

Meidinger, Elliott, Oesten (eds.)
Social and Political Dimensions of Forest Certification

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF FOREST CERTIFICATION

edited by

**Errol Meidinger
Chris Elliott
Gerhard Oesten**

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Dr. Kessel, Eifelweg 37, 53424 Remagen-Oberwinter, Tel./Fax: 02228-493

eMail: nkessel@web.de

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PREFACE

Forest certification programs seek to assure the buyers of wood products that the wood they are getting was produced in an environmentally and socially acceptable manner. Certification programs are growing very rapidly around the world, and their rise to prominence poses many interesting and important questions. To date, most public and academic discussion of certification has focused on forest management and marketing issues, with an emphasis on technical questions. While those are important, it is becoming increasingly clear that the future of certification programs will depend heavily on their social and political implications. It is time to take a careful look at those implications, and this book is one of the first efforts to do so in a sustained, broad based, academically rigorous way. It seeks to link detailed expertise on forest certification with broader theoretical and political perspectives on policy making, social justice, law, and governance, addressing issues such as the following:

- **Changing Institutions.** How does forest certification relate to traditional policy making and implementation institutions? Are the received roles of policy actors being altered?
- **Democracy and Governance.** How democratic is certification? What avenues exist for public participation and accountability? How much does certification expand public influence on forest management. Is it structured so people can see the implications of their choices and learn from them?
- **Social Standards.** Does forest certification promote social and environmental justice? How can it be made to do so more effectively? Does certification contribute to the well-being of forest dependent communities? How can it protect the resource claims of indigenous peoples?
- **Legal Systems.** How does certification relate to traditional legal regulation of resources and the economy? Are legal systems incorporating certification standards? What can legal systems learn from certification, and vice versa?

Our effort to address these issues began with a conference hosted by the Institute of Forestry Economics at the University of Freiburg, Germany, June 20-22, 2001. The conference produced an intensive and sophisticated dialogue regarding social and political issues in certification. It brought together a carefully selected group of participants with a broad range of expertise, in both forestry and the related disciplines of anthropology, economics, geography, law, political science, and sociology, including experts from developing countries. The format was informal and conversational. The goal was to achieve maximum interchange and development of ideas without getting bogged down in debates concerning the relative merits of different certification programs. Participants engaged in sustained discussions both during and after the conference.

This book grows out of the Freiburg conference. While a number of the articles in it were presented in first draft at the conference, others were stimulated by the conference and prepared later. We believe that together, the articles provide an unusually thorough and multi-faceted review of the social implications, quandaries, and prospects of forest

certification. The papers are not all in agreement - far from it. But they contain a valuable and balanced dialogue on the emerging questions, and lay the groundwork for both further dialogue and continuing research on the issues. We publish them with pleasure and anticipation of the discussions they may stimulate. We hope they will appeal not only foresters, but also to those in the broader fields of environmental policy, sustainable development, international governance, social movements, regulatory policy, and policy studies. We hope they will be useful not only to academics, but also to practitioners and activists in the fields of community development, environmental management, labor protection, human rights, and fair trade.

We wish to express our strong appreciation to the organizations and individuals who have provided essential support to this effort. First, the German Organization for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Andreas-Stihl Foundation, and WWF provided critical financial support for the June 2001 conference. Second, the Institute of Forestry Economics has provided great administrative and logistical support - as well as three beautiful summer days for the conference - contributing immeasurably to the success of this project. Third, the Christopher Baldy Center for Law and Social Policy of the State University of New York at Buffalo provided critical support for Errol Meidinger's work on the conference and book. Fourth, among the many individuals who have contributed to the conference and the book we want to acknowledge the contributions of the following people in particular: Michael Becker, Dietrich Burger, Kai Fischer, Michael Flitner, Carol Grossmann, Jochen Krebuehl, Barbara von Kruedener, Peter Sprang, and Angelika Weidner. Finally, we wish especially to thank Stephanie von Detten, who undertook the exacting task of producing the final version of this book with coeditors scattered in three different countries, and often traveling in others. She has done a terrific job.

Errol Meidinger, Chris Elliott and Gerhard Oesten
November, 2002

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SECTION I

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL ISSUES AND INTERESTS

THE FUNDAMENTALS OF FOREST CERTIFICATION*

Errol E. Meidinger

Professor of Law
State University of New York
Buffalo, New York, USA

Chris Elliott

Director, Forests for Life,
WWF International,
Gland, Switzerland

Gerhard Oesten

Professor of Forestry Economics
Albert-Ludwigs-University of Freiburg
Freiburg, Germany

INTRODUCTION

Although many readers of this book will be familiar with forest certification, we hope that others will be relatively new to the subject. To date, forest certification has been discussed primarily in forestry circles. This book is part of an effort to extend that discussion into the wider community of people interested in environmental policy, sustainable development, transnational institutions, social justice, and new modes of governance. To that end, this chapter offers a concise overview of forest certification programs as they exist today. Subsequent chapters explore their many social and political implications. We invite readers who are not familiar with forest certification programs either to read this chapter at the outset or to refer back to it when additional information on certification would be helpful to understanding other chapters.

* The authors thank Amor Balada, Emily Noah, Margaret Shannon, and Peter Sprang for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper but retain sole responsibility for any errors.