

The political ecology of Africa's mangroves: experiences from Madagascar and The Gambia

Speaker: **Dr Ivan Scales**
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Chair: **Dr Dan Friess**
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Abstract

The African continent has roughly 20% of the world's mangroves. While aquaculture has been the biggest proximate driver of mangrove loss in many regions (especially Asia and Latin America), the harvesting of mangroves for fuelwood and charcoal production is a growing threat in many African nations. However, the socio-ecological dynamics of African mangroves are poorly understood. To what extent do different political, economic and cultural factors contribute to mangrove use, conservation, and loss in different geographical contexts? How do poverty and growing wealth contribute to mangrove use and loss? What ecological impacts do different mangrove uses have?

In this talk I will take a political ecology approach to explore some of these questions through two case studies. The first is a study of women oyster harvesters in The Gambia. The second is a study I carried out with Dan Friess on the socio-ecological dynamics of mangroves in the Bay of Assassins in southwestern Madagascar. I argue that in both cases, while poverty plays an important role in mangrove use and loss, the socio-ecological dynamics of mangroves are influenced by the intersection of a much broader range of political, cultural and economic factors. These have important implications for environmental policy and mangrove management.

About the Speaker



Ivan Scales is McGrath Lecturer in Geography at St Catharine's College, University of Cambridge. His research emphasises the role of political, cultural and economic factors in shaping the way natural resources are used and contested, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa. He has carried out fieldwork in Cameroon, French Guiana, The Gambia, Madagascar and Senegal. Current research projects include work on the political ecology of African mangroves; agricultural innovation and smallholder farmers; and the diversity of environmental values. He received his first degree in Ecology from the University of Durham, followed by a Masters degree in Anthropology from University College London and a PhD in Geography from the University of Cambridge.

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