

In this issue:

- Japan Palm oil energy
- Resource dreams
- Climate and Biodiversity interface

Japan is driving Palm Oil Power Plants causing land-use changes as direct driver

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To avoid negative impacts on biodiversity, the Post 2020 draft emphasizes addressing climate change. Shifting to renewable energy is problematic, however; some renewable energy projects are leading to the destruction of biodiversity. Palm oil power plants are just one of the issues.

As is well known, monoculture palm oil plantations occupy large land areas. In producer countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, we see serious biodiversity loss, through the destruction of old-growth tropical forests, land drainage contributing to major forest fires, wild-life habitat loss and ecosystem destruction. Large scale greenhouse gas emission from peatlands, and human rights violations are also significant global issues. And now, palm oil for biofuel is becoming a major issue in Japan. Japan has a policy of promoting renewable energy and supports power plants by buying energy at a high price. In the policy, palm oil is identified as renewable biomass, and the number of licenses granted to palm oil power plants rapidly increased until 2017, when the amount generated reached 4,600 MW. The reason for this explosion is the price, which is 1.8 times higher compared with other countries. This policy is a subsidy that harms biodiversity as described in Aichi Target 3. In addition, the EU is moving towards a ban on food-crop biofuels.

Can we make the post 2020 GBF targets effective for protecting biodiversity!? As IPBES pointed out, some approaches to limiting global warming will have significant impacts on biodiversity. The framework to address direct driver such as land-use change, and to transform the driver industries and social systems are urgently required. Not only for climate change but also for biodiversity.

(Article Excerpt)

-Resource dreams: case of the elusive private sector and on-going austerity-

It is imperative to place the 2008 Resource Mobilization strategy in its political and economic context: forged in the afterglow of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, the document is infused with wider excitement of the time for innovative financial mechanisms evidenced in the MEA and the then-recent announcement of The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity study (TEEB).

Since the 2008 report was drafted conservation impact investing has grown in prominence, allowing us to assess its results to date - results which paint a less promising picture. A recent OECD report notes that biodiversity finance reporting is patchy and inconsistent, making it difficult to assess the sector as a whole. But our own and others' scoping research, based on assessments of the grey literature (often financed at least in part by the financial sector), shows that these capital flows are tiny in relation to the size of the problems, and essentially infinitesimal in relation to subsidies exacerbating biodiversity loss and the world of capital flows writ large. For instance, whereas the 2008 the Eliash review predicted that carbon offsetting could generate up to US\$ 7 billion by 2020, the most recent Ecosystem Marketplace "State of the Forest Carbon Market" report notes that the forest-based emission reduction market peaked in 2014 with US\$ 257 million in value, down to US\$ 120 million in 2016. From forest carbon to biodiversity offsets, the promised windfall of private capital for conservation has consistently failed to materialize. Why is this the case, and why is the enthusiasm for private finance so persistent?

As research has consistently shown, it is notoriously difficult to make conservation an investable asset. The capital that is flowing into conservation finance is deployed by investors who are satisfied with low liquidity (assets that cannot be bought and sold quickly) and who are willing to make investments with high risk and low to no returns, terms that are not palatable to most investors. Return-oriented conservation finance thus relies on the deployment of public and charitable capital that essentially "de-risk" the investments - often known as "blended finance."

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Climate and biodiversity interface: setting a milestone for 2020

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Private finance does not so much provide new resources for conservation but risks redirecting large amounts of public money and capacities into the creation of the conditions for markets that may never materialize.

In terms of the investments that have been made, impacts on biodiversity are difficult to assess. For instance, the very few Payments for Ecosystem Services programs that aim to support biodiversity tend to focus on a particular charismatic species of interest to ES 'buyers' - for instance game animals or those attractive for ecotourism - and may thereby support landuse strategies that could privilege one species while undermining biodiversity on a larger scale.

The case for private finance rests in the foundational assumption of austerity: that there simply is not, and will never be, sufficient public finance to cover the 'gap' in biodiversity. This effectively preempts the kind of transformative change that social movements and academic research suggest is vitally necessary to address biodiversity loss and related environmental urgencies. For instance, the IPBES Global Assessment clearly states that "Goals for conserving and sustainably using nature and achieving sustainability cannot be met by current trajectories, and goals for 2030 and beyond may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors".

Austerity does not have to be an unalterable political reality. Instead of funneling money for conservation into private markets that have little chance of delivering -- under the false assumption that this is a "pragmatic" solution -- we call instead for coordinated action to demand the rollback of harmful subsidies and the provision of public resources, in keeping with the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibility. Our suggestion is to re-name the resource mobilization strategy the "Strategy for economic transformation," capturing the wider economic transformation of which financial resources are only a part. This strategy would push Parties to the CBD and associated international organizations to focus their efforts on addressing the economic drivers of biodiversity loss. Without addressing these drivers, rooted as they are in unequal distributions of wealth and global capitalism, there is a risk that innovative financial mechanisms will continue to fail, and even distract from the most necessary and needed change.

Full reference list available at [http://blogs.ubc.ca/biodiversitycapital/files/2020/02/RM_submission.pdf]

The negotiating processes under the Paris Agreement and the post2020 Global Biodiversity Framework have opened up opportunities to address climate change and biodiversity loss, their interlinkages and inter-dependencies. This is a significant outcome of a sustained civil society campaign to recognise the relationship between climate change and biodiversity loss in a comprehensive manner.

The SBSTTA Chair in CBD/SBSTTA/23/L.4 recommended that the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth meeting adopt a decision recognizing that biodiversity loss, climate change, desertification and land degradation are inseparable and interdependent challenges of unprecedented severity that must be coherently and consistently addressed urgently in an integrated manner in order to achieve the goals of the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework and the Paris Agreement. At COP 25 in Madrid, the governments (Decision 1/CP.25) have agreed to address the biodiversity loss and climate change in an integrated manner.

But this welcome development is fraught with dangers also. The corporate push for so-called nature-based solutions (NBS) and market mechanisms, completely undermining the existing ecosystem-based approaches is one of them. The support coming from UN agencies and some international big NGOs towards NBS is a great concern. Of equal concern are the current deliberations on biodiversity offsets and the "net" approach -- a set of false solutions to commodify biodiversity and deny the relationship between conserving biodiversity and local livelihoods. The interface between climate change and biodiversity loss, therefore, has to be negotiated under a set of principles which recognizes the rights-based approach and promote the rights-based, equitable governance of biodiversity. Governments have to think beyond stakeholder participation and embrace fully the concept of rights and distinct roles played by Indigenous Peoples, local communities, women, peasants and youth in conservation and protection of biodiversity and real community led climate actions.

For 2020, COP 26 and COP 15 are important milestones with long term implications on restricting global warming to 1.5°C and survival of the human civilisation. Both the Paris Agreement and the Global Biodiversity Framework have to address climate change and biodiversity loss without any delay and adopt real solutions to protect nature and biodiversity and not commodify them. It is time that the civil society activists campaigning within and outside the UNFCCC and CBD spaces come together and say:

"Our Nature is Not Your Solution".