

Global-local linkages of community forest production and trade in Central America

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Socio-political context

- Recent shifts in global economic and political structures, neoliberal environmental policies.
- Globalization, trends of unprecedented standardization vs. unprecedented fragmentation.

- Frustration with intergovernmental forms of negotiation, increasing role of non-governmental actors (Cashore 2006).
- New social movements, ethical trade, Fair Trade, issues of social justice and environmental equity (Barrientos & Dolan 2006).

New mechanisms of sustainability?

- Alternative ways of engaging in politics, new forms of legitimacy.
- Market-based instruments of environmental governance (environmental certifications, eco-labels, Fair Trade).
- Based upon the expectations that market incentives will reward sustainable production and trade.

Aims of the study

- Value chains of certified forest products from production to consumption (wood, furniture, kitchenware).
- How different actors and scales articulate in the chains, negotiations and contestations concerning the governance of the chain.
- Cultural practices, social rules and political networks embedded in wood production and trade.

Methods

- Household survey: economic activities, incomes, costs.
- Thematic interviews, detailed data on forest production and trade.
- Interviews in Honduran sawmills, furniture firms, ministries, NGOs, development projects, in European certification offices, retailers, participant observation in furniture expos etc.

Producers

- Heterogeneous group of actors, forestry provides an important but sporadic source of income.
- Currently no price premium, risks of becoming a barrier to market entry.
- More secure resource rights, improved forest management practices, increased political recognition (Bieri and Nygren 2010).

Intermediaries

- Personalized relationships, different forms of manipulation.
- Interpreters between different 'worlds' (Nygren & Myatt-Hirvonen 2009).
- Elimination can not be taken for granted.

Processors

- Certified products, conventional products, illegal products, cf. no chain of custody
- Most operating in national markets, value-added products to global niche markets.
- Rapid changes and re-structurations.

Retailers

- Dominance of few transnational DIY-companies.
- Price, volume, quality, reliability.
- Niche markets: Certification as an image-building and a risk management strategy.
- Important partners for many Southern small producers and processors.

ENGOS, certifiers

- Shift from boycotts to voluntary incentives, high pressure on retailers.
- Important partners with many producers, subsidization of the costs.
- Often categoric views: certified/non-certified. Monolithic notions of southern communities.

End-consumers

- Limited role, not necessarily willing to pay a price premium.
- Complicated decisions, conventional views of tropical forests and tropical forest-dwellers.
- Sophisticated demands, rapidly changing tastes.

Conclusions

- New forms of environmental governance, complex negotiations between differentiated actors.
- Multifaceted global-local linkages, new meanings of locality and globality.
- Certifications only a part of the ongoing structural transformations in global forest production and trade.