Experiences from Forest Reform: the example of Mexico

Next Generation of Forestry Agency Leaders.
Global Issues in Governing Natural Resources

CONAFOR, RRI, MegaForestais.

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Forest Rights and Community Forestry in Mexico

- Long and ambitious process of devolution of forest lands to rural communities (1910-90).

- Government maintained control over use rights of forest resources: strong regulatory framework and large concessions to private and government enterprises (1940-70).

- New policies and legal reforms promoted the control of forest resources by communities and supported their organization for the commercial production of timber: rise of the first Community Forest Enterprises CFE´s (1974-86).
This process was strengthened by traditional forms of organization and governance and was also widely supported by NGOs and 2nd and 3rd level organizations.

A new government impulse was given to community forestry with new programs and historic budget levels (SEMARNAT, 1994 y National Forestry Commission, 2001).
Six important lessons

1. Local policies and flexible instruments: “Not all cut from the same cloth”

- Large variability of socio-environmental conditions
- Local assessments
- Bottom up approach
2. From the community and the landscape

- The need for a landscape approach to forest management and economic development
- Community to community, and community to private industry partnerships
Six important lessons

3. More knowledge, better rules, more opportunities

- Participatory instruments for strategic land use planning (*Ordenamientos territoriales comunitarios*)
- Community regulations for the management of common pool resources
Six important lessons

4. Social capital, democracy and community governments
   - Social capital as a central element for the management of common pool resources
   - Focus on strengthening of traditional community institutions
   - Social capital is fragile: migration and loss of younger generations
Six important lessons

5. Social capital and natural capital are related

- Social capital tends to be more developed in communities where the value of forest resources is high.
- The incentives to invest in institutions and regulations for the governing of common pool resources will be higher where communities can benefit more from their resources.
Six important lessons

6. Community forestry is not a panacea

- Social and natural capital are not always available or may have deteriorated
- Opportunity costs for SFM may be high
- Weak forest rights or boundary conflicts