

What does it mean to be a nation reversing environmentally?

“As we see time and time again, a nation’s insistence on protecting its forests has made local communities the enemies of those forests” (Lat Kau 2012: 426). This was the conclusion drawn by Joachim Lardkaw, an expert in environmental science, specialising in the relationship between a government’s power and the natural environment, including effects on soil, forests and the water system.

Many are surprised by this idea. Those amongst the community with an interest in environmental conservation support international conventions on climate change, the introduction of carbon taxes and the subsidisation of renewable energy, and assume that the environmental problem is a result not of over-involvement by national governments, but rather of under-involvement. Many in the community believe that governments should be investing more time, money and resources into conservation activities. But upon reflection after reading Lat Kau’s insights, it appears to me that local communities are not feeling the full ripple effect of measures put in place by governments. Dealing with the imminent environmental problem is certainly important, but consideration of the communities that are produce those problems and the changes in communities that brought about by the so-called solutions are arguably just as crucial. This is because it is society that determines exactly what the problem is that needs to be solved, and it is the same society that interprets the results of those decisions.