

Review of: "“Saving the Forest” with a REDD+ Project: Socio-Ecological Repercussions on Indigenous People in Cambodia"

Cauê D. Carrilho

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The article sheds light on an interesting and relevant issue regarding the potential negative impacts of REDD+ projects on indigenous livelihoods and well-being. This is, in fact, a debatable topic since the beginning of conservation initiatives, which started with the placement of the first protected areas on inhabited natural lands.

However, the paper would benefit significantly from major revisions in several areas, which I am summarizing below.

I would recommend the author include more references and increase the debate with the ongoing literature regarding the topic. While REDD+ may seem like a recent addition to conservation strategies, there are already several papers investigating REDD+ impacts on the well-being and livelihoods of local communities using different methodological approaches, spanning from more rigorous, quantitative, counterfactual-based methods to qualitative assessments (e.g., Jagger and Rana, 2017; Manda and Mukanda, 2023; Satyal et al., 2020; Solis et al., 2021). Delving into these studies can not only help refine the paper's research questions but also position the findings within the broader context of what's already known. This way, the paper can contribute more pointedly to the ongoing scholarly conversation.

Another key issue is to consider the multifaceted nature of REDD+ on the ground. We need to keep in mind that REDD+ is a bundle of interventions, including command and control instruments, economic incentives for local people to refrain from deforestation, and enabling measures such as land tenure clarification. What we call "REDD+" is more related to the climate-mitigation type of funding than the type of interventions. Therefore, any analysis of REDD+ impacts must consider this heterogeneity and present in detail the interventions implemented by the REDD+ proponent.

Moreover, the paper could offer more details on data collection and analysis methods. This includes information on interview processes, selection criteria, the number and type of respondents, and the nature of the questions asked. In the "Findings and Discussions" section, the author mentioned systematic reviews of the literature that are not explained in the "Methodology" section. Both surveys and systematic reviews are systematic-based approaches with rigorous protocols to be followed which should be presented in the paper. Information about data analysis is absent.

Additionally, I think there is room for improvement in how the findings and discussions are presented. It wasn't always clear to me where certain claims were coming from – whether they were derived from interviews, literature, or the author's personal analysis. Especially when making serious allegations, like those related to corruption or ethical issues, it is vital to provide solid and transparent evidence. A clearer attribution of these claims to their sources would greatly enhance the

reader's ability to follow the author's argumentation and trust the conclusions.

Lastly, the conclusions of the paper should stem directly from paper's findings. They need to be a reflection of the data and analysis presented, ensuring that they are well-supported and justified.

In summary, the paper touches on a critical issue in conservation, and with some additional work on literature engagement, methodological transparency, and clarity in presentation, it could make a significant contribution to our understanding of REDD+ impacts on indigenous communities.

References

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