



INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Aloy: Assignment, Exercise, Essay & Narrative Reporting

April 10, 2025, HEPA: Reflection of Symposium

The symposium focused on the differences between industrial agricultural practices and agro-ecological farming. The presenter highlighted the crisis and failure of industrial agriculture and the promise and sustainability of agro-ecology for world food security. This event drew various stakeholders, including government officials, policy makers, and representatives from various media channels—such as television channels, magazines, newspapers, and journals. The symposium clearly voiced the significance of agro-ecology as a practical and sustainable_ and the only_ option of ensuring food sovereignty.

The symposium not only provided valuable insights but also offered an opportunity for the information and findings shared during the event to be spread through media to various groups of society to generate public support for necessary policy changes. Additionally, it was eye-opening for the authorities (according to the feedback) to reevaluate their positions and policies at the provincial, district, and communal levels, emphasizing the importance of taking meaningful steps toward fostering a healthier, more resilient, self-sufficient, and sustainable society through enhancing the co-governance of natural lands and forests, as well as promoting agro-ecological livelihoods for local communities.

In this lobbying effort in the form of symposium, the involvement of various authorities and media platforms is very crucial. Their participation is helpful to increase the reach of the message, to a broader audience among both policy makers and the ordinary public about the importance of agro-ecological livelihoods.

It is important to note that the terms "advocacy" and "lobbying" are not necessary to be used in all circumstances. Engaging in advocacy and lobbying requires careful strategic planning and proper events with proper names to be organized and approached with a diplomatic mindset to ensure peaceful and long-term impact in the pursuit of desired goal.

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March 13, 2025. Essay. A Case Study. Co-governance in Cao Quang, Vietnam

Introduction

Since 1994, SPERI has been involved in a community-based collective effort to secure land use rights in Cao Quang. To address the challenges of poverty among the residents, SPERI helped form interest-based community groups, including the Forest Group, Herb Group, Vegetable Group, and Agro-Ecology Group. While working towards improving livelihoods, the communities in Cao Quang faced significant conflicts regarding access to their lands due to pressures from local government and corporate enterprises. SPERI remains dedicated to supporting these community-based groups through awareness-raising initiatives, capacity-building training, and the development of grassroots leadership.

When the government established legal frameworks for land rights in 2017, the communities were prepared to assert their rights through legal channels. With the support of SPERI, the community collaborated to apply for their land entitlements. This initiative met the community's needs while also aligning with the government's objectives. In 2019, a pilot program was initiated, involving 40 households and focusing on land entitlement and governance in accordance with the relevant forestry laws. Following three years of successful implementation, the program was expanded in 2022 to include 525 households in Cao Quang.

1. Co-governance

The experiences of the Cao Quang communities in land use and management highlight a vibrant and active process of co-governance that involves various stakeholders, including community members, leaders, government authorities, and agencies. These groups collaborate under both national and customary legal frameworks. Coordination occurs horizontally among household units, community leaders, and agencies, while it is practiced vertically between official community representatives, the executive committee, and local authorities.

Cao Quang has 65 forest groups, which include 525 families from eight communities. Each group has a designated leader responsible for managing the land entitled by several households. These 65 leaders represent all household forest owners and work in collaboration with community leaders to ensure that land use is managed according to the community's established rules and regulations. They are actively involved in monitoring, cross-checking and verifying the condition of forest areas. In addition, they represent their communities at commune-level meetings and conferences with local authorities. Furthermore, they update the community's land use management rules and regulations for recognition by local authorities. They also coordinate with various agencies to obtain technical support, enhancing the effective management of land use and resources.

Each of the eight communities in Cao Quang has three designated focal persons for land governance, resulting in a total of 24 individuals paid by the government. They are responsible for monitoring and maintaining management order within the communities, addressing issues such as wildfires, and reporting any concerns to local authorities, which include forest rangers, commune

leaders, and the executive committee of land governance, who are responsible for safeguarding the national laws and policies.

This structure of horizontal and vertical governance ensures that management power is effectively distributed at different levels, enhancing law enforcement, monitoring, and conflict resolution related to land and resource use. The practice of co-governance not only guarantees equitable sharing of benefits and responsibilities among households from land and resource utilization but also provides security for the sustainability of these resources.

2. Process of Co-governance

a. Designation of rights and responsibilities

The effective allocation of natural forest areas, production areas and homestead areas along with clearly defined responsibilities among households, facilitates greater community engagement in active, grassroots management while respecting traditional rules and adhering to national laws as well. Demarcating the boundaries for community territories and forest landowners has significantly improved the communities' sense of ownership and ability to manage their forests and lands comprehensively and diligently, ensuring that no area is neglected. Community-level law enforcement is also effective because the traditional rules and regulations established by the community are acknowledged by the authorities for the management of forests and resources. The entitlement, following the demarcation of boundaries, not only grants rights to manage and use land but also promotes resource security and sustainability.

b. Agro-Ecology based Landscape design

The landscape design, which adheres to a master land use plan based on agro-ecology, helps manage the land according to designated areas and specific purposes. Moreover, this landscape enhances the beautiful appeal of the natural environment while ensuring effective and sustainable land use. The upper layer of the natural forest supplies non-timber products for household needs, such as food, herbal medicines, and essential household materials. It also creates a healthy environment by improving air quality, providing abundant water sources, and enriching the soil in the lower layers. Additionally, it helps mitigate climate change, prevent landslides, and protect topsoil, all of which are crucial for sustainable agriculture. The middle layer, consisting of short-term and mid-term Acacia forests, generates a steady cash income that supports various social, educational, and developmental needs of families. Meanwhile, the lower layer, which includes seasonal agricultural and agro-ecological farms, produces goods and cash income to meet the immediate needs of the households.

c. Management and Monitoring

Communities are also empowered by the knowledge and skills of Diagram mapping and landscape transects cutting, based on accurate maps of village territories, to implement land use and management planning from the family level to the community level. This provides a

foundation for making informed decisions regarding resource use, preservation, or enhancement.

Resource monitoring and auditing skills provided for the community leaders and Forest Group leaders allows more systematic calculations and documentation of resources according to category, name, type, quantity, volume and usefulness, further enhancing community's monitoring system of lands and forests. One immediate benefit of resource auditing is its effectiveness in negotiating fair prices for carbon credits. While the natural environment is not a commodity to be sold, understanding resource auditing helps mitigate the global impact of carbon credits in a fair and equitable manner.

To enhance the monitoring of forest resources and boundaries within communities, detailed maps are made accessible online. By providing these digital maps, the local authorities, community leaders and forest owners, including other stakeholders can quickly access essential geographic information, facilitating effective resource management and oversight. This transparency not only empowers local leaders to monitor environmental changes and resource usage more efficiently but also fosters a sense of shared responsibility among community members in safeguarding their natural resources. Furthermore, the online availability of such maps promotes collaboration and informed decision-making, ensuring that all parties have the tools they need to engage in sustainable practices and protect their environment.

3. Achievements/Results of co-governance in Cao Quang

- a. ***Transitioning from community-based groups to community-based institutions:*** For the past 30 years, SPERI has provided invaluable informal education and grassroots leadership training, which has been instrumental in preparing future leaders of Cao Quang. Many of these individuals now hold various positions within the community and the government administration. The effective leadership in Cao Quang, both at the community and administrative levels, is successfully turning land management plans into reality and promoting a trend of co-governance. This leadership is also playing a crucial role in the initial enforcement of rules and regulations, which is ensuring the gradual change in attitudes, practices, and lifestyles towards environmental values within families and the wider community.
- b. ***Transforming Barren Lands into Forested Areas:*** Vinh Xuan village, for example, has undergone a significant transformation, with its previously barren lands now thriving as forested areas. As verified in a monitoring report from 2023, the land is no longer devoid of vegetation, marking a remarkable ecological recovery. In the past, the region primarily featured acacia plantations, but recent assessments indicate a shift toward the regeneration of natural forests. This transition represents not only a change in landscape but also a restoration of biodiversity and ecosystem health. By February 2025, the regenerated natural forest in Vinh Xuan is projected to yield an impressive 142 cubic meters of timber per hectare. Additionally, it plays a vital role in carbon sequestration, with estimates indicating that it can capture approximately 96 tons of carbon per

hectare and absorb around 253 tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂). This transformation underscores the importance of sustainable land management practices.

- c. ***Co-governance as part of political, economic and livelihood system:*** Co-governance practices have increasingly integrated into the social, economic, and livelihood concerns of Cao Quang. Addressing political, economic, and livelihood challenges necessitates considering co-governance in land use, which facilitates informed judgment and effective decision-making.
- d. ***A concrete model of successful co-governance:*** Cao Quang has emerged as a model for effective co-governance, fortified by two key supportive elements: community-based institutions and agro-ecology-based landscape design. This innovative approach has garnered significant attention and interest from both national and international observers, as well as development organizations.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the co-governance model implemented in Cao Quang exemplifies an effective and sustainable approach to land management that engages various stakeholders, including community members, agencies and government authorities. By thoroughly addressing the rights and responsibilities associated with land use, fostering agro-ecological practices, and strengthening local institutions, the community has made significant steps in transforming their environment and livelihoods. The successful transition from barren lands to thriving forests illustrates the positive ecological changes achieved through collaborative efforts, while also providing a model for other regions facing similar challenges. As Cao Quang continues to innovate and attract interest from national and international organizations, it serves as a powerful example of how grassroots leadership and co-governance can harmonize environmental sustainability with community empowerment and socio-economic development.

Aloysius

March 07, 2025. Land, Forest and Acacia Plantation management practices - Vinh Xuan Village Case of Cao Quang Commune.

The land, forests, and acacia plantations of Vinh Xuan village are managed by the local community under the guidance of community leaders. Different types of land, including residential, agricultural, acacia production, and natural forest land, are governed according to the master plan established by Cao Quang commune. The land is categorized and allocated based on varying sea levels across the territory. Due to its geographical characteristics, the distinct landscape layers of Vinh Xuan are prominently evident from the flat residential areas. The residential zones, agricultural fields, acacia production sites, and forested areas are thoughtfully and systematically demarcated, with boundaries outlining the lower, middle, and upper levels of the land.

Management of these lands adheres to both customary practices and legal regulations, with community members actively participating in enforcement. Groups have been established to oversee land use in forest areas according to their designated allocations. Additionally, a proactive warning system is in place to monitor potential threats such as annual flooding, forest fires, land use violations, and intrusions by either humans or animals.

Co-governance practice of land, forest and acacia

Land use in Vinh Xuan is governed by various stakeholders such as community members, community leaders, government authorities and agencies, each with distinct roles, responsibilities and levels of decision-making power. In terms of allocation and entitlement, the power related land governance is shared vertically and in terms of management on ground level, the power is shared horizontally.

The co-governance of Vinh Xuan community is a model of land use that respects both the legal frameworks set by the government and the lived experiences or traditional customs of community members./. **Aloysius**

March 08, 2025: Summary of Learning about Co-Governance in Cao quảng, Vietnam

The successful practice of co-governance over land began in Cao Quang with efforts to raise awareness and educate the community about land use and entitlements. The government provided legal frameworks for land rights, and when given the opportunity, the community worked collaboratively with the support of SPERI to apply for these entitlements. This initiative addressed the community's needs while aligning with the government's objectives. In 2019, a pilot program was launched involving 40 households, focusing on land entitlement and governance in accordance with the relevant forest laws. After three years of successful implementation, the program was expanded in 2022 to include 525 households in Cao Quang.

The entitlement not only grants rights to manage and use land but also promotes resource security and sustainability. The landscape design, which adheres to a master land use plan based on agro-ecology, helps manage the land according to designated areas and specific purposes. Moreover, this landscape enhances the beautiful appeal of the natural environment while ensuring effective and sustainable land use. The upper layer of the natural forest supplies non-timber products for household needs, such as food, herbal medicines, and essential household materials. It also creates a healthy environment by improving air quality, providing abundant water sources, and enriching the soil in the lower layers. Additionally, it helps mitigate climate change, prevent landslides, and protect topsoil, all of which are crucial for sustainable agriculture. The middle layer, consisting of short-term and mid-term Acacia forests, generates a steady cash income that supports various social, educational, and developmental

needs of families. Meanwhile, the lower layer, which includes seasonal agricultural and agro-ecological farms, produces goods and cash income to meet the immediate needs of the households.

Demarcating the boundaries for community territories and forest landowners has significantly improved the communities' ability to manage their forests and lands comprehensively and diligently, ensuring that no area is neglected. The effective allocation of forest areas, along with clearly defined responsibilities among households, facilitates greater community engagement in active, grassroots management while respecting traditional rules and adhering to national laws as well.

Diagram mapping and landscape transects, based on accurate maps of village territories, empower communities to implement land management planning from the family level to the community level. Resource monitoring and auditing techniques enhance the planning and management of lands and forests, allowing for more systematic calculations and documentation of resources according to category, name, type, quantity, volume and usefulness. This provides a foundation for making informed decisions regarding resource use, preservation, or enhancement. One immediate benefit of resource auditing is its effectiveness in negotiating fair prices for carbon credits. While the natural environment is not a commodity to be sold, understanding resource auditing helps mitigate the global impact of carbon credits in a fair and equitable manner.

The experiences of the Cao Quang communities in land use and management highlight a vibrant and active process of co-governance that involves various stakeholders, including community members, leaders, government authorities, and agencies. These groups collaborate under both national and customary legal frameworks. Coordination occurs horizontally among household units, community leaders, and agencies, while it is practiced vertically between official community representatives, the executive committee, and local authorities. This structure ensures that management power is effectively distributed at different levels, enhancing law enforcement, monitoring, and conflict resolution related to land and resource use. The practice of co-governance not only guarantees equitable sharing of benefits among households from land and resource utilization but also provides security for the sustainability of these resources. /.Aloysius

Feb 27, 2025. Integrated GPS mapping, Diagram mapping and Ecological Transect mapping towards Agro-Ecology 7 principles of Systematic Master Planning Principles

Map reading skill is very important for land use or forest management planning. The main features and symbols of the map talks about the geographical features and locations in reality. Roughly, GPS mapping, diagram mapping and ecological transect mapping methods are important to us who are working with the communities for resource management.

GPS mapping with inclusion of contours and scales, most accurately transfers the real territory and its contents into the map that is used for documentation, record and certification. It may evolve according to the practices of land use, forest management, development activities and change of land types within it. GPS map is essential as part of the historical record of a community living in a certain territory.

Diagram mapping is used for identifying the main contents of the territory for social, economic and development planning. It does not necessarily require to be accurate but gives an idea or view of the contents in certain faces and locations of the territory. Based on the diagram map, ecological transect mapping can be done for more effective land use and forest management planning. It is important that no part of the diagram is missed in transect mapping for analysis as there exist invaluable resources in the least recognizable parts such as boundaries, edges and bottoms of the slopes. In using ecological transect mapping, some key categories to be analyzed are to be brought into consideration, such as type, height, flop, soil, flora, fauna, challenges, solutions/plan, etc. This mapping is most useful for landscape or social-economic or land use or other related and suitable plannings. Aloysius , 27/2/2025