

## **Report on Panel Discussion on Indigenous Knowledge for Forest and Climate Protection: What does the UNFCCC ,Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform have to do with Forest Landscape Restoration?**

On the occasion of the 48<sup>th</sup> session of the UNFCCC SBSTA held in Bonn where the deliberations on the functions of a Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' (LCIP) Platform, established through the Paris Agreement, was on the agenda, INFOE organized a panel discussion on questions around the role and integration of indigenous and local knowledge in the design and implementation of forest landscape restoration (FLR) measures. The speakers and participants were welcomed by **Sabine Schielmann** from INFOE who briefly **introduced** the background for organizing the panel discussion which could be seen as a follow up from a discussion held in May 2017 with a focus on indigenous peoples' participation and knowledge in relation for forest and climate protection.

In the first key note, **Dr. Sabine Reinecke** from the University of Freiburg described the discourse landscape for our discussion on the role of indigenous and local communities in forest conservation, management and restoration and the integration of their knowledge systems in practice. She presented the results of an analytical research of different discourses on FLR highlighting that most actors involved in FLR (governments, researchers, NGOs, private companies, development agencies etc.) view local and indigenous communities as important actors in FLR implementation. She then elaborated on principle questions regarding the integration of different 'ways of knowing' or 'valuing' in decision-making and practice and observed that bottom up approaches are moving to the centre in FLR discourses. Issues of the use, transfer and/or integration of knowledge where also touched upon.

The second key note was presented by **Dr. Rodion Sulyandziga**, a Udege representative from the Russian Far East and director of CSIPN, the Centre for Support of Indigenous Peoples of the North of Russia. He informed the participants about the involvement of indigenous peoples in the UNFCCC negotiations and their participation efforts leading up to the creation of the LCIP Platform. He emphasized the importance of the platform for indigenous peoples as a recognized space to bring in their knowledge and experience with regard to climate change and climate change adaptation as well as to claim their rights related to their knowledge, territories, resources and cultural practices. He also spoke about the importance of boreal forests for climate change mitigation and adaptation and the traditional subsistence strategies of indigenous peoples living in boreal forests.

After the coffee break, the panellists were introduced by Sabine Schielmann who then also introduced **László Maráz**, the Coordinator of the Working Group on Forest of the Forum on Environment and Development , as co-moderator for the panel discussion. Mr. Maráz has a background in forestry and said that it is important to reflect on one's own understanding and positioning in debates on knowledge and protection as members of a capitalist society over consuming natural resources. For their preparation the panellists had been sent the following three questions beforehand:

1. Please introduce yourself and your activities regarding Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR). What significance do indigenous communities and their experiences (in theory and practice) have for forest and climate protection as part of your work?
2. How important is the creation of the LCIP platform and the related recognition of indigenous knowledge, their adaptation strategies and practices for your work?

3. From your point of view and experience, how can the participation of indigenous actors and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems in theory, practice and politics (with a focus on FLR) be promoted?

In the panel discussion, however, these questions were discussed without strictly following the order and clustering the responses.

**Dr. Susanne Winter**, Director of the Forest Program at WWF Germany, informed the participants about the engagement of WWF in FLR and in forest conservation in general. She stressed that indigenous and local communities are at the core of WWFs projects and that projects are implemented in close cooperation with these communities. WWF supports indigenous peoples' own approaches such as Indigenous REDD. She asked whether ensuring that the principle of FPIC (free, prior, informed consent) is applied is enough and argued that it is not and that WWF wants safeguards for FLR. She sees a potential in FLR for clarifying land rights issues.

Dr. Pasang Dolma Sherpa from Nepal participated as panellist in the place of Grace Balawag who wasn't able to join the panel discussion. **Ms. Pasang Dolma Sherpa** is the executive director of the Centre for Indigenous Peoples Research and Development (CIPRED) in Nepal. She particularly stressed the importance of indigenous peoples own customary institutions in maintaining, applying and sharing knowledge and practice and the need to recognize and involve them, in particular at the national level. In this way, they make an important contribution to communities' resilience. She also said that the LCIP platform is an important step and that it must not be forgotten that these developments at the international level help advance issues at the national level.

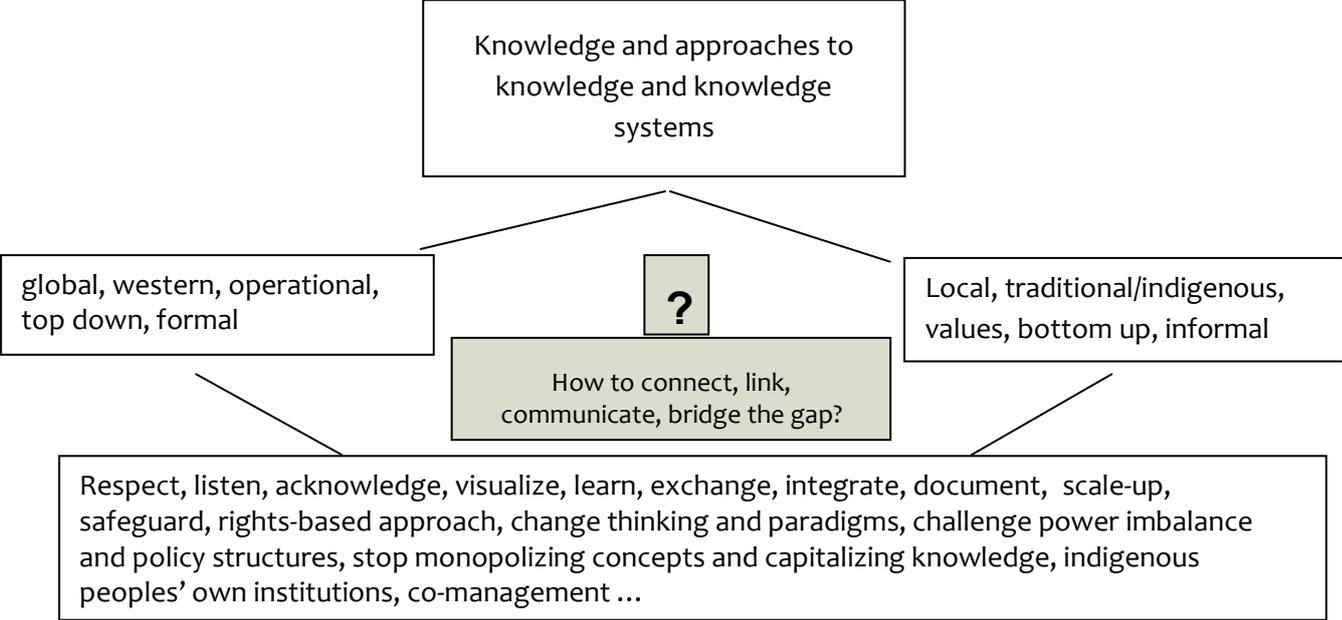
Finally, **Dr. Nidia Catherine Gonzalez**, PhD. Graduate from Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz and currently Research Fellow at the University of Bologna, Italy, gave a very vivid practical input picking up on her work with indigenous peoples in Colombia. She elaborated on the different and complex nature of indigenous knowledge and resulting management practices. She also stated that the indigenous community is documenting its knowledge and that it is important to visualize this knowledge in order to make it visible, heard and respected.



The open **discussion** with the participants then centred on different understandings of “development” by indigenous and non-indigenous peoples as well as different notions of knowledge based on different conceptions of human-nature relationships. Shifting cultivation as presented by Dr. Gonzalez is also a common traditional practice in many Asian countries and with its integrated and complex approach and elements can be viewed as a FLR practice. It was realized that we are talking more about forest management than forest restoration which is only a part particularly in the landscape approach. Also, for indigenous peoples in their daily practice, many times there is no separation between adaptation, management and restoration as all goes hand in hand. It is not named ‘adaptation’ etc. as it is their genuine daily knowledge and practice, interacting with nature, responding to changes and coping with the situation.

One critical issue was the concern that the different knowledge systems may not be compatible; indeed it seems that they are so incompatible that indigenous peoples with their own knowledge systems are victimized and criminalized. There is also the danger that indigenous knowledge is capitalized in a such as the newly created LCIP platform. The concern is that indigenous peoples' knowledge and their best practices are only gathered and valued for their usefulness in offering solutions to problems identified from the perspective of governments, scientists and climate experts.

Below, we are trying to sum up the two sides or levels of knowledge and approaches to knowledge that could be identified and the main points raised in terms of how they can be linked or communicated.



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