

Research Title: Promises and limitations of payments for environmental services (PES) in conserving the forests in Tinoc, Ifugao, Philippines

Year: 2012

Place of fieldwork: Tinoc, Ifugao, Philippines

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Key Words: forest, watershed management, mini-hydro, cordillera

The relatively new concept of PES has gained currency in the literature on forest conservation as it suggests a straightforward solution: pay people to “help produce” various environmental services (ES) derived from forests. In Tinoc, a PES mechanism (for watershed protection services) is being proposed through the construction of three mini-hydro power projects. Having the highest electricity rate in the Asia, the Philippines, is an attractive investment for power production. And because of the general public disapproval for large dams, smaller dams or mini-hydro plants are favored which usually are closer to water tributaries such as Tinoc. A large area of Tinoc constitutes the mountain range of Mt. Pulag which has the highest peak in Luzon Island of 2922 masl. Tinoc is an important watershed especially to Magat Dam, one of the largest dams in the Philippines, generating both irrigation and power (Fig 1).

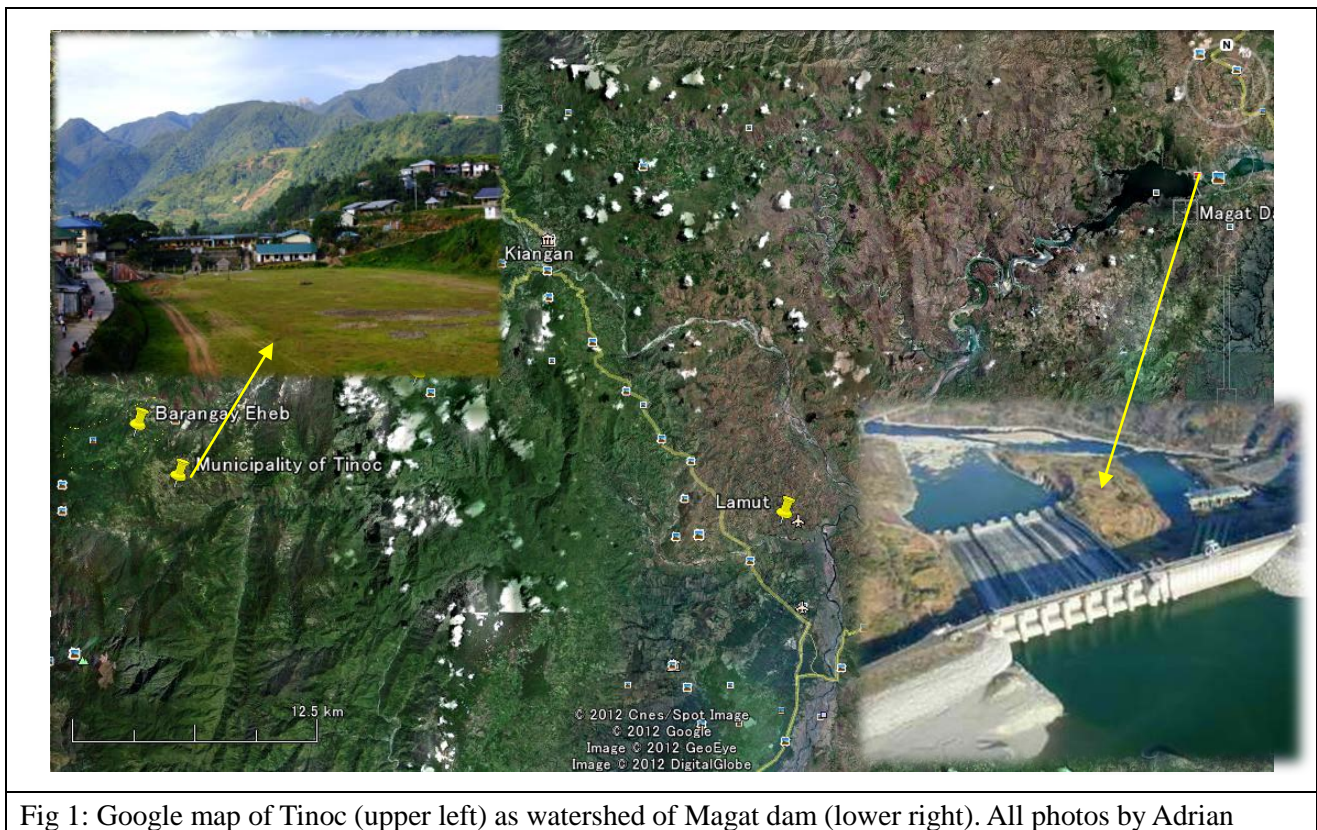


Fig 1: Google map of Tinoc (upper left) as watershed of Magat dam (lower right). All photos by Adrian

A PES in Tinoc is especially urgent as its forests are being converted into vegetables, which is hardly regulated partly due to high poverty incidence. With support from the local government, Tinoc was identified for (initially) three mini-hydro plants, expected to provide alternative income and help abate deforestation (Fig 2).



Fig 2: Ongoing forest clearing mainly for vegetable (e.g. lower left), mini-hydro ECC public notice (right)

However, despite having drafted a memorandum of agreement in 2008, the projects (and payments) are still yet to start. In my previous fieldwork, the delays were mainly in the negotiation of terms especially of payments. During this fieldwork, I found out that the company (Sta. Clara Power Corporation) made a joint venture with Ayala Corporation (one of the largest conglomerate in the Philippines) to form a new company named Quadraver Energy Corporation to take over the projects not just in Tinoc but across the country, which could explain the further delay. There are, however, rumors saying that a probable reason could also be the opposition and presence of communist rebels, who last April 2012 ambushed and killed 11 soldiers and a civilian in a nearby village. If true, their continuous presence and influence in the area could leave the project indefinitely suspended; so is my writing this paper. I then spent the rest of my field work time coordinating and presenting my thesis to different stakeholders particularly in four different universities as well as to the provincial lawmakers of Ifugao, to get their feedback especially on some policies I propose concerning forests, agriculture and culture.

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For the invaluable service rendered as **RESOURCE SPEAKER** and sponsoring the Seminar on Enhancing Productivity Through Research Forum held on August 4, 2012 at the Ifugao State University, Nayon, Lamut, Ifugao.

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Given this 15th day of August, 2012.

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