

Flare 2018 Annual Meeting Abstracts

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Title: *Brokers- a Weapon of the Weak: the impact of bureaucracy and brokers on a community based forest management project in the Brazilian Amazon*



The bureaucracy that regulates land tenure, agriculture and community based forest management (CBFM) in the Brazilian Amazon aims at achieving an impartial administration and process of practices that complies with the intention of laws, regulations and decrees and safeguards the rights of the citizens at large and particularly people in a vulnerable position. Yet the local powerholders' actual interpretation and implementation of laws, regulations and decrees is to large extent opaque, arbitrary, and contingent upon subjective intentions, interests and perspectives. These irregularities and arbitrariness affect poor smallholders hard and hampers their access to resources and formal rights. We show how the smallholders who have initiated a CBFM-project in a settlement in the north-eastern region of the Brazilian Amazon are unable to manage the project on their own, because they lack financial capital, as well as the necessary social and political capital to be able obtain compulsory permits and make the contracted firm and people comply with the terms of the contracts. In order to transcend these difficulties the smallholders utilize their social networks, above all vertical contacts, to attract brokers. We further argue that this strategy assigns great power and influence to various brokers, and affects how policies are implemented, how resources are distributed or not distributed and how power relations are articulated. These aspects of governance and governmentality are grossly under-theorized in research on development projects in general and CBFM in particular. The research project is based on participant observation and various forms interviews, carried out 2012-2017.