



Criteria and indicators for the assessment of community forestry outcomes: a comparative analysis from Canada



Sara Teitelbaum*

Department of Sociology, Université de Montréal, Pavillon Lionel-Groulx, C.P. 6128, Succ. Centre-ville, Montréal, Québec, H3C 3J7 Canada

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 February 2012

Received in revised form

17 October 2013

Accepted 5 November 2013

Available online 8 December 2013

Keywords:

Community forestry

Community-based forest management

Local governance

Evaluation

Social sustainability

Canada

ABSTRACT

In Canada, there are few structured evaluations of community forestry despite more than twenty years of practice. This article presents a criteria and indicator framework, designed to elicit descriptive information about the types of socio-economic results being achieved by community forests in the Canadian context. The criteria and indicators framework draws on themes proposed by other researchers both in the field of community forestry and related areas. The framework is oriented around three concepts described as amongst the underlying objectives of community forestry, namely participatory governance, local economic benefits and multiple forest use. This article also presents the results of a field-based application of the criteria and indicators framework, comparing four case studies in three Canadian provinces. All four are community forests with direct tenure rights to manage and benefit from forestry activities. Results reveal that in terms of governance, the case studies adhere to two different models, which we name 'interest group' vs. 'local government'. Stronger participatory dimensions are evident in two case studies. In the area of local economic benefits, the four case studies perform similarly, with some of the strongest benefits being in employment creation, especially for those case studies that offer non-timber activities such as recreation and education. Two of four cases have clearly adopted a multiple-use approach to management.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Community forestry is an established approach to the management of forests worldwide. [Sunderlin et al. \(2008\)](#) estimate that 27% of forests in the developing world are either owned or accessible by community groups. In the developing world context, political reforms in favor of community forestry have come about as a response to the struggles of rural and Indigenous populations collectively seeking to combat escalating rates of deforestation and social exclusion. Since the 1980s, intergovernmental organizations as well as international development organizations have also supported the implementation of bottom-up approaches such as community forestry as a means to reduce poverty and address environmental degradation ([Brosius et al., 2005](#)).

In industrialized countries, the adoption of community forestry approaches has been slower ([Sunderlin et al., 2008](#)). In Canada, the focus of this paper, public land continues to be allocated almost exclusively to the private sector in the form of long-term tenures. In return, forest companies are required to invest in processing

facilities and pay stumpage fees to provincial governments ([Howlett and Rayner, 2001](#)). However, there is evidence of a public appetite for community forestry, emanating from rural-based constituents and organizations, academic milieus and civil society organizations ([Smith and Palmer, 2012](#); [NOSCP, 2010](#); [Bouthillier and Dionne, 1995](#)). And indeed, over the years, there have been modest political reforms in favour of devolving forestry rights to communities, most since the 1990's. Two provinces, Quebec and British Columbia have established legal tenures, which allow community organizations (including municipalities, Indigenous communities and non-profits) to manage and benefit from public forest resources. In the province of Ontario, there is a long history of municipal forest management ([Teitelbaum and Bullock, 2012](#)). However, it appears that community forestry in the sense described in this paper, of community-based organizations which hold a direct tenure to manage and benefit from a public forest, comprise less than 2% of all public forests in the country ([Teitelbaum et al., 2006](#)).

The impetus towards establishing community forests in Canada, a country wherein 94% of forests are publicly owned, is multi-faceted but has been linked to public dissatisfaction with the legacy of top-down and centralized management as well as broadly expressed concerns with the impacts of industrial forestry practices

* Tel.: +1 514 343 6111x49083; fax: +1 514 514 343 5722.

E-mail address: sara.teitelbaum@umontreal.ca.

on the environment (Bullock and Hanna, 2012; Bullock et al., 2009; Pinkerton et al., 2008). There is an economic dimension to this critique as well, as provincial tenure allocation practices are described as resulting in the consolidation of activities amongst a few corporate players, thereby restricting entrepreneurial opportunities in communities (Krogman and Beckley, 2002; Howlett and Rayner, 2001; Clapp, 1998). Thus, the discourse surrounding community forestry tends to present it as a counterpoint to the status quo. For example, community forestry is commonly described as an approach with the potential to foster more participatory approaches to decision-making, create locally-centered economic development strategies and enhance environmental outcomes (Furness and Nelson, 2012; Tyler et al., 2007; Beckley, 1998; Burda and M'Gonigle, 1996).

Despite more than two decades of community forestry implementation in Canada, there is little empirical research examining linkages between community forestry practice and the goals underlying this approach. This stands in contrast to the developing world, where a substantial literature has emerged focused on evaluation, including several international studies and meta-analyses (Bray et al., 2008; Pagdee et al., 2006; Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2005; Carter and Gronow, 2005; Shackleton et al., 2002; Kellert et al., 2000) as well as national and regional comparisons (Hajjar et al., 2012; Lawrence et al., 2009; Malla et al., 2003). There is also methodological work available to guide evaluation (Maryudi et al., 2012; Ritchie et al., 2000). This literature allows for a level of generalization not yet seen in Canada, pointing to lower-than-expected performance in both socio-economic and ecological areas, which is linked to a number of constraints stemming both from the community level, due to such things as limited capacity, insufficient democratic accountability and corruption (Ribot et al., 2006; Larson and Ribot, 2004), and from the state level, where there is evidence of insufficient devolution of rights, resources and institutional support (Agrawal et al., 2008; Wollenberg et al., 2008; Shackleton et al., 2002).

In Canada, there is a growing literature on community forestry, which, while not explicitly oriented towards evaluation, does provide an indication of how these initiatives are faring. This research describes a number of social benefits, such as enhanced networking and collaboration amongst stakeholders (Leclerc and Chiasson, 2013; Bullock and Hanna, 2012; Chiasson et al., 2005) and the adoption of more integrated and/or diversified approaches to forest management (Teitelbaum and Bullock, 2012; Tremblay, 2009; Gélinas, 2001). Other descriptive accounts indicate that it has proved challenging for community forest organizations to manifest strong practices of social inclusion and economic differentiation, due to institutional barriers, insufficient local capacity and challenging economic contexts (Ambus and Hoberg, 2011; McIlveen and Bradshaw, 2009; Pinkerton et al., 2008; Ambus et al., 2007; McIlveen and Bradshaw 2005/2006). However, these findings are based on a limited number of case studies and preliminary program review, thus it is difficult to draw clear conclusions. Furthermore, there is little specific social, economic and environmental data being generated about community forestry performance and outcomes. As a result, it remains challenging to assess the impacts of this approach, compare the strengths and weaknesses of different models and generalize about links to the social well-being of adjacent communities.

Given the strong ideological underpinnings of community forestry, and the attention it has received both from civil society groups and policy-makers in Canada, there is clearly an opportunity to contribute new research in the area of evaluation. This paper aims to contribute to the development of methodology for evaluating progress in community forestry in a Canadian context, while adding to available baseline data concerning community forestry

practice. In the first part of the paper, we present a structured method, namely a criteria and indicators framework, designed for the presentation of community forestry outcomes in relation to three concepts often described as amongst the underlying objectives of community forestry in a Canadian context, namely participatory governance, local economic benefits and multiple forest use. The framework draws on research and metrics proposed by other researchers both in the field of community forestry, in Canada and internationally (Reed and McIlveen, 2006; Foothills Model Forest, 2003; Ritchie et al., 2000), and related areas such as collaboration (Leach, 2004; Mascarenhas and Scarce, 2004; Innes and Booher, 1999) and sustainable forest management (CCFM, 2006; FSC, 2004). In the second part of this paper, we present the results of a field-based application of the criteria and indicators framework, which occurred between 2004 and 2006 comparing four community forest organizations in three Canadian provinces – British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. In this exercise, we used a combination of socio-economic data gathered at the case study organizations (annual reports, forest management reports, etc.) and interviews with key informants within each organization, in order to provide a descriptive comparison of outcomes.

2. Conceptual dimensions of the evaluation: participatory governance, local economic benefits and multiple forest use

It is frequently observed that it is difficult to provide a single definition of community forestry, due to the context-specific and locally-defined nature of objectives and practices. However, there are a series of underlying principles which distinguish this approach, perhaps most central being those of enhanced local participation in decision-making and improved social equity (Hajjar et al., 2012; Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2005). For example, McDermott and Schreckenberg (2009) define community forestry as “the exercise by local people of power or influence over decisions regarding management of forests, including the rules of access and the disposition of products” (p.158). Concern for the state of the environment is another common theme (Maryudi et al., 2012; Muñoz-Erickson et al., 2007). These and other objectives have been used to evaluate progress in community forestry. For example, in the Global South, studies examining the relationship between community forestry and poverty alleviation are common (McDermott and Schreckenberg, 2009; Dhakal et al., 2007; Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2005). In the North, considerable attention has been paid to the collaborative potential of community forestry, including in conflict resolution (Bullock and Hanna, 2012; Chiasson et al., 2005; Carter and Gronow, 2005).

This study follows in this tradition of comparing community forestry outcomes to goals, through the analysis of multiple efforts (Charnley and Poe, 2007; Conley and Moote, 2003; Kellert et al., 2000). We selected three concepts which appear to be relevant to the Canadian context, as they appeared both in the research literature and in the written objectives of specific initiatives, namely: 1) local and participatory governance, 2) local economic benefits, and 3) multiple forest use. Clearly these three concepts by no means provide a comprehensive evaluation of community forestry practice, and indeed, this was not our objective.

The first concept, *local and participatory governance* speaks to the need for local involvement and influence over decision-making (Glasmeier and Farrigan, 2005; Ritchie et al., 2000; Brendler and Carey, 1998). In a sense, it is both a defining feature of community forestry and a desired outcome. Implementing local and participatory governance is multi-faceted, requiring not only efforts towards creating inclusive and accountable institutions at the local level, but also the presence of a sufficient level of authority to ensure that decisions have bearing. The latter aspect of decision-

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1055802>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1055802>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)