



Tropentag, September 17-19, 2014, Prague, Czech Republic

“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

The Response of Formal Institutions to Forest Governance Issues in the Bolivian Amazon

APPIE VAN DE RIJT¹, WALTER CANO CARDONA², TINA BAUER¹, NORBERT WEBER³

¹*Technische Universität Dresden, Inst. of International Forestry and Forest Products: Tropical Forestry, Germany*

²*Centre for International Forest Research (CIFOR), Indonesia*

³*Technische Universität Dresden, Inst. of Forest Economics and Forest Management Planning: Forest Policy and Forest Resource Economics, Germany*

Abstract

This poster reviews the academic knowledge on the under-representation of local needs in forest policy in Bolivia and the response of formal institutions. It is positioned in the process of adapting forest management policy to the rights and necessities of forest dependent communities. The rights of peasant and indigenous communities are recognized by the 1996 forest law, but the right to use forest resources was limited. The law had a strong focus on industrial timber extraction, and did not provide an equitable access to forest resources, nor did it correspond with rural communities' needs. For instance, communities were only allowed to commercialise their timber resources via forest management or deforestation plans. To comply with these requirements communities mostly depended on large companies to design and execute the management plans or had to sell their timber rights directly to the company. Both cases often result in disadvantageous deals for the communities. These shortcomings have been pointed out by academics and NGOs since the implementation of the forest law in 1996. These findings have been supported by an increasing amount of literature. In response, various ad hoc forest regulations have been designed and implemented in an attempt to satisfy local needs, such as small authorisations for community members to commercialise timber individually. The responses from both governmental and non-governmental institutions during the last 18 years have been analysed. The findings are based on a research conducted between March and June 2014 in cooperation with CIFOR, as part of a MSc thesis for TU Dresden. The study contributed CIFOR's project which aims to understand the dynamics between timber markets and investment in the Western Amazonian region. Fieldwork consisted of interviews with key-actors such as governmental and non-governmental institutions, community representatives and community members involved in the small scale timber production in either peasant or indigenous rural communities.

Keywords: Bolivia, forest policy, formal institutions, rural needs