Winners and Losers: Application of the Politicised Institutional Analysis Framework to Market-based Conservation Schemes in Kenya

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The past decade has witnessed the rise of market-based conservation approaches, such as Payments for Ecosystems Services (PES) and Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+). PES and REDD+ are heralded for overcoming fundamental flaws of previous conservation approaches by creating a market for the demand and supply of ecosystem services (Ferraro & Kiss 2002). Market-based approaches represent a departure from previous approaches on various grounds: i) they present a paradigm shift from a single focus on ecosystem services provision to one that is integrated; ii) they provide a cash-based benefit distribution system in addition to non-cash benefits, and iii) they offer a conditional incentive system based on agreed upon resource management practices that meet conservation outcomes (Wunder 2013). Combined, these features are considered more promising in regards to meeting the needs of conservation, especially in resource rich, but resource threatened environments.

The transition to market-based approaches also introduces new institutions and creates new institutional arrangements through which conservation is delivered. Whaley & Weatherhead (2014) argue that for the ecosystem service resource paradigm to be successfully sustained, our understanding of the relationship between market-based conservation and human values in decision-making requires improvement. Institutions, defined as the "the rules of the game" (North 1994: 361), combined with the political dynamics that shape them ((Clement 2009)), are thus central to our focus on PES and REDD+ design and implementation. Existing research on PES and REDD+ has focused on exploring institutional performance in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Approaches include analyses of transactions costs to evaluate efficiency (Vatn 2010) and the application of standard governance indicators to evaluate effectiveness (Corbera et al. 2009; Muradian et al. 2010; Sommerville et al. 2010). While these contributions advance our awareness of the conditions under which PES and REDD+ can deliver conservation outcomes, less attention has been directed to the social and political dimensions of institutions that influence PES and REDD+ delivery (Whaley & Weatherhead 2014). Therefore, various calls have been made to address this limitation. Firstly, calls for more in-depth research on the institutional processes that mediate ecosystem service provision through market-based mechanisms are emerging (Corbera et al. 2007). Calls also stress that efficiency and institutions are not mutually exclusive, and socio-politics are embedded in how institutions enable and constrain market-based conservation performance (Muradian et al. 2010). It is argued therefore, that there is no real reason why efficiency should overlook social aspects characteristic of institutions (Muradian et al. 2010). Lastly, Sommerville et al. (2010) call for a need to understand the local institutional context in terms of the characteristics of buyers, sellers and their relationship for PES and REDD+ to be effectively implemented. In support of this, Whaley and Weatherhead (2014) recognise the need to empirically demonstrate the importance of case-specific institutional histories. This research aims to address this critical gap by studying two market-based conservation schemes from Kenya. While both schemes are based on the principle of conditionality, one is a wildlife PES scheme that distributes direct cash benefits to landowners, and the second is a REDD+ scheme that distributes benefits through community projects to those with insecure land tenure. We apply the Politicized Institutional Analysis and Development (PIAD) Framework (Clement

2009; Whaley & Weatherhead 2014) to capture the historical and socio-political processes involved in the establishment of the selected schemes.

We employ a suite of qualitative data collection approaches including the innovative and participatory Net Map approach (Schiffer & Waale 2008) which we use to map the historical and political process of PES and REDD+ scheme design. We then combine the Net Map findings with in depth intra household and key informant interviews to better understand the socio-political realities of scheme implementation. The intra household approach highlights the labour and resource use relations of both men and women, of which the latter are often neglected.

Our results show that in both cases, the introduction of new conservation actors creates new institutional arrangements for the delivery of conservation outcomes. The degree to which 'new' institutions differed from 'old' institutions however varied due to distinct historical processes associated with each case. In the PES scheme, the path dependence of elite capture contributed to actors' exclusion from decision-making processes. Whereas, in the REDD+ scheme, historical land injustices characterised by large scale land dispossession, was a barrier for community members to benefit directly from carbon monies. These results show that while new institutions were established to facilitate the provision of ecosystem services, historical practices remained largely intact. We did observe a reduction of power imbalances which was attributed to various REDD+ certification standards such as Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and affirmative action policies. In the absence of such standards, we observed from the PES case that elite capture and gender imbalances in access to and decision-making over resources were reinforced. We review a number of instances where this inequality served to threaten the conservation outcomes of the schemes.

We conclude that an historical and political perspective sheds light on PES and REDD+ design and implementation challenges including exclusion from decision-making, imbalances in benefit distribution due to tenure insecurity and property rights, and gender biases. Despite these, the creation of institutions represented by newly introduced actors and modes of decision-making can facilitate the provision of ecosystem services whilst starting to address at least some of the existing challenges. Certification standards are one of the approaches that help reduce inequalities in benefit distribution and decision-making, but in their absence, PES and REDD+ may run the risk of reinforcing existing imbalances. We suggest that where informal mechanisms to address imbalances affecting ecosystem service provision are weak, project specific and formal approaches be adopted. Systematic collaborations with institutions within and beyond the conservation landscape may also contribute to positive social and conservation outcomes in the long run.

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