

Understanding development through the language of Habermas and Bourdieu: Insights from Nepal's leasehold forestry programme

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ABSTRACT

Development approaches have dramatically shifted from the technology transfer models of the fifties to empowerment models initiated in the late nineties. The authors seek to establish that despite a growing appreciation of 'political' approaches to development, the actual ways in which development projects are designed and implemented constrain genuine deliberations through which poorer and more disadvantaged people could have taken greater control of their lives. Taking a case study of the leasehold forestry development programme in Nepal, this paper demonstrates how developmental practices legitimated by claims to technical knowledge restrict deliberative processes and prevent improvements in the livelihoods of the poorest households. The paper combines Bourdieu's theory of social practices with Habermas' ideas on deliberation to explain how developmental practices have/can become too technocratic, providing limited spaces to the subjects of development to negotiate and define the processes and outcomes that best fit their situations.

KEY WORDS: forestry, models, Nepal