What role for forest certification in improving relationships between logging companies and communities? Lessons from FSC in Cameroon

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Why this research?

- **Objectives**
  - To review the FSC-induced ‘social’ schemes
  - To assess the effectiveness of these schemes with 3 FSC-certified logging companies (6 logging concessions)
  - To add another piece to the FSC-puzzle in the Congo Basin

- **Research questions**
  - What is the effectiveness of MDPs?
  - What impacts on the ‘communities / logging companies’ relationship?
Findings

- **FSC-induced improvements**
  - ‘Socio-economic’ units with dedicated budgets
  - MDPs with dedicated budgets
    - To cover running costs and annual activities
    - Range US$ 4-7k/yr
  - Conflict-resolution teams
  - Increased participation of local population to forest management (border patrolling, anti-poaching...)
  - *Ad-hoc* policies targeting indigenous people
  - Participatory maps of customary spaces
MDPs

**Mission**
- Permanent interface between communities and companies
- Collect complaints and arbitrate conflicts
- Identify and manage ‘development’ projects

**Structure**
- The ‘legal’ option (Chief of village, Local and external elite, indigenous people, youth, women, farmers reps.)
- The ‘company’ option (1 ‘manager’ each 2/3 villages, ‘associate members’ – company and council, ‘observers’ – local admin, chiefs, NGOs)
A vertical structure

MDPs a ‘construct’ of the companies

- Mistrust of local population
- Lack of ownership
- No engagement of the local admin

Consequences

- No legitimisation
- Weak representativeness
- Company leadership on dev’t projects
  - The more visible v. the more useful
Dev’t projects

- **Funding of micro-projects**
  - Money managed by the MDPs
  - Money directly managed by the company
  - Funded with stumpage levies (US$ 1-2/m³)
Effectiveness

- Not (yet) effective on existing conflicts
  - Overlapping of logging titles
  - Degradation of culturally relevant places
  - Delimitation of production forests v. ‘agro-forestry’ areas

- A source of new intra-communitarian conflicts
  - On disbursed funds
  - On customary land
  - On suspicion of company/MDP-reps collusion
Conclusion

- **FSC-induced improvements**
  - ‘Social’ issues better integrated into management
  - Improved forms of conflict-resolution (negotiation v. imposition)
  - New benefit-sharing schemes
  - Certification helps to enforce forest regulations

- **Shortcomings**
  - CBs evaluate ‘existence’ v. ‘effectiveness’ of MDPs
  - Companies show ‘existence’ but not (yet) convinced about the usefulness of investment as part of ‘good management practices’
Some ideas

- Improve the social policy of certified companies
  - Consider the distribution of power within the communities
  - Review the current top-down approach
  - Identify the real ‘needs’ of communities
    - Community vs individual
Merci

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