

SEMINAR SUMMARY

YFFReview

The Promise and Practice of Community-Based Forestry

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YFF Review

YALE FOREST FORUM AND YFF REVIEW

The Yale Forest Forum (YFF) is the special events branch of The Forest School at the Yale School of the Environment. YFF offers weekly lectures during the academic year to provide opportunities to hear from leaders in forest management, conservation and policy. Speakers represent a wide range of perspectives and organizations, including government, NGOs, and businesses, and across scales from local to international. The *YFF Review* captures information delivered during the YFF speaker series to extend the outcomes of the lecture series and inform additional interested audiences. We hope that you will find the information in each *YFF Review* useful and stimulating.



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Introduction

The Yale Forest Forum (YFF) has been engaging people with the most important issues in forestry since 1994. In the spring of 2021, YFF brought together more than 1,000 registered attendees from all around the world to hear from eleven leaders and experts in community-based forestry (CBF). Communities increasing loss of rights to forest access and use has spurred interest in understanding and expanding the model of CBF. This season's YFF speakers gave many examples of how colonial land seizure, state appropriation of forests, and industrial forestry have all been implicated in wresting control of forests away from local people over the past century, and how CBF can correct those wrongs.

CBF is a set of ideas and practices centered on returning or strengthening local communities' rights and responsibilities to manage forests. For example, Dr. Bishma Subedi told YFF attendees about how the Nepalese government devolved control over forests to community groups, allowing them to manage and use the forest resources while the government maintained ownership of the land. CBF in Nepal has resulted in beneficial outcomes for forests, for people's livelihoods, and for democratic governance. Other YFF speakers shared their own experiences with CBF, from building sustainable baobab supply chains to designing urban gardens.

In every case, CBF stands out as an alternative mode of forest governance that allows local people to make their own decisions about the ecosystems around them. CBF aims to improve livelihoods for marginalized people all around the world, prevent deforestation, and build democratic institutions at every level. The Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that one-third of the world's forests are under some form of collective control, and the speakers at this YFF series took us all over the world to see how CBF is practiced.

The Promise and Practice of Community-Based Forestry speaker series was jointly hosted by [The Forests Dialogue](#) and the [Urban Resources Initiative](#). The Forests Dialogue was created in 2000



to provide a platform for leaders in forestry from across the world to engage in dialogue about and develop solutions to the most pressing issues in sustainable forest management. The Urban Resources Initiative is a community-driven urban forestry organization focused on planting street trees, providing green jobs training, and supporting community groups in managing greenspaces in New Haven.

Community Forestry: Foundations and Practice for Improving Lives and Landscapes



David Ganz

February 4, 2021

DAVID GANZ, Executive Director
RECOFTC

By: Yvonne Shih ('22 M.E.M.)

David Ganz, Executive Director of The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC), spoke about the foundations, practices, and benefits of community forestry. He drew on his deep experience working with forest communities in the Asia-Pacific region for more than 30 years.



More than 450 million people in this region rely on forests for their livelihoods, and there is a need to invest in local communities to achieve sustainable forest management. Ganz presented community forestry as a pathway for increasing the role of local people in the management of forests and forest resources. Community forestry has a diverse set of approaches, and they all share the same goals, such as maintaining healthy forests, meeting livelihood needs, and empowering local communities.

There are five principles of successful community forestry that Ganz emphasized:

- 1. Adaptive management and learning** – community members need to gain knowledge, skills, and confidence to successfully manage their land, gain clarity on their boundaries, and understand the forest resources available to them.
- 2. Availability of natural resources** – the land given to local communities must contain enough volume and quality of natural assets to be a source of income and livelihood.
- 3. Effective governance and participation** – it is imperative to understand who the stakeholders are, what decision making method is used, and how decisions are being implemented.
- 4. Rights and institutional setting** – communities need clear and secure rights to develop sound partnerships with the private sector for forest-based enterprises.
- 5. Addressing community needs** – effective participation is critical to addressing community and institutional needs to advance the voice and livelihoods of user groups.

Community forestry models differ in form, objectives, package of rights given, and the duration of those rights. The spectrum of community forestry models, in order of increasing strength of rights, participation, and empowerment, goes from participatory conservation, joint forest management, community forestry with limited devolution, community forestry with full devolution, and private ownership. Ganz set the stage for this year's Forest Forum by going over the spectrum of models with the following case studies.

VIETNAM



The Giao land grant allocates production forest land to individual households for a period of 50 years. Households that have this land grant can transfer, lease, and mortgage the land with 5-year land use plans. This grant encourages households to invest and benefit from the income from their land.

NEPAL

Community forest user groups are governed by a general assembly and an executive committee. The forest user groups make decisions on how the forest will be used and how the benefits will be shared. Forest products are exempt from governmental taxes in order to further encourage community forestry. Forest user groups are able to manage their forest indefinitely but need to update their forest management plans every 5 to 10 years.

PHILIPPINES

The government issues a Certificate of Ancestral Domain title to indigenous cultural communities and Indigenous People in perpetuity. It gives these communities the right to develop the land and receive its benefits. It also gives them the right to regulate entry of migrants and the right to resolve conflict according to their customary law.

INDIA

The Forest Department sets up committees with forest protection as their primary objective. Committee members are paid to patrol

the forest and discourage illegal timber cutting. They are not allowed to use the forest for cultivation or commercial activities. This means the community can lose customary use rights. The committees have limited decision making power and can be disbanded at any point.

Finally, there are several challenges to community forestry. These include the availability of natural resources, weak recognition of tenure rights, social exclusion, and meaningful participation. Communities are often given tenure on degraded forests, which reduces the benefit that people can receive from their forests. The space is largely male-dominated, resulting in inequitable distribution of benefits. The success of community forestry relies on effective participation, but the teaching and facilitation of effective participations still remains a barrier. Despite these challenges, tremendous progress has been made through education, information sharing, new technology, improved legal frameworks and a global movement to secure land and tenure rights.

Achievements, Challenges and Perspectives of Community-Based Forestry in Central America

February 11, 2021

VICTOR LOPEZ
FORD FOUNDATION

By: Leah Snively ('21 M.A.R.)

In his presentation *Achievements, Challenges and Perspectives of Community-based Forestry in Central America*, Víctor López reflected on lessons learned from his time working with community foresters in eastern Guatemala, most recently in his role as Program Officer at the Ford Foundation. In the 1990s, López returned to his home country of Guatemala and began engaging



Victor Lopez

with a movement of *campesinos* who were attempting to protect their communal forest in the province of Jalapa. During that time, he saw how racism against Indigenous Guatemalans caused those communities to become dispossessed from their land. While a few individuals grew wealthy from illegal logging in the region, blame was shifted onto Indigenous communities for destroying the forests through their farming practices. Since his first experiences in Jalapa, López has been honored to serve the most poor and marginalized communities in their forestry efforts as they work to benefit all of society.

Drawing from David Ganz's presentation from the week before, López emphasized how community-based forestry (CBF) has been particularly successful at addressing the needs of those he has worked with in Guatemala. He noted that communities have historically struggled to gain their place as central stakeholders in their own projects and to be recognized in policy decisions. López presented the Maya Biosphere Reserve in northern Guatemala as an example of why empowering community members to address their own needs is a key part of CBF.



The Maya Biosphere Reserve was established in 1990 on land that people have used for centuries to sustainably extract chicle, xate palm, breadnut fruits, peppers, and timber to export for profit. When the reserve was first created, the Guatemalan government granted forest concessions of 25 years to communities

and their NGO supporters. Stable policy and respectful external support have empowered the communities and local institutions to act as protagonists in their own forests. Most forest concessions were successful and only failed if the pieces of the forest granted were already over-extracted. Today these concessions are beginning to be renewed for another 25 years.

López highlighted two main threats to the forests of the Maya Biosphere Reserve. The first is the pressure of expansion of *narcogananadería*, which is cattle ranching promoted and funded by large landowners linked to narco-trafficking structures. These *narcogananaderos* use their ranches as covert landing strips for drug trafficking because the reserve sits within a crucial corridor for drug trafficking to the United States. Communities are working to improve their organizational efforts, forest protection, and coordination with government authorities in response to the stretches of forest that are being cut down to expand those cattle ranches. A second major threat is the Mirador-Calakmul Basin Maya Security and Conservation Partnership, an archaeological and tourist project led by international stakeholders that would reduce community rights over their own biosphere.

Overall, CBF in Central America has proven itself to be a successful practice for achieving rural development, mitigating climate change, and conserving biodiversity. Other stakeholders from Latin America, such as policy makers in Colombia, have begun to turn towards the Guatemalan model as they work to implement CBF in their own forests. Since Central America's capacity to adapt to climate change is directly correlated to the stability of its forests, López stressed that successful CBF programs are essential for increasing resilience to the current and future impacts of climate change within the region.



A University Model for Clinical Urban Community Forestry Training

February 18, 2021



Caroline Scanlan

CAROLINE SCANLAN, GreenSkills Manager
URBAN RESOURCES INITIATIVE, YALE SCHOOL OF THE ENVIRONMENT

By: Chris Tapnio ('21 M.E.M.)

Caroline Scanlan brought the Yale Forest Forum from global to local by sharing her experiences as a community forester in New Haven. Scanlan is the GreenSkills Manager at the Urban Resources Initiative (URI), which was founded in 1989 by Dr. William Burch. Burch was a Yale professor with extensive experience in community forestry in rural areas overseas. Since its founding URI has been putting these community forestry principles into practice in Baltimore and New Haven.

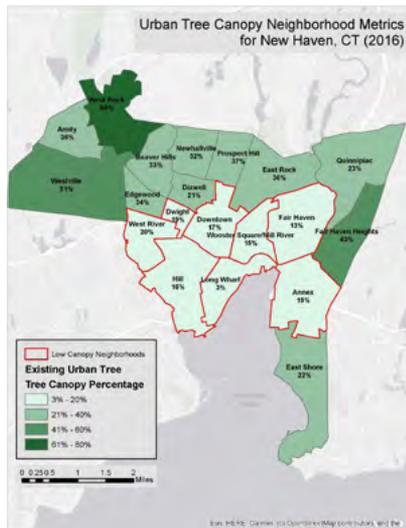
URI's vision revolves around building capacity, generating local employment, and creating social cohesion through community forestry. It seeks to strengthen the web of relationships in the city and create equitable access to nature. URI puts a premium on upholding the right of the community to participate in decision-making, management, and stewardship of local greenspaces.

Scanlan showed that although New Haven has a high urban tree canopy cover in total, this tree canopy is not equitably distributed across the city. She explained that this disparity in tree cover can be traced to the history of development in New Haven, including racist housing policies such as redlining. Redlining was a practice implemented during the New Deal by the federal Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC). The HOLC generated maps for cities across the country to assess the credit-worthiness of neighborhoods, and increased residential segregation by systematically denying home loans to people of

color. The effects of redlining continue to be severe in many ways, and also resulted in disinvestment in tree canopy and greenspace in neighborhoods where people of color live.

URI works to correct these disparities by implementing programs that actively engage residents to steward and expand their neighborhoods' greenspaces. The URI Community Greenspace Program, begun in 1995, supports self-organizing groups of neighborhood volunteers to fulfill their vision of improving the local landscape. Group activities range from planting street trees and working in public parks to transforming vacant lots into mini-parks. A cohort of community forestry interns from Yale provide assistance to nearly 50 Community Greenspace groups every year. URI has worked with over 300 different Community Greenspace groups over the years, including some from the beginning of the program more than 20 years ago.

In 2007, URI launched a new program for street tree planting in New Haven. Building on its success working with volunteers to plant and care for trees in the public right of way, URI partnered with the City of New Haven to establish its GreenSkills tree planting and green jobs program. The GreenSkills team, funded in large part by the Department of Public Works & Parks, now plants over 500 street trees every year for New Haven residents and businesses. URI's GreenSkills program also works under a request-based model. It does not impose tree planting in places where trees are not wanted. Instead, Yale interns reach out to local residents and businesses to see who will take on stewardship of trees by watering and caring for them. The community can then actively engage



with URI in choosing the location of trees and preferred species. URI staff, including Scanlan, supervise planting teams as part of the GreenSkills jobs program. These crews are made up of Yale interns, high school youth, and formerly incarcerated adults working for Emerge, a reentry and job training program.

According to Scanlan, URI “never counts anyone out as a potential tree steward” and has planted 6,500 trees in front of homes and businesses, as well as school yards and public parks. URI monitors young trees, provides regular communication with tree adopters, and prunes trees after 5 years. URI looks at trees not just as a resource to provide environmental services but as a vehicle to strengthen connections with other people and institutions.



Finally, Scanlan presented the key findings of their 2021 study, “URI as a University Model for Clinical Urban Forestry.” Scanlan and her co-authors interviewed past URI interns to understand how effective URI’s training programs are at building urban forestry capacity. They found that:

- The skills most gained by interns at URI and used in professional work is working with people in local communities
- URI continues to provide durable skills that translate across a wide range of environmental and non-environmental jobs.

Former interns are working in urban forestry, education, policy, clergy, academia, environmental conservation, and the private sector.

- URI is a resource to the neighborhood as well as a partner to the city. This has facilitated strong partnerships between stakeholders, senior staff and interns.
- Many interns are drawn to the program because they want to work at the nexus of social justice and the environment. They want to see how urban and community forestry can provide the groundwork for equitable distribution of environmental benefits and work towards dismantling systemic racism. In URI's research, former interns identified this as an area for improvement and more explicit training and conversation.

Overall, URI has created a lasting change on the ground, enhances student experience, and ensures that programs build upon effort of each season to produce positive impact on communities.

Community Forestry for Conservation, Livelihoods and Sustainable Development in South Asia

February 25, 2021

BHISHMA SUBEDI, Executive Director
ANSAB

By: Ryan Smith ('22 M.F.)

Dr. Bishma Subedi joined the Yale Forest Forum to discuss his experiences of community forestry from years of working with the Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture and Bioresources



Bhishma Subedi



(ANSAB). With a vision of maintaining and promoting rich biodiversity and prosperous communities, ANSAB generates knowledge and designs programs for community-based, enterprise-oriented solutions, which are then implemented in partnership with community groups, local enterprises, governments, industries, and other stakeholders.

Nepal is recognized globally as a leader in innovative community-based forestry. The program was initiated in 1978, and today over one-third of Nepalis, more than 9 million people, are involved in about 22,500 Community Forest User Groups (CFUGs). Together, they manage over one-third of Nepal's total forested area.

Forests provide critical ecosystem services such as habitat for endemic biodiversity, and are critical sources of timber, fuelwood, fodder, fiber, food, nutrition, personal care products, medicine, and income. More than 65% of Nepalis are dependent on forests for household energy and livelihoods. In high mountain communities, forests contribute to up to 44% of all income, the majority of which comes from community forests.

In the early 1990s, forests in Nepal were over-exploited and underperforming in their services to society. Communities had limited rights of use in forests, and rural poverty and deforestation were serious concerns. After analyzing the situation, challenges, and prospects, ANSAB introduced a Participatory Action Research process in 1995. According to Subedi, the purpose of this process was to better understand and promote enterprise-oriented community-based forest management and value chain development. This iterative process involved multiple stakeholders, cycles of conceptualization, experimentation, analysis, and the incorporation of important lessons. The goal was to improve the ability for Community Based Forestry (CBF) to balance ecological sustainability, social justice, equity, and economic efficiency. ANSAB's approach focused on three main areas:

1. Facilitation and community empowerment
2. Development of enterprises, value chains, and markets
3. Creation of an enabling environment

Since 1996, CFUGs have been formed and empowered by improving institutional structure and governance, developing practical tools for sustainable forest management, and expanding property rights. CFUGs have their own legal structure, group charter, rules, and regulations. Participation was made inclusive by creating interest subgroups for women, the poor, traditional non-timber forest product (NTFP) harvesters, and other socially-excluded people. Federations of CFUGs, both at the local and national level, were strengthened to help improve dialogue in information sharing between the central government and local communities and their capability for policy advocacy.

Recognizing that local communities need a diversity of products to have their needs met by forests, legislation was passed allowing CFUGs to commercially benefit from an expanded list of products, including timber, NTFPs, biofuel, and payments for ecosystem services. A variety of business development services were made available to communities. CFUGs worked with members of the private and public sectors to develop products, certifications, and labeling that would help them market their forest products and services.

Nepal has advanced the enabling environment of community-based forest management and goals related to conservation, economic and social outcomes. Forests have achieved measurable improvements in ground cover, biomass production, carbon sequestration, biodiversity, and other ecosystem services. Forest inventories and management plans enable sustainable harvesting, fires are better prevented or controlled, landslide measures are implemented, livestock managed sustainably, and communities patrol and monitor their forest resources. Some CFUGs are obtaining sustainable forest management certifications and others have established protected areas to conserve threatened species.

CFUGs have also increased flows of sustainable forest products and services, employment, and income. Structural adjustments provoked by CFUGs have improved inclusion and gender equality, and there are many examples of women involved with CFUGs becoming political leaders. Community forestry along with the national forest stewardship standard also provides a





framework for conflict resolution, and CFUGs have increased local resilience to disasters such as the 2015 Himalayan earthquake and the COVID-19 pandemic.

The following factors have been identified as keys to success for community forestry in Nepal:

1. Clearly defined property rights ensuring long-term access to resources
2. Forest management systems and practices which consider all aspects of society
3. Biological monitoring and technical information on sustainable yields
4. Access to value-adding technologies and higher value markets

Remaining challenges for CBF include maximizing efficiencies through increasing forest productivity, harvesting, processing and marketing; reducing policy and regulatory barriers; and continued improvements to governance and equity. Best practices could also be standardized, mechanisms for sharing information scaled up, and knowledge transfer improved at multiple scales.

Nepal has demonstrated that enterprise-oriented community-based forest management can viably generate diverse outcomes. This approach can significantly contribute to sustainable development, safeguard natural capital for biodiversity and other ecosystem services, and serve as a model for sustainable community-based forestry around the world.

The Evolving Nature of Community-based Forest Management in Parts of Africa with Particular Emphasis on Mozambique

March 4, 2021

MILAGRE NUVUNGA, Executive Director
MICAIA FOUNDATION

By: Fadhili Njilima ('21 M.E.M.)

Milagre Nuvunga, Executive Director of the Micaia Foundation, presented on community-based forestry in Southern Africa, particularly in Mozambique. She highlighted that literature on the African experience of forestry has only been around for the past two to three decades, coinciding with the development of today's community-based forestry systems. Nuvunga emphasized that community-based forestry has always been present in Southern Africa. Pre-colonial forest management was entrenched in cultural values, transferred between generations through myths and rituals under the leadership of chiefs and elders. The communities' traditional beliefs were based in forests, which were used as sacred sites while protecting springs and biodiversity. Many communities used forested lands as graveyards and kept these areas off-limits.

During the colonial era, forest resources were centrally administered. Colonial governments introduced total state control while limiting communities' access to forest products. Valuable timber reserves were appropriated for the colonial state, forests were harvested in an extractive manner, and community access to forests for subsistence was curtailed. This lack of access to forests limited the transmission of indigenous knowledge.



Milagre Nuvunga



Colonial governments focused on maximizing economic growth through centralized forest management, at the expense of traditional rules and regulations. Nuvunga informed attendees that in Mozambique, many forested lands were turned into forest reserves. Persistent loss of control over centuries led to the loss of accumulated indigenous knowledge of conservation and management of landscapes.

In the post-colonial period, African governments, including Mozambique, adopted the previous colonial structures for governing forest resources. These included maintaining central administration of the forest reserves and limiting communities from managing and accessing the forest products. Nuvunga also mentioned how African governments pushed different community-based forestry systems following the “fashion of the day,” which were linked to different donors and their strategies.

However, the international donor communities embraced different technologies and limited the chances for the communities to center their traditional indigenous knowledge and technologies. More recently, the devolution paradigm has returned to the recognition of indigenous knowledge and land resource-based tenure rights worldwide. African governments have started incorporating indigenous knowledge into policy frameworks and legislations which allowed community ownership and management of the natural forests or planted forests.

Nuvunga cited an example from central Mozambique, where the Micaia hybrid organization that she co-founded has been working with women baobab collectors. Micaia consists of an operational foundation (the Micaia Foundation) and a social enterprise (Eco-Micaia Limitada). For many years, these women were involved in an exploitative informal trade system that did not benefit them. Eco Micaia created an inclusive business, Baobab Products Mozambique (BPM), a company that is now paying the women 4-6 times more than they received from the informal market. In the meantime, the Micaia Foundation supported the development of a baobab collector’s association to enable these women to manage the shares that Eco Micaia reserved for them in BPM. The company produces organic baobab powder and oil for the national and international markets.

However, Nuvunga mentioned how fragile these market linkages can be. Economic, social, and environmental problems can challenge these operations, denying communities of what could be their most important source of income. For example, during the COVID-19 crisis, European and American companies canceled orders. It took the actions of a sympathetic donor who was supporting the development of the value chain to fix the situation, providing bridge funding for purchasing the baobab supply.

Finally, Nuvunga shared that women collectors are working with chiefs and communities to ensure current management systems sustain their business. Communities are developing local rules and regulations to accommodate this new trade to ensure that baobab trees continue to sustain their livelihoods.

On the Frontlines of Change and Transformation: How the Community Forester is Essential to our Shared Future

March 18, 2021

ERIKA SVENDSEN, Social Scientist/Team Leader
NYC URBAN FIELD STATION, U.S. FOREST SERVICE

By: Yihong Zhu (*22 M.F.S.)

Dr. Erika Svendsen is a research social scientist with the U.S. Forest Service, based at the New York City Urban Field Station. This unique partnership between the Forest Service and the New York City Parks Department has provided Svendsen with unique perspectives to study urban forestry and its impact on people. Svendsen began by sharing her personal journey from being an intern with the Urban Resources Initiative to researching the social contribution of community forestry.



Erika Svendsen



Svendsen has found that a significant but less visible benefit of community forestry projects are their societal contributions, such as building social resilience and civil capacity. Research has also shown that the quality of tree canopy cover in various neighborhoods can relate to present and historical injustices, especially because urban forests and greenspace are critical to our health and well-being. Also, they found that stewardship of urban forests strengthens civic capacity, builds cohesion, and supports the foundations of a strong democracy.

Forested natural areas are crucial for urban dwellers to find refuge, recreation, and connection to systems larger than themselves. Trees can be a catalyst for change and transformation in mental health, as greenspaces inspire care, reflection and recovery. For example, Svendsen shared that community forestry activities such as tree-planting and land conservation projects were organized to memorialize the victims of the 9/11 attack. These projects can help people process grief and trauma and form a supportive community. In order to inspire people, Svendsen has found that, “fear works, profit works, guilt works, but the most important thing that can motivate people to stay engaged to do good things is love.” Love is sometimes overlooked in research, but it is at the heart of why people stay committed to community forestry.

Community foresters can also be thought of as “green responders” to disturbance. After decades of work around natural disturbances like storms, tornados, floods, fires and climate change, Svendsen found that people can harness the restorative aspect of nature to process and adapt to change. Her most recent research is about the resilience and adaptivity of community forestry groups and governance networks to the COVID-19 disturbance. During the pandemic, natural areas provide a refuge and place for connection to nature.

However, problems still exist. Through semi-structured interviews with community forestry, municipal, state, and federal forest managers across an urban-rural gradient in the Northeastern United States, they found extreme levels of public use of forests during the pandemic, but limited capacity of land managers. Injustice still prevails, and problems exist within both the civic and public sector. It is essential to ensure that public places can be

accessible, safe, and welcoming to all, through proper management and cooperation among different sectors. Dr. Svendsen also called for applying new data tools in decision making. She co-developed the Stewardship Mapping and Assessment Project (STEW-MAP) to map the territory, networks, and characteristics of urban greenspace stewardship groups in New York City to measure their impact on shaping the environment and community life. The map visualizes the effects of community projects, providing a powerful and practical tool for decision-makers. Besides quantitative analysis and research, the map also collects stories about how community foresters have served as green responders to disturbances like storms and floods, aiming to remind people of the power of community work.

Lastly, she called for thought partners to explore what might be helpful in adapting urban and community forestry to extreme events and issues of social justice and inclusion. To better deal with these issues, Svendsen pointed out that global community networks will be more and more important in the future.

Building Community Tools for Urban Forestry

March 25, 2021

KIM YUAN-FARRELL, Executive Director
THE PARK PEOPLE

By: Chris DeFiore ('22 M.F.)

Urban forestry is all about working with communities. This was the main message of Kim Yuan-Farrell, Executive Director of The Park People, a Denver-based nonprofit. Yuan-Farrell outlined the innovative urban community forestry programming that The Park People (with a staff of only four people) have implemented in Denver. They have planted over 60,000 trees and, most importantly, fostered the growth of neighborhood environmental stewards and leaders.



Kim Yuan-Farrell

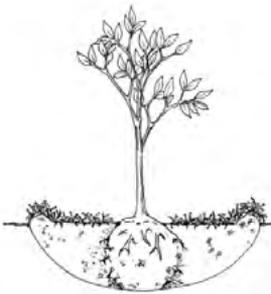
Denver is a growing city of approximately 700,000 people. Unfortunately, the tree canopy of the city is threatened by the emerald ash borer, an invasive insect which will likely kill 15% of Denver's trees. Additionally, policies and inequalities rooted in historical redlining and systematic oppression have resulted in an inequitable distribution of tree canopy cover. This can lead to some neighborhoods being 15° hotter than neighborhoods with greater canopy cover. For vulnerable populations that may be less likely to have access to reliable air conditioning, this presents a dangerous health risk. In addition to providing shade, trees are invaluable urban ecosystem keystone species that filter air and water pollutants, reduce flooding from stormwater, provide wildlife habitat, and uptake greenhouse gas emissions.

"People get connected to the earth, and they get connected to their neighborhood, and they get connected to each other. And it's that community building process that strengthens the neighborhoods, and strengthens the city."

—Gertie Grant, founder of the Denver Digs Trees program

How can a small organization like The Park People address such a large issue? Yuan-Farrell said that the Park People focuses not on planting trees themselves, but on "collaborating with residents and organizations to plant and steward healthy, resilient communities." This strategy, termed "community forestry," has been gaining momentum in many cities throughout the United States and worldwide. By increasing community capacity, more trees are planted, and more importantly, residents are empowered to take ownership of their neighborhood's urban forests through caring for their trees and educating others about tree stewardship.

To empower residents to become neighborhood tree stewards, The Park People have developed the Community Forester Program. Neighborhood leaders are provided free training through workshops on tree health and ecology, tree planting, pruning, tree identification, and volunteer leadership and community engagement. The goal is to have one, dedicated, trained Community Forester in each Denver neighborhood to lead planting and pruning crews, collect data, help distribute trees, and provide school programming.



While these positions are currently volunteer-based, The Park People hopes to eventually provide stipends for Community Foresters who may not have the financial ability to spend their limited free time in a volunteer position.

Along with support from the Community Forester program, The Park People has developed several core community-based forestry programs to engage the Denver community in cultivating a healthy, resilient forest and city.

Mile High Tree Champions - Corporate and business partners collaborate with The Park People to conduct large-scale tree plantings. Through this program, partnering organizations provide their employees with invaluable team-building opportunities while contributing to the local communities. These events can also foster long-lasting relationships between The Park People and prominent businesses in the area.



Denver Digs Trees - Through economy of scale, The Tree People can provide low-cost trees to many Denver residents. Residents apply for a tree in January and then receive their tree in April. Focus neighborhoods, including areas that have been historically marginalized and have scarce tree canopies receive their trees for a significantly discounted rate. By encouraging individuals to purchase (at a very low cost) and plant their own tree, a deeper

relationship of stewardship is formed than if an outside organization planted the tree.

Neighborhood Scale and Block Scale Projects - The Park People work with local neighborhood organizations to develop a vision of change residents wish to see in their neighborhood (greenway, neighborhood park, etc.). The community members then take the lead in planning and implementing their projects with the technical support of The Park People.

Yuan-Farrell made it clear that the health of Denver's communities and natural environment are interconnected. Each of The Park People's programs provides opportunities for residents to engage in new stewardship-based collaborations with neighbors. Out of these interactions, new understandings are born of each other. These relationships can then grow and bloom into a culture in which we work harder to take care of one another and our common natural environment. Where one flower blooms, a million more will follow. As The Park People exemplify, these changes start with people.

Community Forest Management Experiences in Brazil: Scenarios and Cases Studies



Fernanda Rodrigues

April 1, 2021

FERNANDA RODRIGUES, Executive Secretary
BRAZILIAN FORESTS DIALOGUE

By: Eudora Miao ('22 M.F.S.)

What does community-based forestry (CBF) look like in Brazil? Fernanda Rodrigues, Executive Secretary of Brazilian Forests Dialogue – Diálogo Florestal, and Ana Violato Espada, Ph.D. candidate at the University of Florida, took Yale Forest Forum attendees to the Brazilian Amazon to answer this question.

CBF in Brazil involves a lot of people and encompasses a large area. Fernanda explained that 41% of the Amazon's two million square kilometers is under community control, and 266,435 families are directly involved with CBF. Brazil's legal framework has made progress in the recent decades in improving the community's rights to use and manage the forests. A recent landmark was the creation of the category of "extractive reserve" in 1990, which is a "territorial space destined for sustainable development and conservation of renewable natural resources by local populations." A survey conducted by Observatório do Manejo Florestal Comunitário showed that among CBF initiatives, 57% produce timber, while 43% are working with non-timber forest products such as oils, açai, and rubber. Rodrigues emphasized two main challenges faced by CBF initiatives in Brazil. The first is to ensure that legislation recognizes and allows communities to manage forests and lands on their own. The second challenge is creating market access and incentives for a new generation of products and ecosystem services. Rodrigues wrapped up her presentation with a recording of an interview with Maria Margarida Ribeiro da Silva, who has supported and fought for the right of communities to sustainably manage their forests, and whose achievement was recognized by the Wangari Maathai Award at the Global Landscape Forum in 2017.

Violata Espada presented two case studies that brought us to communities on the ground that are managing the forest for timber products. The first community is in the Tapajos National Forest, where community members have formed cooperatives to manage 33,691 hectares of logging areas. The cooperatives have increased timber production year by year, and have seen an increase in net revenue. According to Violata Espada, "it is not common to have this kind of net revenue of CBF in Brazil." Almost half of the net revenue goes to investment for future activities, such as monitoring and harvesting, and the other half goes into a fund for the community, which supports health care, education, technical assistance, and financial support. Community members also help the government oversee illegal activities such as forest degradation in the protected area.

The second case presented by Violata Espada comes from the community of Ituxi, where local people also manage timber



resources on a smaller scale. This case illustrates the on-the-ground considerations of logging and the role of applied research. Research from Tropical Resources Institute (IFT) shows that tractors and motorcycles are the best ways for the community to transport logs. These methods have financial advantages (low acquisition cost, low fuel consumption, low maintenance cost), decrease physical effort, and cause minimal damage to forest soil. Another surprise benefit of these transportation systems is that they motivate women to work as timber workers because of the reduction of physical strenuousness.

Rodrigues' and Violato Espada's presentations again emphasized the importance of the on-the-ground context for CBF projects, just as how the projects shared by other speakers at the Yale Forest Forum are deeply rooted in their own locales. However, there are also common challenges and lessons across the globe, as demonstrated by a rich array of questions asked by the audience. These presentations deepened attendees' understanding of CBF in Brazil and the multiplicity of possibilities for community-based forestry.

Some Lessons from Engaged Anthropology and Human Rights Activism



Marcus Colchester

April 15, 2021

MARCUS COLCHESTER, Senior Policy Advisor
FOREST PEOPLES PROGRAMME

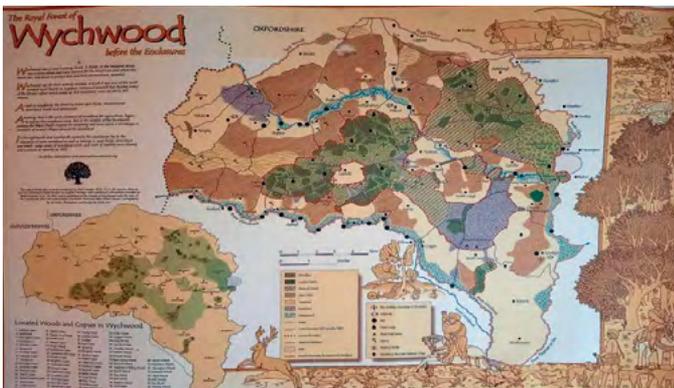
By: Adam Houston ('21 M.E.M.)

Marcus Colchester, an anthropologist and Senior Policy Advisor at the Forest Peoples Programme, challenged attendees at the Yale Forest Forum to rethink their definition of forests. Many of us think of forests purely for their biological attributes, such as

trees and wildlife, which 1.5 billion people depend on for their subsistence. Colchester asked us to look beyond the trees to see how historical conceptions of forests have changed over time and shaped how these lands are used.

While areas with trees have always existed as ecosystems, conceptions of forests as discrete areas emerged with the delineation of royal hunting reserves. Medieval forests were actually not all wooded, and contained mosaics of vegetation types such as meadows and farms. The key distinction of the emerging concept of a forest in this period was that it was an area reserved for royals. The first forestry laws originated in the 700s CE with Emperor Charlemagne to restrict the uses of forest. For example, cutting timber or firewood, making charcoal, and hunting were all strictly limited by the royal's sovereign power. In fact, the word "paradise" comes from a Persian word meaning "hunting reserve." The word forest itself comes from the same root word as "foreign," and means that which is outside or beyond.

Colchester's history lesson made it clear that the Western conception of forest is not actually based on the presence of woody vegetation, but on the creation of boundaries that exclude many people for the benefit of a few. Over the course of his career, Colchester has seen how European-style forest management and legal structures have been exported and imposed in the tropics during the colonial era. These exclusionary systems have often devastated peoples and places.



However, Colchester pointed out that in recent years there has been a major change in how we think about forests due to sustained activism by indigenous people all over the world. International law, such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, has now agreed that the rights of indigenous peoples need to be protected. This means that legally, all people have the right to be protected from deprivation of their land and means of subsistence. In practice, Colchester has seen this contested on many levels.



Today, governments continue colonial practices by designating areas of the country as forest and appropriating that land for exploitation. For example, the government of Indonesia has designated 70% of the country's land as state-controlled forests. There are 60 to 90 million people and 33,000 villages

within that area, but the forestry law says that state forests are areas where there are no rights.

Indigenous people won a big victory in 2012 when the Indonesian Constitutional Court ruled that where indigenous peoples' territories overlap with forests, these areas become customary forests and not part of state forest areas. While maps and boundaries served as tools for asserting state power, they can now be used to contest it.

Colchester gave several examples of how community mapping can be used to map forest peoples' customary rights, sacred areas, and use boundaries. For example, the Toba Batak people in North Sumatra had a 2,000-year history and a thriving economy based on intense Agroforestry, only to have their land stolen and converted to eucalyptus plantations. They have appealed to the Indonesian President and the International Labor Organization, with some success, to protect their land rights into the future. Community mapping, along with international law and activism, can establish the foundation for pushing back against the tradition

of exclusionary forest control. Colchester's talk reminded us that community-based forestry is about more than just the trees – it is about control of land and the right to self-determination.

What Makes Community Forestry a Success? Examining Tenure, Gender, and Community Entrepreneurship

April 22, 2021

CÉCILE NDJEBET, President
**AFRICAN WOMEN'S NETWORK FOR COMMUNITY
MANAGEMENT OF FORESTS**

By: Musawenkosi Joko ('22 M.F.)

Cécile Ndjebet, the founder and president of the African Women's Network for Community Management of Forests (REFACOF), spoke to the Yale Forest Forum on what makes community forestry a success, examining tenure, gender, and community entrepreneurship. REFACOF is an organization which was started in 2009 with its headquarters in Cameroon. It is made up of twenty Central and West African countries as well as Madagascar. It is an organization focused on African women's tenure rights in land and forest reforms. The intervention areas of REFACOF are in capacity building, tenure reforms, advocacy, and experience sharing and women's economic empowerment.

Community forest management in Africa started in the 1980s, mainly focused on enhancing community engagement in forest management, reducing rural poverty, and promoting forest resource conservation. Ndjebet shared three case studies from REFACOF's community forestry work in Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Gambia, which have different community forestry schemes. The schemes define community forests differently, they have varied objectives, and they differ in tenure.



Cécile Ndjebet

In Cameroon, community forests are 5000 hectares and are guaranteed for 25 years. Management is based on a five-year management plan approved by the forest administration and renewed every five years. There are several legal entities that are recognized for the management of community forests in Cameroon including the Common Initiative Group (GIC), the Cooperative and the Economic Initiative Group (GIE). In the DRC scheme, community forest areas are 50,000 hectares and are guaranteed in perpetuity. In Gambia, community forests are of variable sizes but are similarly guaranteed in perpetuity, and have five-year management plans approved by the forest administration.

Ndjebet also discussed the role of women in community forestry. In Gambia, women are the business developers. They play a significant role in the firewood business and in tree nursery enterprises. In Cameroon they developed the pistachio and plantain businesses. These businesses generate a lot of income for women, but they were negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in plantain production and marketing. In addition, women are also involved in community forest restoration and rehabilitation. This includes tree nursery development, tree planting activities, mangrove restoration and mainstreaming agroforestry practices into food cultivation. Women are also actively involved in Community Forest Management Committees (CFMCs) in all the three countries.



Ndjebet also laid out some challenges for expanding community forestry. The first challenge is land tenure. There is a need to clarify and secure the rights of local communities, especially for women, and there is also a need to improve customary rights. Gender inequalities also need to be addressed. The different roles, responsibilities, and activities of women and men must

be well understood, and young people need to be involved to provide adequate support and access to decision making processes. Furthermore, there is a need to improve access to funding, technology, and markets for women, and for more flexible rules to be introduced in the informal sector where most women operate.

There are five keys to the success of community forestry, and particularly for women. This includes adaptive management and learning, such as engaging local and indigenous women and providing adequate support to them through capacity building, technical, technological, financial, organizational and institutional capacity. It also means tenure security and facilitating access to timber and non-timber forest products for women. Women should also be empowered to participate in governance and decision-making structures. There should be an enabling environment through the use of gender responsive laws and regulations and a global commitment to invest in community forestry enterprises. Livelihood needs of communities should also be addressed.

Ndjebet concluded that it is necessary to go beyond policy to practice, and translate this to the vision, knowledge, needs, and expectations of forest small holders and women producers.

Organizational Innovations that Make Community Forestry Viable

April 29, 2021

DUNCAN MACQUEEN, Principal Researcher and Leader
**NATURAL RESOURCES RESEARCH GROUP, INTERNATIONAL
INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL AND DEVELOPMENT**

By: Katherine Ball (*22 M.E.M.)

Duncan MacQueen was the final speaker in the Yale Forest Forum's series on "The Promise and Practice of Community-Based Forestry." He had the challenge of tying together the previous ten



Duncan MacQueen

speakers and shining a light on the role that organizations play in making prosperity an outcome of community-based forestry.

MacQueen began by asking, “Why prosperity?” Within communities, prosperity is a negotiated vision of what people want. There are a range of values that people desire, but prosperity is about values shared for the common good, not selfish interests. “Community organizations are very good at pursuing prosperity because people have to negotiate what values they are pursuing so that the outcome is the common good,” MacQueen said. Organizations give people the means to achieve prosperity through collective action. Prosperity is a key notion because it helps us negotiate what we are aiming for in our quest for development and sustainability, two well-meaning and related, but sometimes confounding, discourses.



The second question MacQueen posed was, “Why is community forestry important?” Community forestry is important because it protects forests, preserves biodiversity, and maintains climate resilient landscapes. Each year 3.3 million hectares of forest disappear. This threatens the global climate. Forest management could be one of the solutions to climate change and biodiversity loss, rather than one of the causes. The main drivers of forest loss are industrial agriculture and industrial

forestry. Community forestry can – and historically has been – a way in which human species are a part of nature, rather than a self-destructive force within it.

The scale of community forestry is huge. Over 26% of the world’s forests are managed by communities. They make up over 40% of the planet’s protected areas. Often policy makers and financial

resource partners exclude community forest groups on the grounds that they could not possibly help with generating value and mitigating climate change. They are seen as too high risk. In reality, it is a risk to leave them out because community foresters, indigenous, and tribal people are the people who actually populate these landscapes.

Community forestry fosters diversity. Community forests exist on diverse landscapes: the forest core, forest edge, forest and farm mosaics, and outside forests communities process the diverse products that come from forests. Community forests create diverse value chains in biomass, timber, non-timber forest products, and services, such as water filtration and protection. Over \$1.3 trillion in products come from forest and farm smallholdings annually. Community forestry can be the basis of prosperity.

With these guiding questions shared, MacQueen began to explore the ultimate question of his talk, “how can community forestry be prosperous?” To him, organization is the entry point to prosperous community forestry. MacQueen went on to tell compelling stories of community-based forestry that exemplified what factors to prioritize when trying to build strong organizations. He shared stories of community foresters in Guatemala, Togo, Ecuador, Bolivia, Ghana, Vietnam, Kenya, Madagascar, Zambia, and Nepal that demonstrate the benefits of working together for the common good.

Successful organizations are often structured in multiple levels – local, regional, national, and international – that are accountable to local organizations. MacQueen diagrammed the tiered organizational structure in Guatemala that enabled successful community forestry, as we learned about in [Victor Lopez’s YFF talk](#).

In addition, **community forestry groups can benefit from becoming a subgroup within larger farmer organizations**, which are often better resourced, have better market connections, and better political representation.

One of the first steps in building strong organizations is to mainstream organizational risk assessment. MacQueen recalled when [YFF speaker Fernanda Rodriques](#) talked about





the challenges of doing community forestry in the Amazon. Community forestry often exists in challenging environments. This is why assessing and prioritizing risks are a vital starting point to know what to tackle in the year ahead.

MacQueen also talked about the power of organization, in the sense of power-to rather than power-over. **Organization has the power to lobby for and enable policy change.** MacQueen brought us back to [Marcus Colchester's YFF talk](#) recounting how the Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago in Indonesia worked to have customary law over forests recognized.

Organization can empower women. [YFF Speaker Cécile Ndjebet](#) talked about how community forestry can help overcome difficult customary barriers at the family and national level through women's entrepreneurial empowerment. Indeed, **organization can help mobilize finance** and **organizations at the apex level can create business incubation at the local community forest level.**

Organization is critical for upscaling climate solutions. In this way, **organizations provide social and cultural services that leave no one behind.** Reminding us of when [Bhishma Subedi shared with the YFF](#) that in Nepal there are over 15,000 community forest groups in an organizations in the Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal, Maqueen made his final point that, “to communicate, to blend these and other organizational innovations into compelling stories can help to attract resources into forest and farm producer organizations, into community forestry and make it the mainstay of rural development.”

As a student in the Yale Forest Forum, the compelling stories that all eleven speakers told about community forestry were a new and hopeful way for me to dream about how people can work together, in the forests where they live, to mitigate climate change, reduce poverty, and ameliorate land degradation, for the common good.

Conclusion

The Yale Forest Forum's speaker series on The Promise and Practice of Community-Based Forestry brought together speakers from all around the world to illustrate how CBF can serve as a beneficial forest management paradigm across a range of values. Expanding CBF has its challenges, including securing land tenure rights, ensuring gender equality, and strengthening access to markets for community forest enterprises. Global systems for knowledge sharing, like the YFF, will be crucial to overcoming these challenges and spreading community-based forestry to people all over the world.





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