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"Stakeholders, Interests and Power as Drivers of Community Forestry" - Case studies from Ecuador and Peru

Vidal Merino[a], Mariana and Max Krott[b]

a Technische Universität Dresden, Forest Biometry and Systems Analysis - Institute of Forest Growth and Forest Computer Sciences, Germany (marianavidal@forst.tu-dresden.de)
b Georg-August Universität Göttingen, Chair of Forest and Nature Conservation Policy, Germany

Introduction

Community Forestry (CF) is understood as a process of increasing the involvement of and reward for local people, of seeking balance between outside and community interests and of increasing local responsibility for the management of the forest resource (Sarre 1998).

Conversely, though, CF practices can also been seen –rather than as genuine devolution of forest management to local forest users-- as an extension of state hegemony. By creating or giving space in a new policy arena, states are making trade-offs with local communities to restore and conserve forests lands without providing even nominal incentives to them. Baker et al. (2003, p. 140) caution that the restoring of planning authority and decision making power to local arenas will enable private sector interests to more easily access and extract public land resources. Furthermore, Coggins (1999 qtd. in Baker et al. 2003) mentions that past experiences with local control of public resources have resulted in short-term profit schemes and over extraction.

Not only local people and government administration, but very often also a large number of non-governmental organizations –as well as bilateral donor agencies– are actors claiming a stake in community forestry (Bandaje et al. 2006). The CF proposals of these external actors frequently hold significant differences with those stemming from the local communities (Wilkie et al. 1996), creating situations of potential conflicts.

This research contributes to understand the real factors determining the outcomes of community forestry by looking at the surrounding political framework. The focus of the study is on the various stakeholders, their interest and the degree of power that they hold.

Methods

Targeting the study's goal, two empirical cases, one from a Shuar Centro in Ecuador (Yumisím Centro, located in the Cantón of Tiwintza, Morona Santiago Province), and an Asháninka community in Peru (community of Santa Rosa de Chívis, District of Puerto Bermúdez, Province of Oxapampa, Department of Pasco) were analyzed.

In order to carry out a complete network analysis, i.e. to identify all the actors that made up the network, a snowball sampling technique was applied. Contacts took place and face-to-face dialogues were conducted, as standard interviews were developed. Once all actors of the network were identified, they were classified into governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, and within each of these categories as profit and non-profit oriented actors. Finally, Agna 2.1.1. was

used to visualize the network and to calculate measures of centrality using in-degree and out-degree correlations.

In order to measure the power of each stakeholder, the study used a three dimensional power model developed by Hasanagas (2004). In this quantitative analysis, the power of each actor of the network was defined in terms of how trusted the actor is, how irreplaceable the actor is perceived to be, and the incentives that the actor gives to other actors in the network.

Power= $[\text{Trust}\,(\%) + \text{Incentives}\,(\%) + \text{Irreplaceability}\,(\%)\,]/3$

The most powerful stakeholders were investigated further by triangulation of qualitative interviews, written documents and external sources like statistics or reports.

In assessing the outcomes of CF, the study focused in those which were in clear relation to goals formulated in public programs for community forestry (Krott et al. 2008). Using the overall goal of sustainability such goals were classified in economic, ecological and social dimensions.

Results and Discussion

The results of the network analysis show that the network of Yumisím has a greater number of connections (ties) between actors (56 out of 156 possible connections) than the network of Santa Rosa (38 out of 132 possible connections). Due to this greater number of ties, the network of Yumisím may have alternative ways to satisfy needs. Actors may have access to, and be able to call on more of the resources of the network, as a whole.

By further evaluating the CF networks of both case studies, similarities in terms of network size and composition were found (see Table 1). Communal, governmental and aid actors occupy central positions in both networks. Communal actors, who have the right to use the forest resource, as well as the government actors, responsible for issuing permits for the harvesting and marketing of forest resources, are irreplaceable in their roles within the networks.

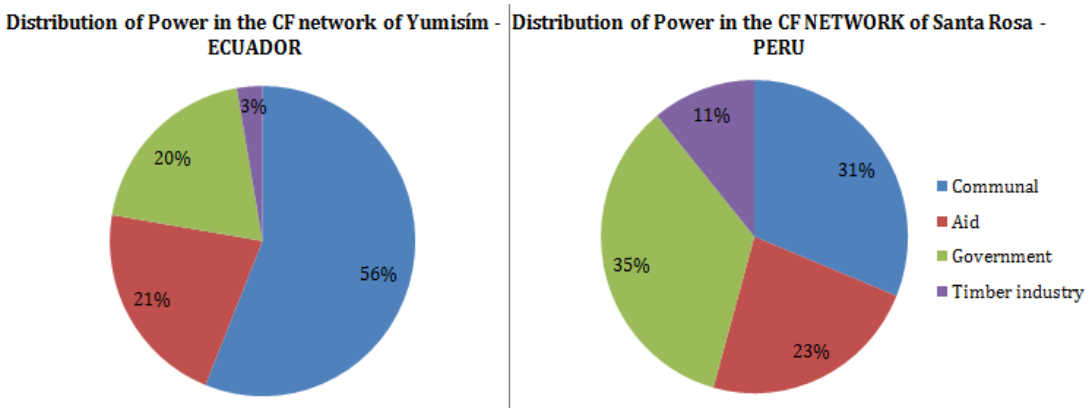
Table 1. Actors making up the community forest networks in Yumisím (Ecuador) and Santa Rosa (Peru)

Actors making up the community forest network in Yumisím	**13**
Governmental Stakeholders	**3**
Profit oriented	0
Non profit oriented	3
Non Governmental Stakeholders	**10**
Profit oriented	2
- Timber Industry	2
Non profit oriented	8
- Aid Actors	3
- Communal Actors	5

Actors making up the community forest network in Santa Rosa	**12**
Governmental Stakeholders	**2**
Profit oriented	0
Non profit oriented	2
Non Governmental Stakeholders	**10**
Profit oriented	6
- Timber Industry	6
Non profit oriented	4
- Aid Actors	2
- Communal Actors	2

On the other hand, main differences were found in the way power is distributed among each network (see Figure 1): in the Yumisím CF network, the power is predominantly focused on communal actors. Ergo, if alliances are stricken in order to achieve common interests, these have the clear potential to dominate over the interests of other actors in the network. In Santa Rosa's CF network, governmental actors hold the greatest power, thus, it is them who can assert their interests.

Figure 1. Distribution of power in the CF networks of Yumisím and Santa Rosa



In both networks, the Aid actors are seen as trustworthy institutions and as maximum providers of incentives. Yet, they are not considered irreplaceable to the operation of the network. In the CF of Yumisím, the Aid actors with stronger presence in the network have been working in the area for over 8 years. During this time period, they have implemented strategies aimed at achieving the sustainability of the CF system, e.g. avoiding paternalism by charging for technical support and regency services. In contrast, in the case of Peru, we find a long list of developing agencies that had worked with Santa Rosa in the past. All had remained in the area during the lifetime of specific projects, and withdrew at the end of them. Under these circumstances, despite the good intentions that those institutions may have had, it was unlikely that medium and long term strategies –required in the forestry sector-- could have been implemented.

The Timber Industry actors, which represent the market demand, didn't assumed main roles in any of the case studies. In general terms, they have no active role in the development of CF. Yet, they have a strong power in determining many of the outcomes of CF, which was not explicitly reflected in the power network analyses: They set market prices (turning timber commercialization activities in a profitable or not profitable business for indigenous communities) and they demand only a few number of timber species (making sustainable forest management more difficult).

Assessing the outcomes of CF by evaluating social, economic and ecological indicators, overall positive results in both case studies were found. An important part of these positive results can be attributed to the existence of communal forest enterprises (CFEs).

In the CF of Yumisím, as well as in the CF of Santa Rosa, the creation of CFEs has been driven by Aid actors committed to sustainable forest management. These enterprises promote, inter alia, capacity building and the generation of local jobs, which helps in alleviating rural poverty. By operating under the national forest legal framework, they also promote the formalization of the forest sector. Both CFEs are in an early stage of business development and therefore have productivity and profit levels that don't allow them to achieve economic sustainability yet. Both CFEs have developed important technical skills, but still need to train entrepreneurial skills in order to ensure occupying a strategic position in the value chain of forest products. The Aid actors play a key role in developing these capabilities.

The legal framework that regulates the access to forests is also crucial in determining the level of benefits that different actors may obtain from CF. In the case of Ecuador, to obtain a logging permit (SFUP type) lasts 7 to 15 days. Here, the harvesting of the forest is done almost entirely at the finca (or farm) level with contracts of 1 year (short-term, small areas) and the investment necessary to exploit forests comes from the landowner. In Peru, the system is quite different. Forest management is conducted through large forest concessions granted for periods of up to 40

years (large areas, medium and long term). The process of obtaining a logging permit (corresponding to an Annual Operation Plan) lasts 3 to 4 months, and there are reports indicating that the process took more than a year. It is the community that makes the investment (in the case of Santa Rosa, also through the CFE). In this sense, the Ecuadorian regulatory framework promotes easier accessibility to forest resources than the Peruvian one.

In the CF of Yumisím, a membership in the Governing Council of the Shuar Arutam People (CGPSHA) is of importance. This institution takes the lead in developing Life Plans, Shuar regulations for forest management (that respect national forestry regulations), creation of CFEs for the protection of forests and the provision of information. This organization articulates its partners and seeks external resources, and also helps in resolving forestry-related political and social issues. In the case of Santa Rosa, there is no higher institution fulfilling those functions. ANAP, which is the indigenous organization that represents all native communities of the Pichis Valley, is more focused in defending the indigenous rights than in the above mentioned duties.

Conclusions

In the case study of the Yumisím Centro, in Ecuador, it came to be known that the key factors determining the outcomes of CF were predominantly internal stakeholders (communal actors). For the case study of de Santa Rosa de Chívis in Peru, it was recorded that the key factors determining the outcomes of CF were primarily the external stakeholders (non communal actors).

The analyzed communities have begun a process of adapting the management of their forests to each country's laws. From these processes in motion, both CF cases have created forms of communal enterprises in order to promote marketing of the timber from their forest. Both of them are trying to stop illegal logging and the indiscriminate use of their forest resources. Both call for the conservation of their environments. And, in both cases, international cooperation funds channeled through local NGOs aim to support these processes.

Yet, substantial differences exist between the two case studies. A major divergence between them lies in the legal frameworks in which they are inserted, with significant discrepancies in the way Ecuador and Peru view the exploitation of their forests. For these particular case studies, the Ecuadorian regulatory framework seems to promote easier accessibility to forest resources than the Peruvian one.

This study makes visible the various social, economic and ecological benefits of CF. However, the implementation of CF, as seen in both case studies, requires technical, financial and managerial that, to varying degrees, is beyond the scope of communal actors. The need for intensive external aid creates situations of dependency and thereby calls into question the sustainability of the CF initiatives.

In order to achieve this sustainability, it is necessary to support local actors in the development of self-management skills, besides suitable financial, managerial and technical skills.

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