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DEV research briefing

Conservation, Markets and Justice—A comparative study of local and global conceptions

The number of protected areas has more than doubled in the last 20 years and this growth has resulted in increasing claims that conservation poses economic and cultural threats to those communities who live in and around areas of high biodiversity. Some see market-based conservation initiatives as part of the solution to this problem, whilst others believe that the extension of markets will pose new threats to already marginalised forest people.

This Briefing Paper provides an introduction to an international research project being conducted in Bolivia, China, Tanzania and Venezuela. The project hypothesis is that conservation conflicts can partly be understood as tensions and divergences between different conceptions of environmental justice. In particular we are interested in whether local communities hold different ideas about environmental justice to those that they experience in their everyday encounters with forest policies and projects. Our focus is on forest conservation in the tropics, with a particular interest in situations where some market-based activities form part of the mix of local conservation management.

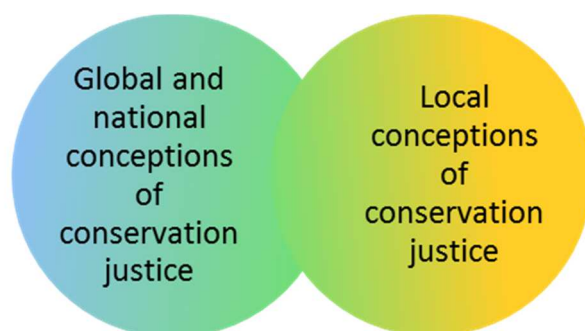
There is now growing interest in environmental justice around the world. This includes for example the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights. However, we still know very little about the kind of ideas about environmental justice held by different groups and individuals, and how these ideas are employed in response to real world environmental problems. We expect these different 'real world' views about justice to be highly contextual. They are shaped by particular cultural, economic and environmental conditions; and by the particular experiences and interests of different stakeholders. What seems fair to a director of a UK based conservation NGO may not resonate with the principles held by some local people. We propose that these different views of justice matter greatly, because they affect both the conservation and human wellbeing outcomes of policies and project interventions.

Research Design: exploring and comparing justice conceptions in Bolivia, China, Tanzania and Venezuela

Much of our empirical research is focusing on exploring local conceptions of environmental justice in sites with some form of community-

based conservation management. We selected four study locations in very different geographical, cultural and political contexts in order to maximise our understanding of the different contextual factors that can shape local justice conceptions.

Figure 1. Our research aims to find key areas of convergence and divergence between global and local justice principles in forest conservation areas.



All locations have seen the introduction of some form of market-based conservation interventions (ecotourism, sustainable/certified timber sales, and/or REDD+ pilot projects). In all cases these market activities take place in conjunction with other forms of conservation based on participatory forest management or indigenous territories. In each location we selected two study sites, again with an emphasis on providing variation in context, and in particular, variation in the nature, scale and progress in market-based activities.

In Tanzania, for example, one site has already sold Forest Stewardship Council certified timbers and is quite far progressed towards selling carbon offsets on voluntary markets; whilst the other site had tenure disputes that stalled its attempts to pursue the same initiatives.

In each site we undertake three main research efforts:

First, we undertake context studies to understand the environmental and socioeconomic contexts in which environmental management takes place.

Second, we examine local conceptions of environmental justice, for example what different individuals and social groups consider to be the fairest way of making decisions about forest management options, and what they consider to be the fairest way of distributing the costs and benefits associated with any intervention.

Third, we explore the conceptions of justice evident in environmental policies and in the local implementation of these policies.

Figure 2. Our research sites

China	Tanzania	Bolivia	Venezuela
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teng-chong County •Sub-tropical and temperate forest •Collective and private forests; national park •Site A: forests under PFM and ecotourism •Site B: forests under PFM and sustainable timber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Kilwa district •Miombo woodland: savannah & forest •Village forest lands •Site A: village forest reserve under PFM, FSC certified timber and REDD+ pilot. •Site B: village forest with stalled PFM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Santa Cruz de la Sierra •Dry Forest •Indigenous territory •Site A: more developed commercial timber activities • Site B: less developed market activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Canaima National Park •Savannah-forest mosaic. •National Park with indigenous rights over ancestral land •Ecotourism enterprises more and less developed



Data Collection Methods: Identifying justice norms through surveys, experimental games and ethnography

Because so little is known about local conceptions of justice, and there are no established methodologies for its research, we are using a combination of methods that facilitate opportunities for comparison and validation of results.

1. Semi-structured surveys. Surveys explore stated preferences for principles of justice in specified context scenarios. For example, respondents are given choices that indicate their preferences for distributing forest incomes according to principles such as ‘need’, ‘egalitarianism’ and the ‘greater good’.
2. Experimental economic games. This method is designed to explore justice behaviours through field based experiments. The games used will focus on the principles of justice that people use to determine what is a fair distribution of village forest revenues.
3. Ethnography. We employ qualitative methods to explore the justice conceptions evident in arguments made about forest management. Our approach is to explore arguments expressed privately (in interviews) as well as arguments that arise in different public forum, including village meetings.

4. Participatory video. This is part of the ethnographic work package and is also one of the public forums that we research. PV has been developed over five decades and has proved to be empowering in the way it enables a community to clarify its needs and ideas over an issue of interest often leading to communication with decision-makers. It is less commonly used as a research method but we are finding that it provides a different and valuable way for communities to identify and articulate ideas about environmental justice.



Analysis: A comparative approach

Looking forward, there will be a strong emphasis on comparisons when analysing our data.

1. Comparing methods. Do the different methods arrive at similar findings about local conceptions of justice? This will include individual 'justice profiles', by looking at how individuals express justice norms in different research contexts.
2. Comparing country locations. For example, comparing the results of the experimental economic games across locations to identify different views of distributive justice.
3. Comparing sites. For example, is there any evidence that sites with greater market-based activity will reveal different conceptions of environmental justice?
4. Comparing local with 'expert' and global

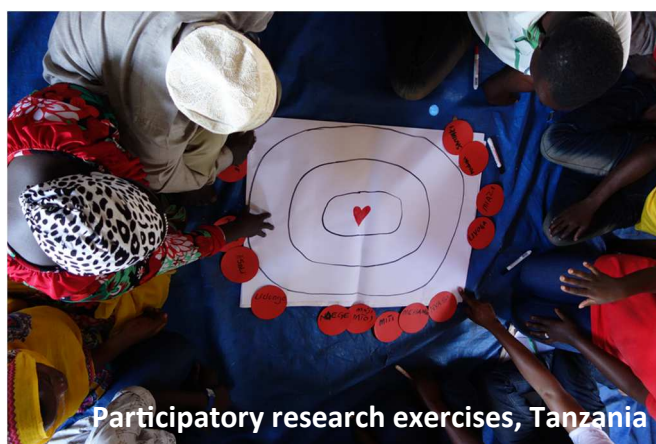
conceptions. For example, how do principles of benefit sharing expressed by local stakeholders converge and diverge from those found in national forest policies or in REDD+ policies?

Analysis events: Inter-cultural workshop and Stakeholder engagement workshop

In Winter 2015 we will hold two linked events in the UK. The inter-cultural workshop will bring together local community and other stakeholders from each location to present and discuss findings from each country. This will include showings of Participatory Videos and summary pamphlets describing findings from each site. The event will be supported by simultaneous translation to enable cross-cultural exchange. The emphasis will be on trying to understand the contextual factors that underly both differences and similarities in justice conceptions.

The inter-cultural event will be immediately followed by a larger stakeholder workshop which we hope will bring together a wide range of practitioners and policymakers involved in forest management and biodiversity conservation in the tropics. The emphasis will be on discussing critically our initial findings and considering the implications for how we can better work towards just and effective conservation.

In addition to these international events we will also be holding workshops in Tanzania, China and Bolivia. These will also aim to bring together practitioners and policymakers to think about how we can better connect research to practice



Stay in touch with us

Local and global NGOs have contributed directly to the research design through discussions at earlier events.

We want to continue with this wider engagement, with a range of stakeholders, including activists, national and international policymakers, conservation NGOs and academics.

We would love to hear from you if you are interested in this work. For example, you might want to be on our mailing list for future updates; you might be interested in attending one of our stakeholder workshops; or you might be conducting related research. We are particularly interested to hear from anybody who is conducting (or who is interested in conducting) other case studies of conceptions of environmental justice in order to share and compare research findings.

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The research is led by Adrian Martin (School of International Development, UEA)

Contacts:

UK team: Dr Adrian Martin (adrian.martin@uea.ac.uk); Dr Nicole Gross-Camp; Dr Bereket Kebede, Dr Iokiñe Rodríguez and Prof. Thomas Sikor.

Partners:

Bolivia: Mirna Inturias, Universidad NUR (mirnainturias@yahoo.es)

China: Dr He Jun, Eco-watch (H.Jun@cgiar.org)

Tanzania: Glory Massao (glory.massao@mpingoconservation.org); Jasper Makala, Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative



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