Part 4

BOOK AND ARTICLE REVIEWS
Review of “THE EARTHSCAN READER IN FORESTRY AND DEVELOPMENT”

Edited by Jeffrey Sayer (jsayer@wwfint.org)

Orientation: After spending the last four years working on food and agricultural policies since I left forestry, some might question my credentials for reviewing the book The Earthscan Reader in Forestry and Development, edited by Jeffrey Sayer as a compilation of papers. After initial hesitation, I felt encouraged to take on the task because I discovered that in fact much of the book recognises that very often the very success or failure of sustainable management efforts depend upon policy developments that are often way beyond the sector itself. The book is not for reading at one seating but something to keep handy for ready reference as need arises. Despite its title, the book covers only third world forestry; it is organised into five parts, each introduced by an editor’s highlights statement: (a) The forest resource; (b) Forests and livelihoods; (c) Threats and opportunities; (d) The challenge of Sustainable Forest Management; and (e) The way forward: forestry for the future. Although many papers are written by researchers and conservation advocates, they carry ideas of value to forestry development practitioners, whether managers or policy-makers.

I read the book with pleasure and, apart from complimenting Jeff Sayer for his labour of love, I recommend it strongly to a wide spectrum of readers. Sayer has done a masterful job of introductory remarks to the whole work but also to each of the sub-sections, highlighting key ideas that emerge in the papers. In the chapeau, he notes that overall decisions about forests are no longer the unique preserve of foresters; at the end of the book his summation focuses on people dependent upon forests whom, in the context of growing decentralisation of control over forests, he “seeks to put . . . firmly in the driving seat”. Neither from Sayer nor from the individual papers, however, is it really

97 At the time of writing Chipeta was Director, Policy Assistance Division, Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome. Comments were made in a personal capacity.
clear how the relatively weak and poor local communities can effectively take the driving seat when more powerful stakeholders remain a reality.

**Some perennial beliefs:** Regarding the approach, with the notable exception of the paper by Shiel and van Heist, many authors appear impatient with literature review beyond going back a few years to about 1997/98. The assumption appears to be that the latest views are also the best. Glancing through, I find still detectable here and there some perennial orientations that I left behind a few years ago, although many authors have tried hard to place them in more balanced perspective: (a) the apparent persistent belief among foresters that local people and their institutions are, by definition, “benign” for forests while outsiders, including governments, are “malign”; (b) the dominance of the forester’s self-interested perspective and set of values, a core tenet of which is belief that forests justify strong policies and investment to conserve in substantial expanses; (c) the considerable attention given to biodiversity and apparent belief that its importance must be universally shared. In essence, emphasis remains on conserving thousands of forest species and yet in agriculture, the world is able to make do with only 5 agricultural crops supplying over 90 percent of its basic food. The papers in the Earthscan book offer no new compelling reasons that can convince laymen and politicians to conserve not just hundreds but thousands of forest species; and (d) with the tangential exception of the paper by Wunder, a general lack of attention to the fact that forests are a form of capital – potentially convertible into other forms of capital that may more immediately meet human welfare objectives than conservation in the form of forest can.

**Highlights from selected papers:** Taken all together, Sayer has compiled a book that justifies everyone’s attention. Many papers in it have gone out of their way to look at more than one partisan perspective: on issues as diverse as forests and poverty, conservation and development, tenure etc, they have tried to offer sober, balanced, and well moderated insights. If only for reasons of space, it is impractical to refer to every paper in the book; what then stands out among the insights gleaned from the book? – my selection follows:

- **White & Martin (Chapter 4):** The claim that of ownership and /or secure access/use rights to forests are necessary or important for sustainable management is topical. White & Martin report growing community ownership or access rights in developing countries but they are unclear
as to whether this change is in fact leading to better conservation and management. The paper could have benefited from examples of success outside the developing world that can support the implied recommendation that the trends towards community ownership will enhance sustainable management.

- **Wunder (Chapter 5):** In this excellent paper, Wunder explores possible synergies between poverty alleviation and tropical forests and expresses some reservations about the capacity of forests, especially natural ones, to provide the best route out of poverty.

- **Arnold and Byron (Chapter 7):** Arnold and Byron explore forest dependency by peoples of the tropical forests, starting with definition problems of “dependency”. They observe various gradations of contribution by forests to livelihoods and not so much clear-cut dependence. An important message is that forest-dependent people’s reliance on forests is dynamic in its nature and degree, with some remaining forced to be dependent. While others escape. The paper could have benefited from greater emphasis on how to provide people with the capacity to capture the most beneficial options within and outside forestry, to avoid forest reliance being a trap.

- **Kaimowitz (Chapter 8):** Kaimowitz deals with illegality and law enforcement, addressing in particular issues of corruption as a major cause of forest misuse and of diversion of benefits away from the people. While the paper highlights these adverse effects of illegality, it is short on prescribing what can give the poor and weak capacity to become less disadvantaged or to fight better for their rights, including any need for “affirmative action”.

- **Kaimowitz, Byron and Sunderlin (Chapter 12):** Kaimowitz, Byron and Sunderlin: a very well thought out paper looking at non-sectoral including macro-level policy intervention to protect forests. Given that many policy reforms the paper proposes are at very macro level or would cause loss of very visible non-forestry (e.g. agricultural) gains in return for more modest forestry benefits, the question that remains unanswered is how to provide governments with justification for what could (at least superficially) be seen as irrational choice favouring the sector. The paper also pays less attention than expected to the importance of general economic growth in weaning people away from resource-destroying direct dependence on the land and the forest.

- **Smith, Mulungoy, Persson and Sayer (Chapter 16):** Smith, Mulungoy, Persson and Sayer: this paper carries the important message that expectations that carbon-capture forestry
can offer abundant opportunities for small-scale interventions may need moderation.

- **Wilshusen et al (Chapter 17):** as a departure from the norm, it was a surprise to read authors courageous enough to propose a paradigm shift towards more top-down approaches in order to ensure adequate biodiversity protection. The authors argue that in situations where incentives to destroy forests are driven by poverty or institutional incapacities/instability, mankind risks significant irreversible biodiversity losses if it insists on playing the politically correct game of “participation”. The authors also call for conservation objectives that are less burdened with unrealistic concurrent social goals.

- **Sayer (Chapter 22):** in his concluding section, Sayer focuses on future adaptation to “... new institutions for forests ... that must have the capacity to influence forest-related decisions at a much broader scale than we have attempted in the past.” He notes that, increasingly, the sector will call for a range of interventions beyond just protection and will witness strengthening of a trend already in evidence whereby non-foresters are wielding the policy batons. Sayer is unclear as to whether in order to better cope with these changes he would prefer unitary broad-mandate institutions with forestry as only one of their responsibilities or coalitions of complementary – mandate institutions, with forestry sub-structures operating in partnership.
Law compliance in forestry continues to receive considerable attention. The ITTO and FAO have recently issued a book on best practices for improving law compliance\(^9^9\); now CIFOR has published the book that is the subject of this review “Justice in the forest – Rural livelihoods and forest law enforcement”. Edited by conservation activist Marcus Colchester and drawing upon six country cases (Bolivia, Cameroon, Canada, Honduras, Indonesia, and Nicaragua)\(^1^0^0\) and the inputs of five contributors, the book starts by highlighting estimates of proportion of illegally-logged timber – as high as 90 percent for some countries – showing that in such cases, illegality is the norm and hardly excites notice.

The study then draws attention to ‘Forest Law Enforcement and Governance’ (FLEG), highlighting the tendency for the law to limit the rights and livelihoods of forest-dependent communities. After suggesting that laws are often promulgated without adequate thought for livelihoods of the poor, the study draws attention to contradictions among laws and the adverse selectiveness in their application to local communities; the relative costliness or other difficulty of compliance by the small-scale; and the exclusion of the

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98 At the time of writing: Kelatwang: Consultant: FAO Forest Resources Assessment Project, Rome, Italy; Chipeta – Policy Assistance Division, FAO, Rome
100 An editorial decision that can be questioned is the room offered to the Chief Forester of British Columbia (Canada) being offered room to “defend” itself while none of the other countries – all of them developing countries – have had the same opportunity. Readers may feel that unfair advantage has been extended to Canada and that the rest have been prejudged to be “guilty as charged” in this case.
weak from corrupt political patronage that may allow large-scale abusers to go scot-free. It then mentions efforts being made by large enterprises or government agencies to share benefits with local communities, stating that such arrangements function poorly and may even lock the beneficiaries into benefiting from illegality. In places, the study mentions cases where perfectly legal forest operations by large industry can do more damage to local livelihoods and / or the environment than illegal ones; it concludes with a number of recommendations on future approaches.

The message is that for local communities, the full application of the law may undermine livelihoods, sometimes inadvertently. Associated with this is the suggestion that at times, law enforcement may target the poor more than the large and powerful, even if the latter may do more harm. A second message is that some perfectly legal activities carried out by industrial-scale operators can nevertheless be harmful to both forests and local livelihoods and yet escape censure while less harmful activities by the poor often fall foul of the law. Coming as the work does from a research centre, its sections are formatted as answers to “research questions”, i.e.:

• Whose livelihoods depend on forests?
• How do forest-related laws relate to these people?
• For whose benefit were these legal frameworks primarily developed?
• How does illegal forest use affect communities?
• How much of what poor people do in forests is ‘illegal’? What are the effects on the poor of making their forest use illegal?
• What have been the effects of forest law enforcement on the poor?, and
• How can forest law enforcement initiatives be improved so they contribute to poverty alleviation at the same time as combating illegal forest use?

Colchester has assembled a work that fully merits the attention of all who have an interest in understanding that law enforcement does not necessarily equally impact the powerful and the weak. It should appeal to all who engage in advocacy in favour of forest-dependent local communities but has value well beyond that. It has involved very extensive research through a near-exhaustive

101 As an example, in the late 1970s and 1980s the Republic of Korea built up a massive export oriented plywood manufacturing industry based on logs imported from unsustainably managed resources. For Korea, this industry was a very good source of capital accumulation later transformed into other industries and abandoned – here was nothing illegal in what it did – but in some of the countries from which the logs came (e.g. Philippines), forest destruction proved irreversible.
literature. In this way it allows readers to find original sources and thus make their own judgement where they may not find the authors’ interpretation not fully clear in its basis. By looking at all situations where law enforcement may penalise the locals unfairly (such as where conservation is intended) as well as where the law also penalises non-local parties (such as major industrial investors), the study contrasts the impact and stresses that adverse effects are inordinately heavy for locals, given their weakness, their lack of official contacts which could afford them some shielding from the full might of the law, and their more basic and greater need for the forest.

In most cases, over exploitation of forest resources depends on ease of access and markets. Thus, people coming from far can often cause more damage than locals as they bring in transport; these faceless gatherers sometimes supply larger enterprises or larger urban communities. Unfortunately, they are very difficult to track since many can simply move to the next area where law enforcement is more lax. Governments are responding partly by introduction of participatory forest management. To balance law enforcement suitable for local communities and commercial enterprises, exemption are granted for domestic use and licenses for commercial use. But what hampers these developments is lack of monitoring and assessment of the forest resources, corruption by government officials and incapacity to enforce the law. To satisfy it often calls for a capacity that is affordable by larger enterprises and institutions but also appropriate to local communities. In most cases, it is only the larger enterprises who can meet government requirements as local communities are too weak to bargain and are easily intimidated. The law therefore has an inbuilt even if inadvertent bias. Unfortunately, incapacity to obey offers no exemption in the eyes of the law; thus, local communities may suffer twice: from lack of information and inability to protect their own resources and also from the incapacity to demonstrate that they would comply if they could afford it!

Of the aspects that could have been stressed better, two can be highlighted: (a) that in drawing attention to the injustices, one should not forget that the small-scale communities can also do considerable harm: anyone who has seen the damage wrought by extensive shifting cultivation will know what this means; (b) that much of the dislocative impact of the law on the local communities is not the result of aforethought malice on the part of the authorities. Instead, it may reflect what is observed for all small-scale and informal-sector operations: the codified law is designed for formal institutions.
Colchester’s work is long overdue and throws light on an important topic. It is thorough enough to serve as a convenient reference document for all who wish to see equity achieved in practice. There is, of course, a rather heavy element of idealism in the recommendations; perhaps also of optimism as to the ease with which the current weaknesses can be corrected. In the end, power considerations come in – if the locals remain weak economically (unable even to bribe!), not socially networked with those in power, and relatively disorganised (in comparison with their more commercial industrial users of forests), they may continue to be at a relative disadvantage. The recommendations could thus more forcefully seek earliest removal of extreme hardship but accept greater delay in achieving utopia.

What may therefore be missing in the recommendations are suggestions as to most realistic “special provisions” and allowances that allow local people to be given exemptions as an interim measure while eventual perfection is sought. Also missing may be suggestions on how to make informal, non-codified traditional practices of locals carry more weight than they currently do in the eyes of the law. Furthermore, how to deal with what we have called above “faceless gatherers” is a real challenge requiring early attention: they are in many cases what disadvantages the local communities. The faceless gatherers are mobile, have funds to bribe and huge target markets both in and outside countries. Even when participatory management is introduced, it is not realistic to expect local communities to impose heavy fines or otherwise enforce the law against them; the gatherers vent their wrath on the poor and thus the victims are always local communities.
In a world swamped with sentiment and words without end about the environment and the vital need to protect our forests, it is a privilege to review a work that assesses whether, how and under what circumstances implementation of a specific environmental pro-forests policy has been effective. The policy in question is the removing of natural forests from timber production “as a strategy of conserving forests;” in popular language, such policies have been labelled “logging bans”.

The FAO Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission, which brings together the region’s governments on forestry issues, should be thanked for a timely decision to study the efficacy of these policies in the hope that the early lessons can influence societal response to related environmental challenges. The report covers several country cases of “logging bans”, of which the oldest is for New Zealand (imposed in 1987) and the newest for the Peoples Republic of China (1998); the other countries reviewed being Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

The authors are to be congratulated for a professional assessment: they start by looking at driving forces leading to the policy decisions including the adverse environmental changes that triggered action; the perception of alternative sources of timber if natural forest supplies were to be withdrawn; differentiate the climate of popular or official opinion in the study countries – from desire for conservation to merely fighting deforestation. Then they provide for each country a profile of the “ban” imposed: its structure, comprehensiveness or otherwise, how it is enforced. Finally the authors look at whether and to what degree the bans have been beneficial in the sense originally intended.

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The original report should be read to fully appreciate the complexity of judging efficacy. In the first place, the benefit to the specific country may have been at the expense of importing timber from a country with weak institutions and lax forest management so that the net effect of well-intentioned conservation at home may be to “export deforestation” to others. The authors attempt to link timing of the “bans” with a rising trend in timber imports but to be fully convincing this will need time. Of the study countries, some have had adequate lead time to develop alternative internal timber sources: New Zealand developed plantations and Sri Lanka has home gardens; others are only now establishing such sources. The authors have explored how adoption of the policies has affected the forestry comparative advantage of each country and led to the inadvertent creation of protected areas.

They draw attention to many lessons and make some recommendations, the essence of which is the need to place bans among other options. The report encourages the adoption of accompanying measures if bans are to achieve the intended gains of conservation while not ignoring sustainable development aspirations.

For anyone with an interest in policy approaches to conservation, this report is essential reading. FAO and the authors are to be complimented on an important work and they should be encouraged to revisit this work in another decade, so as to provide lessons based on longer observation.

**Related reading:**


Richard Tucker


Richard Tucker explores how the pull of markets resulted in rampant destruction of natural tropical ecosystems. In a world greatly concerned about ecological security, the book is highly topical; Tucker’s scholarly analysis is a compelling read. Looking mainly at the period from the 1890s till the 1960s, Tucker sheds light on American demand for tropical products as a principal underlying cause of resource destruction as investors cleared land to produce for the market; how America deepened the destructive ecological footprints left by Europe’s 500-year domination of global trade; and how growing Japanese demand is following suit. His analysis lends weight to responsible consumption patterns as a factor in achieving sustainable development.

In his highly readable story, Tucker reveals what happened as American capital sought profits in the ruthless ways it knew best, including the exploitation of local elites’ vested interests. Tucker traces cause and effect through research that painstakingly knits together strands from history, economic and political power play, and chauvinism among powerful trading countries, globalisation and plain human greed.

The author is to be commended for successfully resisting the temptation to write an inflammatory book, replete with the apportioning of blame and condemnation of American and other imperialist capital. Instead he has presented a factual account, interpreted sensitively with a natural eye for human motives. The book should be obligatory reading for those in corporations, governments, international organisations, or donor agencies that seek environmentally responsible development policies and strategies.

103 Reviewer Chipeta was at the time Deputy Director General, Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Bogor, Indonesia.
In line with the journal’s mandate, this review touches only lightly on the global scene (see box) so as to focus on Southeast Asia.

**Generic impacts of American insatiable appetite**

- American investments brought some economic prosperity and modernisation to the tropical countries, even if on an enclave basis;
- The “insatiable appetite” of American markets was the leading fundamental cause of tropical resource destruction;
- Both rich and poor contributed to ecological degradation but the rich were by far more destructive;
- Americans capitalised on the vested interests of local oligarchies, dictators and other elites who dominated land ownership in the tropical countries to capture and exploit natural resources. Tucker states “Americans usually succeeded in subordinating local elites through mutually profitable transformation of landholding patterns ….” Elites were often backed by governments when the poor became restive (in Asia, the Philippines is said to best exemplify this);
- Transport infrastructure and later chainsaws and heavy-duty equipment facilitated access for ecological transformation and land clearing.
- In general, damage took the form of:
  - biological simplification by displacing native ecosystems with monoculture plantations;
  - collateral damage to ecosystems through: (a) cultivation of newly accessible lands by indigenous populations displaced by development; (b) fuelwood harvesting e.g. for sugar refining – a cartload of sugar used to need half a cartload of firewood.

In **Southeast Asia**, Tucker reports on the impacts in the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia. In the **Philippines**, Americans started with sandalwood harvests from Negros Island forests for the China trade but greatest impact came from farming *(sugar, pineapples, tobacco, abaca)* and timber exploitation yielding products with strong American demand. **Sugar** came to lead Philippines exports, with 65% of the land on Negros under it by 1974. In **timber** exploitation, the Philippines temporarily became a leading exporter: in the decade till 1959 forest products multiplied nearly fifteen times to a sixth of exports – later declined to insignificance; new 1960s pulp and paper capacity worsened pressure on natural forests. By the 1970s, over 13 million acres
of forest were treeless and squatters were moving in. Tucker considers the Philippines today “probably the most ecologically degraded large country in the tropics”.

In Indonesia, Americans focused on Sumatra, starting with coffee trading but later making Hevea rubber the most important – America bought 70% of Sumatra’s rubber. The American motor industry created insatiable demand for Hevea rubber, until synthetic substitutes emerged after 1950. After World War II, over 90% of rubber came from tropical Asia (0.7 million tons each for Malaya and Indonesia). However, direct American planting was dwarfed by smallholder cultivation that, by 1973 had nearly 4.6 million acres of rubber on outer Indonesian islands, including Kalimantan against only about 1.1 million acres of estates. In Malaysia, estates and smallholdings shared equally the 3.6 million acres of forest cleared by the 1970s; although the market influence was predominantly American, production was initially British and later local. The British were simultaneously creating oil palm monocultures there.

In the Pacific, Tucker reviews Hawaii as an extreme case: harvesting whales and sandalwood till near-extinction; flooding the island with alien humans, plants (sugar cane and pineapples), and animal species (goats, cattle) so bringing new diseases, and displacing natural ecosystems; transforming dry areas through excess irrigation; polluting water with excess agro-chemicals; early decimation by alien diseases of the indigenous human population.

**Related reading:**


International Tropical Timber Association (ATIBT) and Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), 1999. *Road infrastructures in tropical forests – road to development or road to destruction?*, Rome, Italy. Ref. D/X1361E