

*The Effectiveness of Community Forests Management in Madagascar: The Impact and the Social Capital Channel*

In this paper, we study the effectiveness of community forest management (CFM) in Madagascar between 2001 and 2013 and examine to which extent collective action is a channel explaining this impact.

The establishment of community forests in Madagascar dates back from 1996 with the GELOSE law and nowadays, more than 1400 community managed forests have been established across the country. With this policy on security of land tenure, the rationale is to engage communities in a sustainable use of their resources to increase their long term profits. A first recent impact evaluation of CFM in Madagascar has however found no impact on deforestation (Rasolofoson et al. 2015). A stream of literature in the 1990's might offer an explanation to this: according to some anthropologists, collective action is merely an illusion in Madagascar (Blanc-Pamard and Fouroux 1994). Rasolofoson and his coauthors nevertheless recognized lacks in their data. Also and to the best of my knowledge, no attempt of measurement of collective action in Madagascar has been currently presented in the literature.

In this paper, I examine the effectiveness of CFM in Madagascar at the national scale between 2001 and 2013 using more consistent data. I use an exhaustive spatial dataset of CFM, fine scale vegetation cover maps over 23 years, a variety of controls and a quasi-experimental setting to statistically confirm the little environmental additionality of CFM over the period. Deforestation has hardly decreased after the creation of CFM: the use of the resource remains unsustainable with CFM weakening by that the long term welfare of locals. I then use field data I have collected between October 2014 and April 2015 on 4 case studies to explore the reason of this failure. I conducted a network analysis, a trust game and a contribution to public goods game to analyze patterns of collective action and motivations for conservation inside communities. I show that if community involvement in conservation action is indeed low despite strong links between members, the reason might not be trust in general but rather a lack of interest from locals for conservation.

This study contributes to the impact evaluation literature for conservation policies by extending its geographical scope to a little studied continent to date –Africa, and by focusing on CFM. I also mobilize the literature on the commons to enrich the results from an impact evaluation. Additionally, as CFM remains nowadays central in conservation policies in Madagascar, these results may help in understanding how to design better the approach to increase their effectiveness.

Note: Early results, author just back from the field.

Blanc-Pamard, C., & Fauroux, E. (2004). L'illusion participative (Vol. 31, No. 3, pp. 3-3). Presses de Sciences Po.

Rasolofoson, R. A., Ferraro, P. J., Jenkins, C. N., & Jones, J. P. (2015). Effectiveness of Community Forest Management at reducing deforestation in Madagascar. *Biological Conservation*, 184, 271-277.