

Marie Pourchot

Reflection on the lecture about Mitigation in Africa Case : REDD+ from the perspective of equity

During this lecture, Irmeli Mustalahti has talked about the issues surrounding the implementation of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+), in the continuity of the article "Governing and implementing REDD+" written by Esteve Corbera and Heike Schroeder.

Indeed, both demonstrated that the implementation of REDD+ is not as simple as it seemed at first, to the contrary to what Stern foresaw in his review. Several key issues were interesting for me, such as the question of the change in the governance due to the apparition of several actors and the question of the legitimacy of putting limits to people for using their resources.

Concretely, this REDD+ system means that local people from tropical regions who log to meet their needs in wood, such as building houses, would receive compensation not to cut these trees, in order to decrease the amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere. This process crosses many sectors and levels of power; it generates interactions and creates conflicts because of different interests and claims. In order to achieve the goal and for financing developing countries, it has to be organized at an international level, but of course the state is necessary for the concrete implementation. Obviously, involving local people is a key point, since they are the most directly concerned by the forest. They have to take part in the discussions, like it has been done in Mexico, in meetings where civil societies, government agencies and individual interested in REDD+ could discuss together, and where government received advices and insights from the participants. The authors of the serie of articles critic the top-down approach, because it does not foster the involvement of local people. These latter have the right to be informed about what will happen in their forests, where the REDD+ sites will be implemented, who will manage them, etc... and what financial benefit they will receive. Irmeli Mustalahti agrees with this point. According to her, local people should know REDD+ as a continuous process and not like something coming from the top. She also thinks

that protecting communities is as important as protecting environment, and so both should be strongly associated in the REDD+. Of course, most of these local people are very poor, so they should have very good reasons and other alternatives such a good compensation if they stop logging.

So, involving local people is important for the effectiveness of the REDD+, but also for its legitimacy. Indeed, it sounds a little hegemonic to ask to poor developing countries to make efforts for mitigation which is due to developed countries; even though it is largely justified since tropical forests are the lung of earth. Also, local people are the users of the forest, so they are also concerned by the consequences of deforestation, for finding medicinal plants for example.

As said Irmeli Mustalahti in her lecture, training local carbon-monitoring team takes time and costs a lot, but it is necessary that local people are motivated and involved in the project, otherwise it will probably fail. She has also noticed that there are some consequences in the social relationships within communities. For instance, the team which has been trained feels empowered and this creates conflicts with the other members of the community.

For all these reasons, REDD+ implies a change in governance, in which there should be more interaction between the different stakeholders. But in any case, the implementation of this process seems very complicated, and generates many consequences to the communities and society in general. Moreover, these social consequences are difficult to foresee, since very often we do not know well these local people. Co-operation, discussion, exchange of information and of points of view is a milestone for mitigation with REDD+, but also for environmental issues in general, and maybe for the other sectors too. Would REDD+ generate a new kind of governance?