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Deadlock or Transformational Change? Exploring Public Discourse on REDD+ across Seven Countries

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Abstract

This paper investigates public discourses on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) across seven countries to assess whether they support policy reforms. The paper argues that transformational discourses have at least one of the following characteristics: they advocate specific policy reforms that address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation; they take into account potential risks of a REDD+ mechanism; they go beyond technocratic solutions to reduce emissions; they explicitly challenge existing power relations that support drivers of deforestation. The evidence indicates the predominance of win–win storylines, a lack of engagement by state actors with debates on potential negative socioeconomic outcomes of REDD+ and little attention to the drivers of deforestation. The paper concludes that in order to achieve a shift towards transformational discourse, reformist policy actors and the media need to engage dominant policy actors in debates about how to reduce pressure on forest.

Introduction

This paper investigates the extent to which public discourses on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) – the financial mechanism aimed at mitigating carbon emissions from forests – call for substantial policy reforms that tackle the drivers of deforestation in seven tropical countries. We discuss new empirical evidence on public discourse about REDD+ at the national level in seven countries and identify four characteristics of discourse that support transformational change necessary to address these drivers.

Under the Warsaw Framework for REDD+, decision 15/CP.19 reiterates the "importance of addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation".[1] In practice REDD+ is taking shape through deliberation of multiple policy actors at different scales and the very understanding of REDD+, what it should look like and what it should achieve, is contested among these actors.[2] Like other environmental policies, it is discourse, institutions, and politico-economic conditions of host countries that shape REDD+ policies.[3]

National media provide a window into public discourses. The media reproduce and contribute to shaping policy debates. At the same time, policy actors use the media to signal their positions to policy opponents and potential allies, and to influence policy decisions.[4] Media reports also determine the salience of policy issues and contribute to popularizing REDD+ policy debates, affecting

1. UNFCCC 2014, 43.
2. Hiraldo and Tanner 2011.
3. Hajer 1995; Macnaghten and Urry 1998; Newell 2008.
4. Andsager 2000; Boykoff 2008.

the engagement and opinions of the general public[5]. We investigate policy actors' public statements on REDD+ in the media to assess how these actors understand REDD+, which policy directions they privilege, and what emphasis they give to addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

While discourse analysis has been used to assess how social change comes about[6], few studies have investigated specifically which elements of a discourse support or indicate transformational change. We define transformational change as a specific shift in discourse, power relations and deliberate actions away from business-as-usual towards policy reforms that, in the case of REDD+, tackle the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.[7] This paper contributes to advancing our understanding of discourses that aim to bring about substantial transformation in the way we understand and devise solutions for environmental problems.

To begin with, the paper outlines the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, including what transformational change would entail in this context. It then explains our method for identifying and analyzing public discourses on REDD+, before presenting the results using Bäckstrand and Lövbrand's categorization of environmental discourses.[8] Finally, the paper identifies four characteristics that represent elements of a REDD+ discourse indicating transformational change, and discusses the extent to which specific actor groups and specific national contexts promote such discourses.

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5. Wilson 1995.
6. Hajer 1995.
7. Brockhaus and Angelsen 2012, 16-17.
8. Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006.

Transformational Change and the Drivers of Deforestation and Forest Degradation

REDD+ has been presented as a cost-effective option for mitigating climate change. Currently, REDD+ strategies, policies, and measures are being negotiated in many national policy arenas. Global research on deforestation indicates that drivers of deforestation and forest degradation stem not just from forestry, but from multiple sectors[9], hence, an effective national REDD+ strategy should involve multisectoral policy reforms. When analyzing the contribution of different sectors to deforestation we can distinguish between direct and underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation. Although there are differences among the seven countries analyzed, overall agricultural expansion (including large-scale, permanent, subsistence, shifting, and swidden agriculture and cattle ranching) is the main driver of deforestation, while logging (for commercial and fuel uses, legal and illegal) is the main driver of forest degradation. Infrastructure development (transport extension and roads, expansion of settlements, and hydropower plants) is also a major direct cause of deforestation. Underlying causes relate to macroeconomic conditions (such as currency devaluations, trade policies and fuel subsidies), weak governance (including poor enforcement of property rights, unclear land tenure, corruption and rent-seeking) and other social conditions, such as marginalization of local communities and lack of access to land.[10]

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9. Kaimowitz and Angelsen 1998.
10. Barraclough et al. 1995; Chomitz et al. 2007; Hosonuma et al. 2012; Kaimowitz and Angelsen 1998; Kanninen et al. 2007; see Di Gregorio et al. 2012a for further differences among countries.

Moving from business-as-usual development trajectories to address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation requires a substantive change in discourse, incentives, and power relations. Such a process of transformational change requires changes in the discursive order.[11] In turn, this affects economic and governance frameworks and initiates policy reforms within and beyond the forestry sector that counter the direct and the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation.[12] Conversely, discourse that deflects attention from these drivers and the absence of political engagement to reform existing institutions and policies leads to 'political inaction' and perpetuates business-as-usual. Disinterest in REDD+, resistance to change, and an inability or unwillingness to carry out policy reforms that upset the economic or political status quo can all lead to political inaction.[13] We can think about business-as-usual and transformational change as two extremes of a continuum, and of different discourses as located somewhere along this continuum, depending on the extent to which they address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

Media, Discourse and Transformational Change

Environmental policy decisions, including those on REDD+, are negotiated primarily through argumentation or discourse. Discourse here refers to "a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which

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11. Foucault, 1971.
12. Brockhaus and Angelsen 2012.
13. Bell 1994, 59; Brockhaus et al. 2014.

meaning is given to physical and social realities".[14] Within discourse story lines act as metaphors that define and redefine environmental problems.[15] According to argumentative policy analysis, policy processes are therefore "a struggle for discourse hegemony in which actors try to secure support for their definitions of reality".[16] Thus discourses frame REDD+ policy debates, limit what are considered reasonable options, and inform policy-making processes. In so doing, discourse constructs, and reproduces, or transforms power relations among REDD+ policy actors.

As policy-makers are defining national policies a variety of discourses on REDD+ compete to determine the direction that REDD+ should take: they diverge in terms of priorities, level of focus (international, national) and consideration of different stakeholders. They portray different understandings of REDD+, which lead to distinct policy proposals.[17]

The media play a critical role in this process.[18] A central function of the mass media is to identify and interpret environmental issues and act as a mediator between scientists, policy actors, and the public.[19] They shape how policy is translated to the public, and contribute to the placement of policy issues on the political agenda.[20] Policy actors also use the media to publicize their vision for REDD+ in order to influence public opinion and policy processes. For controversial policy issues, actors that have high stakes in those issues often

14. Hajer, 1995, 44.
15. Forsyth 2003.
16. Hajer 1995, 59; Thompson and Rayner 1998.
17. Gupta 2012; Hiraldo and Tanner 2011; Streck 2010.
18. Anderson 2009; Castree 2004; Carvalho and Burgess 2005.
19. Boykoff 2009; Moser and Dilling 2007.
20. Bennett 1994; Crow 2010.

actively use the media to gather support. Exposure in the media also serves to legitimize policy actors, and let adversaries know the opinion of the opposition.[21] Thus, the media reflect, mediate and reshape specific frames represented in policy processes.

The literature on forest governance and climate change has identified a number of competing discourses.[22] Many of these discourse analyses draw on Bäckstrand and Lövbrand's classification of three broad discourses that derive from a study on tree planting and climate change.[23] This study most closely fits with our own topic and draws on broader environmental discourse literature to identify the following meta-discourses: i) ecological modernization, ii) green governmentality and iii) civic environmentalism.[24] Each discourse contains a number of distinct threads allowing for some overlap between the three discourses.

Depending on the extent to which these discourses and their variations challenge the status quo, we can classify them along a continuum that moves from business-as-usual to transformational change. The position on this spectrum signals whether existing discourses are likely to support major policy reforms to realize REDD+ objectives (Figure 1).[25]

FIGURE 1

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21. Andsager 2000.
22. Arts and Buizer 2009; Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006; Clapp and Dauvergne 2005; Di Gregorio et al. 2013; Forsyth and Walker 2008; Hiraldo and Tanner 2011.
23. Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006.
24. Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006; Hajer 1995; Liftin 2004.
25. Brockhaus and Angelsen 2012.

The discourse of ecological modernization asserts the compatibility between economic growth and environmental protection and portrays liberal market approaches as leading to win–win outcomes.[26] It tends to focus on cost efficiency at the expense of other socioeconomic aspects such a poverty and inequality. One characteristic of ecological modernization in the late 1980s was the reframing of environmental problems as global problems.[27] An important distinction within this discourse refers to weak and strong ecological modernization. While both support market based solutions, the weak variant is closer to business-as-usual than transformational change, because it challenges neither existing institutions nor power relations. The strong variant, also called reflexive ecological modernization, takes into account the need for institutional and economic reform and for an open and participatory democratic decision-making process.[28]

The second discourse, green governmentality, refers to the use of knowledge ─ including on the part of governments, scientific experts, and big business ─ to influence policy decisions.[29] Sound science here becomes the legitimizing instrument to justify specific technocratic policy solutions. Not unlike ecological modernization, it tends to depoliticize environmental problems. Closer to the transformational change end of the continuum compared to weak ecological modernization, green governmentality questions whether business-as-usual practices can be compatible with REDD+ outcomes. Yet, it tends to

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26. Dryzek 2000; Hajer 1995.
27. Mol 2001.
28. Christoff 1996.
29. Dean 2004; Jasanoff and Long Martello 2004.

disregard the role of underlying power structures that sustain business-as-usual. Reflexive green governmentality is a variant that is less hegemonic and more transformative. It recognizes local knowledge and democratic participation as essential for effective and equitable environmental decision-making. Environmental experts that are conscious of the local context and are concerned with environmental justice and democratic participation often promote this discourse. Reflexive green governmentality questions the very power structures that support business-as-usual and is thus more conducive to transformational change.

The third discourse, civic environmentalism, emphasizes pluralism and broad participation in decision-making, which should involve all stakeholders that have an interest in, and are affected by, relevant environmental problems and their solutions. It draws attention to the accountability and legitimacy of decision-making processes and is skeptical of win–win rhetoric that suggests market based solutions alone can solve environmental problems. Bäckstrand and Lövbrand identify a reformist and radical variant of this discourse. The first variant supports cooperation between state, markets, and civil society, including public–private partnerships.[30] Reformist civic environmentalism is not necessarily transformative, and might at times be used as a rhetorical device to 'talk the talk of change' but take action only in so far as it does not upset prevailing power balances. The radical variant is more skeptical of embedded power inequalities underlying partnerships and cooperation and tends to be

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30. Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006; Elliott 2002.

more ecocentric than the reformist variant.[31] It calls for transformational

change, not just because it recognizes the trade-offs between economic and

ecological outcomes, but because it demands changes in the underlying power

structure of society that perpetuates patterns of environmental degradation.

Methods

This paper investigates the statements about REDD+ attributed to specific

policy actors in the national media in seven countries: Brazil, Cameroon,

Indonesia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Peru, and Vietnam. The country

selection criteria were geographical diversity along the tropical forest belt, early

engagement in REDD+ processes, and established partnership for data

collection with researchers in the country. The countries studied also involve a

variety of different drivers of deforestation and of pressure on forests.

We analyze opinion statements ─ also called 'stances'[32] ─ of policy actors

within national newspaper articles on REDD+. The period investigated covers

January 2006 ─ right after the 11th Conference of the Parties (COP11) that

first included avoided deforestation in the UNFCCC policy agenda ─ until

December 2010 (COP16). The analysis covers three newspapers in each

country, which we selected according to volume of circulation and to represent

a broad spectrum of political perspectives. To identify relevant articles research

teams searched for the key phrase 'reducing emissions from deforestation and

forest degradation', parts of this phrase and the acronym 'REDD' (using the

31. Paterson 2000.
32. Kockleman 2004.

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relevant local language). Subsequent screening eliminated articles that only

mentioned REDD with no further elaboration.

This process identified a total of 780 articles across all seven countries, which

featured a total of 852 stances. Teams used a standardized codebook to capture

a range of data from the articles and stances. They identified the stances of up

to two actors for each media frame: the stance of one actor and, if present, a

counter-stance of another actor.[33] They transcribed the stances or paraphrased

them when too long. Among a range of other data the teams coded the name of

the organization and of the person putting forward the stance, as well as the

type of organization. The focus of this analysis is primarily on non-media

policy actors, which we pooled into three main actor groups: i) domestic state

actors; ii) foreign actors (comprising foreign governments, international

organizations, NGOs and research institutes); iii) domestic civil society and

research institutes. Coders considered journalists as the source of a stance only

in editorial or opinion pieces, which account for a very small number of

stances and so are grouped under the residual category 'others' (together with

other seldom-featured actor groups, including private business).

We analyzed the stances in two steps, first through an inductive and then

through a deductive approach. We first used open coding to identify broader

categories of stances that subsume a number of different stances under one

conceptual theme.[34] We identified these broader frames inductively from the

data, and pooled stances together under one stance category if they shared a

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33. Di Gregorio et al. 2012b.
34. Benford and Snow 2000.

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common meta discourse. This resulted in thirty-three unique stance categories, many (but not all) of which were found across multiple countries.

The second step of the analysis took a deductive approach and focused only on those stances associated with the three most frequent categories in each of the seven countries, for a total of fifteen different stance categories, comprising 615 individual stances. Coders classified each of these 15 stance categories within one of Bäckstrand and Lövbrand's three meta discourses: ecological modernization, green governmentality, or civic environmentalism.[35] To assign a stance category coders relied on a detailed description of a) the definition and b) a list of detailed characteristics of each of the three discourses derived from the literature and presented in the earlier section. Coders assigned each stance category to the discourse whose characteristics were dominant in that stance category. That said Bäckstrand and Lövbrand recognize areas of overlap between the different variants of the three discourse categories.[36] One of the limitations of our approach is that it does not allow for stances to be assigned to two discourses, meaning we are not able to capture such nuances, other than through general discussion and commentary on the results. Another aspect to keep in mind is that the media tend to over represent state actors and political topics and our analysis supports this evidence although there are differences across countries.[37]

Results

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35. Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006.
36. Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006.
37. Boykoff 2008.

In most countries, media coverage of REDD+ did not start until late 2007, which coincides with COP13 and the Bali Action Plan. After a subsequent decline, media coverage increased in frequency until December 2009, during COP15 in Copenhagen. Total coverage of REDD+ during this five year period varied significantly between countries (Table 1).

TABLE 1

The majority of the stances reflect ecological modernization discourse (56%), making it the dominant public discourse on REDD+ overall, as well as the most frequent in Brazil, Cameroon, Indonesia, Nepal and Peru (Table 3). This is followed by civic environmentalism (34% overall), which is the dominant discourse in PNG, while only 10 percent of stances reflect green governmentality. Only in Vietnam is green governmentality the dominant discourse. Civic environmentalism discourse is absent in both Vietnam and Cameroon, and the same is true for green governmentality discourse in Indonesia and Nepal (Table 2).

TABLE 2

The most common actor groups to put forward positions on REDD+ in the media between 2006 and 2010 were domestic state actors, followed by foreign actors and, finally, domestic civil society and research organizations. Collectively, these groups account for 90 percent of all stances in the media. Although domestic state actors have more voice in the media overall, there is a difference in the distribution of actors' statements across the three discourses. Foreign and state actors predominantly engage in ecological modernization discourse, while domestic civil society and research organizations are more

engaged in civic environmentalism.[38] However, each of the three actor groups — state, foreign and domestic civil society/research organizations — is represented to some degree across all three discourses (Table 3). Below we explain in more detail the stance categories we have classified under each of the three discourses, and explore the actor groups associated with these stances (see Table 4 for the complete overview).

<div align="center">TABLE 3</div>

<div align="center">TABLE 4</div>

Ecological Modernization: The Win–Win Story Line

Of the fifteen most common stance categories six align with ecological modernization. These include, in order of frequency, stances that emphasize: the importance of incorporating forests into a global solution to climate change; the responsibility of the industrialized world; and the need for a carbon offset market mechanism to finance REDD+, as well as stances that claim REDD+ will deliver: co-benefits in addition to climate change mitigation; a win–win solution for conservation and development; and large amounts of funding.

Overall, these stance categories tend to represent broad, simplistic perspectives on REDD+, and typify win–win story lines. While we might expect such positions to be more frequent during the early days of REDD+ (before more complex realities had fully emerged), this is not the case, as their frequency is almost identical in 2007, 2009, and 2010. We can distinguish weaker and stronger variations of the ecological modernization discourse, for example, in

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38. see also Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006, 68.

the extent to which the discourse considers justice related dimensions of environmental problems. In this case, stances calling for REDD+ funding to come from industrialized countries, and those anticipating co-benefits ─ which include, among other things, poverty reduction and improved governance ─ lie towards the strong end of the ecological modernization spectrum.

The stance put forward more often than any other is one that calls for REDD+ (or forests) to be part of the global solution to climate change. It reflects the globalization of environmental problems, characteristic of the third wave of ecological modernization and its perspective that 'we are all in the same boat'.[39] This stance featured among the top three most common stance categories in five of the seven countries studied. Consider, for example, the following statement, by Paulo Adário from Greenpeace Brazil: "It is essential to take the opportunity that Bali offers to include forest conservation in the discussions on climate change as one of the solutions to deal with it"[40]. At the time, it was clear that the Bali meeting would bring forward the idea of a market based solution to deforestation, and many organizations saw this as an opportunity to include emission reductions from forests among the global solutions to climate change.

The second most popular stance category is one that claims that developed countries should finance REDD+, which incorporates global justice concerns and REDD+ related trade-offs with development objectives. Although not always explicit, the justifications for such support relate to: the need for

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39. Yearley, 1996.
40. Folha de S. Paulo, December 4, 2007.

adequate compensation to REDD+ countries for their contribution to a global

public good; the argument that REDD+ leads to foregone economic growth and

associated development opportunities; and the perceived historical

responsibility of industrialized nations for carbon emissions. Therefore, given

the clear justice related dimensions of such stances, they could be considered as

leaning towards the strong end of the ecological modernization spectrum.

Consider, for example, the following position articulated by Indonesia's

Minister of Forestry prior to COP13 in 2007:

> "For Kaban, as long as there is no commitment from developed
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> countries to adopt REDD, global efforts to resolve climate change
>
> will remain unfair. 'If there are no ties for developed countries,
>
> developing countries will have no certainty, because the prop for
>
> developing countries is resources,' he said."[41]

This stance acknowledges the potential for trade-offs between national

development objectives and global climate change objectives. This international

perspective on sustainable development and ecological democracy typifies

Bäckstrand's definition of strong ecological modernization, which also overlaps

with the civic environmentalism discourse, discussed later.

The third most frequent stance category within ecological modernization

discourse (and fourth overall) consists of calls for carbon offset markets to

finance REDD+. These statements were prominent in Brazil, Indonesia and

PNG, and often relate to Annex 1 countries using offsets to avoid reducing their

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41. Media Indonesia, October 24, 2007.

own emissions, something that has generated considerable controversy. In many cases these stances call for linking REDD+ to carbon markets and assume that markets alone can solve the problem of global emissions. None of these stances mention potential risks, such as loss of access to forest resources, unequal power or access to information between sellers and investors, as well as other climate justice concerns. Such calls generally represent weak ecological modernization discourse, as they promote market driven strategies that sustain existing economic and development paradigms, while failing to question existing institutions and power structures that drive deforestation and forest degradation in the first place.

Interestingly, this is the most controversial among our stance categories, with 38 percent of offset related stances actually opposing REDD+ carbon offsets. Disagreement focused primarily on concerns with environmental justice or with the effectiveness of carbon markets in reducing emission, as per the following 2007 statement from the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Brazil:

> "In the case of deforestation, Brazil does not agree with the premise of the carbon market, which enables the purchase of carbon credits for rich countries that pollute above the target set internationally."[42]

All three main actor groups contribute to debates around the four most frequent stance categories (global solution, global financial support, carbon markets, and co-benefits). However, overall, state and foreign actors dominate the ecological

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42. O Estado de S. Paulo, December 5, 2007.

modernization discourse, while domestic civil society and research institutes have far less representation (Figure 2). Interestingly, no civil society or domestic research organization put forward stances anticipating that REDD+ will deliver a win–win solution for climate change and development.

FIGURE 2

Green Governmentality: The Technocratic Solution

In the context of REDD+ media debates, stances reflecting green governmentality discourse appear in 5 out of 7 countries (Brazil, Cameroon, Peru, PNG and Vietnam). A total of five stance categories classified under green governmentality focused primarily on technical solutions to the distribution of domestic costs and benefits. These include, in order of frequency: calls for REDD+ to compensate for the opportunity cost of forest conversion; for beneficiaries of environmental services to finance REDD+; and for increased technical and financial assistance.

The adoption of economic discourse reflects the use of "eco-knowledges" that impact "the administration of life itself—individuals, populations and the natural environment".[43] In this case, experts use science as the legitimizing instrument to justify specific technocratic policy solutions. Calls for REDD+ to compensate for the opportunity costs of forest conversion in the Brazilian media suggest that new incentive structures need to be set in place to tackle deforestation. In this case, economic theory provides the justification for how

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43. Bäckstrand and Lövbrand 2006, 54.

REDD+ payments should be distributed. Consider, for example, the following statement from an economist from the Center for International Forestry Research: "When 80% of a serious environmental problem is caused by large landowners, then any solution will have to grant to this group some sort of compensation for losses"[44]. While such a position addresses the need to tackle the drivers of deforestation, it privileges an economic rationale for deciding who should be compensated. Another characteristic of green governmentality ─ asserting the global power of the administrative state ─ is reflected in stances demanding stronger international leadership (Peru and PNG) and calls for countries to join multilateral efforts on REDD+ (Vietnam).

A reflexive vision of green governmentality, which embraces an attitude of humility and self-reflection and where experts are conscious of the cultural assumptions they bring to their knowledge, is scarcely represented in the media. Overall, only ten percent of all stances have been classified as green governmentality, reflecting a marginalization of science within REDD+ media coverage.[45]

Domestic state actors are the most common actor group promoting green governmentality discourse, putting forward half of all stances (Figure 3). Foreign actors account for one third, and domestic civil society and research institutes one fifth. The latter group, dominated by research institutes, engaged with only two of the five stance categories, with civil society organizations

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44. O Globo, May 25, 2010.
45. Perla Alvarez et al. 2012; Babon et al. 2012; Cronin and Santoso 2010; Kengoum 2011; Khatri et al. 2012.

having only a minor presence. State actors and domestic research organizations

both engaged in debates around opportunity costs of REDD, indicating that

state actors at times use scientific arguments to support their positions in the

media, and that experts contribute to shaping public policy debates. State actors

in Vietnam discussed domestic payments for environmental services (among

the least prevalent stance categories) to gain support for a regulation that places

economic values on forest related environmental services. Vietnam is the only

country whose dominant discourse is green governmentality (Table 3).

FIGURE 3

Civic Environmentalism: Reformist or Radical?

Of the fifteen most common stance categories, four have been classified as

reflecting civic environmentalism discourse. These include, in order of

frequency: stances that consider governance and institutional reform or

community rights and empowerment as prerequisites for REDD+; those that

warn of the risk that REDD+ funding and corruption will encourage

exploitation and dispossession of local people; and those that call for REDD+

funding to benefit poor and indigenous communities.

These four stance categories represent a total of 193 individual stances, or just

over a third of the stances analyzed. These stances call for increased inclusion

of marginalized groups as part of the realization of sustainable development,

while a number recognize the fundamental trade-offs between economic,

ecological, and social sustainability, as well as between global aims and local

needs. Stances related to civic environmentalism become more frequent in media coverage during the latter years (2009–2010) of the period analyzed. Civic environmentalism is the dominant discourse in PNG (55% of stances) and is also relatively frequent in Nepal (42%), followed by Indonesia (26%) and Brazil (21%). At the other extreme are Cameroon and Peru, where media coverage on REDD+ does not feature any stances that promote civic environmentalism.

Of the four stance categories, by far the most frequent is one that sees governance and institutional reform as the key to REDD+ success. Such a position frequently encourages stronger cooperation and coordination among market, state, and civil society actors, and the establishment of good governance, rather than a radical change in institutional arrangements. It can, therefore be described as a reformist, rather than a radical discourse. Consider the following statement from Wiwiek Awiati from the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law during COP13 in 2007:

> "There are classic problems in the governance structure: corruption, poor institutional and intersectoral coordination, and legal uncertainty. If these are not resolved, then any mechanism applied will fail." [46]

In this case, the stance acknowledges a range of systemic flaws in Indonesia's forestry sector that have contributed to the country's historically high levels of deforestation, and in doing so recognizes the challenges involved in

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46. Kompas, December 12, 2007.

implementing REDD+ at a national level. Still, such calls for improvements fall short of calling for radical reform of the political, economic, and social status quo.

Similarly, those stances that call for REDD+ funding to benefit poor and indigenous communities also represent reformist version of civic environmentalism, in that they don't necessarily question the underlying power structures that leave poor and indigenous communities marginalized.

Lying more towards the radical end of civic environmentalism are those stances that explicitly recognize the need for respecting local rights, inclusive decision-making, and empowering communities to capitalize on REDD+. While we have already seen a number of stance categories that are related to local communities – for example, those concerned with distribution of benefits – this particular stance category goes further, to argue for a fundamental transformation of existing power structures. Consider, for example, the following statement from Dorothy Tekwie from Greenpeace:

> "Despite playing a leadership role internationally, the
> Government of PNG has not consulted with landowners and civil
> society and does not represent the people of PNG."[47]

This stance highlights how national power relations can undermine the representation of weaker actors in international negotiation processes, and how this impacts on the legitimacy of REDD+ policy processes. Such stances call

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47. Post Courier, November 23, 2009.

for greater inclusion of these groups in decision-making and by doing so challenge existing power relations. Stances that warn of the risk that REDD+ funding, coupled with a culture of corruption that promotes the exploitation of local rights, reflect a similar questioning of national decision-making structures in the context of weak governance.

When we look at who is saying what, it is clear that domestic civil society actors are more frequently engaged in civic environmentalism than in other discourses, accounting for half of their total stances over the five year period. These stances primarily advocate for governance reforms and community empowerment, but also include the few stances that refer to potential trade-offs between REDD+ and community benefits (Figure 4). Within civic environmentalism, state actors focus primarily on the need to establish new institutions for REDD+, but rarely call for radical change. Foreign actors account for just one fifth of the stances classified under civic environmentalism discourse. When we consider the distinction between reformist and radical civic environmentalism, and the classification of only those stances linked to empowerment and exploitation as radical, the prominence of civil society becomes even more conspicuous, as does the absence of foreign actors.

FIGURE 4

Deadlock or Transformational Change?

Drawing from the above evidence on REDD+ public discourse, we argue that discourse promoting transformational change shows at least one of these four

characteristics: 1) it clearly discusses specific policy reforms needed to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation; 2) it takes into account the risks and trade-offs that a REDD+ mechanism might entail; 3) it goes beyond technocratic solutions to reduce emissions and includes the need for governance and institutional change; 4) it explicitly challenges existing power relations that support business-as-usual.

We identify two central characteristics of public discourse in the REDD+ countries analyzed here. First, the stance categories within the two most dominant discourses (weak ecological modernization, the most common discourse in Brazil, Cameroon, Indonesia, Nepal and Peru, and reformist civic environmentalism, the most common in PNG) reveal the prevalence of public debates that avoid directly tackling drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Although a number of actors recognize the need for institutional and governance reform to support REDD+, the vast majority of stances fail to directly challenge business-as-usual. Just nine civic environmentalism stances discussed directly address drivers of deforestation, such as legal and illegal logging and conversion of forest to plantation agriculture or other land uses. These stances appeared almost exclusively in the Indonesian media. State actors put forth six of these stances ─twice to suggest they are tackling these issues already ─ and civil society organizations the other three. The high frequency of reformist civic environmentalism stances in PNG coincided with 2008 reports into questionable carbon projects and related corruption scandals, which compelled the government to respond to questions of climate change

governance.[48]

The second central characteristic is that, overall, discourses that call for transformational change ─ reflexive green governmentality and radical civic environmentalism ─ are the least prominent overall, although radical civic environmentalism is quite prominent in PNG and to a lesser extent in Brazil. This indicates that very few public debates recognize the potential trade-offs between REDD+ and economic development goals, nor do they question the potential impacts of REDD+ on the socioeconomic conditions for local communities and their access to forest resources. Green governmentality stances offer predominantly technocratic solutions to deforestation and forest degradation, with few questioning existing institutional structures. Radical civic environmentalism stances go further in challenging business-as-usual: they address issues of power directly. For example, the call for increased participation of local people in decision-making processes on REDD+, and the importance of the recognition and respect of community and local rights to forest resources, challenge the prevailing distribution of power in national REDD+ policy arenas and raise issues related to procedural and distributional justice. These stances question underlying processes and power structures that maintain the dominance of established interests, including those behind the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. They are, however, conspicuously infrequent, accounting for just 8 percent of all stances on REDD+. Interestingly, stances on empowerment and community rights are most prominent within the two countries that have the strongest existing legal

48. Babon et al. 2012.

structures recognizing local rights to forest resources, PNG and Brazil. Such stances directly address three of the four key aspects of transformational change identified above: they highlight the risks and trade-offs for local communities, and they call for institutional reform and changes in power structures. With respect to the fourth aspect ─ tackling the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation ─ these stances address some of the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation and the need to rebalance power structures, but are less explicit about the need to address direct drivers.

When we compare countries, weak ecological modernization is the dominant discourse in Brazil, Cameroon, Indonesia, Nepal and Peru, while in PNG civic environmentalism and in Vietnam green governmentality dominates. These differences reflect a stronger focus on governance and the need to empower local communities to effectively participate in REDD+ in PNG, and the extensive reliance on scientific and technical justifications for promoting REDD+ in Vietnam. Such comparison also reflects the extent to which respective national political systems are open to the participation of nonstate actors, as well as freedom of the press. Domestic civil society primarily supports civic environmentalism discourse and statements from this actor group are completely absent from REDD+ media coverage within the two countries, Cameroon and Vietnam, where the press is labeled as 'not free'[49].

Conclusion

Our results support existing evidence that REDD+ has brought issues of forest

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49. Freedom House 2011.

governance to the forefront of international and national public policy debates. This prominence has led some authors to identify 'forest governance' as a new stand-alone discourse within the REDD+ domain.[50] Nevertheless, the dominance of weak ecological modernization discourse indicates that many REDD+ policy actors favor measurable market solutions and ignore possible socioeconomic trade-offs. In most countries issues such as protecting local rights and participation remained marginal in national REDD+ public debates, at least until 2010. Evidence also suggests that even national public debates focus more on international REDD+ design and financing, as opposed to localized experimentation and learning.[51]

Most notable in all seven countries is the absence of a debate around the direct causes of deforestation and how to address them. State and business actors from the agricultural, forestry, infrastructure development and mining sectors are very scarcely engaged in public debates on direct drivers. At present, national public discourses on REDD+ show only a limited potential to move beyond concerns with forest governance and demand more substantive political action to transform current production and land use allocation processes that drive deforestation and forest degradation. We conclude that dominant public discourse in REDD+ countries largely fails to question existing policies and practices in the sectors that drive business-as-usual. In order to achieve a shift in discourse that will support transformational change, reformist policy actors as well as the media need to engage dominant policy actors more explicitly in debates about how to reduce pressure on forest from agricultural expansion,

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50. Arts and Buizer 2009; Hiraldo and Tanner 2011.
51. McDermott et al. 2011.

legal and illegal logging, mining and infrastructure development.

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Table 1: Number of Articles, Total Stances, and Number of Stances within the Three Most Frequent Stance Categories by Country

Country	Number of Articles	Total Number of Stances	Number of Stances within the Fifteen Most Frequent Stance Categories
Brazil	257	176	122
Indonesia	265	369	230
Papua New Guinea	160	206	186
Vietnam	35	34	21
Peru	26	20	15
Nepal	22	27	24
Cameroon	15	20	17
TOTAL	**780**	**852**	**615**

Table 2: Discourses Represented in Stances by Country (in Percentage)

	Brazil	Cameroon	Indonesia	Nepal	Peru	PNG	Vietnam
Ecological Modernization	**59%**	**63%**	**74%**	**58%**	**73%**	38%	47%
Green Governmentality	20%	38%	0%	0%	27%	7%	**53%**
Civic Environmentalism	21%	0%	26%	42%	0%	**55%**	0%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 3: Distribution of Actor Groups across Discourses in Percentage*

Discourse	Domestic State Actors Percentage (total frequency)	Foreign Actors Percentage (total frequency)	Domestic Civil Society and Research Organizations Percentage (total frequency)	Other Actors Percentage (total frequency)
Ecological Modernization	**57% (132)**	**67% (107)**	41% (44)	80% (40)
Green Governmentality	11% (26)	10% (16)	10% (11)	0% (0)
Civic Environmentalism	32% (74)	23% (36)	**49% (52)**	20% (10)
All	100% (232)	100% (159)	100% (107)	100% (50)

* Total frequencies are in brackets, bold numbers indicates the discourse in each of the three main actor groups in most represented
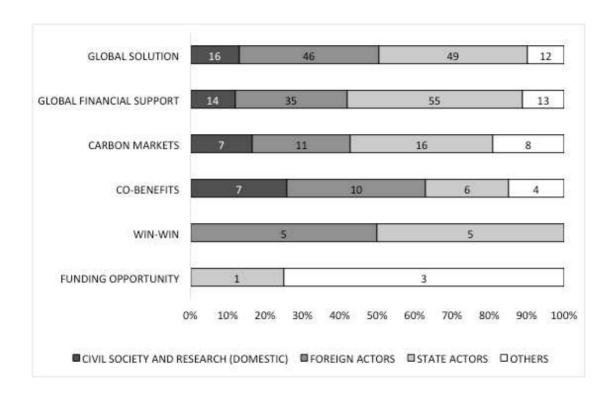
Table 4: Stance Categories and Associated Discourse (Frequencies of
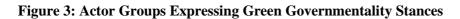
Agreement versus Disagreement)

Category	Abbreviation	Agree	Disagree
Ecological Modernization			
REDD+ (or forests) should be part of the global solution to climate change	Global solution	123	6
Developed countries should finance REDD+	Global financial support	117	2
REDD+ should be financed by a carbon offsetting market mechanism	Carbon markets	42	27
REDD+ will provide co-benefits apart from combating climate change	Co-benefits	27	1
REDD+ is a win–win; it can protect the forest and support income/development	Win–win	10	0
REDD+ can generate large amounts of funding	Funding opportunity	4	4
Total		323	40
Green Governmentality			
REDD+ should compensate for the opportunity cost of forest conversion	Opportunity cost	22	1
REDD+ needs greater international leadership and accountability	International leadership	15	3
REDD+ will require major technical and financial assistance	Technical/financial assistance	6	0
Domestic beneficiaries of environmental services should finance REDD+	User pays	5	2
The country should join international/multilateral efforts to protect forests through REDD+	Joining global efforts	5	0
Total		53	6
Civic Environmentalism			
REDD+ will require major governance and institutional reform	Governance	102	17
Respect for local rights, inclusion in decision-making, and empowerment are needed for communities to capitalize on REDD+	Empowerment	42	4
REDD+ funding and corruption will encourage exploitation of local community rights	Exploitation of communities	23	0
Money earned through REDD+ should benefit local, poor, and indigenous communities	Community benefits	5	0
Total		172	21

Figure 1: Environmental Discourse and Transformational change

Business-as-usual

Weak Ecological Modernization
Green Governmentality
Reformist Civic Environmentalism

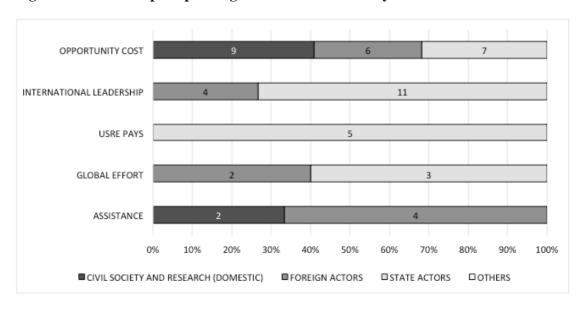Strong Ecological Modernization
Reflexive Green Governmentality
Radical Civic Environmentalism

Transformational change

Figure 2: Actor Groups Expressing Ecological Modernization Stances

Figure 3: Actor Groups Expressing Green Governmentality Stances

Figure 4: Actor Groups Expressing Civic Environmentalism Stances