

- ANNOUNCEMENT -

Towards a rights-based agenda in international forestry?

Berkeley, USA, 30-31 May 2009

The University of East Anglia (UK) and the University of California at Berkeley (USA) will jointly hold an international workshop 'Towards a rights-based agenda in international forestry?' at Berkeley (University Hall #150) on May 30-31, 2009. The workshop will bring together leading activists and researchers in international forestry to discuss together how the rights-based agenda might contribute to inclusive futures for people and sustainable forest management.

Background

Rights have moved to the center of debate in international forestry. National and international advocacy groups call for the transfer of statutory tenure rights from states to local people, and many forest dwellers have received titles and other certificates to forest in recent years. Moreover, efforts have been made to bolster local people's economic rights with regards to forests by coupling legal transfers with measures that enhance people's access to complementary resources and markets (e.g., forest certification). At the same time, people and organizations lobbying on their behalf have demanded the expansion of political rights by way of decentralization, legal empowerment and governance reform. Some rights activists, finally, have promoted a broader interpretation of forest rights, calling attention to conceptions of human rights.

The rights-based agenda has made major in-roads in key forest policies. For example, devolution programs have come under scrutiny, as many devolved responsibilities in forest management to local people but retained key rights with the state. Protected areas have encountered criticism for excluding local people and taking advantage of their marginalized political positions. Recent initiatives to credit Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation under future climate change agreements have provoked stern responses by indigenous rights activists demanding the recognition of forest people's rights to forest including the carbon stored in them. These are just some illustrations for the growing pervasiveness of the rights-based agenda; further examples can easily be identified with regards to decentralization, forest law and governance reform, payments for environmental services, and tree plantations.

At the same time, empirical research has produced important insights into the potentials of and challenges to the rights-based agenda. For example, devolution programs may have transferred tenure rights to local people in a relatively egalitarian manner, but local people may have turned out to be in different positions to take advantage of them. Decentralization may have strengthened local decision-making over forests but may also have empowered unaccountable customary leaders over elected local governments. Again, these are just a few examples for a wider set of issues related to livelihoods, equity, governance, politics, and sustainability unearthed in empirical research.

The workshop

This workshop brings together analytically-minded activists and activist scholars to interrogate the rights-based agenda in international forestry. They discuss how the

rights-based agenda might contribute to inclusive futures for people and sustainable forest management.

The workshop will include presentations by:

- **Don Anton**, University of Michigan Law School
- **Shaunna Barnhart**, Pennsylvania State University
- **Stefan Dorondel**, “F.I. Rainer” Institute of Anthropology, Bucharest
- **Victoria Edwards**, University of Portsmouth
- **Lynn Jungwirth**, Watershed Research & Training Center, California
- **Moira Moeliono**, Center for International Forestry Research
- **Fred Nelson**, Maliasili Initiatives, Tanzania
- **Blake Ratner**, World Fish Center
- **Jesse Ribot**, University of Illinois
- **Neera Singh**, Michigan State University
- **Oliver Springate-Baginski**, University of East Anglia
- **William Sunderlin**, Rights and Resources Initiative
- **Peter Leigh Taylor**, Colorado State University
- **Phuc To Xuan**, University of Toronto
- **Paul Vantomme**, Forestry Department, FAO

The presentations will address one or more of the following questions:

- What are the critical emerging issues in the rights-based agenda in international forestry?
- What implications does the rights-based agenda bear on key forest policies?
- What are the main challenges encountered by the rights-based agenda at the international, national, and local levels?

To view the paper abstracts please see:

http://www.uea.ac.uk/polopoly/polopoly_fs/1.108086.1234349283!abstracts.pdf

The presenters will be joined by several discussants from UC Berkeley, including Cari Coe, Louise Fortmann, Nancy Peluso and Jeff Romm.

Planned publications

The workshop is aimed at producing two publications: first, an edited book that discusses key issues in the rights-based agenda, develops its implications for key forest policies, and derives lessons from actual experiences with rights-based approaches; and second, a multi-authored paper on various rights-based approaches and key issues in the rights-based agenda for submission to an international journal.

Contact and further information

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