

## Defining Solutions, Finding Problems: Deforestation, Gender, and REDD+ in Burkina Faso

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### Abstract

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) is a policy instrument meant to mitigate climate change while also achieving poverty reduction in tropical countries. It has garnered critics for homogenising environmental and development governance and for ignoring how similar efforts have tended to exacerbate gender inequalities. Nonetheless, regarding such schemes as inevitable, some feminists argue for requirements that include women's empowerment and participation. In this paper we move beyond discussions about safeguards and examine whether the very framing of REDD+ programs can provide openings for a transformation as argued for by its proponents. Following the REDD+ policy process in Burkina Faso, we come to two important insights: REDD+ is a solution in need of a problem. Assumptions about gender are at the heart of creating 'actionable knowledge' that enabled REDD+ to be presented as a policy solution to the problems of deforestation, poverty and gender inequality. Second, despite its 'safeguards', REDD+ appears to be perpetuating gendered divisions of labour, as formal environmental decision-making moves upwards; and responsibility and the burden of actual environmental labour shifts further down in particularly gendered ways. We explore how this is enabled by the development of policies whose stated aims are to tackle inequalities.

**Keywords:** deforestation, gender, global governance, REDD+, World Bank, Burkina Faso

### INTRODUCTION

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) is a framework most countries have come to agree upon in otherwise fairly beleaguered climate negotiations. It is modelled as a large scale Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) scheme where countries are paid according to quantified amounts of avoided emissions and it is presented as a win-win solution for countries in both the global South and North. REDD+ has garnered critics for being yet another homogenising top-down scheme for environmental governance

(Thompson et al. 2011), this time on a global scale. Managed not by a single state but a medley of national and international actors REDD+ offers an excellent example of global governance, frequently described as, 'the collective capacity to identify and solve problems on a global scale' (Slaughter 2003: 83). Feminists have long brought attention to the gendered nature of state governance (Walby 1997; Lister 1997; John 1999; Pateman 1988). The emerging field of REDD+ provides an ideal terrain to bring into focus the so far shadowy contours of the gender of global environmental governance. Gendered assumptions colour REDD+ projects and programs even when gender is not mentioned specifically. In cases where gender is mentioned, it is often done with reference to women who are expected to play a prominent part in their capacity of collectors and processors of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) (e.g., national REDD+ plans of Cameroon, Ghana, Togo (CIF 2014; FCPF 2014)). Most literature on gender and REDD+ centres on safeguards and participation. In this paper, we move beyond the much-discussed issue of safeguards and draw on a broader set of literature related to global governance and

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DOI:  
10.4103/0972-4923.164203

knowledge production in policy processes in order to analyse gender as constitutive of REDD+ programs.

We ask, What is the problem of gender in REDD+ represented to be?

What presuppositions are implied or taken for granted in representations of gender and women?

What is left unproblematic?

What effects do these problem representations have on policy formulation? (Bacchi 1999: 2).

REDD+ activities initiated by the United Nations REDD programme (UN-REDD) and the World Bank are expected to provide a cheap way of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and to bring about transformations that mitigate climate change and reduce poverty. We examine these aspirations by following the policy process of the Forest Investment Program in Burkina Faso and deconstructing its underlying assumptions about deforestation, poverty and gender relations. At the core of our analysis are the propositions and arguments for REDD+ formulated in the national Investment Plan and developed in negotiations between the World Bank and the Ministry of Environment as well as other actors brought into the process. Our focus is on the gendered relations envisaged in the policy process and the social content of REDD+ policies meant to alleviate poverty and promote development in Burkina Faso.

Drawing on feminist scholarship, we examine the ‘governance of gender’ (cf. Brush 2003) in the REDD+ programs. We also analyse how global ‘governance is gendered’, i.e. ‘the practices and assumptions of gender difference and dominance’ that organise the institutions, capacities, and ideologies of the actors involved in the REDD+ policy process. Despite its aspirations for transformation, we maintain that the new is very much embedded in the old, and that new actors and directions in (REDD+) policy do not portend a transformation of forestry and development trajectories but neither do they merely reproduce it. We discern ideas about a new division of labour presumed in the REDD+ programs, with implications for gender equality and especially for women. The heightened efforts to bring women and their labour into local and global markets for natural resources such as those for non-timber forest products are accompanied by formal decision-making moving upwards. Pilot activities and negotiations in Burkina Faso suggest that REDD+ policy is indeed bringing about a change in how the government governs resources within its territories. REDD+ seems to be reproducing but also exacerbating an unequal gendered division of labour on an international scale. We explore how this is being done in the policy process that seeks to work against inequalities.

In the next section, we outline our analytical framework demonstrating how knowledge production brings actors together around a gendered governance process where markets play a central role. Following a section on methods, we then begin mapping the REDD+ policy process and problem definition in Burkina Faso. We argue that REDD+ was a solution in which appropriate problems were found. We demonstrate how it was presented in Burkina Faso’s Forest Investment Program (FIP) and how the government and the

World Bank undertook a process of defining problems and creating ‘actionable knowledge’ (Vetterlein 2012). In the following section, we go on to question the official definitions of these problems (deforestation, poverty, and gender) in light of contradictory statements, past research on forests and deforestation and work on similar payment for ecosystem services processes elsewhere. To understand how gender is governed in REDD+ and how the governance of REDD+ is gendered, we examine the ways in which carbon markets and gendered labour relations are conceived and the assumptions that colour the REDD+ program in Burkina Faso.

## ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The initial REDD+ process in Burkina Faso entailed creating the kind of ‘actionable knowledge’ (Vetterlein 2012) needed to operationalise the REDD+ program and making the problem of gender and deforestation ‘legible’ and ‘measurable’ (Scott 1998); and amenable to intervention. Scott has argued that constructing such legibility allows states to take action and develop policies, enabling the exercise of power and control and in extension shaping the natural and social environment. Broome and Seabrooke (2012) expand Scott’s reasoning on legibility beyond state politics to international organisations and global governance. In their view, organisations such as the World Bank have a ‘cognitive authority’ similar to that of states to describe problems and prescribe solutions using common templates and standardised units for measurement. This cognitive authority lies in the privilege given to their way of seeing a member state or an area of intervention (Broome and Seabrooke 2012: 2).

In Burkina Faso, the World Bank was not alone in this knowledge production. As Mosse (2005: 8) notes, it is not only ‘control over the interpretation of events’ that matters, but also the support from a range of actors that help produce and sustain these interpretations. Project documents, as the ones we review, serve to bring actors together and internally justify the allocation of resources rather than to direct policy practice (Mosse 2005). REDD+ in Burkina Faso included international organisations, a range of government officials, private interests and civil society actors, all with different interests and stakes in the process. As ‘actionable knowledge’ on REDD+ in Burkina Faso was created, deforestation and poverty were identified as the main problems that would be solved by REDD+ interventions and that could make actors come together. Bacchi (1999) proposes that studying policy proposals and problem representations can reveal the underlying assumptions of what needs to change and what constitutes the ‘problem’.

Markets, through the sales of carbon credits and non-timber forest products, are at the heart of REDD+ schemes and in extension, the labour relations that underpin these markets. Research has shown that ‘markets... are stabilised and institutionalised not only in the functioning of global capitalism but also through the institutions of global governance’ (Rai 2008: 26). Processes such as REDD+ involve the state in negotiations with a range of actors in ‘restructuring its

national gendered labour-capital relations in response to new pressures and in reorganising its own regulatory boundaries to protect its position within the globalized political economy' (Rai 2008: 28). Feminist researchers have pointed out how market-based models (such as the models REDD+ projects are based on) fail to take into account the embedded nature of markets, that 'roles within market systems are structured by non-market criteria' such as social norms on gender, class, ethnicity, age etc. (Harris-White 1998: 201). Folbre (1994) calls such sets of norms or rules 'structures of constraints' and argues that they must be met with social policy that coordinates collective action in order to reach cooperative solutions and equality of opportunity.

While literature on rights in REDD+ strongly promotes safeguards, inclusive processes and participation (e.g., Lyster 2011; Visseren-Hamakers et al. 2012), few have discussed the issue of rights from a gender perspective beyond the obvious arguments for women's participation in decision-making (with some exceptions, e.g., Peach Brown 2011). Even less has been written on the need for attention to the gendered nature of the markets and institutions that are meant to be the foundation of REDD+. Some regard REDD+ as inevitable, and argue that if safeguards and requirements for including women and gender considerations are made part of the projects, the power of global carbon markets can be engaged to advance empowerment goals (WOCAN 2013; Aguilar et al. 2012). Boyd (2002) emphasises that gender considerations must focus on strategic needs that forward women's status in society, not merely on practical needs and basic necessities. Yet others argue that climate change interventions, in order to be truly transformational, should focus on rights, not needs (Bee et al. 2013). Our ambition is to take these discussions a step further and inquire into the way gender issues are embedded in the conception of REDD+.

## METHODS

Our analysis is based on a detailed review of documents related to the Forest Investment Program and Burkina Faso's REDD+ program in particular and to REDD+ in general. To complement this document review we have conducted 15 in-depth interviews: five with government officials working for the Ministry of Environment with forest issues and the Forest Investment Program; two with World Bank officers – called 'natural resource management specialists'; two with officials from European donor agencies; and six with civil society representatives working for different Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) - a federation of farmers' organisations and a civil society network on climate change. Data was also collected through participant observation at meetings and a workshop co-hosted by the World Bank and the Ministry of Environment (October 2011, February and November 2012). Given the limited empirical base of our study and the early stages of the REDD+ program, this article can only be suggestive and we recognise the enormous variations in policy processes elsewhere. Yet, it brings to light important questions

about gendered aspects of global environmental governance missing in mainstream discussions that cannot be ignored if any of the aspirations of climate programs, development or gender equality are to be realised.

## REDD+ IN BURKINA FASO: CREATING ACTIONABLE KNOWLEDGE

In 2010, Burkina Faso, together with seven other countries (Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mexico, and Peru) was adopted as a pilot country in the Forest Investment Programme. It is a 'targeted programme' under the Climate Investment Funds (CIF), administered by the World Bank (CIF, 2014). One aim of the program is to 'initiate and facilitate steps towards transformational change in developing countries' forest related policies and practices.' Transformational change is to be achieved through 'supporting change of a nature and scope necessary to help significantly shift national forest and land use development paths', 'Linking the sustainable management of forests and low carbon development', 'improving forest law enforcement and governance', and scaling up 'private investment in alternative livelihoods for forest dependent communities' (FIP design document, CIF 2009: 4-5).

In Burkina Faso, the process of formulating the Investment Plan was meant to 'allow the country to change its [development] trajectory' (Burkina Faso Investment Plan, FIP 2012: 3), thereby protecting the country's forests and reducing poverty. Another aim was to provide experiences that could be useful to the UNFCCC REDD+ deliberations. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the World Bank led the formulation of the REDD+ program in Burkina Faso. In these negotiations, they called upon a multitude of actors, including international organisations, government officials from other ministries (Ministry of Finance, Prime Minister's office), donor agents, private sector and civil society actors seen to be representing farmers, women, and local communities. An important principle for action in the Forest Investment Program process, as in most REDD+ schemes, is wide participation of relevant stakeholders, particularly historically marginalised groups, through a process of public consultations (CIF 2009). World Bank officials act as promoters and facilitators of the inclusion of local actors, not only in the main process but also through the Dedicated Grant Mechanism (DGM) from which civil society organisations and indigenous peoples can apply separately for support to their participation in the Forest Investment Program process and projects (CIF 2011a).

The focus of the work for the first three years (2010-2012) was on developing the Investment Plan. In keeping with REDD+ objectives, this entailed gathering data to describe the problem of deforestation and its drivers and identifying what might be done to mitigate the deforestation problem. The work with formulating key documents such as the national Investment Plan and the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) was led by the World Bank in collaboration with the African Development Bank and the national government represented by the Ministry

of Environment. At the ministry, a Focal Point for the Forest Investment Program was responsible for the process and a Technical Secretariat was established for administering the work. Consultants, a Canadian and Burkina Faso nationals were also appointed. Between February 2011 and March 2012 four Joint Missions were held with representatives from the government, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the donors. During these missions, workshops and meetings for the private sector and civil society representatives including NGOs, farmers' organisations and environmental organisations were also organised. The World Bank's 'natural resource management experts' visited the country between the missions to oversee and facilitate the process. In addition, government representatives participated in international Forest Investment Programme meetings.

Among the eight pilot countries Burkina Faso stood out as having a uniquely low mitigation potential in terms of carbon content in its forests (Recommendations for pilots, FIP 2010). Still, it was considered a valuable pilot. The motivation for this was that Burkina Faso would be the first semi-arid country to have a REDD+ program thereby providing a unique experience. A World Bank official explained it in terms of its future relevance. While Burkina Faso might not have forests as rich in carbon as the Democratic Republic of Congo, it fit well into the discussions on expanding REDD+ to a broader landscape approach. The landscape approach aims towards the development of a territory rather than adopting a conventional sector approach (Burkina Faso Investment Plan, FIP 2012: 5).

Due to the low potential for carbon sequestration in the country, donors with emission reductions as their primary focus initially seemed reluctant to invest in Burkina Faso. The Investment Plan was first approved in 2011 on the condition that they provide a revised plan with a detailed description of the drivers of deforestation and the potential for emission reductions (Summary of Sub-Committee Meeting, CIF 2011b). Drivers of deforestation provided a checklist for what needed to be dealt with in order to reduce emissions. It was important to categorise and measure the problem so as to make it 'legible' (Scott 1998) and operationalise it in the REDD+ context. While the Burkina Faso government needed to cultivate the country's image as an interesting and valuable pilot in the global REDD+ deliberations, it was no less important for the World Bank experts to get the same message across to the Forest Investment Program funders<sup>ii</sup>.

Burkina Faso has been granted funding of 30 million USD for development and implementation of its Investment Plan, including two main projects (CIF 2014). Development of these two projects, '*Decentralised Forest and Woodland Management*' and '*Participatory Management of State Forests*' started in 2013 and implementation is expected to begin in 2015. The first project includes components related to local development, land use planning and promotion of forest products (FIP 2012: 39-40). The second project, in addition to management of state forests, includes legal reforms and the establishment of systems for Measuring, Reporting, and

Verification (MRV)<sup>iii</sup> which are a key component of all REDD+ projects (FIP 2012: 42).

The emphasis on the need for MRV and establishing reference levels for deforestation against which performance is measured are key components of all REDD+ schemes and dominate REDD+ discussions. Quantifying the impacts of REDD+ efforts is considered a difficult, but surmountable and ultimately technical issue. MRV systems are fundamental in turning REDD+ emission reductions into a commodity that can be traded on the carbon market and central to the World Bank's Forest Strategy (World Bank 2004). UNFCCC agreements contribute to the invention of carbon as a commodity by establishing practices for measurement and calculation. In Burkina Faso, establishing a MRV system that 'responds to the needs of dry forest countries' and takes into account 'the specificities of dry-land forests and their technical requirements' (FIP 2012: 3) was important in justifying the country as a REDD+ pilot with replication potential. Nevertheless, as Leach and Scoones (2013: 965) have shown, 'measurement processes are not just technical but social and political, bringing with them and thus cementing particular views of landscape and social relations'.

### **Finding problems: drivers of deforestation, poverty, and vulnerable women**

In the production of standardised and 'actionable knowledge' (Vetterlein 2012) and in the invention of Burkina Faso as a REDD+ country identifying drivers of deforestation became a key component. Despite some differences in emphasis, the idea of deforestation was built upon strongly by Burkina bureaucrats, the World Bank and civil society actors alike. Nevertheless, while donor preoccupations centred largely on reducing emissions, the Burkina government focussed on the need for development. The REDD+ process provided opportunities to bridge those differences. The possibility to link climate change mitigation with poverty reduction was one reason for Burkina Faso becoming a pilot in the Forest Investment Program (Recommendations for pilots, FIP 2010). The main drivers of deforestation cited in the Investment Plan are related to livestock activities, agricultural expansion, and overharvesting of firewood and non-timber forest products (FIP 2012: 11). Thus, deforestation and forest degradation are linked primarily to local drivers and poverty, leading to the conclusion that carbon projects must focus on poverty reduction and reconcile local development and carbon sequestration. One of the projects aims to promote 'an alternative development path' that would encompass the twin aims of reducing poverty and reducing emissions (FIP 2012: 23, 39).

Officials from the Ministry of Environment attributed Burkina's inclusion as a pilot country in the REDD+ process to the success of their long-standing participatory forest management scheme. The scheme was praised by the expert group, composed of academics and experts from international NGOs, appointed to recommend pilots.

Government interviewees spoke with pride of how Burkina was considered ‘an example’ or ‘a pioneer’ for arid areas, holding a ‘reproductive capacity’ and of being able to contribute something unique to the REDD+ process. Thus, from being a new and innovative approach that would provide quick and cheap reductions of greenhouse gas emissions (Angelsen and McNeill 2012), REDD+ in Burkina Faso came to straddle the all-but-new territory of participatory and local forest management.

The existing participatory forest management system began as a FAO led program in the Central region in the mid-1980s. It was later taken over by the state and expanded. The aim of the program was to protect forests from over-exploitation and provide urban areas with a sustainable supply of fuelwood (Sawadogo 2006). The program establishes Forest Management Areas managed by local forest management groups. Since the 1990s, the scheme has been accompanied by a decentralisation process, especially in relation to natural resource management, to local governments. For the rural municipalities established in this process, revenues from forest taxes and fees and other natural resource extraction are often their only source of income (Bouda et al. 2009).

The involvement of local communities was justified by the Investment Plan defining the drivers of deforestation as mainly local. The largest share of the budget in the national Investment Plan was thus intended for support to decentralised and local forest management (FIP 2012: 40). This included support for the on-going decentralisation process related to natural resource management that included supporting and scaling up existing projects within the framework of sustainable and participatory forest management. The transfer of responsibility to community management groups have become the focus of REDD+ projects also elsewhere in the world, not only in Burkina Faso (Murdiyarsa et al. 2012). According to Burkina’s Investment Plan, the project ‘has a component entirely dedicated to local communities and will be implemented by them’ (FIP 2012: 88). The plan further states that the ‘FIP is designed to achieve a transformational change in forest and woodland management in Burkina Faso through this combined approach of local tailored action in close coordination with the local communities and actions on the regulatory and legal framework’ (2012: 5).

The national Investment Plan predicts that the twin aims of reducing emissions and poverty, will help value ecosystem services, ‘[maximise] benefits to local populations and help the population maximising their economic development’ (FIP 2012: 23). Implicitly, the plan contains the notion of a two-way relation between poverty and deforestation where poverty reduction is expected to lead to reduced deforestation and forest protection is expected to contribute to reducing poverty. This fits well with the World Bank’s Forest Strategy that aims to ‘[harness] the potential of forests to reduce poverty’ (World Bank 2004: 2). For the Burkina government, concerned with poverty and lack of development, this is a convenient view. The REDD+ process thus legitimises existing approaches and enables existing programmes on forestry to continue while rural women are further enrolled into the new programs.

Rural women are regarded as the ones mostly affected by poverty, thereby being particularly vulnerable (FIP 2012: 5). Although certain activities are targeted especially towards women, they are also expected to benefit automatically from REDD+ activities. The Investment Plan states that ‘FIP activities would have a positive impact on gender equity as it will contribute to improving the social and economic status of women’ (FIP 2012: 23). Both in the Investment Plan (FIP 2012: 57) and in interviews with government officials, women were described as close to the forest and more than men involved in the collection, production, and trade in Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). NTFPs play a prominent part in the Forest Investment Program because of their potential to generate streams of income from the forest without causing its destruction. The project proposals include support to producer groups and cooperatives and acquiring processing equipment in order to facilitate commercialisation of NTFPs (FIP 2012). This made women seemingly ideal candidates for supporting REDD+ schemes and their importance in the schemes is thus taken for granted. Through these local forest management systems the poor, and women in particular are expected to take on the responsibility for REDD+ in their countries while there is hope that they would also benefit from them.

Promoting gender equality and including women in REDD+ is most often presented as a way of improving outcomes and efficiency both in terms of forest protection and development (The Business Case for Mainstreaming Gender in REDD+, UN-REDD Programme 2011). The World Bank, although recognising gender equality as an objective in its own right, claims to base its work with gender issues on the premise that gender equality is ‘smart economics’ (World Bank 2006 2011). By formalising local markets and drawing women into the global economy, REDD+ proponents envisage a win-win situation for poverty, gender equality, and a reduction in carbon emissions. We now turn to look at the history of deforestation, poverty, and gender in Burkina Faso and question the REDD+ process in light of that.

### **QUESTIONING THE CANON—DEFORESTATION, POVERTY, AND GENDER EQUALITY**

Deforestation narratives have been used for economic and political purposes in numerous times and contexts. National policies, World Bank programs and interventions to tackle deforestation and environmental degradation in West Africa have many times been based on simplistic narratives that are exaggerated and in some cases simply wrong, but nonetheless held as true by state, international organisations, academics, and urban NGOs alike (Bassett and Zuéli 2000; Fairhead and Leach 2005; Ickowitz 2006). Fairhead and Leach (2005) note that narratives on deforestation and degradation that drive policy in West Africa tend to disregard the knowledge and perspectives of local people. Donors and project developers favour narratives that fit with global environmental rhetoric and this contributes to perpetuating the image of poor rural farmers as backward environmental destroyers versus urban

intellectuals as modern and progressive. In addition, it provides the basis for connecting reduced deforestation with anti-poverty measures.

Already in the 1930s, shifting cultivation, bush fires, and pastoral land use were identified by a British forester as the 'three evils' causing deforestation and degradation of forest resources in West Africa (Stebbing 1937, cited in Wardell et al. 2003). The French colonial rulers worried that uncontrolled woodcutting would deplete the forest resources of West Africa and make it difficult to meet demands for energy (Ribot 1999). Ribot calls this narrative 'A history of fear' and he questions whether it is based on an understanding of deforestation patterns or rather on a will to gain control over forest resources. Warnings of imminent fuelwood shortages have long been the ground for intervention by the colonial rule, the state, and international organisations.

More or less the same 'three evils' are used in the Investment Plan to describe the deforestation problem today. Burkina's Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) that provides a more comprehensive analysis of the drivers of deforestation than the Investment Plan also echoes this narrative. For example, it states that the limited extension of bush fires in the Sahelian areas of the country are due to 'social behaviour that is more respectful to rarer fodder resources' than in the Sudanese area where bush fires are common (R-PP, MEDD 2012: 40). In this view, bush fires are considered a sign of a lack of respect rather than the conscious strategy others have described (e.g., Ickowitz 2006). Despite an alleged lack of reliable data, the least conservative/highest estimate for deforestation out of several that were available is used in Burkina Faso's Investment Plan without justifying the application of this figure (FIP 2012: 10-11)<sup>iv</sup>. The same figures are used in the R-PP (MEDD 2012). Whether or not this figure is correct is beyond the scope of this paper to investigate. Nevertheless, high initial deforestation means a higher potential for emissions reductions and supports the case for Burkina Faso as a suitable REDD+ country. Though, as a World Bank 'natural resource management specialist' emphasised the description of deforestation in Burkina Faso was a caricature, a simplification and a collective storytelling needed for the production of what we referred to as 'actionable knowledge' (Vetterlein 2012).

The tendency within REDD+ projects to simplify the causality of deforestation has been observed by Thompson et al. (2011), who maintain that it often results in the blame for deforestation being attributed disproportionately to local communities rather than other stakeholders and external drivers. They point out that the broader REDD+ programs such as the UN-REDD and the Forest Investment Program tend to avoid the complexities and downplay the role of stakeholders not living close to the forests. They argue that this leads to local communities being held responsible for forest protection by laying disproportionate blame for deforestation and forest degradation on them. Similar critique has been raised of REDD+ on a global scale, arguing that it transfers responsibilities for climate change mitigation from fossil fuel consumers in the North to poor countries (e.g., Friends of the Earth et al. 2010; Kühne 2011). Citing

a range of studies on PES, McAfee (2012: 124) argues that REDD+ is premised on an inherent contradiction between the aims of poverty reduction and emission reductions. REDD+ is considered a cheap option because opportunity costs for forest conservation are expected to be low, but they are low because farmers and forest dwellers are poor. In other words, for the program to be successful, forest dwellers would need to stay poor. If their incomes were to increase, paying them to protect their forests would no longer be a cheap option.

Thus the transformation called for in REDD+ documents, becomes increasingly remote. As we have seen above, the focus on poor people in REDD+ is closely related to questions of gender and to women, who are expected to take a large share of the responsibility in REDD+ implementation. A gender review of the Forest Investment Program and four of its national programs (in Laos, DR Congo, Brazil, and Mexico) proposes that gender could serve as a driver for transformational change (Aguilar et al., 2012: 78). However, as the authors point out, this would require an approach where gender issues are taken into account in all stages and forums of the program. There is little evidence in the plans they review, or in our study in Burkina Faso, to show that this has been or will be the case. As a World Bank interviewee emphasised, while recognising the potential for a broad landscape approach including agroforestry and agricultural landscapes in Burkina Faso, 'FIP is a forest program and the proposed projects are to expand existing forest management schemes'. Past research has shown that the primary aim of such schemes has been to secure fuelwood for urban areas (Ribot 1999; Hagberg 2001).

It was clear in the interviews as well as in the Investment Plan that despite the multidimensionality of donor discourse about social and cultural factors, transformational change was a question of management plans and land use planning. Relying on management plans made deforestation and gender inequalities economic and technical problems that could be solved by participatory forestry and the expansion of markets. Research in Burkina Faso shows that decision-making within the Forest Management Groups is the prerogative of a few powerful individuals (Coulibaly-Lingani et al. 2011; Zougouri 2008). Hagberg (2001) remarks that while calling for participation, the control over resources remains with the state. In 'management by participation' as Coulibaly-Lingani et al. (2011: 54) dub it, actual management lies in the hands of the forest service, local elites and state designated fuelwood merchants who almost always happen to be men. Nor has technical assistance shown to be sufficient to change forest management practices since improving the flow of information to a decision-maker does not necessarily increase his or her capacity to act upon it (Coulibaly-Lingani et al.: 68).

The idea that participatory forest groups at the local level ensure sustainable and equitable management becomes a truism when uncomfortable problems and inequalities are sought to be avoided (cf. Arora-Jonsson, 2013). For the officials involved in Burkina Faso's REDD+ process, simplifying reality was a step in creating 'legibility' (Scott 1998) and producing 'actionable

knowledge' (Vetterlein 2012) for the solution at hand. The idea that forests are also people's homes and have symbolic and cultural values, as attested to by scholars working on forestry, runs contrary to such knowledge. It means having to deal with social and political issues that lie at the core of negotiations around forest use, ownership, rights, and responsibilities vis-à-vis the environment (cf. Arora-Jonsson 2013).

Gender and power inequalities are easier to reduce to an issue of economic poverty that can be solved by income generating activities and by support to women entrepreneurs or by targeting them with 'conditional safety nets' i.e. cash transfers conditional on forest protection (FIP 2012: 57). Bringing women into formal markets and making use of their work with NTFPs is portrayed as increasing their reach and modernising a traditional division of labour where women are marginalised due to their isolation from markets. As a World Bank officer put it, the REDD+ projects and the benefits that would accrue from establishing forest management plans would allow people to see the forest as their factory. 'You have to go to work in the factory in the morning and go home in the evening and then in the end you get your salary.' This suggests that as women are drawn into larger national and global economies, their labour for subsistence is sought to be transformed into wage labour without much notice of the reproductive work they do outside of it. Nevertheless, Harriss-White (1998: 202) emphasises that if women are empowered by participation in markets it is despite 'gender ideologies [that] compound female disadvantage'.

Elias and Saussey (2013: 164) write of such a process already at work in the shea butter trade where the Burkinabè state showcases women's groups working with a lucrative non-timber product from shea trees as paving the way for their socioeconomic emancipation. '...the donor-led activity of shea butter production is described as emancipating women from the "habitual shackles of the housewife confined to domestic duties"'. The end result of the fair trade is far from fair for the women with low remuneration and exploitation of women by women (Elias and Saussey 2013: 172). Also Wardell and Fold (2013) worry that women shea producers lose autonomy and control as international capital enters the commodity chain. As Saussey et al. (2008) show, with growing interest for shea butter in the international market, female producers have found it difficult to compete and are increasingly dependent on selling their unprocessed nuts to intermediaries who are predominantly male. Although both an interviewee from the World Bank and one from the Ministry of Environment expressed a fear that by increasing the value of a certain resource men might try to take control over it, the general sense was that women would benefit.

Women's involvement in the economy in relation to forest and agricultural products and associated value chains is a relatively new area and there is as yet little research. Research within export manufacturing for example gives grist to Fröbel et al.'s (1978) thesis of the 'new international division of labour'. Feminists have argued that this is premised on the widespread mobilisation of female labour (Bair 2010)

often without a social content or benefits and safeguards that acknowledge gendered inequalities and the reproductive work that women do (e.g., Pearson 2004). REDD+ planning in its current form is eerily close to this thinking.

Gender is considered important in the fact that women tended to be poor and vulnerable and that their involvement in the NTFP trade was to be given attention. However, gender inequalities or the implications of involving women in formal markets in the program formulation are not considered as important. Gender inequalities in the Forest Investment Program are reduced to 'power games' rather than structures of privilege that disadvantage certain women regularly. 'Social and gender relations (changes of power games due to revenue and created new responsibilities) can have an impact on the ways of managing Natural Resources' (FIP 2012: Appendix 11). Thus, as in many other development contexts before, gender issues are depoliticised (cf. Baden and Goetz 1998).

Neither did women, at the local level nor in the official process have much of a voice in the negotiating process. It was clear from the interviews with both World Bank and Burkinabè officials that they were aware of these problems. Rather than passing unacknowledged they were pushed to the future, preferably carried out by others such as the civil society. They conformed to the current pattern in environmental governance that makes gendered inequalities something to be solved later and through other means (Arora-Jonsson 2013). Both a government official and a World Bank interviewee emphasised that gender issues will be addressed through separate funding provided by the Dedicated Grant Mechanism (DGM). The call for the DGM that was in fact meant to safeguard local peoples' participation in the process did not open until January 2013, after the national Investment Plan had already been approved (CIF, 2013). In other words once the process was defined, such questions would be brought in, not realising that it is the framing of those very policies that might be exacerbating inequalities (cf. Arora-Jonsson 2011). In fact, when a first concept note for the DGM was presented it contained no mention of gender issues, and the outlined projects were hardly distinguishable from components of the projects in the Investment Plan.

Cornwall (2008) observes that pragmatism often dictates whose voice is taken to represent others. The small number of representatives invited to participate in the initial stages of the formulation process of the national REDD+ program were all based in the capital, Ouagadougou. Although they were meant to represent civil society at large and to watch the interests of marginalised groups, not least rural women, only a few worked in grassroots organisations mobilising support from farmers and rural people, while others represented NGOs working with local development projects with a top-down approach. One of the civil society representatives worked for an NGO headed by the man who was the Forest Investment Program focal point at the Ministry of Environment. It was a small NGO unlikely to take part of the negotiations were it not for this connection.

Similarly, the women's representative was a government employee and also the secretary general of an association for

female professionals in environment and agriculture. She was expected to speak for indigenous peoples though she pointed out that this term was not relevant in Burkina Faso: 'We don't have indigenous peoples as such. But we have local populations that live close to the forest.' Burkina Faso's constitution does not recognise the existence of indigenous peoples, in spite of the presence of the pastoralist Peul and the Tuareg who identify as indigenous (Wessendorf, 2011). This can explain why, in the Forest Investment Program process, when government representatives incorporate international terminology and talk about indigenous representation they are actually, like the 'indigenous representative', talking about any rural people.

Several representatives of NGOs and grassroots organisations complained about the lack of information about the REDD+, especially in the beginning. To a certain extent, this seemed to improve as the process went along. Another complaint concerned the lack of representatives from outside the capital. The government cited lack of money for paying for travels and per diems as a reason for this and promised to host regional consultation meetings. By mid-2013, only national consultation meetings in the capital had taken place. The R-PP outlines plans for local and regional consultation committees, in line with the stipulated safeguards for participation, but these were yet to be implemented (MEDD, 2012). At the same time, several interviewees, both from civil society and the World Bank expressed the notion that people in rural areas lack knowledge and capacity to truly participate. As a civil society representative put it 'even when they are invited they will come, sit down, greet each other, and then it will be said that they participated'.

Neither did the form of the consultations seem conducive for more widespread participation. That the budget for consultations was small is an indication of what the funders/donors consider important. The urban bias constituted a disadvantage for groups that are primarily organised in rural areas, such as shea butter cooperatives and pastoralist, semi-nomadic groups. Ironically, the urban bias of the NGOs made them susceptible to criticism. A World Bank official pointed out that many civil society representatives do not really know rural life and the forest. He feared that they would be the ones to speak in the name of local communities. From the interviews and at a meeting with civil society organisations, it felt that NGOs would support their government, not criticise it. In northern Burkina Faso, Nygaard (2008) found that associations competing with traditional authority often attracted traditional chiefs or their relatives. He suggests that this explains why traditional power relations are sustained or reinforced in the formal decentralisation process. Hagberg (2004) notes that while intellectuals make an active choice to become members of associations, rural people in Burkina Faso are often included by default. In this way, urban intellectuals can speak in the name of all rural people (Hagberg 2004). It was no wonder then that deforestation caused due to urban needs or as a problem of urban linkages is not high on the REDD+ agenda. The urban, male, and elite bias of REDD+ is already in the documents, where they are not considered to be part of the problem as are rural people or vulnerable women.

## DISCUSSION

REDD+ was a solution in search of problems in Burkina Faso. The problems of deforestation, gender, and poverty were central to making it stick and to stitch differing interests together. Government officials, donors, World Bank officials, and civil society actors were instrumental in putting together an agreement that would suit them. In the spirit of Bacchi (1999), we have inquired into the way problems are represented in the REDD+ program and the implications of these representations. Our analysis shows how the representation of deforestation and poverty as intimately connected problems produces highly gendered effects. REDD+ projects needed to present problem-solution narratives that mobilised support from networks of supporting actors (Mosse 2005). Burkina Faso was an unlikely REDD+ country, with low forest cover and low carbon content. Problem formulation was thus aimed not only at justifying REDD+ in Burkina Faso but also at justifying Burkina Faso as a REDD+ country.

Issues of gender and women's participation were brought into the equation as a bureaucratic obligation serving to legitimise the process and as a problem of planning rather than power (see Peach Brown (2011) for Central Africa). They were reduced to an economic issue where women's status was expected to improve as their incomes increased, all within the logic of economisation that often characterise World Bank operations (cf. Vetterlein 2012; Rai 2008; Pearson 2004) and despite that such approaches have been shown to be inadequate in the past (see review in Arora-Jonsson 2014). Female economic participation and increased incomes do not necessarily translate into empowerment within the household (Harriss-White 1998). Still, it was easier to frame gender issues as a problem of poverty than to admit that the subordination of women is a question of power relations or to acknowledge the gendered character of institutions, state, and development agencies themselves (Jackson 1996).

Most insidious however is that the discussion on gender became one of how best to use women's labour in the REDD+ process. Once again, it risks becoming a case of 'women working for development rather than development working for them' (Chant 2008: 183). While addressing gender as a technocratic measure, to be dealt with later and on the side in separate modules such as the Dedicated Grant Mechanism, gender was present without being named in the entire process and in how REDD+ is to be put into motion. We need to understand not only how gender is brought in or should be but also how it is constitutive of the plans, i.e., in the ways it is gendered. In Burkina Faso, the inclusion into a global environmental economy entails a sorting of people based on rural geography and gender.

Despite the World Bank's recognition that the relation between poverty and deforestation has been largely exaggerated (Sustaining forests—a development strategy, World Bank 2004: 2), together with government bureaucrats they were instrumental in the production of knowledge that confirmed such predefined links. The focus on local drivers



of deforestation in relation to poverty fit well with the idea and structure of REDD+. The fact that urban areas fuel the demand for fuelwood was disregarded. The focus on local factors of deforestation in Burkina Faso made it easier to act than a focus on underlying inequalities or global markets would have. Likewise, the fact that such policies, building on transformation of local market or subsistence labour into larger markets without attention to social consequences are likely to increase women's travails was ignored. Poverty reduction and reduced deforestation were set up as mutually reinforcing goals that will automatically empower women.

The World Bank was a central player and served as broker (c.f. Lewis and Mosse 2006) when donor-driven global issues of climate mitigation were negotiated vis a vis national development agendas. Burkinabè officials had an important part in the creation of the deforestation-poverty discourse, as they framed the forest problems in domestic policy hoping to capitalise from the emerging markets. The civil society representatives that participated in the process saw the chance to shape it according to their interests and simultaneously contributed in legitimising it. For a country like Burkina Faso, being a part of REDD+ activities meant taking the opportunity to access funds. Whether or not REDD+ is launched as a global funding mechanism for forest protection within the framework of a binding climate agreement most interviewees, both from the government and from civil society, expected the Forest Investment Program to have positive impacts. Following the path outlined by the donors for REDD+ investments, with templates for standardised data collection and a focus on 'Measuring, Reporting, and Verification', was a way of getting access to available funding. The idea of Burkina Faso as a unique example with great replication potential also gave a sense of contributing to a greater, global good. For the Burkina bureaucrats, it was important in this context to stress poverty reduction and forest protection as mutually reinforcing goals.

In a sense, by buying into the discursive, institutional, and economic power of the World Bank and the donor countries, the globalisation of Burkina Faso's environmental management, 'framed by an environmental-economic paradigm and backed by institutional and economic power of advanced capitalist states and multilateral institutions is blunting the North-South disputes that once threatened to derail the new international environmental institutions' (McAfee 1999: 148). In doing so, REDD+ appears to be reconfirming the North-South status quo in the international arena. And yet, while the status quo is being promoted both in Burkina Faso's relationships with donors and in gender relations at home, there are shifts in thinking on environmental management and especially gender relations that portend major changes. While decision-making on the environment is moving upwards to a 'global' level, responsibility is shifting further down in particularly gendered ways, with a shift of the burden of actual environmental labour to the poor and especially women. The real transformation envisaged is not in an abstract development or poverty reduction but

in pegging women's labour to global capital flows. Since REDD+ envisages forest conservation and limitations to logging, largely a male preserve, the onus of accessing products from the forests falls on women who have been involved in procurement of non-timber forest products. The new international division of labour is thus premised on women's work in the forests.

Feminists have long looked to the state for redress for gendered injustices. The REDD+ process brings up poignantly that feminists and others seeking to make a difference cannot just look to the state and need to look beyond to somewhat more shadowy contours of global governance. While safeguards are imperative, these cannot be a substitute for social policy. 'Powers and programs of the state can offer women leverage against masculine privilege.' Not only 'at home, on the job, at school, and on the street' (Brush 2003: 17) but also as participants in environmental economies. Rather than focussing on solving women's vulnerability through a mobilisation of their labour, ... '[I]aws and social policies can make it easier for women to speak up, fight back and take charge' (Brush 2003), an important part of REDD+ that at the moment is missing in its plans.

## NOTES

1. Burkina Faso has submitted a so called Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) to another World Bank led REDD+ scheme; the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF)
2. Australia, Denmark, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States
3. Including forest inventory and classification and evaluation of carbon sequestration potential
4. Quoting the FIP Investment Plan (FIP, 2012: 10-11): 'Based on the FAO data, the annual deforestation rate would be 65,000 ha/year (from 6.84 million ha to 5.54 million ha over 20 years). However, the government estimates the deforestation rate at 107,626 ha/year—almost double the FAO's estimate (MECV, 2009). This large discrepancy is an indication of the paucity of forest statistics in Burkina Faso and the difficulty to define precisely the forested land since there is a continuum between forest, wooded savannah, and grassy savannah. The deforestation rates for Burkina Faso quoted in the literature are therefore numerous and they vary... While waiting for the outcome of the second national forest inventory, we will consider that deforestation have resulted in the loss of about 107 626ha of forests annually in Burkina Faso during the period of 1992-2002 (MECV, 2009).'

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Support for this research was provided by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs as part of a larger project on Gender and REDD+ in three African countries, coordinated by Seema Arora-Jonsson. Lisa Westholm was responsible for the fieldwork in Burkina Faso and this is part of her thesis project. Both authors contributed equally to the paper. We would like to thank Mawa Karambiri for her assistance with the interviews and Sten Hagberg, Stefan Arora-Jonsson, and Erik Westholm for comments on prior drafts as well as two anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments.

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