

**Interview by Jemma Purdey with Ahmad Suaedy and Heri Sutanta, Yogyakarta, 27 May 2014**

**PhD, University of Melbourne, Geodetic Engineering, 2008-2011**



[00:00:19]	Grew up in Wates, about 35km from Jogjakarta, and went to school there. Then did his bachelor degree at Gajah Mada University (UGM), in the Department of Geodetic Engineering. Graduated in 1999, then worked temporarily as an instructor in the department. In 2000 he went to the Netherlands on a Dutch government scholarship to do a master's. He had only been married for six weeks and his wife couldn't go because she was pregnant and the insurance didn't cover having a baby. Finished the master's in 2002. Did field work in Semarang looking at land subsidence. Continued lecturing at the university, was promoted to assistant head of department in 2005. Applied for a number of scholarships between 2004 and 2008, including an ADS scholarship in 2007. Thinks the ADS scholarship was the best because Australia's not too far and the family could learn English.	Background; Childhood; early education; Scholarship opportunities
[00:05:13]	He has four children: two sons, born in 2001 and 2004, and two daughters, born in 2007 and 2011. The youngest was born in Australia on 21 September, a special date. [Stories about babies' names (some babies born in Indonesia were given names to commemorate the family's time in Australia e.g. Ameliani 'Anak Melbourne' and Alma Delia Sari (ADS).]	Family; Living in Australia
[00:09:58]	Went to local primary and junior high schools. Graduated as dux of the school and district. Was interested in science and inspired by an older student who won a national science award. Wanted to go to senior high school in Magelang or Jakarta but he is an only child and his parents didn't want him to leave so he went to a local senior high school. In 1992, when he was 16, he was given an award for being the best student in	Childhood; early education; Family background

	the district, and came second in the province.	
[00:14:45]	He was also part of a youth ambassador and student exchange program for Jogjakarta and, as part of a different program, for the youth organisation of Golkar. Was dux of his senior high school so could go to university without sitting the test. He chose to do electrical engineering at Deponegoro University in Semarang but wasn't admitted (doesn't know why) so he went to UGM. Chose his field after being inspired by a leaflet explaining geodetic studies and to avoid biology, his weakest subject.	Leadership; Undergraduate education
[00:19:00]	For his undergraduate thesis he studied the accuracy of distances based on GPS satellite signals. Using GPS to measure earth movement was quite new then. Finished his studies in December 1998 and graduated in 1999. [Description of two GPS-related projects he was involved in while he was a student.]	Undergraduate study
[00:24:40]	Vulcanology is a related field but Heri's research focus is on other natural hazards, they are often neglected because their development is not noticeable, e.g. land subsidence in Semarang. So in 2000, in the Netherlands, he studied that. [Comments about Semarang city and the rate and extent of land subsidence.] He studied Semarang for his PhD as well but the focus was more on spatial planning. Some of his recommendations have been passed on to government. The amount of information and acknowledgement of the problem has increased between 2004 and 2011 and he has talked with the city planners, advocating activities that relate to land subsidence.	Field of study; Opportunities for overseas study
[00:29:48]	[Explanation of his recommendations and discussion about the findings of his PhD research and tidal waves.]	
[00:32:26]	Part of his PhD was also studying the governance of spatial information, how to make it useful for people. Research tagline: From managing spatial information to managing information spatially. Spatial information is very strategic for creating good development plans and monitoring and implementing them so his research focus is how to empower local government to use the information. In 2012 he was appointed as head of the Research Centre for Spatial Data Infrastructures Development (PPIDS) at the university. [Discussion about central and local government roles in relation to spacial data infrastructures and how the PPIDS are helping with both technical and policy aspects e.g. the Indonesian Spatial Data	Research area; Leadership

	Infrastructure Readiness Index and awards for local government based on the index.]	
[00:40:48]	The centre is also involved in other activities, directed by the central government: last year they developed a book of guidelines about developing spatial data infrastructures (SDIs), they're involved in Indonesia's adoption of international standards and conducting focus group discussions with provincial governments. Local governments with young, energetic staff can increase their readiness. [Anecdote about one creative government official who built the infrastructure himself.] The centre has also been asked to develop technical guidelines about developing SDIs at local government level. The guidelines will cover a number of aspects so they're collaborating with political scientists.	Current career; Leadership; Professional networks; Community networks
[00:45:41]	Was in Australia from June 2008 to November 2011. He had a few months of the scholarship left but went back to Indonesian because they had a new baby and he could focus better on writing in Indonesia. He went back to Australia from February to June 2012, without the family, to finish his writing. At Melbourne uni his research focus was disaster and his first supervisor was Dr Kerry Hunter, but he left after six months. His second supervisor was Professor Abbas Rajabifard, president of the Global Data Infrastructures Association, director of the Centre for Spatial Data Infrastructure and Land Administration at Melbourne uni and, now, chair of the Australian Disaster Management Initiative. Prof. Rajabifard's research focus was SDI but he was interested in disaster so he discouraged Heri from changing his focus and supported his research.	Studying in Australia; Family; Supervisors
[00:49:18]	Heri went to Australia alone in June 2008 and found somewhere to live after two months. In September he went back to Indonesia to get the family. His elder son went straight to Moreland Primary School, the younger son went after a few months. His wife worked at childcare centres, MCCC and Hartnett House, and taught at a centre for Indonesian culture. She was a teacher in Indonesia. His older daughter went to Tinning [Mitchell] St childcare centre in 2009. [Story about his wife having a good experience working for Hartnett House, and how it helped her get her current position in a primary school.]	Arriving in Australia; Family; Living in Australia; Working experience in Australia
[00:54:35]	He didn't join any groups in Melbourne, occasionally went to events organised by the Indonesian student group. Socialised with other Indonesian families. The previous tenants of their apartment were Indonesian students and	Social life in Australia; Indonesian community in Melbourne; Ongoing connections with Australia;

	they recommended another Indonesian family when they left. His wife made Australian friends through her work, they went to each other's houses, and keep in touch through facebook. Hartnett House gave her a farewell party when she left to have the baby.	Friendships
[00:59:00]	The children enjoyed school in Australia. For the first few months back in Indonesia they asked when they would go back to Australia. They had a car in Melbourne and went on trips to the Great Ocean Road, Mt Bulla, Lake Mountain, Phillip Island and to Sydney. They didn't plan to have a baby in Australia. They tried to give the children travelling experience, so stopped over in Kuala Lumpur on the way to Indonesia when Heri had a conference in Singapore in 2010 and, in 2011 on the way home, they stopped over in Singapore. Heri did his fieldwork in Indonesia in 2009 but the family stayed in Melbourne.	Living in Australia; Family; Travelling in Australia; International networks
[01:02:51]	No cultural problems in Melbourne, mainly mixed with other students in his department. He was a teaching assistant, which was a good experience. Two weeks after arriving in Melbourne he was approached by an economics professor to help her process data from her project about health and sanitation in East Java. It took the children a few months to adjust to the language, but after that they had no problems at school and they made a lot of friends, mostly the children of other international students from Taiwan and Malaysia. There were Spanish, Indian, Pakistani and Australian people in the apartment block where they lived.	Living in Australia; work experience in Australia; Friendships
[01:06:28]	He worked as a teaching assistant in the master's program. Sometimes he worked on weekends, other times stayed at home or did things with the Indonesian community. Enjoys his current work a lot, less pressured than being a PhD student when time was limited. The ADS scholarship paid better than most other scholarships but still wasn't enough to support a family. There was no family allowance and if his wife hadn't worked they wouldn't have had enough. The opportunity to work was also good. Heri did some casual work delivering pamphlets (PhD – pamphlet home delivery) and as a kitchen hand at University House. Later went there for a meal with his professor. Also worked as a programmer for a private company and for the Murray–Darling Basin Authority, through his supervisor, as well as being a teaching assistant. [Discussion about not going to the Murray or Darling rivers and travelling to regional centres	Work experience in Australia; Indonesian community in Australia; Scholarship experience

	on the train on Christmas day, because it was free.]	
[01:13:18]	[Comments about being fined for not having a valid ticket on public transport and getting parking fines and a traffic infringement.] The AusAID liaison officers were very good, Lucia Wong and Jackie. The Indonesian community has a mailing list where they let each other know about accommodation and furniture. Still has contact with his supervisor, invitations to collaborate in a number of ways – as sister research centres, to be part of an Australian disaster research centre initiative and translating Prof. Rajabifard's book, about land administration and sustainable development, into Indonesian. They may also bring him to Indonesia to run a regional training course on SDI.	Scholarship experience; Indonesian community in Melbourne; Professional networks; Ongoing collaboration
[01:17:42]	[Discussion about the MOU between Melbourne uni and UGM, and the Australia–Indonesia Centre.] In 2011 and 2012 they had funding from Australia–Indonesia Facility for Disaster Reduction to develop training material for training local government.	Collaboration; Ongoing connections with Australia
[01:21:33]	END	