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# Paradoxes of participation: The logic of professionalization in participatory forestry

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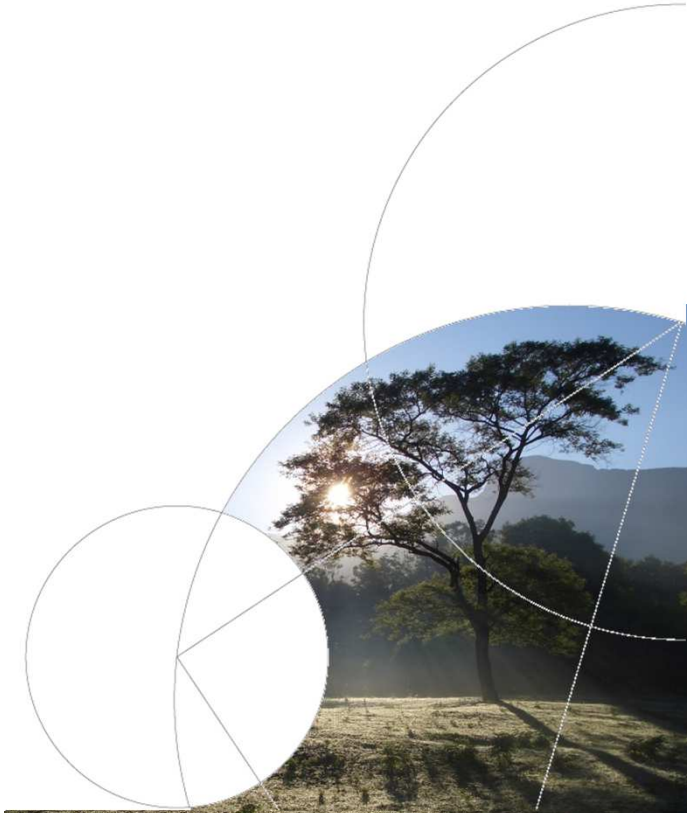
http://www.ifro.ku.dk/scifor

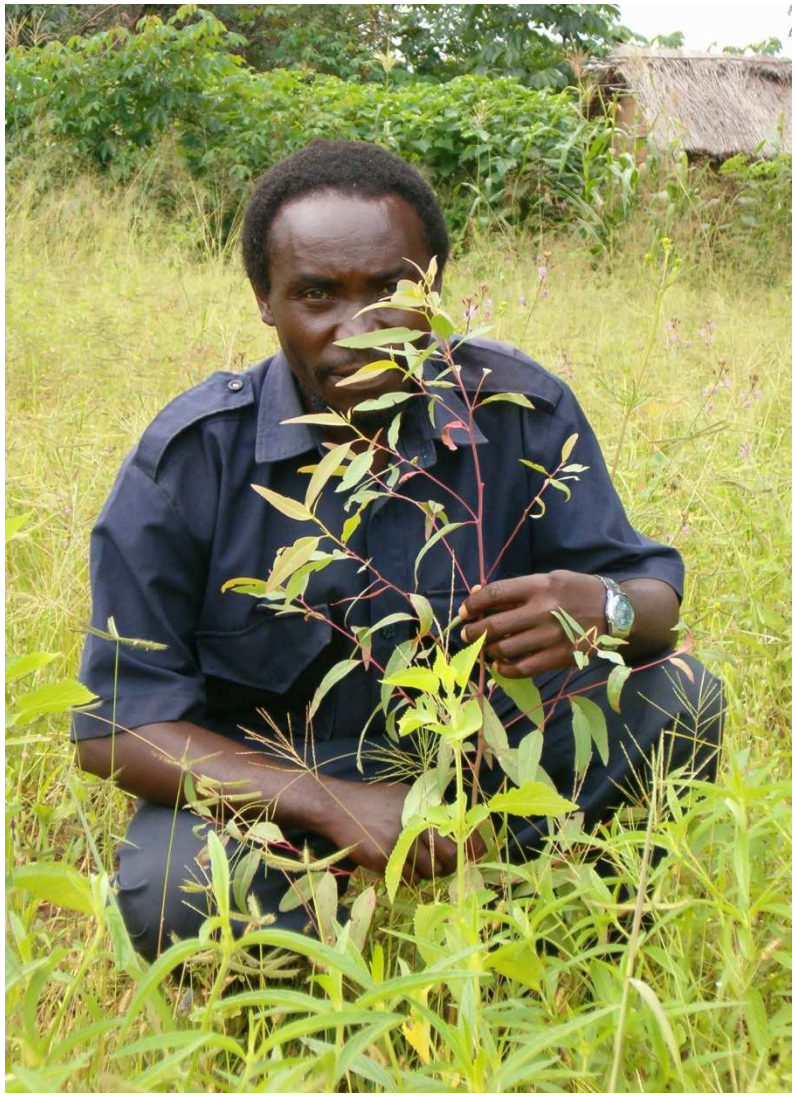


# What is meant by 'professionalization'?

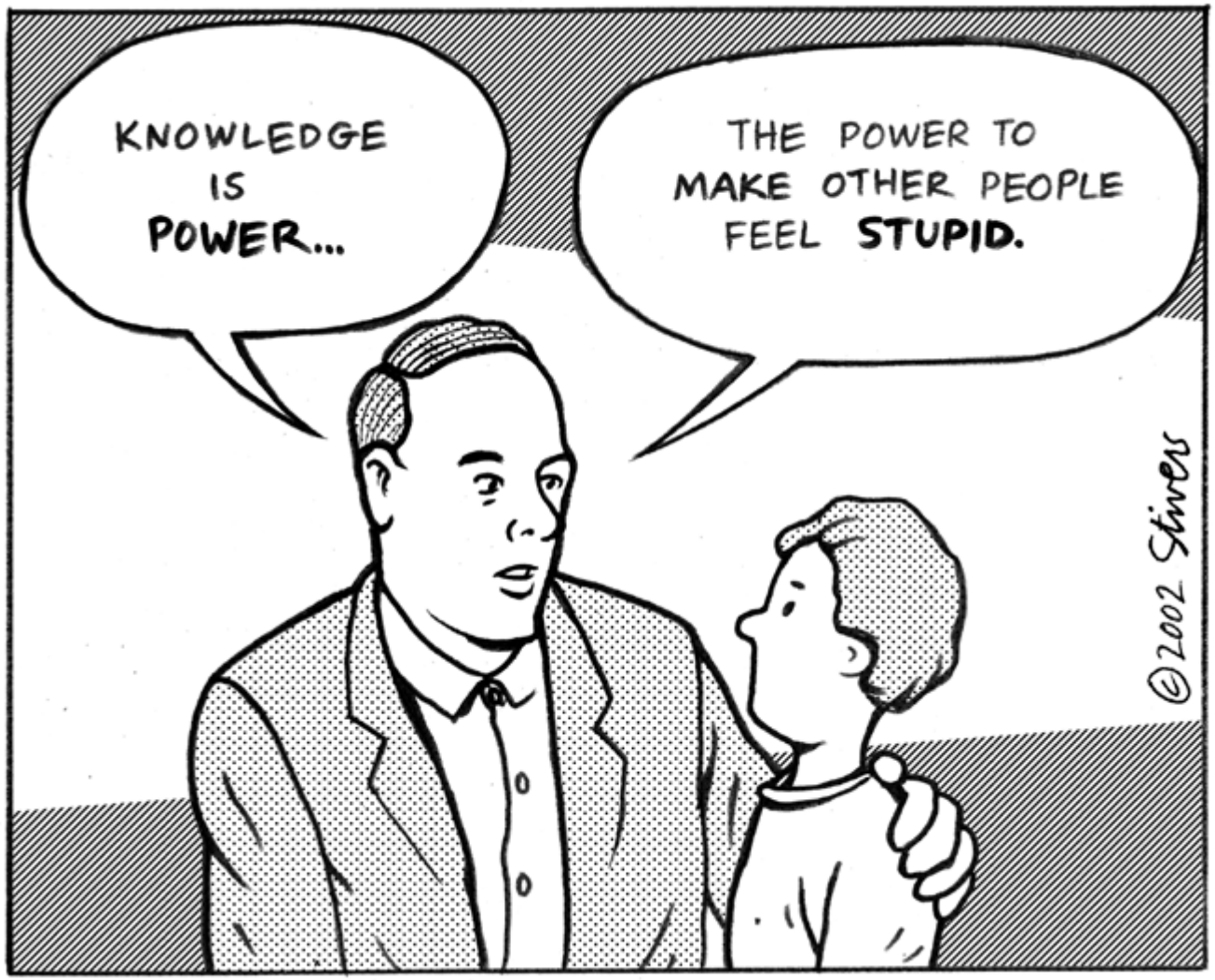
http://www.wri.org/blog/2014/02/9-maps-explain-worlds-forests

# How does professionalization manifest itself?

1. Management plans
2. Detailed and bureaucratic procedures for monitoring, record keeping and information dissemination
3. Links to wider networks of information gathering for national and international statistics
4. Capacity building needs

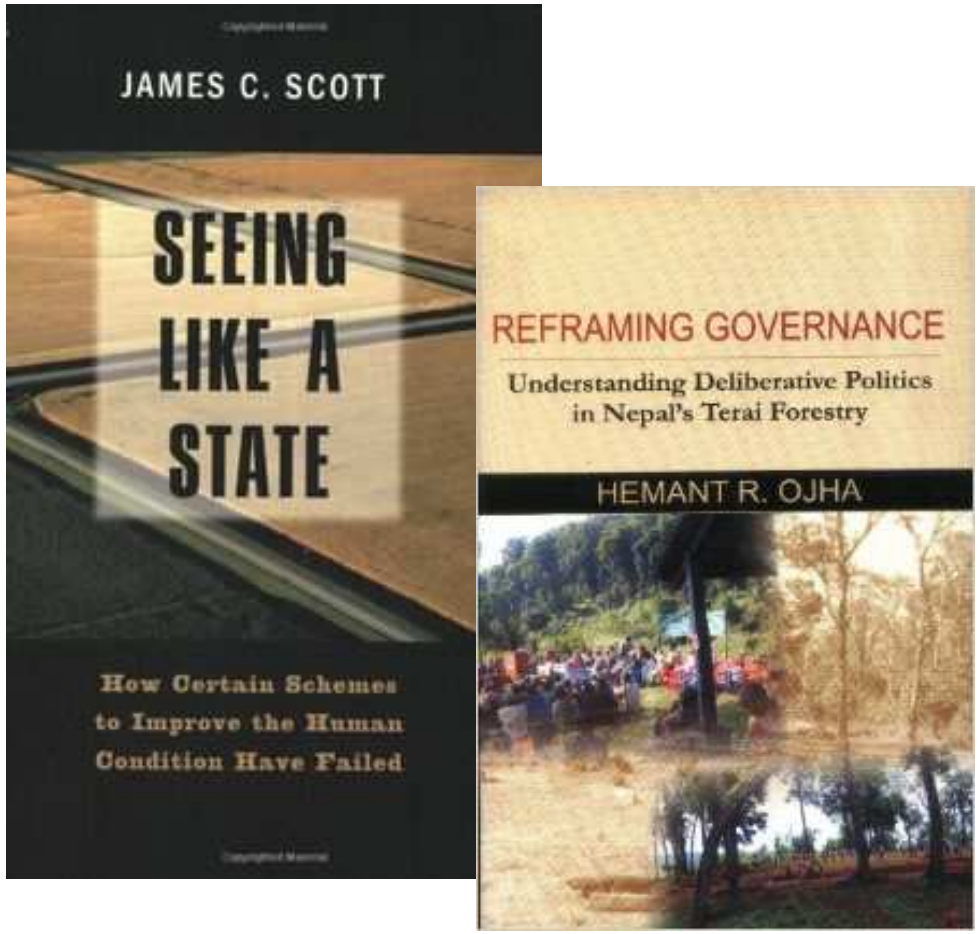


# What does professionalization do?



# Why is professionalization prominent in participatory forestry?

Techno-bureaucratic doxa of natural resources professionals



# Why is professionalization prominent in participatory forestry?

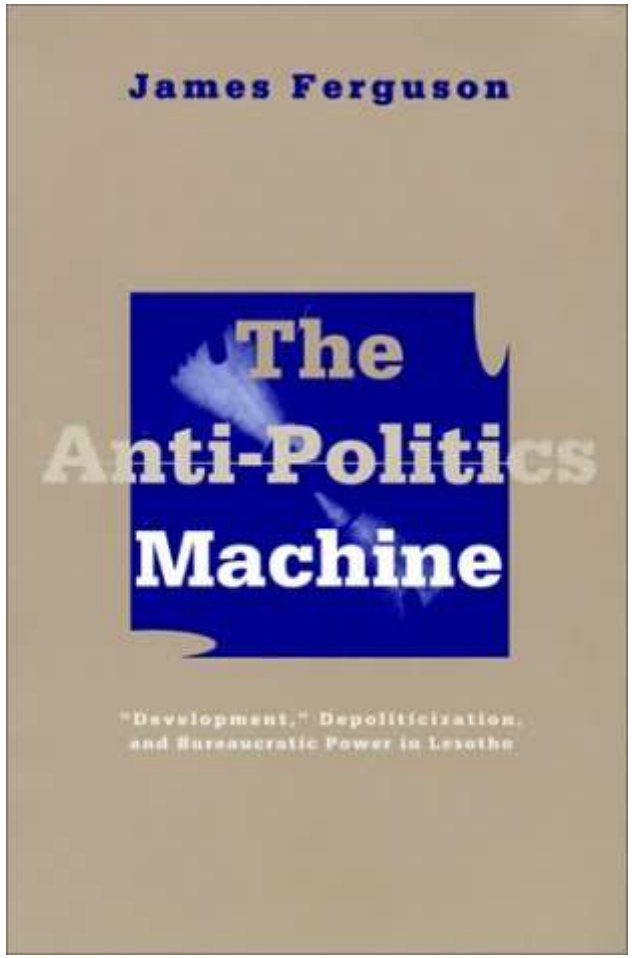
Neoliberal environmental policy

PES, REDD+, FLEG-T etc.

http://www.wwfguianas.org/our_work/payment_for_ecosystem_services/

# Why is professionalization prominent in participatory forestry?

International development assistance



# Special issue: Deconstructing and criticizing professionalization

- Five papers + introduction
- Cases from Senegal, Tanzania and Nepal
- Illustrating how the framing of participation as professionalization:
  - Implies costs that in turn impede implementation
  - Depoliticizes and facilitates elite capture
- Illustrates that the standards of professionalization and scientific forestry:
  - Are not upheld in practice by professionals
  - Are not used in actual management practice

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NO. 03 • SEPTEMBER 2015

Forest inventory, Tanzania. Photo: Henrik Meilby

## The logic of professionalization in participatory forestry

### Introduction

Participatory forestry (PF) reforms ostensibly seek to promote forest-adjacent communities' participation in forest management by devolving management rights. PF's objectives include sustainable forest management, equitable local livelihoods and development opportunities. In practice, however, PF initiatives often appear to sustain domination by government officials and/or private enterprises in forest management decision-making. Even when rights are actually devolved, the outcomes tend to fall short of expectations. Although improvements in forest management and conservation are common, PF reforms seem to result in increased hardships for the poorest and the elite capture of often limited local financial benefits.

Based on a special issue in the journal Forest Policy and Economics, this policy brief argues that part of the explanation for these paradoxical outcomes of participatory forestry reforms is that they promote professionalization, i.e. a reliance on scientific management approaches and structured, highly detailed systems of information gathering, dissemination and planning. This creates obstacles for implementation and privileges forms of knowledge typically held by forestry professionals and social elites in forest-adjacent communities.

### Participatory forestry

PF entails forest governance approaches that involve people living in and around forests and are referred to as decentralized, participatory, joint, and community-based forest management as well as indigenous forestry and social forestry. Legislated and implemented by governments of many developing countries, often with advisory and financial support from donors, such regimes exhibit great variation in the sharing of rights and responsibilities between various levels of government and rural communities. PF emerged in the 1970s and by the 1990s had become the standard model for forest conservation and management in the developing world.

# Rethinking 'expert' knowledge in community forest management in Tanzania

ARTICLE IN PRESS

FORPOL-01225; No of Pages 12

Forest Policy and Economics xxx (2015) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Forest Policy and Economics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/forpol

Rethinking 'expert' knowledge in community forest management in Tanzania☆

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ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*
Received 27 February 2014
Received in revised form 8 December 2014
Accepted 10 December 2014
Available online xxxx

*Keywords:*
Community forest management
Expertise
Politics
Knowledge
Power

ABSTRACT

From the 1980s great hopes have been placed on community forest management to promote socio-economic development along with forest protection. Empirical research has shown, however, that while community forest management has often improved forest conditions, the goals of poverty alleviation and local empowerment have not been fully attained. The wide gap between theory and practice of community forest management has caused scholars to emphasise the role of power and politics in the design, practice and outcome of decentralisation. More recently, the roles of techno-bureaucratic values, practices and the authority given to 'expert' knowledge have been highlighted as important factors impeding its successful implementation. Building on these insights, this paper, conjoined with other contributions to this special issue, aims to examine the role of professionalisation and 'expert' knowledge in community-based forest management in Tanzania, particularly with regard to its economic development and local empowerment benefits. Drawing on long-term research in the Angai village land forest reserve in Liwale, Lindi Region, Tanzania, this paper illustrates how almost 20 years after the inception of community-based forest management, villagers are still waiting for the promised political and economic benefits to materialise. We argue that professionalisation and the privileged role of 'expert' knowledge hampered forest decentralisation. Based on our findings, we join other authors of this special issue in calling for less technically and bureaucratically demanding ways of forest management and planning to allow local communities to fully take over ownership and control of forest resources and to relieve state and non-state actors of cumbersome and overburdening development requirements.

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**1. Introduction**

Starting in the 1980s community forest management has gained popular support globally and especially in the developing South (Charnley and Poe, 2007; Sunderlin et al., 2008). As with community based natural resource management (CBNRM) in general, the premise underlying their wide adoption is that the involvement of local communities in the governance and management of forests will bring about socio-economic development and ecological sustainability (Agrawal, 2007; Maryudi et al., 2012). While a number of social, economic and political factors contributed to their increasing popularity (Charnley and Poe, 2007; Nelson and Agrawal, 2008), they also emerged as a response to exclusionary 'fortress' conservation strategies (Brockington, 2002; Lele et al., 2010), which caused social injustice and often failed to achieve conservation outcomes (Agrawal and Redford, 2009; Brockington and Igoe, 2006; Porter-Bolland et al., 2012; Sunseri, 2009). Great hopes were therefore laid in participatory strategies as advocates argued that local authorities are able to manage natural resources in a more sustainable, efficient and equitable way (Dressler et al., 2010; Hayes and Ostrom, 2005; Ribot et al., 2010). Especially the institutionalisation of local participation via democratic decentralisation reforms was thought to promote empowerment and democracy among rural populations with positive outcomes for long-term sustainability (Ribot, 2004; Wily and Dewees, 2001).

In this context developing country governments have extended community forest management regimes to over a tenth of the world's forests in the past decade (RRI, 2014). In a number of cases they have contributed to local livelihood benefits, the protection of forests and the transfer of political powers to local communities (Cronkleton et al., 2013; Larson and Ribot, 2007; Ribot et al., 2010). In many more instances, however, the core objectives of poverty alleviation, empowerment and improved forest conditions have not been attained (Cronkleton et al., 2013; Dressler et al., 2010; Maryudi et al., 2012; Nelson and Agrawal, 2008). In contrast, community forest management initiatives resulted in inequitable benefit sharing across local stakeholders, elite capture of benefits, and conflicts over access to natural resources that left less powerful forest users more marginalised than prior to the intervention (Charnley and Poe, 2007; Ribot et al., 2006, 2010; Schreckenberg and Luttrell, 2009; Tacconi, 2007).

The mixed results and wide gap between theory and practice of community forest management have caused scholars to specifically

☆ This article belongs to the Special Issue: Science and power in PFM.
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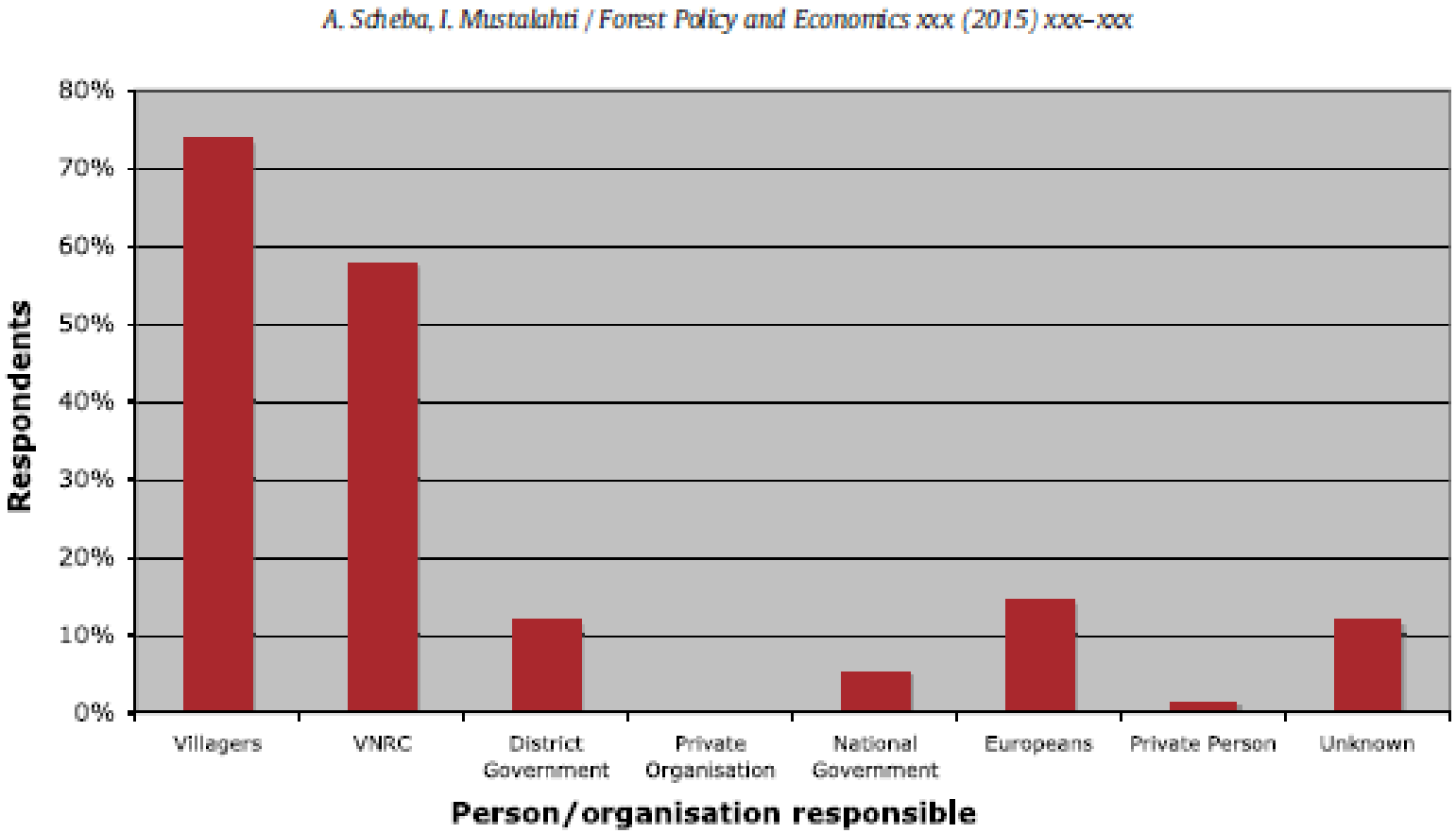
Describing 20 years of donor-supported and technically-framed efforts at implementing participatory forestry without much progress on the ground

# After 30 years and 500.000€ spent…



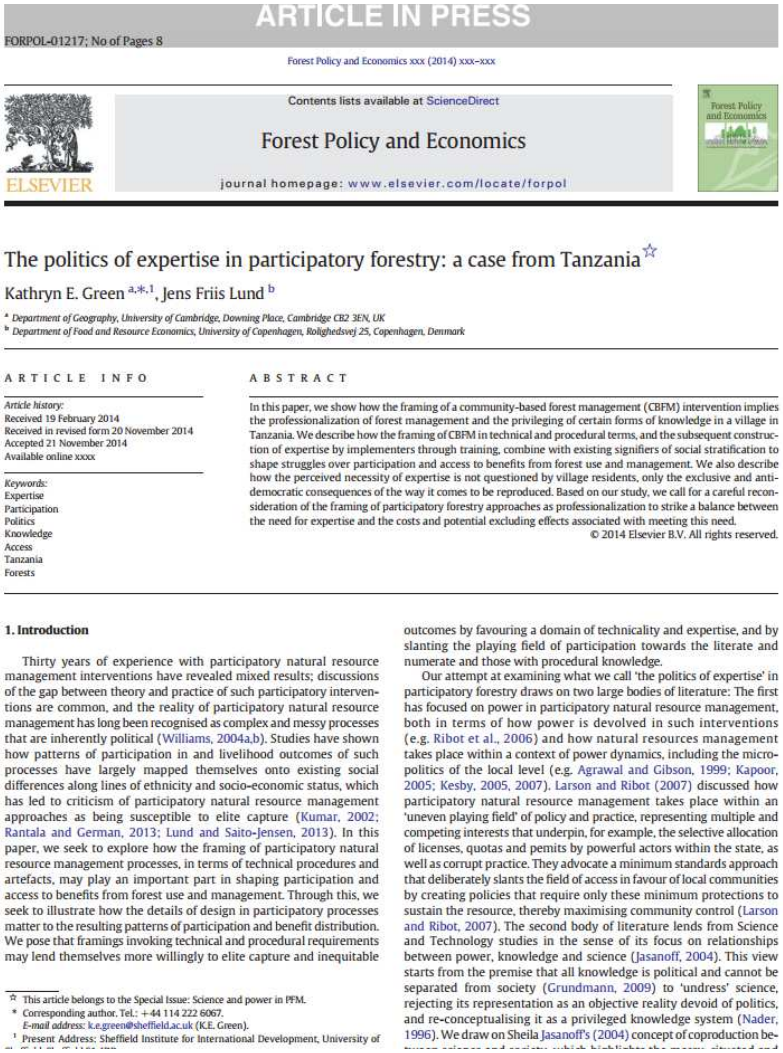

**Graph 2.** Who is responsible for taking care of the protected the forest?

# After 30 years and 500.000€ spent…

*"For all the work we depend on the district. The district officials are the experts. All the expertise is in the district.We stay and we wait, what to do" (M Interview 14).*

*"We are the ones who look at the experts only. Because as you know, the ones who studied are at the top and the ones who did not study are at the bottom. Thus we look what are they doing, how will they provide benefits to us. We will see" (M Interview 10).*

# The politics of expertise in participatory forestry: a case from Tanzania



ARTICLE IN PRESS

FORPOL-01217; No of Pages 8

Forest Policy and Economics xxx (2014) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Forest Policy and Economics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/forpol

The politics of expertise in participatory forestry: a case from Tanzania ☆

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ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*
Received 19 February 2014
Received in revised form 20 November 2014
Accepted 21 November 2014
Available online xxxx

*Keywords:*
Expertise
Participation
Politics
Knowledge
Access
Tanzania
Forests

ABSTRACT

In this paper, we show how the framing of a community-based forest management (CBFM) intervention implies the professionalization of forest management and the privileging of certain forms of knowledge in a village in Tanzania. We describe how the framing of CBFM in technical and procedural terms, and the subsequent construction of expertise by implementers through training, combine with existing signifiers of social stratification to shape struggles over participation and access to benefits from forest use and management. We also describe how the perceived necessity of expertise is not questioned by village residents, only the exclusive and anti-democratic consequences of the way it comes to be reproduced. Based on our study, we call for a careful reconsideration of the framing of participatory forestry approaches as professionalization to strike a balance between the need for expertise and the costs and potential excluding effects associated with meeting this need.

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**1. Introduction**

Thirty years of experience with participatory natural resource management interventions have revealed mixed results; discussions of the gap between theory and practice of such participatory interventions are common, and the reality of participatory natural resource management has long been recognised as complex and messy processes that are inherently political (Williams, 2004a,b). Studies have shown how patterns of participation in and livelihood outcomes of such processes have largely mapped themselves onto existing social differences along lines of ethnicity and socio-economic status, which has led to criticism of participatory natural resource management approaches as being susceptible to elite capture (Kumar, 2002; Rantala and German, 2013; Lund and Saito-Jensen, 2013). In this paper, we seek to explore how the framing of participatory natural resource management processes, in terms of technical procedures and artefacts, may play an important part in shaping participation and access to benefits from forest use and management. Through this, we seek to illustrate how the details of design in participatory processes matter to the resulting patterns of participation and benefit distribution. We pose that framings invoking technical and procedural requirements may lend themselves more willingly to elite capture and inequitable outcomes by favouring a domain of technicality and expertise, and by slanting the playing field of participation towards the literate and numerate and those with procedural knowledge.

Our attempt at examining what we call 'the politics of expertise' in participatory forestry draws on two large bodies of literature: The first has focused on power in participatory natural resource management, both in terms of how power is devolved in such interventions (e.g. Ribot et al., 2006) and how natural resources management takes place within a context of power dynamics, including the micro-politics of the local level (e.g. Agrawal and Gibson, 1999; Kapoor, 2005; Kesby, 2005, 2007). Larson and Ribot (2007) discussed how participatory natural resource management takes place within an 'uneven playing field' of policy and practice, representing multiple and competing interests that underpin, for example, the selective allocation of licenses, quotas and pemits by powerful actors within the state, as well as corrupt practice. They advocate a minimum standards approach that deliberately slants the field of access in favour of local communities by creating policies that require only these minimum protections to sustain the resource, thereby maximising community control (Larson and Ribot, 2007). The second body of literature lends from Science and Technology studies in the sense of its focus on relationships between power, knowledge and science (Jasanoff, 2004). This view starts from the premise that all knowledge is political and cannot be separated from society (Grundmann, 2009) to 'undress' science, rejecting its representation as an objective reality devoid of politics, and re-conceptualising it as a privileged knowledge system (Nader, 1996). We draw on Sheila Jasanoff's (2004) concept of coproduction be-

☆ This article belongs to the Special Issue: Science and power in PFM.
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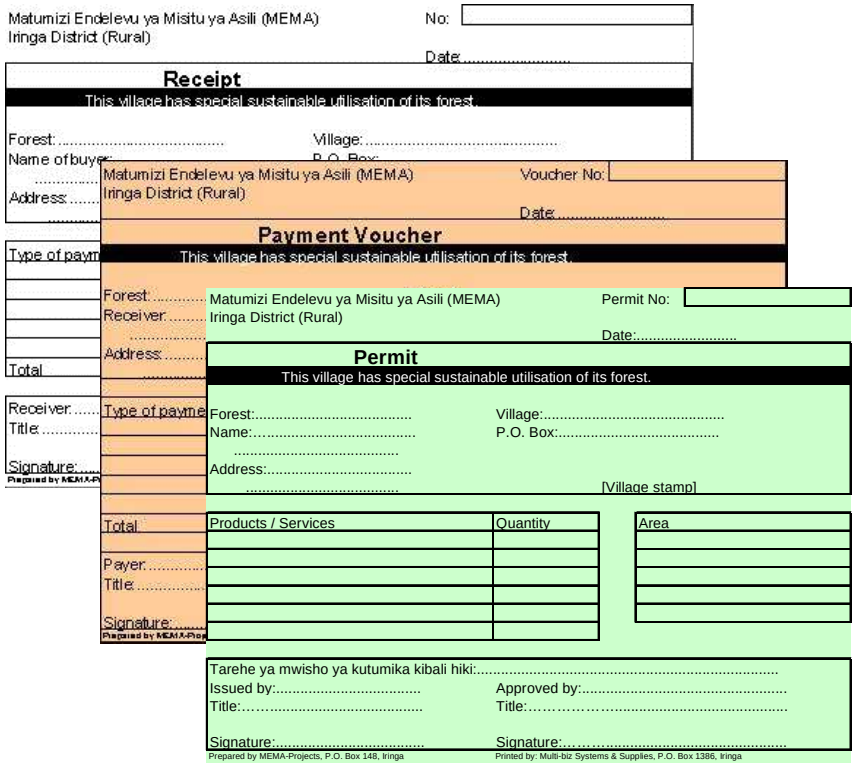
Linking the technical framing of participatory forestry to processes of elite capture at the village level

# Management responsibilities and procedures

| | |
|---|---|
| **Meetings** | **The committee will meet once a month to discuss all matters pertaining to the management of the forest and the implementation of the forest management plan** |
| **Record Keeping** | **The committee will record all meetings, training activities and management suggestions/decisions in the Secretary's book**<br><br>**The committee will record the issuing of all resource user permits, fees paid, fines paid and expenditures on standardised vouchers and receipts in three copies; one for the producer, one for the VFC and one that will be kept by the district forest office** |
| **Forest Patrols** | **The committee will implement weekly forest patrols (and additional patrols when damage is reported in the forest)**<br><br>**The forest scouts will record resource uses, disturbances and selected indicator species/droppings seen during patrols on standardised reporting forms**<br><br>**The VFC (non-scout members) will carry out occasional inspections of the forest** |
| **Accounting** | **The committee will receive and manage revenue collected from forest activities and arrange its use in collaboration with the village council**<br><br>**The committee will record all financial transactions in standard books (see Record Keeping)** |
| **Information Dissemination** | **The committee will compile a monthly report and send a copy of it to the District Forest Officer as well as used account books**<br><br>**The committee will report to the village at public meetings four times per year on the activities of the committee** |
| **Interviews** | **The committee will carry out perception interviews regarding the state of the forest and its resources with residents of the village (5 per month)** |

# The monitoring system



Matumizi Endelevu ya Misitu ya Asili (MEMA)
Iringa District (Rural)

No:

Date:

**Receipt**

This village has special sustainable utilisation of its forest.

Forest:..... Village:.....

Name of buyer:.....

Address:.....

Type of paym

Total

Receiver:.....

Title:.....

Signature:.....

Prepared by MEMA-P

Matumizi Endelevu ya Misitu ya Asili (MEMA)
Iringa District (Rural)

Voucher No:

Date:.....

**Payment Voucher**

This village has special sustainable utilisation of its forest.

Forest:.....
Receiver:.....
.....
Address:.....
.....

Type of payme

Total

Payer:.....
Title:.....

Signature:.....

Prepared by MEMA-Proj

Matumizi Endelevu ya Misitu ya Asili (MEMA)
Iringa District (Rural)

Permit No:

Date:.....

**Permit**

This village has special sustainable utilisation of its forest.

Forest:..... Village:.....
Name:..... P.O. Box:.....
.....
Address:.....
.....

[Village stamp]

| Products / Services | Quantity |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

| Area |
|---|
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |

Tarehe ya mwisho ya kutumika kibali hiki:.....

Issued by:..... Approved by:.....
Title:..... Title:.....

Signature:..... Signature:.....

Prepared by MEMA-Projects, P.O. Box 148, Iringa

Printed by: Multi-biz Systems & Supplies, P.O. Box 1386, Iringa

**To:** District Lands, Natural Resources and Environment Office
**Copy to:** Ward Executive Officer
Divisional Secretary

| **Report from Village Natural Resource Committee** | **Village:** | **Month and year:** |
|---|---|---|
| Names and positions of committee members<br>Positions:<br>Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Patrol Commander, Interview Chairman, others. | Females<br>1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6.<br>7. | Males<br>1.<br>2.<br>3.<br>4.<br>5.<br>6.<br>7. |

| **Meetings/ Training** | Date | No of attendants (Females) | No of attendants (Males) | Issues related to natural resources |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Village Natural Resource Committee meetings | | | | |
| Village General Assemblies | | | | |
| Training/ Workshops | | | | |

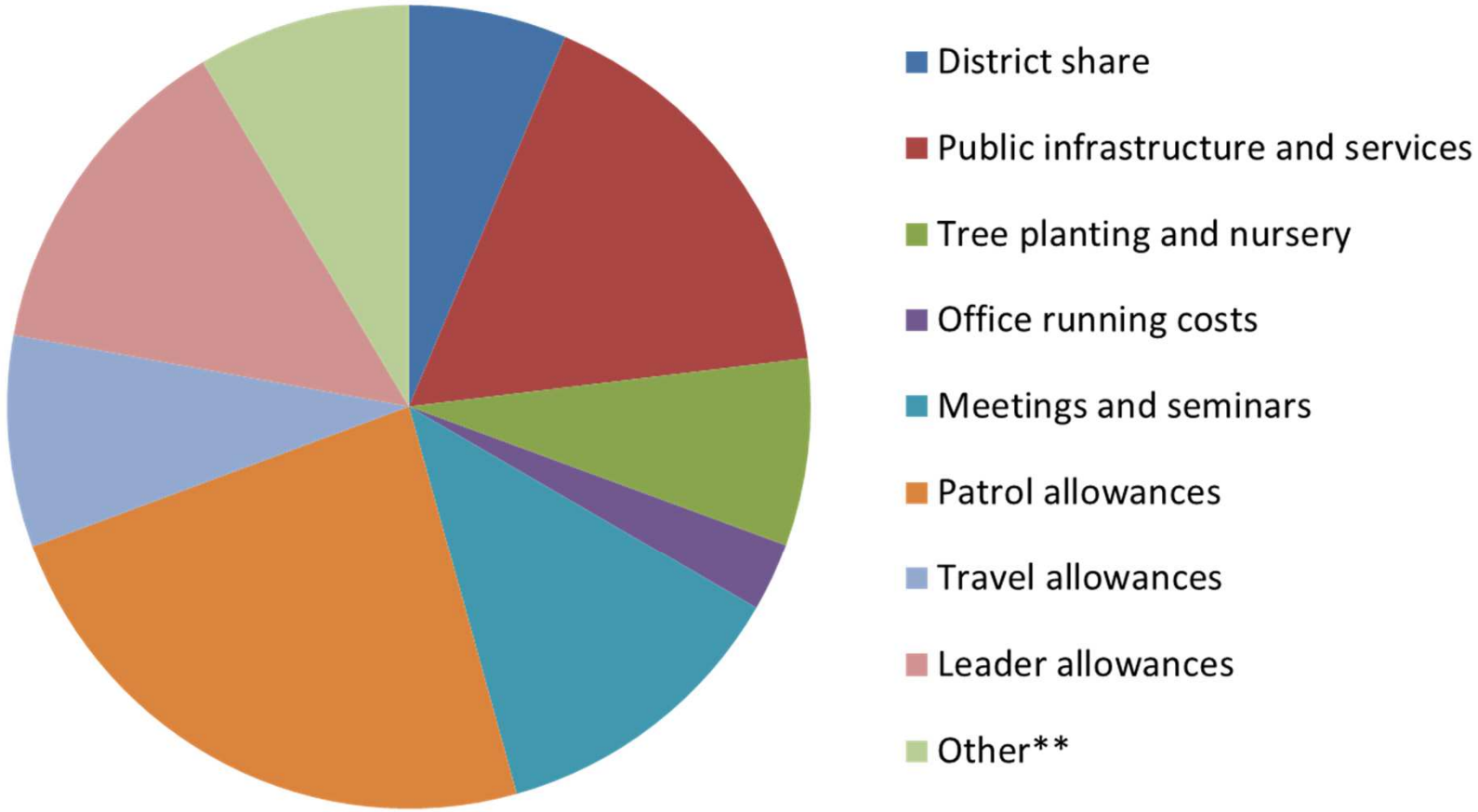
**No of Permits, Revenue from resource/services, revenue from fines and Expenditure**

| **Natural resource / Service from forest** | No of permits | Revenue Tshs. | **Fines** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Number of fines | |
| | | | Revenue from fines (Tshs) | |
| | | | **Expenditure (Tshs)** | |
| | | | Natural resources expenditure (Tshs) | |
| Total number of permits and revenue from forest resources/services | Total number of permits | Total revenue from resources/services | Village expenditure (Tshs) | |
| | | | Total expenditure (Tshs) | |

Remarks:

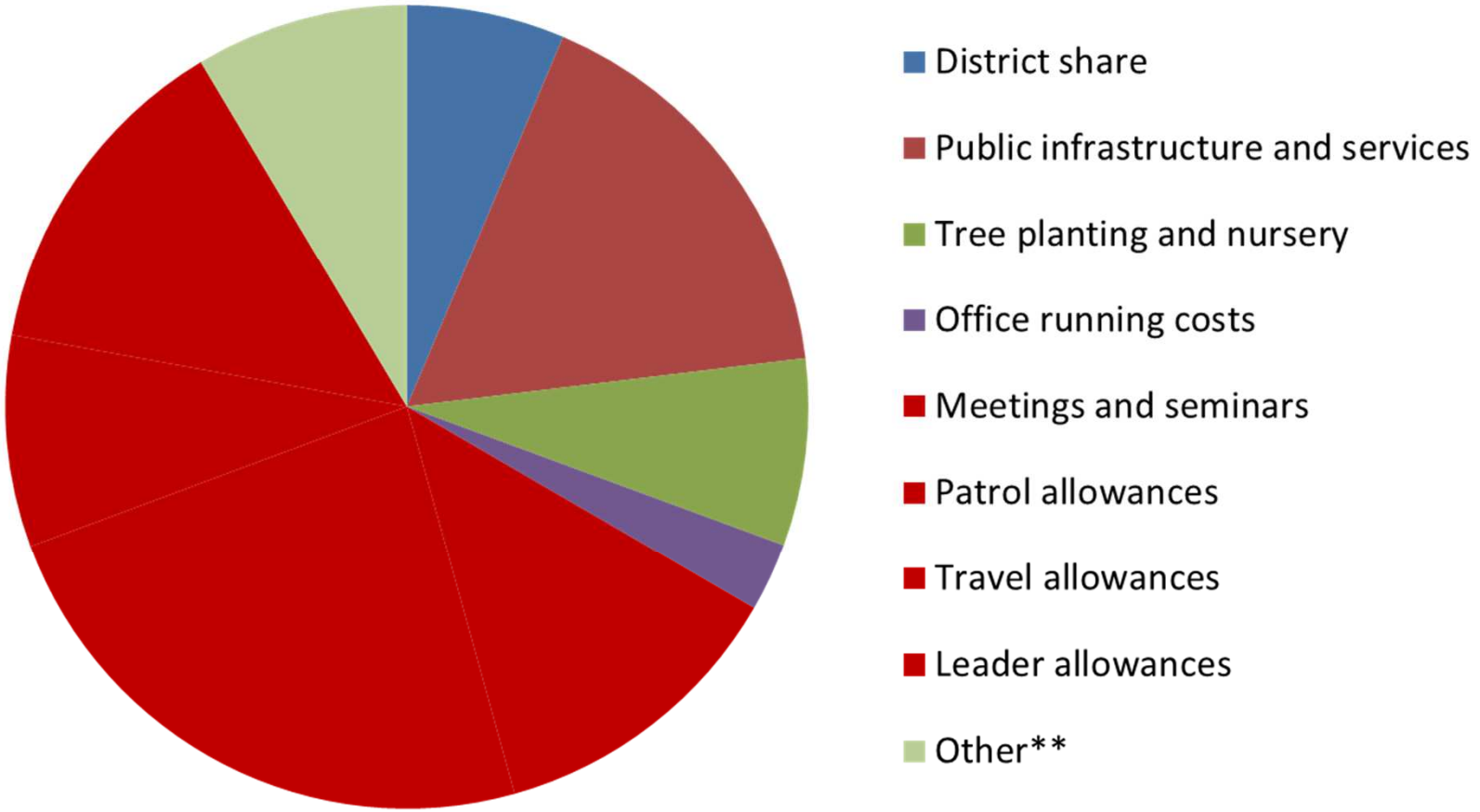
| Date: | Date: | Date: |
|---|---|---|
| ..... Signature VNRC Secretary | ..... Signature VNRC Chairman | ..... Signature Village Chairman |

# The use of forest revenues




** 'Other' includes other allowances, contributions to an inter-village collaboration on forest management, and other expenditures
Source: Own compilation, based on expenditure records 2003-2009, see Table 3 in Green and Lund (2015)

# The use of forest revenues

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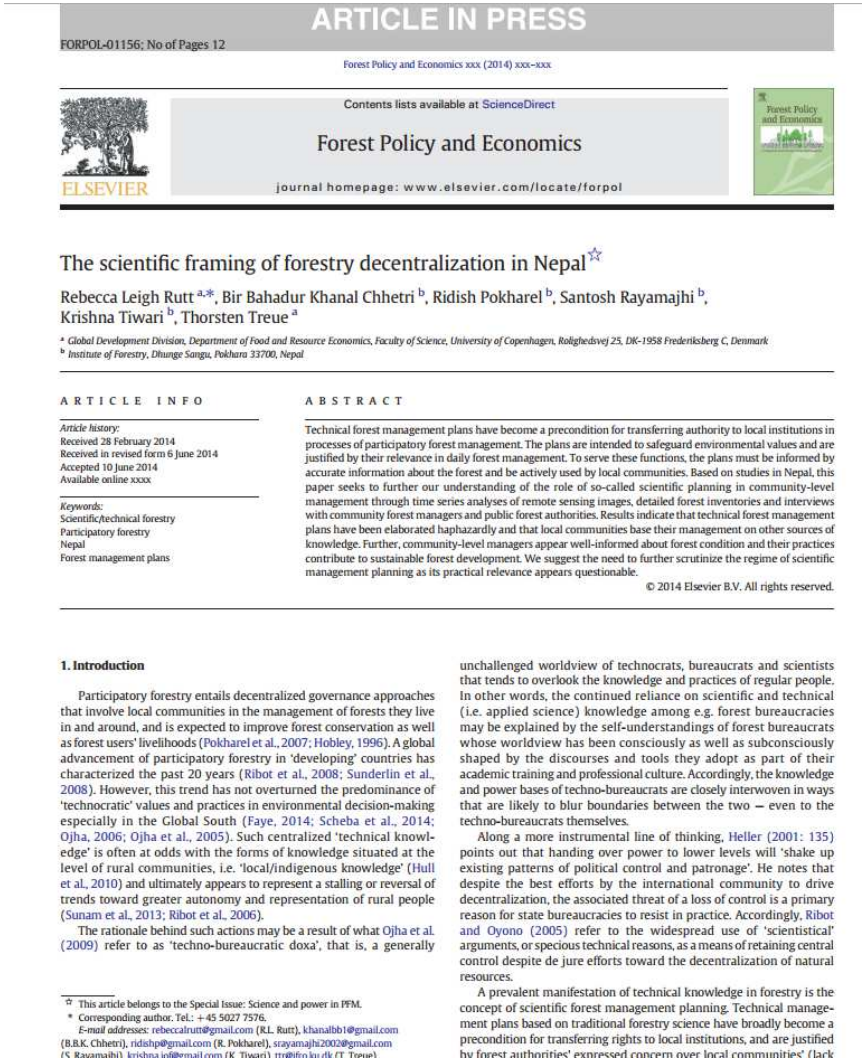
Source: Own compilation, based on expenditure records 2003-2009, see Table 3 in Green and Lund (2015)

# The scientific framing of forestry decentralization in Nepal



ARTICLE IN PRESS

FORPOL-01156; No of Pages 12

Forest Policy and Economics xxx (2014) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Forest Policy and Economics

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/forpol

## The scientific framing of forestry decentralization in Nepal☆

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ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*
Received 28 February 2014
Received in revised form 6 June 2014
Accepted 10 June 2014
Available online xxxx

*Keywords:*
Scientific/technical forestry
Participatory forestry
Nepal
Forest management plans

ABSTRACT

Technical forest management plans have become a precondition for transferring authority to local institutions in processes of participatory forest management. The plans are intended to safeguard environmental values and are justified by their relevance in daily forest management. To serve these functions, the plans must be informed by accurate information about the forest and be actively used by local communities. Based on studies in Nepal, this paper seeks to further our understanding of the role of so-called scientific planning in community-level management through time series analyses of remote sensing images, detailed forest inventories and interviews with community forest managers and public forest authorities. Results indicate that technical forest management plans have been elaborated haphazardly and that local communities base their management on other sources of knowledge. Further, community-level managers appear well-informed about forest condition and their practices contribute to sustainable forest development. We suggest the need to further scrutinize the regime of scientific management planning as its practical relevance appears questionable.

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**1. Introduction**

Participatory forestry entails decentralized governance approaches that involve local communities in the management of forests they live in and around, and is expected to improve forest conservation as well as forest users' livelihoods (Pokharel et al., 2007; Hobley, 1996). A global advancement of participatory forestry in 'developing' countries has characterized the past 20 years (Ribot et al., 2008; Sunderlin et al., 2008). However, this trend has not overturned the predominance of 'technocratic' values and practices in environmental decision-making especially in the Global South (Faye, 2014; Scheba et al., 2014; Ojha, 2006; Ojha et al., 2005). Such centralized 'technical knowledge' is often at odds with the forms of knowledge situated at the level of rural communities, i.e. 'local/indigenous knowledge' (Hull et al., 2010) and ultimately appears to represent a stalling or reversal of trends toward greater autonomy and representation of rural people (Sunam et al., 2013; Ribot et al., 2006).

The rationale behind such actions may be a result of what Ojha et al. (2009) refer to as 'techno-bureaucratic doxa', that is, a generally unchallenged worldview of technocrats, bureaucrats and scientists that tends to overlook the knowledge and practices of regular people. In other words, the continued reliance on scientific and technical (i.e. applied science) knowledge among e.g. forest bureaucracies may be explained by the self-understandings of forest bureaucrats whose worldview has been consciously as well as subconsciously shaped by the discourses and tools they adopt as part of their academic training and professional culture. Accordingly, the knowledge and power bases of techno-bureaucrats are closely interwoven in ways that are likely to blur boundaries between the two — even to the techno-bureaucrats themselves.

Along a more instrumental line of thinking, Heller (2001: 135) points out that handing over power to lower levels will 'shake up existing patterns of political control and patronage'. He notes that despite the best efforts by the international community to drive decentralization, the associated threat of a loss of control is a primary reason for state bureaucracies to resist in practice. Accordingly, Ribot and Oyono (2005) refer to the widespread use of 'scientistical' arguments, or specious technical reasons, as a means of retaining central control despite de jure efforts toward the decentralization of natural resources.

A prevalent manifestation of technical knowledge in forestry is the concept of scientific forest management planning. Technical management plans based on traditional forestry science have broadly become a precondition for transferring rights to local institutions, and are justified by forest authorities' expressed concern over local communities' (lack

☆ This article belongs to the Special Issue: Science and power in PFM.

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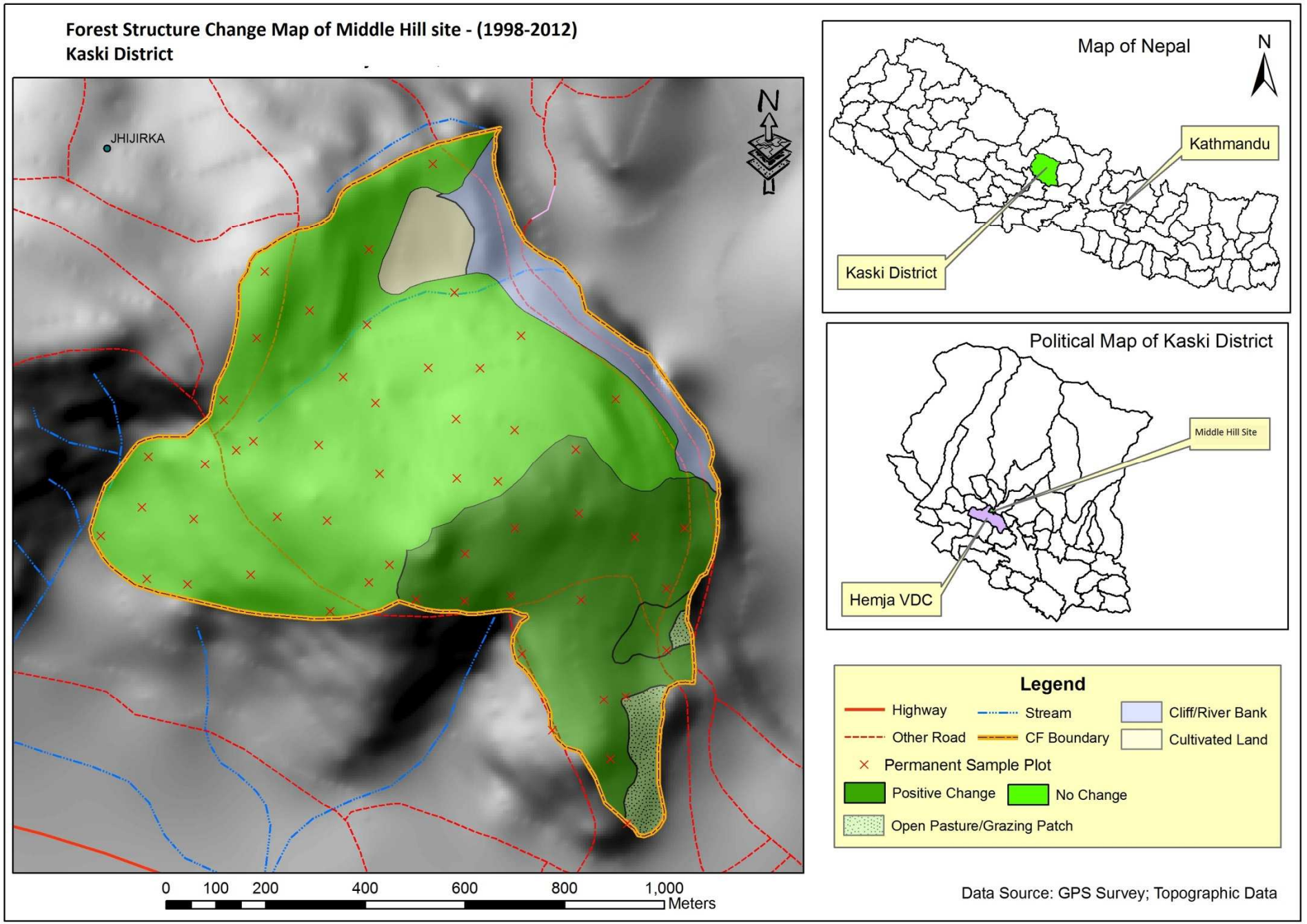
*E-mail addresses:* rebeccalrutt@gmail.com (R.L. Rutt), khanalbb1@gmail.com (B.B.K. Chhetri), ridishp@gmail.com (R. Pokharel), srayamajhi2002@gmail.com (S. Rayamajhi), krishna.inf@gmail.com (K. Tiwari), tt@ifro.ku.dk (T. Treue).

- Questioning the scientific rigor and usefulness of management plans to participatory forest management


Forest Structure Change Map of Middle Hill site - (1998-2012)
Kaski District
JHIJIRKA
N
0 100 200 400 600 800 1,000
Meters
Map of Nepal
N
Kathmandu
Kaski District
Political Map of Kaski District
Middle Hill Site
Hemja VDC
Legend
Highway
Stream
Cliff/River Bank
Other Road
CF Boundary
Cultivated Land
Permanent Sample Plot
Positive Change
No Change
Open Pasture/Grazing Patch
Data Source: GPS Survey; Topographic Data

# Quality and usefulness of management plans

The plan's very high annual allowable cut estimate:

*'The figures in the plan are too high, so we look at the forest and make decisions on that basis.'*

The plan's statement that 40% of the forest area is erosion prone:

*'We don't agree with this. The technicians simply looked at the slope without considering anything else and came to this result. But in the Mid-Hills there are slopes everywhere and not all areas are prone to landslides. … We know this forest better than they do. I suspect the quality of the technicians' assessment was poor. They did it all in three days only.'*

# Concluding remarks

1. Professionalization presents a challenge to ideals of participatory natural resources governance (NRG)

2. The logic of professionalization in NRG is promoted by neo-liberal environmental policies and the logics of development organizations and state bureaucracies

3. Social scientists have typically challenged professionalization tendencies by pointing to its social consequences (political ecology)

4. Another – more radical – approach is to question its basic foundation as rigorous, relevant and useful to NRG (STS) and/or its coevolvement with processes of socialization in professional organizations and training facilities (ethnography of development, STS)

# Thanks for your attention!

To know more about this work look at http://www.ifro.ku.dk/scifor and/or for the following articles 'in press' with Forest Policy and Economics:

- Lund, J.F. 2015. Paradoxes of participation: the logic of professionalization in participatory forestry.
- Faye, P. 2015. Choice and power: Resistance to technical domination in Senegal's forest decentralization.
- Green, K. & J.F. Lund. 2015. The politics of expertise in participatory forestry: a case from Tanzania.
- Rutt, R. L., B. B. K. Chettri, R. Pokharel, S. Rayamahji & T. Treue. 2015. The scientific framing of forestry decentralization in Nepal.
- Scheba, A. & Mustalahti, I. 2015. Rethinking 'expert' knowledge in community forest management in Tanzania.
- Toft, M.N.J., Adeyeye, Y. & Lund, J.F. 2015. The use and usefulness of inventory-based management planning to forest management: Evidence from community forestry in Nepal.