Forest Governance Innovations:

Assessing their Pro-Poor and Democratic Effect in Cameroon and the Philippines

Ruben de Koning

**Abstract:**

Tropical forests tend to attract poverty. The state is often weak and outsiders frequently exploit resources without considering local communities. The last ten years governments of many tropical forest countries have, together with development partners, implemented innovative forest governance solutions to counter these trends. Whether governance innovations are pro-poor and democratic is not always obvious though. This discussion paper highlights some of the limiting factors with the help of two case studies: Community Based Forest Management in Cameroon, and Multi-sectoral Forest Protection Committees in the Philippines. Both cases demonstrate that commercial forest exploitation is crucial to deliver any pro-poor effect. Cameroon has better prospects in this regard. In turn, local and national demand for reform is crucial to achieve necessary checks and balances in the management system. Here the Philippines experience appears more promising.

**Acknowledgements**

Ruben de Koning is an independent consultant and former research associate on land governance at the Oslo Governance Centre.

We thank Deborah A. Barry at the Centre for International Forestry Research [CIFOR] and Saturino M. Borras Jr. at Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, for their valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper.

Earlier versions of this paper were also shared with country offices of UNDP.

**Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this brief are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations Development Programme or the UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, or UN Member States.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| undp_logo |  |
| **United Nations**  **Development Programme**  Oslo Governance Centre  Democratic Governance Group  Bureau for Development Policy  Inkognitogata 37,  Postboks 2847 Solli  0204 Oslo, Norway  Phone +47 22 12 16 00  Fax +47 22 12 16 01  [oslogovcentre@undp.org](mailto:oslogovcentre@undp.org)  [www.undp.org/oslocentre](http://www.undp.org/oslocentre) |  |

Introduction

In the last ten years, there has been a rapid growth in national and international policy initiatives to promote good forest governance in tropical forest countries. The term good forest governance emerged in the early 1990’s in debates on forest decentralization, corruption and illegal logging in tropical forest countries, and has since guided a wide range of governance innovations. These include community based forest management, forest law enforcement and trade initiatives, company-based forest certification and third-party forest monitoring.

Governments in tropical countries increasingly realize that the high level of central control over forestland is untenable, and many have recently passed new legislation to increase community control. While forest management and tenure arrangements are starting to shift power from governments and private companies to local forest users, tropical forests environments are still associated with profound governance deficits. These are arguably more profound in moist tropical forest than in dry forests because of the former’s high market value (Brown 2001: 2).

Forest governance innovations need to grapple with several demands. The most obvious is the ever-increasing demand for timber production and forest conservation. Many countries’ forest management policies have until now been designed to either maximize profits or to minimize human interference – in both cases intensifying state and ‘expert’ control over forests (RRI 2008). Such policies are unlikely to benefit –indeed sometimes risk negatively affecting - the people who live in forests. At the same time communities, indigenous groups and other local small-scale users are increasingly demanding clarification, recognition and registration of ownership and user-rights, in order to enhance their livelihood opportunities. Legal reform in 18 countries since 2002 has increased community and indigenous management and ownership rights over forests (Sunderlin et al. 2008).

Whether new legal and policy reforms will help to improve forest people’s tenure as well as livelihoods depends on the manner in which reforms are implemented and on the existence of broader enabling economic, social and environmental policies. Larson and Ribot (2007) point out that unequal access to resources can lead to partial and biased implementation of seemingly ‘fair’ and ‘neutral’ forest policies in favor of urban-based and local elites at the expense of local smallholders. They argue that in order to provide benefits to communities, forest policies and regulations must explicitly redress access asymmetries in addition to establishing and strengthening substantive rights.

This paper provides evidence-based understanding of state-society interactions generated through forest governance innovations and assesses the democratic and pro-poor character of such governance innovations. The first section of the paper clarifies key linkages between forest governance and poverty. The second section provides a definition for pro-poor and democratic governance of forest resources. The third section considers community based forest management and enterprising through the case of Cameroon, which can be considered exemplary for Central and West Africa. The fourth section considers state-civil society partnerships for forest monitoring through the case of Multi-sectoral Forest Protection Committees in the Philippines. The concluding section compares the two cases and provides some policy recommendations.

1. Forest, governance and poverty links

There are some compelling reasons to investigate forest governance innovations from a pro-poor and democratic governance lens. Forests and other wooded lands cover 32 % of the world’s land area, compared to about 12 % used permanently for crop production (FAO 2004). The World Commission on Forest and Sustainable Development in 1999 estimated that 350 million of the world’s poorest people depend almost entirely for their subsistence and survival needs on forest. A further 1 billion people in the developing world depend on remnant woodlands, on homestead tree gardens, and on agro-forestry systems for their essential fuel-wood, food and fodder needs (WCFSD 1999). Although figures are disputed it can safely be said that forests, particularly in the tropics, have vital livelihood functions for almost a third of the world’s rural poor.

While crucial for many people’s livelihoods, forest areas within countries are often disproportionally poor (Sunderlin 2008: 11). Forest remoteness and low population densities increase the cost of service delivery and reduce economic return on public investment. Private and public investment in (agro) forestry activities does not match the kind of investment made in agricultural sectors outside the forest (RRI 2008: 6), creating a double disadvantage for the forest poor. In some countries forest communities suffer from environmental and thereby livelihood destruction caused by commercial forest exploitation (Colchester et al. 2006). In addition to forests representing pockets of poverty within countries, densely forested developing countries on average experience slightly lower growth and higher poverty rates than sparsely forested countries (Alemagi et al. 2007).[[1]](#footnote-1)

As to the correlation between governance performance and forest, there is no conclusive correlation on a global scale between high and low forest covered countries (Ibid.).[[2]](#footnote-2) However, in Latin America and Asia, high forest countries tend to perform worse than the regional average in terms of one or more indicators This may be attributed to the opportunities timber revenues create for rent seeking by state agencies and to possibilities that forest industries open for individual gain rather than for the public good. For example, the timber booms during the 1990s in Indonesia, Philippines, and Malaysia (Sabah and Sawarak) generated institutional breakdown, with forest management institutions being transformed to acquire the largest possible control over rents that, in turn, were often used by political elites to reward supporters and silence opposition (Ross 2001).

Local governance issues are also important to consider. In many countries most intact forest areas are found along borders, remote from political and economic centers. This often results in low levels of identification with the state and limited extension of state power (Kaimowitz 2005). Also, due to low population numbers high levels of in- and out-migration, local forest communities, authorities and associations tend to be fragile and unstable, limiting capacities to negotiate collective benefits and rights withexternal state and private actors. Furthermore, as a result of limited state administrative services and complex and changing individual and collective entitlements to forest lands, forest dependent people often have low formal security of land and tree tenure.

1. What do we mean by pro-poor and democratic forest governance?

The correlation between (tropical) forests, poor governance, weak tenure, and high poverty signifies the need to enhance pro-poor and democratic outcomes when attempting to improve forest governance. Before investigating different innovations in selected countries, what do we mean by these terms?

Speaking of ‘the poor’ is from the outset problematic, as poverty relies not simply on objective indicators of income, assets and basic needs fulfilment but also on people’s subjective experience of poverty, which is often relational and depends on experienced levels of power and autonomy. This does, however, not mean that poverty concerns are not justified as a guiding principle in development. The term ‘human development’ deployed by UNDP, while having poverty reduction as ultimate goal, recognizes that it can only achieve this ‘by expanding capabilities people have, to be free and able to lead lives that they would choose to’ (UNDP 2002).

Democratic governance is governance that promotes human development. Governance comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences (UNDP 1997). As a concept, democratic governance goes beyond the efficiency of institutions (and rules), by aiming to make institutions and rules fair, and developed through a democratic process in which all people have a real political voice (adapted from Fukuda-Parr and Ponzio 2002).

Pro-poor governance is one dimension, or a sub-set of, democratic governance as it is explicitly concerned with one group in society, the poor. The pro-poorness of decision making processes depends on the extent to which policy processes involve the poor; the extent to which policy content targets the poor and the extent to which the policies and policy outcomes actually benefit the poor, thus distinguishing between policy formulation, policy content and policy outcome.

Forest governance is associated with the government agencies where official authority and power is located, including ministries of forestry, agriculture, environment and other regulatory agencies (WRI 2003). However forest governance goes beyond what is decided in formal policy processes and results in rules and laws; it includes how these rules, laws and rights are exercised, upheld and enforced on the ground. This is much affected by how government agencies interact with non-governmental, customary and institutions and practices as well as the private sector and private individuals.

Good forest governance, in turn, is governance that best meets the needs and goals of forest dependent peoples in particular as well as the country as a whole through democratic forest governance processes, e.g. participatory policy making, fair and accessible legal provisions and equitable implementation and enforcement.

3. Forest governance innovations

Translating the above, the case studies below analyze formal processes of policy formulation, and the content of laws and regulations, as well as the way they are exercised and result in outcomes on the ground that either meet or not meet the needs of forest dependent peoples. Pro-poorness is achieved when governance innovations enhance assets and capabilities of the poor. Democratic governance happens when stakeholders, including the poor, are included with real voice and power to negotiate forest governance innovations. Both elements have to be regarded in each stage of the policy process, by looking at actors, rules, power relations and discourses involved and associated with the innovation.

3.1. Community-based forest management: the case of Cameroon

Community based forest management (CBFM) is in many countries viewed as a key component of forest governance reforms. CBFM, as part of wider processes of decentralization, is believed to provide greater control over local resources to local government entities and community councils. These are potentially more responsive to the needs of forest dependent peoples, including the poorest and most disadvantaged, and, therefore, capable of generating better access for such groups to forests and more benefits deriving from their exploitation. CBFM as form of decentralization of forest management would, furthermore, allow forest users to exercise their democratic rights, e.g. to contribute to decision making processes and hold representatives accountable.

There is no guarantee that decentralization or CBFM will achieve these goals, unless there is strong recognition on the side of the state of the need for actual rights transfer to local communities. Still, even when this does occur new or empowered local forest management institutions are not necessarily more democratic and responsive to different segments of society than central authorities. Decentralization even when labelled ‘democratic,’ rarely creates empowered *and* democratic local institutions – it is usually one or the other – but instead often fosters privatization, NGO-ization and de-concentration (Ribot 2008). In the absence of fair electoral processes, local power-holders then become upwardly accountable to those business, political and development actors whose policies and projects provide the means and legitimacy to execute power.

3.1.1. Content

Cameroon’s forestry decentralization has three major components: fiscal decentralization of revenues to *communes[[3]](#footnote-3)* and villages adjacent to logging concessions; community forestry through newly established governing structures; and communal forestry at the *commune* level. The focus here will be on Community Forests (CF).

The 1994 Forest Act separates the humid forest zone between a permanent and non-permanent forest domain (through Zoning plans, following the adoption of the code) (Rep. Of Cameroon 1994, 1995). The permanent forest domain comprises conservation areas and long-term logging concessions. The non-permanent forest domain allows agriculture, community forestry and short-term logging permits. The Act for the first time offers local communities the chance to gain control over forest resources (normally for a 25 year period) but affirms the state as ultimate owner of the national forest estate.

Any portion of the non-permanent forest domain can be delimitated by local communities, who acquire the right to harvest timber and non-timber forest products. Communities can sell logging rights or log themselves. Either way, financial revenues are supposed to be managed and invested in social projects by newly established management institutions drawn from the local community. The requirement of log processing inside the CFs should guarantee employment creation, even if an external actor undertakes logging.

While community forestry can bring significant economic benefits to local forest communities, this potential is limited from the outset. First of all because of implementation difficulties that are, *inter alia*, the result of complex and expensive procedures, the proliferation of several legal management entities, and a poor definition of what constitutes the community. The required management plan can cost as much as USD 55,000 and take up to two years to complete (Smith 2006). As a result of the complexity and cost of the process, external assistance from logging companies and NGOs has been necessary in all cases observed by Oyono (2004) up to 2004.

Secondly CFs, as provided for alongside other concessions, are not very competitive. Although established in the non-permanent forest domain, environmental impact assessments are mandatory and management plans must observe environmental sustainability. Short-term logging concessions, or *ventes de coupes*, likewise allocated in the non-permanent domain to private companies, require no management plan and there are no restrictions regarding logging methods (Rep. of Cameroon 2005). Competitiveness of CFs *vis-à-vis* forest concessions in the permanent forest domain is strained by the fact that most valuable timber trees have already been logged from the non- permanent forest domain, i.e. the diameter of a tree from a CF is usually less than a fourth of one from an industrial concession.

3.1.2. Policy formulation

The 1994 Forest Act and community forestry provisions therein, are the result of a compromise between the Cameroonian government – trying to maintain their grip on as much forest land to allocate for industrial concessions – and foreign donors – attempting to decentralize forest management in a bid to achieve both poverty reduction and sustainability gains. It is no secret that the Act was part of the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Program, the implementation decree for the new law being made conditional to a 1994 Economic Recovery Credit (Essama-Nssah and Gockowski, 2000).

The Expatriate consultants who drafted the Forest Law conducted very minimal consultations with stakeholders in forestry issues. Information campaigns were restricted to some localities without amplification at national levels. Ordinary people were not consulted during these meetings (Ibid.). Foreign consultants also established the *plan de zonage*. To define and establish boundaries between forestlands denoted for one or the other usage, they relied on satellite imagery and aerial photos rather than field verification with local populations and authorities (Côté 1993).

After the law was drawn up and management zones defined, the Act was forced through the General Assembly (GA), without including any of the modifications called for by opposed deputies from forest zone constituencies (Griaziani and Burnham 2005). Objections and modifications centered on the concern that the Forest Act would open Cameroon’s forest up to outside investors. Calls were made for measures to protect and strengthen the position of domestic logging operators, community based enterprises and local processing industries.[[4]](#footnote-4) Donor pressure on the government, alongside limited legislative power and fierce competition between branches of government precluded any serious consideration of objections.

Some legal modifications were achieved in 2001 a result of continuous pressure from forest constituencies, civil society groups, parliamentarians, and other international donors, notably the Department for International Development DFID. The first was the right of communities to exploit timber under a self-management regime (*en regie*) and through association with a licensed operator (*par accord*). The second was that communities neighboring forests were granted a ‘‘pre-emption right’’ that gives them two years to claim a CF before it can be awarded to a company in the form of a short term logging concession (Ribot and Oyono 2005).

3.1.3. Policy outcomes

Despite widespread criticism, forest reform in Cameroon marks an end to state monopoly over forests and forestry decisions, paving the way for local management and access to income generations from commercial logging (Diaw and Oyono 1998). Indeed, many communities have, despite high transaction costs, obtained CF concessions. Between 1998 and 2007 a total of 167 CFs were attributed to village communities (Oyono et al. 2007). CFs cover close to 5% of Cameroons total forest area, against 25% that is allocated for industrial timber concessions.[[5]](#footnote-5).This figure suggests moderate progress, but what are the local level outcomes in terms of establishing democratic governance institutions and reducing poverty?

Those pointing to so-called ‘elite capture’ of newly established management committees have downplayed the optimism surrounding decentralized forest management (Oyono et al. 2007, Oyono 2004). Cameroons CF experiment started in a time of recession and structural adjustments when many civil servants were let off and educated youth failed to enrol in formal employment. Opening up of opportunities in small scale timber enterprising in community forestry drew many unemployed educated urban elites back to the villages to mobilize support to establish CFs, start application procedures and negotiate with logging operators. This new forestry elite has come to dominate management institutions, at times in coalition but often also in competition with local chiefs, elders and lineage heads.

The law broadly prescribes a consultative meeting of all components of the community which must be held to appoint the members of the new institution. The law does not detail the method of appointment. One study finds that among the 14 committees investigated only 10 % of the members were actually elected in a consultative meeting (Oyono 2004). Committee members are supposed to be an interface between their constituencies and external actors. However, being self-appointed, accountability is more often than not, directed towards external actors: the logging companies whose equipment is needed; administrators and local forestry officials that provide legal documentation and approve management plans; and development projects that in many cases support community forestry establishment.

The relationship between revenue generation/ distribution and the management style of community forestry has not been carefully researched. One study does suggest that the community benefits (income derived from revenues and employment) in CFs where timber production takes place under an agreement with an industrial operator, is on average almost twice as low as in cases where communities manage the logging operations themselves and directly sell sawn timber in the market (Ezzine de Blas et. al 2008).[[6]](#footnote-6) In turn, communities are more likely to undertake timber exploitation on their own, the closer they are to markets. External support provided by international aid agencies and NGO’s plays a moderately positive role, but only when support continues after establishment into the actual management phase (ibid.).

With regards to the distributional effect of different CF management types, quantitative studies are lacking to date. Most quantitative studies focus on decentralized forestry tax revenues accruing from timber harvesting in large-scale concessions. Individual case studies show that CF revenues do contribute to community welfare, when invested in school buildings, housing improvements, agricultural projects, and other infrastructure and income generating activities.

However, considerable misappropriation, self-remuneration and parallel/hidden negotiations between influential committee members and timber companies are frequently observed (Assembe 2003 a,b). As a result, revenues either do not flow into community coffers or are not spent on public goods. For instance, in Kongo village of the estimated $29,730 generated from 2002 to 2003 only $9,580 was spent for economic or social purposes, while the rest vanished into the pockets of committee members (Oyono 2005). In Mbeki village only 12 % of $7,920 produced was invested in the construction of classrooms, while the rest money was divided among supporters of the chairman of the management committee (Ibid.).

From studies it can safely be concluded that a select group, usually of elderly male, educated individuals, appropriates the larger share of benefits deriving from CFs. This money does however circulate in the local rural economy, and can be expected to trickle down to those excluded from the entire process, youth and women in particular. However, there are no guarantees for this. Although younger men generally benefit from employment opportunities, which can be of great importance to local livelihoods, often much of the workforce is brought in from outside by timber companies[[7]](#footnote-7). Harvesters of Non-Timber Forest Products, usually women, risk seeing their access to forest restricted as a result of logging operations.

3.2. Forest monitoring: the case of the Philippines

Besides community forestry, forest monitoring arrangements have increasingly evolved in tropical forest counties, carrying a similar potential to enhance citizen/ civil society control over forest benefits, policies and management (although not devolving rights over forest lands). Monitoring arrangements are diverse in nature:

* *Independent Forest Monitoring* (IFM) concerns third party activities undertaken by an NGO or private company on behalf of and in formal agreement with the state to monitor the performance of government agencies that regulate forestry operations (see Brown et al. 2004). A good example of IFM is that of the Independent Observer in Cameroon and Cambodia, which was assigned to the NGO Global Witness in 1999 (later taken over by private audit companies), as part of international donors’ aid package to both countries.
* *External forest monitoring* is a broader category, which implies third party monitoring of forest operations, not necessarily with the intention of monitoring the activities of state agencies. An example is Indonesia where two environmental NGO’s have since 1997 gathered and provided information about illegal logging and other forest crimes. Although their role was not formalized in any way, information has been much solicited for by the Indonesian Ministry of Forests (Brown and Luttrell 2004a).
* A final category can be labelled *embedded forest monitoring*, referring to state initiated multi-stakeholder partnerships responsible for multiple functions in forest policy making and governance processes. This type of monitoring bears the largest potential to devolve forest management rights to communities and will therefore be elaborated below using the Philippines as an example.

While diverse in nature, monitoring arrangements are inspired by widespread concern over illegal logging, forest crimes and corruption. It is estimated that illegal forestry activities deprive governments of billions of dollars in lost revenues, and cause massive destruction to forest environments and people’s livelihoods. In addition to performing technical functions – e.g. detecting and reporting legal infractions – forest monitoring can help to ensure that laws and regulations are implemented and improved so as to meet forest policy objectives. Forest monitoring can also enhance greater public participation in monitoring forest policy, laws, regulations and management, so as to ensure equitable pro-poor outcomes.

However, intensified forest law enforcement in tropical forest countries – much insisted on by foreign donors – in many cases has proven to be biased against small producers by ‘criminalizing’ artisan forest operations, as well as other forest based hunting and gathering activities (see also Kaimowitz 2003), without addressing causes of such behavior, e.g. expense, degree of complication of procedures, high transaction costs or corruption of administrative staff. The monitoring of forestry practices and law enforcement activities must be sensitive to such issues of equity, in order to have a pro-poor effect.

3.2.1. Content

Multi-Sectoral Forest Protection Committees (MFPCs) were set up in the Philippines from 1992 onwards as part of the Philippine Government’s Environment and Natural Resources Sectoral Adjustment Loan Program (ENR-SECAL) – executed with the assistance of the World Bank. MFPC’s have been set up at the lowest level of government administration, as well as at municipal, provincial, and regional levels. A total of 314 committees were established by 1999, but this number declined rapidly thereafter due to drying up of World Bank support, with about 100 remaining by 2005 (DENR 2008). Despite the decline of the initiative, the government, through the Department for Natural Resources (DENR), has recently manifested renewed commitment to strengthen existing and reactivate formerly well-functioning MFPC’s (see DENR, FAO, and UNDP 2003).

MFPC members are drawn from representatives from civil society groups (NGO’s, churches, academia and media), local (indigenous) communities, military and police units, local government units and DENR offices. They are assigned three major functions (adapted from DENR 1995). Firstly, they serve as a collection point for information on illegal forestry activities by tapping into the independent networks to which members belong. Secondly, they act as a special monitoring arm of the DENR that receives and discusses DENR reports, specific to routine, monitoring, apprehension and prosecution, and advise DENR and other relevant parties on these activities.[[8]](#footnote-8) Thirdly, they mobilize support for, communicate information on and sensitize communities and other constituencies regarding forest protection.

Besides performing forest monitoring and communication functions, committees have been involved in national policy reviews and performance evaluations of central government institutions through the creation and constitution of a National Federation of MFPC’s in 1994. The 1994 Manual of Operating Procedure includes this element of policy review, and extends the MFPC’s mandate to carry out surveillance, monitoring and apprehension, as well as contribute to local livelihood development.

MFPCs are clearly set up to allow for more democratic and pro-poor forest governance. Democratic functioning of the MFPCs system rests on its innovative networking approach. Individual members represent, report back to and receive inputs and queries from their respective interest groups. This way the system enables various interest groups, including poor forest communities, to be represented and directly involved in decision-making (Oliva 1998). Internal checks between individual committee members reduce the committees’ susceptibility to bribe payments.

At the outset, however, a few remarks should be made. The selection of members by DENR consultants takes place after careful screening so that only those with a demonstrated concern for forest protection are invited to join (Cruz and Tapia 2005). Poor forest communities dependent on artisan, mostly illegal logging activities, are therefore unlikely to be represented, although they are stakeholders’ with a legitimate interest in the forest. Also there are no requirements of balance between interest groups from which members are drawn. As a result, committees risk being captured by dominant or overrepresented members, going against the independence sought in their Terms of References. A final critical element is the lack of any remuneration for members, which bears the risk of rent seeking from commercial forestry activities.

3.2.2. Policy process

The shift from a centralized and highly destructive forest management regime to a more participatory mode of governance focusing on sustainable management, rather than exploitation, started during the 1980’s, after the downfall of the regime of President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986. Forest protection and management measures such as export and logging bans, the delineation of protection and production forest, the legal definition of illegal logging, and a new concession allocation system, required improved control mechanisms. Forest protection and law enforcement formed one of the first forest governance domains in which a multi-sectored approach was piloted. This was in line with simultaneous processes of decentralization of forest management; the inclusion of Civil Society Organisations in certain forestry activities; and the recognition of indigenous people’s tenure rights.

The MFPC initiative was principally explored to strengthen limited law enforcement capacities of DENR field personnel, but also to correct malpractices of enforcement officers. MFPC concept was conceived by the DENR, and based on the assumption that broader participation in law enforcement would improve credibility and effectiveness of the effort. At the same time the MFPC initiative was a response to increasing NGO and civil society activism and advocacy for improved forest governance after the ‘Peoples Revolution’ of 1986 (Cruz and Tapia 2005).

Furthermore, the MFPC program, particularly through awareness raising campaigns, generated citizen mobilization for forest protection either spontaneous/ case based or through the creation of several new environmental and forest ‘watch groups’ (Ibid.). Despite the drying up of government funding at the end of financial assistance provided by the ENR-SECAL, in some regions financially independent non-governmental bodies sustained the operation of MFPCs, often in collaboration with local government leaders championing action against illegal logging.

3.2.3. Outcomes

As mentioned above MFPCs spread rapidly across the country during the 1990’s but went in decline afterwards when World Bank funding dried up and the government could not bear the costs on its own. Civil society demand to be included in forest monitoring and law enforcement, coupled with renewed international donor and national civil society interest, may revive the system in the near future.

The outcome of the MFPC initiative is usually presented in terms of reducing illegal logging activities. According to DENR, the collection of information and intelligence reports to which MFPCs contributed, led to the neutralization of 919 out of 1321 illegal logging hotspots between 1995 and 2001. The volume of confiscated timber declined significantly during the period 1993-98, *however the number of incidents rose dramatically in the same period*, with progressively less timber confiscated per incident (Cruz and Tapia 2005). These trends suggest that MFPCs helped to stop large-scale illegal timber operations, but was faced with an increase of small-scale illegal logging activities. The problem of illegal logging most likely did not disappear but rather took different forms as unemployed workers of larger companies started small-scale operations on their own to preserve their incomes.

It is argued that MFPCs have probably affected small-scale operators more than large-scale illegal loggers (Cruz and Pulhin 2006). For example the cancellation of Resource Utilisation Permits for environmental protection reasons is argued to have had adverse socioeconomic consequences for poor forest dependent communities in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanoa, and may even have contributed to further forest degradation (IPC 2004; Pulhin 2005). Some development oriented institutions, member to MFPCs, now explore ways to offer alternative livelihood opportunities as compensation for strict law enforcement, in an attempt to preserve the credibility of the MFPC system in the eyes of forest dependent populations. Positive experiences are, however, few and isolated (Cruz and Pulhin 2006). To date, there has been no comprehensive empirical analysis of overall poverty and equity impacts of the MFPC program.

With regard to promoting democratic checks and balances, MFPC’s have not only been allies to the DENR but have on numerous occasions also criticized field offices on their enforcement work (Brown and Luttrell 2004b). Provided with direct access to DENR documents and actual operations, MFPC’s have been particularly well able to identify and address and as a result reduce irregularities among MFPC-supervised DENR operatives and officials, and to evaluate the soundness of decisions regarding permits and licenses issuing (Malayang 2000).

However, the internal democratic character of MFPCs has not always been optimal. In some cases the committees were taken as vehicles for protectionist groups to ban all commercial forestry activities in their area of operation, often at the expense of local communities. In other cases, their control functions were undermined as a result of membership of parties involved in or benefiting from illegal forest operation, often Local Government Units (Cruz and Tapia 2005).

Despite these shortcomings, MFPCs in the Philippines represent a positive shift away from the highly centralized forestry administrations of the 1980s. The model also stands out in tropical timber producing countries, most of which have no provisions for broad-based civil society and community involvement in monitoring and law enforcement activities.

4. Comparison and recommendations

Forest governance innovations involve complex partnerships and arrangements between multiple partners. To analyze these one may look at four dimensions:

1. The *actors and coalitions*, including the organizations created by the arrangement.
2. The *rules*, which determine the way in which actors can participate in the arrangement (formal laws and regulations and also informal procedures for policy making)
3. The *power and resources*: power balance, differences in power, information and knowledge.
4. The *discourses* of the actors and coalitions: the verbal interchange of ideas; these ideas give meaning to physical and social realities. (Tatenhove *et al.*).[[9]](#footnote-9)
5. Upward and downward *accountability*:mechanisms of monitoring policy implementation by state authorities and lcoal community representatives.

The emergence of new policy 'discourses', like sustainable forest managements (SFM), forest law enforcement and community based management, have in recent years energized and informed forest governance arrangements in the tropics, including the country cases considered in this paper. A multitude of actors in these countries, including international donors, national governments, civil groups and communities and private companies perceive that their investment in and affiliation with new management concepts can conserve and free up new resources, both natural and financial. Coalitions of players are able to bring about legal and policy changes, providing for considerable decentralization of and plurality in forest management. Differences in power, information, knowledge and other financial resources, in turn, influence the extent to which legal and policy provisions are implemented and in whose interest.

Although both case studies reveal similar policy trajectories, dynamics between ‘actors’ were remarkably different, with larger donor pressure in Cameroon and more national ownership by national stakeholders in the Philippines. In Cameroon decentralization of forest management was suggested and conditioned by the World Bank, rather than a state reformist initiative. It neither emerged from popular demands from below for political liberalization and multi-partism in the beginning 1990s. In the Philippines the DENR sought assistance from international donors to aid a progressive forestry reform agenda that emerged during a wave of democratization and against the backdrop of gigantic forest loss during previous autocratic rule.

The fact that community forestry in Cameroon did not materialize from any demand emerging from forest communities can to some extent explain the capture of the process by local political elites in association with external enterprises, particularly in the early stages of reform. Communities and civil society organizations were neither involved the policy process, nor prepared and organized to make use of provisions on their own account and in the general benefit of the community. In contrast, the DENR assumed full ownership over the process along with an ever-growing number of civil society organizations and forest communities through their representatives, on whom implementation depended.

Another important difference houses in the ‘power and resources’ dimension of the arrangement, with Cameroonian CF being able to generate their own revenues and Philippine MFPCs depending on public funding. In Cameroon timber revenues can cover start-up and running costs of CFs, making them less dependent on external donor or government inputs (but often more on that of logging companies). Self-financing has clearly been lacking in the MFPC policy initiative where committees were indirectly funded from donor grants to the government. As a result only a small portion of MFPCs set up during the 1990’s were able to finance themselves after funding dried up in 1999. Furthermore, a strict forest protection agenda much inhibits self-financing of local MFPCs through revenues from community-based forestry enterprising.

Innovative and progressive forest policies have little pro-poor or democratic effect when little is done to increase and guarantee equitable access to direct commercial and subsistence benefits from forests to communities. In the Philippines it would be advisable for MFPCs to make more efforts to combine its regulatory and controlling functions with supporting revenue generation activities that are not only alternative to but also include small-scale logging. This implies legal reform that helps small scale producers enter the legal trade directly rather than through the formal large scale industries that tend to be able to buy their timber at low prices. Any external funding should focus on livelihood support, tenure clarification and forest enterprise development. MFPC operations would preferably be funded through revenue collection from regular forestry activities and fines from illegal forestry activities.

The cases of Cameroon and Philippines highlight a need to address upward and downward accountability. For example, Cameroon’s CFs deserves a fairer chance to compete with other logging concessions, without having to depend on external companies’ input. This can be achieved by bringing down transaction costs, simplifying regulations and offering long-term technical assistance to community enterprises. In addition, cooperation between adjacent CFs should be promoted to help them reach economies of scale in order to approach that of larger concessions. Rules concerning management committees’ start-up and operations, however, do need to be more democratic and enable citizens to hold their CF representatives to account. A review of Cameroon’s forestry laws and regulations through local consultation and parliamentary processes – hitherto never executed – could address these and other priority issues for harnessing local benefits from forest exploitation.

Literature

Alemagi, D., Samjee, A.S. and Davis, A. 2007. *Comparison of Economic Growth and Governance between High Forest and Low Forest Countries*. Washington DC: Rights and Resources Initiative.

Amanor K.J. 2003. *Natural and Cultural Assets and Participatory Forest Management in West Africa*. International Conference on Natural Assets, Conference Paper Series n°8. http://www.wrm.org.uy/countries/Africa/west.pdf.

Assembe, Samuel. 2003a. ‘Justice Environnementale, Gestion Durable et Manipulation des Revenus Forestiers: Une Evaluation des Impacts dans le Sud-Cameroun.’ Unpublished Research Report. Yaoundé: CIFOR.

Assembe, Samuel. 2003b. ‘Gouvernance Forestière au Cameroun: Cas du Village de Mboké.’ Internal Document. Yaoundé: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Brown, D. and Luttrell, C. 2004a. ‘Review of Independent Forest Monitoring.’ Report to DFID. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

Brown, D. and Luttrell, C. 2004b. Forest Law Enforcement and Governance: The Role of Independent Monitors in the Control of Forest Crime. *ODI Forestry Briefing,* No. 5. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Brown, D., Shepherd, G., Schreckenberg, K. and Wells, A. (2002). Forestry as an Entry Point for Governance Reform. *ODI Forestry Briefing*, No. 1. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

Brunner, J. and Ekoko, F. 2000. Cameroon, in F.J. Seymour and K.D.Navroz, eds., *The Right Conditions: The World Bank, Structural Adjustment and Forest Policy Reform.* Washington: World Resources Institute.

Colchester M., Monterrey N.S., Tomedes R., et al. 2006. *Forest Peoples, Customary Use and State Forests: The Case for Reform*. Paper presented to the 11th biennial congress of the International Association for the Study of Common Property, Bali, Indonesia, 19–23 June 2006.

Côté, S. 1993. *Plan zonage du Cameroun du Meridional*. Agence Canadienne de Développement International et Ministère de l’Environnement et des Forêts.

Cruz, V.O. and Tapia, A. 2005. A Review of Multi-Sectoral Forest Protection Committees. *ODI Forestry Briefing,* No.6. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Cruz, V.O. and Pulhin, J.M. 2006. Review of Multisectoral Forest Protection Committees in the Philippines. *Verifor Country Case Study 7.* London: Overseas Development Institute.

DENR, FAO and UNDP. 2003. ‘Revised Master Plan for Forestry Development.’ Report prepared by the Forest Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources with financial support from the United Nations Development Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Manila.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). 2008. ‘Forest Law Enforcement and Governance Strategies in the Philippines.’ Presentation during the

Asia Pacific Forestry Week, 22 April 2008, National Convention Center, Hanoi, Vietnam. <http://www.mtc.com.my/issues/images/stories/fao/parallel/tue/FLEG/Romeo%20Acosta%20FLEG%20Philippines.pdf>.

Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). 1995. Forestry Sector Administrative Order No. 17, May 20, 1995. Institutionalization of the Multi-Sectoral Forest Protection Communities Within The DENR System

Diaw, M.C. and Oyono P.R. 1998. Instrumentalité et Déficit des Itinéraires de Décentralisation de la Gestion des Ressources Naturelles au Cameroun. *Bulletin Arbres, Forêts et Communautés Rurales,* (15/16): 20-5.

Essama-Nssah B. and Gockowski, J. 2000. *Forest Sector Development in a Difficult Political Economy; An Evaluation of Cameroon's Forest Development and the World Bank.* Washington DC: World Bank Operations Evaluation Department.

Ezzine de Blas D., Ruiz Pérez M., Sayer J.A., et al. 2009. Cameroonian Community Forests: Conditions for Community Logging Management and the Influence of External Intervention. *World Development*, (37)2: 445-456*.*

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). 2004. FAOSTAT on-line statistical service. Rome: FAO. [http://apps.fao.org](http://apps.fao.org/).

Global Forest Watch. 2005. Interactive Forest Atlas of Cameroon. Washington DC., World Resources Institute.

Graziani, M., and Burnham P. 2005. Legal Pluralism in the Rain Forests of South Eastern Cameroon. in K. Holmwood, ed., *Rural Resources & Local Livelihoods in Africa*, pp. 177-97. Oxford: James Currey.

Institute of Philippine Culture (IPC). 2004. *In-depth study of a CBFM project in Mindanao. The case of the Ngan, Panansalan, Pagsabangan Forest Resources Development Cooperative (NPPFRDC)*. A Final Report submitted to the National Forest Programme Facility. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University.

Kaimowitz, D. 2003. Forest Law Enforcement and Rural Livelihoods, *International Forestry Review,* 5(3): 199-210.

Kaimowitz, D. 2005. Forest and War, Forest and Peace, in *State of the World's Forests, 2005,* pp. 116-23. Rome: Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

Larson A.M. and Ribot J.C. 2007. The Poverty of Forestry Policy: Double Standards on an Uneven Playing Field. *Sustainability Science*, (2)2: 189-204.

**Malayang, B.S. 2000. The Changing Role of Government in Forest Protection, in P. Utting, ed, *Forest policy and politics in the Philippines: the dynamics of participatory conservation*.** Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Midwoud P. and van Bodegom A.J. 2007. Independent Monitoring of the FLEGT Timber Legality Assurance System: Thinking Outside the Box. *VERIFOR Briefing Paper,* January*.*

Oliva, R. 1998. ‘Sustainable Forest Management through Multi-sectoral Forest Protection Committees: Philippine Experience.’ Washington DC: World Bank, WBI CBNRM Initiative Case.

Oslo Governance Centre (OGC). Forthcoming. Pro-Poor Governance and the Policy Process: A Framework. *OGC Framework Paper 2*.

Oyono, P.R., Ribot, J.C., Assembe Mvondo, S., Logo, P.B. 2007. Improving decentralized forest management in Cameroon: options and opportunities from ten years of experience. *CIFOR Governance Brief*, No. 33. Bogor: Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR).

Oyono P.R. 2004. Institutional Deficit: Representation, and Decentralized Forest Management in Cameroon. Environmental Governance in Africa Working Paper, No. 15. Washington DC: World Resources Institute.

Oyono, P.R. 2005. Profiling Local-level Outcomes of Environmental Decentralizations: The Case of Cameroon's Forests in the Congo Basin. *Journal of Environment and Development*, 14(3): 317-37.

Oyono P.R., Ribot J, Larson, A. 2006. ‘Green and black gold in rural Cameroon: natural resources for local governance, justice and sustainability.’ Environmental governance in Africa Working Paper No. 22. Washington DC: World Resources Institute.

Republic of Cameroon. 1994. ‘Loi No 94/01 du 20 janvier 1994 portant régime des forêts, de la faune et de la pêche.’ Yaoundé, Cameroon: Republic of Cameroon.

Republic of Cameroon. 1995. ‘Décret No 95-53-PM du 23 août 1995 fixant les modalités d’application du régime des forêts.’ Yaoundé, Cameroon: Republic of Cameroon.

Republic of Cameroon. 2005.‘Décret n° 2005/0577/PM du 23 février 2005 fixant les modalités de réalisation des études d'impact environnemental*.’* Republic of Cameroon, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Ribot J.C., Oyono, P.R. 2005. The Politics of Decentralization, in: B. Wisner, C. Toulmin and R. Chitiga, eds, *Toward a New Map of Africa*. London: Earthscan Press.

Right and Resources Initiative (RRI). 2008. Seeing People *through the Trees: Scaling Up Efforts to Advance Rights and Address Poverty, Conflict and Climate Change*. Washington DC: RRI.

Ross, M. 2001. *Timber Booms and Institutional Breakdown in Southeast Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fukuda-Parr, S. and Ponzio R. 2002. ‘Governance: Past, Present, Future Setting the Governance Agenda for the Millennium Declaration.’ http://www.undp.org/governance/eventsites/PAR\_Bergen\_2002/gov-past-present-future.pdf.

Smith, W. 2006. ‘Regulating Timber Commodity Chains: Timber Commodity Chains Linking Cameroon and Europe.’ Paper presented at the 11th biennial congress of the International Association for the Study of Common Property, Bali, Indonesia, 19–23 June 2006.

Sunderlin, W.D., Hatcher, J. and Liddle, M. (2008). From Exclusion to Ownership*? Challenges and Opportunities in Advancing Forest Tenure Reform*. Washington DC: Rights and Resources Initiative.

Sunderlin, W.D. 2008. *Poverty, Rights, and Tenure on Forest Lands: The Problem, and Priority Actions for Achieving Solutions*. Washington DC: Rights and Resources Initiative.

Tatenhove, J. van, Arts B. and Leroy, P. 2000. *Political Modernisation and the Environment; The Renewal of Environmental Policy Arrangements.* Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2002. *Human Development Report, 2002*. New York: Oxford University Press.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 1997. ‘Governance for Sustainable Human Development.’ <http://mirror.undp.org/magnet/policy/>.

World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development (WCFSD). 1999. *Our Forests, Our Future.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

World Resources Institute (WRI). 2003. *World Resources 2002-2004: Decisions for the Earth: Balance, Voice, and Power*. Washington, DC: WRI

1. Statistical analysis conducted by D. Alemagi, A. Samjee and A. Davis in 2007, using growth data from the Development Data Group of the World Bank, and using poverty data from UNDP 2006 Human Development Report. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The calculations for these findings use timber producing countries member of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) as a proxy for high forest countries. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The *commune* is a local government level established at the level of a District and headed by an elected mayor, surrounded by an elected municipal council. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For example an export log ban proposed in the GA to protect domestic processing industries was retracted by the government under pressure of the French government, which wanted to let French timber companies continue to export raw logs (Brunner and Ekoko 2000). The World Bank also opposed the log export ban on the grounds that it promoted inefficient processing of timber and depressed the local price of wood (Amanor 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The calculations for these findings use data from Sunderlin et al. (2008) for the number of Ha under different management and Global Forest Watch (2005) maximum estimate of forest land in Cameroon. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. In the 18 cases timber producing community forests only four were operating independently. Self-management contributed more to income than commercial timber potential. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. In Mexico, where there is abundant community timber enterprise, employment allocation is valued almost as much as dividend distribution. It is actually perceived to be ‘on par’ in terms of importance and as a distributive mechanism. Who gets to work in the mills or harvest is a highly negotiated and rotating affair. Deborah A. Berry. Centre for International Forestry Research. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. A guiding principle is that MFPC members are not obliged to endorse DENR policies in their areas of coverage (Malayang 2000: 57). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This conceptual framework has predominantly been used for the analysis of (changes in) national environmental/ conservation policies, but has been more widely used in other policy domains such as public-private and state-civil society collaborations to regularise legalise and monitor product and commodity chains (see Midwoud and van Bodegom 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)