Who determines biodiversity? An analysis of actors' power and interests in community forestry in Namibia

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Summary

Recent and ongoing research has begun to question the efficacy of community forestry programs. In particular, analysis seems to reveal that devolution of power to the local resource user does not happen. Nevertheless, it also appears that community forestry programs do deliver some of their promises. Especially, the biodiversity of the resources involved is often improved. But who determines this, if not the local resource user? This article seeks to answer this by analyzing the biodiversity of 14 community forests in Namibia. The authors apply their power theory and methodology to identify the powerful actors and these actors' interests. Finally, the author relates his findings to the real outcomes for biodiversity.
The article concludes that biodiversity is only in the interest of a few powerful actors who have used their power to achieve a positive outcome for biodiversity. Therefore, the article argues that biodiversity in community forestry depends on the interests of powerful actors.

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