

B. Consolidation of the participatory mapping at the sub-district and district level

Focus group discussion with the Sekadau District Administration, Nanga Mahap Sub-district Administration and the local communities, in order to raise the awareness of the District Administration, explain the mapping and its link with land use planning, and discuss how the participatory mapping project can be beneficial to the government, communities and other stakeholders.

Analysis of the spatial planning policy of Sekadau District (Rencana Tata Ruang Wilayah Kab. Sekadau - RTRWK), in order to understand the spatial planning in the Nanga Mahap Sub-district and its inconsistencies with the preliminary community maps created by the communities of the Nanga Mahap Sub-district. The guiding questions of the analysis are: how can the communities respond to the district spatial planning policy; how can the community spatial planning provide input to the district spatial policy?

Workshop on Spatial Planning in Nanga Mahap sub-district, with the involvement of village delegations (village government, Adat leader, women), the district government and officials from the national government.

C. Pushing the participatory process a step further: formulation of socioeconomic and spatial plans in the 11 villages, consolidation of the plans at sub-district level

Formulation of the socioeconomic and spatial plans in the 11 villages involved in the project, including an analysis of the relations and interdependencies between villages regarding infrastructure use, land use, and access to natural resources.

Analysis of the socioeconomic and spatial plans by an expert team, regarding their physical soundness (land, water, forest, climate, geology) and socioeconomic consistency (culture, livelihood, customary rules, tenure).

Presentation and discussion of a first complete draft of the consolidated Spatial Plan of the Nanga Mahap Sub-district with delegations from all involved villages, the sub-district government, the expert team and a facilitator. Consultation at village level regarding the first draft of the Spatial Plan of Nanga Mahap Sub-district.

Public consultation on the final draft of the Spatial Plan of Nanga Mahap Sub-district.

Endorsement of the Spatial Plan of Nanga Mahap Sub-district by the village communities and the Sub-district government.

D. Submission and promotion of the sub-district Spatial Plan

Public launch and submission of the Spatial Plan for the Nanga Mahap Sub-district (including participatory maps) to the Sekadau District government.

Discussion of the Spatial Plan in the District Parliament, with the District Government, in some of the other sub-districts, with others NGOs, and with the private sector.

Dissemination of the Spatial Plan for the Nanga Mahap Sub-district, including in local newspapers, on radio, in the JKPP bulletin (Kabar JKPP), and on posters.

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\(^1\) The concept Adat refers to the set of cultural norms, values, customs and practices, typical of an ethnic group, that regulate the interactions in the social, political and economic spheres of the group. Adat also covers the rules that govern access to and use of natural resources.
Importance of the case for people-centred land governance (PCLG)
The participatory mapping of customary land and forest use has proven to be an effective tool to:
» increase community awareness of the own rights regarding natural resources and of regional development and planning processes;
» empower local communities to participate meaningfully in spatial planning;
» inform the local government on the customary tenure of land and forests;
» foster a culture of collaboration between stakeholders.

Achievements

Baseline (before JKPP engaged with communities in Sekadau District)
Before JKPP started working in villages in the Nanga Mahap Sub-district, the villages had maps but no spatial plans nor socioeconomic planning. JKPP's members in Sekadau District and West Kalimantan had no experience in developing village or sub-district plans. There was no involvement of communities in the spatial planning at sub-district, district and province level. The use of natural resources by the Dayak was completely ignored in spatial planning at district and higher levels and the District Spatial Plans allowed for the creation of palm oil plantations at the expense of the local communities.

Changes observed (in the Sekadau District)
In terms of empowerment of the Dayak people:
» the community has a deeper understanding of their environment and their use of natural resources;
» the community has an increased awareness of their own rights regarding natural resources and of regional development and spatial planning processes;
» the community got a hands-on experience that participatory maps can function as a tool to support their rights and to communicate land-related information to the government
» the process of participatory mapping, when different stakeholders participate, facilitates networking with local and national institutions.

In terms of formal recognition of indigenous territories:
» the district government of Sekadau accepted the maps, used them to resolve village boundary conflicts and relied on them to fix the official boundaries of the villages;
» the District Forest Agency of the Sekadau District, however, has not yet accepted the maps, due to a different understanding of forest area with respect to the communities' understanding.
» the Sekadau District Forest Agency started collaborating with local communities in Nanga Mahap for the management of Village Forest (Hutan Desa) and Community Forest (Hutan Kemasyarakatan), in a bid to delegate forest management to the communities.
» the maps have not been integrated as such into the Spatial Plan Policies (RTRW) of Sekadau District, but the maps initiated the a wider discussion and increased the awareness that support for similar projects/models is needed in other sub districts.

For comments regarding changes at the national level, see section 4.4 “Follow up”.

Evidence
The Sekadau District Government has allocated a budget for the project for the resolution of village boundaries in Nanga Mahap Sub-district. This project is currently being implemented (end 2013) by the Nanga Mahap Sub-district Government.
Lessons learned

Lessons for civil society

JKPP identified the following positive lessons:

» community mapping lays an effective basis for community spatial planning;
» the community mapping process helps communities to make explicit local knowledge, history, and traditional sets of rules and arrangements for natural resource management;
» participatory maps convey a message to the local and national governments that the indigenous communities desire to engage in local planning processes; the maps are used as a negotiation tool;
» participatory maps help the local government to understand the extent and use of community lands;
» the mapping process increases the communities’ awareness of their rights over regional land and natural resources;
» the mapping process is helpful in networking the community with local and national institutions;
» there is no need to push the government to adopt participatory mapping as methodology for the creation of official maps.

JKPP encountered the following challenges:

» there is a risk that only village elites are really involved in the process;
» there is a risk that the mapping process or the map reveals or exacerbates internal conflict in the village;
» the map often becomes an objective in itself, rather than a tool for empowerment.

Lessons for future community mapping initiatives (according to JKPP):

» maintain participatory mapping as a tool for awareness raising, empowerment, and influencing of spatial planning at district/province level – do not consider the participatory mapping as a goal in itself;
» the community mapping process has to evolve into a community planning process, in order to capture the village’s development needs and the community’s vision on natural resource use.

Lessons for policy makers

Conflicts related to land and forest use are often caused by the disregard of customary tenure rights even in countries where such rights are implicitly or explicitly recognised by the national legislation or by constitutional court rulings. The conflicts are then the result of the communities’ lack of awareness of their rights, the communities’ lack of capacity to claim their rights, the local administrations’ lack of capacities and resources to correctly implement the law, or the lack of information regarding the customary use of land and forest by indigenous communities. Participatory mapping is a process that helps to address some of these issues.
Follow-up (beyond Sekadau)

International REDD and REDD+ initiatives, and in particular the signature of a REDD+ agreement between the government of Norway and the government of Indonesia in 2010, has increased the attention in Indonesia to the claims of indigenous peoples over communal forest areas.

On 14 November 2012 the Indigenous Peoples’ Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN) and JKPP officially handed over 265 ancestral domain maps, registered in the Ancestral Domain Registration Agency (BRWA) and covering 2,402,222ha, to the Indonesia’s Geospatial Information Agency (BIG) and Presidential Delivery Unit for Supervision and Control of Development (UKP4) in the framework of the One Map programme (DTE, 2012). More maps are coming, as at the time of writing (end 2013) already 474 maps, covering 4,264,845ha, have been produced.

Although community maps have not yet officially been integrated in Spatial Plans, they are already influencing the discussions on national forest policies, as they are the evidence of indigenous peoples’ claims over their territory. Their claims have recently been backed by Constitutional Court ruling 45/2011, which removes the state’s authority to unilaterally establish forest status, and Constitutional Court decision 35/2012, which confirms the existence of indigenous-owned customary forest (“Adat forest”).

The central government, through the Geospatial Information Agency (BIG), is preparing (at the time of writing, end 2013) a Standard Operational Procedure (SOP) for participatory mapping. SOP is set to guide the government’s provision of topographical maps and Landsat imagery maps to communities for the purpose of participatory mapping.

Challenges

In 2006-2007 it was still a major challenge to receive some recognition that participatory mapping is useful, as the national and district governments’ regard of community maps was very low. Thanks to constructive dialogues, in which the importance of participatory mapping was demonstrated, the maps received the deserved attention from the local government. Since 2012 they also receive attention from the national government, creating a window of opportunity for indigenous peoples to show their community maps at national level. The major challenge today is to upscale and accelerate participatory mapping, in order to take full advantage of this national window of opportunity.

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REDD stands for “Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation”. REDD+ extends REDD with sustainable forest management, conservation of forests, and enhancement of carbon sinks. The REDD and REDD+ acronyms usually refer to projects that are designed to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases from deforestation and forest degradation, usually through the creation of market and financial incentives, in an attempt to slow down global climate change.
Supporting material

References and further reading
DTE (Down to Earth Indonesia) (2012). Indonesia’s ‘One Map Policy’.

Photos, videos

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The International Land Coalition (ILC) is a global alliance of civil society and intergovernmental organisations working together to promote secure and equitable access to and control over land for poor women and men through advocacy, dialogue and capacity building.
The opinions expressed in this brief are those of the authors and do not necessarily constitute an official position of the International Land Coalition, nor of its members or donors.
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