VAN DEXTER, KRISTINA [S25-P08]

Forest governance and dynamics of customary institutions: synergies between community forest management and REDD+
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Recent debates about forest and climate governance have been centered on communities' rights and participation. It is widely agreed that effective forest and climate governance requires a broad set of policies, including institutional reforms in the areas of tenure, decentralization, and community forest management. Further, reforming forest tenure and governance systems is increasingly viewed as a key factor in achieving multiple development and environmental goals. A growing body of evidence has emerged on the role of resource governance and devolved tenure systems, in particular, in reducing deforestation and forest degradation through sustainable forest management, thus allowing researchers to address the link between community tenure, forest conditions, and climate change. The international community has been advocating for and designing incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and to increase carbon stocks by enhancing forest regeneration and regrowth (or REDD+). Increasingly, REDD+ is being promoted as an opportunity to achieve outcomes beyond carbon emissions reductions, such as biodiversity conservation and support for local livelihoods. At the local level, discussions about REDD+ is more closely linked to these co-benefits. With competing pressures to conserve and exploit forests, complex issues of tenure, rights, access have significant social and ecological outcomes. There is usually a continuum of land and forest tenure types in any given forested landscape which present conflicts and can affect social and environmental benefits associated with the landscape. A growing body of literature demonstrates that collaborative institutional arrangements that recognize and secure property rights and access to forests are key to effective decisions about how forests are used. Both REDD+ and community forest management share the objective of managing forests sustainably. These interventions, implemented in a variety of institutional and cultural settings, require context specific management strategies that consider community heterogeneity and complexity as well as relations between institutions at multiple levels. REDD+ design can build on and benefit from the social, institutional and environmental capital associated with existing community forest governance.

This research uses case studies from Colombia, Peru, DRC, and Indonesia to illustrate interactions between REDD+ and community forest management. In each country, my research will be set within the framework of international and national policies related to forest governance. It will include both single country and cross-site analyses, focusing on relationships between customary and formal tenure systems, land use planning, resource use and management, and the role of larger scale policies in local level realities. My research will be situated at the interface between communities and landscapes, examining resource management and governance at local levels within the context of global efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. It presents a brief overview of the evolution of community forest management and links it to the broader debate concerning deforestation and tropical forest management. Decentralization and land reform initiatives, including a recent community forest policies and land use zoning, as well as the development of large-scale REDD+ programs has raised awareness on indigenous rights and social conflicts related to land use and contributed to increased participation of indigenous and local communities in decision making around natural resource management at local and national levels. These case studies explores how both informal and formal institutions governing landscape and landscape resources are changing, resulting in the emergence of hybrid forms of institutions that incorporate elements of both customary and formal rules taking into consideration local needs. This research seeks to

better understand the role of institutions (formal, informal or hybrid) in shaping the patterns and functions of landscapes and asks whether these shifts in formal rights affect the ability of local people to manage their territories and its resources. Building from empirical evidence linking devolved forest tenure systems and forest conditions, this research contributes to a holistic understanding and governance of landscapes as complex mosaics of multiple land uses and meanings in a more adaptive and collaborative way that benefits both the environment and local communities.