

Tibet: Resource frontiers as primary zones of biodiversity loss

Summary/Zusammenfassung

Resource frontiers (Eilenberg 2014) are sites where we can witness a dramatic loss in biodiversity. Resource frontiers experience rapid transformations from low intensity to high intensity land use practices, e.g. from slash-and-burn shifting agriculture to plantation economy, or from pastoral to more sedentary forms of land use. These transformations are often combined with an increasing integration into the global market economy. Resource frontiers are therefore also frontiers of production. These social, political and economic transformations substantially alter the landscape and have dramatic consequences in terms of biodiversity loss. Protected areas in contrast can be regarded as a reaction to these changes and a means to prevent further biodiversity loss. The aim of this research project is to study these transformations and their normative implications using a comparative perspective. The project thereby addresses the following question: how does the development of resource frontiers change property relations to land and resources as well as imaginations of nature's value and ecosystem services and what are the normative implications of these transformations? The site where these process of resource frontier expansion will be studied is the Tibetan Plateau, studying resource characteristics, land use patterns, property relations, livelihoods pathways, commodity chains. The project will conduct mapping, livelihoods analyses, key informant interviews and household interviews.

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