Complicit mechanisms and the repercussions of unsuccessful tropical forest management in Cambodia: Paradoxical facets of globalization and pluralization

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Abstrak

Tropical forest management (TFM) has become increasingly globalized since the end of the Cold War. This article examines how Cambodian forest management, long supported by international organizations, has failed. The focus here is on complicit mechanisms of international efforts in the failure of Cambodia's forest management, rather than on well-clarified domestic politico-economic structures. Paradoxical facets of international support for Cambodia's forest management are also elucidated. Major efforts by international stakeholders to introduce sustainable forest management (SFM) in Cambodia included projects and programs supported by the World Bank and other organizations from the 1990s to the 2000s. These included the reform of commercial logging concessions based on international standards and the introduction of community forestry based on different models. However, Cambodia continued to undergo severe deforestation in the 2010s, due to destructive timber harvesting and monoculture plantation development by groups connected with the ruling party and authoritarian states, and cash crop cultivation by local farmers, as a result of failed international efforts. Those unsuccessful efforts stemmed from dissonance among international stakeholders on how to support SFM in Cambodia and other developing countries. The failure suggests two paradoxical facets of the current globalized, pluralized TFM, particularly in developing countries like Cambodia. First, forest management in developing countries is difficult to improve as there are many stakeholders with different interests to be coordinated. Second, authoritarian political parties and states can benefit from unsuccessful TFM