Forest Certification in Latin America:
Prospects for use as a Development Tool in Community Forestry

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Introduction to Topic

Forest certification has emerged as a device that facilitates connections between well-managed producers and consumers who value knowing where their wood purchases come from and how they are produced. That is the basic idea. A simple premise, but a sometimes complicated reality. Some complicating factors include the plethora of certification regimes, who has access to certification, the meeting of supply and demand, and whether or not certification is just rewarding already responsible producers and not influencing the worst producers who are doing the most damage. The focus here will be on examining the interface between certification and community forestry in Latin America- where it provides opportunities and where its limitations lie.

Background of Certification

The practice of certifying forests to ensure that sustainable management practices are being used is a relatively recent phenomenon. It emerged as part of the larger global trend towards Sustainable Forest Management (SFM). McDonald and Lane (2004) argue that since the renewed focus on the concept of SFM at the decisive 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), there has been increasing global convergence regarding criteria and indicators (C&I) that describe specifically what constitutes SFM. But that does not equate agreement on how to implement SFM policies because "stakeholders in the process hold strong and often conflicting beliefs about the importance of the criteria (68). There is also ambiguity in the term sustainable. Traditionally, a standard definition has been, "[the] ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" but Vogt *et al* argue that this definition does not address the "complexity and interdisciplinary nature" of the term (60). They put forth a new definition that recognizes the link between natural and social components: "social- and natural-science resistance and resilience to disturbances (could be human or not) that allows the management unit to function within its

natural range of variability" (60). Certification has become a mechanism for creating agreed upon standards and methods of implementation, through multi-stakeholder input.

In the last decade, there have been emergences and expansions of certification programs and rising worldwide citizen awareness of them. One of the oldest, largest, and most successful proponents of forest certification is the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), based in Bonn, Germany. It is a non-profit international organization that seeks to promote "environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests" through mutually agreed upon principles, criteria, and standards (FSC website). The FSC accredits bodies throughout the world who then perform actual inspections and deal with on-the-ground implementation of criteria. In the United States two main FSC accredited bodies can provide certification- they are Vermont-based Smartwood and California-based Scientific Certification Service (SCS). These two bodies also certify forests outside the United States.

Worldwide certification processes are still undergoing growing pains, as the movement is relatively young. It is at times a cumbersome and costly process, with, sometimes, questionable tangible benefits. Disparate groups such as environmentalists, governments, large forest companies, and indigenous peoples all see value in certification, as it promotes sustainable practices that take into consideration water quality, economic sustainability, and recreational utility. Consumers also seem to be more conscious of their power to affirm such ideals through their wood product purchases. The focus of this paper will be to look at the challenges and potential benefits that come when community forestry groups in Latin America pursue forest certification.

Literature Review

While certification is a relatively new concept, the study of forest management at the local and community level is not. There are many works that provided important background information and explained concepts that come into play in certification. Two recent articles in Forest Policy and Economics provide theoretical background regarding public participation and

forest management decision-making. Wellstead, Stedman, and Parkins (2002) look at the general concept of representation and Appelstrand (2002) stresses the importance of "finding consensus in diversity" in creating a "solid base for policy outputs" (281).

Due to the young and dynamic nature of certification, it is difficult to find comprehensive works and studies that address the experiences of community groups within developing nations who have pursued certification, but a couple of sources have emerged as quite useful. Studies of specific Latin American countries and their progress, struggles, and strategies are found in the November 2000 Forests, Trees, and People Newsletter put out by a European organization of the same name. It offers a compendium of articles submitted by experts involved in initiatives in different countries. Once piece by Fernando Aguilar, director of the Bolivian Council for Voluntary Forest Certification (CFV), looks at challenges and opportunities that Bolivia has faced in seeking community certification. Another piece focuses on experiences in Mexico. Camino Velazo and Alfaro Murillo provide a more comprehensive overview of Latin American experiences in certification. While this source is useful, experiences are developing and evolving at a rapid rate so more up to date works are vital.

A more current book entitled Social and Political Dimensions of Forest Certification (2003) provides a wealth of information regarding the struggles developing nations and communities within those nations face in implementing certification. Different authors contribute chapter case studies from throughout Latin America looking at various aspects of such challenges. Virgilio Viana looks at how certification processes in Brazil have had both direct and indirect impacts on areas such as institutional policies and roles, dialog and partnerships, and community involvement. Stephen Bass takes a different approach by elucidating initial assumptions and expectations that different parties had prior to certification and how those notions have played out after experience. He looks primarily at Bolivia and Mexico. Last, Andréa Finger-Stich provides a perspective on how certification works "on the ground" in Guatemala. She provides suggestions on how to improve its relevance, effectiveness, and success by

practicing as “ a multi-stakeholder-based policy-making process rather than merely as a market instrument” (165).

Lastly, a 2001 work entitled Certification’s Impacts on Forests, Stakeholders, and Supply Chains devotes chapters to community forest certification and the future of certification. It draws on joint field studies carried out by the Oxford Forestry Institute (OFI) and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) which examined the experiences of community-based enterprises, especially of interest are those carried out in Bolivia, Honduras, and Mexico.

Thesis Statement

It is important to look at certification from a perspective other than the dominant northern one, as over half of the world’s forests are in developing countries. Can certification, as an environmental policy, be an effective development tool under the circumstances developing nations face? Is it unrealistic to expect more from this primarily market-base tool? Larger issues of governmental policy, economic circumstances, and citizen’s rights need to be examined to provide the context for determining what role certification can and should play. It is worth addressing how organizations go about working to promote certification. Is it a push from the outside or more locally and community driven? Who have been the major actors initiating certification? The term “public participation” is key. How should stakeholders be meaningfully involved in the process?

The goals of this paper will be to look first at the FSC as an institution and how it has emerged, then to identify the major actors involved, and, last, set forth what we can learn from the certification experiences of Latin American communities thus far. What have been the costs and benefits? As certification matures and becomes more widespread could this change? Hopefully, through looking at selected case studies in Mexico, Brazil, Guatemala, and Bolivia, more robust conclusions regarding the effectiveness of using certification as a development strategy will emerge.

Strategy/ Research Method

Various research strategies were used to complete the research, much of it web-based. Websites of national FSC initiatives, independent research organizations, and other community groups provided needed background information. Scholarly articles in publications such as the Journal of Forestry and Forest Policy and Economics provided theoretical background and discussions on key factors. Other recent books and case studies from different research organizations provided meaningful input to the questions posed earlier. A more qualitative approach was taken, locating a few applicable cases.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

As stated earlier, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), established in Oaxaca in 1993, is an international nonprofit organization whose mission and main goal is "to promote and enhance well-managed forests through credible certification that is environmentally responsible, socially acceptable, and economically viable" (FSC Website). That stated goal was worked toward through the establishment of mutually agreed upon criteria, standards, and principles of forest management. An excerpt from an FSC pamphlet summarizes the 10 Principles:

This is the internationally recognized label that the FSC uses to certify that forest products were produced in a sustainable manner

1) **Compliance with laws and FSC Principles:** Forest management must abide by all applicable laws of the country in which they occur
2) **Tenure and Rights and Responsibilities:** Rights to the land are clearly defined and clearly established
3) **Indigenous Peoples' Rights:** Indigenous peoples' rights to own, use, and mange their lands are recognized and respected
4) **Community Relations and Worker's Rights**: Maintain and/or enhance the long-term social and economic well being of forest workers and local communities
5) **Benefits from the Forest**: Encourage the efficient use of the forest's resources and services to ensure economic viability, and environmental and social benefits
6) **Environmental Impact**: Conserve biological diversity, water resources, soils, and unique and fragile ecosystems and landscapes, maintaining the ecological functions and integrity of the forest
7) **Management Plan**: A plan is written, implemented, and kept up to date, including statements of long-term objectives
8) **Monitoring and Assessment**: Monitoring is conducted to assess the condition of the forest, yields of forest products, chain-of-custody, management activities, and their social and environmental impacts

9) **Maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests**: Management activities enhance the attributes of high conservation value forests

10) **Plantations**: Plantations should complement the management of, reduce pressures on, and promote the restoration and conservation of natural forests

(Source: Forest Stewardship Council U.S.A.)

It is important to emphasize how difficult it is to create standards that will be acceptable to forest industries, environmentalists, and forest stakeholders, who hold vastly different values and goals. Not all forestry enterprises or conservationists are willing to compromise in such a give-and-take process as this.

Why would forest enterprises voluntarily submit to such outside scrutiny? Partially because consumers are, more and more, demanding that their wood purchases do not contribute to degradation of the environment. During the early 1990s consumer boycotts of tropical timber emerged and threatened the market. When forest product producers look toward the future, they must try to predict whether or not certification will fade from importance or whether it might become a prerequisite for doing business. Time has shown that, "within one decade, it (certification) has emerged from just an idea to become a common practice, especially in Europe and North America" (Bass, *et al* 1). Certification offers market-based incentives that, along with sustainability concerns, make it a very reasonable alternative for forest industries who along with profits, seek solid reputations.

The organizational structure of the FSC consists of the main decision-making body, the General Assembly, which is comprised of three equal chambers: social, environmental, and economic. Each of these chambers has a Northern and Southern sub-chamber that equally share the votes allotted to the larger chamber. This structure was designed with equity as a main concern, but an analysis by Thornber, that will be looked at later, demonstrates that equity has not been a reality and she offers some suggestions on how that might be remedied.

The actual certification process has evolved as time and experience have exposed flaws. One example can be found in the difficulties small-landowners have faced in their attempts to

access certification, mainly because of the relatively high cost. There have been attempts to make it more affordable through schemes such as umbrella and group certification. Also just recently, the FSC established a project entitled Small and Low Intensity Forest Management (SLIMF) to address those concerns and obstacles.

FSC certification is by no means the only scheme available. Many other national, regional, and international systems of certification exist. Some include the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), which deals in many sectors other than forestry, the Pan-European Forest Certification Framework (PEFC) started in 1998 as an alternative to the FSC and now surpasses it in area of forest certified, and SFI, which involves large U.S. timber producers (Bass, *et al* 7). A 2004 review of various certification schemes by the NGO, Forests and the European Union Resource Network (FERN), found that the FSC "remains the only credible scheme in operation" (FERN website). It also makes this statement regarding other certification programs "unless these schemes improve and tighten their procedures and practices, forest certification can achieve very little towards improving forest management…forests are in crisis and certification has been sold as the panacea to all problems…in reality only the FSC label deserves the confidence of consumers as almost all other schemes allow business-as-usual practices to continue" (FERN website).

Equity and FSC Certification

Kristi Thornber uses her experiences in working with community certification and assessing the impacts of FSC certification through IIED projects to explore equity issues that have emerged. At its inception, FSC certification proponents believed that small-scale, tropically-based forest producers would be the first to embrace and become involved in certification, whereas it would be more difficult to catch the attention and participation of big business. Time and experience have shown that, to the contrary, big businesses have been at the forefront in involvement in certification (64). Yet for development agencies and NGOs, certification continues to be viewed as a potentially important tool that can bring about more equitable power

sharing over forests and improved livelihoods for all stakeholders. The current observed patterns of inequity regarding certification hamper those efforts.

One area where equity is of concern comes in response to the fundamental question: "Who can achieve it and who can benefit from it?" (64). Statistics reveal, developed countries hold 66% of certificates and 80% of certified land area (64). Industrial enterprises hold 35% of certificates and 66% of certified area, while community-based enterprises hold 25% of certificates and 3% of certified area (64). Also the nature of the forests certified further evidences the northern preeminent position in that "boreal/temperate forests dominate over tropical and sub-tropical in terms of certificate numbers, areas, and average sizes" (64).

Thornber specifies two major inequity divisions: at the international and national levels. Internationally there is a clear north-south divide. Concerns include differences in the developed and developing countries' enterprises themselves and variable market conditions (65). At the national level, there are equity challenges regarding the diverse size and types of enterprises: large companies versus small/ community-based, multi-national versus local, and private versus state controlled, all with different technical and financial capacities. Thornber notes that disparities in risk levels and information access regarding markets are especially detrimental (70-71). With different conditions through the world, can certification adequately address such diverse realities? She calls for equity concerns to be addressed, but also maintains that caution is necessary. Certification's primary role is as a market-based instrument, and its limitations must be realistically taken into consideration. It is not a magical cure-all.

Richard Donovan, Director of Smartwood, one of the two accredited certifiers in the U.S., discussed such equity concerns at the 2000 FSC conference in Oaxaca. He sees great value in the FSC continuously addressing issues of equity. Current and future strategies should involve more flexible policies, openness to innovative certification systems, and targeted initiatives that focus on key sectors such as indigenous and low-quantity producers (8). He identifies "emphasis

on getting economic benefits to certified operations of all sizes" as a key step in working to resolve equity issues.

Context and Background

Poverty and Forests

The World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development (WCFSD) calls the co-existence of high poverty levels with rich expansive forest capital endowments as "remarkable' and "indefensible" (11-12). It sees this as a failure of governance, as current arrangements "all too frequently exclude disadvantaged groups such as indigenous peoples and women who are directly dependent on and affected by forest policies, uses, and management" (12). This is related to forest degradation as, "the lack of respect for traditional land ownership rights is destroying some of the best protectors of the forest, indigenous populations" (13). It is estimated that 350 million of the worlds' poorest people depend of forests for their survival and a billion more rely on various woodland types for fuel, food, and fodder (14). The status of forests is of vital concern to these people. Their livelihood is threatened by forest decline, but properly managed forests offer the possibility of welfare and development improvements.

More narrowly, about 60 million indigenous people make their homes in and depend on forests for survival (15). The practical and cultural significance of the forests to them is inestimable. Outside demands on forests and the instability of their rights to access and use are pressing problems for indigenous forest dwellers (15). The WCFSD believes that the responsibility to protect the public interest lies with the government and that they "should create mechanisms for consultation, dialogue, and debate in which all private interests participate [and] in which the poor and the politically weak are represented" (16). Later, the roles of government and policy will be examined in relation to how certification can also accomplish some of these objectives.

Forest Ownership in Latin America

It would be useful to have a brief overview of the nature of land and forest ownership in Latin America. According to the International Network of Forests and Communities (INFC), 25% of the world's forests are located in Latin America and 52% of tropical forests (1). Approximately 7.4 million hectares are lost, annually, mainly because of the promotion of agriculture, commercial and otherwise (1). Another important characteristic of natural resource and forest ownership in Latin America is the fact that ownership and tenure are very frequently unclear because the state has primary ownership rights (1). Agrarian reform programs in places like Guatemala and Mexico attempted to return land to campesinos, and other nations are also moving toward the goal that forest resources be utilized for the benefit of local communities (1). The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) quoted a prediction that by 2050, 40% of the world's forests will be managed or owned by communities. Specifically in Mexico, 80% of forests are collectively owned (Madrid 1). This is in stark contrast to the circumstances in other developing countries of the world where 71% of forests are government owned (1). "In the past 15 years, the area owned and managed by indigenous communities has more than doubled to around 380 million hectares (1).

Latin America and Community Forestry

The experiences of community forestry certification in Latin America offer useful insights in assessing the future potential and limitations of certification as an ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable alternative. This is not to imply that "Latin America" is in any way a homogenous grouping. Forest types, national forestry laws, stakeholders, cultures, and circumstances are quite diverse. But this diversity does not preclude the extrapolation of some general lessons and the notation of some common dilemmas. The focus here will be on indigenous and community forestry. Following is an analysis of the main stakeholders

(governments, NGOs and the communities) and important issues (culture, economic sustainability, barriers to certification, and benefits of certification).

Community Forestry

Community forestry operations occur in differing social, cultural, and political contexts, but there are common features that distinguish such enterprises:

1) Informal and Limited Management Capacity
2) Low Production
3) Low Mobility of Capital
4) Sporadic Activities/ Multiple-Use
5) Remote Locations
6) Policy and Legislative Vacuum

(Bass, *et al* 18)

This is directly related to equity issues discussed earlier, as many of these characteristics are what put such operations at a competitive disadvantage under current schemes (20). Community forestry is so important because it is increasingly receiving a mandate from governments to manage lands. "In the past decade, governments and international funding agencies appear to have put greater emphasis on the transfer of natural resource management rights or responsibilities to communities rather than to local governments," though there also has been a trend moving authority from central governments to municipal authority (Ferroukhi 10). "More than 80% of all developing countries with economies in transition are currently experimenting with some form of decentralization" (IUNC Website). This process of decentralization to municipal governments and communities has occurred as a result of central governments "lack of legitimacy" and the "search for more efficient public service provision" (5).

The inherent goals of decentralization are very much in line with necessary prerequisites for SFM and certification, as "local people are more likely to identify and assign priority to their environmental problems accurately" and "local groups are likely to feel greater 'ownership' of decisions made locally" (9). A study by Ferroukhi, Larson and Pacheco looked at the extent to which decentralization has occurred in Latin American and the outcomes of this transition. Bolivia was described as the most decentralized, but powers at the local level are still quite constrained. One important outcome has been the redefinition of local power relations, as

marginalized groups are now being recognized by the traditional power-holding local elite and are gaining new opportunities for access, through this is not always the case (13). In contrast, Brazil's regulatory framework for forestry management is highly centralized and has few resources and really no capacity for monitoring or implementation of policies or regulations (15). It would be useful, now, to examine a few current national forestry policies and how they evidence this transition, and also how certification has played a role.

Governments Policies/ Forestry Law

In his chapter in the book Social and Political Dimensions of Forest Certification, Stephen Bass examines the role of certification in relation to public forestry policy. He claims, "forest stakeholders now seem more concerned about certification than with the latest forestry regulations, or with initiatives from the United Nations" and he seeks to elucidate the reasons why this has become true (27). The current forest political landscape has a few main characteristics or truths:

1) There has been a breakdown of public trust in forest managers and enterprises
2) Forest problems are on the rise (especially poor controls on forests use and lack of policy/ market incentives for sustainability)
3) Forest producers are under intense pressure to change
(Bass 27)

These realities underlie and precipitated the rise of certification. Now certification is looked to to fulfill two main purposes. First it is hoped that certification will improve forest management and ensure multiple public benefits through market-based incentives. Second, as a consequence, improve market access and share for the products of such management. Both proponents and opponents based their views and expectations of certification on assumptions regarding its place in relation to traditional state regulations, consumer demand, credibility, and the applicability of the FSC's broad standards to diverse forests and unique social/ political situations.

The history and experiences of community certification in Bolivia offers insights and lessons regarding the interaction of government policy and local stakeholders. An important

factor that has had very relevant effects on the Bolivian forestry situation is the evolution of government forestry policy and the restructuring of governing bodies. The shift from unsustainable selective logging to more sustainable forest management began during the 1990s due to pressures from diminishing stocks of desirable species, international market pressure, and new government programs (Jack 6). These same forces, largely, have also led to the growing interest and implementation of certification.

Unquestionably, 1996 is considered a significant year in terms of Bolivian forestry policy. A wide-ranging new forestry law, passed by the Bolivian congress, changed the legal structure that forest managers faced (6). The objective of the new law, "[to] enforce the sustainable use and the protection of forests for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby harmonizing the social, economic, and ecological interests of the nation" would change the foundations of forestry in Bolivia (6). Very significant was the new requirement that logging enterprises submit management plans that "include a clear, solid and explicit strategy guaranteeing the long-term sustainability of both volume and quality" (6). Mechanisms for enforcement are critical in determining the impact or effects of all new laws. A new independent institution (the *Superintendencia Forestal*) was created and charged with monitoring and enforcing compliance (6). This new institution, while lacking sufficient resources, is a large improvement over its predecessor, which was very corrupt. The relationship of these changes, with the movement towards certification, is evident in two ways. First, is that the standards of the new law are practically equivalent with those required for certification, making it very accessible. Secondly, an indirect consequence of the law is that forest enterprises are now required to harvest a much broader range of species, and certification is seen as a logical and effective avenue for marketing of such species (7).

Government policy can also explicitly promote certification, such as the case in Guatemala. Andréa Finger-Stich looked specifically at certification within the Maya Biosphere Reserve, established in 1990, in Northern Guatemala, which covers 19% of territory, all state-

owned (166). Upon its establishment, local communities interests were not taken into account and their access to forested land was often restricted (166). This led to escalating conflicts between those communities and state agencies, until a process began to resolve issues. Participatory conservation and sustainable management were identified as priorities. Ultimately, the solution was found in a system that would grant, renewable, 25-year concessions to communities (167). Stipulations for concessions include: establishing organized and legalized status, forming an elected committee within the community, linkage to an NGO for technical support, and mapping of the area requested (167). Very recently a new stipulation requiring certification of operations within 3 years of the concession grant, was added. A community-based organization, the *Asociación de Communidades Forestales de Petén* (ACOFOP), was formed to aid local communities in strengthening organization and capacity and also to work for national forestry law and regulations that address local realities (169).

Role of NGOs

The case of Guatemala brings forth the topic of NGO involvement in certification of community forestry. "Community forestry has formed one of the main thrust of donor funding for forestry for the past two decades…[and] donors have promoted community forestry as a way of improving the livelihoods of rural communities by generating income and employment, and by securing a long-term supply of forest goods and services" (Bass, *et al* 18). When certification emerged in the early 1990s, many NGOs/ donors saw it as a way to improve benefits that communities received from forests and they promoted it along with community forestry, though there was little experience in either (20). There also was a significant number of NGOs who moved from espousing a strict conservation mentality, to seeing management as a part of a broad conservation strategy (Viana 54). There has been criticism of the single mindedness of some organizations in pushing certification. Bass, *et al* asks donors to consider focusing funding on building management and technical capacity, at a pace that is fitting for the community, rather than sometimes jumping into certification prematurely (36). In the next sections NGO funding

and the economic sustainability of certification will be examined. Constructive criticism does not diminish the progress that many NGOs have made. In Brazil, the multi-stakeholder nature of the certification process and its focus on sustainable management, has brought about changes in policy formation. In 2001, Brazil's governmental regulatory body CONAMA, was restructured to have more NGO representation (Viana 54).

Costs and Benefits of Certification

Various groups with various motivations have used certification. When a community is in the process of deciding whether or not certification would be something they pursue, they should look at what it offers to them and what it doesn't. Early on, when certification was in its early stages, there was not much experience to draw from, there were only assumptions and predictions. Now, there is more experience and scholarly work to consult and there are some more discernable patterns regarding the role of certification in terms of community forestry.

Costs/ Barriers and Economic Sustainability

The initial, truly, the only original premise of certification was market-based, assuming that consumer demand would drive the need for certified products. Though it is still early, especially for smaller-community based enterprises, there has not been a significant meeting of demand with supply. That the quality and regular quantities of wood demanded is relatively high for less capital rich communities is often a problem. This was especially evident in the case of Lomerío, Bolivia, where the capacity and technological level of their mill was a detriment in accessing markets. Even when there is a linkage between producer and buyer, there have not been the price premium that was anticipated. Especially considering that many enterprises are heavily subsidized by NGOs, donors, and development agencies- if certification is not even able to be self-sufficient now, how long will communities be able to or should they continue to be certified? When donors lessen support, what will happen? There have been various efforts to create national buyers groups and to connect them with suppliers- such as work by the Rainforest Alliance in

Mexico, BOLFOR in Bolivia, and ACOFOP in Guatemala. This seems to be a promising avenue to achieve more market access.

There has been recent evidence that through concerted effort some of these financial and market barriers can be lessened. Chemonics International, engaged by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), has been working with 21 communities in the Petén area of Guatemala to enhance their business capacity (Chemonics). They have noted that revenues increased 50%, largely due to certified market exports and predicted another 30% increase in 2003. They did this in part by consolidating communities into producer associations, reducing costs by entering into a group certification scheme, and negotiating contracts without brokers (Chemonics).

Sergio Madrid, from Mexico's *Consejo Civil Mexico para la Silvicultura Sostenible* (CCMSS), claims that it is not realistic to expect profits for Mexican community groups in the short-run, for various structural reasons such as poor national forestry sector conditions, illegal logging driving prices down, but long-term profitability is a reasonable and likely reality (6). In fact, just recently a Mexican community group entered into an agreement with Swedish-based international retailer IKEA, providing them with sustainably produced lumber for various furniture pieces. This arrangement has been important for the community as it, "ensures employment for qualified local labor, increased added value for the wood, [was] a direct deal without unnecessary intermediaries and [provides] greater direct economic benefits for the community of Pueblo Nuevo" ("Certified" 1).

Also the level of management and the technical capacity required for certification is often prohibitively high. Right now there is an emerging trend that certification is only a possibility for those communities who are already relatively well managed. Many communities would not even dream of seeking certification. Again, Sergio Madrid recognizes that certification is not a panacea that can work to cure all community problems and he calls on the FSC to "think more seriously about the problems of the forestry operations of the non elite" (11).

The very characteristics that define community operations are the same that hinder their efforts to become certified- informal and limited management capacity, low production, low mobility of capital, sporadic activities (multiple-use), and remote locations (Bass, *et al* 18-19). Experience has shown that extended time periods are needed for stable community enterprises to become established, for example an average of 8 years in Brazil and 10-15 years in Honduras. Also, costs of the actual certification, direct and indirect, have been problematic as well, though the FSC has been working on new alternatives like the SLIMF initiative and group/ umbrella certification.

Lastly, an important factor that can determine whether or not certification is successful in a community if the treatment and acknowledgement of cultural differences. A very fitting example comes from the Chiquitano owned enterprise in Lomerío, Bolivia. Josh McDaniel took a more ethnographic research approach, conducting interviews and observing over a yearlong period, to evaluate the experiences of this community with certification. He concluded, “many of the problems that the Lomerío project is experiencing can be traced to fundamental conflicts between Chiquitano culture and the values that necessarily accompany market-based development efforts” (327). He provides examples to support his assertion, including how many ideals the Chiquitanos’ hold regarding wages, the value they place on agriculture, and a native moral economy “dominated by rules of reciprocity and rewards for generosity” conflict with newer market-based concepts that focus of individual consumption and the need for workers to consistently show up to work (335-339). Despite these deeply rooted incompatibilities, McDaniel still believes that community forestry is the best option for groups such as the Chiquitanos. Key to improved success of such operations will be “moulding the organization of the project in ways that reflect Chiquitano patterns of work and production, and reconciling the demands of market economics with the values of reciprocation that permeate life in Chiquitano communities” (339).

Benefits

Many communities, in addition to pursuing certification for economic reasons, had other motivations. One such is to secure status and recognition for their using sustainable management practices. Bass *et al* note that "a number of communities have seized on the potential of certification to provide objective proof of their management capacities (22). This could be important for a number of reasons. First, becoming certified could ease relations with critical outside forces. An example of this occurred in Mexico, where prior to certification there was much criticism by conservationists and NGOs who viewed community forestry as synonymous with illegal-logging and poor management practices (22). Another reason why status might be important comes when communities seek funding from outside sources.

Very important, is the recognition communities might gain from their government regarding land rights when they are certified. In Lomerío, as large industrial forestry companies were seeking to encroach upon community lands, community forestry and certification were turned to as mechanisms to stop this. Because the government, at the time, valued export industries, like timber, it was clear that to retain use of their lands, the community would have to put their land to more productive use, or begin logging (McDaniel 329). This occurred with the technical aid and funding of various national and international organizations, which eventually led to certification (329). Also, as mentioned earlier, certification has been vital in communities receiving land use rights in the Maya BR in Guatemala.

Lastly, benefits come through certification's inclusive processes that involve multiple-stakeholders. In fact, this is probably one of the biggest, lasting contributions certification has made. Increased quality public meetings in Guatemala evidence positive effects of this nature (Finger-Stich 176). "Enhanced participatory governance capacity is probably the greatest asset for sustainability, improving both the quality of life of local people and the quality of their environment" (176). Certification also was seen to provide "learning opportunities for collaborative management" (173). Observers in Bolivia also note that, "certification has promoted

the redefinition of community roles and responsibilities in forest management and enterprise administration" (Ruiz-Garvia 6).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to revisit the main question posed earlier. Can certification be an effective development tool for developing nations, especially smaller-scale communities? The evidence so far provides mixed conclusions. There have been clear obstacles in terms of market access, management and technical capacities, and economic sustainability, but there have also been successes with the encouragement of more inclusive processes and discussions, improved status, and more recent successful marketing. It is important to remember that certification is still young and, similar to many other processes, there is continuous learning and evolution. Inequities and barriers are not ignored, but there is work to address such problems and to make certification more accessible and beneficial even to smaller-scale enterprises, because the sum of those small-holdings adds up. Sergio Madrid from CCMSS provides a practical outlook, "There is no doubt that certification should not be thought of as the panacea to all communal problems and their forests, but there is a challenge and a possibility to take advantage of the mechanisms of certification, adapt it and make it useful for a larger number of communities with forest resources" (11).

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