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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Promise or pipe dream?

Prospects for decentralization and carbon credit certification

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TIST The International Small Group and Tree Planting Program

CCB Climate, Community and Biodiversity

CCBA Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance

CAAC Clean Air Action Corporation

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Abstract

This study examined *The International Small Group and Tree Planting Program* (TIST), a decentralized tree planting project with the double objective of mitigating climate change and selling carbon credits, while also empowering subsistence farmers. TIST is certified by the *Community, Climate and Biodiversity Alliance* (CCBA), an independent body which guarantees that greenhouse gas reduction projects also generate positive benefits for local communities and biodiversity. The study tested two rival perspectives on decentralization, and assessed whether CCBA lives up to its commitment of granting net community benefits through its projects. The key findings were that TIST has empowered poor subsistence farmers, but has low accountability and has reinforced some inequalities. The overall conclusion was therefore that TIST and the CCB certification do generate net positive benefits for the local community, even though only to a moderate degree. As TIST can be considered a *most likely case* for successful decentralization, this study indicated poor performance of decentralization strategies in general. However, the study also suggested that more research be carried out on how underlying circumstances affect the outcome of decentralized governance.

1. Introduction

Decentralization of power to the local level is a recent trend in natural resource governance. Proponents of the concept stress that it improves accountability, empowers people that are usually excluded from decision-making, and enables better responsiveness to local needs. However, this positive view of the potential of decentralization is contested. Critics have noted that decentralization might not be empowering in practice, but rather leads to increased inequality since local elites tend to grab both power and material assets from decentralized projects. Scholars have also remarked that decentralized projects often result in high levels of corruption. Decentralization as a means for successfully governing natural resources is in other words controversial, and more empirical research on its impacts is needed. This thesis hopes to participate in filling this gap of knowledge, by empirically studying what the impacts of decentralization might be on the local community.

The *Climate, Community and Biodiversity Alliance* (CCBA) is an independent body that certifies greenhouse gas reduction projects that live up to certain standards regarding biodiversity and social responsibility. CCBA promotes a decentralized, inclusive governance strategy for its projects and grants that certified projects lead to net positive benefits for the local communities. CCBA is fully operational only since 2011 when the first project was verified, but its credibility has already been challenged. Three case studies carried out by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation suggest that the CCB certification might not live up to its commitment of granting net community benefits.¹ Further, the CCBA certifies projects that sell carbon credits on the international market for voluntary carbon offsetting, where companies and other entities can carbon offset their activities by investing in greenhouse gas reduction projects. The very idea of forest offset markets as a suitable solution for tackling challenges of land use management is contested, and certifications are perceived by major proponents of forest offset markets as a key requirement for the markets' credibility. Credible

¹ Eklöf 2013

certifications is a main argument that carbon projects have moved on from the days of the "carbon cowboys", when unscrupulous investors profited on dubious forest offset projects.² For example, carbon projects have been found to restrict indigenous people's and local communities' access to traditional land and resources, degrade traditions and cause conflicts, or damage native ecosystems.³ If certification schemes such as CCB do not provide sufficient quality insurance, a major argument in favor of forest offset markets is challenged. There is clearly a need to further evaluate CCB's performance, and very little research has been carried out so far. This study wishes to contribute to the debate on certification schemes for carbon offsetting by examining whether The International Small-Group and Tree Planting Program (TIST), a CCB verified project located in south India, has led to net positive impacts for the local community. The study does not examine biodiversity impacts from the project, though acknowledges the importance of evaluating this aspect of the CCB certification as well.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on governance of natural resource management, focusing specifically on theories on decentralization. Potential positive and negative impacts on local communities associated with decentralization are outlined, and key concepts are defined. In chapter 3, the methodological choices, including research design and method for data collection, are described and motivated. The results and analysis are presented in chapter 4, and finally the conclusions in chapter 5.

2. Theoretical framework

This chapter introduces the challenges of natural resource management and the need for effective governance. Secondly, it presents an overview of the critique towards classical forms of governance that has led to the promotion of decentralization, which is today a major trend in governance theory. The last section outlines potential positive and negative impacts from decentralization that advocates and critics of the concept emphasize respectively.

² Eklöf 2013

³ CCBA 2013b

2. 1. Deforestation – a collective action problem

Deforestation of the world's forests occurs at a high rate, which has both environmental, social and economic consequences. Decreasing forest cover means biodiversity loss, decreasing provision of ecosystem services and loss of livelihood, which affects both present and coming generations' abilities to meet their needs. Lately, insights have risen of the importance of deforestation for climate change. The world's forests constitute an important carbon sink, and deforestation is estimated to account for 20% of total global emissions of green house gases.⁴

Deforestation is a typical example of a *collective action problem*, defined as a situation in which multiple individuals would all benefit from a certain action, but has an associated cost making it implausible that any one individual can or will undertake it alone.⁵ Most humans would benefit from keeping an extensive tree cover. However, planting trees, or refraining from cutting trees, is associated with a cost, which means that no individual will have the incentive to take these steps alone. There is in other words a conflict between individual and collective rationality. Garrett Hardin describes this phenomena as a "tragedy of the commons", and explains why resource depletion takes place. A common-pool resource, such as forests, is characterized by rivalry and non-excludability. Since each individual benefits from continuing to harvest the resource, whereas the costs associated with a degraded resource are shared collectively, the resource will inevitably be depleted.⁶ The challenge is to change the incentive structure and make each individual act in a way that benefits the collective; in other words, make individual rationality correspond with collective rationality. To solve collective action problems, some form of *governance* is needed.

2.2. Defining environmental governance

Governance can be defined as a "social function centered on efforts to steer societies or human groups toward collectively beneficial outcomes and away from outcomes that are collectively harmful".⁷ Governance encompasses actors such as the state, communities, private companies and non-governmental organizations,

⁴ Eklöf 2011

⁵ The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics 2009

⁶ Lundqvist 2009

⁷ Delmas and Young 2009:6

and can take the form of international accords, national policies and legislation, transnational institutions and more⁸. Governance can thus vary in shape and content but has one objective in common; to solve collective action problems.

In a time of dramatic increases in the scope and intensity of the impact of human actions on the world's ecosystems, governance is perhaps needed now more than ever. After the consolidation of the sustainable development paradigm, governance is now expected to take into account not only environmental issues but also social and economic concerns.⁹ There is thus a growing demand for effective governance. It is in light of this that the CCB certification can be viewed: as a means of responding to the need for forest governance by taking both social, economic and environmental considerations into account.

2.3. Historical review of environmental governance

Concepts of natural resource governance have changed rapidly during the second half of the 20th century¹⁰, and a short review of these changes will be given in this section, as well as a presentation of the main forms of governance.

Historically, the state has been conceived the given agent of natural resource governance. The state was expected to manage natural resources by legislation and enforcement. Thanks to its infrastructure, specialized personnel, budget and coercive control, the state was considered the best suited actor to resolve environmental issues.

However, by the late 1970's and early 1980's this view was challenged, for several reasons. With a nascent globalization, including increasing international trade and growing economic, social and political interactions across nation borders, the state gradually lost its governing capacity. Awareness grew of the limitations of the state, including its ineffectiveness and lack of flexibility.¹¹ The combined effect of loss of both state capacity and faith in the abilities of the state led to the appearance of alternative means of governance. Within the field of natural resource governance, market-based solutions were promoted to address the inefficiencies associated with state governance, and to enable greater

⁸ Lemos & Agrawal 2006

⁹ Delmas and Young 2009

¹⁰ Shabbir Cheema and Rondinelli 2007

¹¹ Delmas and Young 2009

profitability in the utilization of natural resources.¹² Codes of conduct, certification schemes and other voluntary mechanisms are examples of this form of governance. However, critical voices have been raised regarding the increased recourse to market-based solutions. Social goals might be undermined as the market is unable to take these into account, and market governance might lead to unequal allocation and unequal access to natural resources. Accountability and legitimacy are also important challenges for the market governance approach.¹³

During the late 20th century, a third governance approach grew in importance, namely decentralization. Development theory shifted towards participatory development and growth-with-equity objectives, which led to increasing calls for decentralization.¹⁴ This shift could also be observed within the field of environmental governance and decentralization is today a major trend shaping environmental governance.¹⁵ As the following section will show, however, decentralized governance has not been spared from objections and its impacts remain contested.

2.4. Decentralization – a contested strategy

This section outlines potential benefits and problems associated with decentralization, with an emphasis on natural resource management in a context of developing countries.

Decentralization is the transfer of power to local level administrative units and social groups.¹⁶ One of its main objectives is to reverse power relations and empower people that are commonly excluded from decision-making.¹⁷ Empowerment is defined by the World Bank as "the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes".¹⁸ It concerns both institutional structure and individual capacity. Important aspects of the institutional structure include access to information, and accountability, which is defined by the World Bank as "the

¹² Lemos and Agrawal 2006

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Shabbir Cheema and Rondinelli 2007

¹⁵ Lemos and Agrawal 2006

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ See e.g. Binswanger-Mhikize et al. 2010, and Mansuri and Rao 2004

¹⁸ World Bank PovertyNet 2014b

ability to call public officials, private employers, or service providers to account, requiring that they be answerable for their policies, actions, and use of funds”.¹⁹ Participation in decision-making processes is also an important aspect of empowerment and is considered both an end in itself and a means for obtaining better decisions. Since information problems are reduced, participation is expected to lead to better designed projects, and more equitably distributed project benefits.²⁰ Decisions-makers can also take advantage of precise time- and place-specific knowledge, thereby improving the targeting of e.g. poverty programs, and increasing the responsiveness to local needs.²¹ Exit options, that enable dissatisfied members to quit a collectivity, are commonly considered an important feature of empowerment as it prevents that members are exploited.²²

On an individual basis, empowerment means increasing assets, which refers to material assets and include land, housing, livestock, savings, and jewelry.²³ Empowerment also means increasing capabilities, which are inherent in people and enable them to use their assets in different ways to increase their wellbeing. Capabilities can be divided into *human capabilities*, which include good health, education, and productive or other life-enhancing skills; *psychological capabilities*, including self-esteem, self-confidence, and ability to imagine and aspire to a better future; and *social capabilities*, including social belonging and values that give meaning to life.²⁴ By strengthening organizations that represent poor people, the organizational capacity could be enhanced²⁵, and particularly the communities' capabilities to undertake self-initiated development activities.²⁶ Another important aspect of social capabilities that decentralization is expected to boost is social capital, which Putnam defines as "the collective value of all "social networks" and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each

¹⁹ World Bank PovertyNet 2014a

²⁰ Mansuri and Rao 2004

²¹ Lemos and Agrawal 2006

²² Warren 2011

²³ Narajan 2002

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mansuri and Rao 2004

²⁶ Casey, Glennerster and Miguel 2010

other."²⁷ Social capital is also commonly referred to as the level of trust among people.²⁸

Decentralization is also expected to generate increased local-level market activity, and increased legitimacy for decisions, since those affected by the decisions are included in the decision-making process.²⁹

Community governance is sometimes put in relation to the concept of "good governance", a term used to describe characteristic traits among successful policy systems. The United Nations define good governance as having eight major characteristics: it is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and follows the rule of law.³⁰ Proponents of community governance often state precisely these characteristics as being typical for community governance.

However, scholars have shown that there might be serious unintended effects of decentralization, which has led to a questioning of the appropriateness of the decentralization approach. Firstly, it is debated whether the positive impacts mentioned above actually occur in practice. For example, Mansuri and Rao³¹ emphasize that decentralization might not be a successful means of empowering poor people. The concept of participation might be used to legitimize the project's previously established priorities, and might not improve the match between what a community needs and what it obtains. Others have shown that, in practice, participation might require complex institutional changes, which has led project implementers to include stakeholders only at some stages of the project, commonly excluding stages such as budgeting and designing the project.³² Golooba-Mutebi³³ also highlights that participation might be time-consuming, thereby putting more pressure on already overworked people. Mansuri and Rao question whether decentralization actually leads to reversed power relations. Instead, they argue, studies have shown that local elites often grab both power and material benefits from decentralized projects, thereby reinforcing existing power

²⁷ Putnam 2000:19

²⁸ Keeley 2007

²⁹ Young 2009

³⁰ UNESCAP

³¹ Mansuri and Rao 2004

³² Biswanger-Mkhize et al. 2010

³³ Golooba-Mutebi 2004

structures and increasing inequality. Case studies have shown that wealthier, better-networked individuals with strong bargaining power are likely to dominate decision-making.³⁴

Critics of community governance argue that the dispersion of power also constitutes a risk for corruption.³⁵ Corruption, defined by Transparency International as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain", not only includes bribery but also embezzlement (the taking or conversion of money, property or valuable items by an individual who is not entitled to them but has access to them by virtue of their position) and favoritism (the favorable treatment of friends, business associates and family in the distribution of resources and positions, regardless of their objective merits).³⁶

Mansuri and Rao highlight that communities vary in their ability to mobilize information and monitor disbursements, which creates further opportunities for both elite capture and corruption. There is also some evidence that the infusion of outside financial assistance for community groups may lead to rapidly changing group composition, including the accelerated departure from the group of the most socially marginalized individuals.³⁷

As can be seen from this review, there is no clear answer to the question whether or not community governance should be promoted as a means to cope with collective action problems. In summary, advocates of decentralization stress that it leads to empowerment, including structural components such as participation, access to information and exit, and individual components such as assets and capabilities. Other potential positive impacts include increased local-level market activity, responsiveness to local needs and accountability. Potential negative impacts from decentralization are corruption, elite capture, inequality and changing group composition.

2.5. Aim of the study and research question

In the light of the above-described controversy on decentralization, it is evident that more research is needed on its impacts on local communities. This study aims

³⁴ Mansuri and Rao 2004

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Transparency International 2013b

³⁷ Casey, Glennerster and Miguel 2010

at contributing to the theory formation on sustainable management of natural resources, by answering the following question:

- *Do CCBA's decentralization ambitions lead to the advantages asserted by advocates of community governance?*

3. Method

In this section, the methodological choices for answering the research question are described and motivated. These choices concern research design, method for data collection, ethical and reliability considerations, and finally operationalizations of key concepts and criteria for drawing conclusions.

3.1. Research design

For the purpose of this study, a *single case* design was chosen. The reason behind this choice is firstly that the study aims at examining a complex problem: the impacts on the local community of a certain governance strategy. In order to increase the internal validity, it is desirable to include as many potential impacts as possible. The impacts studied are themselves highly complex, which requires a design that allows for in-depth analysis.

Secondly, the CCB standards are a relatively recent phenomena, and there are currently few projects that have received the verification.³⁸ The cases are also geographically dispersed, which means it would be highly impractical to study more than one case. Due to practical limits, a comparative design has therefore been opted out.

One could argue however, that the study is a so called *within-case analysis*, since it aims at describing a *change* over time within a community. Even though interviews were carried out at only one point in time, the interviewees were continuously asked to evaluate the change within their community after they joined TIST. Regardless of the terminological concerns, the design chosen will allow for drawing conclusions on what impacts TIST has had for the local community.

³⁸ The CCB certification has two steps: firstly, a *validation* that guarantees a good project design, and secondly a *verification* that is an independent endorsement of the quality of project implementation.

3.2. Case selection

The case chosen for this study is a CCB verified tree planting project named TIST, located in Tamil Nadu, India. TIST is based on subsistence farmers offsetting some of their agricultural land for planting trees, thereby sequestering carbon. Farmers join on an individual basis and each farmer plants trees on their own land, thereby retaining ownership of the land and the trees. A for-profit company called Clean Air Action Corporation (CAAC) funds TIST and administers the selling of carbon credits generated by the tree planting. The carbon credits are sold on the international voluntary market for carbon offsets, to companies and other entities that wish to carbon offset their activities. During the project's lifespan, the farmers receive 70% of the carbon credit revenues, and the remaining 30% goes to administration of the project and profit for CAAC. The farmers receive a quarterly carbon payment based on number of trees, and the remaining sum after 20 years. TIST organizes the farmers into small groups of 6 to 12 persons that should provide mutual support. Representatives from the different small groups engage in monthly node meetings, in order to exchange information, develop "best practices" and receive training and education. The double aim of the program is to mitigate climate change and empower poor subsistence farmers.

The project has a high degree of decentralization since the tree planting, which is the backbone of the program, is completely controlled by the farmers. The farmers decide when and where to plant, how many trees and what species.

Judging from TIST's project design, TIST can be expected to have good conditions for successful governance. The small groups can be expected to safeguard inclusion and empowerment, and since the project is supposed to practice rotating leadership, the risk of domination of local elites and unequal allocation of project benefits should be limited. Continuous education and knowledge exchange within and between small groups could be expected to boost human and social capital, voluntary participation should reduce the risk for involuntary relocation, and so on. It is thus motivated to consider TIST a *most likely case* for successful decentralized governance. In other words, if the problems emphasized by critics of decentralization have arisen within TIST, that would be a strong indicator that the critics are right.

3.3. Semi-structured interviews

The method of data collection employed was semi-structured interviews with farmers involved in the project. The farmers are the central actors in the research question, since the study aims at describing the impacts of the project on the local community.

The method chosen allows for examining the farmers' own experiences of the project. For many of the variables studied (as presented in further detail in chapter 3.7), it is not primarily objective facts that are in focus but rather the farmers' subjective view of certain phenomena. For example, the study is not only examining whether people are *formally* included in decision-making processes, but also whether they *feel* included. For other variables included in the study it would have been preferable to combine the interviews with e.g. a survey. For variables such as corruption, not only the individuals' perceptions of corruption are of interest, but also the actual, objective level of corruption. However, the survey option was not practically feasible in this case, since the farmers were geographically dispersed and difficult to reach. The study was therefore limited to 13 semi-structured interviews. The limitations resulting from this choice of method should be kept in mind when drawing conclusions from the data.

The interviews were structured around central themes corresponding roughly to eight variables relevant for this study (as described in chapter 3.7.). An interview guide (see Appendix 1) was prepared, and the same type of questions was asked to all respondents. Open questions with follow-ups were used, which allowed the farmers to explain their views, and to further develop answers and give examples.

The manager of TIST India was interviewed in order to shed some light on the general functioning of TIST. Since the person interviewed was the highest official of TIST India, it might be in his interest to give a somewhat embellished description of the project. His answers have therefore been critically analyzed, mainly in relation to the farmers' experiences. The information from the TIST manager was also complemented by a review of documents relating to TIST, such as their Validation Report to CCB. It turned out, however, that some discrepancies existed between documents and reality, and the documents have also been

analyzed with caution.

3.4. Selection of interviewees

The interviewees were chosen strategically according to the principle of maximal variation, since the study aims at covering all variations in experience within the communities in TIST. First of all, five villages in three different geographical areas were chosen, which means that the interviewees belonged to three different nodes and had different local TIST agents. The interviewees varied in age, length of TIST membership, position within the community, and position within their small group. There was also some distribution among richer and poorer individuals within the villages. The interviews were continued until theoretical saturation was obtained, which occurred after 13 interviews.

Important to notice is that only men were interviewed. This was first of all due to the fact that only men were members of the project in the villages visited. India is often ranked as one of the world's most gender-biased countries³⁹ and this structure was also found in the villages visited. The common order seemed to be that the man in the household took responsibility for the breadwinning, thereby taking all decisions concerning the farm land and the tree plantation. I searched for women with some knowledge about TIST even though they were not officially members, but it was very hard finding any. The tree planting and the TIST membership was clearly the man's business, and the benefits from the project were likewise distributed to the man. In some cases, the woman in the family participated during the interview, and some questions were put directly to her. The information gained from women was however limited in scope. Although this might seem like a limitation of the study, it is also a result in itself that no women were involved in the project. TIST has failed to empower women, other than indirectly as the household is empowered. The implications of this finding are further discussed in the Results section.

One should also notice that the choice of interviewees was not random, and the study has no ambition of quantifying the answers obtained.

³⁹ See e.g. the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index, where India in 2012 was ranked as Medium/High level of discrimination against women.

3.5. Ethical considerations

None of the themes treated during the interviews could be considered particularly sensitive but the interviewees were granted anonymity, which was primarily to allow them to speak freely about their experience of the project without risking any kind of reprisals from TIST. The interviewees were informed of the aim of the interview before it took place, and they were also invited to ask questions. No one refused to participate, neither before nor after the interview was carried out.

3.6. Use of interpreter and other reliability concerns

Since all interviewees spoke Tamil, a Tamil-English interpreter was used for all interviews but one (which was carried out in English). The use of interpreter is problematic, as interviewing is less flexible and the quality of the translation might be difficult to evaluate.⁴⁰ In order to minimize the risk of inaccurate results, the interpreter was carefully introduced to the subject, and the importance of precision was emphasized.

In order to increase reliability, all interviews were recorded and thoroughly transcribed.

3.7. Operationalizations

The potential positive and negative impacts from decentralization identified in chapter 2 are summarized in table 1. These variables are operationalized in the following section, in the same order as they appear in Table 1. All operationalizations are based on the definitions presented in chapter 2.4.. As can be seen from the table, there are quite a few theoretical concepts that need to be operationalized. For many of the concepts, the measurement is quite complex,

Table 1. Potential positive and negative impacts from decentralization.

<i>Potential negative impacts</i>	<i>Potential positive impact</i>
Corruption	Empowerment
Inequality	Increased village-level market activity
Elite capture	Accountability
Changing group composition	Responsiveness to local needs

⁴⁰ Bragason 1997

which could affect the internal validity. In order to increase the validity, well-established operationalizations were used as far as possible. During the interviews, several questions were put on the same topic, to ensure correspondence.

Corruption was operationalized through a number of questions, which were all derived from Transparency International's survey questionnaire⁴¹. The interviewees were asked questions on bribery, rules and regulations regarding distribution of money and other material benefits, and embezzlement and favoritism. Lastly, they were asked whether they thought the frequency of this type of phenomena had changed in their village after they joined TIST.

As for the *Inequality* variable, questions were asked so as to enable comparisons between non-members and members, between members of the same village, and between members of different villages. The interviewees were asked questions on how the distribution of benefits usually took place, and whether they perceived the distribution as equal.

Elite capture was measured by asking questions on the distribution of power within the project. Power was measured as ability to achieve one's will, which is a simplification of Weber's definition of power.⁴² The interviewees were also asked about the leadership within the project.

Changing group composition was measured by asking the interviewees whether someone had moved from the village after the project started up, and if so, for what reason.

As for *empowerment*, the aim was to include as many aspects of it as possible, both concerning institutional climate and individual capacity. The institutional climate was firstly measured by assessing the farmers' access to information, by asking the interviewees about their means of communication with the project staff and other members. They were also asked about their opinion of the access to information, and their knowledge about the project and their rights and responsibilities. Participation was measured by asking about the decision-making processes within the project. The interviewees were also asked during which parts of the project (such as planning, budgeting, implementation and

⁴¹ See Transparency International 2013a

⁴² Namely, "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance.." (Weber 1978:53)

evaluation) they had had a say, and to what extent they felt that their priorities, needs and preferences were taken into account.⁴³ Exit options were also measured, by asking the members whether they thought it would be easy or difficult to quit the project if they wanted to. As for individual assets and capabilities, the interviewees were asked about prospects for the future and level of health and education, and whether these had changed after joining TIST. They were also asked whether their economic situation had changed due to joining TIST. Organizational capacity was measured by asking whether the TIST members were cooperating on other matters than the tree plantations, in order to see if TIST had increased their capabilities to undertake self-initiated activities. Social capital, another capability, is admittedly difficult to operationalize but is commonly measured as the level of trust. In this study, the World Value Survey⁴⁴'s classical question on trust was used. Finally, the interviewees were asked to evaluate whether there was any change in level of trust after joining TIST.

Increased village-level market activity was measured by asking the interviewees whether they had noticed any difference at the local market after TIST, for example concerning purchase patterns and the number of vendors.

Accountability was measured by asking the interviewees about their means of appealing decisions and to what extent they were able to identify who was responsible for a certain decision. The extent to which they knew their rights that came from the TIST membership was also measured. Access to information closely relates to accountability as the former is a prerequisite for the latter⁴⁵, and access to information will therefore be discussed in relation to the accountability.

When it comes to the *responsiveness to local needs*, the character of this study makes an objective evaluation impossible. This variable will therefore be based solely on the farmers' own perception of the responsiveness to their needs.

3.8. Criteria for drawing conclusions

In this section, the criteria for drawing conclusions are described for each of the variables presented above.

⁴³ These operationalizations are based on the World Bank's *Participatory Communication. A Practical guide*. Tufte and Mefalopoulos 2009.

⁴⁴ World Value Survey 2012

⁴⁵ Narajan 2002

When analyzing *corruption*, it is first examined whether corruption exists at all within the project. If corruption has occurred, the context will be taken into consideration. It might not be reasonable to expect a project in India to be completely spared from corruption. To the extent possible, the farmers were therefore asked to compare the level of corruption in TIST with similar projects. If the corruption level is higher in TIST than in similar projects, it is considered a problem, otherwise not.

Inequality is analyzed by comparing the situation before TIST and after. If inequality has increased it will be considered a problem, otherwise not.

Elite capture is analyzed by measuring whether some persons have got more power and other resources from the project. If so, it is examined *who* these persons are. Only if they belong to privileged groups will elite capture will be considered a problem. Privileged groups include people that are richer than average in the village, religious leaders, village presidents, and leaders of other groups.

Changing group composition is analyzed by assessing whether somebody has moved from the area after TIST started up. If somebody has moved, for reasons that can be related to TIST, changing group composition is considered a problem, otherwise not.

As for *empowerment*, a division is made between institutional climate and capabilities and assets. The institutional climate concerns access to information, participation, and exit. To be considered having good access to information, the farmers should have some basic information about TIST, have some means of actively contacting TIST (e.g. attending a meeting) and themselves consider the access to information to be good. The evaluation of *participation* is based both on formal participation, namely to what extent the farmers have been involved in different parts of the project, and on the farmers' own perception of their participation. Any participation at any stage of the project is considered a positive impact. The same principle is applied to the farmers' own perception; any feeling of inclusion is considered a positive impact. Good *exit* opportunities are a prerequisite for empowerment, since it ensures that participation in the project is voluntary. Lack of exit could lead not only to lack of positive impact, but also to negative impacts such as exploitation of the farmers. Lack of exit is therefore

considered a negative impact, whereas good exit opportunities are considered a positive impact. Exit should be both formally and practically viable for the farmers in order to be considered good. As for the variables *assets and capabilities*, any increase in the variables is considered a positive impact.

The variable *increased village-level market activity* is considered a positive impact in case the farmers state that it has increased, otherwise not.

Accountability is considered to be good in case the farmers are able to identify who is responsible for different decisions, have some means of protesting against decisions, and know their rights that come from the TIST membership.

The results on the *responsiveness to local needs* are analyzed with caution, since the method chosen does not allow for comparisons or quantification. The analysis is based on the farmers' perception of TIST's responsiveness. In case they find it good, it is considered a positive impact, otherwise not.

4. Results and analysis

The following chapter compiles the answers from the interviews in order to assess whether the impacts summarized in Table 1 can be identified in TIST. The variables are treated in the order they appear in the table, and are analyzed according to the criteria presented in chapter 3.8.

4.1. Corruption

Three different aspects of corruption were studied, namely (1) bribery (including giving gifts and paying additional fees), (2) rules and regulations regarding the provision of benefits, and (3) embezzlement and favoritism.

Regarding bribery, the results were unequivocal: no bribing took place within TIST. None of the interviewees had neither paid a bribe, nor been asked to do so.

When it comes to the distribution of benefits, the rules are clear regarding the carbon money. Each member receives a certain amount per tree and year, and no deviation from this rule was discovered. Regarding other material benefits, such as fertilizers and seedlings, there seemed to be no clear rules on how they should be distributed. Despite this, the interviewees all stated that there were no

irregularities and that the material benefits were equally distributed within the group.

Regarding embezzlement and favoritism, the results were mixed. Some interviewees told that there was no corruption whatsoever in TIST. Other members said that the TIST agent that comes to their village sometimes charges a transportation fee much higher than what the transport actually costs, i.e. the agent makes some profit for himself. Some members also said that the TIST agent sometimes gets seedlings that are supposed to be distributed among the TIST members. Instead of giving all the seedlings to the farmers, the agent sells some of them for his own benefit. In this context, one must however remember that the Indian society in general has a high level of corruption. India scores 36 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index for 2013, where 100 is very clean and 0 highly corrupt, and where a score under 50 indicates "a serious corruption problem"⁴⁶. The members in question also explained that the problem with the seedlings was not typical to TIST; "it takes place all over the agriculture department, TIST, the government, everywhere." Taking the context into account, and acknowledging that there is not more corruption in TIST than in other related areas of society, corruption is not considered a problem within TIST.

4.2. Inequality

In this section, possible inequalities between the village members that decide to join the project, and those who decide not to, are examined. Secondly, it is examined whether there are any inequalities between TIST members within the same village, and thirdly whether there are any inequalities across different villages. A fourth aspect concerns gender equality.

Regarding potential differences between *members and non-members*, some interviewees stated that in their village, everybody had been invited to join the project. They also said that there was no difference in income between those who became members and those who did not, it was merely a question of interest and willingness to invest for the future. Other interviewees however stated that only people that had already planted trees were invited to join the project. This not only

⁴⁶ Transparency International 2013a. Sweden scores 89, as a comparison.

violates the CCB standards and TIST's own rules, but also leads to reinforced inequalities. One interviewee explained that the primary reason why some people decided not to plant trees was that they could not find the initial capital necessary. The same interviewee also said that in the long run, those who had planted trees would earn more. In this context, TIST's behavior is remarkable. Instead of supporting the economically weaker farmers in the village by providing them with seedlings and other support, TIST focuses solely on the more privileged village members by giving them carbon payments and other benefits. Instead of evening out inequalities within the village, TIST is in this case reinforcing existing inequalities.

As for *TIST members of the same village*, no inequality was found, neither in terms of material benefits nor power. As stated earlier, the carbon money is distributed according to fixed rules, and other material benefits were also distributed equally among the members. Regarding the distribution of power, the node meetings were mostly for information sharing and usually not for decisions-making. The node meetings were led by a TIST agent, and the common view among the interviewees was that people were equal within the group. As for the small groups, they were not working as intended in any of the villages visited. Their sole function was administrative; the small group members received the carbon payment to the same bank account. Regarding the distribution of material benefits and money, the unequivocal conclusion is therefore that no inequality can be observed.

As for possible inequalities between *members of different villages*, it appeared that there were major differences in what support the members got from TIST. First of all, the access to information varied. In one village, there were regular node meetings where everybody received information. TIST had also helped the members set up a microcredit bank, and the members were motivated and strengthened by the meetings and the advantages they provided. In other villages, members were never invited to any node meetings. Others knew there were meetings but were not motivated to attend because they did not find it beneficial enough. Some farmers were also found to have very limited knowledge of their rights and responsibilities. For example, some farmers did not receive their carbon

payment, without understanding why. The distribution of material benefits across villages was also very arbitrary; some did not receive anything at all, others received as much as they wanted. Since all farmers have signed the same contract with TIST and CAAC, it is highly unfair that they receive different support. CAAC earns the same amount of money for each farmer, and one can therefore argue that all farmers should receive the same benefits from TIST.

As for *gender relations*, it quickly became clear when visiting the villages that women have a very unaspirated role within TIST. In the villages visited, there was not a single female TIST member. TIST seemed to have adapted to a gender-biased context and were not taking any active steps⁴⁷ to alter this power order. The only impact TIST might have on the gendered power relations is to enhance male networking and increase men's capabilities, thus further reinforcing the existing inequality.

4.3. Elite capture

In this section, the question to be answered is whether the local elite had benefited from the project in any way – by grabbing either power or material benefits.

As mentioned, there were no inequalities in the distribution of material benefits among the members. As for the distribution of power, there was no sign that the local elite had captured leading positions. Leading figures, such as religious leaders and village presidents, were found not to have any specific role in the project. On the contrary, they were either not members, or had unaspirated roles within the project. The small group leaders were considered economically equal to the other village members and had not had any other leading role before TIST. The conclusion must therefore be that no elite capture had occurred.

4.4. Changing group composition

On this point, the results are unequivocal; in none of the villages visited had there been any change in group composition. In some cases, people had left the village for work or studies in bigger cities, but for reasons unrelated to TIST.

⁴⁷ According to TIST's project manager, TIST welcomes women as members but are not doing anything actively to involve more women.

4.5. Empowerment

In this section, different aspects of the institutional climate and the farmers' individual assets and capabilities are discussed.

4.5.1. Institutional climate

First of all, the *access to information* is examined. TIST's project design documents indicates that there are two major means of communication within the project. Firstly, representatives from the small groups attend monthly node meetings, and then spread to their small groups what has been discussed. Secondly, there are monthly newsletters with information and advice from TIST. However, the node meetings were not working as intended and many members did not attend them. The newsletters were distributed in the node meetings, which was unfortunate since those who did not attend the meetings lacked this second source of information too. The means of communication were therefore very limited for some farmers.

The knowledge about TIST varied a lot among the members. Some members had a basic understanding of how TIST operates. They might also get some updates on what is going on within the project. However, other members had very limited, if any, information about the program in which they were members. Some simply said they did not know anything at all about TIST. Regarding the budget, none of the interviewees knew anything about it.

As for the farmers' means of communication with TIST, the answers varied. One member said he had no means whatsoever to contact TIST. He could not attend the node meetings and as a consequence did not receive any newsletters, and he had no other way to contact TIST. Another member had the phone number to three TIST agents, and could call them at any time: "if I need information I can get it fast. If I need anything I contact the three persons, and they will help me immediately."

The farmers own opinions about the access to information varied. Some farmers thought the information they got was enough, while others stated they would like to receive more information from TIST than they presently did.

In conclusion, TIST performs poorly on all aspects of access to information.

TIST is therefore considered not having empowered the farmers on this point.

As pointed out in chapter 2.4., *participation* is another important aspect of an empowering institutional climate. The original project design for TIST was made in 1999. The project has thereafter expanded, keeping basically the same design.⁴⁸ The TIST members interviewed for this study all joined the project within the last five years, and were therefore not included in the designing of the project. It was clear however, that the members were participating very actively in the setting up of their plantations. All farmers chose themselves how much land to offset for tree planting, and what species to plant. They got advice from TIST on how to start up and maintain the plantation, but each farmer always decided how to use his land. Setting-up the plantations was thus highly participatory. When asked about the extent to which the farmers could influence decisions concerning TIST, a distinction appeared between issues that concerned the tree plantations, and issues that related to the overall functioning of the TIST program. On issues that concerned the tree plantations, some farmers, though not all, thought that the TIST staff took into account what they thought, for example what they needed for maintaining the crops or what species of seedlings they wanted. On matters regarding the functioning of the project, it was however clear that TIST is not participatory. Even the members who attended the node meetings did either not know whether they could influence, or felt they had no power to do so. None of the interviewees stated that they felt they *could* influence decisions and priorities on a project level. The members' limited access to information also limits their abilities to influence.

In conclusion, if TIST can be considered participatory on the very local level regarding the tree plantations, it is less so when it comes to requests on e.g. material support. As for the functioning of the project, TIST does not allow any participation at all.

The third aspect of institutional climate included in this study is the *exit* options. An important point here is that the farmers are planting trees on their own land and keep the property rights of both land and trees in case they choose

⁴⁸ CCBA 2013a

to quit the project.⁴⁹ The only economic loss from quitting is that they lose the future carbon payments, which, however, was noticed being of limited economic importance to the farmers. As for formal obstacles, both TIST's manager and the farmers agreed that it was easy for the farmers to quit the project. In other words, there were neither formal nor practical obstacles for the farmers to quit.

4.5.2. Individual assets and capabilities

For the farmers, planting trees is a long term investment, and the time from planting to harvesting ranges from 5 to 25 years. This way, planting trees has certainly increased the farmers' savings. Some farmers also mentioned that the yield will be an important source of income for them in the future, that might enable them to increase their material well-being.

According to TIST's manager, the members are supposed to receive a certain amount of money after 20 years in the project, corresponding to the rest of the 70% of total carbon earnings they have not received at that point. From TIST's perspective, giving 70% of the profit directly to the farmers is a major argument that they are actually empowering the farmers. The farmers however stated that the carbon payment was of very limited economic importance to them. Further, none of the members interviewed mentioned the future lump payment after 20 years. Either did they not know about it, or they considered it of limited importance as well. In any case, the carbon payments cannot be considered having any substantial effect on the farmers' assets.

In one village, TIST had helped setting up a microcredit bank, which several members mentioned as being important to them. The bank made them save money collectively and enabled them to get loans, e.g. for setting up new businesses.

In total, TIST can be considered to enhance farmers' assets. The extent of this enhancement varies between farmers, but it is clear that TIST has had some positive impact.

As for capabilities, TIST's project design documents state that the members are offered education on HIV, malaria, hygiene, nutrition and other health related

⁴⁹ CCBA 2013a

issues, which could be expected to boost *human capital*. In practice however, none of the interviewees received any of this education and TIST is therefore judged not having any direct impact on the health and level of education of the members.

As for *social capabilities*, TIST seems to have had some impact, even though it did not concern all members. Some members had noticed an increase in social capital. For example, one member said:

"After joining TIST, there was some trust within the group. If I say "we used this fertilizer and pesticide before, you can also try this one", the others usually trust me and use the same pesticide. Previously, we usually did not do that."

Concerning the organizational capacity, it was in some cases clear that TIST had played a role in increasing the cooperation in the village. For example, one member explained that after TIST helped them set up a microcredit bank, they were also sharing business ideas and helping each other in different kinds of projects. Another member explained that in the node meetings "we discuss about helping the students in the local school, helping the community." It is thus clear that by organizing people into groups, TIST has spurred cooperation on other matters as well, and has enhanced the organizational capacity. For the members who neither attended node meetings nor cooperated within their small group, the organizational capacity had naturally not increased.

Some members expressed that they perceive the project as meaningful. For example, one member, who was temporarily the village priest, had started up a tree plantation for the parish and the village school. He explained that the tree planting would remain after he had left the village, and thought that others should follow in his footsteps.

Two indicators of *psychological capabilities* were examined, namely self-confidence and ability to imagine and aspire to a better future. Regarding the self-confidence it was clear that some of the members felt strengthened by the project. For example, one member said: "Now that we are members and planting trees, other villages are following us. We get new ideas, new knowledge, so we are feeling happy."

As for prospects for the future, one member explained that for him,

planting trees was a life insurance policy. If the family ever needs an extra income, they can always sell some timber. However, none of the other members had much aspirations for the future. One mentioned that he did not know what the market situation for timber would be like in 20 years, so he could not count on a good future income from the trees. Another member explained that the situation for farmers in his area was very difficult. He thought that planting trees would help him sustain a few more years compared to doing agriculture, but his situation was still desperate:

"I am not going to get enough money to feed my family, educate my children, for my life needs. At some point, I will not have any money at all. At that point I will move away from this village, to the city or something, and look for a new job"

These very pessimistic prospects for the future had only to a very limited extent been affected by the TIST membership.

In conclusion, the results show that TIST is empowering its members. TIST clearly performs better on assets and capabilities than institutional climate. TIST has increased all aspects of assets and capabilities, except human capabilities. The institutional climate on the other hand, does allow the farmers to actively participate in the tree plantations, but not on broader issues regarding the project design and priorities. Access to information is also poor. As for exit options, the members can quit the project, both formally and economically. This indicates that being a member brings net benefits to the farmer, and also safeguards against exploitation of the farmers. A concluding remark is that very few of the empowerment aspects treated above redound to non-project members. Since only men were members in the villages visited, women cannot be regarded as having been empowered by TIST, which is a significant limitation.

4.6. Increased village-level market activity

Most of the interviewees had not received any carbon payments, and those who had considered it to be a negligible sum that did not affect their economic situation. Of the farmers expecting an increased income from the trees, no one had yet got any yield. None of the members had thus so far received any

substantial increase in income, which makes an increase in village-level market activity implausible.

4.7. Accountability

As stated earlier, the farmers' access to information was very limited. This has considerable implications for the accountability, since the farmers sometimes do not know their rights, cannot identify who is responsible for a certain decision, and do not have any means of contacting TIST in order to appeal a decision. In this section, the farmers own experience of the accountability is examined.

First of all, the farmers take most decisions concerning the plantations themselves, and there is thus no need for accountability concerning these decisions. Since exit options are good, the farmers can always leave the project in case they are dissatisfied. However, as will be seen below, there are important limits to the accountability within TIST.

In some cases, the farmers were complaining about not receiving the carbon payments they had been promised. Their limited information did not enable them to identify who was responsible for the default; themselves, the local TIST agent or the TIST main office. They also had limited means of contacting TIST and to hold someone accountable.

Some members were convinced that their local TIST agent took seedlings and sold in the market instead of distributing them to the members. These members tried to contact a higher TIST official, who did not pay any attention at all to the complaints. The TIST official did not take any measures to investigate or rectify the issue, and the farmers had no means at all to hold their local agent accountable. This was equally true for other members who did not even have a way to get in contact with any higher official in TIST. Their only contact with TIST was through their local agent, meaning that they were completely dependent on him or her.

In conclusion, the limited access to information and means of communication, in combination with no means to appeal decisions, leads to low accountability within TIST. Some farmers expressed feelings of frustration and resignation. The lack of accountability should therefore not only be considered a

lack of positive impact, but also a negative impact since farmers feel powerless and exploited.

4.8. Responsiveness to local needs

The character of the study does not allow for doing comparisons on the responsiveness to local needs, which means the potential for drawing firm conclusions is limited. This section examines the farmers' own experience of TIST's responsiveness to their needs, in order to see what indications can be found.

The farmers' experiences varied regarding TIST's responsiveness. One member said the TIST agent always began the node meetings by asking for the farmers' needs and then strived to help them. Other members experienced that TIST did not respond to their needs.

Several members had suggestions on how to improve the project. For example, one member suggested that TIST set up a partnership with purchasers in order to get a higher price for the farmers. None of the members had however conveyed their ideas to TIST. It is not clear whether they thought TIST would not bother, or if they simply had not had the opportunity to convey it. In any case, it is a clear sign that TIST has not been successful in capturing their needs.

In conclusion, the farmers' experience of TIST' responsiveness to their need varied, but the method chosen for this study makes it hard to draw any firm conclusions.

5. Conclusions

Keeping the research question in mind, it is now time to discuss the results presented above. To what extent has the CCBA's decentralization ambitions led to the advantages asserted by advocates of community governance? In order to answer the question, this chapter summarizes and analyzes key findings, before drawing conclusions. All results are compiled in table 2, where each variable is evaluated based on whether it has occurred within TIST or not. A reminder should however be made of the limitations for drawing conclusions that result from the methodological choices. No random sampling was done and no quantifications can therefore be made. For example, the study cannot assess how *common* the

Table 2. TIST's positive and negative impacts on the local community.

<i>Negative impacts</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Positive impacts</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Corruption		X	Empowerment	X	
Inequality	X		Increased village-level market activity		X
Elite capture		X	Accountability		X
Changing group composition		X	Responsiveness to local needs		X
Poor accountability	X				

form of corruption described earlier is, but can only assess that it does exist.

As for the outcome of the decentralization strategy, it was first of all concluded that no considerable corruption was encountered within TIST. This finding might be explained by TIST's project design, that neither leave much room nor incentives for corruption. Firstly, there are no middlemen in the distribution of money. The carbon payments that the farmers receive are never handled by their local agent, but the money is directly transferred from TIST to the farmers' account. Secondly, TIST handles only small amounts of money, which makes corruption less attractive. The major economic benefit that the farmers receive is from the trees. Since the farmers keep the property right of the trees, this income goes directly to them, never passing through TIST. The argument that decentralization leads to corruption is therefore found not to be true in this case. If there were a risk for corruption, it might be overcome by a clever project design.

TIST did give rise to some inequalities within villages, between villages and between genders. TIST did in one case invite as project members only persons that had already planted trees, an already economically stronger group, thereby increasing existing inequalities. There were also important differences in the support different members got. This inequality was not related to within-community power relations, which the literature commonly focuses on, but was nevertheless probably a result of the decentralization strategy. Geographical inequalities are often highlighted when discussing decentralization of government, e.g. from state level to regional or local level.⁵⁰ It does however not as often occur in the context of natural resource management or development. It is an important equity concern in this context too though, especially in TIST's case

⁵⁰ See e.g. Pierre 2010, and Hague and Harrop 2010

since it is a market-based project where other market actors earn money from the farmers' participation. One finding of the study is therefore that geographical inequality should not be neglected in this kind of projects.

From a gender perspective, it is clear that TIST is not effective in including women in the project. This could also be considered a form of elite capture, since the dominating gender also dominates the project. The implication of this finding is that decentralization does not automatically reverse power relations, and that the causal relationship might be more complex. Decentralization might have to be context-specific in order to reverse power relations. The critics of decentralization are in other words found to be right regarding the risk for inequality. Just as stressed in the literature, project implementers have, at least in part, adapted to an unequal power structure, thereby rather reinforcing than reversing it. No other forms of elite capture were found however, which indicates that decentralization does not *necessarily* lead to elite capture. It might be, once again, that a clever project design could avoid the problem. TIST has decentralized power to the household level, which might be a way of avoiding community-level elite capture. It is however not effective at targeting within-household inequalities.

No change in group composition could be observed within TIST. In the literature, changing group composition is related to large inflows of money. No such inflows seem to have occurred in TIST, which might explain why the problem of changing group composition has not occurred either.

Regarding empowerment, one can argue that TIST performs better on individual assets and capabilities than on institutional climate. The results showed clear increases in both material well-being and social and psychological capabilities. For example it was found, just as stressed in the literature, that by organizing people, their capacity to undertake self-initiated activities was strengthened, and social capital was increased. As for the institutional climate, the results were mixed. The farmers' access to information was poor, in terms of both knowledge about TIST and means of communication. One main cause was that the node meetings have a pivotal role for information sharing. TIST did not painstakingly enough inform the farmers about the meetings and make sure they attended. This led to domino effects, since the farmers as a consequence did not

receive information about other things either. Participation was only ensured on matters that concerned the farmers' own plantations but not on the general functioning of the project, a pattern identified in the literature as being common in similar projects. Both formal and practically feasible exit options did exist however, which is an important aspect of empowerment as it ensures that project participation brings net benefits to the farmers. TIST can therefore be said to have empowered poor people, even though women are excluded from this empowerment.

No increase in village-level market activity was observed. Since the farmers still have not harvested the trees, they are still waiting for the main economic benefits from the project. It might well be that the market activity is spurred later on, but no such impact could be discovered by the time of research.

Accountability was poor, which is not only considered a lack of positive impact, but even a negative impact since some farmers experience feelings of frustration and resignation and a sense of powerlessness and exploitation. The lack of accountability relates to the institutional climate, which supports the statement above that the institutional climate might be a weaker part of TIST. Important to remember is that only decisions concerning the plantations are actually decentralized. For those decisions, accountability is good. It is for decisions made by TIST and the local agents that the accountability is low. Those decisions are not possible to influence by the farmers. This study can therefore not conclude whether inclusion in decision-making leads to better accountability.

It was hard to draw any firm conclusions on the responsiveness to local needs based on the method chosen for this study. The farmers' perceptions on the responsiveness were mixed, ranging from good to low.

What are the overall conclusions to be drawn from the results discussed above? First of all, it is clear that the impacts from decentralization are not black-and-white; both critics and advocates have important points to make. The positive impacts found in this study mainly concern empowerment, whereas the negative impacts are poor accountability and some increase in inequality. How should these impacts be weighted? Firstly, one should remember that empowerment comprises positive impacts on both material well-being, social capital and other social and

psychological capabilities, and also some positive results on participation and exit options. One could therefore argue that these impacts are more comprehensive than the impacts on inequality and accountability, and that TIST should be considered generating net positive effects for the community. This conclusion is supported by the farmers' own perceptions of the project (even though they did not take inequality concerns into account). All farmers stated that it was overall a good project, even though it could be improved in many ways. There was some discontentment about the administration of the project, and in some cases the accountability. But in general, the interviewees all thought the project was beneficial. The fact that the interviewees stayed members, even though it would have been easy to quit, also indicates that the project brought them net benefits. The first conclusion is therefore that TIST has a slightly positive impact on the local community.

What does this conclusion imply from a theoretical perspective? As can be remembered from the methodology chapter, TIST's project design makes it a likely case for successful decentralization. In this light, TIST performs quite poorly. If not even TIST, with its favorable conditions, gives rise to better results than this, one can argue that decentralization probably does not lead to positive outcomes in other cases with less favorable conditions. Before drawing any conclusions on this point however, a caution should be made. During the field study, it appeared that there were important differences in the functioning of the project across villages. In one of the villages visited, there seemed to be no negative impacts at all from the project, while the positive impacts appeared to be much larger than in the other villages. The method and size of sample of the study do not allow for confirming these differences, but it might nonetheless be an indication that some other factor than decentralization also affects the outcome. One such factor could be the implementation of the project. It could for example be that well-implemented decentralization leads to positive outcomes for the local communities, whereas poor implementation opens up for negative impacts such as corruption, and leads to inequalities. This hypothesis cannot be proved or disproved within the scope of this study, but constitutes an interesting opening for further research. The conclusion is therefore that the results from this study

indicate that decentralization in general might lead to quite poor outcomes for the local community, but that this finding would have to be confirmed by testing for other factors, such as implementation.

From a societal perspective, it matters little whether the outcome is a result of the decentralization strategy or of poor implementation. In any case, CCB is supposed to grant investors that their projects lead to net positive benefits for the local community. As the results from this study have shown, CCB does grant net positive benefits for the local community, but the benefits are fairly limited in scope. It is the author's firm conviction that with a few small steps, the project could be much improved and benefit the farmers considerably more. These steps include improved access to information, especially regarding the farmers' rights and responsibilities as project members, and active measures to empower women. More homogenous implementation across villages would possibly improve equality between members and decrease corruption. Likewise, in order to increase their credibility, CCB could improve their standards, ensuring that certified projects move on from "not harming" to truly benefiting local communities.

An opening for future research would be to study the biodiversity impacts of TIST and CCB. TIST's major emphasize is on community benefits, whereas biodiversity concerns are of secondary importance. Since TIST is found to perform relatively poorly on the community aspect, it would be reasonable to expect their environmental outcome to be fairly poor as well. As for the author's own observations, monocultures and use of pesticides and fertilizers seemed to be widespread. It might be that both TIST and CCB could have higher standards regarding biodiversity as well.

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Appendix

Interview guide

I am a student from Sweden, Gothenburg. I am 24 years old, and I am currently writing a Bachelor's thesis in environmental science and political science. That is why I am doing these interviews; to collect information for the thesis. I am interested in the TIST project and how it affects the participants, including you, so the interview is going to be about your experience of TIST. Your participation is very important to me and I hope that the results from my study can also be of interest and help to you and others within TIST.

The TIST staff or anybody else from TIST or its partners will not get to know what you have told me, and you will be completely anonymous in the study. Your answers will not be possible to trace back to you. Me and [name of interpreter] are the only ones who are going to hear this. So I would like to ask you to be honest and speak freely about anything you think about; like I mentioned before I am interested in your own, personal experience.

Is it okay with you if I record the interview?

Do you have any questions before we start?

- **Warm-up questions**

How came you joined the TIST project?

Has joining TIST affected you and your family in any way? How?

- **Capabilities**

Has joining TIST changed the level of health of you and your family? Level of education?

Within your Small Group, do you cooperate on other matters that are not directly related to TIST?

With other TIST members?

Generally speaking, do you think the other village members can be trusted, or do you think that you need to be very careful in dealing with them?

Has this view changed in any way after joining TIST?

Do you have any prospects for the future for you and your family? Have they changed since joining TIST?

Do you feel that you have the power to make important decisions that change the course of your life? (eg education, changing profession) Has this feeling changed in any way after joining TIST?

- **Economic well-being and local market**

Has the economic situation of your family changed due to joining TIST?

If yes, in what way?

Have you noticed any difference at the local market after the establishment of TIST? E.g. Number of vendors, people buying more/less, people changed their purchase patterns?

- **Distribution of power**

Would you say that there are any persons who more easily achieve their will within your Small Group or Group Center?

If yes, who are these persons? What was their position within the village/community before TIST?

How is the leader of the Small Group and the Group Center selected? Do you believe that you could be a leader? If no, why not?

Is the leadership rotating? Between whom does it rotate?

If conflicts arise within the Small Group or between Small Groups, how are these conflicts resolved?

Are there any sanctions if anyone within the Small Group violates the common rules? If yes, what are the sanctions like?

- **Equality**

Within your Small Group, how do you decide how the money and other benefits from the project (fruit, fire wood..) are distributed?

Are there any persons who receive more or less than others at the distribution?

If yes, who are these persons?

Do you believe that this distribution is equal? Why/why not?

- **Participation**

When there is a decision to be made within your Small Group, how does this usually come about?

Within the Group Center? Within TIST as an organization, as you perceive it?

During which parts of the project have you had a say?

Planning the project, budgeting, implementation of the project in your

village, monitoring, evaluation.

Do you believe there is any way for you to convey your own priorities, needs, preferences within TIST? Do you believe that these are taken into account?

Are there any kinds of decisions where you would like to have a say, but have not got so?

The way decisions are made, do you perceive it as fair, in general? Within both Small Group, Group Center and TIST.

- **Accountability (incl. voice + exit)**

Have you ever been dissatisfied with any decision that has concerned TIST?

If no: if you were dissatisfied with any decision that concerns you, would you know who is responsible for that decision? Would there be any way to call for change?

Explanation: all types of decisions; planning, budgeting, implementing, and monitoring. Could also be decision that have been made but never implemented. Decisions made both within the Small Group and within TIST.

If yes, when that happened, did you know who was responsible for that decision?

Could you address that person/group and demand change?

Was it possible to hold accountable the person/group who made the decision? In what way?

If you would like to quit TIST, would that be possible?

Easy or difficult?

- **Access to information**

How much information do you get regarding TIST? Too much, too little?

Is any information regarding the distribution of money within TIST available to you? (TIST budget etc)

If there is any information you want or need from TIST, do you believe you get it? Is it easy or hard to get?

Has the TIST project changed your access to computers or other communication technologies?

- **Corruption**

Are the benefits from TIST (such as money, education etc) provided according to fixed rules and regulations?

Do you know of any person who, in the past 12 months, paid a bribe in any form to anyone involved in the TIST project?

Do you know of any person who, in the past 12 months, had to pay any additional fees or give gifts to get things done within the frame of TIST?

Do you believe that anybody within TIST has taken advantage of his/her position to benefit himself/herself or a family member or friend?

Do you believe that this sort of phenomena has increased or decreased in the village in general after the introduction of TIST?

- **Emigration**

Do you know if any person(s) have moved from the area after TIST started up here? If yes, do you know why they moved?

Was the relocation related to TIST?

Could you describe the persons who moved (sex, age, socioeconomic status)?

- **Personal information**

Age?

Sex?

Caste?

What does your family live from (primary source of income)?

Compared to the rest of the village, are you high class, higher middle class, lower middle class, or low class?

- **Rounding up..**

My last question to you is, what do you think about the TIST program in general? Do you think it's a good or a bad project?

These were my questions. Is there anything else you would like to add?