PERSPECTIVES ON FOREST MANAGEMENT

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Abstract: Community forestry offers many perspectives on the forest management system. It has become an avenue for special collaboration between state, scientific communities, social enterprises, businesses, and local communities, as well as a means of promoting practical solutions in forest conservation. Furthermore, it becomes an arena where forest people can participate in forest conservation projects, improve their livelihoods and manage forest projects via their own traditional knowledge. Inspired by its unique features, the researcher carried out a qualitative research study of community forestry with the hope of exploring its possibilities in the South East Pahang Peat Swamp Forest (SEPPSF). In this regard, the researcher employed research methods that consisted of interviews, focus group discussions and field observations. The interviewees were asked to reflect on current forest management practices in SEPPSF. Other participants included government officials, social activists and researchers. This study found that the SEPPSF offers a unique opportunity for collaborative forest care. To achieve this vision, however, there is a need to resuscitate the following three important elements of community forestry in SEPPSF: community empowerment in forest care; community land security; and community consultation for forest related activities. In addition, this study recommends two contemporary models to prompt effective forest governance: a short-term community forestry project in SEPPSF and a long-term community forestry project for the Orang Asli. It is anticipated that this paper will provide a fresh perspective on collaborative forest management. Furthermore, it is hoped that its findings parallel increasing calls for holistically sustainable forest management in Malaysia.

Keywords: Community Forestry, Qualitative Research Study, Orang Asli Jakun, SEPPSF. Forest Conservation

Introduction

As is commonly known, changes in forest governance have steadily passed through several phases, from a focus on state control with state initiated forest conservation activities, to community-led forest management, with each being transition built for sustainable forest management.¹ One glamourous term

that has dominated the notion of sustainable forest management is community forestry.² While to some extent the centralised state-based forest system seems to have created social and environmental problems, community forestry is often regarded as a fair and equitable system for forest care.³ Because community forestry has permitted indigenous people to manage forest resources by incorporating traditional forest knowledge, this practice has been seen by many tropical countries as socially and environmentally sustainable.⁴

In the earliest studies on the role of the state in forest management, researchers determined that inefficient outcomes resulted from changes in forest use, unbridled growth of land expansion and unabated relocation of forest communities. These phenomena evidently gave negative images of the environment and people's livelihoods. They invited attention from academia, civil rights movements, and international donors to answer this question: why did the state exclude the indigenous people from forest management? Accumulated studies on traditional forest systems have found that the elimination of the innovations and practices of indigenous people and local communities is both naive and inappropriate.⁵ Although the state forest system created boundaries to protect the forest from encroachment,⁶ it was essentially a process designed by higher decision makers, with very little consideration of the forest communities' traditional roles in forest care.⁷

In reaction to the drawbacks of the state forest model, recent studies have encouraged an appreciation of the livelihoods of indigenous people and the promise they hold for biodiversity protection. Such an attitude is very fundamental for shifting the rhetoric away from centralised solutions to deforestation. It is a pivotal element in moving towards an indigenous people forest system embodying community empowerment in forest care and community consultation for forest conservation projects. By highlighting the logic of biodiversity protection and the conditions that already have made its trial a success, past studies have presented an avenue for other efforts to rekindle contemporary interest in community forestry.

This study, however, argues that the extent to which past studies can contribute to today's need for sustainable forest management is barely sufficient. This is for three reasons. Firstly, in the past, the contention was provoked by a notion that there was a knowledge gap between forest people and the higher authorities. Secondly, an assumption existed that such a gap was common sense and could not be rectified. Thirdly, there was too much cynicism ridiculing the traditional forest system, local communities' experiences with climate change, their methods of surviving harsh environments, and their traditions and beliefs. While there is some truth to the first and second assumptions, the third requires a thorough examination of traditional forest knowledge. John Scot attested to

this truth when he said that "There is today a growing appreciation of the value of traditional knowledge. It is valuable not only to those who depend on it in their daily lives, but also to modern industry and agriculture. Many widely used products [including] medicines, health products and cosmetics, are derived from traditional knowledge." To achieve this goal, there is a need to bridge the gap between the state, scientific communities, social enterprises, businesses and the indigenous people. It is under this ambitious call to integrate these stakeholders in the forest that this study was carried out. By explicating local communities' participation in forest care, "I forest management" and forest-related activities, this study hopes to reduce acrimonious attitudes towards forest people.

To achieve this objective, the researcher opted for a qualitative research methods with the goal of unravelling Orang Asli thoughts, ¹³ reflections and insights on the current forest management system in South East Pahang Peat Swamp Forest (SEPPSF). ¹⁴ In balancing their views, and so as to avoid bias, the researcher carefully augmented their thoughts with those of government officials, academics and social activists regarding indigenous participation in forest care. ¹⁵ For the readers to have a clear sense of the direction of this study, it is wise to note that, because of the complex formulation of the legal framework recognizing local community rights in forest management, cumbersome legal discussions have been omitted from this study. Extensive studies have by now established a popular fact: that the most successful countries in pioneering community forestry took stages of trial and error before they processed the legal framework. ¹⁶

This paper begins with the insights that seem paramount in the surge of indigenous people's interests for community forestry in SEPPSF. In the first section, there are detailed coverage of interviews with the Orang Asli communities, with the intention of unveiling their thoughts about community forestry. The next section describes how advocates have made their case for implementing those thoughts, while the third section elaborates more on the possibilities for community forestry in SEPPSF. This paper concludes with several recommendations for engaging indigenous peoples more productively. By placing the emphasis of the study on forest communities' experiences in SEPPSF, this paper aims to move beyond the rhetorical question of who owns the forest to the practical ones: how is it possible to build community forestry within the current state forest management system? and how is it possible to form a novel partnership between the Orang Asli communities, the state and the scientific community?

The Current Forest Management System in SEPPSF

The absence of an institutional arrangement for a collaborative forest system

forms the capstone of today's popular forest policy. Since the 70s, the higher authorities have asserted their dominance in forest care – they own the land – thereby privileging the state, its subordinates and its departments. In numerous conversations with the indigenous people, the researcher observed a common theme centred around the absence of collaboration between the state and the Orang Asli. This situation discloses the main reason why community forestry has been excluded from the discourse about forest conservation. To change this situation, the Orang Asli advised the authorities and their subsidiaries to recognise them as stakeholders in the forest, in order to develop a genuine collaboration with local people. Many Orang Asli believe that community forestry will improve if the authorities empower forest people in forest related affairs. The following statements highlight this significance:

"Empowering Orang Asli in forest conservation project means they are able to speak up and tell their narratives about resource conservation. When Orang Asli people are able to tell local versions of environmental practices to outsiders who may not be very well informed on local conservation practices, we can utilise their forest conservation ethics, in which their ancestors have bestowed upon them for many generations. Their knowledge of forest resources is crucial to the creation of community based forest conservation projects."

"Community empowerment will bring cooperation to stakeholders in the forest, and entities who have access to the market. It recognises forest communities' aspiration, ideas, needs and culture. It forces the state, its subsidiaries, and departments to foster relationship with local communities."

"Genuine empowerment goes beyond mutual relationship between authority, local communities and family circles. It means the communities have the abilities to tell narratives about forest, so others understand why rich forest covers offer positive impact on local livelihood."

"In forest conservation, people have to foster relationships with local communities. Based on good-will, they will need to understand everything that are essentials to local communities and their forest landscape." ¹⁷

These comments emphasise Orang Asli participation in forest care. Hence, forest management systems that value forest community participation need to

be grounded in local institutions, social structures and traditions. They have to perform substantive measures by empowering local communities in deciding the final output of forest conservation activities.

Because this last point fits in admirably with the question of how community forestry should start, it precipitated a discussion about community consultation for a better community forestry project in SEPPSF. The temper of the discussion around this issue is crystalised by the following insights:

"If you want to do a project with the community, you must consult the community, you have to shell out plans with the community, and listen to the community's opinions. Consultation is not an imposed thinking. It is not about giving option to local communities: either you accept or you don't accept this project. You cannot bring project to community and tell them that and force them to accept your project. This is not a sound project. You have to give your heart to the project."

"I have participated in community forestry projects with local communities in rural Malaysia. It is called community kampong (village) program. I see many project developers did not consult local people and eventually detached congruent elements in local environment (examples: cultural belief, environmental condition). You cannot do community forestry project with a manner that goes like this: I am the management side, I'm coming and telling the locals what to do. This is wrong attitude because you did not ask exactly what the locals really want before you venture into your work."

"Ask the people what they want to do with the intention to get their opinions. Discuss the project with local communities. Project management, international agencies, foresters, social scientist and related agencies must discuss with local community. Old generation in the communities should not be seen as outsiders. They should be the key participant in decision making processes. External agencies have to take responsibility to train their staff in station. Staffs have to listen to locals' voices. This way the forest conservation program starts at local levels and accedes to locals' needs."

"When you do community project, first and fundamentally you should ask the community what they really want. If you ignore this method, you will never get full cooperation from the locals. If you didn't think through the project in this manner, you have to prepare for the worst of not getting full cooperation from local people. Lack of cooperation is an obstacle

to the continuity and sustainability of community project. You cannot design a project between top level management among the authority, and proceed with the project without the full participation of local people."¹⁸

Given these comments, community consultation is required in order to create a sound community forestry project. A clear correlation exists between consultation and establishing a sustainable development agenda.

Views on Indigenious Participation in Forest Care

Thus far in this study, a number of consistencies have been apparent in Orang Asli thought about community forestry and which, collectively, earmark it as a possibility in SEPPSF. Community forestry and the role of indigenous people therein, as the above insights from the Orang Asli suggest, must involve the introduction of community empowerment and community consultation in forest care. This highlights the importance of the Orang Asli in local institutional arrangements for forest care. However, there is a danger that their thoughts might only be superficially persuasive, since the issues of forest management are often seen differently through indigenous as compared to state eyes. Furthermore, continuous state-indigenous polemics seem to have gained the status of common sense in Malaysia - unequivocally depicting a protracted and unfriendly relationship. 19 At the same time, talk about a collaborative forest system has been superseded by mundane sentiments like "forest care is the responsibility of the state," or by acrimonious attitudes directed toward the Orang Asli, such as "There is no point talking about it because the Orang Asli have already been detached from the forest," all of which are exacerbated by the following phrases:

"They used to collect rattan in the forest. They used to go to the forest for two or three months and then they came back. However, after the forest was cut down and circumstances changed, some Orang Asli learn how to adapt by taking up driving license, they drive truck, they drive school bus. Eventually they left their old job as a rattan collector."

"The Orang Asli people are not fully dependent on the forest for their livelihood. Although some are still depending on it, the number is getting lesser. This is because of government schemes for local communities. For example, the government is helping the local communities through the profit from oil palm. Each family gets a dividend. In this manner, people have no problem if the government takes the land and change our living landscape as long as their action helps them."²⁰

While some of the attributes and circumstances apparent in the previous

comments are realities, the researcher's several other discussions with government officials appear to have found a novel idea about the state-indigenous people relationship. In this regard, one respondent said:

"The good thing about discussing community forestry in Malaysia is that the state does not preclude forest communities from utilising the resources in the forest. The state and its associate subsidiaries do not preclude local communities' right to access the forest. Forest communities are given the right to utilise forest products for their livelihoods "21"

Another sanguine comment about indigenous people and their role in the forest crept in, favouring collaborative forest care: "Community forestry is possible in SEPPSF. It will give local communities the right to manage forest, the right to design forest conservation project, and the right to determine the best conservation practice for their environment." These comments reveal that the thick layers surrounding past forest conservation discussions have been replaced by common ideas between the indigenous people and government officials. This mutual understanding is a first step towards a greater partnership in the future.

To advance this partnership, the majority of respondents highlighted the need to prioritise land security for indigenous people and, presumably, for the successful arrangement of community forestry. Thereby, they demonstrated that the idea of community forestry has progressed little beyond community empowerment in forest care. In this regard, some respondents persuasively described the ideal structure of community forestry in the following ways:

"I assumed that community forestry project is a mixture of local communities' participation in forest conservation activities, land security and the benefits from community-based forest conservation project. The question of who benefits from conservation project has close connection to who owns the land. If the land is owned by the landlords, he can reap benefits from leasing out his land to others. If the local communities own the land, they are the ones going to plant, harvest, sell what they planted to the market, and they eventually the ones getting profits from their efforts."

"Community forestry should be seen in the light of its fundamental principle and that is you recognise people rights to customary lands, that they have their own forest management system or group of forest users who can utilise the forest, manage the forest and protect the forest. If there is no recognition of right, there will be no formalisation of tenure security, there will never be a community forestry. If local communities do not have entitlement to the land, they do not have security on the land. If they do not have security to the land, their involvement in forest conservation projects is not secured."

"Trying to build community forestry in SEPPSF requires a structure that aims to open the platform for local communities to participate actively in forest conservation project. This structure must have foundation because if you try to build something as new as community forestry without a fundamental foundation, whatever you build, you build on air. What I mean by foundation? It is based on the recognition of community right to forest, to land. Recognition of community rights in the forest comes with a goal to give forest communities the management power to claim their stake on SEPPSE."

"If you ask local communities in SEPPSF to plant forest, they must get benefit from forest conservation activities. If they cannot benefit from community forest, then there is no point in it. Thus people who are protecting forest must get credit for their involvement in forest conservation projects."²⁴

The above insights clearly point to an absence of state recognition regarding community rights in forest management. As a result, much of the comments are aimed at offering 'the route' to benefit the forest communities, who are 'the active participants' in forest conservation projects.

Possibility for Community Forestry in SEPPSF

This study began by highlighting the rhetoric often present in forest management via two questions: why hasn't it changed and how can it be changed? My interrogation first undermined the assumption that the state is the only actor in forest care. In reality, there is actually a misconception about that narrative, which has been cleared by 'the colluding of fresh thoughts' approach for a collaborative forest care system in SEPPSF. This is anchored in flexible opinions that are positively embedded with the hope of producing community forestry in SEPPSF. With that approach in mind, it now makes much more sense to merge the points of both sides in order to contend with three important elements for community forestry in SEPPSF: community empowerment – viewed as structural characteristic, community land security and community consultation. It is hard for conventional thinking to sustain the assumption that these three elements can be denied as preconditions for building community forestry in SEPPSF.

Previous advocates of community forestry have long hailed the positive results of reforming forest management.²⁵ From the principles of how societies develop institutional arrangements²⁶ to the revival of traditional forest knowledge, the changes in forest governance have been manifested in dual objectives: the socio and ecological components.²⁷ The state-based forest system, as implemented until today, has been fully separating forest people and the forest, drawing boundaries between the 'caretakers' of the forest and the forest itself.²⁸ Indeed, the strange thing about the state conservation standpoint is its ideology of separating forest people from the forest. That we frequently continue to assess this ideology reveals just how flawed it is; it valorises the commodification of nature and elbows out indigenous environmental wisdom. But the most concerning aspect of this system is the resulting proliferation of land clearance, paving the road for modern development in the forest. As a result, people who used to inhabit forested areas are restricted, banned and treated unfairly within those areas.²⁹

Beyond these absurdities, the chance of having a forest managed by its inhabitants is real. All that is required is the political will, the transference of forest management and ownership rights to the forest people, and a system by which forest people benefit monetarily from forest conservation projects. These 'pillars' unequivocally summarise the need to recognise local communities as key stakeholders in the forest. It also articulates a more multi-functional role for forest people in forest care. ³⁰ Regarding the last of the pillars, and in the words of the Orang Asli:

"If the government entrust us with forest management, the government already believed in us to take care of the forest, so we have to be clear about the return from forest conservation project, only then we can play our part in it. If the government and its agencies have funds for the local communities, this is another good initiative. For example, let say the government gives 10 hectares of land for community to play their role in conservation, and this land is entitled to participants who have the right to claim the accrued benefits. This means that the land area that has been allocated to local communities cannot be exploited or ventures and cannot be sold to outsiders. It has to treated and maintained by registered participants who are under contract with the government. The contract must be aligned with how much the participants get in return, say RM1,000 a month, for example. If this is the case, then I think local communities can play their part in the conservation program." ³¹

Conclusions and Recommendations

The three elements of community forestry discussed here, together with the role of the state in facilitating them and the indigenous readiness for them, are little understood. This may be because of the current political stance regarding these matters. Such a lacuna cannot, however, be an excuse in academic discourse. It is therefore necessary to offer fresh perspectives for a new paradigm in forest care. One such voice addresses government readiness to shift paradigms in forest management: "Success is possible only with effective community leadership. integrity, good planning, stakeholder involvement, and willingness to work on a collaborative basis that puts community interest above self-interest. Participants must also be determined to continue activities after project funding terminates. Other essential elements to ensure success and sustainability include training, awareness/education and knowledge sharing. Hence, much information and lessons learned have been exchanged among forest managers, rangers and communities - activities which have increased understanding of the government's policy on forest management, nature conversation, and their associated benefits."³² Another work concerns the socio-ecological components that connect forest protection and indigenous people: "When we identify the natural ecology in the forest, at the same time, we capture together an indigenous community's environment. Forest is seen as physical and spiritual environment, in which forest communities understood it as a place to live. We can learn about medicine and there is also knowledge about survival in the wildforest. The indigenous people are the masters of their own environment. They know leaves that can be eaten and leaves that cannot be eaten. They know what is in the wood and what inside the water. Forest conservation is crucial to the survival of forest and its ecosystems as well as the host of benefits it could offer to human and animals as a whole."33

With those positive reflections in mind, and with the advent of holistic forest management in Malaysia, it is hoped that this study will represent an important development in relation to sustainable forest care. Perhaps SEPPSF presents a unique option for that objective.

This paper has acknowledged several constraints to the process of community forestry: forest ownership, institutional arrangement, land conflicts and so forth. Now, it will suggest two contemporary models to overcome those blocks: introduce a short-term community forestry project in SEPPSF and a long-term community forestry project for the Orang Asli in SEPPSF.

The short-term community forestry model links forest communities to forest conservation projects. So far as the rationale behind community forestry is concerned – and this is what ultimately triggered the aim of this first model – community empowerment is envisaged as percolating slowly down from the

community's right to monitor and protect the forest. Furthermore, people are motivated to work out solutions for environmental problems when they are guaranteed land. So, the planting of tree species that are well known to the locals should be prioritised in this first model because it ingrains traditional forest knowledge and offers long-term benefits to locals. In short, for this first model to materialise, ideas must be congruent to local needs.

Pertaining to the second model, there is no doubt this approach will constitute an arduous journey, including time consuming and cumbersome legal processes. In its infancy, community forestry cannot be implemented without land reform. Also, community forestry projects will be short lived in the absence of community rights in forest care or if rules are weak and land boundaries are unclear. In the presence of these three factors, community forestry projects will be susceptible to intrusion, congestion and conflict. Furthermore, without a structural foundation. people have no privilege to access, withdraw, manage and protect the forest, hence they have no stake in it. This concern is best captured in the following metaphor on land conflicts between landlords and landless people: "The elites did not want to pick cow dung because cow dung is filthy. So they ask villagers to collect the waste, compost it, so it can be used as a source of energy. From environmental point of view, this is good because the energy used from the waste help burning trees without producing much pollution. However, from the social point of view, the one who benefits from selling cow dung to the market is those who own the land. Those who collect the waste, they do not get anything from their efforts."34 In other words, well-defined land is key to forestry reform.

The foundation for the second community forestry model is the currently missing recognition accorded to Orang Asli communities as caretakers of the forest. The state is not capable of offering sustainability in the forest, or even stability in the locals' livelihood, without attending first of all to the cultural values, beliefs, forest knowledge and rights of those communities who live in the forest. Therefore, the conundrum at the heart of today's state-based forest management lies in its creation of boundaries for forest conservation without having the people to make it work. This approach actually conflicts with its own objective. In the past, local communities have had freedom to access the forest, with profound implications for forest care. For example, people spent time observing the cycles of nature and actively monitoring their ecological landscapes. The elders regulated their members' activities in the forest. This norm signifies a template for a forest-people relationship and is testimony to the importance of the forest people and their management roles.³⁵

State-based forest management is not a complete solution to forest conservation. Reforming the current system is integral to developing a more holistic management of forest resources. Therefore, recognition of community rights in forest management is crucial to beginning the integration of different stakeholders with respect to the forest conservation agenda. As shown in this study, there are strong voices arguing that the current forest paradigm is a stumbling block to community-based conservation projects. Calls for a more resilient approach in SEPPSF is thus an important initiative as the shift of attention from a centralised, state-run forest management system to community forestry will stimulate learning, negotiation, implementation, capacity building for local communities and collaborative forest management.

To conclude, the paper summarises five recommendations in the following points:

- Engage communities in forest conservation activities. In this regard, the authorities must give the Orang Asli the responsibility to monitor state forest areas. This effort could be trialled for a year. Depending on performance (based on biodiversity protection, increased forest cover and so forth), the project could then be advanced for another two years.
- In each community-managed forest area, the forest conservation project must include the plantation of tree species that are well-known amongst locals. This is so those trees can be used as a source of subsistence. If there is a market to which the produce of these trees can be sold, then there is also a need to design a benefit-sharing scheme between social enterprises, businesses, the state and local communities.
- Apply both local and scientific knowledge to forest conservation practices.
 To make this effective, there is a need to develop training schemes with local communities through research institutions. The aim of this recommendation is to enable scientific researchers to work together with the Orang Asli. It also aims to identify valuable tree species, diversify tree plantation and develop new forest management methods.
- Recognise local involvement in community forestry.
- Enforce a framework and exclude non-forest users from taking forest resources in the territories of different communities.

Notes

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- 1. Arun Agrawal, Ashwini Chhatre, Rebbeca Hardin, 'Changing Governance of the World's Forest,' *Science* 320, no. 4, (2008):1461-1462
- Community Forestry is a form of forest governance in which local communities manage forest resources for subsistence, timber production, non-timber production products, wild life and the conservation of biodiversity. For more details, see Don Gilmour, Yam Malla and Mike Nurse, 'Linkages between Community Forestry and Poverty,' Available at http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/ viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.514.3609&rep=rep1&type=pdf
- 3. Muhammad Adha Shaleh, Miriam Karen Guth, and Syed Ajijur Rahman, 'Local Understanding of Forest Conservation in Land Use Change Dynamics: Evidence from the Orang Asli Jakun Community Living in Tropical Peat Swamp Forest, Pahang, Malaysia,' *International Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 2, no. 2 (2016): 6-14.
- 4. Blom Benjamin, Terry Sunderland, and Daniel Murdiyarso, 'Getting REDD to Work Locally: Lesson Learned from Integrated Conservation and Development Projects,' *Environmental Science and Policy* 13, no. 2 (2010):164-72.
- 5. Barbara Fraser, 'Traditional Forest Knowledge is Not a Folklore, but a Resource for Change,' Forest News. Available at http://blog.cifor.org/17174/qatraditional-forest-knowledge-is-not-folklore-but-a-resource-for-change?fnl=en; AgrawalArun, 'Dismantling the Divide Between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge.' *Development and Change* 26, no. 3 (1995): 413-439; John Scot, 'Traditional Knowledge in Global Policy Making: Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity,' in *Biodiversity and Ecosystem Insecurity: A Planet in Peril*, ed. Ahmed Djoghlaf, Felix Dodds (London: EarthScan, 2011), 180.
- 6. A good example of a 'boundary' is the zoned areas in the forest. The aim of zoning is multi-purposed: forest conservation, agricultural plantation, recreation activities, preserving cultural resources.
- 7. Nicholas Colin, 'Orang Asli resource politics: Manipulating Property Regimes through Representivity,' in *RSCD Conference on Politics of the Commons: Articulating Development and Strengthening Local Practices*, Chiangmai, (2003): 1-15:
- 8. Shaleh et al, 'Local Understanding of Forest Conservation,' 10-3.
- Mahanty Sango, Jane Gronow, Mike Nurse M, and Yam Malla, 'Reducing Poverty Through Community Based Forest Management in Asia,' *Journal of Forest and Livelihood* 5, no. 1 (2006): 78-89; Pagdee Adcharaporn, Yeon-Su Kim, and Peter J. Daugherty, 'What Makes Community Forest Management Successful: A Meta-Study from Community Forestry throughout the World,' *Society and Natural Resources* 19, no. 1 (2006): 33-52.
- 10. Scot, 'Traditional Knowledge in Global Policy Making,' 180.

- 11. 'Participation' here entails local community involvement in mapping out boundaries that reinforce their decisions in forest conservation projects. See Thompson Jan R, William F. Elmendorf, Maureen H. McDonough, and Lisa L. Burban, Participation and conflict: Lessons Learned from Community Forestry,' *Journal of Forestry* 103, no. 4 (2005):174-178.
- 12. 'Forest Management' here means a situation where locals have decided which forest areas or boundaries are suitable for their care.
- 13. I carried out in depth interviews and focus group discussions with Orang Asli Jakun communities. For a firsthand understanding of the Orang Asli's socioecological context, I decided to interview forest people who currently experience changes in their living landscapes. Other selection criteria included forest dwellers who have seen different kinds of forest changes since the 80s.
- 14. SEPPSF has been identified as one of the most critical Environmentally Sensitive Areas in Peninsular Malaysia. For more details about its ecosystem, see Ismail, Shaharuddin Mohamad, Abdul Rahim Nik, and Khali Aziz Hamzah, *Integrated management plan of the South-East Pahang Peat Swamp Forest: Peat Swamp Forest Project* (United Nation Development Programme/Global Environment Facility, 2008).
- 15. I interviewed government officials who dedicate their time to planning holistic forest management, in addition to academics and social activists who dedicate their time and research to indigenous community land and natural resources management rights in Malaysia.
- 16. The following studies reiterate the importance of legal frameworks in community forestry programmes: Pagdee et al., 'What makes community forest management successful,' 43-4; Varughese George, and Elinor Ostrom, The Contested Role of Heterogeneity in Collective Action: Some Evidence from Community Forestry in Nepal. World development 29, no. 5 (2001): 747-65; Gill, S. K., W. H. Ross, and O. Panya, 'Moving Beyond Rhetoric: The need for participatory forest management with the Jakun of South-East Pahang, Malaysia,' Journal of Tropical Forest Science 21, no. 2 (2009):123-38
- 17. These statements are personal reflections by Orang Asli. They are based on the key question: what role do the indigenous people have in forest conservation?
- 18. These insights have their origins in researcher who worked with Orang Asli for conservation projects, Orang Asli's general reflection on, and their experinces in forest conservation project.
- 19. Nicholas Colin N, 'Community rights and the management of protected areas: The Orang Asli case,' *MENGO workshop on Protected Area Management vs Community Rights*, Petaling Jaya (2002).
- 20. The phrases, mundane sentiments and acrimonious attitudes in this part of my findings are also taken from in depth interviews. They were voiced by many people from many different backgrounds among my participants.
- 21. This notion was voiced by a researcher specialising in indigenous studies in Malaysia.
- This pragmatic opinion was given by a field researcher in a similar study site in SEPPSF.
- 23. The thick layers of the past did little to bridge the gap between indigenious people and the higher authorities. This study proves that the knowledge gap, or

- perhaps trust, between them can only be reduced by collaboration in forest care.
- 24. Excerpts from my interviews with social activists, researchers and officials.
- 25. Shaleh et al, 'Local Understanding of Forest Conservation,' 13; Thorp, Rosemary, Frances Stewart, and Amrik Heyer, 'When and How Far is Group Formation a Route Out of Chronic Poverty?,' *World Development* 33, no. 6 (2005): 907-20; Djamhuri, Tri Lestari, 'Community Participation in a Social Forestry Program in Central Java, Indonesia: The Effect of Incentive Structure and Social Capital,' *Agroforestry Systems* 74, no. 1 (2008): 83-96.
- 26. Studies of community forestry throughout the world give credence to the importance of property rights. After evaluating the factors that make community forestry successful, they found that significant influence stemmed from policy provisions that properly articulate community rights in forest management. See Elinor Ostrom, Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*14, no. 3 (2000): 137-58; Elinor Ostrom, 'How Types of Goods and Property Rights Jointly Affect Collective Action. *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15, no. 3 (2003): 239-70; Yasmi, Yurdi, John Guernier, and Carol J. Pierce Colfer, 'Positive and negative aspects of forestry conflict: Lessons from a decentralized forest management in Indonesia,' *International Forestry Review* 11, no. 1 (2009): 98-110
- 27. Zimmerman, Barbara, Carlos A. Peres, Jay R. Malcolm, and Terence Turner, 'Conservation and Development Alliances with the Kayapo of South-Eastern Amazonia, a Tropical Forest Indigenous People,' *Environmental Conservation* 28, 1 (2001): 10-22; Persha, Lauren, Arun Agrawal, and Ashwini Chhatre, 'Social and ecological Synergy: Local Rule Making, Forest Livelihoods, and Biodiversity Conservation. *Science* 331, 6024 (2011): 1606-8
- 28. Lye Tuck-Poe, 'Forest People, Conservation Boundaries, and the Problem of Modernity in Malaysia,' in *Tribal communities in the Malay world: Historical, Cultural, and Social Perspectives*, ed. Geoffrey Benjamin, Cynthia Chou (Singapore: ISEAS, 2002): 160-84.
- 29. Ibid., 163.
- 30. The present study reveals that a common understanding about SEPPSF could lead to collaborative forest care. This has been proven by respondents' eagerness to start a new partnership for the sustainability of forest management.
- 31. This is a common concern in collaborative forest care. There is research suggesting a tendency to see community-based forest conservation projects as an end in themselves, not as a means to an end. This does not fit into the sustainability goals of forest conservation and community livelihood. For more details, see Gill, Savinder Kaur, Kamal Solhaimi Fadzil, and Khali Aziz Hamzah, *Respectful Listening: The Jakun as Partners in Conservation* (Selangor: Forest Research Institute Malaysia, 2009), 82.
- 32. Farahazfa Muhammad Sapari, Community forestry in Malaysia, *In Forests for Livelihood*, Proceedings of APFNet workshop on Community Forestry in the Context of Climate Change (2012), 53. Available at http://theredddesk.org/resources/forests-livelihoods-proceedings-apfnet-workshop-community-forestry-context-climate-change
- 33. I prepared this excerpt from my interview with the Orang Asli.
- 34. The question that triggered this methaphor was 'How did the payment for

environmental services help locals?' I asked one of the advocates for their opinion about how this system can be effectively implemented together with community forestry in SEPPSF. For more details on Payment for Environmental Services (PES), please refer to Centre for International Forestry Research, Payment for Environmental Services. Available at http://www.cifor.org/project-websites/payment-environmental-services/

35. Poe, forest people, conservation boundaries, 170.