

## **A Model to Help People to Realize Sustainable Forestry Futures**

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### **ABSTRACT**

People usually know how they want their situation to change to secure a better future – but they do not always know how to change their situation. Initiatives intended to secure a better future do not always work as intended, and may have unintended side effects. Computer models can help advocates explore consequences of proposed initiatives, so they can make informed selections of alternatives, secure in the knowledge that consequences have been thoroughly investigated. By encouraging people to explore scenarios, models empower people to be more innovative and less dependent on technocrats. Models also enable planners to experiment with policy without risks to people or to the environment. Emerging software solves many technical limitations, but the real issue is not software, but rather the provision of a supportive framework within which people can express and experiment with ideas. FLORES, the Forest Land Oriented Resource Envisioning System, provides such a framework to stimulate interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers, practitioners and clients. Two recent workshops have demonstrated the feasibility of FLORES, one of which provides the subject matter for a forthcoming issue of *Small-scale Forest Economics, Management and Policy*. However, FLORES is not about software; it is about providing the means to explore the consequences of alternative scenarios. Ultimately, FLORES is not a physical package, but an association of users and the interactions they have amongst themselves, and with the people involved in policy-making. By promoting this emerging network and providing technical support we encourage more people, especially those from developing countries, to influence the development of FLORES and the issues that can be explored within it.

Key words: Decision support system; adaptive modelling; land-use alternatives; policy analysis; envisioning; forest frontier.