
Forestry consultancies: business for their home countries

Forestry consultancy firms are crucial actors behind the scenes in the implementation of pulpwood plantations. They are in charge of promoting, investigating, planning, designing and setting up pulp and paper mills and plantation activities. Additionally, they play the important role of establishing links between executives, technology and machine providers, and local officials and authorities to make sure the establishment and the continuity of such projects.

A paradigmatic example is that of Jaakko Poyry, a Finnish consulting company, which is nowadays the largest forestry and engineering consulting company in the world. In the last two decades it started to expand globally, following and promoting the expansion of tree monocultures and the exploitation of the forests in the South. Jaakko Poyry has offices in 25 countries around the world and employs almost 5,000 people.

However, Jaakko Poyry is not alone. Also prominent are Canada's H. A. Simons, Sandwell, Reid, Collins and Associates, and SNC Lavalin; the US's Brown and Root, Babcock and Wilcox, CH2MHill, and Rust Engineering; the Nordic countries' Silvestria, Swedforest and ENSO/Indufor; Switzerland's and Britain's SGS Silviconsult; New Zealand's FORENCO Consultants; Australia's FORTECH; Germany's DFS Deutsche Forestservice; and France's Cirad and Chleq Frote.

NGOs can play a major role in countering the activities of these often hidden influential actors. A good example has been provided by NGOs such as the Finnish Forest Action Network, which, in close association with Southern NGOs, have organized public fora in the 1990s in Helsinki, at which NGOs from Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Nepal and other countries criticized Jaakko Poyry for interfering in their countries to promote plantations, and called on the Finnish public to curb the abuses of its government agencies and corporations.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Southern NGOs can try to find out if Northern consultancies are active in the promotion of plantation development in their country
- Northern NGOs can provide information on their country's consultancy firms and on their activity in different Southern countries
- South-North links can be established to exchange information and to carry out concerted actions on a particular consultancy
- Northern NGOs can denounce the impacts of these consultancies in their home countries