

POLLEN 2022 organised session proposal

Title: Power and politics in global forest restoration and tree planting efforts

Type of session: Panel session and/or paper session

Organisers:

Flora Hajdu, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, flora.hajdu@slu.se

Harry Fischer, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, harry.fischer@slu.se

Rose Pritchard, Global Development Institute, University of Manchester, rose.pritchard@manchester.ac.uk

Session Abstract

Recent years have seen growing calls for largescale landscape restoration, especially forests, most recently through the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Proponents often argue that restoration has great potential to advance environmental objectives alongside human welfare (Bastin et al. 2019, Chazdon and Brancalion 2019, Mansourian et al. 2020). Political ecologists have raised concerns about how actual practices of restoration (especially tree plantations) may serve to legitimate land cover changes that further marginalize poorer people, reproduce entrenched power asymmetries in global environmental policy interventions, and neglect underlying drivers of forest loss and poverty (Osborne et al. 2021, Ellias et al. 2020, Davis and Robbins 2018). While extensive research has called both for protecting local land rights and ensuring that local stakeholders have power in restoration planning processes, (Fleischman et al., 2020, Erbaugh et al., 2020, Djentonin et al. 2020), there remains a need for theoretically-grounded research on how more just restoration and tree planting can be achieved in practice. It is certainly the case that dominant policy discussions have lacked social scientific perspectives (Pritchard 2021, Coleman et al., 2021, Hajdu & Fischer 2017).

This session aims to contribute to building a foundation for critical social science scholarship on global restoration – its politics, its impacts, and its many varied manifestations on the ground. We do so through a paper session and through a panel discussion between researchers and practitioners who have in-depth experiences with restoration and tree planting in different parts of the world. Our objective is to draw together experiences from across the Global South & North in ways that can help synthesize existing knowledge and identify areas where strong political ecological scholarship is needed. We hope that this can help stimulate a knowledge community of critical restoration scholars that we can continue to build and engage with in the coming years.

Potential Themes include:

- What are the diverse ways in which restoration (or often simply tree planting) is being realized on the ground? What institutions, policy mechanisms, and power dynamics are being put into motion through the global focus on restoration?

- How and in what ways are practices of “restoration” new? Or, is this simply ‘old wine in new bottles’ – the continuation of long entrenched practices of established funding structures, administrative structures, and environmental agencies?
- How is the global imperative for restoration impacting people and landscapes in different parts of the globe?
- What would a more just and empowered paradigm of restoration look like in practice – and what kinds of politics can help it to be achieved?

Bastin, J.F., et al. The global tree restoration potential. *Science*, 2019, 365.6448: 76-79.

Chazdon, R. & Brancalion, P. 2019. Restoring forests as a means to many ends. *Science* **364**, 24–25.

Coleman, E. A. *et al.* 2021. Limited effects of tree planting on forest canopy cover and rural livelihoods in Northern India. *Nature Sustainability*.

Davis, D. K. & Robbins, P. 2018. Ecologies of the colonial present: Pathological forestry from the *taux de boisement* to civilized plantations. *Environment and Planning E*. **1**, 447–469.

Djenontin, I. N. S., Zulu, L. C. & Etongo, D. 2020. Ultimately, What is Forest Landscape Restoration in Practice? Embodiments in Sub-Saharan Africa and Implications for Future Design. *Environ. Manage.* 619–641.

Elias, M., Joshi, D. & Meinzen-Dick, R. 2021. Restoration for whom, by whom? A feminist political ecology of restoration. *Ecol. Restor.* **39**, 1–2.

Erbaugh, J. T. *et al.* Global forest restoration and the importance of prioritizing local communities. *Nat. Ecol. Evol.*

Fleischman, F. *et al.* 2020. Pitfalls of Tree Planting Show Why We Need People-Centered Natural Climate Solutions. *Bioscience*.

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.

Mansourian, S. *et al.* 2020 Putting the pieces together: Integration for forest landscape restoration implementation. *Land Degradation and Development* **31**, 419–429.

Osborne, T. *et al.* 2021, The political ecology playbook for ecosystem restoration: Principles for effective, equitable, and transformative landscapes. *Global Environmental Change* **70**, 102320.

Pritchard, R. 2021. Politics, power and planting trees. *Nature Sustainability*.

Please send your abstract to one of the three organisers by 15th January.

We hope to convene both a **paper** and a **panel** session. Please indicate if you want to:

- 1) Present in a paper session – i.e. get about 15 minutes to present a paper based on your original research or practitioner experience, including data and theorization.
- 2) Present in a panel session – i.e. get about 10 minutes to present an argument based on your research/practice experiences and then participate in a longer panel discussion.

In either case, please submit also the following:

Name and affiliation

Title of presentation (max 20 words)

Abstract (max 250 words)

List of max 3 key words