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Book Review

Donoghue, E.M. and V.E. Sturtevant (eds.) 2008. *Forest Community Connections: Implications for Research, Management, and Governance*. Washington, DC: RFF Press.

Reviewed by Eric A. Coleman, Department of Political Science, Florida State University.

This is an edited volume which describes ways in which U.S. communities interact with forests, and how these interactions are effected by broader social forces and national policies. Contributions to the book come from a variety of disciplines whose authors are both from within and outside of the academy. In Part I a number of relevant sociological research methods are reviewed. Part II explores the roles communities have taken in different substantive areas of forest management, from wildfire to forest restoration. Part III examines the various institutional arrangements used by those involved in community forestry. Parts I and III are most closely related to issues of the commons, while Part II gives thorough details of an increasingly collaborative forest policy in the United States.

As a point of departure, I will note the important insight given in Chapter 2 by Sturtevant and Donoghue: “large scale social assessments [...] have not, for the most part, been able to address causal links between forest policy and community change.” This is perhaps the greatest challenge to those studying community-based forestry and the commons in general. Given the plethora of confounding variables that can potentially explain community change on the commons (Ostrom 2007), how does one isolate the effects of particular policies or institutions? The authors go on to argue that including community members and managers in the research process, narrowing research questions, and looking at the effects of policy over time will allow researchers to better understand and unpack the effects of forest policy. In the following chapters, contributors outline strategies to measure community change (Chapter 3) and engaging communities through participatory research (Chapter 4). While these methods are important contributions to the field, I was disappointed to read nothing of experimental and quasi-experimental

research designs given the fundamental problem of ascribing causality. Still, these chapters provide a nice introduction to the methods mentioned and provide details from the authors' personal experiences with their application and shortcomings.

Part III will be of most interest to readers of *IJC*. In it, specific forms of governance are easily tied to existing theories of the commons, even if these theories are not explicitly stated. Chapter 10 is a particularly good chapter. In it Cecilia Danks has two important contributions. First, she makes an important distinction in the typology of the organizations involved in community-based forestry (as distinguished from the multitude of community groups that may be involved in forestry which tends to be the emphasis of Part II). Next, she identifies key roles that community-based forestry may take, bridging policymakers, catalyzing broader policy change, and providing services. My general feel is that there is a growing literature categorizing services provided by community-based forestry groups, but little research on their role in bridging policymakers and catalyzing for change, and this is perhaps an important, yet overlooked area of research for those studying the commons.

In Chapter 11, special attention is brought to family forestry, and I believe more theoretical work ought to distinguish between familial forest relations versus other types of community-based forestry groups and explore how this might translate to differences in forest outcomes. In Chapter 12 a typology of community-based forestry is advanced. The author explores the characteristics of each of the types (indigenous, town or municipal, community-based conservation organization). This typology may prove quite useful, but the theoretical importance of the distinctions remain unclear. Evidence from the developing world now suggests that community-based forests are not more sustainable than private or government forests (Ostrom and Nagendra 2006; Coleman 2009), but there may be variation among the types of community-based forests. Unfortunately, there is no compelling theoretical reason to believe which types of community-based forests would be most successful.

This volume is suitable as a supplementary text in an advanced undergraduate or graduate courses in natural resource management, rural sociology, or environmental anthropology. It is an applied text and gives a broad overview with some specific applications to community forestry in the United States.

Literature cited

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