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Title: Reproducing forestry: education and scientific authority in Tanzania

Despite changing views about what forests are and what values they hold to society, the narrow vision of scientific forestry emphasizing demarcation, mensuration, calculation, and modelling remains hegemonic across most of the World, including in Tanzania. While priorities have evolved from restricting activities of ‘natives’ in designated areas during the colonial period to industrial forestry soon after independence to biodiversity conservation to participatory forestry and carbon sequestration, the central tenets of scientific forestry and thus strategies of action have not changed. This paper considers the reproduction of forestry in Tanzania across time and space.

The paper considers the reproduction by conceptualizing forestry practices as a product of dispositions (habitus) and encountered situations within the forest management social field. The application of scientific forestry knowledge is considered inseparable from its production and circulation. Employing a qualitative methodology based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, the paper thus examines the reproduction of forestry in educative practices and activities of forestry academics at the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA).

I argue that pedagogy and curriculum of forestry education at SUA creates scientific forestry habitus for the forest management social field. Further, forestry academics, who doubles as scientists and experts and occasionally as bureaucrats, conduct research and engage in consultancies in ways that preserve and perpetuate, rather than disrupt, the primacy of scientific forestry knowledge and thus of their scientific authority, consciously or unconsciously. The scientific forestry habitus predisposes foresters to produce and reproduce technical forestry practices.

Violence (injustices and failures) in forest management is thus a by-product of what appears to foresters as appropriate forest management approaches and practices. Violence is symbolic and often misrecognized because foresters have acquired a frame of seeing and thinking about landscapes with trees that naturalizes scientific forestry practices. This misrecognition of violence reproduces existing practices by foreclosing the possibilities of seeing beyond and disrupting them. A radical rethinking of forest policy, and thus of the established scientific and social order, therefore presupposes a rethinking of the forestry curriculum and pedagogy.