

Local responses to global standards – the reshaping of environmental governance

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Since the 1990s, countries in the Amazon region have increasingly adopted their environmental legislation in response to environmental change. In many occasions, these adoptions have also resulted in new governance regimes combining global standards and local needs. Although they have been designed to create economical, social, and political opportunities for local communities, the effect at the local level of environmental governance remains arbitrary and frequently lacks in effectiveness. This paper attempts to open the black box of policy influence at the local level by departing from local 'bricolage practices' of local actors in response to new legislation. Bricolage practices imply that local actors reshape external policy influences by drawing on the different institutional elements at hand, for example legislation, conventions, norms or traditions. These can result in rejection, adaptation or incorporation of environmental policy into their already existing social structure and traditions. This paper draws on post institutional theories to provide insight in how the local community level responds to environmental policies. By means of case studies in the Amazon region of both Bolivia and Ecuador, it demonstrates the dynamics surrounding the implementation of environmental policies. These dynamics show environmental policy as only one of the many institutional influences on local communities, often being in conflict with local needs. The paper concludes by discussing that communities seem much more receptive towards locally initiated "softer" guidelines than towards restrictive and "hard" government legislation.