Can tropical forestry bring lessons to conservation science?

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First part of talk

- What are roots of tensions between foresters and conservation scientists?

  logging = deforestation

  sustainable forest management = timber mining

  Deficit model – how science influences policy and opinion
Drivers of tropical deforestation

  - looked at 152 published case studies (1940-1996), frequency of causes, interactions amongst factors
Commercial wood extraction

Logging plays a part, but mainly through interactions with other direct drivers

52% (all regions)
78% (Asia)
26% (Africa)
40% (Latin America)

Underlying drivers: policies, economics, institutional failure

Largest agent of forest cover change was the timber industry; logging financed state-led conversion to agriculture.

Do we know how to manage tropical forests sustainably?

Yes

“The main message . . . is that natural forest management can be done; conservation and production are not incompatible... p312

Is there a place for Sustainable Forest Management?

Yes

We know how

Logged forest have high conservation value

Progress with forest law enforcement, governance and trade

Use it or lose it

Putz et al. (2012) Cons Letters
Is there a place for Sustainable Forest Management?

No

Multi-national corporations have little interest in local sustainability

No

“little or nothing is known about specific autecological characteristics of the timber species to be managed . . .” p 479

Assumes no regulations
Re-interpretation of published studies

“If they only understood . . .if only they knew what we know”

Deficit model
- rationale role of knowledge
- science provides neutral expertise
- facts and values distinct
Message from first part

• SFM is not same as timber mining but requires that some conditions are met (rules).

• “facts” can be interpreted in different ways
  Chan et al. 2007 Cons Bio 21 (1): 59-68.

• Don’t assume lack of uptake is due to lack of understanding or awareness

Second part of my talk

– In forestry, often some values and perspectives are privileged over others
Knuckles Forest Conservation Area, Sri Lanka
Some practices okay, some not okay

• Value-laden terms
  – Forest loss, degradation
  – Land improvement
  – Pristine

• From whose perspective are we valuing the resource, is conservation more important than social justice?

• Costs and benefits of decisions are unequally distributed

Messages from second part
Our experience and perspective influence what we value, what we see, what we measure.

Knowledge exchange and self-reflection can help.

Third part of my talk
Is community forestry the answer?

Ecological sustainability
Local community benefits
Some responsibility and authority in community

Need to connect people, groups, organizations
– Deliver services to users that want them
Need to connect people, groups, organizations

- Give voice
- Governance structures
- Share experience and knowledge

Sangha Tri-national World Heritage Site (Congo Basin)
Conservation and Livelihood Indicators

Local Natural Asset
Availability of Non-Timber Forest Products
Availability of Bushmeat . . .

Global Natural Asset
Population of elephants
Population of gorillas

Social Assets
Level of activity of local NGOs
Corruption in public & private sectors . . .

Physical Assets
Number of cassava mills
Quality of housing . . .

Human Assets
Access to health care
Quality of education . . .

Messages from third part

• Experience with community-based forestry mixed, context specific, rules are important

• External factors influence community-based organisations as well as industry
  – Sometimes positive, sometimes negative, unpredictable

• Importance of loose linkages (vertical and horizontal)
Take home message

• Self-reflection important

• Partnerships and friendships are important

• Need to work at multiple scales to address complex problems

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