

Confronting Sustainability: Forest Certification in Developing and Transitioning Countries

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Foreword

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Ongoing environmental, social, and economic challenges facing the world's forests have led to increasing concern regarding appropriate policy approaches. As evidence pointed to increasing deterioration of forest ecosystems and rampant forest destruction in many places, initial efforts beginning in the 1970s emphasized intergovernmental agreements. Results included the signing of the International Tropical Timber Agreement in 1983 and the launching of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan in 1985.

Environmental and social groups, frustrated with slow governmental responses, undertook two complementary efforts in the 1980s: launching boycott campaigns of wood products from certain regions of the world, such as undisturbed tropical rainforest and Canada's remaining temperate old growth forests, while simultaneously supporting efforts to achieve a meaningful and binding global forest convention.

However, in 1993, following the failure of the Rio Earth Summit to achieve a global forest convention, the world of forest policy began to turn upside down. Many environmental groups, private foundations, and their allies decided to bypass intergovernmental efforts, which they reasoned to be a vast time sink with few results, and instead created a highly unusual policy instrument known as forest certification.

Building on the Forest Principles agreed to at Rio, they created a multi-stakeholder "Forest Stewardship Council" that developed globally important principles and criteria of responsible forest management and provided direction to regional bodies whose job was to develop national and/or sub-national standards. Most importantly, they turned to market pressures – hoping that there would be enough demand on the part of customers for environmentally and socially friendly forest products that the FSC might have a meaningful impact in denting, ameliorating, or even reversing global forest deterioration.

This grand experiment has had a number of powerful and important effects. It has encouraged and promoted multi-stakeholder participation in the development of forest policy in what had been historically closed processes between businesses and governments. It has also encouraged the proliferation of "FSC competitors" initiated by forest industry and forest owner associations who, while attracted to the idea of

forest certification, were unhappy with some FSC procedures and requirements. The result of this competition over certification programs has led to broader support for forest certification among forest companies and owners in North America and Europe, but limited support in developing countries – where some of the first and most persistent concerns about global forest deterioration were focused in the 1970s and still are today.

This book represents a comprehensive and rigorous effort to understand better how forest certification has emerged in developing and transitioning countries, regions that, despite their importance to global forest management, have until now received limited scholarly attention. Just how forest certification might emerge as a force for the promotion of sustainable forest management, and its potential role in limiting forest deterioration while promoting forest conservation is arguably one of the most critical questions facing environmental management today.

The book makes an important and significant contribution to addressing these questions for two reasons. First, it presents what is one of the most systematic and in-depth comparative analyses of contemporary forest policy and governance. Second, the decision by the editors to have the cases written by individuals from the countries being studied, and to hold a symposium on the results that linked practitioners and scholars, means that its influence on the *practical* questions of our times will be much greater than the array of scholarly conferences that fail to disseminate, or translate, the meaning of their efforts to real world problems.

The environmental and social challenges facing global resource management are more complex and at more critical junctures than ever before. Now more than ever there is a need for scholars to reinvigorate their efforts towards addressing and ameliorating critical global problems. The volume you are about to read is exemplary of such an approach: critical, probing, and yet always attuned to the problems for which forest certification was created.

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This book is the result of an incredible array of efforts on the part of countless individuals and organizations who recognized the importance of studying the role and impact of forest certification in developing and transitioning countries. Without their individual and collective efforts, this book would not have been possible. The range of people to whom we owe enormous gratitude is so great, and so rich, that we feel the need to apologize in advance for omissions that we will inevitably make. Nonetheless, the following is our first, though far from final, effort to give recognition for those who have made this venture possible.

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