

All that glitters is not gold;

Power and participation in processes and structures of implementing REDD+ in Kondoa, Tanzania

Abstract

Proponents argue that REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation) has the capacity to empower and benefit the poor through increased participation in community-based conservation. REDD+ is however, initiated from outside these communities and often enters a landscape characterized by power asymmetries. This paper documents a case-study from Kondoa, Tanzania and finds that even when local people seem to be generally in control of decision making, one may seriously question if there is true empowerment and real citizen control. The paper explores local participation in the various stages of establishing REDD+; i.e., deciding whether to participate, demarcating land and formalizing ownership, deciding on land use plans/by-laws and on the benefit sharing mechanisms. Results reveal that participation may not lead to empowerment and genuine control if the structures and processes of participation reinforce the underlying power differentials among the actors. The study further shows how the broader governance structure spanning from the international to the local level influences REDD+ processes at the local level, and recommends that global and national policy should account for the various forms of power of the actors operating at different levels.

1. Introduction

Community participation is advocated both as a virtue in itself and as a critical component for the success and long-term sustainability of REDD+ policies. Participation can be seen as an important safeguard against potentially negative impacts of REDD+ and as a way to ensure enhanced social benefits and human rights. Moreover, it can be understood as an instrument to ensure effective forest management and conservation (Agrawal & Angelsen, 2009; Ostrom, 1990; Peluso, 1992; Rey, Roberts, Korwin, Rivera, Ribet, & Ferro, 2013; Wade, 1994).

Whether seen as safeguard and a right or as an instrument, both perspectives focus on the engagement of participants in creating desired outcomes. As a safeguard, REDD+ participants are more likely to claim their rights if they can influence the decisions that affect their lives, either by being represented in public spaces or by attending themselves (Bolin & Tassa, 2012; Lawlor, Madeira, Blockhus, & Ganz, 2013; Lyster, 2011). Consequently, it is argued that if communities

and indigenous groups participate ‘fully and effectively’, the risk of being manipulated and marginalized by REDD+ is reduced and the potential benefits are enhanced (Chhatre et al., 2012; Moss & Nussbaum, 2011; Rutt, 2014; UNFCCC, 2011). Along the same vein, participation as an instrument for conservation suggests that when people participate in crafting organizational structures, monitoring, sanctioning and conflict resolution systems, rules become better adapted and have higher legitimacy. Hence, they will be abided by to a greater extent and forest management is improved (Ostrom, 1990).

The centrality of community participation to REDD+ is best understood within the historical context of conservation approaches in Tanzania and developing countries more generally. From the 1940s to the 1980s, both colonial and post-colonial governments pursued protectionist approaches to conservation (Roe, 2008). Over time, however, these exclusionary approaches faced increasing opposition because exclusion did not produce the expected ecological outcomes and was associated with negative consequences for local people (Brockington, 2002; Brockington & Igoe, 2006). By the late 1980s, community-based conservation and management was growing in popularity in Tanzania. In terms of achieving genuine participation, the literature has, however, highlighted several pitfalls within the country’s participatory approaches for conservation. These include powerful economic and political interests compromising implementation and exacerbating land use conflicts and poverty (e.g. Bluwstein et al., 2016; Igoe & Croucher, 2007; Mariki, 2013; Mustalahti & Lund, 2009; Walwa, 2017), and problems related to corruption and mismanagement (Lund et al., 2017). With specific reference to forest conservation, others have argued that participatory forest management (PFM) does not foster economic and democratic empowerment because the processes of forest management require professional expertise, which leads to the exclusion of the majority of people in the communities, leaving only a few trained individuals and

development workers or forestry staff to participate (Green & Lund, 2015; Lund, 2015; Scheba & Mustalahti, 2015). Despite these shortcomings, PFM in Tanzania has been lauded for its progressiveness in terms of putting in place the necessary legislative frameworks, as well as recovery and (or) maintenance of forest cover (Blomley & Ramadhani, 2006).

Given the low funding to scale up PFM (Blomley & Ramadhani, 2006), the Tanzanian government hoped to use the ‘massive’ financial resources expected from REDD+ to scale up PFM (URT, 2013). Indeed, in 2008, the country managed to secure a significant amount of initial funding to begin on its REDD+ readiness process. Although the flow of funds did not continue after this initial period, Tanzania obtained sufficient finances to support the implementation of nine REDD+ pilots across the country. At that time however, there were concerns about the possibility that REDD+ could mirror the negative effects of past conservation approaches including a return to evictions and displacement of forest dependent communities (Beymer-Farris & Bassett, 2012), government recentralizing control over forest land, private interests leasing or buying large areas of forest land at the expense of communities (Phelps et al., 2010) and elite capture of REDD+ benefits and processes by local village leaders (URT, 2013).

The designers of REDD+ in Tanzania were therefore aware of and eager to avoid these past mistakes observed under PFM (URT, 2013). In fact, a number of safeguards were put in place also in Tanzania. It is however, unclear whether these have protected local communities or not. We still do not know whether REDD+ as a new policy, has learnt from past experiences and overcome power issues observed under PFM. In that respect we note that REDD+ is based on a global initiative to be implemented locally and actors are heterogeneous, often with conflicting interests (Brockhaus, Di Gregorio, & Carmenta, 2014; Ostrom, 2010).

Some studies on REDD+ implementation have analyzed the level of participation only in decision-making especially related to consenting to REDD+, systems for benefit sharing and land tenure (Haugen, 2014; Krause, Collen, & Nicholas, 2013; Lyster, 2011). Yet, while participation in decision-making is important, an exclusive focus on this may easily overlook that significant exercises of power may occur outside public arenas or operating in forms that are not easy to observe. Actors have varied interests and may conceal information and in this way shape the outcomes of decision-making (Gaventa, 2006; Kothari, 2001; Svarstad & Benjaminsen, 2017). Power may moreover also be structural, operating through formal and informal rules; the institutions of a society (Cleaver, 1999; 2012).

Our main objective is therefore to explore how actors participated in decision-making in a REDD+ pilot project implemented by the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) in 21 villages in Kondo district, Tanzania. Doing so, we also try to unravel the power relations involved, thereby contributing to a literature – e.g., Benjaminsen, 2014 and Scheba & Scheba, 2017 – that has examined power struggles within local REDD+ processes in Tanzania. We follow three processes; the decision whether to embark on REDD+, the demarcation and formalization of land rights (land use planning), and finally how benefit sharing mechanisms were decided upon and payments introduced. The analysis proceeds in two steps. First, we investigate how actors participated in decision-making including how they exercised power to influence which issues were discussed. We further conducted an analysis of how participants evaluate their involvement. Proceeding this way, we demonstrate how decisions taken in the public arena of a seemingly rather successful project (NIRAS, 2015) were influenced by exercises of power – both visibly and invisibly – through actors both within and outside the community.

The paper is structured as follows. In section two, we discuss relevant theoretical concepts on power and participation. Section three sets the scene for the study, while details on methods are in section four. Finally, results are presented in section five and discussed in section six.

2. Theories on participation and power

The UNFCCC emphasizes full and effective participation of all stakeholders in REDD+ implementation (UNFCCC, 2011). REDD+ enters, however, a complex landscape of existing interests and institutions. As noted above, participation may not by itself ensure that outcomes are ‘good’, ‘balanced’, ‘efficient’ or ‘legitimate’. The structure of REDD+, as externally initiated, may frame processes significantly. A key issue regards the process of consenting to REDD+. On what basis can one actually say that a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ reflects the interest of the involved communities? This is about the quality of the process, including what kind of power is exercised. It concerns the relationships between communities and the external initiators of REDD+ (e.g., the NGO and the involved district authorities) as well as the internal power relations in the communities.

One may argue that if the process of entering REDD+ or not has involved local communities properly, the decision is ‘good’. Arnstein (1969) uses the eight rung hierarchical ladder where each rung represents a certain quality of citizens’ participation in and control over decision-making. At the lower end of the ladder, there is ‘non-participation’ where power holders only ‘educate’ and ‘cure’. Then there are rungs emphasizing consultation where people can also voice their concerns, while still lacking the power to ensure that these are taken into account. Only at the highest rungs of participation – ‘delegated power’ and ‘citizen control’ is participation genuine in the sense that citizens have real power to influence the goals made and the decisions taken. Pretty (1995) and White (1996) suggest similar systems for ‘ranking’ participation; seeing participation as a

continuum from a purely instrumental end-means participation process to a rights-based, self-empowerment participation approach where planning, decision-making and implementation is placed with the local people/citizens.

Common to these typologies is the view that increased participation efforts are empowering because citizens have real influence over the processes. However, while this mainstream view still dominates engagement for participation, it has also attracted widespread criticism, emphasizing that it fails to adequately account for the importance of power in participation (Cooke & Kothari, 2001). This is because, for empowerment to occur, individuals and groups must not only be able to exercise agency – the ability to act on behalf of the goals that matter to them – but also to challenge structural barriers such as broader political, economic, social and cultural forces and structures that shape, constrain and enable agency (Dutta, 2011). Therefore, studies of empowerment should capture both agency and structural dimensions.

By emphasizing access to decision-making arenas, standard typologies regarding participation reflect a rather limited perspective of power similar to those emphasized by Dahl (1961) and Polsby (1963). These authors see power essentially as exercised through decision-making. Power is, moreover, seen as pluralistically spread across interests. Any issue that is important in the community could therefore provoke an interest group to push their grievances through the decision-making arenas in order to be heard. Because conflicts of interest are seen as revealed by political participation, non-participation can be thought to reflect satisfaction or even consensus. Such analyses would cover what transpired in the decision-making process by asking questions like: Who participated, who did not and why? What were the key issues or conflicts? How were they resolved? Many studies usually argue that opening up of decision-making processes empowers the less powerful by reducing the power of elites.

While these are important issues, not all conflicts of interest might be openly included in the decision-making processes (Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; 1963). On the contrary, powerful actors might block what makes it to the official arenas through ‘mobilization of bias’, referring to a set of dominant beliefs, values, rituals and institutional procedures that operate to systematically benefit what is usually a minority elite group. Therefore, consensus or non-participation may not necessarily indicate absence of conflict – i.e., the conflict is covert. Akbulut & Soylu (2012), Soylu (2014) and Aguilar-Støen (2014) document examples of exercises of agenda setting power, the latter in a PES project.

Finally, Lukes (2005) adds a third dimension when formulating his three-leveled account of power. Power is not only the capacity to influence decisions (Dahl), or to block what comes on the agenda (Bachrach & Baratz). Power may also be exercised in terms of preventing conflict from emerging in the first place through shaping people’s perceptions and preferences, so that they accept their role in the existing order. That is, one may exercise power by influencing the very wants of others. So, while the perspectives of Dahl and Bachrach and Baratz are behaviorists in their foundations, Lukes’ third dimension adds a social constructivist perspective to power emphasizing structural dimensions of hegemony and ideology.

It follows therefore, that a significant part of power is invisible. To address these concerns, Krott et al (2014) suggest a framework that aims to make power empirically observable. Unlike Lukes’ three-leveled account, which conceptualizes power in terms of the capacity of an actor to make another do something that they would otherwise not do (power as domination/“power over”), Krott’s framework places more emphasis on power as the potential to do something (power as property/“power to”). Accordingly, there are three sources of power, with which actors can alter the behavior of others. These include, *coercion* through for example regulation, physical action or

threat of force, *(dis)incentives* in form of advantages or disadvantages and *dominant information*, which regards altering the behavior of others using misinformation or information that is unverified or blindly trusted (Krott et al 2014, Prabowo et al 2016, Wibowo and Giessen 2015).

Against this background, a typological view of participation, concentrating only on agency through meetings and representation may miss important aspects regarding if empowerment is taking place. It does not capture the structures that may accentuate empowerment or disempowerment (Cleaver, 1999). Participation must be studied as situated within the broader context of people's social life. This implies a need to understand the organizational structure, the characteristics of actor arenas and how power, resources and authority are distributed among people. Key here is how institutions, both formal and informal, influence these aspects (Vedeld 2002, 2017). Accounting for structure is therefore important to understand the local context in which individuals and groups exercise agency, including heterogeneity within and between village commons (Adhikari & Lovett, 2006; Poteete & Ostrom, 2004; Vedeld, 2000).

So, accepting or rejecting REDD+ locally may depend on complex relationships between interests, institutions and power. In a case like REDD+, the linkages across scales – i.e., local, national and international – are also important (Gaventa, 2006; Mohan & Stokke, 2000). The international level is crucial for the framing of the context within which REDD+ is to be instituted locally – e.g., the creation of carbon as a commodity to be traded.

3. Context of the study

Below, we present the study areas, the NGO responsible for implementing the project and we give some general information about forest governance in Tanzania.

3.1 The study site

The pilot project operated in Kolo/Irangi hills, in Kondoa district, Dodoma region in north-central Tanzania. Kondoa district consists of 28 wards¹/sheias with a total population of about 270.000 (Kajembe et al., 2016; NBS, 2013). The district has a semi-arid climate with an average temperature between 16 and 29°C and an average annual rainfall of 500-800 mm. Rainfall is variable, erratic, and falls in short, highly erosive storms (Kangalawe, 2012). Soils are highly erodible, sandy loams with low content of clay and organic matter (Mgeni, 1985). The district is divided into two topographic areas; the Kolo hills with altitudes between 1000 and 1500 m and the surrounding plains at between 500 and 1200 m above sea level. The plains are undulating with a few isolated hills and large swamps while Kolo hills is a rolling hilly zone (Dejene, Shishira, Yanda, & Johnsen, 1997). Kolo has a population of about 62,000 (14,000 households). The main economic activities are crop cultivation (70.2%), agro-pastoralism (27.4%) and salary employment (1.4%) (African Wildlife Foundation [AWF], 2012; Matilya, 2012).

The project area covers 19,924 hectares of community and government land, of which 10,114 hectares are forest reserves. Adding the reference area and leakage belt, the total project area was 71,632 hectares (Matilya, 2012). There are two government forest reserves – the Salanga, a central government reserve, that falls under the jurisdiction of the Tanzania Forest Service and Isabe, a local government forest reserve managed by the district. 15 out of the 21 villages border the government forests. Five have forests on community/village land, while one village has both own forests and border a government forest – see Figure 1.

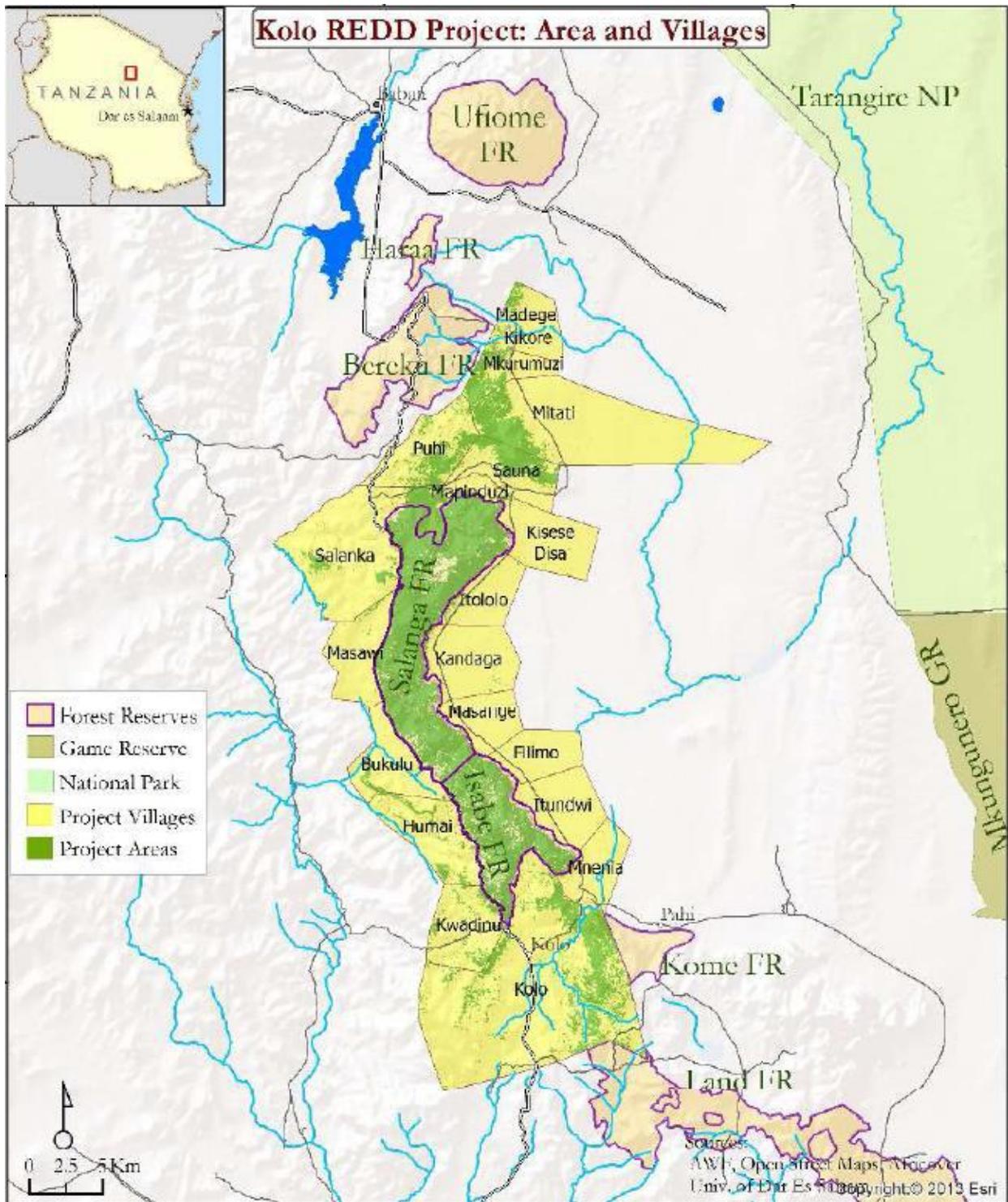


Figure 1: Location of project villages and government forest reserves
 Source: Loubser, D., Knowles, T., & Boardman, P. (2014)

Kondoa has a long history of deforestation and land degradation with subsequent losses of productive land. Both colonial and postcolonial regimes have over the years initiated several interventions to fight environmental degradation and restore land productivity. Already in the 1850's and 60's there were obvious signs of erosion, although these historical records also describe the area as being well-vegetated. Widespread forest cutting however, began in the early 1900's. Kondoa, being a vibrant production and trade center at the time, was facing increasing demand for agricultural land to feed caravan traders and German troops during the First World War (Östberg, 1986). Moreover, the area was infested with tsetse flies and in 1927, the British colonial government started undertaking large-scale forest clearing programs to combat tsetse. These campaigns would continue through the 1930s and 40s, ending in 1949 (Mugasha & Nshubemuki, 1988). Yet, extensive land degradation in the 1940s also meant that many families were increasingly becoming dependent on famine relief, which prompted the colonial government to carry out further forest clearings to provide land for families from the severely degraded areas. This period also saw forced resettlements of people to the newly established settlements and attempts to reduce livestock, both of which met with local opposition (Östberg, 1986). Given the torrential rains, undulating topography and erodible soils, such forest clearances made Kondoa one of the most eroded areas in Tanzania.

Several conservation measures were instituted in the 1940's. These promoted new production methods, as well as compulsory reduction of livestock and resettlements (Lane, 2009). These actions were associated with colonial force and met strong opposition from local people (Kangalawe, 2012). The forest reserves in the study area were also gazzeted around this time; Salanga in 1941 and Isabe in 1954 (Charnley & Overton, 2006), followed by the establishment of forest laws like the Forest Ordinance of Tanzania (1957).

Starting in the 1940s, the opposition to conservation programs was becoming part of the wider opposition to colonial rule and by the late 1950s it was practically impossible to implement conservation programs. Consequently, by the time the country gained independence in 1961, the intervention programs had ceased to exist. The post-independence government shifted its focus to agricultural production, paying less attention to conservation issues. Throughout the 1960s, therefore, forest reserves were in practice open to local people despite being legally under a protection status. As a direct consequence of these political changes, and the fact that previous conservation strategies had been largely unsuccessful in reducing soil degradation, many areas had no vegetation cover left by the early 1970s (Backeus, Rulangaranga, & Skoglund, 1994). This prompted the Tanzanian government to take action and in 1973, the HADO project (Hifadhi Ardhi Dodoma or Conserve the Land of Dodoma) was introduced. HADO covered the three districts of the region, with a main focus on Kondoa, specifically the Kondoa Eroded Area (KEA) which covered 1256 km², or about 10% of the total area of the district (Kangalawe, 2012; Mugasha & Nshubemuki, 1988). Villages in the southern part of the REDD+ target area were either within or very close to the KEA. Within the KEA, land degradation was perceived so dire that in 1979, the project completely removed livestock from all villages. This move was complimented by raising tree nurseries, free distribution of seedlings and the establishment of tree planting demonstration plots. Although destocking was unwelcome to many local people (Mug'ong'o, 1991), it resulted in an impressive regeneration of the vegetation (Backeus, Rulangaranga, & Skoglund, 1994) and HADO seems to have been (partly) favorably evaluated by the people in terms of its association with improved rainfall and more fodder for their animals (Östberg 1986).

The most recent external intervention prior to REDD+, was the USAID funded PFM project implemented by AWF in four villages of Kondoa from 2007. Although this project also involved

controlling the use of forest resources, its participatory nature was meant to represent a radical departure from past projects that had mainly been coercive and non-inclusionary. Key aspects included providing local people with opportunities to consent to or reject participation in the project, as well engaging them in land use planning and formulating forest use bylaws. The REDD+ project which started three years later was, essentially, a continuation and scaling up of this – USAID funded – project.

3.2 Overview of the study villages

Seven villages were selected for the analyses – Kisesedisa, Kolo, Mapinduzi, Masange, Mitati, Mnenia and Puhi. Four of these were selected randomly out of the 17 villages which, by the time of data collection had completed the REDD+ process. The other three were purposely selected out of the four which did not complete the process to give insights on issues and on sources of conflict and to better understand variations between villages in these processes. To avoid revealing the identity of people involved in these three villages, we will refer to them as village 5, 6 and 7 in the results and discussion sections.

As shown in Table 1, the forests in Kisesedisa, Mapinduzi, Masange and Mnenia, are on government land. Puhi and Mitati have forests on village land, while Kolo has both a village forest within its boundaries and borders a government forest. On paper, local people have no rights to access government owned forests except when they have a joint forest management (JFM) agreement with the owning authorities. As previously indicated, four of the 16 villages with government forests including Kolo and Mnenia² launched a JFM project in 2007 working with AWF and the district. In Mapinduzi, Masange, Kisesedisa, the practice was *de facto* open access before REDD+.

Table 1: Characteristics of study villages, Kondoa District, Tanzania, 2014

Village	Forest ownership	Previous experience with PFM (JFM)	Walking distance from village center to the forest (min.)	Walking distance from village center to local market (min.)	Distance from village to Babati (min. by car)	Persons/ha of forest land ^{a)}
Kolo	Government and community forest	Yes	10 (for both forests)	0	90	1.0
Masange	Government	No	10	5	80	4.1
Mapinduzi	Government	No	15	8	60	1.5
Mnenia	Government	Yes	15	3	90	5.2
Kisesedisa	Government	No	15	10	45	4.1
Mitati	Community	No	45	15	35	4.5
Puhi	Community	No	35	15	30	2.6

^{a)} Population numbers are from the national census of 2012. Different sources present different figures for forest sizes. We chose to use figures from the project note submitted by AWF to the Plan Vivo Foundation (Loubser, Knowles, & Boardman, 2014) because it is the only source that had numbers for both village and government forest areas. Results should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Forests are easily accessible as most of the villages (except Puhi and Mitati) are within 15 minutes walk from the forest. Local markets are also quite close. Additionally, all villages have relatively easy access to external markets, the furthest being about 90 minutes by car from Babati town, the major regional center.

3.3 The conditions for implementing REDD+

The project implementer – AWF – is an NGO established in 1961 with a focus on conserving wildlife in Africa. In December 2009, AWF signed a contract with the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA) (NOK 14.43 million) to implement a three-year REDD+ pilot project from January 2010 to December 2012. The project ‘Advancing REDD in the Kolo Hills Forests (ARKFor)’ was later extended to December 2013. Kolo Hills is one of altogether nine REDD+ pilot sites in Tanzania. This pilot was chosen because it had prior experience with participatory

forest management (PFM), which according to the Tanzanian national REDD+ strategy was the basis for advancing REDD+ in the country (URT, 2013). Moreover, the vegetation is mostly of Miombo woodlands, a dominant type of forest in Tanzania and was therefore representative of the country.

The project was part of an initiative by the Norwegian government to facilitate REDD+ internationally. While being linked to the UN and World Bank engagements in the same process, Norway was the largest financial supporter for REDD+. It looked at REDD+ as an efficient strategy to curb climate gas emissions (Norwegian Prime Minister's Office, 2007).

Because of ongoing accountability issues³, NMFA decided to direct REDD+ funds to the NGO sector instead of going through the Tanzanian government. Hence, the pilot projects were established independently of the national structures and processes⁴ regarding developing governance structures for REDD+. This also implied that AWF reported to the NMFA and was accountable to it. The contract emphasized capacity building as a key responsibility for AWF (NMFA, 2009).

Forests in Tanzania are either placed under government responsibility – as forests reserves, national parks and general land – owned directly by villages (village land) or in a few cases also owned by individuals. There are substantial debates in Tanzania regarding the distinction between general land and village land (URT, 2013). There are also disputes regarding villagers' access to resources in government reserves. To ensure successful conditional payments under REDD+, land rights need to be clarified. Next, as village forests are under common ownership, one may face issues regarding internal distribution of costs and benefits related to a REDD+ contract.

AWF developed the project within the Tanzanian system of local governance, and land and forest management. Three elements are of particular importance. First, the Local Government Act

(URT, 1982) defines the responsibilities of the village council to convene a “meeting of the village assembly to discuss and decide upon any matter of extraordinary public importance” (Section 103, sub-section 3). Second, there is a system for establishing village land as outlined in the Village Land Act (URT, 1999). Lastly, there are procedures for PFM as formulated in the Forest Act of 2002 (URT, 2002). PFM implies the opportunity to establish joint forest management (JFM) between villages and the government for government forest reserves and community based forest management (CBFM) in village forests. A key element of the PFM policy is land use planning.

The three elements above formed the basis for the overall strategy followed by AWF in implementing REDD+. Specific interventions included seeking the consent of participating communities, land use planning, making payments and deciding on benefit sharing arrangements. Income generation activities, although present, were not yet widely spread in the communities by the end of the project period.

AWF engaged locals through a series of separate meetings for making decisions related to each of these processes. In addition, the NGO worked with the Kondoa District Council and the District Forestry Office to ensure local legitimacy and to fulfill formal requirements regarding PFM. They also engaged consultants from private companies such as Clean Energy for Carbon Assessment, research institutes like Institute of Resource Assessment for socio-economic surveys, Selian Agricultural Research Institute for implementing livelihood activities, and the National Land Use Planning Commission for land use planning.

4. Methods and data collection

Data were collected between January and February 2014, while supplemented with information obtained in 2010 and 2015, as part of our study also of the costs and impacts of REDD+. We combined quantitative and qualitative approaches allowing us to get an understanding of the case that single methodological approaches would not ensure. The quantitative data were basis for numerical estimates regarding how people evaluated the decision-making processes. Qualitative methods enriched our understanding of the quantitative results and allowed us to investigate issues that were not amenable to quantification

We had two main sources of qualitative data – focus group discussions (FDGs) and resource person interviews. Two FDGs were conducted in each village. They involved semi-structured interviews with five to eight people – one with men and another with women who had attended meetings on REDD+ in the village, but that held no leadership positions. In addition, semi-structured interviews were undertaken with resource persons; one meeting with the village chairperson (political leader) and the village executive officer (technocrat employed by government). Another meeting was held with the chair and vice chair of the village natural resource committee. In addition, we had separate meetings with the district natural resource officer, the district forest officer, the district chairman (political head) and staff from the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). Some informal interviews were also conducted during the fieldwork. In addition, we reviewed project documents from AWF and Tanzanian policy documents on local governance, forest governance and REDD+.

Quantitative data were collected through surveys undertaken among altogether 200 respondents spread across the seven villages. Closed ended questions in the survey instrument were followed by open ended questions to better understand the motivation behind people's quantitative

responses. 75% of the sample were randomly selected from attendance lists of REDD+ meetings and 25% from those that did not attend. The stratification was done because attendance in meetings was rather low, and we wanted to have good coverage of those attending meetings.⁵

The quantitative data on participation was assessed on a categorical scale. That is; we used ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ responses to questions about whether a respondent had attended meetings relating to REDD+ and whether a community had completed the REDD+ process. To capture perceptions, we used Likert scale variables on the impression of meetings, and information offered at meetings (on a scale of 1 to 5, e.g., ‘Very bad’, ‘Bad’, ‘Satisfactory’, ‘Good’ and ‘Very good’). Finally, for participation we also gathered qualitative data – i.e., data regarding people’s experiences and the reasons why they participated or not. In the case of power, we only used qualitative data – e.g., information on roles/positions, actions and various structures regarding decision-making and information flows.

5. Results

5.1 Participation and power in decision-making

In this section, data from interviews with resource persons and focus group discussions is used to explore the different phases of instituting REDD+. We detail people’s participation at each stage and describe how different actors exercised power to influence REDD+ discussions.

5.1.1 Phase 1: Consenting to REDD+

The process started with an introductory meeting between AWF and the village council in each village. AWF then launched REDD+ in January 2010, in a meeting where the district, ward and village leaders and Members of Parliament from the district were invited. Information was given about the project and questions were answered. Next, AWF met with the village councils once again and if the council agreed, they called a village general assembly where AWF and district

officers introduced the idea to the regular villagers. At the general assembly, AWF and the district officials emphasized issues like environmental conservation, climate change, how REDD+ could help to mitigate it, what the contributions of and benefits for the villagers could be as well as suggesting alternative income generating activities. The village assembly decided to join or not by following a majority vote, either through raising voices or by show of hands. It seems clear that potential risks and uncertainties of the project were not much emphasized.

Of the 21 villages, there was at this stage serious opposition in five – including two of the villages selected for this study⁶. In village 5, the fear for loss of livelihoods seemed to be the main reason for discontent as illustrated by a statement made by one of the participants in the FGD with men as a response to why their village refused to be part of REDD+.

“In the beginning, we worried about what we had heard over radio and seen on television happening in other parts of the country where there were REDD+ pilots. It was very difficult for people to get anything from the forest. No firewood, no poles and no timber. So, we told AWF to give us three years to observe how they (AWF) would implement the project. We did not refuse the project. We only told them to give us some time to observe.”

Several members of the village council – after having met with AWF – urged people to reject REDD+. Ultimately, at the introductory meeting, AWF and the district officers were given little chance to present their case because the meeting became chaotic, prompting the technocrats to leave unceremoniously. This village never consented to participate in REDD+.

In village 6, some members of the village council disagreed with embarking on REDD+ during their second council meeting with AWF. The leaders received information from AWF and agreed to call residents for meetings, but they chose not to relay this information to the rest of the villagers. This prompted the district commissioner to write a letter to the village chairman asking

him to cooperate. After this letter, the leaders very reluctantly invited people for meetings and the village decided to join the project, although the information about the meetings was not well spread. Villagers cited corruption within the village council as reason for the behavior of leaders. In an informal interview, one elderly woman asserted:

“The rules are very strict in the villages that joined REDD+. Now, everybody comes to our village to make charcoal. You see, half the village council is corrupt. As long as you can pay a bribe to the chairman, you can enter the forest. That is why they (leaders) did not want us to know about the project.”

5.1.2 Phase 2: Land Use Planning (LUP)

The next step was to undertake land use planning. LUP meetings were convened in each of the villages accepting the project, where each village elected two representatives – a male and a female – to the village land use planning team. This team worked with a technical committee from the district – the participatory land use management team – to carry out land use planning.⁷ The process began with training village land use planning teams and village leaders on land use planning and REDD+ concepts. The land use teams from the village and district together with village leaders then demarcated the village boundaries, next divided it into agricultural, forest and grazing land⁸, residential areas, burial places, land for schools, etc. In the meantime, the villagers – facilitated by AWF – drafted bylaws to govern resource use. For village forests, bylaws were drafted by the village council and then approved by the general assembly. For villages bordering government forests, each village council drafted bylaws, which were approved by village general assemblies and signed by an inter-village council (JUHIBECO). Mandated by the law to enable joint management of forests, the inter-village council was established as part of the REDD+ process and was composed of two elected representatives from each village bordering the government forests.

After the bylaws were set up and the demarcation completed, land use plans were prepared by the land use team from the district, taken to village general assemblies for approval and then sent to the district council for comments and further approval. They were finally forwarded to the Ministry of Lands for legal gazettelement. The bylaws restrict the type and extent of production activities permissible and suggest an amount of fines for breaking the rules. For the most part, these by-laws were a revival or adaptation of the old rules that existed within the communities since the times of the HADO project. As such, they were already familiar to the communities.

Village 7 opted out at the LUP stage. A counselor from the ward development committee, who was rich and influential, spread rumors that the forest would be sold if people accepted REDD+ and urged them to reject it. An FGD respondent expressed fear about loss of the forest in the following way:

“If there is carbon (hewa ukaa) everywhere, why don’t they (the Europeans) first buy from themselves? What is so special with our forest? We have heard that some leaders want to connive to sell our forest. But, in this village we will never agree to that.”

Due to the rumors, some had their minds made up to reject the project by the time of the general assembly deciding on the LUP. These people disorganized the meeting, created chaos and forced AWF and public officials to leave. By doing that, they restricted the rest of the villagers from getting information other than the rumors they had already spread. Focus group discussions revealed several reasons for why the councilor acted as he did. First, he had a direct interest in income from the forest because he was one of the biggest charcoal makers in the village. The other reasons were political. The councilor had run his campaign with a promise to protect the forest from being taken away from the community, so he was (in fact) following up on his promise.

5.1.3 Phase 3: Benefit sharing and payments

This process began with drafting criteria for making payments. Three criteria were developed by the village councils, facilitated by AWF and the district officials and then taken back to the village assemblies for final approval. The first criteria was governance, for example how often the village council called village meetings; the second, compliance with reducing deforestation assessed by for example counting the number of trees cut; and the third was how well the villages were following rules in the bylaws, such as zero grazing and conservation agriculture. Hence, the criteria were based on governance and rule compliance and not on changes in the forest carbon status.

With the exception of village 6, all participating at this stage fulfilled these criteria – albeit to different degrees. Therefore, trial payments varied to some extent. The village with the highest payment got – 7.937.201 Tsh – and the lowest – 6.124.282 Tsh.⁹ All payments were made to the community as a whole. The village council met to propose ideas on how to allocate the money to community projects like the village office. These proposals were then approved at a general assembly where the villagers also had the chance to propose new ideas. At the time of data collection, the benefit sharing process was finished in all villages that fulfilled the payment criteria except in one village where the village council had not yet agreed upon how to apportion the money to community projects.

5.2 Local evaluation of REDD+ implementation

Given the above, how did people evaluate the processes? Basing the analysis mainly on the survey data, supplemented with resource person interviews and focus group discussions, we will present people's opinions about the REDD+ project, the way meetings were conducted and the quality of the information offered.

5.2.1 Overall perception of the REDD+ project

About 75% of respondents (N=195) reported a positive or very positive view of the project. This translates to an average score of 3.8 on a 5 point Likert scale. In the villages that completed all processes, the average score was 4.2 compared 3.2 in those that did not complete or engage in REDD+. Therefore, opinions varied across villages, with those that completed all REDD+ processes having a more favorable perception. A Chi-square test further supported this finding by showing a significant¹⁰ relationship between attitudes to the project and completion of the REDD+ process ($\chi^2 = 49.7$, $df=4$, $P=0.000$). The most important reason given for positive attitudes was environmental protection (84%, N=141). Focus group discussions and resource person interviews revealed that people associated deforestation with the recurrent droughts in Kondoa, and believed that the conservation of forests could have positive effects on rainfall with the subsequent increases in crop and livestock outputs. For those with indifferent or negative attitudes (N=42), limited knowledge about REDD+ (55%) and loss of land (40%) were the most important reasons given. Here, qualitative interviews made it clear that the actions by leaders to block (or spread) certain types of information, largely contributed to this lack of knowledge and the perception that REDD+ would lead to land loss.

5.2.2 Perception of the decision-making processes

Overall, the respondents reported positive attitudes on the three decision-making processes – i.e., the decision on whether or not to join REDD+, land use planning and benefit sharing. This was especially so in the villages that went for REDD+. For instance, when asked about how free the decision to participate was, 82% (N=139) indicated that the decision to join or not join the project

was made freely. 94% (N=69) felt that they were not coerced into accepting or rejecting to carry out LUP in their village. Also, 98% (N=41) stated that they freely accepted the payment formats decided upon. There are variations in number of respondents (N) for the three processes because some of the villages did not participate in all of them.¹¹

The results further indicate a very positive view of the meetings arranged for the three processes. 83% (N=148), 96% (N=72) and 98% (N=52) of the participants considered the introductory, land use and payment meetings to be satisfactory, good or very good respectively. It seems clear from these results that people were least impressed with the introductory meetings where at least 17% of the participants reported a bad or very bad impression. This could be explained by the differences in samples – i.e., that villages with opposition did not get to or complete the other processes. Fisher’s exact test indicated a statistically significant relationship ($p=0.000$) between completion and impression of meetings. Thus, respondents from non-completing villages were less satisfied with introductory meetings compared to their colleagues in the villages that completed the REDD+ process (Figure 2).

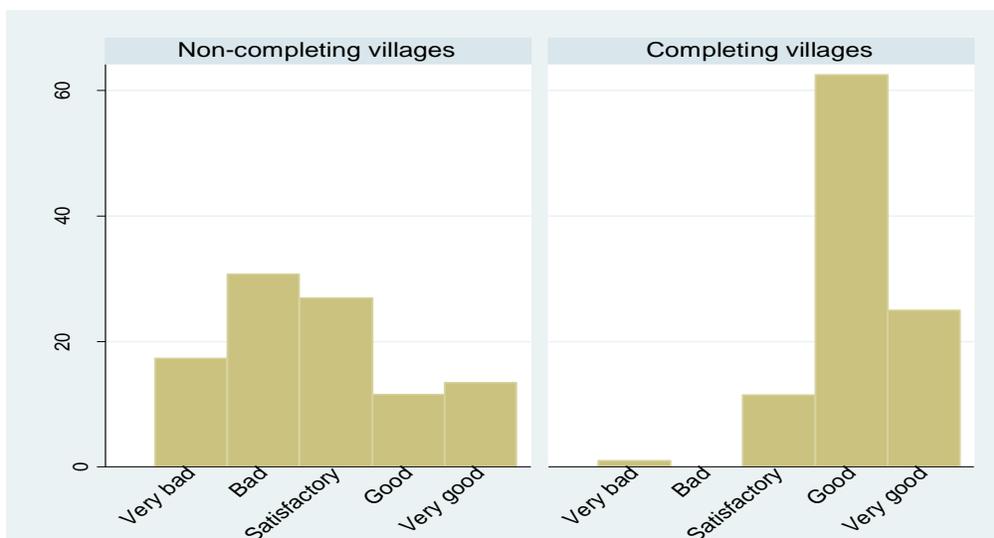


Figure 2: Perception of introductory meetings, REDD+pilot Kondoa district, Tanzania 2014

The reasons provided for the positive attitudes towards the meetings on payment were that people considered them to have been very open and peaceful. Similarly, the majority thought that LUP meetings had been open. The few who were not content were mainly from village 7 where the LUP meeting turned chaotic. These reported that top-down communication was the reason for their discontent. Note that there were no such meetings in villages 5 and 6.

Respondents were also generally happy with the information they received during all meetings. At least 81% (N=149) reported that the information given in the consent meetings was either satisfactory, good or very good. Again, there is a significant relationship between completion and opinion about the information offered at meetings with a p-value of 0.000 (Figure 3).

Further, 98% (N=54) and 93% (N=70) thought that information in payment and LUP meetings respectively was satisfactory, good or very good. Reasons are similar to those discussed earlier with variations arising from opting out or into the program. Focus groups and resource person interviews further confirmed the finding that the participatory approach was largely responsible for the positive evaluations of REDD+ processes.

Generally, people appreciated AWF’s strategy of involving communities in the decisions regarding REDD+, as opposed to the forceful methods employed by previous conservation programs.

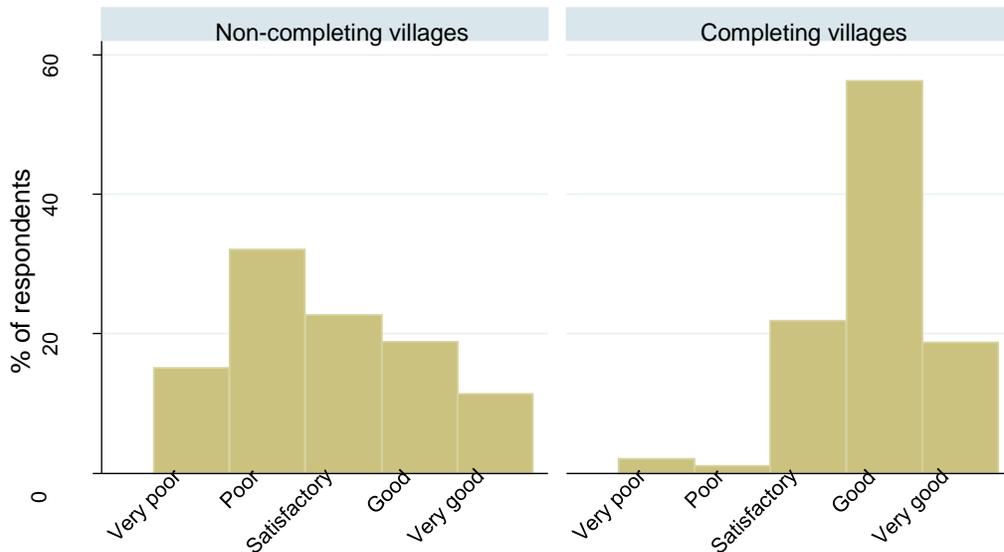


Figure 3: Perception of information offered at introductory meetings, REDD+pilot, Kondoa district, Tanzania 2014

6. Discussion

Discussing our findings, we emphasize the interconnections between participation, interests, and power through examining the way actors exercised agency within the broader governance structure – spanning from the international to the local level – in which REDD+ unfolds.

Participation enabled villagers to gain some control over most decisions. We find that communities were consulted and provided with information for all three processes. At the general assemblies, residents were given the chance to make changes to proposals. Community representatives also played a leading role in demarcating land, developing bylaws and criteria for payments as well as selecting income-generating activities (similar observations are made regarding a

REDD+ pilot in Kilosa; see Vatn et al. 2017). In communities that joined REDD+, the overall attitudes to the project and the decision-making processes were positive. Moreover, in some communities, people rejected participating in REDD+. We attribute these achievements to the Tanzanian PFM and decentralization systems that emphasize engagement of communities in decision-making. These institutions provided for and permitted leaders to call meetings for people to decide on whether to join REDD+, discuss the issues, contribute ideas and follow the implementation of the entire process.

Therefore, based on an assessment of people's participation in public processes, one could conclude that REDD+ was participatory as people were in charge of the decisions concerning how to engage in REDD+. However, reverting to the links between participation and power, there are reasons to question whether participation in this case was genuinely empowering. To this end, we find that an interpretation going beyond just 'access to decision-making arenas' is necessary.

Lukes' second level of power – referring to Bachrach and Baratz (1962; 1963) – posits that the powerful may confine decision-making to relatively safe issues. In this study, this type of power (agenda setting) was evident among some village leaders, as well as AWF and district officials creating barriers against discussion of certain issues concerning REDD+. For instance, using their mandate to convene meetings, some leaders used the meetings to deliver information in line with their interests – as in village 5 and 7 – or refused to call meetings entirely – as in village 6. Residents felt that leaders had private economic interests going against REDD+, such as charcoal revenue or income from bribes or they had political interests including re-election in the then upcoming 2015 general elections. The leaders mobilized public support for rejecting REDD+ using issues of concern to the masses for example loss of livelihoods or forestland. Mustalahti &

Rakotonarivo (2014) also observe local leaders using power and information imbalances to influence the consent decision elsewhere in Tanzania.

AWF and the district officials also exercised agenda setting power. The contract between AWF and the NMFA was the main instrument used to set the agenda for what was to be discussed. Accordingly, it outlined capacity building among both communities and district forest staff as one of the major mandates for AWF. This contract further required AWF to account upwards to NMFA and the national actors regarding risks and successes of REDD+. In sharp contrast, neither the contract nor the national level guidelines such as PFM¹² required a similar downward accountability to the communities, an observation made also by Mustalahti & Rakotonarivo (2014) and Nuesiri (2016) in their analyzes of REDD+ piloting.

Thus, AWF and the district officials were mandated to provide information, but had flexibility concerning the type of information that they would disclose to local people. We note that AWF and the public officers generally did not discuss issues that could cause conflict or doubt among participants during the meetings. For example, the fact that there was lack of a global agreement and hence an uncertain future for REDD+ financing and political support was not much mentioned, if at all – see also Fosci (2013). In addition, vital information regarding how to share benefits and costs between government and communities did not feature in discussions with the villagers. This is especially important in the villages where REDD+ is implemented as Joint Forest Management (13 out of the 21 villages). While there were suggestions from AWF and the public officers of an 80% share of benefits for communities, these suggestions were not discussed during the village general meetings. Instead, the focus during payment meetings or indeed with community leaders was on devising criteria for making payments and on how to allocate the money to the various community projects. In the meantime, the NGO pointed out the lack of clarity

regarding benefit sharing in higher level fora such as national and international conferences where donors, government officials and technocrats were likely to be present (Matilya, 2012). Note that at national level, legislation is silent on how benefits and costs in joint forest management arrangements should be shared, even if the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism has made some suggestions (Blomley & Iddi, 2009). This legal uncertainty made it extremely difficult for AWF and the district officials to clearly inform the villagers on this issue.

The third level of power, ‘invisible power’, as suggested by Lukes, relates to shaping people’s opinions to accept their role in the existing order. Here again, the contract between AWF and the NMFA supported AWF and the district officials to exercise this form of power over local people. Since the contract required AWF to build local capacity, detailed information at general meetings and through targeted trainings was provided on conservation, climate change and REDD+ concepts, forest management and land use planning, forest law and enforcement, carbon measurement, and sustainable income generation. After the long history of deforestation in Kondoa, this message was familiar to what people saw as reasonable measures for protecting their environment, in line with local values and norms. This was, in part, because of the colonial and post-independence policies concerning land use, soil erosion, deforestation and degradation processes. Over the years local people had been exposed to a number of external-actor and state policy interventions as well as local and internal initiatives to control and limit land and other resource uses. These interventions influenced and partly formed local people’s knowledge and skills over time, but also their attitudes, values and norms towards both external interferences in general and also the more concrete practical content and consequences of interventions. For example, the HADO project, which had been undertaken previously in the area, had led to the perception that forest conservation could enhance rainfall, an important factor in the agricultural-

based economy of Kondoa. Therefore, HADO had managed to enhance people's understanding of the need to conserve – although the project was very undemocratically run. Combined with AWF's more persuasive as well as inclusive approach, communities became more open to the idea of conservation.

It seems less surprising therefore, that over 80% of the respondents gave conservation as the main reason for why they thought positively about the REDD+ program. Proponents framed REDD+ within the conservationist discourse developed over many years, a finding that resonates with Agrawal's point regarding how new discourses may over time change actors understanding of self and their environments (Agrawal, 2005). Ultimately, REDD+ in Kondoa exemplifies how the structures of hegemony and ideology at international and national levels of governance could influence decision-making at the local level.

The foregoing discussion makes it clear that *dominant information* was an important source of power through which AWF and district officials convinced local communities to participate in REDD+. As important were the *incentives* provided to the communities, most importantly, the promise of environmental conservation, but also payments and trainings. This notwithstanding, we also find some modest enhancements in power status of local people (see also Schusser, 2015). This is because *coercive power* in terms of regulations enshrined in the PFM and decentralization systems – to some extent – helped to counter the power held by AWF, the district and community leaders. Since locals generally took part in deciding on the bylaws, payments, land use plans and choosing leaders, they gained some control of the decisions being taken. This, in itself, is an important finding considering that similar studies of power have pointed out that local participation in forest management (including REDD+) has done little to counter the negative exercises of power over local people (e.g Benjaminsen, 2014; Devkota, 2010; Maryudi, 2011; Schusser et al.,

2013). As previously mentioned, this rather positive result can be attributed to the fact that community participation was embedded in the PFM guidelines and decentralized systems of the Tanzanian state. So, in this case, coercive power was in fact helpful for improving the situation of local people.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we have employed theoretical perspectives on participation and power to investigate how actors participated in decision-making in a REDD+ pilot project in Kondo, Tanzania. Combining theories this way, we provide a deeper understanding of how REDD+ was implemented, bringing to the fore nuances that would have perhaps been obscured by relying on each theory independently.

Based on an analysis of the visible exercises of power, i.e., participation in meetings, one may conclude with a rather optimistic view that REDD+ implementation was genuinely participatory, due to the observations that people participated in public arenas and have mostly a positive judgement of the project and REDD+ processes. Yet, analyzing the case based on the more hidden forms of power, a different picture emerges. It not only becomes clear that people's decision to accept or reject REDD+ was based on unverified rumors or misinformation, but also that participation partly took the form of legitimizing the interests implicit in REDD+ as an external intervention. This is because in communities that accepted REDD+, information came exclusively from project proponents and their partners, who successfully convinced the communities that it was in their best interests to join the REDD+ project, while not disclosing all relevant information – especially about the risks. Yet, in communities that opposed REDD+, we observed that powerful

local actors manipulated processes through either spreading rumors to scare residents or deliberately refusing to convey information about REDD+.

We further find that incentives and disincentives were an important source of power used to influence REDD+ processes. The most important incentive was the promise of environmental conservation and the expected agricultural benefits from improved rainfall, while disincentives were mainly a variety of sanctions for non-compliance with the rules for conservation. Given the historical context of forest conservation, this message of conservation was familiar to local people, portraying conservation as important for maintaining vital livelihoods. Moreover, as past interventions had been undemocratic, the participatory approach used by AWF made REDD+ more acceptable to people.

The study thus points out a key weakness with participatory processes that has been previously highlighted elsewhere. That is, that participation may not lead to empowerment and genuine control if the structures and processes of participation reinforce the underlying power differentials among the actors (e.g., Chomba, Nathan, Minang, & Sinclair, 2015; Mosse 2001; Nightingale & Ojha, 2013; Ribot & Larson, 2012). However, our results also point to a conclusion that if global and national policy can ensure that the structure of REDD+ governance accounts for the variation in power wielded by the actors operating at different levels (see also Hayes & Persha 2010), it is possible for REDD+ to be truly participatory and empowering. In this case, for instance, the PFM and decentralization systems in Tanzania indeed helped locals to counter some of the power by higher level actors, by enabling them to decide on their preferred rules and generally how the REDD+ program should be organized. The challenge however, was that PFM and decentralization did not effectively deal with the underlying power dynamics (especially regarding

the problem of dominant information) with the result that local people did not gain genuine control over decisions that affected them.

So, we caution against the popular view that community participation under REDD+ will safeguard local people's rights by for example giving them a right to say no. Instead, we call for a deliberate effort for participatory processes to deal with the various forms of power held by the various actors. One way is to support downward accountability systems so that stakeholders at all levels are responsive to local needs and interests. Secondly, community access to various sources of information may help to counter the challenge of information imbalances and ensure that people can make decisions with full and accurate information. With such information, local people are more likely to hold leaders accountable thereby facilitating a balance of powers in REDD+ implementation. This is vital given the high potential for conflict due to the variation of interests inherent in REDD+ policies.

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NOTES

1. Tanzania is administratively divided into regions, districts and then into sub-districts and further into wards/sheias. The wards are finally divided into streets for urban wards and villages for rural wards.
2. Two other villages Itundwi and Kandaga also started implementing JFM with AWF and the District in 2007.
3. At the time, the Norwegian government had an issue regarding mismanagement of funds previously transferred to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism.
4. The government of Tanzania was at the time of the pilot developing a national REDD+ strategy (see Vatn, A., Kajembe, K. Silayo, D. A. & Vedeld, P. 2016). This process did, however, not influence the pilot project in Kondoa. It is also notable that the strategy was finalized first in 2013 (URT, 2013).
5. Out of an estimated adult population of between 900 to 2000 people per village, attendance of meetings typically ranged from about 100 to 250.
6. By end 2015 when we returned to the study site, one of these villages had joined REDD+, citing good experiences in the other villages that had joined REDD+, as the reason they had accepted the program.

7. Land use planning is mandated by law and is meant to be a government process, but since it had not been done in the project area, AWF took up the task of funding (about USD 8000 per village) and coordinating between village, district and ministry to facilitate the process.
8. Due to shortage of land, only two villages were able to allocate land for grazing, the rest decided that they would only practice zero grazing.
9. A US dollar was at the time about 1600 Tanzanian shillings.
10. A significance level of 5% is used throughout the paper
11. Introductory meetings were held in 6 of the villages (excluding Puh), and LUP meetings were held in 5 (Mapinduzi, Masange, Mitati, Mnenia and Puh). Payment meetings were held in only 3 (Mapinduzi, Masange and Mnenia). Note moreover that some questions were only relevant for those attending meetings, hence, the low sample sizes (N) especially for payment meetings.
12. It is important to note that much of the regulation on forest management predates REDD+ and thus some of these challenges could not have been foreseen.