'Equity' and institutional logics in REDD+ in Tanzania

Irmeli Mustalahti, Salla Rantala, Tiina Kontinen and Kaisa Korhonen-Kurki

Corresponding author: salla.rantala@helsinki.fi

Abstract

The concept of equity is increasingly used especially by agencies designing environmental funding mechanisms and governance regimes from the local to the global level. In the context of Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), a climate change mitigation instrument based on payments for the maintenance and enhancement of carbon stocks in tropical forests, the manner in which 'equity' is understood will be of critical importance for the impacts and acceptance of REDD+ interventions. Although the concept of equity has been extensively analysed in the academic literature, in policy debates related to REDD+, however, equity is often described as an 'issue' without further conceptualization. In this study, we provide a conceptual framework for analysing the underlying rationales in the 'equity in REDD+' debate, and apply it to highlight how actors involved in the design of national REDD+ governance structures in Tanzania utilize the concept of equity in proposing different governance models.

Keywords: REDD+, equity, institutional logics, Tanzania

1. Introduction

Climate change poses enormous governance challenges and has profound social implications for people (see Byravan and Rajan 2008; Sovalcool and Brown 2009). One of the key challenges relates to understanding variation among the short- and long-term priorities of different groups

of stakeholders, and balancing them effectively and equitably in climate change policies and strategies. Whether the proponents of regional and national level climate strategies and interventions are able to determine socially acceptable, climate-compatible development paths at the local level is a burning question for policy makers, practitioners and scholars alike (Mustalahti et al. 2012).

In this paper, our focus is on understanding how agencies that support the development and implementation of strategies related to Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) conceptualize and operationalize equity in REDD+ interventions. Equity is frequently cited as one of the key aspects for the design of national and sub-national REDD+ interventions; i.e. one of the "three E's" along with effectiveness and efficiency (cf. Angelsen 2008; Angelsen et al. 2009). Lack of equity is also central to the critique towards REDD+ articulated by a number of environmental and social organizations and movements[1]. It is argued that while REDD+ might have potential to offer benefits to forest communities in terms of increased incomes and development activities, the environmental and social benefits of REDD+ are not guaranteed, but subject to existing power structures in decision making and implementation (Chhatre and Agrawal, 2009; Phelps et al., 2010; Agrawal et al. 2010). REDD+ may include risks for the livelihoods of forest-dependent people, such as potential loss of land and livelihoods (Sandbrook et al., 2010). If REDD+ interventions increase the value of forests, stakes grow higher, potentially leading to more conflicts over land especially where tenure is unclear. Governments may become more prone to taking control over forest lands in order to appropriate the benefits from REDD+, applying control-and-command measures or "fines and fences" approaches that serve to exclude local people from the forests (Cotula and Mayers, 2009). Subsequently, the working definition of 'equity' adopted in this paper is one concerned with issues of negotiation power, participation in REDD+ decision making and implementation, and allocation of costs and benefits among the stakeholders and groups involved.

We apply the theory of institutional logics (Thorton et al. 2012) in analyzing multiple, sometimes contradictory rationales related to promoting certain concepts in policy debates. In the global REDD+ debate, it is evident that 'equity' is used as a concept exemplifying economic,

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[1] See e.g. http://www.redd-monitor.org/

capitalist and market logics on the one hand, and moral and value logics traditionally attached to state or civil society on the other. One actor might employ, explicitly or implicitly, a number of logics. Identifying a plethora of rationales and logics in the conceptualization of equity facilitates the understanding of the dynamics of REDD+ policymaking and of practical implementation on the ground. For example, in Tanzania, much of the debate surrounding the development of the national REDD+ strategy is focused on the design of a benefit sharing mechanism between the national and local levels. Actors propose very different approaches and strongly critique each other's proposals, although all of them state to be striving for equitable outcomes (Rantala 2012). We argue that central to this debate are the different, unspoken rationales for equity (or perceived lack thereof), which continue to cause friction in the implementation as REDD+ moves from the national to the local level.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Equity in the REDD+ debate

In climate change documents and debates, equity issues, principles and norms are often presented in a normative tone and as impetus for desired practice, i.e. ideal descriptions of how things should be (Stern 2008; Angelsen et al. 2009; Mustalahti et. al. 2012). In the academia, equity is a central concept in philosophy, law, economics and political sciences, among others. While we are not able to review all this, some underlying principles include e.g. the calculability of equity – equal share, equal emissions, etc. – or equity as a moral issue or an issue of distribution of the common good (see e.g. Müller 2002; Mattoo and Subramanian 2010). In practice, equity principles are often flexible and used in accordance to users' interests (Heyward 2007). In other words, conceptions of equity are frequently perspective-based rather than derived from a universal common understanding.

The literature on equity in climate change interventions in general (see e.g. Lohmann 2005; MacKenzie 2009) and equity in REDD+ in particular is vast (see e.g. Corbera and Brown 2010; Fisher et al. 2011; Mustalahti et al. 2012). For the purposes of our paper, it is sufficient to recognize the variation in the theoretical approaches and vocabularies used in the literature.

Such vocabularies include e.g. equality, responsibilities and capacity (Heyward 2007: 520), international, social or intergenerational equity (Metz 2000), fairness, inclusion and democratic decision-making (McDermott and Schreckenberg 2009; McDermott et al. 2011).

2.2. Institutional logics perspective to REDD+ as an international organizational field

The institutional logics approach (Thorton and Ocasio 1999; 2008; Thorton et al. 2012) is based on the neoinstitutional tradition in organization studies (Meyer and Rowan 1977; DiMaggio and Powell 1983). The tradition is preoccupied with organizational legitimacy vis-á-vis organizational environment which refers to the organizational field characterized by coercive, normative and mimetic processes leading to increasing similarity in organizational meaning and practices (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In analogy with the institutional approach to current development aid system (Tvedt 1998; 2002; 2006), we claim that REDD+ gradually facilitates an emergence of a new organizational field and an international system, the borders of which are defined by channelling, allocating and managing of REDD+ funds. The members of this system range from international negotiators to local communities. This international organizational field is characterized by different concepts, organizational structures and practices that constitute the identities of 'legitimate REDD+ actors'. Equity is certainly one of the concepts circulating in the system where it gains different theoretical, normative and practical meanings and fits a variety of rationales.

The institutional logics approach draws attention to the variety of rationales available for organizations in the society. The central idea of the approach is that organizational and individual behaviour is located in the institutional context which both constraints and enables agency (Thorton and Ocasio 2008: 100-102). Institutional logics can be defined as "the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space and provide meaning to their social reality" (Thorton and Ocasio, 1999: 804). Individual organizations face institutional pluralism (Kraatz & Block 2008: 244) or complexity (Greenwood et al. 2010; Yu 2013), and draw from multiple logics in their practices. In the same vein, when

the actors under scrutiny in this paper construct normative ideas of equity, they employ different institutional logics.

The central institutional systems include, for example, family, religion, state, market, profession, corporation and community (Thorton et al. 2012: 54-56, 73). Each of these institutions acquires their cultural content in different contexts. For example, the logics of the state in modern societies revolve around bureaucratic rationality according to which the equity of citizens will be guaranteed by a well-functioning governmental 'machine'. The logics of the family, in turn, have often been attributed to the nuclear family (Friedland and Alford 1991) characterized by close emotional relationships. Whereas the institutional logics approach has usually been applied in contexts of modern organization in the Northern hemisphere, Thorton et al. (2012) claim that the approach is applicable in other cultural contexts as well. In exploring the institutional logics in the REDD+ domain in Tanzania, we understand the organizational environment partly as the Tanzanian context, partly as part of an emerging international organizational field.

The entire REDD+ mechanism constitutes a new resource environment for actors, both in terms of financial and terminological resources. Therefore, one avenue for examining logics in the emergent field of REDD+ is to focus on the vocabularies by which the equity is described and enacted. By close examination of vocabularies used, we may identify the institutional logics constructed (Thorton et al. 2012: 150) in relation to equity.

3. Study context and methods

3.1. The REDD+ process in Tanzania

Tanzania is one of nine pilot countries of the United Nations REDD Programme (UN-REDD), and has received substantial support for the development of a national REDD+ strategy, implementation of REDD+ pilot projects, and REDD+ research from the Norwegian government. Although various modalities for accounting and crediting (payments) are being tested through the pilot projects, the final draft National REDD+ Strategy (URT 2013) lays out a national fund

based approach for the administration and distribution of REDD+ rewards. In March 2013, the government endorsed the National REDD+ Strategy and Action Plan and the plan for a National Carbon Monitoring Centre (NCMC) which will provide technical services on measuring, reporting and verification of REDD+ activities across the country (Daily News 2013).

3.2. Methods

Data on the equity conceptions of national level REDD+ actors were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives of organizational actors active in the REDD+ policy domain in Tanzania (Table 1). The interviews formed part of a study on REDD+ political networks in Tanzania by the second author, not solely targeting aspects of equity in REDD+, which nevertheless came up extensively in the interviews. The method has been described in full by Rantala (2012). The organizational actors were identified by a panel of experts based on the criteria that the actors considered themselves part of the REDD+ policy domain and were recognized by other actors as such. High ranking officials or the officials most knowledgeable about the national REDD+ strategy development process in each organization were inquired about the challenges for REDD+ in Tanzania, organizational interest and position vis-à-vis key policy design issues, experiences with the policy process and related consultations, and views on the output (draft national REDD+ strategy). In total, 41 interviews were conducted in March-June 2011 after the first draft strategy had been released for public comments, following what was perceived an increasingly closed process by some of the civil society actors (Rantala 2012). Thus, the context of the interviews partly characterizes the data, including some fairly critical positions towards equity in the national REDD+ process.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The NVivo software for qualitative content analysis (QSR International Pty Ltd. Version 10, 2012) was first used to extract relevant material broadly with reference to aspects of equity, benefit sharing and participation. The resulting extracts from 28 interviews were then manually re-coded twice as the main patterns of different institutional logics on equity in REDD+ started to emerge and were sharpened. The logics identified followed the idea of producing Weberian ideal types that facilitates the

construction of logically pure components of the empirically existing cultural reality (Thorton & al. 2012, 52-53; Swedberg 2005, 120). In other words, the method was primarily inductive; previous literature (e.g. Thorton et al. 2012) provided ideas for gauging the data while we also allowed for the emergence of logics that might be specific for the current context. Yet due to the limitations of the data, the logics identified should not be treated as exhaustive of the situation in Tanzania, let alone of the international REDD+ system.

The distribution of different types of organizational actors among the final sample of re-coded interviews is presented is Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of organizational actors in the interview data on institutional logics in the national REDD+ policy domain in Tanzania.

Organizational type	N
National NGO	8
Government executive department	7
International NGO	4
Foreign government agency (embassy)	3
Intergovernmental	3
International business	1
Private business, national	1
Academic, national	1
Total	28

4. Results: institutional logics in the Tanzanian REDD+ policy domain

In the arguments of the interviewed national REDD+ actors, we identified various types of logics related to three different dimensions of the equity debate: first, why equity is a concern in REDD+ policies and initiatives; second, how equity in REDD+ should be addressed; and third, what stands in the way of achieving equitable REDD+ processes and outcomes. Some of the

logics could be related to the ideal types presented in previous literature (market, modern bureaucracy, family, legal, moral) but we also identified logics which might be considered specific to the current context of multilevel, multiactor governance in REDD+ (see e.g. Thompson et al. 2001; Forsyth 2009), drawing from different rationales at the global, national and local levels. The results have been summarized in Table 2.

It should be noted that in the same interview, the actors typically presented arguments that could be related to several types of logics, i.e., the categories are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, it cannot be said that certain types of organizations would not 'sign on to' certain logics because of the open-ended method, that is, organizational positions regarding certain types of arguments proposed by some actors were not specifically inquired from all other actors. This means that the percentages presented in Table 2 are only used to indicate the salience of certain logics in the current data, but cannot be interpreted as the definite proportion of interviewees that draw from the logic.

Table 2. REDD+ equity institutional logics identified based on the arguments of interviewed policy actors.

Logic	Rationale	Central vocabulary / arguments	N actors in whose arguments the logic may be identified	Representing (types of organizations)
Market / economy	WHY equity: Benefits/rewards should go to those whose behavior needs to change in order to achieve effective REDD+ and who therefore incur costs from REDD+. Equal local participation may also lower transaction costs and increase efficiency of REDD+.	Incentives, benefits, benefit sharing, costs, alternative income	9 (32%)	Gov't executive, nat. NGO, nat. business, int'l NGO, intergov't, foreign gov't
Legal	WHY equity: benefits belong to those holding legal rights to forests and land.	Ownership, tenure, property rights	3 (11%)	Gov't executive, nat. NGO
Moral	WHY equity: it is appropriate to involve and share benefits with those whose livelihoods are affected by REDD+, regardless of their legal position.	Rights, marginalization, eviction	5 (18%)	Nat. NGO, academic
Participatory governance	WHY and HOW equity: stakeholder participation across levels guarantees effectiveness and equity, because the state needs wide expertise and inputs for successful policies. Equity of outcomes is enhanced if different perspectives are represented.	Participation, inclusion, involvement, engagement, ownership, stakeholders, representation, multidisciplinary, local knowledge	15 (54%)	Gov't executive, nat. NGO, nat. business, academic, int'l NGO, intergov't, foreign gov't, int'l business
Standards	WHY and HOW equity: equity follows from international standards, agreements and collaboration, properly implemented at national and local levels.	Goal, mission, strategy, action plan, UN-REDD	5 (18%)	Gov't executive, nat. NGO, nat. business, intergov't

Logic	Rationale	Central vocabulary / arguments	N actors in whose arguments the logic may be identified	Representing (types of organizations)
Buzzwords	WHY equity: equity discourse is a superficial reflection of imposed standards for approval and legitimacy, not properly implemented.	"Lipservice", "making the right noises", non-implementation, business as usual	6 (21%)	Nat. NGO, nat. business, int'l NGO, intergov't
Modern bureaucracy	HOW equity: equity will result from an efficient, transparent and accountable state bureaucratic system administering REDD+ accounting and payments.	Transparency, accountability, good governance, "proper institutions", evidence-based design	6 (21%)	Gov't executive, academic
Existing bureaucracy	WHAT hampers equity: equity is undermined by existing power structures; decision making and benefits are concentrated in the central government.	Precedent/ history/experience of unequal benefit sharing, weak government, corruption	10 (36%)	Nat. NGO, nat. business, academic, int'l NGO, foreign gov't
Community	WHAT hampers equity: equity outcomes are socially embedded in the practices of the community.	Elite capture, "weak voices", vulnerability	4 (14%)	Nat. NGO, academic, foreign gov't
Family / household	WHAT hampers equity: equity is not realized within households due to gendered positions and division of labour.	Gender, culture, unequal traditions	3 (11%)	Gov't executive, int'l NGO (esp. Zanzibar)

The central rationale of the *market logic*, that REDD+ needs to provide sufficient incentives in a fair manner in order to change the behavior driving deforestation and forest degradation, could be frequently identified in the arguments of the representatives of all types of organizations. This appears to signal a consensus that previous command-and-control measures in forest conservation, or community-based forest management that has not resulted in tangible benefits for the communities involved (e.g. Blomley et al. 2010; Rantala et al. 2012), have not been very successful in curbing deforestation or forest degradation.

"… the problem has been money and how do we make them [*local communities*] work? We give them incentives, so far not much. Then, when we heard about REDD, we said OK, if it is to enhance carbon stocks and reduce emissions making people who are in the rural areas, the poor, not to cut trees but to keep them and maintain them, then if viable alternatives can come forward, then people can appreciate" (Forestry official, April 2011).

The market logic was intertwined especially in the statements of the civil society actors with that of *existing bureaucracy*, framing the problem as one of clientilistic governance in which the state captures all resources while failing both the equity and effectiveness aspects of forest management. For this reason, opposition to the proposed national REDD+ trust fund was vehement in some of their comments.

"The closest thing we see to that is 20% of the revenue is returned to districts, but even that doesn't then reach the communities where it's happened. So there's just no precedent in Tanzania. There's no history. There's a precedent of the exact opposite. So we don't think that a national reward system will work" (National NGO technical advisor, April 2011).

The *logic of modern bureaucracy* could be considered an antonym of sorts to the logic of existing bureaucracy. In this view, state bureaucracy in seen as an efficient machine that guarantees the equity of REDD+ outcomes. Perhaps unsurprisingly, such notions were presented especially by governmental actors, although they, too, admitted that there was room for improvement in the national forest governance. But in their view, as long as such principles of good governance as transparency and accountability were actively promoted and followed, the state could best oversee the administration of REDD+ policies and projects, including accounting and reward payments.

Somewhat related is the *logic of standards.* According to this logic, equity and other good governance principles flow from the international standards, agreements and partnerships that Tanzania has agreed to follow and is effectively implementing through her national policies and strategies. The flipside to this was pointed out by some NGO and international actors, referring

to what we have labelled the *logic of buzzwords*: indeed, equity goals have been copied from the global discourse for a wider legitimacy of the government-proposed REDD+ strategy, but without clearly defining measures with which such goals might be achieved.

"… it is very nicely written, these things, fairness, equity, gender balance, in the documents. But when it comes to actually doing, it is a different story […] if you don't put up a very effective way of implementing to ensure that, life will go on as usual, yeah, business as usual, yeah. And normally if business as usual on the ground is what is happening, this is what is going on, that is policy, the real policy" (National NGO director, March 2011).

Based on notions of *community* and *family / household logics* in previous literature, the equity outcomes of REDD+ could be expected to be positively shaped by existing social ties within communities and households. In our data, however, these references showed up only in the negative light. There was concern over inadequate attention to traditional gender roles in REDD+ planning and implementation and the subsequent risk that women would not be able to access the benefits while bearing the consequences of forest use restrictions in their daily lives. Concerns over elite capture of REDD+ benefits within the rural communities were related to a key design issue for a national REDD+ benefit sharing mechanism as well as for individual projects: whether benefits should be communal or distributed according to the individual opportunity costs of REDD+. The arguments are thus linked to the market logic and the effectiveness of REDD+ interventions.

Both a justification for and a pathway to equitable REDD+ outcomes, the *logic of participatory governance* may be traced to the idea of REDD+ as a prime manifestation of current multilevel, multi-actor governance spanning various levels of governance and multiple actors representing the state, private sector, civil society, academia and local communities (Forsyth 2009). The rationale that legitimate and effective policies require the equitable participation, direct or indirect, of as many stakeholders as possible, is embedded in virtually all variants of democratic theory. Such goals are frequently explicit in forestry decentralization reforms taking place in many countries across the developing tropics (e.g. Larson et al. 2010), including Tanzania. The

inputs of non-state actors required for effective and equitable policies are seen to span various types of expertise, including scientific knowledge as well as local indigenous knowledge.

"I think it is high time we do away with the conservative way of thinking, being of what the government constitute. We should broaden consultation by taking on board people who can add value to the processes given the fact that REDD+ is multidisciplinary, it is a very wide ranging issue. They could involve people from the civil society, from the academia, from Zanzibar, instead of having directors of government departments talking issues they all know. You bring a professor of forestry, a professor of law you know, a representative of women's groups, a representative of the disabled, a representative of business community and so on and so forth. If that is done, I think REDD+ can develop well because people can inform […] bringing in the lawyers, bringing in the sociologists, bringing in the business community, bringing in whoever, as large as possible, then I think we can think in terms of other things apart from merely economic figures and therefore make REDD+ a success" (National NGO technical advisor, April 2011).

5. Discussion

In this paper, we have put the suggestion that the institutional logics approach may be applied to varying cultural contexts and emerging organizational fields (Thorton et al 2012) to test. In this effort, we confronted challenges with regard to the identification of institutional orders and subsequent institutional logics. For example, when we looked at the rationales behind equity, there were several rationales that would fall under the traditional institutional order of the "state" (Thorton et al. 2012; 56; Friedland & Alford 1991), governance or democracy. However, in our reading, we distinguished between the logics of modern bureaucracy, multilevel governance and existing clientilistic bureaucracy which all subscribed to different logics. Whilst modern bureaucratic rationality characterizes the international documents, it is clearly challenged by the rationality of the multilevel governance which emphasizes multiple ways of participation (and not only democracy as voting). If the modern bureaucracy stresses the neutrality, objectivity and rules as characteristics of a good system, the multilevel governance

considers hearing different voices and engaging with different perspectives as important features. Moreover, the current logics of the state in Tanzania as portrayed in the data, work along a clientelistic logic where the neutrality is challenged by the taken-for-granted rights of those in power to make decisions and gain the benefits. The contexts of the international REDD+ system and Tanzania enriched the variety of the logics of the state.

Our analysis resembled those identifying logics in specific fields such as architecture and publishing industry (Thorton & Ocasio 2008, 128-129). The results resonated with our initial suggestion of conceptualizing REDD+ as an international institutional field analogous to the more established field of "development" (Tvedt 1998). At the current readiness phase, the international flow of money in REDD+ may be considered analogous to that in the international overseas development aid enterprise. The logics of international standards and buzzwords in REDD+ are very similar to those which may be found in the dynamics of international development and previous efforts of forest conservation with its changing buzzwords and standards adopted and used in different ways, while confronting the logics in the local contexts.

The findings suggest that the concept of equity in the context of REDD+ may be related to highly heterogeneous logics. Various actors from different organizational backgrounds may employ many different logics simultaneously while discussing equity in REDD+. It is interesting to note that even if the original idea of REDD+ largely rests on the assumption of rational market behavior, in reality, equity in REDD+ may be justified through various different logics and rationales. Left unspoken, these underlying logics may cause friction in the debates related to the design of national REDD+ governance structures, with notable implications for the legitimacy and effectiveness of REDD+ regimes.

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