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Land sharing not sparing in the "green economy": The role of livelihood bricolage in conservation and development in the Philippines

Wolfram Dressler [a,*], Jessica de Koning [b], Marvin Montefrio [c], Jennifer Firn [d]

[a] School of Geography, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia
[b] Sociology and Anthropology of Development, Wageningen University, Wageningen, The Netherlands
[c] Division of Social Science, Yale-NUS College, Singapore
[d] Science and Engineering Faculty, Earth, Environmental and Biological Sciences, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

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ABSTRACT

In Southeast Asia's green economy, conservation interventions intensify the production of resources as commodities through land sparing activities and zoning in extensively used landscapes. Such initiatives encounter problems where poor resource users diversify livelihoods in multi-functional landscapes over time. In terms of 'livelihood bricolage' – the mixing, matching and building of portfolios – we describe how forest users enhance security by building dynamic livelihood portfolios based on the economic and socio-cultural considerations of place. Philippine case studies show how disrupting livelihood bricolage in multi-functional landscapes with 'intensifying interventions' spatially constrains livelihood security and conservation objectives. We conclude that more equitable forest governance supports land sharing with diverse, extensive livelihoods in varied landscapes.

1. Introduction

In just three decades, the dominant logic of (neoliberal) capitalism—its ideology, incentives, alienation, and violence—has co-emerged with vigour and intensity in an emerging 'green economy' frame advocating for the "mutually reinforcing…relationship of economic growth, nature protection and social equity objectives" (Wilshusen, 2014, p. 129). In particular, global governance and conservation objectives now align with the premise that saving nature is possible only when people and ecologies are subsumed and re-valued in market terms (Büscher et al., 2012, p. 4). The faith and practice of financialising nature, incentivizing resource conservation, and sale of abstract nature, globally, have become central to the green economy. With fervour, government, civil society and the private sector work together to support environmental governance by way of devolved market-oriented interventions in rural landscapes.

In Southeast Asia, actors driving the green economy increasingly focus on developing new environmental technologies, green markets, and 'low carbon' (e.g. alternative fuel) economies as solutions for environmental and economic decline (Corson et al., 2013, p. 3). Scaling down, such governance interventions assume that boosting livelihoods with financial incentives while restricting access to forests might compel local users to produce higher value commodities by using fewer resources in less space (Nevins and Peluso, 2008); in contrast to traditional uses and valuing of nature, farmers will harness the imputed financial value of ecosystem services (as 'natural capital') in forest landscapes. The assumption holds that locals will come to draw on the financial value of forest goods and services and so protect them in fixed spaces (Wilshusen, 2014, p. 151). Increasingly, green governance practices advocate market expansion and incentive structures that have rural farmers intensify commodity production so as to generate revenue to offset the costs of abandoning extensive land uses that supposedly deforest landscapes.[1]

In order to curb encroachment and free up land for forest protection, forest governance and zoning regimes produce 'spatially constrained' intensification processes that purportedly spare land and draw livelihoods toward less forest-reliant, off farm activities (Rigg, 2005; Li, 2008), including intensive mono-cropping and/or

[1] An important development, for example, has been the rise of projects aimed at compensating landowners for the provision of ecosystem services (e.g. Pagiola et al., 2005) and forest carbon sequestration (REDD+), the popularity of which promises to make markets central to the conservation policy and climate change mitigation strategies in Southeast Asian frontiers (e.g., the World Agroforestry Center's 'Reward Upland People for Ecosystem Services' program and the World Bank's WAVES program (Hargrove and Chandler, N.D.)).

* Corresponding author.
E-mail address: wolfram.dressler@unimelb.edu.au (W. Dressler).

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non-agricultural employment (Schmidt-Vogt, 2001; Castella et al., 2005; Rigg, 2006). Coupled with state policies and market pressures, such governance interventions restrict extensive livelihood practices while inducing incentives to progress intensified, sedentarized production among smallholders who remain resource reliant and risk averse relative to others (Phelps et al., 2013).

In line with green economy discourse, many countries have adopted transnational conservation policies with an explicit 'land sparing' rationale—protecting some land and farming the rest intensively (Fischer et al., 2011, p. 593)—as national policy justification for interventions aiming to curb extensive land uses (e.g. swidden) long vilified as threats to timber reserves, ecosystem services and surplus production (Phalan et al., 2011). However, despite the prominence of land sparing discourse and practice, debate remains concerning the extent to which intensification (and zoning) can support conservation objectives while not marginalising local farmers in the process (Phelps et al., 2013). With few exceptions, most land sparing approaches promote spatially constrained, sedentary agriculture and conserving 'high value' ecosystems in fixed zones. Few policy makers and practitioners, however, have substantively engaged with the type and character of those rural people whose livelihoods depend on these landscapes. As Fisher et al. (2014) note, the debates concerning either approach have neglected the socio-politics of local food production and security, and the socio-cultural and ecological connections of livelihoods across landscapes. We engage these lacunae further. We suggest that the debate has neglected the socio-cultural substance of different societies, their own landscape histories and, often, relatively sustainable agro-ecological outcomes. Uniform land sparing approaches remain contested in policy and practice, as they reflect a static, linear and detached interpretation of how to engage rural livelihoods in transition (Fischer et al., 2012). We further this critique in the context of the Philippine green economy by engaging the concept of 'livelihood bricolage' as an alternative to land sparing—in essence, the recombination of different livelihood elements in response to changing environments across landscapes (Cleaver, 2002).

In the context of the green economy, we examine how market-oriented, land sparing interventions may reduce ecosystem services, increase livelihood vulnerability, and scuttle conservation objectives, as the inter-linkages between livelihood bricolage and multi-functional landscapes are broken. While recent studies support intensification and zoning as the basis for land sparing, we argue that *land sharing in multifunctional landscapes* – protecting less land but farming the remainder in agro-ecologically diverse, sustainable ways (Fischer et al., 2011, p. 593) – is better suited to the complex reality of poor, resource reliant uplanders. This is because poor uplanders' livelihood security depends on a diversity of resources from varied ecosystem services that are sustained through complimentary resource uses that also support forest conservation. We illustrate with two contrasting cases the important socio-ecological interlinkages between livelihood bricolage and multi-functional landscapes for the rural poor. The first case is the *frontier* island of Palawan, the Philippines, where NGO and national park interventions support livelihood intensification amongst indigenous swidden farmers who rely on varied forest resources across landscape mosaics. The second case is the *post-frontier* landscape of Biliran, Leyte Island, where landless tenant farmers persist with livelihood bricolage through swidden and agroforestry that is *nested within* intensively farmed copra landscapes. In both cases, we explore how such green governance interventions engender socio-ecological uniformity and vulnerability, as well as pathways for the production and accumulation of capital beyond local control. We argue that such governance must invest in rather than constrain those spaces that have long offered the rural poor diverse livelihood alternatives.

2. Methods

Data for this paper were derived from qualitative and quantitative methods spanning 2009–2013 in central Palawan and Leyte Island, the Philippines. In Palawan, between 2010 and 2012, Dressler conducted key informant interviews, oral histories, participant observation, and a livelihood survey amongst Batak (and Tagbanua) farmers in Kayasan and Cabayugan, Puerto Princesa City, central Palawan. Each farmer group relied on diversified upland swidden systems to a greater and lesser extent, with Batak livelihoods being very agro-ecologically diverse and Tagbanua being more integrated with mixed crop, market-oriented production. Dressler completed a purposive sample of 20 questionnaires (10 of which are Batak households, presented in Table 1) and 40 semi-structured interviews involving upland farmers, park rangers, and NGOs using and managing the forests of the Puerto Princesa Subterranean River National Park (PPSRNP).

In Leyte, in 2012–13, Dressler and Firn conducted key informant interviews and a livelihood questionnaire among smallholders in the Barangay of Caibibihan, Biliran Island. They completed a purposive sample of 40 semi-structured interviews and 20 questionnaires with local farmers, leaders and government officials. While these Christian lowland farmers were more integrated into the local agrarian economy than on Palawan, many were sharecrop tenants and occupants without secure tenure and limited capital. In each area, the various species used in different landscape types are listed in Tables 1 and 2; the table data come from our questionnaires and published data sets (see Novellino, 2008). We explore how local users' livelihoods engage the listed species across landscape types and how these strategies are affected by interventions that intensify livelihoods through market-oriented production.

3. Rethinking the green economy in practice: Livelihood bricolage and land sharing

Since the 1980s, global environmental concerns have been incorporated into international governance agendas and policies as 'sustainable development' or more precisely, 'green developmentalism' (Adams, 1990; McAfee, 1999). In the last decade, however, environmental governance policies and interventions have been reframed as a much more systemic, overarching regime known as the 'green economy', where market logics, mechanisms and technologies value and commodify nature to conserve it (Igoe and Brockington, 2007; Büscher et al., 2012; Corson et al., 2013).[2] Recent global environmental meetings such as Rio+ 20 reinforced the role of the green economy in the context of green growth and poverty reduction; other organizations during the recent World Conservation Congress heralded the integration of 'markets and nature' as central to conservation planning (Wilshusen, 2014, pp. 127–128); and new institutional alliances between NGOs, multilaterals and foundations espoused reconciling nature with stocks of finance (Sullivan, 2014). Across scale, green governance logic further influences how governments manage people and landscapes in line with market-based financing, performance-based incentives and conditionalities (Dressler, 2014).

In varied partnerships, the state, private sector, and civil society drive large programs and interventions that assign market value to nature's attributes and processes, which, supposedly, can be reinvested in and maintained under appropriate pricing and conditions—the basis of 'natural capital' (Sullivan, 2009, 2013). In this

[2] We conceptualize the green economy in broad terms as one of the more recent governance complexes and discourses emerging from histories of converging policies and programs in conservation and development, many of which extended from the political economic realm of government and extractive industries, among other private sector actors.