



Tropentag, October 11-13, 2006, Bonn

“Prosperity and Poverty in a Globalised World—  
Challenges for Agricultural Research”

## Cultural Foundations of Stakeholder Attitudes and Acting - the Case of Forest Management in Kenya

BARBARA TAUBERT, JÜRGEN PRETZSCH

*Technische Universität Dresden, Institute of Internationale Forestry and Forest Products, Germany*

### Abstract

Human behaviour towards forests is guided by individual perceptions and world views. Prevailing cultural norms and rules find their expression in the variety of different skills and practices that exist within a society in relation to natural resources.

Forests in Western Kenya represent a highly contested resource that is used, exhausted and restored in various ways. Since the pressure on the forests results from high population growth rates and an intensive agricultural land use combined with rural poverty, forest maintenance and rehabilitation require the participation of the rural population. Understanding the cultural meanings, roots and reasons of their forest related behaviours can increase the options for forest protection and sustainable forest management.

The study aims to reveal the socio-cultural foundations of stakeholder perceptions and behaviour towards forests, as well as to identify the origins and underlying sources of cultural impact. Two concepts, the Ordered Adaptive Structure (Bargatzky 1986) and the Level Scheme (Irrgang 2004), provide the theoretical framework of the study. Both concepts serve to reveal the specific visions and sacred ideas that guide local people to use, manage, (over-)exploit and rehabilitate forest resources.

This poster presents the main theoretical underpinnings of the research project, as well as the state of the scientific debate. Findings of a first exploratory study that was carried out at the Kakamega forest and around Mt. Elgon using key informant interviews and other empirical qualitative research methods serve to illustrate the attitudes of selected stakeholders towards forest management, as well as their impact on the forests.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, cultural impact, forest use, perception, values