



## **RURAL COMMUNITY STRATEGY OPTIONS IN DEALING WITH CRISIS A Sociological Perspective**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Some strategies as peasant choices are efforts to extend their field or to keep the field they owned, maximizing efforts to meet their basic needs, efforts to avoid losses in farming, exploiting workers in the circle of family, and maximizing manpower available to do any kind of work. Peasant strategy choices are influenced by some factors such as: (1) resources possessed and self-capacity; (2) meaning given to the action of others as a feedback of action; (3) values in the rural community; and (4) output obtained from social interaction such as cooperation, competition, conflict, and consequences. There are differences of strategy choices applied among peasants with different social levels. The differences are caused by an authority difference on land, resources and workers, differences on point of views about action consequences, and on individual characteristics, especially age, experience, risk bearing courage, and motivation.

**KEYWORDS:** Peasant strategy, social values, individual characteristics.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The economic crisis has now started with the exchange rate crisis that is weakening the rupiah began around July 1997 and reached its lowest point in May 1998. Impact directly affect the monetary sector, mainly through closure of some banks are "sick" and the depletion of bank liquidity. Like a snowball, the crisis has devastated the real sector, especially the production sector as a result of rising interest rates. According Subandoro (1999:93), in addition to the macro economic impact, this crisis also brings the social impact of increasing poverty, the emergence of food insecurity, increased unemployment, declining school enrollment rates, and low quality of healthcare. Impact of economic crisis at the macro level, of course, impact the micro level, especially on small businessmen, farmers in rural areas, and other poor communities, both in cities and villages.

From the various references to the crisis, may not find the definition that explicitly describes what is called a crisis. What there is a description of the factors causing the crisis, the scope of the crisis, and the impact of the crisis. However, from various writings on the crisis, can be presented a definition that is meant by the crisis is not functioning institutions, particularly economic institutions, as expected by the public. Expected role or roles that are expected by the public of the institution is no longer manifested in everyday life as a result of turmoil is not clear eventually faced by the institution. The crisis is a condition of systems, procedures, strategies, and / or existing methods, which are owned at that time, no longer functional in helping resolve the matter at hand. One of the limitations of the crises mentioned in Webster's Dictionary (1999), is: "A psychological or social conditions characterized by unusual instability Caused by extensive stress and either endangering or felt to endanger the continuity of the individual or his group". Within these limits, the crisis is seen as an exceptional occurrence and may threaten or endanger the survival of individuals or groups. In the context of this definition, can not be doubted that the communities most affected by the crisis, both economic and social impact, is a rural community, because most of the poor before the crisis in rural areas.

Another impact of the crisis is the decline in real incomes and purchasing power. Study on the Impact of Community Rural Crisis in Java, conducted by Akatiga in 1998, mentions that there has been a decline in income in rural communities studied ranged from 45 percent to 65 percent. The decrease was caused by a surge in rice prices in times of crisis is higher than the increase in income occurs. For example, in the village plantation wages increased approximately 38 percent, but rice prices rose to 150 percent (Akatiga, 1999:6). Akatiga The results also show the severity of the crisis that befell the small farmer or

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peasant pamaro. The decrease in revenue in the group is evident from the decrease of grain that can be stored as food supplies.

As with other civil society groups, peasant communities in rural areas, of course, also have a strategy in the face of poverty or crises they face. They certainly are not silent and resigned, but definitely trying to find new ways to suit the ability and potential and experience has, so it can still survive and maintain its existence in the social environment. Villagers, as said by Wolf (1985:27) is not as described in cliché in the literature as the peasants are passive and do not move, but opposed to it, they always are in a dynamic state, and moves continuously. It is reasonable if individuals try to defend myself to stay alive, not only in the sense of fulfillment of basic needs or materials, but also to live socially, to meet its social obligations.

In the context of this paper, the conception of the individual's ability in determining how or tools from a number of alternatives available to achieve its objectives or in the face of social reality, was adopted as the strategy choices of farmers in the face of crisis. Terminology strategy in this paper can refer to two meanings, as described by Bennett (1982: viii), namely: short-term responses that are tailor (short term adductive response or also called the short-term coping or adductive actions) and actions planned or patterned in the long run (long-term-strategic adaptive design or operations). In the rural farming communities, the short-term response may include, among other actions to take any job from generating income to eat, while the long-term response may involve the transfer of farm work to other jobs in non-agriculture. For example, sell the land to trade, or become wage labor in industry or households, at home and abroad.

Through this article answered the question about how the meaning of the crisis from the perspective of the rural population (farmers) and the factors that influence whether farmers in choosing a particular strategy for survival in a crisis situation? From the answers to these questions, it will be known strategy of farmers in the face of economic crisis, the reasons for choosing this strategy, and differences in the strategies of various social strata.

## METHODS

This research used ethnographic studies to see the extent to which socio-economic dynamics of rural communities during times of crisis, and socio-economic changes what happens, researchers. Ethnographic studies are used to identify and explore cultural aspects underlying the attitudes and behaviors that arise in a variety of economic and social activities as a result of the crisis. To obtain a comprehensive description of the behavior of the villagers in allocating their resources in the face of the crisis as an option strategy, researchers used the approach to adaptive strategies. The investigators determined the focus of this study as follows:

- 1) management of farm production, namely with regard to ways by farmers from various levels of social classes in managing their farm, which include: the ways used to get seedlings, practices in farming, and the meaning given on the farm;
- 2) use of labor, including the amount of labor used, considerations of efficiency is applied, the relationship between landowners with labor, conflicts between land owners with labor and the "method" is applied to the solution of conflict;
- 3) financing of production costs, which cover the entire cost of which is used for the procurement of seed, labor costs, costs of planting and harvesting, strategy in applying the "principles of" efficiency, efforts to obtain venture capital (the role of family and others), and the meaning provided for venture capital;
- 4) marketing efforts, including: relationships with traders, relationships with sugar mills, the meaning of institutions and others in marketing efforts, the meaning of the profit (cost-benefit ratio), the strategies and calculations are applied;
- 5) fulfillment of daily living, including: strategy used to survive in an era of crisis, the strategy chosen in handle crisis, the reasons for the selection of these strategies, differences in strategy choices be seen from various social classes, and the root causes of such differences;
- 6) social interaction, focused on the meaning and symbols used in the interaction at various levels of social strata, the effects of the interaction, the role of work to do, the meaning given for the actions of others, the direction of action, and changes in behavior;
- 7) Patron-client relationships and conflicts; focused on: the exchange process that occurs, the meaning of the exchange, "profit" derived from the exchange, the conflict in the exchange and dispute resolution mechanisms in the exchange.

The process of analysis of these data follow the model of Interactive Data Analysis of the Miles and Huberman (1984) that the analysis conducted continuously during data collection in the field until the data collection is completed.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Rural Community Strategy (Farmers) Facing Crisis**

#### *1.1. Static Expansion: Expanding to Meet the Land Diverse Needs*

The results of this study did not find any cases where the farmer is only oriented to subsistence family farm alone in doing business, as in the concept of Boeke (1974). Why is that, as always occurred desire, either explicitly or implicitly, to expand his farming business either by land or through adding intensification of land (rental and / or buy). Farm laborers who have no land would want to own land, no matter how narrow land. Similarly, farmers who own land, there is always an effort to expand its land, and this occurs in all social strata. The housekeeper who worked in the country and abroad, who earned enough, always makes the soil as the primary investment target for the money they have, in addition to building or repairing houses. If money is not enough to buy or rent land, then they will usually use the capital to trade. The whole farm oriented activities to gain as much as possible in order to meet the needs of daily life and to finance the next planting activities and the fulfillment of ritual activity (traditional party) and so on). Boeke statement that says that if the farmland is planted is enough to meet the needs of a family, then the farmer would not want more than that because it had been satisfied, peaceful and calm, do not get the justification of the results of this study. This is because the dimensions of the wider needs of farmers, especially for children's education and efforts to maintain the status or social prestige in the middle of the community.

From the description that some propositions can be drawn as follows:

1. there is always the desire of farmers at all levels to expand the farm and improve its products, either through intensification or intensification;
2. land has always been a major investment destination for the villagers who have money
3. all farming activities are oriented to obtain the maximum profit that is sufficient to meet the daily needs and to finance the planting activity in the next planting season ceremonial and compliance activities;
4. Easy going attitude of the crop can not be used as an indication of the feeling satisfied, calm and peaceful.

#### *1.2. Safety First: Maintaining Subsistence Living*

If the concept of farmers' Safety First applied to the lower layers (especially those who have less than half a hectare of land), then the meaning of this concept is the same as maintaining life at the subsistence level. Farmers bottom layer consisting of narrow slowly farmers, farm laborers, and those who have no land at all, no other word, except how to see to it that income earned today enough food for today. Safety first actual meaning can be expanded in the context of rural farmers in general and Java in particular Tempuran Hamlet, because they have a philosophy of life "s important slamet" (which is an important survivor). In conjunction with farming, the concept is in the middle and upper layers in the rural areas have meant that the farm should be enough to eat and to finance the next planting. If this is not achieved then it will be judged as a failure the same meaning to fall down on peasant subsistence level as the bottom layer, although substantively different when viewed from the fulfillment of daily needs. Farmers middle and upper layers are relatively not experience problems in meeting their daily needs because the harvest is sufficient for it. Difficulties they are more visible efforts on the fulfillment of capital to finance the planting activity on their land are relatively broad.

From these descriptions, several propositions can be derived as follows:

1. the farmer under the strategy layer is interpreted as an effort to maintain the necessities of life at the subsistence level;
2. on farmers and upper middle class, this strategy meant maintaining a minimum level of profit that can be achieved so that there is a surplus to finance the next planting;
3. Help farmers obtain the lower layers of rich farmers, especially if they carry out activities in the family (mantenan (wedding party), circumcision, death, etc.), the magnitude of this aid is influenced by the social distance between them and wealthy farmers.

### 1.3 Agriculture Involution

The strategy is always associated with two things: first, Anggita family involvement in farming, and second, the individual labor productivity in farming. Involving family members in the management of farming on land that the width is not increased or remained relatively considered inefficient because what happens is the actual use of labor is not required in the production process. In other words, there was excessive use of labor, which is actually not necessary to cultivate a certain area. In addition, the use of labor does not increase labor productivity per person, and thus does not also increase the productivity of cultivated land.

In conjunction with efforts to handled subsistence crisis in the bottom layer of farmers, agriculture involution meaning not understood solely in relation to labor productivity but also from another meaning, namely: (1) the condition is temporary or because "necessity", (2) it should be done, because if not then no one working on the land, and (3) shortage of labor so that relatives or families must be involved. From the description a statement as a proposition can be formulated as follows:

1. involvement of family members (children) in farming has traditions and intended to pass down farming skills;
2. if it hopes to send children to higher levels difficult then learning to farm the family land is considered effective to prepare for the future;
3. in younger age groups, family farming in the land marked as "compulsion", because they do not want the job;
4. Incentive to seek other employment outside of agriculture is very strong at a young age farmer.

### 1.4 Rational Peasant: Just Lucky

This concept can be interpreted as a rational action to do the farmers so they can continue to survive, be it in terms of the subsistence level and to raise revenue above the limit of subsistence. This rational action concerning the efficiency in the use of means of production is use of labor, and efficient in the financing of farming. However, the authors agree with Hayami and Kikuchi that in doing economic calculations, farmers (peasant) are also concerned with the interests of rural communities. According Hayami and Kikuchi (1981), acting in accordance with the norms of the village community is the most appropriate way to save on the cost of farm management. A farmer is rational landowner would prefer to employ their neighbors on the basis of mutual help relationships rather than taking farm workers in the free market, even though wages for neighbors is the same or slightly more expensive than farm laborers. Because the cost of supervision over laziness and cheating laborers are taken from the free market is deemed higher than their neighbors. However this does not mean that a landowner will always be subject to moral norms and rural areas. All this depends on circumstances at the time and place. The landowners are ready to renew the norm is violated or if they see an opportunity that benefits due to violations is much larger than the costs incurred for compliance. Thus the meaning of efficiency in the context of rational thinking in the management of farming for farmers in the hamlet Tempuran is an attempt to prevent extravagance, as far as it does not violate an existing tradition.

Unlike the middle and upper-class farmers, for farmers who cultivate land under a layer of less than one hectare, efficiency means that all farming activities must be done alone. All existing labor within the family should be fully utilized. The use of labor from outside is not done, not only because of the absence of costs but also considered a waste, not only by themselves but also by the village community. Hamlet community will judge them as being lazy, if a relatively narrow land managed by using hired labor. But this assessment does not apply to those who have another job besides farming. So an employee who has less than one hectare of land, considered to be prevalent only use hired labor, because he was not full of farmers. It is obvious that the values in influencing the behavior of the rural population of farmers in farming. These values should be used as guidelines in the conduct and not merely economically rational thinking. Through such a way that this society's negative assessment of the hamlet can be avoided and thus maintained their social position.

From the description a statement as a proposition can be derived as follows:

1. in performing economic calculations take into consideration the interests of farmers with villagers;
2. it is impossible for large farmers for not doing cost-benefit calculations to manage their farm, because every week they have to pay the wages of labor;
3. "Confidant" a mainstay of farmers to conduct surveillance on the job, so it can be prevented the occurrence of waste;

4. For lower-class farmers, efficiency means that all farming activities must be done alone, and labor in the family should be utilized to the maximum extent possible;
5. For lower-class farmers use labor from outside the family is considered as waste, and if it is done then the public will judge the "negative" of their actions.

#### *1.5 Self Exploitation: maximizing use of Power*

This strategy is more directed to the laborer or peasant farmers of the lower classes than the middle and upper layers. Efforts to increase the income must be consistently done so that they can maintain their lives at subsistence level, and also can meet the needs ceremonial as a member of a social system. Small farmers and farm workers receive another job in their spare time, to do any job that can make money or wages in another form (rice, coconuts, and tobacco). As has been said before, that there is a tendency among farmers is the bottom layer to use its power to limit the lowest utility. That is, they are willing to work "whatever" with the level of wages "whatever" home to meet his need for food and money. This is by Chayanov called Self-Exploitation or Self Pacal (See: Scott, 1994).

Forms of activities to help as described above, must be distinguished from requests for assistance when there are events slametan, mantenan, circumcision, and other similar activities. In this activity, people do not expect the wages of labor are given, except the hope of a similar form of relief when the relevant conduct similar activities. In this case the concept of "mutual-help" is more appropriately used. Meaning of the word "please" is what has made the process of social exchanges in rural areas is voluntary and eliminate the feeling of "exploitative" in the patron-client relationships, among the clients (Hodge). But this moral can be damaged or not working as expected if the request for help takes place without compensation and in the intensity of repetitive. "Social protest" in the form of unwillingness to help may arise if this condition occurs. The client or farm laborers, with a variety of reasons, will refuse to do the job required him if in some cases he felt "disrespected" her strength.

From the description can be derived as the following proposition:

1. small farmers and farm workers receive another job in their spare time, to do any job that can make money or wages in another form;
2. if no other jobs are "worthy" then any job that can be done will be received by small farmers or farm laborers;
3. most of the work performed by the farm workers out of work hours is work around the households of rich peasants;
4. nature of the relationship between rich farmers with farm workers is more of a "request for aid or assistance" rather than giving jobs reward, because it rewards is determined by the person seeking relief on the basis of merit alone, and social exchanges occur on a voluntary basis rather than exploitative;
5. Farm workers with a variety of reasons, will refuse to do the job required him if in some cases repeatedly he felt "disrespected" her strength.

#### *1.6 Model of Social Geography*

Intensification seemed impossible, especially in this research area, because it is no longer available land that can be opened for new agricultural land. To expand the lands owned, farmers do by renting or buying, and this opportunity seems greater than the probability of the rich farmers of poor farmers, especially large growers who control more than five acres of land, and farmers who have a business or other work as a source of income. The meaning of land ownership is not solely for capitalization, but also to maintain social status. The author agrees with Suharso (2002) which states that land tenure is not only important from the aspect of production factors, but also because of socio-cultural implications. Similar opinions are also stated by other researchers, Ghoose, Saith, and Lipton (1974), and Cline (1970) which says that the aspects contained in the case of land tenure is not only related to individual access to land, but also related to the income opportunities, life strategies, and development of community efficiency in agricultural production.

Activities buy or lease land, of course, has no meaning increasing the quantity of land in a village, but only the accretion of land ownership on a particular individual farmers. Hamlet Tempuran, ground rent lease-purchase is done. Cultivation of land rights within a certain period there is the tenant, while the land ownership rights remain on the lease. So who bought the rights till, rather than property rights? In this context there are several variants: (1) rented land is vacant land ready to be planted, and (2) rented land is

land that has been planted by the owner, and the lease continues for the next planting period. Of course, plants in the land shall be treated in a "rental agreement".

Other measures mentioned by Palte, namely the intensification of cultivation of the soil, use of improved seed, and so forth have long applied to farmers Tempuran Hamlet. From the observations of researchers, ranging from the cultivation of land, the use of seeds, fertilizer and plant care, all have been done in ways that are more modern. In a sense, they have been using advanced technology in farm activities.

But when a crisis occurs and until the time of this study, these activities can not be fully done well. Some farmers try to reduce the use of artificial fertilizer plant because the price is soaring high, and try to replace with more use of manure. Farmers use a sugar mill waste mixed with manure as a fertilizer plant. Farmers who grow sugar cane is also trying to reduce the types of activities to reduce production costs. For example, klentek should be done twice, into one, because it seemed less manicured sugarcane harvest (cutting).

From these descriptions, some statements as propositions can be arranged as follows: owned land expansion is done through the mechanism of rent and / or buy, because there is no possibility to open new agricultural land;

1. meaning of land ownership is not solely for capitalization but also to maintain social status;
2. Land has the same meaning with having a job, therefore the ownership of land will be preserved as much as possible.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### 1. Conclusion

(1) The meaning given for the function of others and experience in social interactions become the main basis for farmers to act before deciding to perform a certain action. This characteristic is found in all levels of social coating, but when viewed from the aspect of the orientation or goal of action, there is a difference in the layer. Farmer directs his actions on the bottom layer of rich peasants who became their patron, while the upper layer farmers more direct actions on outsiders.

Wariness in the act and suspicion toward others on farmers in the upper layer tends to be directed from the outside labor, factory workers, village bureaucrats, and social institutions in the village asking for donations for their harvest. While the farmers' bottom layer is more dominant direct their actions to rich farmers or village elite who are perceived to exploit their labor, including through the provision of low wages or wage rates that are not economically or socially inappropriate.

(2) Choice of farmers to a specific strategy to address the impact of the crisis, affected by these factors: 1) resources owned, 2) the meaning given for the actions of others (the feedback action), 3) values in rural communities who deemed not block the action taken; and 4) the results obtained from the social interaction in everyday life that lead farmers to choose actions that benefit and avoid actions that are not favorable for life.

The difference in choosing a strategy among different social classes, caused by: 1) differences in power over the land, 2) differences in control over resources and labor, 3) differences in the perception of the acts; and 4) differences in individual characteristics.

### 2. Recommendations

To further investigate in depth and comprehensive socio-economic dynamics that occur in rural areas as a result of the implementation of adaptation strategies of farmers in dealing with crisis and difficulties of daily life, according to the researchers still needed micro-level research, especially relating to:

- 1) the extent of involvement of family members in the management of farm production is meaningful to the farming community?
- 2) the extent to which the role of "social security" given large farmers to small farmers and farm workers in the subsistence farmers?
- 3) Identification of a more thorough and accurate account of the impact of the crisis and the type of assistance needed by farmers. For a farmer empowerment policy interests in the broader sense, we need a policy that leads to products of incentives to produce.

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