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Presentations	Session 4.1	<i>The politics of forest governance: understanding power and global complexity.</i>

Abstract Session 4.1 – Forest governance: Hydra or Chloris?

This paper summarizes a book-in-the-making on forest governance. It aims to offer a state-of-the-art review. Analytically, the book distinguishes three meta-discourses on forest governance: modes, shifts and norms. The first refers to multiple modes of governance in the state-market-society triangle, the second to shifts from government to governance and the third to various forms of good governance. Jointly, these three discourses relate to an outburst of many forest governance initiatives around the world the last couple of decades, such as National Forest programs (NFPs), Participatory Forest Management (PFM), Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS), REDD+, and FLEGT. Now *Hydra* and *Chloris* – both figures from Greek mythology – are two metaphors to normatively evaluate this situation. *Chloris*, from the ancient Greek word *khloris* or ‘green’, is the Goddess of flowers. She stands for a positive and optimistic view on all these governance initiatives: ‘let a thousand flowers bloom’. And there is a strong belief that these initiatives may make a difference on the ground. *Hydra* is the multi-headed, serpent-like beast that Heracles has to fight to complete his twelve labors. Every time he chops off a head, it immediately regrows double, and continues attacking him. This image mirrors the *politics* of forest governance: power, resistance, conflict and path-dependencies. So governance reforms and innovations have a hard time to truly change established practices, such as the political economy of deforestation and forest degradation, or do only successfully so in small niches. In the last part of the paper, both metaphors are weighted against one another. It is concluded, inspired by the work of Rosenau, that the world of forest governance is *bifurcated*. Governance innovation and political inertia may exist in parallel in many cases, being separated spatially, or struggle for dominance in others, while trying to suppress the one at the cost of the other.