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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

Struggle Over the Diminishing Teak Forest of Java: The People, the State and the Forest

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Abstract

In Indonesia, for more than 30 years the authority over state owned teak forests on Java Island has been granted to State Forest Corporation amid the fact that the state forests are surrounded by communities highly dependent on forest land for their livelihood. Therefore the struggle over teak forest utilisation between communities and the state has long been documented with different patterns and intensities. This research analyses the extent and the causal pathways along which the practices of teak forest management in Java have undergone changes after reformation era. The research design builds on extensive review of policy and written documents and two major phases of fieldwork in two selected districts in Central Java. The expert interview was used to explore four dimensions of Policy Arrangement Approach (actors, rules, power and discourses) in the Collaborative Forest Management Programme (CFMP), which is seen as the only existing mechanism for the community to access the state owned teak forest. This study reveals that although actors hold different perceptions concerning the programme, there have been changes in the power-relation structure between the State Forest Corporation and communities through the new mode of CFMP. Interestingly, many of the actual changes are taking place through more informal mechanisms rather than formal ones. The study shows that informal rules and power of the community may overrule the formal ones of the state, and the reformation era had a role as trigger and stimulant to that situation. In conclusion, this research shows that amid general view of the 'status quo' situation of Java's forest management after reformation era, institutional changes have actually taken place and have had an impact on the day-to-day teak forest management practices.

Keywords: Collaborative forest management, forest community, institution, Java, policy arrangement approach