



Linking outputs and outcomes from devolved forest governance using a Modified Actor-Power-Accountability Framework (MAPAF): Case study from Chilimo forest, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

Recent changes in the policy and institutional framework for forestry of Ethiopia emphasize the decentralization of power including through devolution. With the aim of filling the gap in the literature on Ethiopia, this study explored the actors involved, the nature of power they hold, the accountability relationships among actors and the social and environmental outcomes of the devolved governance system using a Modified Actor-Power-Accountability Framework (MAPAF). The results indicated that discretionary decision-making space is created for the local population and the leaders of Forest Cooperatives to manage and protect the forest and use it for subsistence purposes. To generate income from their withdrawal rights, however, local actors require approval from a mid-level actor, the Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprise. Devolution has improved physical and human conditions and the benefits from natural capital, which were identified as salient for the local population as a means of coping with their vulnerabilities and for income generation. The environmental outcome differed depending on the policy followed by the mid-level partner organizations that make decisions with the local population on income-generating activities from the sale of forest resources. Overall, elite capture and the recent emphasis on income generation over forest conservation were identified as key factors hampering positive social and environmental outcomes from the devolved governance system.

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1. Introduction

Recent changes in the policy and institutional framework for forestry management in Ethiopia emphasize the devolution of forest management by empowering local populations to combat deforestation. Both the 1994 Forest Conservation, Development and Utilization Proclamation and the most recent 2007 Forest Conservation, Development and Utilization Proclamation have given space for local populations to participate in forest governance. In addition, devolved forest governance is very well-suited to Ethiopia's decentralization and rural development strategies that mandate the participation and empowerment of rural communities in forest resource management (Thomas and Bekele, 2003).

In line with such federal level provisions, more than 211,076 ha of forest located in three regional states of Ethiopia are under devolved forest governance as of 2010 (Winberg, 2010). The formal recognition of such devolution of forest governance, however, is only done in Oromia regional state. The region, through Oromia Forest Proclamation No 72/2003 that was endorsed by the regional council in 2003,

recognized three types of ownership including community forests. In addition, it encourages the participation of local communities living within and adjacent to state forest priority areas in conservation, development and the proper use of state forests.

The implementation of this devolved forest governance has been undertaken by non-State actors, i.e., NGOs and donor agencies notably by FARM Africa, SOS Sahel, GTZ and JICA (Gobeze et al., 2009). One of these initiatives is Chilimo participatory forest management (PFM) project, which was implemented from 1996 to 2007 by Farm Africa. The aim of the project was to democratize forest governance, improve the condition of the forest and contribute to the betterment of the local population (Mohammed and Inoue, 2012a). Although the school of resource governance presumes that democratization will lead to positive social and ecological outcomes, studies linking the extent of empowerment with social and environmental outcomes are rare in the literature on natural resource governance and local development (Andersson and Gibson, 2006; Pérez-Ciera and Lovett, 2006; Coleman and Fleischman, 2011). In the case of Ethiopia, previous works only emphasized on either property rights issues (Bekele, 2003), characterizing livelihoods of forest dependent local populations (Tesfaye et al., 2011), conducting scenario studies (Habtariam et al., 2009) or, exploring the dynamics of decentralized forest policy (Mohammed and Inoue, 2013) etc. The aim of this study is to fill the aforementioned gap in the literature by

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addressing the following two objectives. The first is to investigate extent of democratization achieved. The second is to link the extent of democratization achieved by the devolved forest governance policy with social and environmental outcomes at the local level using a Modified Actor-Power-Accountability Framework (MAPAF). The next section, [Section 2](#), discusses MAPAF and its elements in detail. [Section 3](#) contains the study site description as well as data collection and analysis methods. The results and discussion are reported in [Section 4](#) before conclusions and policy implications which are presented in [Section 5](#).

2. A Modified Actor-Power-Accountability Framework (MAPAF)

Devolution generally refers to the transfer of a broader set of decision making powers, including the transfer of authority to community organizations ([Agrawal and Gupta, 2005](#); [Larson and Soto, 2008](#)), local elected or appointed leaders ([Oyono, 2004](#); [Tacconi, 2007](#)) or communities ([Larson and Soto, 2008](#)). The three fundamental elements of devolved forest governance that underlie all acts of devolution are the actors involved, the types of decision making powers the actors have and the power actors have to control decision makers, i.e. accountability relationships among actors ([Agrawal and Ribot, 1999](#); [Pérez-Ciera and Lovett, 2006](#); [Schusser, 2012](#)). The Actor-Power-Accountability Framework (APAF), encompassing these three vital dimensions of devolution, has been the most influential framework in the area of devolved natural resource governance ([Coleman and Fleischman, 2011](#)).

Although APAF has been a potent tool for analyzing the extent of democratization, it was found to need improvement in two identified areas to make it a better tool for analyzing devolved forest governance. These areas are the inclusion of property right issues in power analysis ([Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001](#); [Larson and Soto, 2008](#)) and the accommodation of social and environmental outcomes in the framework ([Andersson and Gibson, 2006](#); [Coleman and Fleischman, 2011](#)). Decision making power on property rights is the major vehicle by which power is transferred among actors in devolved forest governance reforms ([Acheson, 2006](#)). Nonetheless, the APAF failed to sufficiently address property right issues ([Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001](#); [Larson and Soto, 2008](#)). In addition, devolved forest governance is undertaken mainly to achieve positive social and environmental outcomes which were not within the scope of APAF ([Pérez-Ciera and Lovett, 2006](#); [Larson and Soto, 2008](#); [Maryudi et al., 2012](#); [Schusser, 2012](#)). Therefore, a Modified Actor-Power-Accountability Framework (MAPAF) that attuned for the aforementioned drawbacks is developed by adding property rights to the analysis of type of devolved power and by broadening APAF's scope of analysis to include social and environmental outcomes ([Fig. 1](#)). The remainder of the section explains different components of the MAPAF.

Since devolution aims at transfer of power among actors, bringing new actors into power in the process, identification of the actors and their power (actor-centered power) is imperative. The actor that acts or take part in formulation and/or implementation of devolution policy ([Krott et al., 2013](#)) can be citizens/the grassroots, policymakers (politicians, lawmakers, regulators), or organizations and frontier providers (government ministries, private sector entities, cooperatives, foresters, extension workers, development agents, and others) ([Devarajan et al., 2007](#); [Yilmaz et al., 2010](#)). Each of these actors typically has certain types of powers and particular accountability relationships ([Agrawal and Ribot, 1999](#)).

The salient power, a vehicle through which actor/s (potentate) influence the behavior of another actor (subordinate) among the aforementioned actors to attain certain outcome they desire from the devolved forest governance system ([Krott et al., 2013](#)), is via decision making power on different bundles of property rights ([Acheson, 2006](#)). Particularly, ability of the potentate to influence the behaviors of the subordinate with respect to managing the forest,

withdrawing resource from the forest as well as exclusion of others from such rights on the forest have been identified to be key with respect to defining the empowered actor/s ([Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001](#)). Such authorization is commonly prescribed by formal and/or informal rules ([Schlager and Ostrom, 1992](#)). Consequently, decision-making powers on property rights can be further unpacked into the power to create new rules or modify old ones, the power to implement the rules, and the power to ensure compliance with the rules ([Agrawal and Ribot, 1999](#)). One departure of our framework from that of the recent Actor-Centered Power framework developed by [Krott et al., 2013](#) is that it is through these authorities of creating and/or modifying and/or implementing and/or adjudication of rules on property right that the potentate influences the behavior of the subordinate.

Properly designed devolved forest governance, however, will enable the subordinate control the influence of the potentate via different forms of accountability mechanisms. This is another departure from [Krott et al., 2013](#) assumption on potentate-subordinate power relation in which the subordinate subjugate to the demand of the potentate when the latter try to influence the former. In fact, accountability is a principal element of devolution that ensures good governance ([Ackerman, 2004](#); [Agrawal et al., 2008](#)). Accountability comprises a set of mechanisms that can ensure that policy outcomes are consistent with actors' needs and aspirations ([Ribot, 2004](#)). This mechanism can be either vertical, resulting in downward or upward accountability, or horizontal, in which the power holder needs to report to other, same-level officials and agencies ([Ackerman, 2004](#); [Agrawal et al., 2008](#)). Whether vertical or horizontal, all modes of accountability are relational. To understand the nature of accountability, therefore, it is necessary to examine the actors among whom accountability relationships exist ([Agrawal and Ribot, 1999](#)).

At the center of the argument in favor of such reshuffling in actor, their power as well as accountability relation in devolved natural resource governance is the potential to democratize the forest the natural resource governance regime ([Larson, 2005](#)). Democratization, the transfer of meaningful discretionary decision-making power regarding the management and use of natural resources to either local communities ([Deweese et al., 2010](#)) or to lower-tier governments that are accountable to the populace ([Agrawal and Ribot, 1999](#); [Ribot, 2002](#)), is expected to contribute to good forest governance ([Agrawal and Ribot, 1999](#)) through more effective local investments and management and ultimately resulting in more socially and environmentally sustainable forest governance ([Ribot, 2002](#); [Maryudi et al., 2012](#)).

The important social outcomes, particularly in developing countries, are mainly related to poverty alleviation and improved local livelihoods ([Pérez-Ciera and Lovett, 2006](#); [Larson and Soto, 2008](#); [Maryudi et al., 2012](#); [Schusser, 2012](#)). Good forest governance can improve local people's livelihoods and alleviate poverty by serving as a safety net in vulnerable periods and improving the wellbeing of households by generating income ([Pattanayak and Sills, 2001](#)). Vulnerability contexts, including natural shocks, agricultural shocks, health shocks, economic shocks, and trends in employment opportunities and food availability, are trends or shocks over which local populations have limited or no control but nevertheless affect their livelihoods and the wider availability of assets ([Adger, 2006](#)). Assets that rural households can use as a means to cope with such shocks and improve their wellbeing include natural, human, physical, financial or social capital ([Scoones, 1998](#)). Natural capital refers to natural resource stocks, including forests, soil, and water, while financial capital refers to monetary capital bases such as income, credit, and savings. Skills, knowledge, and the ability to work are examples of human capital. Physical capital includes productive assets held by the household such as land, tools, and livestock ([Scoones, 1998](#); [Sherbinin et al., 2008](#)). Social capital includes networks, social claims, social relationships, affiliations, and associations from which individuals draw when pursuing different

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