



SOCIAL FORESTRY NETWORK



FOREST POLICIES, FOREST POLITICS

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I INTRODUCTION

Forest Policy was chosen for this set of network papers because Social Forestry projects are held in tension between - on the one hand - the achievement of villager/forester cooperation in rural areas and - on the other - the political, economic and above all legal environment created by the nation state. A good deal of attention has been given to local-level issues in Social Forestry: it is also time to consider ways in which national-level institutions help or hinder such projects.

A subsidiary theme is perhaps more implicit than explicit in the papers. It is this: as soon as the national level givens to which Social Forestry projects try to adapt are brought under critical scrutiny, onlookers are forced to broaden their frame of reference. Territorial and Commercial Forestry have to be considered at the same time, and so do much wider land-use issues.

Attempts to formulate a country's forest policy must of course face the fact that trees and the land on which they grow are being competed for by several non-congruent sets of opposed interests. Even establishing the criteria for adjudicating between them has proved difficult in the past, and commercial interests have tended to carry the day. Yet it has become increasingly clear as tree-cover dwindles in many parts of the world that until environmental sustainability is more frequently privileged in land-use planning, we should be pessimistic about the future of forest, woodland and scrub. The outlook is currently even more gloomy for many people who depend upon trees for subsistence needs.

Thirty years ago, it was assumed, relatively unquestioningly, that wealth created through industrialisation would trickle down through society to bring benefits to all. Forest industry made quick profits and the State saw forest revenue as its legitimate right. The outflow of forest benefits from rural to urban areas was often believed to benefit the rural poor in some indirect way: through the provision of state services, for instance. Those who faced the fact that forest benefits might never accrue to compensate rural people were probably of the opinion that benefits to the majority (the State or the Nation) justified costs to the minority.

Time has proved the proponents of this theory wrong. Jack Westoby, the FAO forestry expert who first advocated forest industry as a creator of wealth for all, has recanted, observing how rural people actually became worse off as a result (Dargavel et al 1985: 14-15). And a host of other writers, taking their starting point from Lipton's notion of 'urban bias' (Lipton 1977), have shown

the same thing. The rights of forest peoples already making extensive use of the forest had to be curtailed to make way for industrial activities. Their own modest commercial activities were outlawed and so were many of their subsistence activities. As a result, the rural majority was impoverished for the benefit of the urban minority, their ability to support themselves undermined. 'Trickle-down' theory has had an overlong innings among foresters, and is in urgent need of decommissioning.

The need for change in Forest Policy is now being felt in some countries, partly as a result of the Jakarta Eighth World Forestry Congress in 1978, whose final declaration explicitly linked the welfare of rural people with the survival of forests (Westoby 1985: 107); partly through the campaigning efforts of voluntary organisations who work with the poor; but above all through attempts to implement Social Forestry projects in anachronistic policy environments.

This paper attempts to tease out some of the issues which forest policy makers must address, using the material available in the newsletter articles and network papers which it accompanies, together with other sources. Because international, national and local-level issues all intertwine here, there is heuristic value in addressing each in turn, examining the particular problems thrown up at each level.

II THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Trees for the nation or cash from exports?

The export of tropical hardwoods has, in the past, provided an income for many developing countries. There are now very few countries with the forest resources to continue to do so, Indonesia being one of the few (Evans 1986), and none which should do so without including in the sale price the cost of renewal and replacement.

Foreign timber buyers naturally have no commitment to the forest stock of others: Japan for instance has preserved and even enhanced its own forests while contributing to deforestation in S E Asia and South America, and will continue to do so while the price differential remains great (Westoby 1983: 3).

Third World governments, in considering whether or not they can afford to raise revenues by felling natural forest, either for export or to make space for commercial agriculture, need to consider more than the forestry

sector. It may well be that profit from one source is greatly outweighed by increased expenditure because of flood damage, silted dams, decreased perennial water supplies, reduced rural self-sufficiency and higher rural-urban migration rates (Vohra 1986). But the mechanism is lacking in many countries for bringing out the relationship between such profits and losses, and a stouter defence of the nation's resources by its representatives is badly needed.

The international body of donors, researchers and campaigners can assist here by helping to devise appropriate methods of calculation, and by pushing for a recognition that international timber prices must include a stumpage rate.

III ISSUES AT NATIONAL LEVEL

There are various types of problem for Forestry decision-making at national level. On the one hand, decisions most commonly left to the Forestry Department itself concern the balance between conservation and commercial forestry claims upon the forest resource. On the other, there are conflicts over deforestation and alternative land-uses which are likely to involve several bodies. Both sets of problems occur in most places in a context of more or less rapid loss of forest cover.

Deforestation

Dramatic deforestation is occurring in most of the places these papers address. India aimed, in 1952, to keep 33% of its territory under forest but is now down to 12% (Gadgil et al 1983). In Dominica forest cover has fallen from 60% in 1947 to 26% today (de Ceara 1986). Sahelian deforestation was first noticed forty years ago, and depressingly correct predictions made then of the ecological and social collapse to come (Lai and Khan 1986: 3). And, worst of all, Ethiopia's forests, which covered 40% of the country in 1900, now extend across only 3% of it (Adams 1986). Wherever it occurs, deforestation leads to deteriorating incomes for the rural and urban poor.

Deforestation occurs when population densities go up, fallows shorten and agricultural intensification leads to the faster clearing of wooded terrain and perhaps the removal of tree crops (Boserup 1965; Byron 1985). But it is important to realise that demographic increase in a particular area is as frequently the result of squeezing a politically weak people out of good land into more marginal land or into a smaller area than before, as it is the result of a population explosion (Gill 1985). Such

evictions are frequently associated with the expansion of commercial agriculture or commercial forestry, driving the poor up hills, towards deserts or into forests, where tree-felling for agricultural plots is highly detrimental environmentally (Blaikie 1985; Roche 1986: 103).

Before attempting to solve the deforestation problem, foresters and other decision-makers need to look for the dynamic behind it and accept that its causes, political, social, economic, are part of that problem. Responsibility must be taken for the deforesters, as well as the trees: simply trying to move the people along passes the problem on to somebody else and, it has been shown countless times, does not stop the deforestation [1].

Foresters have not had this task in the past. They were able to talk of managing or protecting forest, and to treat people who got in the way of these processes as an impediment. But 'natural' resources are always exploited on behalf of one interest group or another, and clearer recognition has been needed of the fact that the well-being of forests, and the people heavily dependent upon them, are closely intertwined. As de Ceara puts it (1986):

'the only means of stabilising the ecosystem is to stabilise the social system; to solve the reforestation problem one must solve the poverty problem.'

Neither conservation forestry nor commercial forestry can practically be considered today without some thought along these lines; and the whole issue of a just Forest Policy turns upon the balancing of the fate of forest-dependent people, with the fate of the trees themselves. Once there is pressure upon the remaining forest resources of a country, it is impossible to avoid asking what forests are for, what use their preservation might be, or by whom they should be used.

Conservation

On the one hand, there are clearly some situations in which forests must be held inviolable for the good of hundreds or thousands of people, and for future generations. Trees are needed on watersheds; tropical rain-forests contain scarcely-tapped genetic riches; highly vulnerable dry open forest (two-fifths of the world's forest) protects soil and livelihoods in savanna and semi-arid areas (Westoby 1983: 3). In such situations, the preservation of trees in situ must take priority over any other use.

Such planning needs much stronger national-level support than it yet gets in most places. It is easy to calculate revenue foregone if such a path is chosen, and difficult to put a precise value on benefits: it behoves the international forestry community to learn to do these calculations, and to make a strong case for them.

At the same time, strict conservation is likely to limit the freedom of rural people living on the fringes of the forests or living in them, and their compliance must be won with well-thought-out compensation. They, after all, bear the chief costs of generalised benefits to others.

For instance, the FAO Ethiopian Highlands Reclamation Study referred to in Adams' article (1986) recognised the futility of conservation measures in a vacuum, and recommended concomitant agricultural intensification techniques and food security while terraces and bunds were constructed and additional trees planted. Conservation of particular patches of forest seems to have been part of the traditional strategy of some groups, and where movements for conservation spring up outside or below the State system they should be encouraged. Movements such as Chipko came into being because hill-dwellers were more concerned by the dangers of over-cutting hill-slope forest than contractors were.

There is a need, too, to preserve what is left without precluding future tree-planting. For instance in Honduras, de Ceara notes that a 1967 law closed saw-mills and prohibited tree-cutting. While the first part of the law was very necessary, the second constituted 'an obstacle to the rational use and establishment of forest species'.

Commercial Forestry

On the other hand, there is a far less socially acceptable sort of 'conservation' which places all kinds of limitations on the use of forest resources by local dwellers, yet allows contractors or concessionaires into the forest to cut timber for commercial purposes. Understandably, such conservation is seen as highly unjust by local dwellers, and their compliance must be obtained by force.

In the case of India, for example, although the 1952 National Forest Policy put ecological and societal forest functions ahead of commerce, revenue and industry, the country actually industrialised with all speed, and the forests were profoundly caught up in the process. Today, nearly half of Indian industry is biomass-based (Agarwal 1984: 10), and nearly all forest currently under Forest

Department control is worked for production. The dramatic loss of forest cover over the last thirty years shows that the 'sustainable yield' calculations which guided cutting rates were not only over-optimistic, but failed to take into account over-cutting by contractors, and the hardship caused to local people (Gadgil et al 1983: 23-27; Fernandes 1983: 14-22).

In fact, Forestry Departments in such situations should be radically revising their management strategies to respond to very rapidly dwindling supply. Some land should now be taken right out of production; some should perhaps be guarded once more by local people - as has proved so successful in Nepal (J. Stewart 1986: 17); commercial extraction should be limited to specific areas.

If foresters really want to preserve forest from a scramble to the death between all interest groups, then they will need to find a way of standing up to contractors, those politicians who support them, and all who hope to exploit the forest and pass on the costs of doing so to society. They will certainly need allies in the shape of other government departments, donors concerned with forests, and in-country voluntary organisations if these are appropriate. But the strongest potential allies of all, if the right relationship can be established, are those who themselves live in or near forests.

The Forest Department and other Sectors

Nationally, the Forestry Department needs to ally itself with such government departments as those concerned with Environment, Soil and Water Conservation, Land-Use Planning, Rural Welfare or Rural Development. Unfortunately, though, many of these departments are weak for exactly the same reasons as those relating to the Forestry Department: they are not big money spinners.

The pressure for short-run commercial land use

The reality is that resource development decisions often go against forestry. There is intense competition for land in most countries. Even in Indonesia (Evans 1986: 22) the total demand for land from all ministries amounts to double the nation's entire land-surface, for instance. In such situations, the richest, most powerful would-be land-users tend to sweep the board, though their proposals are unlikely to be the best land-use options. One might instance the felling of Amazonian forest to ranch beef for export to North America, or the felling of Sahelian tree-savanna (fundamental to the welfare of pastoralists) to grow ground-nuts for the European market in West Africa,

or for mechanized wheat-farming in the Sudan. In each case, consideration of the needs of local inhabitants and of environmental consequences are set aside in favour of export earnings.

The forest as support system for the viability of other economic activities

For forests to be accorded higher national priority, more understanding must eliminate what B. B. Vohra, the Chairman of India's Advisory Board on Energy, calls the 'resource illiteracy of ruling elites' (1986: 7).

Firstly, while only the narrow cash-based benefits of forests are considered, there will be every incentive to go on cutting them, and none to preserving and enhancing them. The Forestry sector is undervalued in the reckoning-up of a country's assets usually, because only the 'quantified and monitored industrial sector' appears in the GDP figures, while the direct and indirect economic contribution of forests to the livelihoods of rural people, and to the ecological protection of water resources and agriculture, is scarcely noted, let alone measured (Roche 1986: 104-107).

Secondly, the costs of keeping a forest in place and thus backstopping the conservation of soil and water are rarely contrasted with the costs of rehabilitating silted dams or making good flood damage. The activities occur in different locations and are paid for by different ministries. In countries with an irrigation sector, far greater financial resources are made available to that sector than to either tree-planting or the management of surface water. And yet, as Vohra points out:

'The management of our water resources is impossible of achievement except through the proper management of our land and biotic resources. The sooner this basic fact of life is appreciated, the better it will be for everyone' (1986: 6).

Integrating forestry into rural development

Casey and Muir's paper (1986) argues particularly well foresters' poor links with professionals in related ministries. They are thinking not so much of conflict over the preservation or destruction of forest, as of the need for integration in the context of farm forestry. They blame foresters for failing to see that trees are simply one more crop for the farmer, while at the same time blaming those working in agricultural projects for forgetting to include tree-planting as a component. For

them, better national-level linkages between agriculture, livestock management, energy and forestry will grow out of local-level integration.

Conclusion

In sum, the fate of forests is ultimately decided at national level. Here, policies will be enunciated, laws passed or repealed, budgets planned. Nevertheless, as Casey and Muir have suggested, and as the following sections illustrate, much that is decided at national level is actually the result of conflicts and their attempted resolution at local level. Issues about how the forest estate is used, whether it is managed as forest (and to what end) or whether it is lost to some other land-use, are in fact much more passionately debated at sub-national level. The State is after all an absentee landlord whose well-being is only very indirectly dependent upon the continued existence of the forest. It is because more local issues ultimately shape national policy that these are now turned to in detail.

IV THE LOCAL LEVEL: CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE LOCALLY-BORN AND OTHERS

Most local-level issues, where forests are concerned, relate to the conflict engendered between the locally-born and officialdom, acting on behalf of a distant state with a need for forest products elsewhere. Others represent a struggle between the locally-born and town-dwellers and/or the poor and the rich. These issues are treated here as a set of oppositions, and are dealt with one by one, although they all run into one another in reality.

State Ownership of Forests, other forms of public ownership, or private ownership?

Systems for forest ownership and management in the world are very diverse. In Europe, public ownership (by region or district rather than the state) characterises Germany and Switzerland, while farmers are the major forest owners in Scandinavia, Britain, Austria and the Mediterranean countries. Fifty per cent of Latin America's forests are in private hands, as are the bulk of forests in Japan and Korea. Both the USA and China have swung towards and then away from public forest ownership. However, most Third World countries which were once British or French colonies have kept the State reservation system which was created during the colonial period, and private forest ownership is rare (P. Stewart 1985).

What is the case for and against State ownership of forests? Firstly, it depends on the use to be made of the forest. Various authors otherwise critical of aspects of state ownership agree that it often makes the best sense where the plan is to conserve the forest for some purpose rather than working it industrially. Game reserves, forests kept in place to protect watersheds or river banks are obvious examples (Thomson 1985: 4; Casey and Muir 1986: 9). If forests were in future to be set aside as gene-banks or for species diversity, State ownership might well be best for them too.

But the setting-aside of such tracts as a State responsibility (together with the lists of protected tree-species which have been put in the care of the State in some countries) assumes a capable State mechanism for the protection of forest. There are plainly gross differences between a country like Mali (Lai and Khan 1986) where the national total of all forestry staff comes to only around 650 individuals, charged with protection of natural resources and afforestation throughout the entire country, and India where, in Karnataka State alone, there are over 10,000 forestry staff. In the former case, it would be absurd to expect effective protection at present.

The level of forest use is also a factor. Forest management in Europe is rendered relatively conflict-free because fuel-wood is not the chief energy source, hardwoods are imported from elsewhere, and the number of rural people dependent upon the forest is small. In India, Commander argues that the state has already demonstrated its inability to assert its monopoly against forest dwellers, contractors and its own employees (1986). Where the need of so many for forest products is so high, must we resign ourselves to the idea that no system of deterrence can succeed?

The state tends to be an inefficient custodian in such circumstances because its locus of power is far away and it depends upon poorly paid forest guards who are often tempted to live off the resource they are supposed to be guarding, either by the collection of bribes, permit fees, and fines or by direct theft. Furthermore, there is more likely to be friction than cooperation with local inhabitants because their relationship to the forest differs. The forest guard will move on to a new post in time: the villagers are there for life.

What, then, are the alternatives? There is the possibility of private ownership, the problems of which are well rehearsed by Commander (1986), or there is the option of public ownership by a more local body than the state.

Unfortunately, the factors which govern whether or not a local community will manage its local forest resources sustainably are as yet imperfectly understood. J. Stewart (1986) shows that panchayats in Nepal have managed forests more effectively than the state, and there seem to be many examples of hill peoples managing their forests with care (e.g. Cornista 1985; Guha 1985). But equally, forest has been speedily cleared in more accessible lowland areas where, no doubt, local and non-local would-be users can get at it more easily. The self-restraint involved in sustainable local management goes very quickly when local guardians can see that what they have 'saved', others have felled and removed. Greater access to markets, higher land-values and the increased social differentiation within the village that these inevitably produce, mean that the villagers' ability to manage adjacent forest may be irretrievably weakened in such situations. Behnke's work on common grazing areas in the Western Sudan would suggest that this is likely to be so (Behnke 1985).

What perhaps needs trying is some arrangement which gives villages adjacent to forest strong but not ultimate rights - a form of leasehold renewed in return for good stewardship. Forest guards or rangers would work with, and at the direction of, villagers, and some at least would be drawn from among their number. If villagers' rights were thus raised above those of outsiders, and village agricultural land and forest land were managed by the same people, the old forester/farmer antagonism would evaporate. If villages were 'paying' for their strengthened forest rights through time committed to guardianship, and self-restraint, no other payments should be imposed. If not, a paying system such as that suggested by Casey and Muir (1986: 10) might be appropriate.

Such a system brings control - and responsibility - right down to village level. Until now, the pre-eminence of industrial forestry has meant that foresters' primary loyalties lay far beyond the village in many cases. But as the emphasis swings towards conservation and the satisfaction of subsistence needs, plans for the rights of villagers become a good deal less utopian.

Commercial interests and subsistence forestry

One of the fundamental roles of forest policy, in relation to commercial and subsistence forestry, has been, and must be, to adjudicate between them in particular circumstances. Conflicts in this arena, and their resolution, are strongly indicative of the ways in which particular countries regard their rural populace and the emphasis they place upon tree cover.

Arguments as to whether a finite forest resource should be used mainly for the benefit of rural people living nearby, or mainly for commercial purposes, of course only arise when forest cover has become too low to satisfy both ends. Even in Indonesia, where forest cover is still many times what it is in most other places, and where it is still possible to propose setting areas aside for permanent production forestry, the government is still being advised to avoid new large-scale forest industries (Evans 1986: 23-25).

Once local areas of forest do begin to be in short supply, the priority, from both the moral and the practical point of view, must be to satisfy subsistence biomass needs. Morally, because rural people's subsistence needs are in general a great deal more modest than those of town dwellers and practically because those struggling to live will, if need be, go to any lengths to do so. The poor are stuck where they are in most cases: industries on the other hand are constantly substituting one resource for another, one area for another.

In India, however, industry has been helped most and the subsistence user least. The costly task of reforestation degraded land, which ought to have been that of the industrial sector, was dealt to villagers with immediate biomass needs, while industry was not only given access to standing productive forest, but in many cases given enormous subsidies as well (Kulkarni 1983: 98; Shiva and Bandyopadhyay 1986: 84).

An argument adduced at times for restricting subsistence use of forests suggests that indigenous people use forests 'badly' and must be restrained so that it can be protected. 'Badly' is of course a value-laden term. There is plenty of evidence that subsistence and commercial use may be good or bad dependent upon context. Often, the charge that the forest is being used badly comes from those whose desire for commercial use is frustrated by subsistence practices which compete with it.

On the contrary, a just forest policy must face up to rural needs, and the short time horizons of the poor rather than concerning itself too narrowly only with commercial production. Instead, only too often we see, as Agarwal puts it, a move away 'from a nature that has traditionally come to support household and community needs, and towards a nature that is geared to meet urban and industrial needs, a nature that is essentially cash-generating' (1984: 10-11).

When the forest can no longer satisfy all claims upon it, all would-be users have to plant a proportion of the trees they need, or go elsewhere. Scanty tree-cover ought to

bring in the governmental body charged with environmental concerns, and in many cases commercial activities should be much curtailed or should cease. Very often, though, political pressures will produce a judgement which grants commerce continued use and attempts (necessarily unsuccessfully) to ban subsistence users.

The more courageous path, however, is to embark upon tree-planting programmes with the two categories of growers who have consistently proved most successful: individual farmers and commercial concerns. Neither state plantations nor community woodlots are as efficient in this respect (Joshi 1983: 39). Commercial concerns can afford to wait for trees to grow. It is villagers who may need incentives such as cash, food-for-work, or stronger land-rights to offset the handicaps of finite availability of family labour, the slow growth of trees and the space they take up on small agricultural plots.

In all these situations, if subsistence needs can be taken as seriously as commercial activities by those who formulate and implement forest policy, many environmental problems become more tractable.

Conflicts over rural and urban priorities for land-use

There is often a silent conflict between rural and urban users over forest resources, which policymakers must not shut their eyes to. In India, one could cite the flooding of forested valleys and eviction of local inhabitants to create more hydro-electric power for urban industry, or the exploitation almost to extinction of bamboo for paper-mills at the expense of rural castes whose trade is to make and sell bamboo baskets and furniture. In Africa, pastoralists and trees give way before townsmen investing in capital-intensive agriculture, and lorries of fuelwood and charcoal travel in their tens of thousands from denuded rural areas into towns.

All these cases are examples of the relevant authorities failing to plan, or planning for the benefit of urban people rather than rural people and the environment. Can Indian cities afford more factories at the expense of more loss of forest, and more landless rural people? According to Vohra (1986) no-one is really doing the calculations to find out. The rate at which bamboos were lost to industry in states such as Karnataka shocked many onlookers, and yet no move has been made to stop the same exploitation, which is taking place all over again in Assam (Agarwal 1984: 8). It is politically difficult to stand up to Sudanese or Kenyan tractor-kings, politically easy to harry pastoralists. Most countries have some awareness of the environmental devastation caused by the endless

extraction of urban fuelwood from rural areas; they may even fine some of the lorry drivers who bring it to town, or some of the rural collectors. Yet almost none have followed Ethiopia's example and planted peri-urban fuelwood plantations, or even set aside money to subsidize alternative urban fuels or woodstoves.

The thread running through these examples is that urban areas are still too prone to see rural produce as ripe for the plucking, and cheap if not free. And too many policymakers focus their attention - and their punishments - on rural dwellers, rather than on bigger-scale analyses of urban impacts on rural areas - and on bigger, but politically slipperier fish. The truth is still that rural poverty in most parts of the world is more profound than urban poverty, and that, nevertheless, the majority of people in Third World countries live in rural areas. Yet economic growth is created for the minority out of an exploitation of natural resources which continually undermines the material basis of life for the majority (Shiva and Bandyopadhyay 1986: 84).

Customary tenure and legal tenure

Many of the difficulties which arise over trees and forest derive from the State's modification of locally-evolved tenure systems. Customary tenure is always somewhat flexible; it is administered legally by local leaders whose legitimacy is accepted, and who have important discretionary rights. When the State steps in, local political authority is usually undermined, and land rights are simplified to fit national norms or are fixed in amber at one moment in time. Either way, rights of dispute settlement pass from the local level to a more remote body whose decisions will be made with less understanding and more inflexibility.

When forest or woodland management shifts from community to State the resource may well undergo rapid depletion (Fernandes 1983: 9). This is because face-to-face communities can police each other better than outsiders can, if they have property of their own to watch and guard.

Local tenurial arrangements continue to be of interest, even after they have been formally abolished, for two reasons. Firstly, local people in much of the Third World continue to behave as if the traditional system still operated, alongside or interwoven with the official system, and it is helpful for government agents and donors to understand this. Secondly, there is currently a swing back towards the recognition that assets such as grazing and forest may well be more effectively managed and protected by those who live nearby.

Customary tenure and trees

Many of the rules about customary tenure and trees are reported in similar terms from all over the world.

Firstly, those who live near important natural resources have stronger rights to them than 'outsiders'.

Secondly, self-sown trees are regarded as common property for those who live near, the ordinary subsistence trees among them especially so (Fortmann 1985: 6-7; Shepherd et al 1985). More valuable trees, in Africa and Asia at least, have commonly been reserved for or by chiefs or rulers.

Thirdly, labour investment creates tenure, so that tree-felling where trees are plentiful, or tree-planting where they are scarce, strengthens tenurial claims to land. The planting of exotics, even where trees are abundant, may have the same effect (Gayfer 1986).

Fourthly, because trees planted are regarded as the property of the planter, trees are likely to strengthen or lengthen the claims of tenants. For this reason, tenants and sharecroppers are usually forbidden to plant trees (Fortmann 1985: 9; Sajise 1985: 6). It is worth noting in this context too that in South Asian wasteland afforestation schemes it would seem that the State (without necessarily intending to) has strengthened its claims to certain pieces of land by tree-planting on them. Byron reports this in the case of road and canal-side planting in Bangladesh (1985: 64) and it has proved a problem in Social Forestry programmes on village common-land in India.

Problems about communal rights and individual rights

Customary tenure systems are very widely reported to classify land into three types, especially where there are livestock. Firstly, there is individually owned agricultural land (allocated for a period, for life, or for ever); secondly there is communally owned grazing, woodland and forest, contiguous to agricultural land; thirdly there is more remote 'open-access' land which may occasionally be used but over which there are no felt ownership rights. These tenurial categories correlate with heavy labour investment, lighter labour investment and virtually no labour investment, respectively. In the case of forests and woodlands of wide extent, that portion within easy walking distance - three to five miles of village settlement - will fall into the second category and the rest into the third. If human settlements are scarce, there may be large tracts of effectively unowned woodland or forest; but if they are scattered regularly

throughout, one village's interest will take over where the last leaves off, each 'communal' area having a finite number of legitimate users (see for instance Shepherd et al 1985).

However, many colonial and post-colonial governments took no note of the tripartite customary tenure paradigm. Authors point out that individual land rights but not group land rights were recognised (e.g. Guha 1985), categories two and three were merged as public land or crown land and, if covered with good quality forest, were reserved. In India, strong group rights were attenuated over time to weak individual privileges, and even they were eventually resented by the Forestry Department (Tiwari 1985: 907). Degraded forest was at times left for villagers, but there was no reward for them in its careful restoration: if it improved in quality, it too might be reserved.

Because only individually owned agricultural land could be retained with some certainty in India, the impetus has continued to be towards tree-felling rather than tree-preservation. In Nepal, when the imminent nationalisation of forests was promulgated, villagers immediately cleared much tree-cover as a way of retaining the land - and have been suspicious of the tenurial implications of Social Forestry on grazing land (J. Stewart 1986: 16-18).

Finally, the critical position of forest dwellers in India, and in South-East Asia as well, is explicable in terms of the gap between customary and state-codified tenure systems. Where forest dwellers use trees rather than planting them or clearing them for agriculture, they have had communal not individual land rights. Because the State has endorsed the individual rights of agriculturalists, but effectively made over communally-owned resources to itself, it has turned such forest dwellers into propertyless squatters. A similar disenfranchisement has befallen many of those other communal land rightholders, African pastoralists.

Innovatory tenure arrangements

Can elements of customary tenure be usefully incorporated into present-day systems despite the changes in internal structure of most rural communities?

In the case of communal tenure of woodland or forest, traditional practice is unlikely to offer a complete blueprint for action. Management often consisted of a mixture of permanent non-use of trees on hilltops, watersheds and around water-points by treating them as sacred; temporary non-use (close seasons); rotational use as in shifting cultivation/tree-fallow systems; or

permanent light use, by a finite number of people, of grazing and fuelwood resources.

When population density goes up, sustainable limited use becomes much more difficult. Where a forester might calculate annual increment, and thence the volume of wood which could be cut each year, individual villagers need a rule of thumb to guide them as they make individual sorties into the resource. Both traditional and recently invented systems have tried to provide this by specifying permitted species, permitted branch diameters, or permitted implements.

It is likely too that customary rights may have to be set in a more modern idiom which can be understood and respected by outsiders. Thus 'group ranches' for East African pastoralists register land communally and prevent individual agricultural encroachment (Coldham 1985: 18-19). Similarly, upland forest dwellers in the Philippines have been helped to strengthen their land rights by planting trees and crops (Sajise 1985: 2-5).

The other sine qua non is the re-allocation to the community (where it has been appropriated) of some of the legislative and political authority with which it used to administer its natural resources (Thomson 1985: 4). While ultimate ownership of the land may be vested in the State, all year-by-year planning of communal resources such as grazing or forest would fall to the communities living directly beside the resource.

However, these are necessary but not sufficient conditions. If a village has become too socially stratified or too faction-ridden to manage community resources, poorer villagers will prefer the involvement of a fair-minded outsider to oversee resource-management, by arranging rotational use of blocks, or a permissible coupe to be distributed among them. There is no reason why junior forest officers should not play this role, if there are enough of them and if they have been trained to work sympathetically with villagers: but these are, for the moment, big 'ifs'. Problems have arisen in acute form in India's Social Forestry programmes on village commons and wastelands, where villagers have proved most reluctant to manage trees planted as a corporate resource. Some tenurial innovation is required such that all villagers own a few trees each on the land, or access is limited to the landless and almost-landless.

Innovatory individual tenure arrangements are less complex. Traditional usufruct may be replaced by leases held from the government, systems of limited individual tenure which mimic share-cropping or tenancy arrangements, but make the State a hopefully more equitable landlord

than the private equivalent, and one encouraging - rather than preventing - tree planting.

In the Philippines, for instance (Cornista 1985: 1-5), the Integrated Social Forestry Programme is trying to consolidate the customary rights of forest dwellers, as individuals, through agroforestry and twenty-five year renewable stewardship agreements.

Such projects have recognised a key fact, absent as yet in Indian 'tree-patta' (tree tenure) schemes: that small farmers do need to be able to grow short cycle crops, as well as to invest in trees. The relative security of tenure offered by such schemes is not complemented by secure subsistence, unless food can also be grown.

To conclude, it would be wrong to try to revive communal tenure where it has already died and where no other community-wide cooperation is to be found. Equally, though, where tenurial traditions exist which prioritize access to a resource, or which attach tenurial meaning to tree-planting, it is foolish to ignore them: conflict will recur until some accommodation with local views has been made.

Forester-Villager relations

Out of all the potential areas of conflict discussed in preceding sections - and of course adding to them - come relationships between foresters and villagers. Foresters find themselves in the often uncomfortable position of having to work at the flash-point between two world views: that of villagers, and that of the governments which usually employ them.

Reasons for poor forester-village relations

Normally, the creation of a Forest Department accompanies the assertion, by the State, of its superior claims to forest resources over prior tribal or local ownership, and heralds different subsequent forest use - reservation or commercial exploitation. In the process, the ability of the previous owners to manage the resource well must almost inevitably be denigrated, as part of the justification for the move. Firstly, then, foresters have often been the harbingers of the unwelcome news that local resources are not exclusively for local people.

Secondly, the introduction of the fines and permits which almost inevitably accompany State reservation, turns foresters into policemen or soldiers and villagers into notional thieves. In a short time responsible local attitudes towards protection and management evaporate,

hostility is engendered and the lookout for local tree-cover rapidly deteriorates (Lai and Khan 1986: 10-16).

Foresters, paid by the government and given the task of imposing a tenure change by force majeure, are hardly likely to question their role or to put themselves in the place of villagers. And in a period when industrial forestry was preeminent, it is not surprising that they saw no injustice in keeping forest dwellers or villagers out of the forest but allowing contractors in. Too many writers about the relationship between foresters and villagers see in all this some particular malignity in foresters. In the past - and of course today as well in many places - the State's claims on forest and woodland, and the laws enacted by the State to facilitate these claims, have been personified for many rural people by foresters. Yet in the past foresters have not been asked, by the State, to enhance (or even consider) rural welfare, to think about rural fuelwood or grazing needs, or to understand village social structure. It would be extraordinary if they had done so. The important questions are: Under what conditions can forester-villager relations now change, and how?

The transition to better forester-village relations

The shift which brings forester-villager relations into sharp focus for foresters is the transition to tree-planting or conservation with villagers. The quality of the relationship can be gauged by the level of cooperation obtained, by the survival rates of trees planted, and by villager enthusiasm.

(i) Forestry extension: local problems

Villagers find it difficult to work with those who have hitherto only policed them, and several countries have tried to avoid problems by creating a separate cadre of forest-extensionists who work and dress differently. There have nevertheless been difficulties. Some foresters, for their part, see working with villagers as less prestigious than high forest management (which may also offer more personal advantage). Villagers, who have to deal with both forestry wings, confuse or conflate them, and allow their negative feelings about territorial foresters to colour dealings with social foresters.

The problem arises because the split is perpetuated which retains standing timber as a government prerogative, while expecting villagers to plant their own. Success is far more likely if villagers and foresters cooperate not only for village tree-planting, but also for the guarding of existing forest. Shared control with villagers or forest

dwellers must be arranged, perhaps through the medium of signed contractual agreements.

In forestry extension work with villagers, foresters need to take a greater interest in the agricultural and livestock requirements of their clients and how trees may complement these, and it will probably be essential to establish good working relationships with local agricultural extensionists.

Finally, because of the insights and good relations gained through working in this way with farmers, it would be a great pity if there was not regular rotation of staff between those working in farm-forestry extension and those working with villagers in forest protection. Regular rotation would also iron out prestige differences in the two tasks.

(ii) Supra-local factors

Satisfactory personal working relationships between foresters and villagers take time to develop. But they cannot develop at all unless certain policy options are open. National-level action will ultimately have to be taken if state forest land may not legally be managed by villagers; or if laws throw up obstacles to tree-planting or tree protection. Lai and Khan for instance note for Mali 'the incompatibility of existing forest legislation with current attempts to engender greater local participation in resource protection and management' (1986: 15).

As such obstacles become apparent to villagers, foresters, or intermediaries such as voluntary organisations or donors, discussion will have to take place until consensus is reached about the action required. Until villagers and forestry officials can agree on the changes needed, it will be difficult to argue for them at higher decision-making levels.

Conclusion

There is no mystery to the eminently-possible transformation of forester-as-ogre to forester-as-facilitator: it simply requires a change of job description. While there was every incentive not to develop good village relations in the past, Social Forestry now demands it, and potentially opens the way to better environmental protection than was ever achieved before. For foresters who can respond, the personal rewards of good relations with villagers - and hence successful forestry projects - are great. As extension staff in Agricultural Train and Visit programmes have found, much satisfaction can come from being relied upon and awaited eagerly.

V CONCLUSION: FOREST POLICY AND FOREST POLITICS

Forest Policy and Forest Politics: the local level

From the point of view of local people, any forest policy evolved should seem just in their eyes. It should recognise their fuelwood, fodder and small timber needs by making sure that resources for these ends are not made over to others. It should recognise the narrow margins within which they operate. Whether activities in a given area mainly concern management of an existing forest resource, or mainly concern tree-planting, the needs and interests of industry or government revenue should not outweigh local needs. For instance, it should not automatically be the case that standing timber is reserved for industry while villagers are asked to go to the trouble of planting trees for their needs.

Such policies may well be unpopular with the commercial sector, and they can only be established once Forest Departments have built up good extension and cooperative relationships with villagers. Foresters, in turn, need to be assured that career prospects are tied to successful forest extension work, before they can show as much commitment to it as to industrial forestry.

Better forest policy, as it is tested in, and emerges from the local context, develops as we have seen from evolving forester/villager relations. More precisely, careful thought and planning will have been necessary for each of the following topics.

Tenure

Farmers need a policy which gives them secure private tenure, rights over the trees they have planted and the right to harvest them when they want to.

Where communal tenure rights exist or are being created, the rights need to be clear-cut, agreed with and written down for local people, and giving rights which secure the resource against outsiders.

Forest management

For forest management in areas where there are people living nearby, a method of management needs to be discussed and drawn up with them with which they can cooperate.

Forest officials concerned with management should be appointed in part from among local residents in order to create 'a democratisation of management' (Gadgil and Guha 1984).

In the case of that portion of forest being managed through the labour and goodwill of local people, any profits from the sale of timber or minor forest products should go to them. A distinction should be made, in consultation with villagers, between forest land sited sufficiently near their village for management to be their prime responsibility, and more remote forest which they may prefer the Forest Department to manage exclusively.

Extension and training

Since so much turns on improved interaction between foresters and villagers, forestry extension, and training foresters for successful extension, become important precursors of good workable forest policy.

Foresters need to acquire the insight into villagers' daily lives which enables them to see how forest and people are intertwined, and how local farming systems work. Since voluntary organisations in many countries are currently ahead of forestry departments in their understanding of village life and how villagers' needs may conflict with current forest laws, the best short-run training for foresters is probably secondment to a non-governmental organisation for a while in a career structure which rewards those who do so.

Villagers need to learn new tree technologies, and possibly (in the case of their management of natural forest) new management styles and a formalisation of responsibility. They will fail to respond if, meanwhile, others on their doorstep are being allowed to get away with different behaviour.

Urban fuelwood needs

Where urban fuelwood needs will have an important effect upon specific rural areas, supplies must be thought through, and villagers involved in any plans for the growing or marketing of alternative supplies.

Tree-planting on degraded lands

Where (as in parts of South and South-East Asia) there are plans to encourage villagers in the planting of degraded or eroded forest-land, short-term incentives for doing so require careful planning.

Conclusion: sending policy proposals up the system

It seems to be empirically the case that once foresters do embark upon an extension, advisory role with villagers - however reluctantly or clumsily to begin with - the opinion of each for the other begins to rise and they

begin to exchange information. With good mutual understanding at the bottom, such need as there may be for legal or structural change begins to emerge, and the Forestry Department's own hierarchies offer the possibility for the passing of messages higher up the system, which villagers are unlikely to be able to do alone.

Forest Policy and Forest Politics: the national level

In a context where good mechanisms exist for inputs to forest policy from below, there will still of course be a national level framework bringing its own weight to bear upon policy formulation.

The politics of the environment

There is now slow progress, in some countries, towards the realisation that the environment is a social, not a natural resource in all but the remotest uninhabited regions; and that, this being so, its management cannot be discussed a-politically or a-socially but only in the context of competing human interests (Westoby 1985: 114).

Several of the contributors to this set of papers make it clear that the welfare of both the environment and rural people are interdependent, so that there is a pragmatic, as well as a moral argument for involving local people in resource management.

Since politicians, with their short time-horizons, are likely to continue to value natural resources in cash terms rather than for their protective role or their ability to support rural welfare, food production and food security, it falls to Forestry Departments to argue the more sophisticated and abstract case. They cannot do so until they believe in the argument themselves and this will come about, it has been suggested, as a result of new working relationships with villagers. When they do, they may need to pick their allies at national level carefully. Gadgil and Guha (1984) explain for instance how much further the Department of the Environment in India has gone in its thinking about forests than has the Ministry of Agriculture.

In countries where there is considerable bias against devolution of responsibility to rural people - and the ability to prevent it - the outlook for the environment is very poor.

Legal obstacles

The most likely legal obstacles to the formulation of a satisfactory forest policy will concern land tenure. Forest land reserved in the name of the Forestry Department or the State may need some redesignation, or to be complemented by the creation of leasehold arrangements. Particular problems are likely to arise where all land is designated as State land, as in Ethiopia.

Economic considerations

Many countries have too small a forestry budget for elaborate interventions and the forest policy they formulate should reflect this. Depending on circumstances, it may make good sense to pass the management of forests largely to local bodies, and to deploy scarce foresters as trainers of village-level forestry extension workers. It would certainly be foolish to draw up a grandiose forest policy which everyone knows can only be honoured in the breach.

Opening out forest policy discussions

As forestry activities change, from the protection and exploitation of forest by professionals to tree-growing and tree-protection by villagers, the point of formulating a forest policy at all changes. Policies drawn up in terms of the reserving of forest from villagers and of punishments for infractions, run counter to the taking of responsibility and the active involvement now hoped for from villagers.

Social forestry, as this report has suggested elsewhere, creates a relationship between foresters and villagers which calls in question the relationship engendered previously by commercial and territorial forestry. To that extent, it also makes previous formulations for forest policy outdated. But Social Forestry, and in particular Farm Forestry, have a further effect. Since farmers take to Farm Forestry as an aspect of agricultural practice, forcing foresters to see trees in that context, and probably to work in time with agricultural extensionists, the long-called-for better interaction between Forestry and Agriculture at Ministerial level can take its cue from what is already happening at the local level. In future, Forest Policy cannot only deal with forests.

Once policy discussions have broadened to consider agriculture together with trees and forests, one last vital step can be taken: the consideration of Forest Policy within the framework of a complete land-use policy in which planning happens across several ministries and

the old competitive approach is to some extent left on one side. Evans (1986) outlines such a process for Indonesia.

Politically, such a broadening will be difficult, and there are bound to be checks and failures. But that is certainly the direction in which Forest Policy discussions should be moving, and in countries with an active Social Forestry programme, pressure for such a policy will come from below, from the local level, as well as from above, from the donors.

Conclusion

Forest policies, as originally formulated, usually depend upon historical chance. Several writers have traced the way in which European forest management styles (complete with revenue-generating forestry department and forest policies to support it) were applied to India in the nineteenth century, and thence copied throughout the British Empire and the colonies of other European countries (Guha 1983; Dargavel et al 1985: 7-8).

In fact, management principles developed for privately owned, largely uninhabited forests were bound to create hardship when applied to inhabited, communally vital forests. In a colonial context, the somewhat rigid application of an imported model is not perhaps surprising. Nor is it particularly surprising that, as one-time colonies have become nation-states, there has been a considerable time-lag before any questioning of forest policies inherited from the colonial era has taken place. Not only did more urgent tasks call, forestry world-wide continued throughout the fifties, sixties and early seventies to prioritise industrial forestry - which was no more than an intensification of the revenue forestry that had gone before.

Now, however, and only as a result of the last five or six years in forestry, the moment is ripe to re-examine colonial models. If, as Casey and Muir suggest, a reformulation of forest policy takes place through a 'widespread and democratic process of consultation' (1986: 4), a learning process will take place even as diverse viewpoints are laid bare and slowly reconciled.

Many would argue that donor participation can be helpful in strengthening the case of more democratic, villager-oriented voices against the old guard, though there is little point in trying to push a policy through for which there is little enthusiasm. The aim should probably be to discover what there can be political support for, and to build on that.

As we have seen, Social Forestry has shifted the limelight - for the first time for over 130 years - onto the needs of the small farmer and his or her spouse, onto the needs and rights of forest dwellers, onto village commons and woodlands. It has highlighted anachronistic laws which discourage private individuals from planting trees, and which will eventually have to be rethought. It is forcing a thinking-through of the costs and benefits of trees to the poor, and is creating, however slowly, the basis for a new productive relationship between villagers and foresters where before there was only conflict.

Other newer issues are beginning to be influential as well. The environmental and ecological functions of tree-cover have become better understood; and the trend towards a new respect for the accumulated knowledge of the indigenous farmer - currently receiving much attention among agriculturalists - is filtering through, too, to the forester.

Social Forestry locates the main thrust of forestry activities at village level, gives subsistence needs new weight, and ushers in a new relationship between foresters, forest users, and forest. It leads, inconspicuously but inevitably, to a complete reformulation of Forest Policy.

NOTE

1. Historically, increasing population density has often been productive of beneficial technical change (Boserup 1965) and Europe would seem to offer archaeological examples of the intensification of land-use over a millennium in which villagers moved from being dwellers in forest clearings to farmers with trees 'captured' in small woods, copses and hedgerows (Rackham 1976).

It would seem that population increases in forests today, especially where increasing densities are the result mainly of immigrants to an area, or where forest resources have to serve not only a growing local population but also fuel and timber needs, are happening too quickly for this kind of adaptation to take place.

Foresters who advocate population control as a means of saving forests should be aware that these strands must all be disentangled. If pressure on resources is from far-away urban dwellers as well as local people, or is due to waves of landless individuals arriving from elsewhere, birth control is not the answer.

Indeed they should be thankful that it is not, since several of these issues are a great deal easier to address than birth control. Prerequisites for a fall in the birth-rate are, firstly, increased education and economic independence for women; secondly a decline in the value of child labour; and only then access to modern means of contraception (Safilios-Rothschild 1985; WRI 1986). These conditions are far from being met in many countries with rapidly declining forest resources.

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