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“Competition for Resources in a Changing World:
New Drive for Rural Development”

Situation and Problem Analysis in the Naban Watershed: From History to Recent Development

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Abstract

In Yunnan province, China, rapid rubber-driven rural development is coupled with a dramatic decline of biodiversity. Within the framework of the “LILAC: living landscapes China” project consortium – the authors are researching the case of the Naban River Watershed. They are looking for relevant options for the introduction, adaptation and diffusion of innovations which may help to conserve the status-quo of biodiversity. The project aims at organisational development, i.e., ways to influence local institutions and structures as well as processes of generation, dissemination and use of knowledge including extension and education activities.

Systemic interventions of this kind require profound insights into the historical as well as the present situation, the problems of various actors and their causal interaction. Based on an analysis of land-use problems, the factors and framework conditions for the adoption and dissemination of innovations within the local and the formal knowledge system are being assessed.

Starting in January 2007, an in-depth situational analysis was conducted in five villages of the Naban He Nature Reserve combining (amongst other PRA tools) extensive observations and narrative life-histories with a stratified, semi-standardised household survey.

The presentation will show the complexity of problems and identify priorities as well as consequences for organisational development. The initial euphoria soon went after preliminary results were analysed, showing a wide field of conflict: between the reserve administration and the farmers but also within the farmers’ groups. Development is strongly linked to rubber, tea and hybrid rice with strong economic forces towards enlarging rubber plantations. Access to these resources is unevenly distributed between villages and ethnic groups. The land tenure system is complicated and often intransparent. Experiences with new crops such as beans, water melons, grapefruit, capsicum are wide-spread but often negative. The potential lies in innovations which may improve the existing plantation system and conserve or even rehabilitate biodiversity.

Keywords: Adoption, biodiversity, China, innovations, knowledge systems, organisational development, PRA, situational analysis, triangulation