

Environmental Communication Model of Land Burning Phenomena at Lowland Area (Phenomenology Studies About Land Burning at Lowland Area Farmers in South Sumatra, Indonesia)

Thirtawati ⁺

Faculty of Agriculture, Sriwijaya University, Indonesia

Abstract. This study discusses interactions and communication that occur in land burning actions which involves various parties who have diverse interests, include the government as a policy maker, the government partners, and NGOs. Interaction between farmers with these parties affect how farmers constructs meaning of land burning action. The land burning phenomena in South Sumatra analyzed by integrates the phenomenology approach, interactionism symbolic theory, and social reality construction theory. This study applies constructivism paradigm to understand how the interaction process between farmers and the stakeholders towards land burning. Farmers take land burning action as a dialectic process between reality and their knowledge about land burning. Most of the farmers still doing land burning even though they recognize the negative effects of it both for them and for the ecological of the environment.

Keywords: Burning land, Phenomenology, Environmental communication.

1. Introduction

Environmental Communication is the planned and strategic use of communication processes and media products to support effective policy making, public participation and project implementation geared towards environmental sustainability (OECD, 1999). Communication will play a crucial role throughout the policy and program life cycle of recognizing - gaining control over - solving - and maintaining control over an environmental problem (OECD, 1999). One of environmental problem faced by public nowadays is Forest and burning land. Its become public attention as an environmental and economic issues, especially after the devastating of El Nino 1997/1998 which destroyed the forest and land area of 25 million hectares worldwide (Tacconi, 2003: iii). Fire is considered as a potential threat to sustainable development because of its effect directly impacts on ecosystems, the contribution of carbon emissions and its impact on biodiversity. In fact, public awareness to not burn the land is still very low because of the high cost of land clearing without burning and law enforcement is still not performing well.

South Sumatra is one of the provinces in Indonesia that are vulnerable of land burning activities. Fundamental factors that cause this, is the spread of peatlands that are mostly located in the eastern coastal region, as well as the behavior of people who are still using fire for land clearing and plantation agriculture. Land burning have also raises another complex issues. Smoke from the burning land that still continues in some districts in South Sumatra, not only lead to eye irritation and interfere the aircraft traffic. The smoke also triggers that affect the rise of temperature in the city. Burning land that occurred on farms in South Sumatra Province puts the farmer as the actor who was accused of causing the widespread impact of forest and land fires. The process itself puts the burning land as an important part. The burning land is done to help the farmers clear the land, or eradicate the pest quickly. Until now, the process of burning land is still done, although it has negative impact, both for farmers and the environment.

⁺ Corresponding author. Tel.: + 6281377778860; fax: +62711-580276
E-mail address: thirtawati@yahoo.com

This burning issues involving not only the farmers who are often blamed as the perpetrators of the land burning, but also the government as a regulator of the policy, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The government, in this case include the Department of Forestry, Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) and Local Government who make policies related to forest and land fires. The NGOs are often viewed as an opposition force against the government as an agent of development. NGOs also said to be a model of its own power in the three sectors (three-sector model), which consists of government as the first sector, World Business as the second sector and the third sector are the organizations as a volunteer. As a third sector, NGOs serves as an intermediary institutions that become the bridge between government and society. These third-party involvement, ie farmers, governments and NGOs is very important, because each party brings interest and significance of each of these burning land phenomena. Interaction of the three will provide an understanding of a phenomenon better, so that policies and programs that have been carried out to provide a better effect in overcoming the problems associated with acts of burning land that still done by the farmers.

This research is a phenomenological study to see how the farmers, through their interactions with governments and NGOs to understand the phenomenon of burning land in Ogan Komering Ilir regency, South Sumatra. The purpose of this study is to disclose Environmental Communication in the Land Burning Phenomena. This study presented as a qualitative research study that use in-depth interviews to examine and understand the attitudes, views, feelings, and behavior of individuals or a group of people. The data collected consists of primary and secondary data. The data obtained (in the form of words, pictures) do not take the form of numbers or statistics, but still in qualitative terms. Primary data obtained through semi-structured interviews, narratives, observation, field notes, while the secondary data obtained through the study of the documentation, print and electronic articles, journals, and other data forms.

2. Land Burning Phenomena and Environmental Communications

Symbolic interactionism views believe that the phenomenon of land burnings by farmers due to the social situation is modified by the individu in it. These individuals make choices, take action and finally form this phenomenon. The following matters describe the phenomenon of burning land and communication interaction inside the four major themes as follows:

2.1. Causes of Land Burning Phenomena

The land burning phenomena by farmers in the study area, according to the primary and secondary informants caused by many factors, namely:

- The Habits which is handed down by the previous generations

the reason that is believed by most of the primary informant, whereas, burning land is part of the farming process that must be done so that plants can be grown with great success.

- Economic reasons

Economic reasons also become main reason behind the existence of burning land phenomena, with the unavailability of capital, then the easiest, cheapest and advantageous way to prepare the land is by burning it.

- The Easiness of Application land burning.

For farmers in the study area, another way to do the land clearing such as the use of hand tractors, or hire more labor to clear the land was considered too expensive and difficult to implement.

- Lack of strict law enforcement

Lack of strict law enforcement have made people feel a deterrent or not responsible for the fires that occur on lands.

- Lack of Communication interaction with the parties relating to the Prevention of Land Burning.

Information about acts of the burning the land has been distributed only through one-way communication through announcements and leaflets. There are still many people who do not know the danger of the burning land. Each party associated with this problem tends to walk alone in running the program.

2.2. Environmental Communication in the Prevention of Burning Land

Environmental Communication in the prevention of burning of land is important to observe in order that information about the danger of burning land can be disseminated to the public, including farmers as well. Many people who may be involved in this effort, including farmers, government, government partners, NGOs and the business world. These will be presented how the communication in the prevention of burning land has been done.

• **Communication Process in Burning Prevention of Land**

The burning process of communication in the prevention of burning land seen from the communications made by the parties concerned, i.e. government, non government organizations (NGOs) and government partners in disseminating prevention of burning land. These include the three-dimensional approach to communication, communication methods and frequency of communication.

Table 1. Communication process between farmers and the Related Parties in Burning Prevention of Land

Stakeholder	Communication Process		
	Communication Approach	Communication Methods	Frequency of Communication
- Government	• Linear	• Extension, Training.	• Limited training in a particular zone. • In case of fire or during the dry season
- NGOs	• Interaktif	• Advocacy, Extension	• depends on the needs and the work program
- Government partners	• Interaktif	• Mentoring	• Intensive

• **Communication Approach**

Communication approach is the way of stakeholder presenting subject of burning land to the farmers. Government tends to be linear approach to communicate. This linear approach is characterized by low motivation and participation of farmers. While the NGO and government partners, carried out in an interactive approach, which is characterized by high motivation and participation in self-awareness of farmer. Farmers voluntarily follow the activities undertaken by NGOs and government partners that they are interested in.

Unlike the linear model of communication, interactive communication in conveying his message was not delivered through formal channels, but instead use informal channels which are formed by non-government and self-managed by the farmers. Another advantage of the interactive communication model is the similarity between the positions of the communicant, so that communication between those involved there is no feeling inferior and superior, and the communication considered as sharing (Idris, 2002:49).

• **Communication Methods**

Communication methods are a the number of method that use to deliver the subject. As the government is in addition to publish the information in the form of leaflets, brochures, bulletins and alerts the board also held outreach and campaigns for avoiding land burning. But recognized by some informants that leaflets which were distributed to farmers in the village hall, rarely read by the farmers

While the NGOs involved in rural research tends to do counseling and assistance for farmers advocacy related to the conflicts they experience problems of land and land burning. Government partners provide guidance to the community. Mentoring programs covering a wide range of training, ranging from the handling of the burning land training to the training of making mats from “purun”, one of vegetation in the peatlands area, as an alternative livelihood, community empowerment and provide assistance such as radio communications. Target of providing material on this land burning also includes student of primary school and also their parents.

• **Frequency of Communication**

Frequency of communication is the number of activities carried out related to the prevention of the burning land. Campaigns and outreach activities are usually carried out in all the villages that are considered to have high levels of fire-prone. Patrol activities carried out only in a limited area, which include the protection and conservation zones. Communications regarding the burning of land made by NGOs are also

not too often, NGOs have a variety of programs related to their organizational goals. Public awareness about the burning land is only one of several programs which they apply, so the intensity of communication on land burning is not too often.

2.3. Position Related Parties in the Land Acts of Burning

Description of the involvement of third parties involved in the interaction of communication can be seen by how the position of each party associated with this burning land activity. There are three positions in this case, the pro, critical / neutral and cons of the act of burning land. Farmer is a party to this action pro. As already explained in the previous section, there are variety of reasons and motives behind their actions. While the Government of Indonesia is in a cons position in responding burning land, through government regulation, the central government prohibits all forms of land burning by farmers and businessmen except for reasons which are justified by the law. On the other hand, local government, county government that is more neutral in this regard. The extension about the dangerous of burning land still be given, but to completely remove the burning behavior of farmers is not easy, as a result of government at the county level still allows the monitoring and stringent conditions.

Government and NGO partners has a neutral position or critical of the burning land activities. Neutral in this case because both institutions have no direct interest in comparison with the previous position. In addition, both parties are also critical. Criticality of the two sides is visible when they use mentoring as well as dialogue with the farming community in addressing the burning land issues. Both sides, not necessarily blame the acts of the burning committed farmers, but trying to find the root causes and find solutions together with the community.

Involvement of third parties shows that there is a relationship that is formed between each party, as well as between the parties with the farmers. Relations between the three parties involved, are described in the following matrix:

Farmer				
NGO	●			
Government Partners	●●	●		
Government	●	●	●	
	Farmer	NGO	Government Partners	Government

Fig. 1: The degree matrix of Related Party Relationships Regarding the Burning Land Activities

Large and small degrees of relationship are shown in a large circle if the degree of relationship between the large and vice versa. From the figure, it can be seen that the greatest degree of relationship would occur between the government partners with the farmers. Unlike the relationship between NGOs and farmers, who are not of the relationship between farmers and government partners. NGOs involved in rural research, has its own goals and interests are not only focused on the burning issue of land. The burning issue of land is only one issue of concern to them, among other issues such as agrarian conflict issues and others. The relationship between farmers and the government, has smaller degree. Government related to the farmers through the communication media being deployed in rural areas such as announcements, pamphlets and flyers, which are rated by farmers as a less effective.

2.4. Interaction Farmers and Related Parties of Land Acts of Burning

Discussion of the relationship between the three parties involved with the farmers on the land burning phenomenon suggests that the involvement of each party is actually needed in the handling of forest burning and land issues. Government, government partners, NGOs and farmers have a commitment to build cooperation through effective communication. Weak interactions are established communication between the relevant parties in burning land will impact not only on economic issues and health, but also on environmental sustainability.

Stakeholder communication interactions are important to explore further for the handling of forest and land fires problem, this does not take place partially by each party. The interaction of communication between the parties related to the farmers in the villages depicted in a chart as follows.

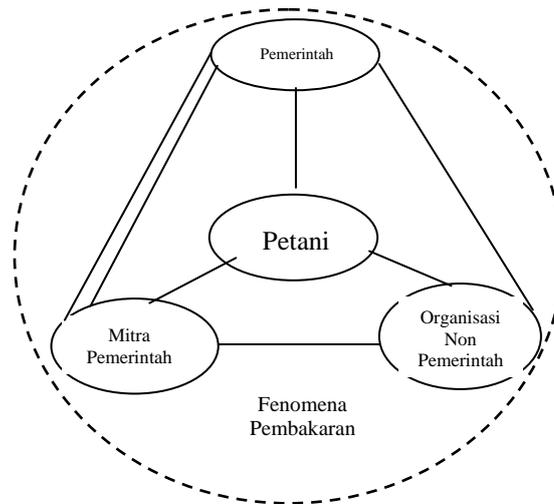


Fig. 2: Model of interaction between farmers and Related Parties (Adapted from the model of the relationship between stakeholders Ann Svendsen and Myriam Laberge, 2003)

Communication interaction in the prevention of burning land will be effective when implementing participatory management. Through cooperation and coordination, the program will be more synergistic and effective.

2.5. Conclusion

Communication interactions that occur in the prevention of burning land involving various parties who each have different interests. The parties involved in this case include the government as policy makers, the government partners, and NGOs. Interaction between farmers and the parties have not been going well, in the sense that each party associated with this action a lot more communication interaction that goes on their own and are not well integrated, so that the achievement of communication, information and education in burning land is not reached maximum.

3. Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank all those who have assisted in this study for their input and suggestions, the informants both primary and secondary especially for Suboptimal Research Centre (PUR-PLSO) for the support.

4. References

- [1] OECD Workin Paper. *Environmental Communication: Applying Communication Tools Towards Sustainable Development*. OECD Publications. 1999.
- [2] Rakhmat, Jalaluddin. *Psikologi Komunikasi*. Edisi Revisi. Bandung:Remaja Rosdakarya. 2001.
- [3] S.Suyanto, Rizki Pandu Permana And Noviana Khususiyah. *Fire, Livelihood And Swamp Management: Evidence From Southern Sumatra*. International Centre for Research in Agroforestry Southeast Asia Regional Research Programme
- [4] Scott. James, C. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, Yale University Press. 1979.
- [5] Solichin, et.al. Pembelajaran (Lesson learn) dari pengalaman dan Implementasi Sistem Informasi Kebakaran Hutan dan Lahan di Sumatra Selatan. [Buletin Hotspot volume XI, November 2008 hal 20]
- [6] Tacconi, Lucca. *Kebakaran Hutan di Indonesia: Penyebab, Biaya, dan Implikasi Kebijakan*. CIFOR. 2003.