

When Policies Problematize the Local: Social-Environmental Justice and Forest Policies in Burkina Faso and Vietnam

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RECEIVED 2024-03-26

ACCEPTED 2024-05-30

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ABSTRACT

We examine social-environmental justice in forest governance by asking who is problematized as drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. We adapt Bacchi’s “What is the problem represented to be” approach to the community forest (CAF) model in Burkina Faso and the Payment for Forest Environmental Services (PFES) in Vietnam and examine the implementation of these policies in specific sites through disaggregated focus group discussions (men, women, youth, ethnic minorities). We delve into the discursive, lived and subjectification effects of the policies’ problematizations, highlighting tensions and contestations relating to forest access and benefits. For both countries, what is left unproblematized in the implicit policy focus on the local is a “communal fix” of indigeneity tied to idealized and collective governance of fixed areas of land and exclusionary processes for those that do not fit the ideal. We argue that market-oriented approach in policies such as CAF and PFES absent of the wider underpinnings of the political and historical forest will only exacerbate social-environmental injustices.

KEYWORDS

WPR; Political Forest; Social-environmental justice; Community forestry; Payment for environmental services.

1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental politics do not operate in isolation but rather, are constituted within social-environmental inequalities and injustices, power relations, hierarchies and modalities of governance at different scales (Newell, 2005; Oosterom & Scott-Villiers, 2016). It is in politics that decisions about re-distributing benefits, access and wealth, equalizing citizenship and democratic participation, and resolving social conflicts are made (Fraser, 1995). A growing body of research has highlighted how the design and implementation of forest governance models that aim for equity such as community forestry and payment for ecosystem services (PES, REDD+) can also inadvertently reinforce existing and/or create new social-environmental injustices (Assembe-Mvondo et al., 2015; Loft et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2020), and create outcomes that are at times opposite to their original intentions.

Equity and justice concerns are now prominent in studies of governance of forest and natural resources (Martin, 2017; Pascual et al., 2014; Sikor et al., 2014), and on the politicization and problematizations in forest policy (Peluso & Vandergeest, 2001, 2020; Skutsch & Turnhout, 2020). An underlying assumption is that equity is not only an ethical or moral consideration, but may also be instrumental to improved governance by reducing likelihood of conflict, and improving participation and motivation for stewardship (Coolsaet, 2015; Dawson et al., 2017). The more common approaches to assessing equity are in its distributional and procedural aspects. Loft et al. (2017) and Pham et al. (2014) for example, examined how understandings of what is ‘fair’ in participation and distribution of benefits and burdens in PES mechanisms in Vietnam

differ widely between national and local actors, exposing the divergence between policy objectives and local perspectives.

Some authors include equity's contextual dimension, centered on wider historical, political and social processes that influence both procedural and distributional equity (McDermott et al., 2013). McElwee et al. (2020) and To & Dressler (2019) argue that institutional forms of PES in Vietnam are more reflective of the histories of state forest institutions and development interests than of newer neoliberal ideas; while Côte and Gautier (2018) suggests that the persistence of the community forestry model in Burkina Faso relates more to the convergence of political opportunities for non-state actors and government interests, and less about concerns over benefits of local communities.

What is lesser studied are aspects of environmental justice¹ related to recognition of identities and cultures, and the extent to which different social groups, ideas and knowledges are considered (Martin et al., 2016, Hoang et al. 2018). Côte (2020) and Fisher & van der Muur (2020) highlight how fixed or narrow representations of indigeneity or customary in community forestry schemes have entangled communities in conflicts over who can claim rights to forests and land, and who can participate in decision making processes in Burkina Faso and Indonesia

Our paper examines the problem framing of deforestation and forest degradation in key policy documents relating to forest management in Burkina Faso and Vietnam, and compares two different models of forest governance that have emerged as policy solutions to such problematizations: the forest management program (*Chantier d'Aménagement Forestier* (CAF) in Burkina Faso and payment of forest environmental services (PFES) policy in Vietnam. Both countries while vastly different in terms of forest ecosystem type and political governance, are similar in placing forests high on the national political agenda of development and climate change mitigation/adaptation. The problem frames can be understood as narratives that link together assumptions about problem characteristics, with causes, appropriate solutions, and distribution of responsibilities (Bacchi, 2012). Once adopted, these narratives can be powerful and difficult to change as they come to be accepted as truth and tends dominate other alternative narratives (Delabre et al., 2020). We examine the problematization of deforestation and forest degradation in both countries, and highlight how the forest governance models purported as solutions are built on similar assumptions, histories and silences.

In both case studies of CAF and PFES, we ask the question of how problematizations of deforestation and forest degradation have shaped local perceptions of environmental justice, related to distribution of forest rights, access, benefits and participation. We draw out how assumptions in CAF and PFES affect local communities, the recipients of these programs, through their different perspectives and claims, and identify how certain problems or conflicts are silenced or rendered invisible.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMES: PROBLEMATISATIONS IN POLICIES

Bacchi (2012) argues that critical examination of public policies starts from the premise that what one proposes to do about something reveals what one considers as problematic. She maintains that problematisations are framing mechanisms, determining what is considered significant and what is left out of consideration, revealing power relations in problem representations. This analytical shift from a focus

¹ We borrow from Martin et al. (2016) and differentiate *equity* from environmental justice, with the latter referring to "an enlarged set of concerns, including distribution and participation, but also incorporating calls for cultural recognition, a dimension of justice that passes largely unnoticed in equity discussions" (p. 254).

of policies in solving ‘problems’ to a focus on revealing problematisations and problem representations within policies is central in Bacchi’s *What’s the Problem Represented to be* (WPR) approach. WPR “interrogates the problematisations uncovered in public policies through scrutinising the premises and effects of the problem representation they contain” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 263).

Drawing on Foucault, Bacchi understands power as productive, as well as prohibitive, and that knowledge and power are intricately intertwined. Bacchi (2009) makes the point that although many competing representations of a ‘problem’ are possible, governments are active in the creation of policy ‘problems’, and their representations of ‘problems’ tend to be dominant because they are constituted in the mechanisms used to govern. She, thus, recognises the power that concepts accrue by being embedded in governmental policies and programs, and the uneven power relations in the creation of a problematisation, and in limiting what can and cannot be talked about (Bacchi, 2012). We examine the problematisations embedded in CAF and PFES policies and what/whom are governed through them.

Problematisations and the problem representations that they contain are constituted in a *discourse*. We borrow Hajer & Versteeg’s (2005) definition of discourse as “an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices” (p. 175). Some discourses may have greater status, for example those that are institutionally sanctioned/ enforced and that reinforce established economic, legal, familial, religious and educational norms. While discourses shape actors’ understanding of social-environmental problems as well as the rationalization of policy solutions (Hajer & Versteeg 2005), they are often institutionalized in unpredictable ways. How a discourse with a specific problematisation of deforestation is interpreted, negotiated, and acted upon by different actors in, for example, spaces where informal institutional arrangements prevail will require critical analyses of different voices and interests (Eilenberg, 2015; Pasgaard, 2015; Sanders et al., 2019). Further, discourses can contribute to mechanisms of exclusion (Astuti & McGregor, 2017; Pham et al., 2020) by structuring information flows and interactions in ways that favour certain interests over others. While both CAF and PFES have inclusion and equity as policy objectives, how notions of equality, indigeneity and need/merit are established as formal procedures tend to prioritize certain groups and excludes others.

3. DATA AND METHODS

3.1 Case descriptions

Forests and trees are high on Burkina Faso’s and Vietnam’s development and climate change agendas. While the two countries are considerably different with regards to their forest governance and regime types as well as their geographies and ecologies with dry forests in West Africa (Burkina Faso) and humid forests in South East Asia (Vietnam); both use international forest policy instruments to enhance forests’ – and local peoples’ – contribution to climate mitigation, adaptation and development. These instruments are community forestry and PES. The two case studies of forest governance models promoted as policy solutions to the problematization of deforestation, *the Chantier d’Amenagement Forestier* (CAF) in Burkina Faso and *payment for forest environmental services* (PFES) in Vietnam, are being implemented nationally and are key mechanisms within the respective country’s climate mitigation and adaptation strategies.

CAF is a participatory forestry model in Burkina Faso within a multi-level governance architecture. CAF has been implemented since 1986, through FAO- and state-led projects, to rationalise the sustainable production of fuelwood and meet the demand of main cities, especially the capital city of Ouagadougou (Côte & Gautier 2018). Vietnam implemented its national PFES policy in 2010, in which hydropower and water supply sectors are mandated to pay environmental service fees that are re-directed to local communities to compensate for their forest protection and monitoring activities. PFES aims to improve forest quality and quantity, to increase the forestry sector's contribution to the national economy and to improve social well-being, while reducing the state's financial burden for forest protection and management (Pham et al. 2014; To & Dressler 2019). Thus, a comparison of the two diverse cases, CAF and PFES, allows us to examine similarities in the way forests and people are problematized.

3.2 Data collection

We collected data at both national and local levels (see Table 1). At the national level, we reviewed policy documents related to forest management in Burkina Faso and Vietnam. At the local level, field data was collected from three villages surrounding the CAF Cassou in the center west region of Burkina Faso, and three villages surrounding Cat Tien National Park in central Vietnam. The data collection in Cassou was led by co-author M. Karambiri as part of her PhD work in 2017 (see also Karambiri 2019, 2020), and the data collection in Cat Tien region is led by co-author Pham T. T. as part of a project assessing PFES impacts and equity across Vietnam in 2019-2020. In both cases, mixed social science methods of focus group discussions segregated by gender, age and ethnicity at the village level, and semi-structured interviews at the household-, village- and regional-levels were conducted. For this paper, we only refer to the data from the focus group discussions as the focus group discussions in both regions used a similar timeline exercise in relation to history of villages and implementation of the forest policies, and explored triggers of change that occurred, how the actors interpreted and participated in these changes and their implications for local wellbeing and forest management. The semi-structured interviews on the other hand were specifically designed to address the different projects' research questions and were this not directly applicable to this analysis. Nonetheless, information gathered from the interviews were very useful for understanding the local contexts.

Table 1. Data sources

	Burkina Faso	Vietnam
National policies reviewed	1) Politique Forestière Nationale 1998 (National Forest Policy, 1998) 2) Loi no. 003/2011 Portant Code Forestier (Law 003/2011 Forest Code) 3) Situation des forêts classées au Burkina Faso et plan de réhabilitation 2007 (Forest Rehabilitation Plan under the Directorate of Ministry for Environment and Livelihoods)	1) Vietnam Forestry Development Strategy 2006-2020 2) Forestry Law 2017 3) Resolution no. 30a/2008/NQ-CP of the Government on support program for fast and sustainable poverty reduction in 61 poor districts
Geographic location of research sites	3 villages surrounding CAF of Cassou, center-west region, province of Sapouy	3 villages surrounding Cat Tien National Park: - Village A in Lam Dong province - Village B and C, Binh Phuoc

	Burkina Faso	Vietnam
		province
Year of site-level data collection	2017	2019-2020
Ethnicities in research sites	Across all 3 villages: - Autochtones (indigenous people): Nuni - Migrants: Moose, Fulani	- Village A: S’Tieng (local indigenous people) - Village B: S’Tieng, Tay and Nung (indigenous migrants from North Vietnam) - Village C: primarily Kinh (majority Vietnamese migrants from the Delta and other regions)
Focus Group Discussions	15	8

3.3 Data analysis

We adapt the WPR approach to draw out problem representations of deforestation and forest degradation in selected national forest governance policies of Burkina Faso and Vietnam, and to examine the effects, silences and how the problem representation is being questioned through an intersectional analysis at the local level (see Figure 1). Bacchi’s WPR method of questioning policy framings comprises six questions:

1. What’s the ‘problem’ represented to be in a specific policy?
2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the ‘problem’?
3. How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
4. What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the problem be thought about differently?
5. What effects are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?
6. How/ where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

The *first stage of analysis* relates to the qualitative text analysis of national policy documents (listed in Table 1) used to address the first three questions in the WPR framework to: 1) identify the problem representations of deforestation and forest degradation and their proposed solutions, 2) analyse the underlying ‘conceptual logics’, i.e. meanings and assumptions that must be in place for the particular problem representation to be coherent, and 3) to outline political, historical and socio-cultural conditions “that allow a particular problem representation to take shape and to assume dominance” (Bacchi 2009, p. 11). We carried out the qualitative text analyses using an inductive and deductive approach.

We do not address Questions 4, 5 and 6 directly through the policy texts, rather we examine them through field data at the local level where CAF and PFES are being implemented by examining the issues and perspectives that are ignored or silenced, the discursive, lived and subjectification effects produced, and the possibility of how specific problematisations are being challenged. This *second stage of analysis* is based on a data corpus from transcriptions (in the case of Burkina Faso) and field notes and summaries (in the case of Vietnam) of extensive focus group discussions at the village sites. Similar to the policy analyses, we carried out a qualitative text analysis using both an inductive and deductive approach. We first read through the data corpus to inductively assign codes and identified themes from these codes, including themes such as “benefits”, “risks/responsibilities”, “participation/decision-making”, “conflict”, “deforestation/ forest clearing”, “degradation”, “security/identity”, “access/rights” and

“gender”. In a next step, we take a deductive approach to group the data codes into three overarching themes of 1) deforestation or forest/land degradation, 2) practices of forest governance and 3) expressions of environmental justice. With disaggregation of the focus group discussions, we are able to pull out different perspectives of what, and who, is driving deforestation and forest/land degradation, and the benefits gained and risks incurred with CAF and PFES forest governance practices in the case study villages. We examine the various contestations and discontent of different social groups, and attempt to gain a deeper understanding of how justices and injustices over forest rights, access and benefits are embedded within or newly created by social norms and institutional practices. We also look to identify what, and whose, issues are not discussed or left unproblematic in this social and institutional power dynamics.

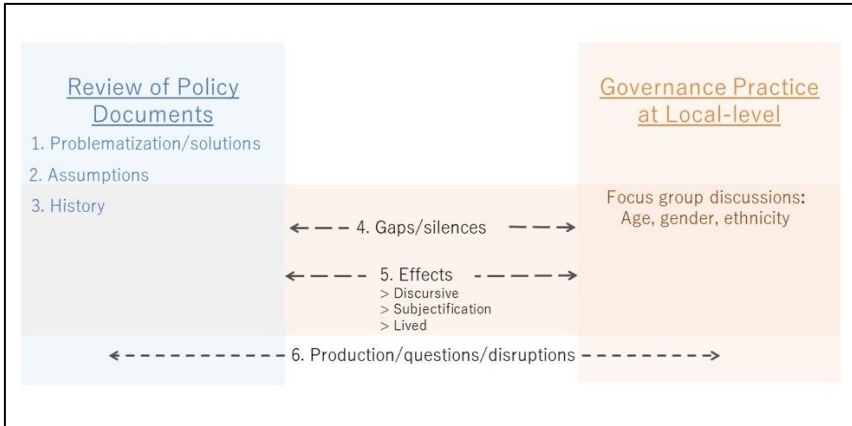


Figure 1. Adaptation of the WPR to assessing effects of problem representation in policy documents and on the ground in case study sites

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We first present and discuss the findings from the WPR analyses of the forest policies in Burkina Faso and Vietnam. We then discuss findings of the local perspectives of how CAF and PFES governance practices have led to different benefits and risks for different groups of people.

4.1 What’s the problem of deforestation and forest degradation represented to be?

4.1.1 Burkina Faso

We analysed three policy documents: the National Forest Policy 1998, the Forest Code 2011 and the Forest Rehabilitation Plan 2007. These policies were selected for their prominent role in defining, framing and giving guidance on how forest should be managed and benefits shared, thus offering a front window to analyse the underlying problem representations in the forest sector.

The policies stress the “principle of rational and integrated management of forest resources with the effective participation of populations” (National Forest Policy, 1998, p.44), and emphasize that increasing local participation (in a controlled way) in forest governance and use of scientific measures (i.e. management plan and bureaucratic governance structures) are solutions to achieve sustainable forest management. While decentralization of forest governance and local participation are presented as tools for effective rationalization of forest management, the rural populations are also described as “lack(ing) management know-how, because they are often illiterate, are not ready to

assume all the tasks and responsibilities arising from decentralization” (National Forest Policy, 1998, p.28).

Thus, the *problem of deforestation and forest degradation* is represented to be the poor competence and low capacity of local people and decentralized local authorities for efficient and sustainable forest management. The *presuppositions and assumptions underlying this problem representation* grew from global discourses of local participation in resource management and community-based forest management in the 1970s and 1980s, which coincided with the broader processes of decentralization in the country. The country’s constitution calls for “strengthened democracy” and “increased participation of all the layers of the population to the country’s economic and social development” (National Forest Policy, 1998, p.50), and decentralization is presented as a powerful policy tool to increase popular participation (National Forest Policy, 1998, p.28). In this context, CAF is a policy tool that borrows from global values of local participation in, and constitutional principles of, decentralized governance. The CAF also serves as a technical and bureaucratic solution to the problem of low local capacity, with the technical direction of the CAF provided by the state and local people doing the actual forest management work. Further, CAF is seen as a solution to the problem of fuelwood overexploitation (with a direct impact on deforestation and forest degradation), as a planned and “rational” management practice to guide fuelwood cutting and supply to urban markets.

How the problematization came about has its roots in colonial history where blame on local people as a threat to the environment has led to the creation and fencing of protected areas that excluded local access to valuable resources despite customary rights. This territorialization has evolved to become State Forests after independence, with customary rights and traditional forms of governance in forest management remaining unacknowledged in the forestry laws, and “rational” practices purely based on preconceptions of colonial science. Within institutionally fenced forests, local people have only selected usufruct opportunities (such as fuelwood for household consumption) over forest resources whereas commercial permits and concession licenses are given to private actors by the state for commercial exploitation of high economic value products, such as gold mining. Successive reforms have reinforced the state’s status of being the sole owner and disposer of public lands and forests. However, in practice, specifically in rural areas, customary authorities retained full control over land management and distribution because of their ancestral entitlements, legitimacy, and symbolic and religious authority over land. Therefore, forest areas like the CAF of Cassou cannot be created without the approval of the customary chiefs and the allocation of parts of their customary lands to the project, thus reinforcing a dual system of State formal and customary governance practices (Karambiri et al., 2020; Côte & Gautier, 2018).

4.1.2 Vietnam

We selected two Vietnamese forest policy documents for our analysis: Vietnam Forestry Development Strategy 2006-2020 henceforth referred as the Strategy, and Forest Law 2017. The Strategy is considered as the key reference for all forest policies and initiatives that were implemented since 2006 (including the pivotal Decree 99/2010/ND-CP on payments for forest environmental services) and the Forest Law of 2017 (approved in 2019) is the most recently ratified forest policy. A third policy document *Resolution no. 30a/2008/NQ-CP of the Government on support program for fast and sustainable poverty reduction in 61 poor districts* was reviewed to trace how the representation of the deforestation problem is translated into specific policy solutions in the targeted populations/regions.

A critical analysis of the policy documents highlights that *the problem of deforestation is represented as* twofold: 1) a problem of the low productivity in the forest sector, particularly with regards to plantations and production forests; and 2) a problem of poverty, and of low livelihoods and farming productivity of ethnic minority groups in mountainous, remote and isolated areas. Low productivity indicates that the forest is undervalued and as a result is poorly managed, and that it is being cleared by poor farmers practicing upland shifting cultivation. The forest is also seen as a solution to national problems, the policies position forestry to support poverty reduction particularly in rural and mountainous regions by generating of wage labour in tree plantations, and by enabling entrepreneurship and participation of local people through allocation of certain rights and responsibilities, and to support stabilization of security and a national identity.

Other causes of poor forest management linked to bureaucratic and technical aspects of weak and inconsistent legal frameworks and low staff and community capacity are similarly equated with solutions of more systematic planning and monitoring, higher levels of finance and stronger engagement with market mechanisms that can then be supported through PFES.

The *presuppositions and assumptions underlying this problem representation* are tied to the development-oriented perspectives underlying the policy documents. Forestry development is to integrate the management, protection and appropriate use of forest resources and ecosystem services; and is to support economic growth, poverty reduction of “poor, remote ethnic communities and women in upland regions”, and environmental protection. Sustainable management, use and development of forests is considered as a foundation for forestry development and is predicated on the condition that forest owners (organizations, enterprises, households and communities) will receive clear benefits, rights and obligations. Further, investments from diverse sources including “private sector, ODA, FDI and other fund sources generated from environmental services for forest protection and development” is a priority (MARD 2007). The development-oriented perspective allows for a narrowly economic approach to poverty reduction and forms the rationale for the national Payment for Forest Environmental Services (PFES) policy in 2010.

How the representation of this ‘problem’ has come about has a long history. Shifting cultivation practices practiced by upland minority groups has been vilified since the French colonial rule and considered as the anti-thesis to state goals of development, modernization and environmental protection (Cleary, 2005; McElwee, 2022) and Vietnam’s anti-shifting cultivation policies aimed to remake these farmers into ideal subjects of the State. Vietnam has been termed as a late socialist country (Wilcox et al., 2021) where a market economy can coexist somewhat peaceably with socialist rhetoric and the Communist one-party state rule. This form of socialist capitalism attempts to balance the desire for economic growth, wealth and modernity with the harmonization of individual and collective wellbeing – or put another way, capitalist economics with socialist institutions – leading to multiple and often contradictory ambitions. In the early days of *Doi Moi* market reforms launched in 1986, the Vietnamese state extended its authority over rural spaces by actively populating frontier regions for the cultivation of commodity crops through structural changes around tenure reforms and relaxation of household registration that enabled a large-scale internal migration. This built on pre-Doi Moi policies in the late 1970s to establish new economic zones in rural regions and encourage large numbers of migration, or “labour relocation”, to redress the perceived imbalance in population density between north and south, and between the deltas and the frontier mountainous areas (Nguyen Anh et al., 2003). The cumulative

policies resulted in extensive deforestation including by military-associated logging operations and land conversion for agriculture by migrants, though often attributed to upland minority groups (Cole & Ingalls, 2020; de Koninck, 2006). Later efforts to halt deforestation and re-green the uplands have taken the form of logging bans, agricultural intensification, extensive tree plantations (which constitutes as forest in its technical definition) and forest monitoring programs, the latter specifically designed with incentives to pull minority groups into state activities. Continued rapid growth in the land- and forest-sectors is led by market demands and private sector actors, leading Ingalls et al. (2018) to observe that: “Vietnam’s ability to at once secure and increase its forest estate while achieving unprecedented expansion of land- and forest-risk commodity sectors hinges on its importation of raw and semi-processed materials from abroad, representing a substantial displacement of deforestation and forest degradation to source countries” (p. 257).

4.2 Perspectives of ‘policy solutions’ on the ground – discursive, subjectification and lived effects

4.2.1 CAF Cassou, Burkina Faso

Who belongs to the CAF?

The CAF is a participatory forestry model for sustainable fuelwood production. The physical entity of the CAF was created by a UNDP-FAO funded project on community lands, following negotiations with the local people landowners which are the autochthons and the customary authorities.

The CAF was founded on principles of local people’s inclusive participation in the management and decision making over the forest and fuelwood production. For that purpose, the local people were organized into forest management groups (GGF) at the village level, a Union of the forest management groups (UGGF) at sub-national level and into a Federation of the Union of forest management groups (FNUGGF) at national level. According to the CAF’s internal rules of procedure (article 2), the State gives the concession of the CAF forest to the UGGF, which acts as local people’s representatives to “safeguard the environment and produce fuelwood through (i) rational forestry development, (ii) the increase of fuelwood production through reforestation, and protection against bushfire, and (iii) the rational use of forest resources for national wood fuel self-sufficiency. GGF cut and sell the fuelwood to urban wholesale wood trucks, provides labor for reforestation and other silvicultural activities, and define future orientation and investments into the CAF. The UGGF hires a technical staff of 6 officers to ensure technical conformity of the wood cutting operations, and the respect of the forest code and other national policies, laws, and regulations. In sum, the GGF emerge as the sole avenue for participation and decision making over the CAF’s affairs. This will lead to intersectional challenges, hence excluding de facto numerous categories of actors.

On paper, the participation in the GGF, hence into the CAF’s management, is voluntary with no exclusion based on sex, ethnicity, or any other social characteristics. In practice, ethnicity and status of residence determine who can join the decision-making bodies of the GGF. Since the autochthons or “first-comers” are the historical landowners, they are automatically invested in a leadership position within the GGF, its Union and Federation. The migrants, who are land borrowers, are excluded (and often self-excluded) from any land and forest related discussion because of their status of “strangers” in the area. A male autochthon argued that “when the CAF started, the migrants were also members of the GGF, but over time they felt uncomfortable and left

because land and forest belong to us, the autochthons, the sole entitled to deal with these issues”.

Furthermore, there are two groups of migrants with different interests regarding the CAF, but facing the same exclusion because of their status of residence: the migrant farmers usually of Moose ethnic groups; and the migrant livestock herders/pastoralists of the Fulani ethnic group. For both, *“the autochthons are the landowners here, they are the ones who decide what they want to do with the forest. We are foreigners here, we have no authority regarding the forest”* (Migrant farmer). As herders, the Fulani people rely heavily on the forest for their livelihoods, specifically for grazing for their animals, as this herder mentioned: *“We were told that the goal of the CAF is to protect the forest so that new migrants can have cropland. That it will also benefit the herders for grazing in the forest”*. However, they cannot participate in the CAF, which ultimate existence is based on a single activity: fuelwood cutting. A male herder explains: *“We are herders, not loggers. Therefore, we cannot be part of the CAF as only the loggers can be members. We do not know the CAF managers. Yet, we depend on the forest for our livestock grazing.”*

Beyond ethnicity, gender dimensions also influence women’s non-participation in CAF’s decision board. Fuelwood for household consumption is perceived as a “female work” and at the beginning of the CAF, only a few autochthon women cut wood for commercial purposes, usually operating in small groups. However, the perceived gender roles and division of labor has squeezed out the few women in the activity. Woodcutting is argued to be a physical and male domain, and wood scarcity in the forest makes it challenging for women to travel long distances in the forest. As such, even though *“we women cut wood. But we do not have any profits from the CAF because we cut wood only for our consumption and not for sale. Now, it is men who cut and sell wood in the CAF”* (Autochthon, female). Migrant women do not cut the wood or participate in the management as their male counterparts, but they aspire more to collecting non-timber forest products for domestic use and sale. A migrant female explained: *“I have never attended any CAF meeting. By the time we learned the information, the meeting had already taken place. So, we did not attend. If you are not informed or if you are not invited, how can you expect to participate? We go to other meetings not related to the forest.”*

Moreover, other non-members of the GGF are also excluded from the CAF management even though they hold legitimate claim to the forest land and resources. For instance, the customary chiefs who ceded their community lands to create the CAF find themselves excluded from its management and benefits sharing schemes as well as the local government and local forest officers. A male autochthon and a local elected official explained even though his family’s lands were among those gathered by the project to create the current CAF, *“they say that I cannot benefit from the forest or participate in the CAF’s meetings or votes because I am not a wood cutter, nor a member of the GGF. Do you find this fair?”* These claims for participation and belonging to the CAF determine who can benefit from the CAF, under which conditions, for which implications for social peace, and the durability of the CAF.

Who can benefit from the CAF?

CAF was expected to generate income, create jobs in the rural area and thus foster forest communities’ socioeconomic development. In practice, only the wood cutters who are autochthon members of the GGF can benefit directly from the CAF. The formal benefit sharing system adopted in the 1990s (and remain unchanged) determines the fuelwood price of 4 USD/m³ and its distribution as followed: 50% of fuelwood revenue belongs to the woodcutter, 27% to the forest management fund, 14% to the state

treasury and 9% to the village development fund. The opinions regarding this benefit sharing are mixed, specifically regarding the village development fund, which concerns the villagers. If the autochthons men are aware of the existence of the fund and can explain its use, their migrants' male counterparts know of its existence, but express ignorance of its during the men FGD *"Indeed, we have heard about this fund. But we ignore if it has served to do anything in the village. Only the autochthons know, we migrants are not informed"*.

The other local people who do not cut and sell the fuelwood can solely enjoy the existence value of the forest, and non-timber forest products for their consumption and sale. Likewise, the institutional actors such as the local government, the forester and the customary chief among others do not hold a stance in the CAF's benefit sharing scheme.

When it comes to gendered benefit sharing, both autochthons and migrants' women have open access to the forest for non-timber forest product, but not to the benefits from wood sale as they are not loggers. Particularly, migrants' women appreciate the open access they have to NTFP in the forest as opposed to private lands where they are forbidden. However, they denounce the fact that only autochthons' women can capture emerging local opportunities for the development of NTFPs small-scale enterprises. They also regret the fact that the forest is being converted into private agricultural land in which case, they will be excluded from its access. The youth autochthons are loggers and thus benefit directly from the CAF. However, they complaint of the lack of transparency in the management of the CAFs revenues and the alleged unfriendly attitude of the CAF's bureaucracy toward the local people. For them, if the management does not improve, they would rather want their ancestors' land to farm and not keep within the CAF.

These systems of fragmented benefits have fuelled tensions in the community between members of the CAF and non-members who express a feeling of their forest, a public resource being hijacked by a group of people, the bureaucratic leaders of the CAF. This enrichment of the CAF's leaders as opposed to the other members is widely denounced including by the wood cutters as this male autochthon *"We are only loggers but those who are leaders of the CAF management board have got rich and some have built houses, and do what they want."* Likewise, the male autochthons said during their FGD that *"the population does not see the benefits of the CAF. It is the CAF leaders themselves who are getting the benefits while we are here and we don't even have fields to grow the population does not receive the benefits of the CAF and that is why we are demanding our land for cultivation. Yet, what is left unsaid are the more damaging lived effects of CAF on the migrants."*

There are voices calling for disruption to this problematization and urging the customary chiefs to claim back the community lands from the CAF: *"the population does not perceive the benefits of the CAF. That is the reason why we are demanding back our land to cultivate"* (FGD autochthon youth). In village A, these claims resulted in the Minister of Environment retroceding 1500 ha of the CAF's lands to the claimants to avoid escalation between the CAF's managers and the local people. In village B however, the claims led to a widespread conversion of the forest into other land uses, and the sale of the CAF's land by the local people to private agribusiness. In village C, proponents and opponents of the CAF exchanged arguments but eventually chose to keep their lands within the CAF. The sustainability of the forest and the CAF system will depend on addressing these land claims rooted in outdated benefit sharing mechanisms and constraining intersectional social characteristics.

4.2.2 PFES Cat Tien, Vietnam

Cat Tien National Park stretches across Lam Dong, Binh Phuoc and Dong Nai provinces. Situated in a geographic transition zone between the Dalat Plateau (Southern Annamites Mountain Range) and the Mekong Delta, the park contains high levels of species diversity and endemism. The number of inhabitants in the CTNP core and buffer zones has declined from over 200,000 in 2010 (Dinh et al., 2012) to approximately 78,000 people more recently (MARD 2021), with residents distributed largely according to ethnicity and migration history (Morris-Jung and Roth 2010). The indigenous peoples (S'Tieng, Chau Ma, Chau Ro and Saray) have occupied their current territories for generations and have historically practiced semi-sedentary shifting cultivation, and now they rely mainly on cashew plantations (Dinh, 2019). Other migrant ethnic communities (Tay, Nung, Dao H'Mong and Hoa) have moved in from the northern provinces and the *Kinh* (or lowland Vietnamese) have been migrating into region since post-war (after 1975), and under the national resettlement program into new economic zones in the mid 1980s (Dinh et al., 2012) aimed at reclaiming “uncultivated land” for farming (Zhang et al., 2006). More recently, the local communities are seen as the problem to park management in the illegal logging and extraction of forest products, encroachment on forest land for agriculture and increasing risks of forest fire (MARD 2021).

Incentives for whom? And for what?

The PFES policy was first piloted in Lam Dong province in 2009 and in Binh Phuoc and Dong Nai, the two other provinces around Cat Tien in 2014. Our field research covered 3 villages on the edges of the National Park in Lam Dong and Binh Phuoc provinces. Two of the villages receive payments as part of the PFES program and all receive various State incentives and projects related to forest monitoring and replanting since the early 2000s. With the objectives to increase forest cover, enhance forestry added-value and improve local livelihoods and reduce poverty, PFES essentially mirrors the problem representation in the national forest strategy. Implemented in mind with Resolution No. 30a/2008's focus on “*poor, remote ethnic communities and women in remote upland regions*” has meant PFES and forest incentive programs in this area are explicitly allocated for indigenous and ethnic groups and excludes Vietnamese *Kinh* migrants by design: “*These (PFES, poverty reduction) programs are only focused on helping the ethnic people, the Kinh do not benefit*” (Kinh, male). A *Kinh* woman expressed her frustration: “*We did not choose to migrate here but the government encouraged us to move here as part of economic development program. But when we came, we were treated as outsiders... We do not have any land and our family does not even have household registration number... being rejected from government programs made us feel invisible.*”

However, state programs and incentives for forest protection also come with restrictions on traditional land use practices such as shifting cultivation, continuing its criminalization since colonial rule, and restrictions against conversion of forests to other land uses. The discourse of shifting cultivation as a driver of deforestation is prevalent in national policies, including REDD+ national documents and development policies linked to permanent farming and settlement with government funding allocated to communal budgets to reduce and ‘stabilize’ swidden areas (Pham et al. 2020). In focus group discussions, ethnic minority males in the group voice concerns the same restrictions did not seem to apply equally to commercial agriculture ventures: “*... in 2006, a rubber company cleared the forests, but we had to stop shifting cultivation. Now we only have 1 ha per household and there is not enough land for rice cultivation*”

and “...the government took away our (shifting cultivation) land in 2004, and then it was given to the Korean company in 2007. Later when the company was bankrupt it was given to Dong Phu [company]. We thought the land was coming back to us when the Korean company left, not to another company.” This episode highlights feelings of injustice and loss of trust in the government that used the narrative of shifting cultivation as a driver of biodiversity and ecosystem service loss, but yet enabled larger drivers of deforestation in the name of ‘development’.

Who does PFES benefit?

Most of the villages appear to depend on PFES payments for their incomes, given insufficient crop harvests from limited farmland and declining value of their cashew crops: “*Our crops are not enough. I have to save all the forest money to live*” (Ethnic minority, female). In the two villages receiving PFES payments, Cat Tien National Park (CTNP) creates individual contracts with households to carry out monitoring activities with payments of between 115,000 – 493,000 Vietnamese Dong per day (approximately USD 5–21), up to potentially 7 million VND per quarter (USD 302). CTNP claims that PFES payments account for about 50% of household income and over 80% of the poor household participating in PFES have escaped the poverty threshold (CTNP 2020). And even though the payments may not be substantive, they were seen as complement: “*the forest money plays a large role in the lives of many households. My husband’s participation brings in income to support our children*” (Ethnic minority, female). An ethnic minority male who works on forest monitoring said that “*the money from PFES is not enough to make up for the time spent working 4 days and 4 nights [average time spent on forest monitoring activities as part of PFES]. But at least the job is stable.*” While CTNP chooses to highlight the positive role of PFES in terms of monetary income, the loss of traditional farming practices appears to have created a dependency among the vulnerable to the small PFES incomes at the expense of more resilience livelihoods.

Last but not least, the forest programs that focus solely on indigenous groups is accompanied with the assumption that these groups are vulnerable and are in need of protection. CTNP park managers and government consider the exclusion of Kinh in PFES as a necessary form of protection against forms of land accumulation and elite capture of development benefits. A Kinh provincial government officer expressed that “*[In order] to protect ethnic people from land grabbing by Kinh people, the government forbid the Kinh to have land and buy land from ethnic groups in these areas.*” This creates a perception of indigenous peoples as incapable and in need to be managed. However, the government is also distrustful of ethnic groups and their potential impact on the narrative of policy success, as a Kinh national government officer said: “*we also need to show that we support ethnic groups ... although many ethnic people are still clearing forests, we cannot punish them or cancel their PFES contract because it will become a sensitive social discrimination story and we will face problem of low disbursement rate.*” Such subjectification of the indigenous as incapable robs them of agency to be able to disrupt such problematisations.

4.3 Burden, benefits and inequalities in CAF and PFES forest governance

Bringing our two case studies of CAF and PFES in Burkina Faso and Vietnam together, the comparison of these seemingly different geographies and distinct programs highlights the discursive, subjectification and lived effects of the problematization of the local forest communities in national forest policy as a commonality across the localities. Forest policies in Burkina Faso problematize the low capacity and incompetence of local people and governments to govern effectively, and establishes CAF as a solution to instil technical and bureaucratic practices within local structures,

and to manage the problem of fuelwood over-exploitation in a rational manner. Our study of CAF Cassou has highlighted how such governance structures has inadvertently benefitted the loggers who were considered responsible for the overexploitation problem, and created power imbalances between those in the CAF governance, autochthons who are customary owners of the land and migrant populations who have neither access nor rights to land but who have been using the land productively as renters.

Similarly, PFES policy employs a dominant narrative of poverty alleviation, and the problem representation is evident in PFES being directed to support and incentivize “poor ethnic minorities and women in remote upland regions” to solve the issue of low forest productivity and decline in Vietnam. Forest and land use restrictions attached to PFES incentives have however created livelihood pressures and ethnic differentiation, while private companies appear to have different treatment under the law through large concessions to the forest and land for plantation activities that are seen as more economically productive and efficient. In both the Burkina Faso and Vietnam policy cases, the embedded discourses and problem framing of local practices and their low forest and farming productivity as drivers of deforestation and forest degradation are reflected in policy solutions that have appeared to create greater injustices.

Even though both CAF and PFES promote inclusion and equity as project/policy objectives, it is clear from our case studies that there are perspectives of injustices along intersections of ethnicity and gender. Even though forest rights remain with the autochthons and ethnic minorities, there is discontent within these groups over who is able to benefit and the burdens that are imposed from forest and land use restrictions. For the migrant “outsiders”, the policies’ perspectives of inclusion based on ethnicity means that not only is information and participation privileged, but subjectifies the group to rejection by society and limiting their agency for disruption:

“Indeed, we heard about this fund. But I do not know if they have already made an achievement in the village with the money from this fund and if they did it, I’m not aware” (Migrant, male, Burkina Faso).

“I have lived here since the village was first established and I have never been invited to any village meetings and been involved in any government programs” (Kinh, female, Vietnam).

A similarity of both the CAF and PFES case studies is the attempt of the Burkinabe and Vietnamese states to address long histories of territorialization, unequal access and distrust between the State and indigenous peoples through rationale economic approaches. The seeming simplicity of triggering behaviour change with just the right allocation of monetary and non-monetary incentives conveniently ignores the long and complex histories at play. Both countries share a history of French colonial regime where ideas of *‘civilisatrice’* or modernity and productivity have determined rules of forest and land development and territoriality. The rules that have caused inequalities and injustices in loss or restrictions of customary rights and local governance practices are still persistent in the policies today. Market-based policy solutions based only on observable economic exchanges in the present cannot but reinforce such injustices.

5. CONCLUSION

We examined two policies, CAF and PFES, that govern forest and forest communities in Burkina Faso and Vietnam. The problem representations of deforestation and forest degradation in the Burkina Faso and Vietnam policies create ambiguity around the question of who is responsible for the problem, who benefits and what has to be

relinquished by whom in terms of activities, lands, and rights. While the two studies are located in very diverse contexts, the policies have in common that it is the local small-scale land user who is expected to act as forest stewards, participate in forest governance models and respond to market incentives that constrained local land use practices.

The CAF and PFES forest governance models in Cassou and CTNP are predicated on the notion of a “communal fix”, building on assumptions that traditional or customary attachment of a group of people to a fixed area of land marks them as culturally distinct with collective land use governance regimes. As Li’s (2010) work on indigeneity highlights – and supported by Côte’s (2020) findings in Burkina Faso and Pham (2020) in Vietnam – contemporary policies continue to “fix indigenous people in place, not to support their farming ventures but to limit them in favour of ‘community-based forest management’” (p. 388) or community-based conservation. CAF and PFES appear to be exactly in this trap with its many contradictions and unfulfilled promises of tenure, finance and benefits reinforcing existing and creating new injustices amongst ethnic and gender divides. The techno-centric and market-based solutions being promoted are wilfully absent of the wider underpinnings of the political and historical forest with its many varied interests, discourses and power that drives deforestation and extraction of benefits, and the persistence of colonial ideas and institutional path dependencies. While our work remains an incomplete view, it is painfully clear that different forms of injustice are likely to be exacerbated with the trends of fast-growing and increasingly complex global investments and market financialization of forest landscapes (Brockhaus et al. 2024). Future research and funding institutions on forest governance models (including CAF, PFES and other models such as sustainable forest management, afforestation and tree plantations) should include a critical examination into the politics and histories that determine what (and who) is problematized in policies and how they come about, what (and who) benefits and/or is silenced, and to shed light on the discursive, lived and subjectification effects of such policies. Such critical analysis will need to closely examine the win-win promise of market-based solutions and place emphasis on the problems of social relations and power asymmetries to be able to move towards a more just forest and people future.

Author Contributions: Grace Wong: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing–Original Draft, Writing–Review and Editing; Mawa Karambiri: Data Curation, Formal analysis, Writing–Review and Editing; Pham Thu Thuy: Formal analysis, Writing–Review and Editing; Alizee Ville: Data Curation, Formal analysis, Writing–Review and Editing; Hoang Long: Data Curation; Chi Dao: Data Curation; Andrea Downing: Writing–Review and Editing; Amanda Jimenez-Aceituno: Writing–Review and Editing; Maria Brockhaus: Conceptualization, Writing–Review and Editing.

Competing Interests: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgments: This research is funded by Vetenskapsrådet (Swedish Research Council) Project no. 2018-00988, with co-financing by the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (FairFrontiers, Project Number 14200149). We are extremely grateful to all interview partners, and especially the community members in our research sites in Burkina Faso and Vietnam who generously offered their time to participate in our research.

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