



University of Natural Resources
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Summary: Future Forests

Forest management, forest use and land tenure are critical factors touching many of the Sustainable Development Goals. Forests provide timber, fuel wood, forage for livestock and raw material for paper production. Non-timber forest products contribute to livelihoods and serve as sources of food. Forest tenure determines who can use which resources under which conditions. As in many areas, gender equality is still to be reached.

What can we do to render forest use more sustainable, ecologically sound and fair? Which rules hinder the sustainable use and management of forests? Which tools can we employ to change them? What type of training and higher education supports a transition to more sustainable ways of forest use and management?

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IS ONE KEY TO MORE RESILIENCE

Despite being of over-proportional global importance, - more than 80% of the world's drinking water comes from mountain areas - mountain forests are frequently poverty traps, **Georg Gratzer**, head of BOKU's Mountain Forestry Programme, explained. Poverty is often higher than in adjacent regions, production conditions and infrastructure are poor, as is participation in political decision processes. For Georg Gratzer, education, and especially tertiary education, is a lever to improve this situation.

GOVERNANCE NEEDS TO SUPPORT LOCALS

Anne Larson, principal scientist with CIFOR, used examples from Nicaragua and Peru to draw attention to governance as one of the main drivers of deforestation and land degradation. Often indigenous people have no title to land they have been using for generations, and are in danger of being driven out by those who obtain property or tenure rights. Or, they do have a title, but law is not enforced properly and they are expelled illegally. Low prices for rainforest land further support the encroachment of colonist farmers or oil companies into tropical forests. Larson calls this collective action failure, and stressed how power relations can shift even further with newcomer villagers moving in and more non-indigenous politicians being elected, who might not necessarily place sustainable forest management over quickly yielding exploitation of resources.



Which levers can we employ to render forest management and use more sustainable and fair, was Michael Hauser's question to the audience and the speakers.



Capacity development is indispensable for rendering forest use and management more sustainable and fair, argued Georg Gratzer.



'I'm a bottom-up person, this is where my heart lies,' says Anne Larson, 'but it's not enough.'

INCLUSION AND DIALOGUE ARE VITAL FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Many challenges to forestry come from other sectors, including agriculture, the livestock industry, or the energy sector (e.g.: oil companies, etc.). For **Esther Mwangi**, who leads CIFOR's Nairobi hub, inclusion and dialogue are the means to prevent arising conflicts from escalating. 'Reforms can be sabotaged by those who feel excluded,' she said. In her opinion, multi-stakeholder forums are more than ever needed to bring all different groups together that might be touched by changes in forest use.

A CALL FOR TRUE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN STATE AND CITIZENS

Mwangi lined out that the most consistent actors over time and space have been states, holding also rather consistent mandates. In her opinion, the state should have a strong influence, but shift from the traditional, authoritative top-down approach to matching the laws to the systems that have for long sustained forests.

PHOENIX REVISITED: DO WE NEED DESTRUCTION TO CHANGE?

In the following discussion, **Michael Hauser** asked whether deforestation is a necessary side effect of economic growth, similar to what Europe experienced during industrialisation. Audience and panellists agreed that forest transition theory is no natural law: we do not need to scrape past destruction to change.

NEW NARRATIVES ARE NEEDED

However, what is needed is a new definition of the goal. Esther Mwangi demurred whether economic growth by itself is what we should aspire at, resonating with Georg Gratzer's call for a new narrative of how we want to live. He stressed the importance of looking at what could be gained by shifting power relations: more equity. The definition of prosperity should also reflect our values and how we want the world we live in to look like.

Forest use and management have become globalized issues. Grassroots movements are vital to challenge and eventually transform the current prevailing dogmata, but they need to be complemented by global and governmental movements. 'There is no magic bullet: we need a new paradigm, and we need new thought leaders,' said Anne Larson.



Esther Mwangi diagnosed mismatches between local practices and the law: 'Often officials try to enforce something that is totally absurd for locals.'



'Take the policy makers to see the place, and perhaps they will understand why they should consider building the road around, and not through the forest,' says Sara Kaweesa, doctoral student at CDR and long-time NGO leader in Uganda.