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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

Department of Urban and Rural Development

Conservation for carbon or communities?

Swedish carbon purchases through forest plantations in Uganda

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Front cover pictures: Rows of pine in Kachung plantation. Photo: Flora Hajdu.
Woman carrying firewood. Photo: Filippa Giertta.

Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Division of Rural Development
P.O. Box 7012 SE-750 07 Uppsala Sweden

Visiting address: Ulls väg 27
Telephone: +46 18 67 21 62 / 67 17 71
E-mail: flora.hajdu@slu.se / klara.fischer@slu.se
Project website: www.slu.se/carbon

THE KACHUNG PLANTATION is a large pine and eucalyptus plantation in Uganda operated by the Norwegian company Green Resources (GR). Since 2012, it has been certified through the UN's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) under the project name '*Kachung Forest Project: Afforestation on Degraded Lands*'. The Swedish Energy Agency (SEA) purchases the emissions reductions generated by the plantation, which count towards Sweden's emissions reduction commitment under the Kyoto protocol. The plantation is also certified under the Climate Community Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

IT IS OF RELEVANCE to draw lessons from forestry projects under CDM for the growing sector of carbon forestry. Although forests are marginal in CDM, which mainly focuses on the transfer of technology, this is currently the most widely applied scheme for global cooperation to mitigate climate change.

THE RESEARCH PROJECT '*Conservation for carbon or communities? Swedish carbon purchases through forest plantations in Uganda*' was funded by the Swedish Research Council 2013-2016. It analysed how the goal of 'local sustainable development', which in theory should weigh equally with the goal of greenhouse gas emissions reductions in all CDM projects, has been negotiated and implemented in Kachung, and how general ideas of the land as 'degraded' have influenced the interpretation of the land use situation and of the local 'sustainable development' effects of the plantation.

THIS FINAL REPORT of the research project summarises the key findings and highlights recommendations for stakeholders and policy makers. The academic publications within the project and Master's theses connected to the project are also summarised.

IN THE SWEDISH PUBLIC DEBATE, the Kachung Forest Project has been the focus of media attention through a documentary and several opinion pieces published in a major Swedish newspaper and in various internet forums. The researchers involved in this project and other researchers who have studied the Kachung plantation contributed to this public debate, a summary of which is provided at the end of the present report.

The nursery for tree seedlings gives some local jobs. Photo: Flora Hajdu.

Houses in one of the villages surrounding Kachung plantation. Photo: Lovisa Neikter.

Summary

THIS RESEARCH PROJECT examined how the goal of 'local sustainable development' in practice was weighed against the goal of greenhouse gas emissions reductions in Kachung Forest Project. While the UN's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) provides detailed instructions and standards for controlling the carbon emissions reductions generated by a CDM project, the meaning of 'sustainable development' is not defined at UN level. This leaves room for sustainable development and potential activities contributing to this goal to be defined in many different ways.

THE CDM PROJECT PLAN prepared by Green Resources described the forest reserve in which the Kachung plantation is located as heavily degraded and related this to local people's overuse of resources and cultivation in the forest. By casting local people as responsible for forest degradation, the project plan implied that just planting trees in the plantation would contribute directly to local sustainable development. However, research on previous forest conservation projects in Africa shows that forest degradation is often assumed and attributed to local practices without empirical proof, with negative outcomes for local people. The body of literature analysing such past projects and their claims about degradation refer to these practices as creating an "African degradation narrative", whereby degradation is frequently claimed without being thoroughly empirically investigated or proven. Through the specific case study on the Kachung plantation, the present research project analysed the extent to which the current CDM regulations for afforestation and reforestation take into account this existing knowledge.

OUR INVESTIGATIONS into the degradation claims made in Kachung showed that these were based on weak empirical evidence and were used to create a win-win narrative where the plantation itself was presented as contributing both to 'sustainable development' and carbon emission reductions. 'Sustainable development' in essence came to mean 'reducing degradation' in this case. It is problematic that the actor responsible for investigating degradation was the company proposing the plantation, since that company stood to gain from proving degradation. We concluded that the CDM process currently provides no safeguards against the use of sweeping degradation narratives and that, in practice, there is a serious risk of 'local sustainable development' not weighing equally with the aim of emissions reductions in forest carbon projects.

Key points

- CDM projects should contribute equally to global greenhouse gas emissions reductions and local sustainable development. As in the Kachung case, other research has found that local sustainable development initiatives seldom lead to the expected positive livelihood outcomes for people living close to investments.
- In the Kachung case, the urgency of mitigating climate change coupled with sweeping statements about the urgency of reducing 'degradation' at global policy level led to a situation where tensions between meeting global goals and local people's livelihood concerns were not sufficiently acknowledged or taken seriously.
- Halting deforestation and degradation is often used as a key justification for carbon forestry projects, while actual deforestation in the particular locations earmarked for carbon forestry is seldom thoroughly researched.
- The sweeping statements about degradation made in contemporary climate change mitigation initiatives much resemble statements in the past about African land use, where Western researchers failed to understand local land use patterns and made faulty interpretations of the land being degraded by local practices. These kinds of sweeping statements on degradation have been criticised in the literature on 'degradation narratives' since the 1990s.
- There is a lack of knowledge in the global community on past research and critique of degradation narratives in Africa. As a result, degradation narratives with a weak empirical basis are again strongly influencing land investments in Africa, now as part of global climate change mitigation.
- There seems to be a general lack of competence in current carbon forestry initiatives regarding recent advances in research on poverty and development, with many lessons learnt being ignored.

Woman fetching water from a well restored by Green Resources and energy efficient stove. Photo: Flora Hajdu.

The company has invested in several development- and poverty alleviation activities in the villages. Our research shows that while many people appreciate activities that they have benefited from, these do not reach all. Especially the poorest individuals and households are not reached by interventions. In addition, from the perspectives of those reached by the activities, these have so far not sufficiently compensated for the loss of agricultural and grazing land in the plantation.

Recommendations for policy

In order for climate forestry investments to avoid the mistakes made in the Kachung case, we recommend that future projects:

- Aim for honest and transparent dialogue about the gains and losses of investments, rather than trying to package an investment as a win-win for all concerned, a practice that usually hides problems and favours strong actors.
- Question sweeping use of 'degradation', 'sustainable development' and 'win-win'.
- Ensure that knowledge of previous research and critique of degradation narratives influence investment decisions. This could be done with the aid of the analytical framework presented by Hajdu et al. (2016) (see list of academic publications).
- Include people with competence in research on poverty and development when planning projects and developing CDM guidelines.
- Ensure a process for (rather than a specific definition of) sustainable development that includes the perspectives of the local people affected. The reason for suggesting a process, rather than one agreed definition of sustainable development at global level, is that pinning down a specific and general definition again risks ignoring local voices in specific investments.
- Follow up sustainable development commitments in the CDM process.

Plantation next to village land- Photo: Filippa Giertta.

Academic publications

Publications list from the project

Fischer, K., Giertta, F., & Hajdu, F. 2019. Carbon-binding biomass or a diversity of useful trees? (Counter) topographies of carbon forestry in Uganda. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space.* 2 (1) 178-199. DOI: 10.1177/2514848618823598

Fischer, K. & Hajdu, F. 2018. The importance of the will to improve: how 'sustainability' sidelined local livelihoods in a carbon-forestry investment in Uganda. *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning.* 20 (3) 328-341. DOI: 10.1080/1523908X.2017.1410429

Hajdu, F. & Fischer, K. 2017 Problems, causes and solutions in the forest carbon discourse: A framework for analysing degradation narratives. *Climate and Development. 9 (6)* 537-547 DOI:10.1080/17565529.2016.1174663

Hajdu, F., Fischer, K. & Penje, O. 2016 Questioning the use of 'degradation' in climate mitigation: A case study of a forest carbon CDM project in Uganda. *Land Use Policy*. 59 (31) 412–422. Available Open Access. DOI: 10.1016/j.landusepol.2016.09.016

Fischer, K., Hajdu, F. & Cavallin Giertta, F. 2016 Commentary on the paper by Lyons and Westoby "Carbon colonialism and the new land grab: Plantation forestry in Uganda and its livelihood impacts", *Journal of Rural Studies.* (47) 267-268. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2016.06.014

Abstracts of the publications

Carbon-binding biomass or a diversity of useful trees? (Counter) topographies of carbon forestry in Uganda

Klara Fischer, Filippa Giertta and Flora Hajdu, 2019. Published in *Environment and Planning E*

Tree plantations in low-income countries are emerging as central tools for global climate change mitigation. However, there is growing evidence that focusing on the carbon-binding aspect of trees in such forests often oversimplifies political ecologies and constrains local livelihoods. One reason is a strong reliance on land use maps, leading to monodimensional and disconnected views of landscapes. This study examines one such climate forest, Kachung plantation in Uganda, run by the company Green Resources on land leased from the Ugandan state through its National Forest Authority. The carbon emission reductions are purchased by the Swedish Energy Agency. Drawing on the Katz conceptualisation of countertopographies, we present a 'situated topography' of Kachung based on the experiences of local women. In contrast to the 'distant topography' produced by the actors investing in the project, it reveals a dynamic landscape where women know and use a diversity of local trees and have well established strategies for regeneration. However, their access to useful trees and farmland is constrained by the plantation, resulting in increased livelihood struggles. In line with Katz, we suggest that producing similar situated topographies for other climate forests can help create strong countertopographies, displaying more diverse, connected and dynamic uses of landscapes than seen from a distance.

The importance of the will to improve: how 'sustainability' sidelined local livelihoods in a carbon-forestry investment in Uganda.

Klara Fischer and Flora Hajdu, 2018. Published in *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning.*

This paper describes a 'win–win' discourse on local sustainable development and global climate change mitigation regarding Kachung, a Swedish–Norwegian climate forestry investment in Uganda certified under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). In many ways, this investment is a typical example of how private interests and capital accumulation are prioritised over local concerns in natural resource management under neoliberalism. This study, however, indicated that investors had genuine intentions of creating mutual benefits for the global environment and local people. Drawing on Li (2007), we show that this 'will to improve' was nevertheless constructed in ways that resulted in prioritisation of global climate change mitigation over local context-specific concerns.

We identify three core factors making the win–win discourse around Kachung plantation especially resilient: (i) the perceived urgency of climate change mitigation, (ii) the apolitical framing of 'sustainability' as an environmental issue that can be fixed through external technical interventions and (iii) the devaluation of local and context-specific knowledge. We end by suggesting that research on the neoliberalisation of nature focus more on analysing the rationales behind specific interventions. This would leave us better equipped to suggest how such interventions should be modified to produce true wins for local contexts.

Problems, causes and solutions in the forest carbon discourse: A framework for analysing degradation narratives

Flora Hajdu and Klara Fischer, 2017. Published in *Climate and Development.*

The term 'degradation' is often used in the current discourse on carbon forestry. Tree planting projects with the primary aim of mitigating climate change frequently claim that they simultaneously reduce degradation. However, despite the centrality of 'degradation' in the forest carbon discourse, reference is rarely made to the significant body of literature that has been questioning generalisations about degradation in Africa since the mid-1990s. Many authors have since exposed biases and problematic underlying motives with degradation claims in various African locations. Drawing on this literature combined with discourse analysis, we developed a framework for analysing degradation narratives in order to explore the extent to which these are evidence- or opinion-based. Acknowledging that environmental change is complex, and increasingly so today in the face of climate change, we stress that narratives cannot be pinned down as 'true or false'. However, unconfirmed 'truths' about degradation being acute have resulted in significant, costly and far-reaching actions to halt it. Thus there is a need to examine the empirical evidence to the best of current knowledge. Our framework, which is designed to be easily applicable for practitioners, could facilitate increased engagement and scrutiny of degradation claims in forest carbon interventions.

Questioning the use of 'degradation' in climate mitigation: A case study of a forest carbon CDM project in Uganda. Framework

Flora Hajdu, Klara Fischer and Oskar Penje, 2016. Published in *Land Use Policy*.

An urgent need to stop degradation is frequently cited as justification for climate mitigation efforts involving forests. However, lessons learnt within social science research on degradation narratives are not taken into consideration. This creates a risk of problematic degradation narratives being used to legitimise forest carbon projects. This study examined a Clean

Development Mechanism (CDM) forest plantation in Uganda, where incomplete and partly contradictory evidence on land use change was interpreted in a way that overemphasised degradation. This interpretation was in line with the interests of the forestry company proposing the CDM activity and with national interests in Uganda, and was stimulated by CDM guidelines and regulations. Our investigation revealed a more complex picture of land cover change in the area that did not support the narrative of an area undergoing continuous degradation. We therefore recommend close scrutiny of the degradation narrative presented in every type of forest carbon project.

Commentary on Lyons and Westoby "Carbon colonialism and the new land grab: Plantation forestry in Uganda and its livelihood impacts".

Klara Fischer, Flora Hajdu and Filippa Kavallin Giertta, 2016. Published in *Journal of Rural Studies.*

In an article published in the Journal of Rural Studies ((2014), 36: 13-21), researchers Kristen Lyons and Peter Westoby criticised the activities of the Green Resources company in two pine and eucalyptus plantations in Uganda, Kachung and Bukaleba, which they argue have destroyed people's livelihoods around the plantations. In our comment on that publication, we point out that some of the findings from our research project about Kachung contradict claims made by Lyons and Westoby about events in Kachung. We also criticise the lack of clarity in their article about what has actually happened in Bukaleba and Kachung and stress the importance of being precise when making criticisms. We also argue that the negative outcomes of the plantation activities in Kachung, rather than being presented solely as the outcome of bad intentions from the company, could be used to illustrate the more general difficulties in creating 'win-win' outcomes for local livelihoods and global carbon emission reductions, even with the most sincere intentions.

Kachung plantation. Photo: Filippa Giertta.

Master's theses connected to the project

During the course of the project, Flora Hajdu and Klara Fischer supervised five Master's students at SLU and Uppsala University, who travelled to Kachung plantation in Uganda for fieldwork and wrote about various aspects of the plantation and related development projects in small independent research projects. In this report we provide the abstracts of their Master's theses, which can be accessed in full at the SLU/UU portals for student theses. The link for each thesis is provided under the abstract.

What are trees for? An ethnographic study of local firewood practices in Uganda in the context of deforestation and climate change discourses

Filippa Kavallin Giertta

Abstract

Interventions and schemes are being introduced all over the world to stop deforestation and reduce climate change. These interventions, on all levels of scale, follow a dominant global discourse based on a human-environment dichotomy and neo-Malthusian logic, and are driven by narratives of degradation by the local population and linear environmental change. These discourses and narratives can be found in the case of Uganda and have had a considerable impact on e.g. the village of Teamon. The main intervention in Teamon is a pine and eucalyptus plantation bordering the village. It is owned by a Norwegian company and is an afforestation project under the Kyoto protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) from which Sweden buys greenhouse gas emissions reductions. Other activities include the introduction of energy-saving stoves, seedling distribution and education. Ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in May and June 2015 showed that the reality in Teamon is not how the body of environmental actors portray it. Local practices concerning tree resource usage in general, and firewood in particular, are actually dynamic and do not follow a simple linear pattern of consumption and population variation. Instead, they follow political, social and personal processes, as well as natural changes. Moreover, sustainability is embedded in the firewood practices of Teamon women, following logics of reducing their workload and concern for the future. There is a discrepancy between the perceptions of nature in dominant environmental discourses and at a local level. Different levels of scale are key to how nature is perceived. While agendas on a global scale are concerned with general tree coverage, the women of Teamon care

Tree providing shade in a garden, Kachung, 2015, Photo: Filippa Giertta.

about their direct proximity. From a global perspective, the value of trees lies in their function as a carbon sink, while in Teamon their value lies in their local usefulness. However, these differences in perceptions of trees and nature are not neutral. As this study shows, the global perspective and agenda dominate the activities taking place in Teamon, affecting the lives of local women. Local women can benefit from the discourses on deforestation and climate change, as in the case of energy-saving stoves and seedlings, but the plantation does not inherently serve local people. Instead, it serves agendas on the global level that actually conflict with women's firewood needs.

Thesis in full: http://stud.epsilon.slu.se/9044/1/giertta_f_160519.pdf

You are a widow and you will die, so why should you plant trees? Intersectionality in local development activities in connection with a carbon forestry plantation in Kachung, Uganda.

Lovisa Neikter

Abstract

Carbon forestry plantations are a way to achieve statutory global emissions reductions and are also claimed to decrease deforestation. The Kachung afforestation project in northern Uganda, which is owned by a Norwegian company, has affected neighbouring villages in different ways. The plantation is part of a local context occupied by different individuals belonging to different social categories. In the villages, various local activities are arranged by the plantation company, many in connection with tree resources, such as seedling distribution to the communities. The goal is poverty reduction in the area, but the stakeholders intended to benefit from these activities are not clearly defined. Through ethnographic fieldwork carried out January-March 2016, this study examined exclusion or inclusion of villagers in the seedling distribution system. Using a participatory approach, villagers themselves articulated the social categories existing in the village. The social categories investigated were poverty and gender, which are commonly studied in the world of development policies. The theoretical concept of intersectionality was used to analyse villagers' experiences of belonging to different social categories; how these categories differed and sometimes contradicted how individuals positioned themselves; and events at the intersections between social categories.

The results showed that gender and poverty are not homogeneous social categories, but that each contains different individuals with differing backgrounds and needs. Scrutiny of how the social categories intersected with each other in the study area indicated groups, e.g. women and the poor, which were more or less excluded from the process of seedling distribution. The intersectionality approach revealed that some individual women and poor villagers were even more excluded from seedling distribution than others within those groups. When organising local development activities in villages around carbon forestry plantation, it is thus important to analyse the different social categories in the village, since a single, inflexible approach risks excluding those who really need support.

Thesis in full: http://stud.epsilon.slu.se/9688/

Carbon forestry and local livelihoods - A case study on poverty in Uganda

Tove Ellingsen

Abstract

Green Resources is one of the largest companies engaged in carbon forestry on the African continent. The Green Resources carbon forestry plantation in northern Uganda is a particularly interesting case in a Swedish perspective, because the Swedish Energy Agency is committed to buying its carbon emissions reductions within a clean development mechanism (CDM) project under the Kyoto protocol. This thesis examined how wealth is perceived and experienced by the villagers in the area surrounding the Green Resources plantation, and how different wealth groups perceive and have been affected by Green Resources interventions associated with the plantation. The analysis was performed using the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA), which presents the main factors that affect people's livelihoods and typical relationships between these. A qualitative approach was used, based on face-to-face interviews, focus group interviews, observations, wealth ranking, community mapping and a review of the literature. The thesis also examined whether the capitals concept from SLA can be applied to explain the livelihood effects of the plantation. The forms of capital considered were human, financial, natural, social and physical capital. Within these, there are different assets to which people have varying degrees of access, depending on the wealth group to which they belong.

The findings revealed exclusion of the poorest from development activities in villages neighbouring the Green Resources plantation. A key reason found for this was that Green Resources operate without taking into consideration the different wealth groups among the villagers, and without a strategy for how it could reach out to the poorest regarding its commitment to poverty alleviation.

Thesis in full: https://stud.epsilon.slu.se/10618/7/ellingsen_t_170818.pdf

The History and Discourse of the Kachung Forest Project

Ghide Habtetsion Gebremichael

Abstract

Kachung Forest Project lies within Kachung Central Forest Reserve, which was designated a forest reserve in 1939 by the former colonial government. Various public and private actors have since governed the reserve, including the Uganda Forest Department, the Norwegian Agency for Development and Cooperation (NORAD), the Norwegian Afforestation Group (NAG) and currently the Green Resources Company (GRAS). However, the first significant change in land use came in 2006, when GRAS started large-scale planting of pine and eucalyptus. In 2012, GRAS certified the plantation as a CDM af/reforestation project. Since then, people living in and around the forest have largely had to stop using the forest resources as part of their livelihoods. Their resistance and resentment has been expressed by encroachment, setting fire to the forest and showing anger to the company. One argument for establishing the plantation cited by GRAS in its CDM documentation was that the area had been subjected to a negative process of deforestation due to local land use practices. However, this description failed to adequately acknowledge the land use history in the region, including its value for local communities.

This study examined the history and discourse of the forest based on empirical data collected through interviews, archival forest records, aerial photographs and maps (assisted by GIS). Actor network theory was applied to see how the actors connected and their role in shaping the landscape. The status of Kachung forest at the onset of the GRAS plantation, the signs of degradation reported and the evidence for these, and the way in which the discourse on Kachung forest was shaped by the broader environmental discourse in east Africa were examined.

The findings revealed that the actors currently engaged in establishing plantation forestry in Kachung are doing so with little knowledge of the human and land history of the forest area. In most cases, their activities replicate the ambition of the former colonial government. The empirical data showed that the area maintained its savannah woodland and tropical high forest until 1996, after which the vegetation and land use system changed through encroachment caused by lack of land among local communities for hunting, grazing, cultivation, cultural activities and access to water. This suggests that the best way of enhancing afforestation is through prior knowledge of the human and land history and consulting local communities. Empowering the local community in environmental conservation practices is also a way of tackling the wider environmental crisis.

Thesis in full: http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1083920/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Adoption and sustained use of energy efficient stoves in Rural Uganda.

Julia Hoigt

Abstract

In 2011, Energy saving (mud) stoves were introduced in villages around the Kachung Forest plantation in rural Uganda as part of an effort to support local sustainable development. Initial fieldwork showed that the stoves had not been adopted as much as the apparent benefits would suggest. This has been a common issue with improved cooking stove projects around the world. In order to find out why the stoves are not adopted, 67 women in charge of the cooking were interviewed additionally participant observations of cooking, other daily work routines and building stoves conducted, as well as interviews with other relevant stakeholders. Results show that women struggle to find enough firewood and are bothered by the smoke produced when cooking, which makes them generally very interested in improved mud stoves. Indeed many women had adopted a local version of the mud stove in order to ease the burden of firewood collection. The reason for not adopting a mud stove in general can be mainly attributed to work burden in constructing it. As for the more sophisticated energy saving mud stoves introduced, additional factors were that the implementation strategy shows weaknesses in how the knowledge on how to build the stove is supposed to spread. Further, the stove introduced is rather complex in the way it is supposed to be built, which makes it difficult to spread the knowledge of how to build it. The implementation strategy needs to be revised under consideration of the local circumstances in order to achieve a higher adoption rate.

Thesis in full: http://uu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1300564/FULLTEXT02.pdf

Public debate in Sweden

The Kachung plantation has been the subject of public debate in Sweden since 2015. The researchers involved in this project contributed to this debate through a response to an opinion piece published in November 2015. Among the academic publications listed above is a comment on an article published by Lyons and Westoby in 2014. This comment is published in an academic journal, but is an opinion piece that highlights differences in opinion between researchers who have studied the Kachung plantation. This debate spilled over into the public debate in Sweden through opinion pieces in Swedish published in *Svenska dagbladet*, one of the major daily newspapers in Sweden. Both sides of the academic debate have been visible in the Swedish debate. The media coverage and public debate that the Kachung plantation has caused is summarised below (in chronological order).

3 November 2015: A documentary in Swedish in the TV documentary series *Kalla fakta* (Eng. *Cold Facts*) called 'Den förbjudna skogen' ('The forbidden forest'), in which the Swedish Energy Authority (SEA) was put under pressure about its knowledge of violence and negative effects for local people around the Kachung plantation and the Green Resources company was is portrayed in a negative light.
» http://www.tv4.se/kalla-fakta/klipp/kalla-fakta-del-5-den-f%C3%B6rbjudna-skogen-3215746

An interview with reactions from the Green Resources CEO Mads Asprem is available as a sound file on the *Kalla fakta* webpage.
» http://www.tv4.se/kalla-fakta/klipp/green-resources-vd-svarar-3217613

A debate in the Swedish newspaper *Svenska dagbladet* started on the day the documentary was aired.
» http://www.svd.se/sverige-finansierar-forodelse-och-miljoforstorelse.

Svenska dagbladet also published a short article on the same day containing a comment from the well-known Swedish agroforestry project *We effect/Vi-skogen*, on the Kachung plantation:
» http://www.svd.se/vi-skogen-om-svenska-projektet-bedrovligt

4 November 2015: *Svenska dagbladet* published a comment from the Swedish Minister for the Environment, Åsa Romson, who ´said that if Green Resources do not start complying with their agreed on commitments to implementing local development projects, Sweden must pull out of this investment.
» http://www.svd.se/romson-kritisk-till-klimatprojekt

The Swedish agroforestry project *We Effect/Vi-skogen* wrote a comment responding to the opinion piece in *Svenska dagbladet* by the reporters. Its comment focused on how plantation forestry projects are problematic and demanded that SEA takes full responsibility for the project.
» http://www.svd.se/ta-ert-fulla-ansvar-energimyndigheten

5 November 2015: Swedwatch published a text on its website called "Lessons learnt from Kachung", where they pointed out various problems raised by this case, including Ugandan state policies that fail to acknowledge local land rights, the lack of follow-up on sustainable development criteria in the CDM process and the lack of transparency of SEA's own investigations into the project.
» http://www.swedwatch.org/sv/2015/11/05/lessons-learned-kachung

6 November 2015: In a response to the first opinion piece written by the reporters behind the documentary, researchers Klara Fischer and Flora Hajdu wrote a comment in *Svenska dagbladet* on problematic aspects of the documentary. This comment *aimed* to highlight how the Kachung plantation is not an isolated incident, but points to problems with the CDM system and carbon purchases in general.
» http://www.svd.se/kalla-fakta-ger-en-missvisande-bild

Reporters behind the documentary responded to Fischer and Hajdu.
» http://www.svd.se/viktigt-att-beratta-hur-enskilda-drabbas

11 November 2015: In a comment to the debate started by the reporters, researcher Anders Sirén called carbon capture via tree plantations "ineffective symbolic acts" that do not affect the long-term release of carbon to the atmosphere.
» http://www.svd.se/plantera-trad-loser-inte-klimatproblemen

29 May 2016: Several researchers who have studied Kachung and other plantations in Uganda, together with environmental NGO representatives, again criticised Green Resources and put pressure on the SEA to pull out of the Kachung project.
» http://www.svd.se/energimyndigheten-bor-lamna-uganda

24 June 2019: The results from this research on Kachung were mentioned in an opinion piece by Fischer and others in the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter, in relation to a discussion on Sweden's responsibility for climate change mitigation.
https://www.dn.se/debatt/repliker/missvisande-att-bara-peka-ut-befolkningstillvaxten/

Our comments on the media debate, in light of our research findings

The international debate has mainly focused on the wrongdoings of Green Resources. In the Swedish debate, the focus has been on the fact that the Swedish Energy Agency entered into a CDM agreement with Green Resources despite knowing about negative outcomes for people in nearby villages. While we agree with the criticism of the lack of attention to local problems in the Kachung reserve, we believe that to date there has been a lack of focus on the larger structural problems within the CDM system, or on the responsibility of the host country, in this case the Ugandan state, for the local problems. In order to avoid repeating the mistakes from this particular case in other forest carbon projects, the debate should not focus solely on the specific actors in the case, but consider these structural problems too.

Contacts

FLORA HAJDU, RESEARCHER
DIVISION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
+46 18 67 21 62
FLORA.HAJDU@SLU.SE

KLARA FISCHER, RESEARCHER
DIVISION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT
+ 46 18 67 17 71
KLARA.FISCHER@SLU.SE

PROJECT WEBSITE: WWW.SLU.SE/CARBON