



## **The politics of inclusion/exclusion of REDD+ in Tanzania**

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, the green economy has emerged as the ‘panacea’ to the many unprecedented social and environmental crises we face today. One important sphere of the green economy, where the logic of market-based ‘green growth’ has gained a lot of traction, is the protection and conservation of nature. A prominent example of this is REDD+, which turns terrestrial carbon in the global South into fictitious commodities that can be sold for profit. REDD+ has been especially popular because of the many social and ecological benefits it claims to offer. In this paper I conceptualise REDD+ as a form of ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation, which promises economic and political empowerment to the local poor through their formal inclusion in global conservation capital. I critique the win-win discourse of REDD+ and ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation more broadly and demonstrate how the commodification of carbon causes new forms of inclusion and exclusion to forest users. Based on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in two forest-dependent villages in the Lindi Region of Tanzania, where two different REDD+ projects were underway, I show how material and discursive powers shaped development actors’ inclusive strategies to market forest carbon. I discuss how the formalisation of forest governance changes the access and use of common forests and argue that new forms of inclusions and exclusions, both in and outside rural villages, emerge. I call upon practitioners and analysts to acknowledge the illusionary character of ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation and deal with the co-existence of inclusions/exclusions in all land use.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the green economy has emerged as the panacea to the many unprecedented social and environmental crises we face today. The green economy builds on the longstanding ideology of sustainable development, but emphasises more strongly market-led ‘green growth’ to reconcile social, economic and environmental objectives (Kettunen and Brink 2012; Huff 2015). One important sphere of the green economy, where the logic of ‘green growth’ has gained a lot of traction, is the protection and conservation of nature. Amidst growing concerns of the unmatched degradation of many of the world’s ecosystems (MEA 2005), governments, international donors, non-governmental organisations and private corporations have increasingly embraced market logic when designing and implementing nature conservation policies/projects (Büscher et al. 2012; Roth and Dressler 2012). At the global level enormous efforts have been undertaken to reconceptualise rural landscapes into ‘natural capital’, and to build the necessary infrastructure for trading ‘ecosystem services’ within and across countries (Gómez-Baggethun et al. 2010). Advocates of market-based conservation argue that the commercialisation of nature will not only lead to its environmental protection but also to poverty eradication and inclusive rural development (Muradian et al. 2013; Bishop et al. 2008). This win-win ideology is exemplified in the rise of Payments for ecosystem services schemes, REDD+, biodiversity offsetting, ecotourism and carbon projects.

The promise of achieving triple-win objectives has made market-based conservation instruments very attractive, especially among conservation and development practitioners. However, scholars have warned against the win-win discourse arguing that it rarely occurs in practice due to the complex political nature of conservation and the existence of irreconcilable trade-offs (Muradian et al. 2013; Büscher et al. 2012). They point out that the commercialisation of nature conservation is a contested political process that brings about the exclusion of some social groups from the natural wealth they depend on (Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones 2012; Kelly 2011; Corson 2010; Büscher et al. 2012). Indeed, recent findings have confirmed the incomplete and fractured nature of market-based conservation, showing its contradictions and competing logics that cause both positive and negative outcomes to rural residents (Leach and Scoones 2015; Green and Adams 2015; Pamela McElwee 2014; Roth and Dressler 2012; Arsel and Büscher 2012). Against this background the question of who gets affected how is one of the most important today.

In this paper I draw on my doctoral research on REDD+<sup>1</sup> initiatives in South-eastern Tanzania to analyse which new forms of inclusions and exclusions emerge from the commercialisation of forest carbon. I conceptualise REDD+ as a form of ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation. I discuss the inclusive strategies that REDD+ proponents made use to gain local legitimacy, but highlight the role of material and discursive powers in shaping local participation. I analyse how REDD+ transforms local forest governance and draw on the literature of the politics of land to explain

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<sup>1</sup> REDD+ is a global mechanism and policy framework emerging under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and in the context of voluntary carbon markets. It is a key element of the post-Kyoto climate agreement. The objective of REDD+ is to financially reward measures taken in developing countries that (1) reduce emissions resulting from deforestation and/or forest degradation, or (2) enhance existing forest-carbon stocks through sustainable forest management. Via the REDD+ mechanism, performance-based payments will be dispersed to project proponents in developing countries who can successfully demonstrate that they monitored, reported and verified carbon reductions from forest use.

social exclusion. Empirically, the research is based on 11 months fieldwork, from August 2011 to July 2012, in South-eastern Tanzania of which I lived 7 months in two remote forest-dependent villages where different REDD+ projects were underway. Within a broader ethnographic research strategy I predominantly used qualitative methods for the collection of data. During my 7 months stay in the villages of Ruhoma and Mihumo/Darjani I conducted participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, 116 recorded semi-structured interviews, 116 household surveys, one focus group discussion and document analysis. For the recorded interviews I purposefully selected research participants from different village groups, village council, sub-village chairmen, conservation agriculture groups, village natural resource committee and district officials. I conducted one focus group discussion in Ruhoma with members from the village council, village natural resource committee, village land use planning committee, REDD+ committee and ordinary villagers. In addition to my qualitative methods I conducted a small-scale household survey with 76 and 39 respondents in Mihumo/Darajani and Ruhoma respectively. Respondents were sampled randomly from the village populations, which made up 690 and 169 households in Mihumo/Darajani and Ruhoma respectively.

The paper is structured in the following way. In the next section I present ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation as my conceptual framework that guides my study into the new REDD+ mechanism. The third section will discuss the Tanzanian REDD+ context and the specific REDD+ initiatives where I collected my empirical data. In the fourth section I discuss how REDD+ project proponents made use of inclusive strategies to promote the commodification of forest carbon. I further interrogate the nature of local inclusion. In the fifth section I discuss the politics underlying the REDD+ initiatives and the forms of inclusions/exclusions that emerged from it. The final section serves to conclude and discuss the wider significance of my study.

## **2. “Inclusive” Neoliberal Conservation**

### **2.1 REDD+ as “inclusive” Neoliberal Conservation**

Based on the premise that deforestation and forest degradation make up 12 to 17 % of global greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC 2007; van der Werf et al. 2009) the international community under the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change has agreed to finance efforts to (1) reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), (2) conserve and enhance forest carbon stocks and (3) sustainably manage forests (Corbera and Schroeder 2011). This has come to be known as the new REDD+ mechanism, which has developed to the world’s largest market-based conservation approach that offers economic payments for the protection and enhancement of forest-carbon stocks in developing countries. Because REDD+ places a financial value on the ability of trees to sequester carbon from the atmosphere, with the intention to promote global market exchange of forest-carbon credits, scholars have described the mechanism as an example of neoliberal conservation (Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones 2012; McAfee 2012; Corbera 2012).

The term neoliberal conservation denotes the increasing penetration of neoliberalism and neoliberal ideas into the field of nature conservation (Büscher et al. 2012; Igoe and Brockington 2007; Arsel and Büscher 2012). Scholars employing the term argue that the neoliberal ideology of using the market to solve social and environmental problems has increasingly entered the field of nature conservation, which was (and still is in many aspects) dominated by a ‘fortress

conservation' approach (Brockington, Duffy, and Igoe 2008). While recognising that processes of neoliberalisation are always multifaceted, dynamic and specific to spatial and temporal contexts (Roth and Dressler 2012; Castree 2010), it is argued that neoliberal conservation generally restructures society-nature relations towards the commodification and financialisation of nature through markets (Büscher and Fletcher 2015; Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones 2012; Sullivan 2013). Often this is accompanied by new governance networks that strengthen private over public stakeholders (Igoe and Brockington 2007; Heynen and Robbins 2005). Over the years a growing body of literature, especially within the critical social sciences, has documented neoliberalisation processes in a variety of sectors – from fisheries, to forests, biodiversity, waste, etc – usually criticising their unequal outcomes and failure to contribute to sustainable development (Heynen and Robbins 2005; Bakker 2010; Castree 2010). While this literature has provided invaluable insights into the origins, designs and effects of neoliberal natures, it has largely missed important changes in the recent development of neoliberalism (for notable exceptions see McAfee 2012; McAfee and Shapiro 2010; Büscher and Dressler 2010). Below I draw on insights from development studies to highlight the emergence of a new 'inclusive' form of neoliberalism, which is also shaping the conservation of nature today.

Since the turn of the millennium, neoliberal ideology and policy across the South has changed significantly. Neoliberal reforms have been increasingly meshed with social and political objectives that promise to include more parts of society in wealth accumulation (Abrahamsen 2004; Ballard 2013; Craig and Porter 2006; Hickey 2010). Principles of good governance, democracy, and inclusive development have commonly been promoted alongside neoliberal solutions to societal problems. This has resulted in a re-regulation rather than a de-regulation of the state, which remains a key actor within society-nature relations (Castree, 2010). 'Inclusive' neoliberal policies have entailed both political and economic reforms, which Craig and Porter (2006, 12) neatly summarised as follows:

While retaining core conservative neoliberal macroeconomic and pro-market policy settings, 'inclusive' neoliberalism adds 'positive liberal' approaches emphasizing 'empowerment' to enable participation (and ensure 'inclusion') of countries and people in global and local markets. These include: institution building and an enabling state ensuring global market integration; building human capital via services (health, education); empowering and protecting the rights of the vulnerable through participatory voice and legal access; engendering moral obligations to community and work (Craig and Porter, 2006, 12).

The 'inclusive' turn of neoliberalism has contributed much to its growing popularity in the field of nature conservation. While conservation advocates have for considerable time called for participatory and community-based approaches (Dressler et al. 2010; Charnley and Poe 2007), the 'inclusive' turn of neoliberal conservation has taken this to a more sophisticated level. Today conservation advocates promise the political and human empowerment of local people through conservation actions, arguing for their rightful and formal inclusion in markets for conservation commodities (Büscher and Dressler 2010; FAO 2011; Larson 2010). To safeguard the rights of the poor conservationists pledge to take into account human rights frameworks, ethical principles, standards and safeguards that have been developed to guide the just inclusion of local

poor in conservation efforts. Contemporary conservation practitioners commonly embrace human rights approaches to development, which is especially illustrated in the widely used free, prior and informed consent principles (FPIC), which should ensure that local actors have the absolute freedom to decide whether to engage in nature conservation or not (Igoe 2007; Springer, Campese, and Painter 2011).

In addition to strengthening procedural rights of the local poor, the ‘inclusive’ turn of neoliberal conservation has contributed to governance reforms towards the recognition, formalisation and democratization of local land rights in the Global South (Putzel et al. 2015; Larson 2010; Ribot, Lund, and Treue 2010). Proponents of ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation argue that the formalisation and decentralization of land rights engages the local poor in the global trade of natural resources, which is thought to result in the dual objective of inclusive development and sustainable management of natural resources (FAO 2011; Putzel et al. 2015). It is further hoped that the decentralization of natural resources contributes to the democratization of the local political sphere, where the local poor can express citizenship and equally partake in the governance of natural resources (Ribot et al. 2010). Therefore, within the ‘inclusive’ neoliberal era efforts to secure local tenure through formal titling processes and land reforms have become a major trend across the rural South, because they embody so neatly the win-win promise of achieving inclusive sustainable development through the legal inclusion of the local poor in global markets (Putzel et al. 2015; Obeng-Odoom and Stilwell 2013). This rationale is explained by Moyo (2004, 107), who wrote:

Land administration reforms tend to be proposed within a neoliberal conception of good governance, focusing on the decentralisation and democratisation of land institutions, to enhance land administrative efficiencies, broad based representativity of local structures of land control and civil society participation in land administration, within a framework of introducing formal and statutory law in the land management systems. The main purpose of these proposed land governance system reform is to develop ‘secure land tenure’ regimes, implicitly to make the institutions benign to market processes.

## **2.2 Exclusions of “inclusive” neoliberal conservation**

Advocates of neoliberal conservation policy and practice have taken on an ‘inclusive’ turn that promotes win-win outcomes of conservation and development initiatives. In their view the formal inclusion of the local poor in market-based conservation will result in the dual objective of poverty eradication and sustainable resource management. However, in promising triple win objectives, proponents of market-based conservation have failed to acknowledge the fact that exclusion is an inevitable consequence of all land use (Hall, Hirsch, and Li 2011). While exclusions are being acknowledged, in the situations where they visibly occur, the popular response usually is to point at failures in implementation or inefficient governance institutions. Hence, in their view the observed exclusions derived from bad implementation or instances of corruption. Exclusions are thus seen as abnormal and temporary; the result of individual people’s inability to follow the correct procedures, policies and frameworks (Igoe 2007). According to Hall et al. (2011, 8), however, “exclusion is a necessary feature of every type of land use and tenorial arrangement.” Building on Ribot and Peluso’s theory of access, Hall et al. speak of

‘exclusion’s double edge’ and define it as “the ways in which people are *prevented* from benefiting from things (more specifically, land).” In demonstrating that exclusion is something necessary and positive to some, as it provides them with security, the scholars highlight the need to acknowledge the necessity of exclusions and respond appropriately.

Hence, exclusion should be conceptualised as the other side of inclusion. Both exist concurrently. But although exclusion is inevitable, it is not a random process. It is structured by power relations that exist and unfold in an uneven playing field (Hall, Hirsch, and Li 2011; Sikor and Lund 2009; Nelson 2010). While there can be many forms of powers that prevent people from benefiting from resources, Hall et al. (2011) identify four key powers: regulation, the market, force and legitimation. Here it is useful to also recall Mansfield (2007) who reminds us that property rights are always protective and violent, meaning that they always include and exclude people from the ownership and access of things. Likewise, Obeng-Odoom and Stilwell (2013) argue that there are many forms of land ownership, both formal and informal, but all require the exclusion of some to secure the inclusion of others.

### 3. Research context and methods

#### 3.1 REDD+ in Tanzania

Tanzania has featured highly on international agendas on REDD+ because of its large forest estates (35 million ha), which are crucial to the livelihoods of the large rural population, the existing progressive forest laws and policies, and high estimated deforestation rates (1.1 % of forest size per year) (URT 2013). Largely supported by the Government of Norway, the Tanzanian state together with several conservation NGOs started the process of designing and implementing REDD+ in 2008. Early activities focused on establishing the necessary institutional framework to engage in global forest-carbon trade: creating national capacity for measuring, verifying and reporting carbon changes, set up governance and institutional legal frameworks, prepare benefit-sharing mechanisms, national standards for safeguards, and learn from demonstration projects (Norad 2014).

Tanzania’s REDD+ policies, institutional framework and demonstration projects resemble the ideology of ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation. All projects aim to halt deforestation and forest degradation by selling forest-carbon credits to international markets. At the same time they follow a pro-poor approach in promoting community-based forest management, alternative income strategies, equitable benefits distribution, democratic governance, social and environmental safeguards<sup>2</sup>, gender mainstreaming, community empowerment and free, prior and informed consent principles (URT 2013). A range of public and private stakeholders were actively engaged to secure public consensus and initiate public-private partnerships for carbon-financed forest protection (URT 2013). Aside from the state, non-governmental organizations have been key in the implementation process. Large parts of the REDD+ funds from Norway<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Safeguards can be broadly understood as policies and measures that aim to address both direct and indirect impacts on communities and ecosystems, by identifying, analyzing, and ultimately working to manage risks and opportunities (Murphy, 2011 in URT, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> The Norwegian government has been especially active in Tanzania’s ‘REDD+ readiness’ process, committing 500 million Norwegian Kroner (around 80 million USD) directly or via the UN-REDD Programme to

were given to conservation NGOs to carry out demonstration projects. Several organizations rearranged their budgets and programmes to include REDD+ in their stated activities (Burgess et al. 2010). After an internal selection process, nine non-governmental organisations received official funding to pilot REDD+ in various parts of the country. Tanzania has thus recorded the greatest number of sub-national REDD+ demonstration projects in any African country outside of the Congo Basin (Lin et al. 2012).

### **3.2 Case study villages**

The findings of this paper are based on my doctoral fieldwork in Ruhoma and Mihumo/Darajani, which are two remote, forest-dependent villages, where different REDD+ projects were underway: The “TFCG/Mjumita Making REDD work for communities and forest conservation in Tanzania” and the “Angai village land forest reserve (AVLFR)” initiative. The two villages – Mihumo/Darajani and Ruhoma – are both located in Lindi Region, in the Southeastern part of Tanzania, in the Liwale and Lindi rural district respectively. The village of Mihumo/Darajani has more than 3,000 inhabitants and spans across an area of 29,555 hectares that include large patches of dry miombo, closed dense forests, riverine and wet miombo forests (Taku Tassa 2010). The village set aside 11,792 ha as forest reserve, which equals to 8.45% of the total AVLFR. The AVLFR covers a total area of 139,420 ha and is managed and owned by 24 villages (previously 13 villages) surrounding the Angai forest. The village of Ruhoma counts 475 residents living in 169 households across a village area of 3,817 hectares. Ruhoma is located on the Noto plateau, which is predominantly covered by dry evergreen forests that include the canopy species *Pteleopsis myrtifolia*, *Azelia quanzensis*, *Zanthoxylum deremense* and *Grewia conocarpa* (TFCG 2009b). Forests cover a total area of 2,830 hectares in the village. About 88% of this area, which is equivalent to 2,488 hectares, was set aside as forest reserve in the course of TFCG/Mjumita’s REDD+ intervention.

Villagers in Mihumo/Darajani and Ruhoma belong to the poorest people in the world. There is widespread poverty in the entire region, which expresses itself in poor infrastructure (water, electricity, houses), low consumption rates, food insecurity, lack of assets, low education levels, low income levels and low levels of mechanization in agriculture (NBS 2013). Although livelihood diversification is an important strategy noticeable among all wealth groups in the two villages, findings of my PhD illustrate that poor households still rely much on agriculture (crop production, livestock, forests and farm wage labour) for cash income (Scheba 2014). At the same time crop sales remain by far the single most important cash source to all wealth groups in both villages. While livestock grazing and pastoralism is extensively practiced in other areas of Tanzania, residents in Lindi Region mainly practice crop production as their major agricultural activity (Covarrubias, Nsima, and Zezza 2012; URT 2012). Major cash crops in Lindi Region are cashew nuts, sesame, groundnut, cowpeas and pigeon peas. The significance of production and sale of crops manifests the continuous dependence on land for human and economic development. This dependence cannot be, as popular discourse does, described as ‘shifting cultivation’. Instead, farmers practice a more complex form of agriculture that makes use of fallow rotation, and intensive cultivation of temporary and permanent farms (Scheba 2014).

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the country, while additional smaller contributions came from the governments of Finland and Germany, and the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility.

### 3.3 REDD+ initiatives

REDD+ initiatives in South-eastern Tanzania are exemplar of ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation in that they aim to reconcile forest conservation with economic and political development. In Ruhoma the REDD+ project, which is called “TFCG/Mjumita Making REDD work for communities and forest conservation in Tanzania”<sup>4</sup>, was the first REDD+ pilot project in Tanzania. It is a five-year (2009 – 2014) partnership between two Tanzanian NGOs: the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG) and Community Forest Conservation Network of Tanzania (Mjumita). An amount of 5.9 m USD was provided from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Norway to finance the project, which aims to “reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in Tanzania in ways that provide direct and equitable incentives to communities to conserve and manage forest sustainably”. The project is especially praised for being ‘pro-poor’ because of establishing a community carbon enterprise through which voluntary emissions reductions shall be aggregated and sold according to international standards (TFCG 2009a). The initiative is considered to be highly successful by project proponents (Mjumita 2014). By 2013 the project was implemented across 36 villages located in Lindi rural and Kilosa districts with a total area of 373,200 ha, and a total forest area of 215,000 ha. In Lindi rural district the project includes 17 villages with a project area of 120,000 ha and a forest area of 75,000 ha. Ten of the 17 villages, including the village of Ruhoma, have recently been selected to apply for CCB and VCS verification in preparation of selling forest-carbon (Mjumita 2014).

The REDD+ initiative in Mihumo/Darajani was initiated by Finnish researcher Dr. Irmeli Mustalahti<sup>5</sup> who started an international participatory action research project titled “The role of Participatory Forest Management in Mitigation of and Adaptation to Climate Change: Opportunities and Constrains”<sup>6</sup>. The aims of her research were „(a) to assess local communities’ perception and willingness to be involved in the REDD+ initiative; (b) to assess local communities’ capability and the costs to carry out PFCA in three villages surrounding AVLFR; (c) to determine forest carbon stock in three villages’ forest area constituting AVLFR” (Mukama, Mustalahti, and Zahabu 2011). The research was specifically concerned with the idea of combining forest decentralisation with REDD+ efforts to promote sustainable and poverty alleviating forest management. Other actors involved included the National Forestry and Beekeeping Division, Liwale District Council, the Clinton Climate Initiative, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and research/University partners. The Clinton Climate Initiative selected the Angai forest from a pool of 70 potential sites to support community-based forest management linked with REDD+ based carbon payments and FSC timber harvesting (CCI 2011). However, Clinton Climate Initiative’s proposal to include Liwale as an official site for REDD+ piloting was not supported by the Norwegian government. In 2010 a new Finnish led development programme started in Liwale titled LIMAS (Lindi and Mtwara Agribusiness Support)<sup>7</sup>. LIMAS is a five-year programme aimed at increasing agricultural productivity, business opportunities and forest management in selected districts in Lindi and Mtwara regions. While LIMAS mentions the sale of forest carbon credits among proposed income generation strategies,

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<sup>4</sup> For the project website see: <http://www.tfcg.org/makingReddWork.html>

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Irmeli Mustalahti has a long and complicated history in Liwale. In 2000 she came to the district to work as a development consultant for two years, facilitating forest decentralisation. Later she returned almost annually as an action researcher. See Scheba and Mustalahti (2015) for a discussion of her role in the project.

<sup>6</sup> For the project website see: <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/tzredd-actionresearch/>

<sup>7</sup> For the project website see: <http://www.limas.or.tz/limas/>

its focus is on community ownership of forests and sustainable timber harvesting (LIMAS 2010).

#### **4. 'Inclusive' Neoliberal Conservation in practice**

In this section I discuss how proponents of neoliberal conservation make use of 'inclusive' strategies to promote processes of neoliberalisation, which result in new forms of inclusion/exclusion. As the first part of this section will show 'inclusive' strategies played a significant role in obtaining the local legitimisation for the commodification of carbon in community forests. However, in the second part of this section I will interrogate the nature of local inclusion and argue that certain (underlying) factors contributed to public acceptance of the projects.

##### **4.1 Practices of inclusion**

In Mihumo/Darajani the idea of forest carbon commodification arrived in the village late 2009 as part of a Participatory Action Research project, led by former development consultant and then post-doctoral researcher Dr. Irmeli Mustalahti. With the assistance of two District Forest Officers, one researcher, and a representative of Clinton Foundation, Dr. Mustalahti introduced REDD+ to the village council first before conducting Participatory Action Research and Participatory Rural Appraisal methods<sup>8</sup> with selected residents for two days. Efforts were made to include a range of village groups in the participatory methods. Both men and women from the village government, Village Natural Resources Committee (VNRC), elders, and community members attended. Contradictory information exists with regard to the exact number of participants (Sundström 2010, 35; Mukama, Mustalahti, and Zahabu 2011). A number of participatory activities took place including group discussions, pair-wise ranking and scoring exercises, a forest transect walk, focus group discussions and participatory forest mapping to engage selected villagers in the REDD+ process (ibid). In following an 'inclusive' approach to market-based conservation Dr. Mustalahti wanted to "empower villagers to participate in forest carbon assessment as well as to study possibilities to implement REDD+ intervention in AVLFR" (Mukama, Mustalahti, and Zahabu 2011, 2).

During the participatory activities the selected villagers learnt of the challenges of climate change mitigation, the global REDD+ initiative, carbon trading and the project proponent's objective of conducting participatory forest carbon assessments and monitoring in the forest. At the same time villagers were requested to assess different forest uses according to their risks and benefits and they were provided with a space to voice their opinions, perceptions, interests and experiences with forest protection. Project proponents presented REDD+ as a possible choice to villagers, trying to connect their traditional knowledge with latest scientific findings to facilitate constructive discussions over the sustainable use of forests (Mukama et al. 2011). During the discussions villagers raised a number of concerns that related to fears of exclusions due to the restrictions on forest use. Because of their fear over the consequences for their livelihoods, the size and location of the reserve in the forest was an important point of discussion. Villagers further discussed how to exclude wild animals, ensure food security for all, and the amount of carbon payments and mode of distribution among others. However, many of the concerns could

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<sup>8</sup> These participatory methods have become very popular in international development over the past decades. In valuing local knowledge and experience they aim to build local skills and capacity for the purpose of increasing community independence and self sufficiency. Researchers take the role of facilitators who guide participants in in data collection and analysis (Mukama et al., 2012:3).

be mitigated during the discussions by calling for an equitable distribution of costs and benefits and inclusive governance mechanisms. At the end the project proponents received local support for the REDD+ initiative (Mukama et al. 2011; Sundström 2010).

In Ruhoma, project proponents also followed an inclusive strategy in initiating processes of neoliberal conservation. As the project aimed to demonstrate a pro-poor approach to REDD+, which shall also lead to CCB validation, deliberate efforts were taken to obtain the free, prior and informed consent from all project participants (Forrester-Kibuga et al. 2011). When initial activities commenced in April 2010 members of the village government and community representatives were invited to awareness raising campaigns and workshops to analyse and discuss forest stakeholders and deforestation drivers (Mjumita 2014). Later on a meeting with the village council was arranged, followed by project staff, district officials and village leaders holding meetings in every sub-village to introduce the REDD+ initiative to community members. Meetings at the sub-village level were deemed useful to include as many villagers as possible in the decision-making process. In these meetings villagers raised a number of issues and lively debates took place over the best possible use of the forest (Forrester-Kibuga et al. 2011). However, on the same day, the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2010, villagers accepted the project in a general assembly, ensuring the legal and democratic legitimacy of the REDD+ initiative.

#### **4.2 Processes of inclusion**

Villagers in both case study sites raised valuable concerns over potential exclusions as a result of the REDD+ initiative. Yet at the end of the day they decided freely and voluntarily to engage in the projects, hence contributing to new forms of inclusions/exclusion in their villages. In this section I will question, however, the extent of freedom villagers had in making their decisions, arguing that the power of discourse and material resources contributed to the public legitimisation of the projects.

#### **Power of discourse**

In order to generate support and obtain legitimisation for carbon financed forest protection among villagers, project proponents resorted to two powerful narratives: environmental crisis and green development. With regard to the former, the negative consequences of cutting down trees were highly problematised. Long-standing agricultural practices such as slash-and-burn agriculture were equated with the destruction of the environment, leading to less rainfall, droughts, less wild meat and global climate change. It was denounced by some as creating wasteland, called '*jangwa*' (cf. Brockington 2006; cf. Conte 1999), which only creates useless land with negative effects on local environmental conditions. What project proponents told villagers in Lumbiji, another project village of the TFCG/Mjumita REDD+ initiative, is exemplar of this narrative:

if all forest cover is removed, there will be many environmental, economic and social consequences - many of the water sources which rise in forests will dry up, irrigation systems will collapse, and there will be no water for domestic use. In the long run there will be droughts, and therefore it won't be possible to produce crops, and the destruction of the forest will contribute to greenhouse gases and ultimately to climate change (Forrester-Kibuga et al. 2011, 22).

Several village leaders in both sites adopted this crisis narrative, particularly the problem of setting fire in the forest. They took on the role of ‘educaters’ to shape public opinion in the village.

With shifting cultivation and setting fire you farm for a few years and then the fertility is gone. Then people need to move again to another place and if you do this you damage the environment. You clear the land, forest and set fire. When you set fire it means you have damaged the environment. (M Interview 26)

Shifting cultivation doesn't have much productivity/benefits. It just continues to destroy the forest. So the farmers must be showed another phase of farming. Maybe with tractors, or projects. (R Interview 13)

Aside from communicating the notion of an environmental crisis (Leach 1996; Roe 1991), project proponents promoted neoliberalisation as the rational path to green development (cf. Lansing 2011). The protection and commodification of forest carbon was presented as a promising win-win strategy that offers environmental (climate change mitigation, improved local weather conditions, availability of rain, improved air quality, reduce heat and protect local water sources) and economic (carbon payments, community ownership of forest resources, improved agriculture, alternative income strategies and community infrastructure projects) benefits. Print-media such as leaflets, brochures and pamphlets as well as open-air video shows were utilised to communicate these viewpoints. Drama groups were trained to perform songs and acts about forest conservation and REDD+. At the day of project acceptance in Ruhoma, villagers were given sodas, T-shirts and biscuits for giving the right answers to a quiz that was prepared around REDD+, climate change and community forests.

If you do something you must ask for what purpose. Now we protect the forest and ask for what purpose. Mostly for development. So for the rain for example that it will continue to come. Like the scientists say. If we protect the forest, the climate will change, rain will be a lot. A lot of rain means good harvest, which means development. This is how I see it. (R Interview 31)

Scholars have demonstrated how environmentalist discourse needs to be viewed in a social and political context (Leach and Mearns 1996; Brockington 2006). Villagers can adopt environmentalist discourse in the pursuit of a ‘strategy of extraversion’ in order to accrue benefits from conservationist interventions (Brockington 2006). The adoption of environmental discourse to further development lays bare the power relations between villagers, state and non-governmental organizations. To many residents the knowledge and information provided by the project proponents has inherent value. Often villagers told me that experts (*watalamu*) specifically came to “educate” them on the benefits of improved forest management.

We used to refuse. We refused a lot. But we were taught by people who studied. So something that you don't know, disturbs you. If you know about it, then you will agree to it yourself. You learn from other people and

then believe. We study by doing not with a pen. We learn by looking (R Interview 15)

Often villagers regard experts as people who have *more* knowledge than them. They know *more* than them and therefore it is necessary to listen and learn *from* them. Discussions are therefore not necessarily about different ideas and strategies. Instead, it is about who knows more, who has understood and who has not yet understood. Therefore, people who disagree are the ones who have not yet understood and they need to be further educated about the right way of doing things.

Disagreements occurred but because we really educate one another they became less powerful as they came from people who did not understand what REDD+ is about. In future, day after day, they will understand more and more (R Interview 11).

### **Power of material resources**

The power of the environmental and green development discourse in the villages is closely related to the material relationship between villagers and development actors. As development organizations and state officials possess considerable resources (money, technology, networks, etc.), villagers seek to benefit from them, despite perhaps opposing views or interests (Mosse 2005). The public acceptance of neoliberal conservation thus relies on the existing socio-economic conditions of villagers. The persistence of poverty means that villagers have limited choices. While villagers may not agree with the views of project proponents, to refuse them could likely result in no intervention at all as opposed to a different one. A neoliberal intervention then becomes attractive for its development promise, no matter how little they may seem (Cooke and Kothari 2001; Silva and Motzer 2015).

In their assessment of the PFCA activities, Mukama et al. (2011) state that the expected economic benefits from carbon sequestration was a major motivating factors for villagers to participate. Furthermore, in both villages the majority of residents mentioned the existing lack of cash benefits from the forest. Aside from meeting subsistence needs, and with the exception of a handful of villagers, the 'village community' has not benefited from the vast economic value that the forest offers. The promise of REDD+ to transfer ownership, management capacity and resource benefits to the village level attracted the support of many, otherwise marginalised, residents.

There is nobody here in the village who has got benefits from the forest. People enter the forest, they leave, and we don't know anything about what he did, and what he harvested. We ordinary villagers don't benefit from the forest. (M Interview 21)

If you protect the forest, you get carbon. If you take the carbon to the market, money will be available. From the money, a percentage we get. Another part we must use to improve the forest. In the village we will plan of how to use the money. The money must be divided to improve the forest, and another part to give to the villagers. Another part to build things

for the forest. (R Interview 21)

## 5. The politics of inclusion/exclusion of REDD+

### 5.1 politics of the formalisation of land

For villagers to sell forest-carbon credits in global markets, they must be the legal owners and managers of the carbon in trees. This gives them the right to alienate it and exchange it for money<sup>9</sup> (Corbera and Brown 2010). However, tropical forests are characterised by complex and competing ownership claims and access relations, which pose a significant problem to project staff. Resolving long-standing questions over who owns the forest therefore becomes a central element of almost every forest carbon project (Naughton-Treves and Wendland 2014; Sunderlin et al. 2014). In both case study villages, and indeed across the country, REDD+ initiatives expedite the formalisation of community ownership of forests (URT 2013). Project proponents engaged in the establishment of community-based forest management, which is a form of democratic decentralisation in Tanzania. If implemented successfully<sup>10</sup>, decentralisation transfers the power and authority over the management of forests to local village institutions, who, it is expected, will manage forest resources sustainably (Blomley and Iddi 2009). However, as it is well known decentralisation of natural resource management is hardly a smooth process; it is full of power struggles, resistance and political conflicts (Nelson 2010; Dressler et al. 2010; Ribot, Lund, and Treue 2010).

In Mihumo/Darajani REDD+ efforts to formalise community ownership encountered a long history of contestation, dating back to 1993/94, when Finnish development consultants initiated negotiations with the Liwale District Council over forest decentralisation. Since then villages surrounding the Angai forest have found themselves in a long struggle over forest resources (Mustalahti 2007; Mustalahti and Lund 2010). When the REDD+ initiative commenced in the year 2009, villagers had already waited for around 15 years to become the formal managers of the Angai forest. However, because of the resistance of the district to transfer powers, the complex technical requirements of decentralisation and the large nature of the forest, only partial successes had been achieved (Scheba and Mustalahti 2015). While villages had obtained the legal ownership of their land in 2005, incomplete forest management plans and by-laws left them with no legal authority to manage the reserve<sup>11</sup>. While villagers had been included in the forest decentralisation process from the very beginning, they practically remained excluded from their forest, albeit having received formal ownership of the village land.

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that the exchange of forest-carbon credits for money depends on various processes including 'individuation', by which scholars describe the act of separating the ecological function of forests – sequestering carbon from the atmosphere – from its supporting biological and social context. The tasks of measuring, reporting and verifying carbon are fundamentally about 'individuation' and 'abstraction' of forest carbon. They put legal and material boundaries around the carbon sequestration function so that individuals, groups or institutions can buy and sell it. Carbon is made homogeneous across time and space - independent of which forest it comes from – and assigned a standard value of exchange (money) (Corbera and Brown, 2010; Kosoy and Corbera, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> To establish community-based forest management certain guidelines and regulations must be fulfilled (URT, 2002; Blomley and Iddi, 2009). Villages must obtain legal tenure over their land, they must elect a village natural resource committee that will be the principal body concerned with the management of the village forest, they must describe the boundaries of the forests, and create management plans and by-laws that describe the permitted and prohibited uses among other things.

<sup>11</sup> This is still the case today with the exception of two villages that recently obtained full management rights over their forests. More are to be followed soon in the course of Limas project.

While REDD+ project proponents carried out carbon measurements in the village forest, political conflicts between the village and the district as well as within the village over land erupted. Instructed by the district, many of the 13 Angai villages split during that period, creating a new total of 24 villages. While official accounts point at reasons of efficiency and administrative limits for the village division, insiders claim that it was a political manoeuvre by the ruling CCM party to increase shares over votes (Scheba and Mustalahti 2015). Irrespectively, the new village boundaries made previously drafted forest management plans largely obsolete, creating a need for a resurvey of the village and forestlands of all 24 Angai villages. That was not only a major stumbling block to decentralisation, but it contributed to the confusion over ownership rights, which put the REDD+ process on hold. While REDD+ project proponents and villager leaders supported the idea of shared ownership and management rights between villages despite their official division, LIMAS project staff decided that boundary demarcations and ownership titles were to be resolved first before negotiations over potential management strategies (timber, carbon, etc) could take place.

In Ruhoma, REDD+ efforts encountered less difficult questions over the ownership and management authority of forests. However, here too, power struggles and politics over the access of land shaped neoliberal conservation. TFCG/Mjumita was the driving force behind the rapidly evolving decentralisation process, which they wanted to implement in as many villages as possible in project areas. They succeeded in creating the necessary consensus and political institutions for decentralisation in a remarkable time. The engagement of TFCG/Mjumita, researchers and development professionals contributed to the formal and legal transfer of forests to village communities. Despite the fact that all village land in the district had been surveyed and legally recognised in 2007, no land use plan was in place in Ruhoma prior to the REDD+ intervention. After the village assembly had officially accepted and launched the REDD+ project, village level meetings and participatory land use planning were carried out to draft a land use plan, which was then taken to a village assembly for approval. During the 6 days workshop participants also drafted by-laws for the management of the forest and one month later, on 25 April 2011, a draft forest management plan for Ruhoma village was ready. The draft forest management plan, village land use plan and by-laws were later successfully approved by the full district council, putting into effect new rules and regulations over the governance of village land and forests.

## **5.2 Reregulating inclusion/exclusion**

The formalisation of community ownership over land, which included the demarcation of the village land forest reserve, a forest management plan and by-laws to regulate access and management of resources within the community forest reserve, resulted in new forms of inclusions and exclusions. The access and use of forest resources were re-determined in the forest management plan and bylaws to practically exclude village outsiders from using the forest and to formally restrict withdrawal within the community. The formalisation process entailed changes in the management and withdrawal of forest resources, determining who gets to regulate forest access and use as well as how forest resources can be exploited.

In both villages the management plans and bylaws distinguish between allowed and prohibited uses of the forests, and uses for subsistence needs and for income generating purposes. They also define 'the community' as all residents of the village, making people from other areas outsiders.

This is already a significant change as forests in Mihumo/Darajani and Ruhoma were long considered to be open access. Farmers from different villages could establish farms in forests based on customary rules of governance. Yet this consequently becomes problematic as they are now considered outsiders with fewer rights than residents. The formalisation resulted in a clear distinction and cost-benefit distribution between residents and non-residents, whereby the latter faces higher financial barriers to forest access.

The formalisation of the use and access to land through the issuing of permits aimed to prevent unwanted activities in the reserve. A number of activities were prohibited including farming in the forest, collecting fresh cut firewood, harvesting wild beehives, trapping wildlife, digging minerals, soil and stones for business, harvesting in the area set aside for rituals, herding livestock, settlement, harvesting trees that are not cleared for harvesting, starting fires, and charcoal production. Residents of Ruhoma are required to pay 20,000 TShs (13 USD) to obtain a permit for 2 months that allows them to harvest up to 50 planks and 70 beams for subsistence use. In addition to the 20,000 TShs (13 USD) they must pay 200 TShs (0.13 USD) tax for every plank. No one in the village is allowed to harvest timber products and sell them. In Mihumo/Darajani residents may not harvest any timber at the moment since no harvesting plans have been prepared and approved by the Liwale District Council. People who misuse their powers by acting outside their rights and responsibilities are to be treated as criminals who face legal prosecution.

Differences between the two villages also exist with regard to the hunting of wildlife and utilising the forest for educational/knowledge purposes. In Ruhoma no hunting is allowed in the village forest reserve. In Mihumo/Darajani residents may hunt certain animals after having obtained a permit from the village natural resource committee. Yet the technique is also of importance. Using snares to trap animals, for instance, is prohibited in both villages. With regard to utilising the forest for educational and knowledge purposes, activities such as tourism, research and study tours require permits in both villages. The amount non-residents need to pay differs substantially between the two villages. In Ruhoma Tanzanian citizens and foreign citizens pay 5,000 TShs (3 USD) and 7,500 TShs (5 USD) per day respectively if they want to conduct research. In Mihumo/Darajani the same activity would cost between 45,000 TShs (28 USD) and 100,000 TShs (63 USD) for Tanzanians and foreign citizens respectively. In both villages the forest management plans and bylaws exclude people who contributed to drafting the institutions from taxes or fees. This saves development actors from having to pay fees or taxes when entering the village land forest reserves.

### **5.3 experiencing inclusion/exclusion**

The political struggles in Mihumo/Darajani over the decentralisation of forest resources resulted in frustrations, anger and disappointment about the lack of benefits in the village. The establishment of the village forest reserve restricted the village government from harvesting timber from the reserve, which they could have sold to raise public income. At the same time the process of forest carbon commodification remained incomplete, resulting in no carbon payments to the village population. Forest incomes at the village were limited to entrance fees from researchers, workshop allowances and per diems for forest carbon assessment activities. In the meantime well-connected individuals, e.g. village committee or council members, district officials or informal leaders, accrued private benefits from illegal timber harvest in the community reserve

(Taku Tassa 2010; The Guardian Tanzania 2014).

We ordinary villagers don't benefit from the forest. (M Interview 21)

Since we started to protect the forest the community hasn't benefited at all. It is the situation of destitute that drives them to enter. And they don't understand how they will benefit. (M Interview 54)

In Ruhoma forests in and around the village were accessed through customary arrangements prior to REDD+. Conflicts over village and forest boundaries were rare and farmers from neighbouring villages could access village areas to open up farms in forested land. The process of formalising local ownership over village land brought serious conflicts over the boundaries of village and forest land. Communities around Ruhoma started to fight over parts of forest, each striving to increase their size and thus potential carbon incomes. When prior to REDD+ farmers from different villages could move unhindered across areas, this was no longer possible. People from outside the village had to be excluded to enable the villagers to commodify forest carbon.

Before REDD there wasn't any conflict about land. But with REDD and every village to become its land titling, conflicts started (R Interview 3).

Actually that is what is bringing all this problems. You know every village is trying to make sure is conserving a very big forest. Even if the people in the village know actually our village size is very small. So they even encroach up to other parts of other villages. If you tell them that this is not part of your village, this is where the quarrel begins. Because they want to conserve an area as big as possible to get more money. But if you tell them, look here your boundary ends here. They say no, up to there is our boundary (R Interview 39).

Residents from Ruhoma (foremost the elders and some village council members) in collaboration with district officials and NGO staff had to meet several times with community representatives from the neighbouring villages to resolve border conflicts. During the land use planning exercises the village boundaries were discussed and confirmed with all the neighbouring villages but conflicts over the boundaries with two villages continued. Therefore, there have been several subsequent meetings between village leaders and project staff where village boundaries were debated and an agreement was reached. Despite the official agreement, which was confirmed in a letter signed by parties from all villages, some residents of the neighbouring village resisted the decision, which they see as invalid. They argued that the place in the forest of Ruhoma rightfully belongs to them. They based their arguments on customary rules, which allowed them for many years to make a living from this forest patch. Nevertheless, residents of Ruhoma, who feared the loss of valuable forest-carbon money due to the destruction caused by those farmers, started to explore different options to move them and with them their farms. Some called for village militias, police or soldiers in their attempts to exclude them from the forest.

We don't have the power. If you want to chase them away, you need to use the force of police. It is needed that the police comes to displace them.

First they damage the forest, because this year they farm here. Next year there. Then there. They damage our forest. But we can't displace them. Maybe the district commissioner, or the land officer (Interview 13).

In addition to village outsiders, the formalisation process also impacted on residents in the community. In restructuring the access and use of forest resources for community members, some villagers experienced exclusions from their permanent farms, which were located in the newly established community forest. In Ruhoma I encountered a man who was negatively affected by the establishment of the forest reserve as he lost customary withdrawal rights to his permanent coconut farm. The man claimed that because of the proposed forest reserve his access and withdrawal rights to his permanent coconut farm with more than 50 coconut trees is now seriously restricted. Due to the new rules he was no longer permitted to make use of fire and to clear land on his farm. Both actions bore a fine of 50,000 TShs or 6 months imprisonment if payment cannot be made. For the man this restriction on withdrawal rights over forest resources was unbearable. In his view it would lead to uncontrollable bush around his coconut trees, which would prevent him from deriving important benefits.

All the coconut trees will be surrounded by bush. Lots of thorns. They don't allow me to use fire to clear the land. Because it is in the forest. After a few years, you won't be able to pass through. There will be lots of thorns of all kind [...] But these days the thorns are small. You can easily slash. But after they are mature, you won't be able to slash. It is not possible (Village B Interview 47).

Many villagers on the other side expressed happiness about the monetary and non-monetary benefits that they received from the REDD+ project. These include trial carbon payments<sup>12</sup> for every resident as well as training provided in the form of workshops, progress in decentralisation reform (legal tenure over forest resources) and knowledge about improved agricultural techniques. In the course of the project the village was also assisted in building a new office. Especially because of the REDD+ trial payments villagers in Ruhoma felt that they benefited individually from the decision to protect the forest. In total an amount of 21,081,960 TShs (12,730 USD)<sup>13</sup> was provided by the REDD+ project to the village. A sum of 2,973,560 TShs (1,900 USD) was kept and spent on community development projects and the remaining 18,108,400 TShs (11,570 USD) were distributed transparently and with the help of

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<sup>12</sup> In February in 2012 households in Ruhoma were among the first in the project to receive REDD+ trial payments. The TFCG/Mjumita project used funding financed by the Government of Norway to distribute money among villagers. The payments were not based on actual conservation performance but on estimations about potential future incomes from the protection and sale of forest carbon. The amounts distributed were calculated on the basis of local annual deforestation rates in the village, average carbon stocks in village forests, total area of village forest with age above 10 years and area of forest with age above 10 years put into village forest reserve<sup>□</sup> (Deloitte 2012).

<sup>13</sup> On the basis of satellite images TFCG/Mjumita estimated that the annual deforestation rate in Ruhoma amounts to 33 hectares. Because of the village assembly decision to protect 88% of the total forest area, it was calculated by project staff that an area of 26 hectares, which would lead to 2,693 tCO<sub>2</sub> per year if deforested, would be protected every year if REDD+ efforts succeed. With an estimated, and rather optimistic, net carbon income of 5 USD (=7,826.011 TShs in Feb 2012) per avoided tCO<sub>2</sub>, a total sum of 21,081,960 TShs (12,730 USD) was made available by the project proponents for distribution.

TFCG/Mjumita project staff to all ordinary residents<sup>14</sup> of the village. Each registered adult in the village received an amount of 39,000 TShs (25 USD). For every registered minor (up to 14 years) an amount of 20,600 TShs (13 USD) was paid.

We get benefits from carbon, we villagers. Like they brought us money. Every person got money. Children got money. And with the money, every person used it the best way according to his knowledge. Some bought food to help him/her together with his/her family. Others used it for farming, so that he could have more afterwards for his family (R Interview 26)

## 7. Conclusion

This article speaks to debates of REDD+ and market-based conservation initiatives as part of a wider move towards a 'green economy'. Building on critical scholarship that warns against the problematic 'win-win' logic of creating markets, or market-like instruments, for the protection of nature, I set out to examine local engagements and effects of the commercialisation of forest carbon in Southeastern Tanzania. Drawing on long-term ethnographic fieldwork in two remote, forest-dependent villages, where different REDD+ projects were underway, I aimed to analyse how processes of 'inclusive' neoliberal conservation emerge and take form at the village level; and which new forms of inclusions and exclusions result as a consequence.

Much research has critiqued the authoritarian character and negative consequences of neoliberal conservation to rural livelihoods (Büscher et al., 2012). While I do not dismiss the existence of such exclusive practices, the findings of my case studies lead me to argue that neoliberal conservation has taken on an 'inclusive' turn in certain instances. As this article showed in detail, REDD+ project proponents utilised participatory, inclusive and democratic means to gain local support and legitimacy for their interventions. In fact, 'inclusive' strategies have been essential for the neoliberalisation of conservation to gain ground among villagers, who at first expressed valid concerns over forest protection. However, my analysis also demonstrates that the material and discursive powers of development actors influenced villagers' apparently free and voluntary decisions. I therefore question the veracity of freedom and choice that villagers have over their livelihood strategies under 'inclusive' neoliberal conservation, arguing for the need of a genuine politicisation of conservation practice that does not lose sight of structural inequalities alongside micro-political struggles (Büscher 2010).

The political nature of 'inclusive' neoliberal conservation especially came to the fore in my section on the formalisation of community ownership over forests. Because 'inclusive' neoliberal conservation promotes the inclusion of local communities in the process of capital accumulation, it inevitably engages with the politics of natural resource management. In fact, by promoting community ownership over forests, REDD+ proponents took sides with village communities against local district government. The neoliberalisation therefore permeates historical and contemporary contestations over forests, land and people, adding another layer of conflict over potential carbon income. On the one hand this furthers power struggles over exchange value, illustrating a fundamental problem of the commodification of nature. On the other hand, it

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<sup>14</sup> Residents were defined as people who were born and live in the village or who migrated into the village to reside there permanently (Source: Ruhoma bylaws)

opens up spaces for progressive change, as long-standing injustices can be transformed to the benefits of villages.

Yet, exactly who benefits and loses from ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation is not easy to tell. While village communities may be supported in their fight against districts over forest resources, the dependence on formal property rights and market exchanges inevitably results in the exclusion of some people, who previously accessed the forest on customary rules. While REDD+ initiatives lacked transformative power in Mihumo/Darajani, they brought real material benefits to residents in Ruhoma. Given the severe degree of poverty in the region, it is unquestionable that even modest benefits can have meaningful impacts to individual livelihoods. However, aside from intensifying old challenges of food insecurity and crop damage from wild life, ‘inclusive’ neoliberal conservation relies on global capitalist carbon markets, which in both our instances have yet to materialise. So far state-financed donor funding has taken on the role of establishing the infrastructure and rewarding villagers for their conservation efforts. This not only illustrates the inherent limitations of using markets for social and ecological ends, but it also highlights the need for remaining cautious of potential exploitative relations, as it has been documented too many times before in rural developing contexts (Bernstein 2010).

In contrast to the popular win-win discourse of market-based conservation my paper highlights the exclusions that come with the formalisation of land use. I demonstrated how the commercialisation of forest carbon created new forms of inclusions and exclusions both within and outside the village. I call upon practitioners and analysts to acknowledge exclusions as an inevitable consequence of all land use and to find ways of mitigating harm and maximising well-being.

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