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"Facipulation and Elite Formation: Community Resource Management in Southwestern Ghana"

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Despite their stated commitment to democratic processes, the Government of Ghana and international authorities presume the accountability and ability of NGOs to represent local interests in forest resource management. This article scrutinises elite formation and elite capture through the case of a Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) in western Ghana. NGOs and the forestry department promotes commercial tree planting on farmlands at this CREMA site. This article shows how institutional mandates, technical and managerial priorities are used by higher-level authorities to rationalise the omission of accountability and representation in CREMA activities. Disregard for democratic processes thus centralise decision making and render political processes apolitical at the cost of effective local participation and control over forest resources. Also, the legal and administrative framework of the CREMA tended to empower the traditional elites. In addition, the recognition of a local NGO by state authorities to oversee natural resource management infringed upon the CREMA's mandate and encouraged the formation of new elites. Further, the higher-level authorities' promotion of tree-tenure privatisation reduced public engagement by enclosing and thus discounting the public forest domain. The combination of these factors compromise the accountability and equitable sharing of benefits in CREMAs. Nevertheless, the CREMAs have been endorsed by the government as an innovative institutional structure for implementing REDD+ projects in Ghana. (Text from author's abstract)

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