Planting and replanting: Shifting relationships between rural livelihoods and government-run plantations over 40 years in Himachal Pradesh, India.

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Global policies are increasingly encouraging national governments in the developing world to invest in forest restoration with the goal of increasing the provision of ecosystem services from degraded landscapes. However in many parts of the world, coordinated afforestation programs have been going on for decades, and it is imperative that we learn from the experiences of these past programs to understand the potential range of outcomes from afforestation programs. In this paper we analyze 40 years of detailed government records from the forest department of the Indian Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh. We show that, contrary to global narratives about increased investments in forest restoration, the number of trees planted and number of acres treated in Himachal have declined from their high in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, over this 40 year period, species composition has shifted away from commercial timber production towards a more diverse set of native broadleaf species, which reflect local preferences for the production of firewood, fodder, and other non-timber forest products and ecosystem services. At the same time, the number of programs sponsoring tree planting has proliferated, reflecting the increasingly fragmented nature of forestry funding in India, as well as the ways that tree planting has been framed as the solution to a growing number of problems, ranging from poverty alleviation to climate adaptation. However, while species composition increasingly reflects the preferences of rural people, government programs specifically focused on engaging with local people in the management of forests or providing direct employment have declined since the 1990s in favor of programs which emphasize more diffuse goals or which aim to compensate for forest loss due to development.