

Foreword

The role of forests in human society has evolved throughout modern history. Major changes in the global importance of forests have taken place in recent decades. During much of the second half of the 20th century forests remained a source for timber to feed a vibrant timber industry. In Europe, landscape, biodiversity and recreational values became more important in the 1970s. In tropical countries forests became recognized as having importance for their potential to promote rural development, their high biodiversity value and as a source of timber. Since 2008 we have seen an important revaluation of forests. Deforestation is now believed to comprise approximately 20% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Reducing deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) and promoting reforestation are being advocated as important options to curb global emissions.

At the same time, forests compete for land with prospective biofuel crops. Biofuel production, the international financial crisis and fluctuations in oil prices are increasing the costs of living worldwide, putting pressure especially on poor families' budgets. Many of those who are negatively affected by high food prices turn to forests to complement monetary income or to substitute consumables lacking because of declining incomes.

The changing role of forests requires adequate policy responses. Policy is a key element that mediates the relationship between human societies and the environment. For that reason, policy making is very much debated among academics as well as practitioners concerned with either environmental dependency or the impact of society's environmental use. Policies need to be adapted constantly to changing societal environmental needs or to changing environmental capacities to deliver goods and services.

For that reason, the Center for Integrated Area Studies (CIAS, Kyoto University) and partners held an international symposium to address the two following questions:

1. What are the general features of forest policies for the coming years or decades, considering the changing demands of human society on forests and the changing forest capabilities to provide for those demands?
2. How can academic research contribute to a better understanding of forest policy and thus improve the process of forest policy making?

The symposium "Forest Policies for a Sustainable Humanosphere" was held on February 17 and 18, 2009 at the Inamori Center, Kyoto University. Participants included experts on forest policy in Japan, Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe. This publication, CIAS Discussion Paper 8, contains seven papers from participants at the event.

The composition of chapters in this volume reflects the issues of forest policy worldwide as they are evolving today. Katerere's Chapter One and de Jong's Chapter Three review the status and challenges of forest policy in major regions in Africa and South America. The contrast with Krott's Chapter Two is remarkable, but also indicative of possible future trends in tropical regions. The degree of negotiations and processes to establish multinational governance without losing national identity is a struggle in Europe. The same struggle is likely to take place in the three tropical regions of the world as the need to streamline forest policies across borders is widely recognized.

Policy sciences and research have an important contribution to make to the policy formulation and implementation process. Academic analysis can assess the rationality and effectiveness of policies. Arts' Chapter Four demonstrates that policy analysis and the outcomes of such analysis are influenced by the underlying policy theories and models that are used. Three case study chapters, two from the Netherlands by Buizer and van Gossum respectively and one from Thailand by Ubukata reinforce and illustrate the general points that are made in the initial chapters.

Together the chapters in this volume provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges that lie ahead for forest policy in tropical and temperate regions and point to some new directions that can be taken. They show that while situations in major regions are different, there are important similarities and opportunities to learn from each other. The papers also show that academic views on forest policy and its analysis are an undervalued resource that could benefit forest policy formulation and implementation during a time when forests are achieving yet greater recognition as important resources that can help solve pressing problems of human society worldwide.

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