

Center for Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM)

Natural Resources Institute, University of Manitoba

CBRM Database

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Case Study Name:	Social process as everyday practice; The micro politics of community-based conservation and development in Southeastern Mexico		
Authors:	Wilshusen, P. R.		
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Region:	Latin America and the Caribbean		
Country:	Mexico		
Ecosystem Type:	mountain ecosystems		
Social Characteristics:	community bordering protected area		
Scale of Study:	district/municipality		
Resource Type:	forestry (timber)		
Type of Initiative:	market/business development		
Community-Based Work:	resource management		
Keywords:	social process, political culture, infrapolitics, governance, power, community, conservation, development, Mexico		
Summary:	This article explores the everyday exchanges associated with community-based		

natural resources management in southeastern Mexico to suggest how formal and informal social practices shape conservation and development outcomes. Discussions of social process in most policy analyses emphasize formal exchanges based in rational action but typically overlook the impact of everyday social practices, which often occur “off-stage.” First, I build on existing conceptualizations of social process in the policy sciences by exploring culturally-informed approaches focused on everyday practice, infrapolitics, and performance. Second, I present a case study detailing the emergence and decline of a timber marketing fund to reveal how informal lending among community members contributed to the decapitalization of the fund. Third, I trace flows of economic capital from the fund in order to discuss specific policy outcomes. Fourth, I present ethnographic and archival evidence showing the persistence and frequency of informal lending, the performative aspects of local social process, and the character of “off-stage” interactions. I conclude with a discussion of social process that extends analysis beyond values-based outcomes to consider how long-standing practices based in particular logics (political cultures) collide with formalized (technocratic) practices of the public sphere. I employ this conceptual approach to critically examine questions of petty corruption and local conflict, to uncover multiple dimensions of micro political interaction, and to explore how cultural perspectives on social process might inform policy responses.