

Exploring the Agency of Africa in Climate Change Negotiations: The Case of REDD+

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Abstract

Emerging climate change regimes such as the mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) are increasingly aiming to engage developing countries such as those in Africa in sustainable development through carbon markets. The contribution of African countries to the global climate decisions determines how compatible the negotiated rules could be with existing socioeconomic and policy circumstances of African countries. The aim of this paper is to explore the agency of Africa (African States) in the global climate change negotiations and discuss possible implications for implementing these rules using REDD+ as a case study. Drawing on document analysis and semi-structured expert interviews, our findings suggest that although African countries are extensively involved in the implementation of REDD+ interventions, the continent has a weak agency in the design of the global REDD+ architecture. This weak agency results from a number of factors including the inability of countries to sponsor large and diverse delegations to the negotiations; inability to generate and transmit research evidence. African countries also perceive themselves as victims of climate change eligible for support rather than sources of technological solutions. Again, Africa's position in the negotiations is further fragmented across negotiation coalitions which make it unable to collectively influence the REDD+ agenda. The paper discusses a number of implementation deficits which could result from this weak agency. These include concerns of implementation capacity and a potential lack of coherence between globally negotiated rules and existing policies of African countries. These findings call for the need to rethink pathways to enhancing Africa's strategies in engaging in multilateral climate change negotiations. This is critical if the effectiveness of climate change regimes specifically targeted at developing countries is to be realised.

Key words: Africa, actors, agency, REDD+ design, implementation, sustainable development

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1. Introduction

The institutional design of climate change regimes involves a negotiation process. The process brings together multiple actors to design operational rules that govern implementation of these regimes. These actors are drawn from global, regional, national and local agencies and institutions. These actors have varying capabilities (expertise, resources and expectations) and roles to inform locally implementable climate regimes (Corbera and Schroeder, 2011; Backstrand, 2008). As such, agency of various actors in prescribing climate change rules influences the level to which the resulting rules account for the policy and socioeconomic interests of targeted areas thus determining the effectiveness of these rules.

The mechanism of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) is one such global climate regime that currently dominates international climate talks in relation to the role of forests in mitigating climate change. Because the forestry sector is estimated to be contributing to about 12-20% emissions to climate change (IPCC, 2007; Werf et al, 2009), REDD+ is framed as one of the essential policy options to mitigate climate change. It is currently being negotiated under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as a potential post-Kyoto mechanism for compensating developing countries for reducing forest-related emissions or sequestering carbon through forest and land-use management strategies (UNFCCC 2011; Gupta *et al.* 2015). Like many other climate regimes, REDD+ institutional design involves a negotiation process that brings together multiple actors to design operational rules targeted at reducing emissions

from forest loss in developing countries. Actors involve individuals, organizations that interact to formulate rules in particular institutional process (Ostrom *et al.* 1994).

In the context of multiple actors, the agency of Africa in REDD+ is particularly critical. The continent hosts one of the largest undisturbed stands of tropical rainforest on the planet (Lowson, 2014). As such, there has been concerted efforts by the international community to upscale carbon investments in Africa through REDD+. These efforts mainly draws from lessons learnt from the Kyoto regime in which the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) investments were critically minimal in Africa compared to other regions (Silayan 2005; Pearson *et al.* 2006). Africa is increasingly involved in the ongoing preparations and experimentation for REDD+. Out of the 47 countries participating in the World Bank-supported Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), 18 of them are located in Africa (Arhin 2015). Again, it is reported that the UN-REDD have supported over 50 partner countries since its inception in 2008, of which 26 are in Africa.

The aim of this paper is to explore the agency of Africa (African countries) within UNFCCC negotiations using REDD+ as a case. In particular, the paper focuses on the agency of Africa in the process of designing global REDD+ rules and discusses how this agency could implicate the process of implementing the rules in an African setting. The specific objectives of the paper are (1) to explore actors and their roles in designing REDD+ rules at the global level (2) to explore the representation of Africa (African countries) in the global REDD+ design process (3) to discuss possible implications representation could have on implementing REDD+ in an African setting. Following this introduction, the paper

proceeds as follows: the next section will discuss our conceptual framework on agency. This will be followed by methods and methodology of the research. Results and discussions follow subsequently.

2 Unpacking agency: A conceptual framework

We follow the literature on earth governance studies (Biermann *et al.*, 2009, Dellas *et al.*, 2011, Paavola, 2003) and define agency as the capacity of an actor to participate in the negotiations and inform decisions within established norms. Within this view, actor agency reflects a means through which humans reaffirm their positions in relation to others. In globally negotiated regimes such as REDD+, actors use their agency to get their preferences into policy decisions (Dauvergne 2012). Agency can be analysed in terms of power relations (Brockhaus *et al.*, 2013) and actor roles and representation (Biermann *et al.*, 2010, Andonova *et al.*, 2009, Schroeder, 2010). Both actor role and power relations overlap, however, as the outcomes of one are indicative of the other (Brockhaus *et al.*, 2013). In this paper, we focused on actor role and representation to explore agency in REDD+ negotiations. Actor roles in informing REDD+ design components is crucial in the ongoing REDD+ design process because it relies on information generated or contributed by actors for monitoring, verifying and reporting methods on which payments are based (MVR). Representation in joint decision platforms helps actors to learn from others' and bargain for their policy circumstances (Najam *et al.*, 2003, Joshi, 2013, Saleemul and Sokona, 2001). Representation is exercised through actor role and bargaining for institutional preferences relevant to an actor's mode of governance (Del-

las *et al.* 2011). Various actors may contribute knowledge resulting in a menu of policy options (Keeley & Scoones 2003). As such, actors must additionally bargain for their preferences especially in joint decision making platforms where choices have to be made among multiple options (Andonova *et al.* 2009; Schroeder 2010; Schroeder & Lovell 2012). In policy negotiation platforms, such as the Conference of Parties (COP) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), representation is a crucial element of bargaining.

Studies show that effective representation of constituents' interests depends to a large extent by the number of representatives these constituents have in a political system, the resource endowment and the expertise of the representatives (Pitkin 1967; Rosset *et al.* 2013). More representatives' increase voting and networking capacity to push for constituents' preferences (Pitkin 1967; Bauer & Britton 2006) and thus increases agency. For instance, studies show that climate negotiations have increasingly marginalised developing countries due to low delegation sizes representing these countries in the negotiations (Saleemul & Sokona 2001; Najam *et al.* 2003; UNfairplay 2011). Resources on the other hand give actors means to voice their preferences and influence other actors to support their preferences, thus increasing their agency compared to others (Midgaard & Underdal 1977; Giger *et al.* 2012; Rosset *et al.* 2013). Representatives with diverse expertise, e.g. legal prowess or social networking, are able to understand the negotiation procedures and sell their ideas to others, thus increasing their agency compared to poorly composed delegations (Makina 2013).

In recognising their varied capabilities, actors with common interests may come together to

form networks such as negotiation coalitions to increase their representation (Wolmer *et al.* 2006). The possibility that the preferences of an actor network become part of decisions depends on how strong the actors are bonded within a network (Keeley & Scoones 2003; Wolmer *et al.* 2006). If a network is loose, its preferences become weak and may not inform decisions (Keeley & Scoones 2003). For example, negotiation coalitions of developing countries in climate regimes are often weakened by socio-economic, cultural and political differences among members (Williams 2005). Section 4 and 5 of this study specifically examines actor roles and representation in analysing the agency of actors involved in the global design process.

3. Methodology and Data Analysis

This paper builds primarily on a combination of non-participant observation of UNFCCC meet-

ings, semi-structured and expert interviews and document analysis. The data were largely collected during a three month research visit to the UNFCCC in Bonn, Germany (February to May 2013) and during a fieldwork in Kenya (June to August 2013).

3.1 Review of UNFCCC documents

Three components of REDD+: methodology, finances and safeguards were the main focus of this research. The study thus began with an exploratory review (Thai *et al.* 2008) of a range of documents (See Table 1) so as to identify actors involved in designing REDD+. Actors included States and non-State organisations and groups (Keeley & Scoones 2003) who have either made submissions to the Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) or have been conferred particular responsibility through SBSTA or COP recommendations. Actors outside SBSTA and COP institutional settings were ex-

Table 1: List of documents reviewed

Document name and year	Documents source	Type of data
Global level documents		
UNFCCC Conference of Parties reports from 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013	UNFCCC archives http://unfccc.int/methods/lulucf/items/6917.php	Information on global REDD+ design process
SBSTA reports and recommendations	UNFCCC archives http://unfccc.int/methods/lulucf/items/6917.php	Information on global REDD+ design process
Submissions from Parties and observer organisations	UNFCCC archives http://unfccc.int/methods/lulucf/items/6917.php	Information on global REDD+ design process
IPCCC reports 2001, 2007, 2013	IPCC archives	Information on global REDD+ design process
World Bank and UN-REDD readiness reports (2008,2010, 2012)	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) archives https://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/	Information on global REDD+ readiness process

cluded because the study focused on an ongoing REDD+ design process. SBSTA is a permanent subsidiary body to the UNFCCC and provides scientific and technological advice to the COP. SBSTA meetings play ‘a gate keeper’ role for the COP by bringing together actors to decide which actors, approaches and/or data sources are relevant for REDD+ design.

In-depth content analysis of documents was then undertaken through an iterative content analysis to explore actor roles in designing REDD+ rules at the global level. Iterative content analysis involves retrieving homogeneous and heterogeneous relationships between sentences and words (Kohlbacher 2006; Marsh & White 2006). The approach has been applied in a wide range of policy studies (e.g. Kalaba *et al.* (2014); Wallbott (2014); Stringer *et al.* (2009)). In this case, it involved retrieving and categorising statements on the roles of identified actors within the various REDD+ components.

3.2 Expert interviews and non-participant observations

In-depth, semi-structured interviews (Hay 2000) were also undertaken with 12 UNFCCC experts. The interviews triangulated information retrieved from the documents regarding actor roles and networks. The experts were identified through a snowball sampling process (Reed *et al.* 2009). The snowball process began with initial purposive sampling of specific experts aligned to the REDD+ design components. Through the initial interviews, additional experts were identified and interviewed. The experts were interviewed on three topics (1) actor typology and connections (2) actor roles and (3) negotiation procedures at the UNFCCC. In terms of actor typology, experts were asked to indicate the menu of actors

involved in each of the REDD+ design components and how the actors are linked to each other. Within the menu of actors, an expert was then asked about how each actor/organisation links to others and the kind of information exchanged among the actors/organisations.

3.3 Social Network Analysis

Actors and their connections retrieved from the document analysis and expert interviews were coded into a matrix. An exploratory social network pattern (SNA) (De Nooy *et al.* 2011) was then generated using UCINET. The SNA network was used to guide and indicate which actors should be targeted for qualitative analysis of actor roles. Centrality measures derived from the network analysis were considered adequate for guiding the qualitative analysis. From the network patterns, degree and betweenness centrality scores for each actor was generated (Wasserman 1994). Degree centrality depicts the number of connections (to other actors) a particular actor has while betweenness depicts an actor’s position as a link between other actors (Wasserman 1994). Actors with high degree centrality scores potentially possess higher capacity to mobilise other actors than those with low degree centrality scores. Actors with high betweenness centrality potentially broker ideas between disconnected actors who they link together (Wasserman 1994).

Centrality scores were interpreted to mean the level to which information diffuses to or from particular actors. These scores were however not indicative of how influential an actor is (Bäckstrand (2006). Evidence shows that highly central actors are sometimes characterized by weak ties and decreasing influence over others (Prell *et al.*, 2009). We analyzed the agency of the various actors according to whether they design

(ID), receive (IR) or implement (II) information on REDD+ rules. This categorisation was informed by the literature on earth system governance (Dellas et al., 2011) as well as our empirical materials. In order to characterise how various actor connections posit influence on the REDD+ design, the experts were asked about actor roles and their representation in the REDD+ design process. Specific attention was given to African States where REDD+ is targeted for implementation. Interview questions and discussions focussed on matching the centrality scores (both degree and betweenness) against actor roles either as ID_s , II_s and IR_s .

Actors were also classified as either having weak, moderate or strong agency. Actors who do not play a key role in designing REDD+ components but only receive (IR) and implement (II) design options suggested by other actors were categorised as having weak agency (Schroder, 2010). Such actors mostly lack capacity or resources to generate and package information on design options e.g. methodological procedures for accounting carbon thus are limited in exercising agency through expertise (Dellas et al., 2011, Archer, 2003, Gupta and van der Zaag, 2009). By contrast, actors who are able to generate knowledge, design, and implement particular REDD+ options have strong agency. Such actors have the capacity to steer design decisions by generating ideas and testing their ‘implementality’ in a manner that provide stronger empirical evidence/experience to support their positions in the global process (Pattberg, 2005, Gupta and van der Zaag, 2009). Actors who are able to design options but are limited in terms of implementing the options were classified as having a moderate agency (Figure 1).

The agency measures for African States (developing countries) were further

triangulated with interviews focusing on Africa’s representation in the UNFCCC negotiations. Experts were asked to explain the negotiation procedures such as rules on numerical and technical representation of actors and how these structure the participation and actors’ influence in designing REDD+. Specific focus was given to the representation in the SBSTA meetings where REDD+ design decisions are filtered. The level to which existing negotiation coalitions e.g. the Coalition for Rainforest Nations and the Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN) improve Africa’s representation in the global REDD+ design was discussed. Non-participant observation within UNFCCC workshops and seminars provided insights on the process of preparing, organising and administering negotiations on REDD+.

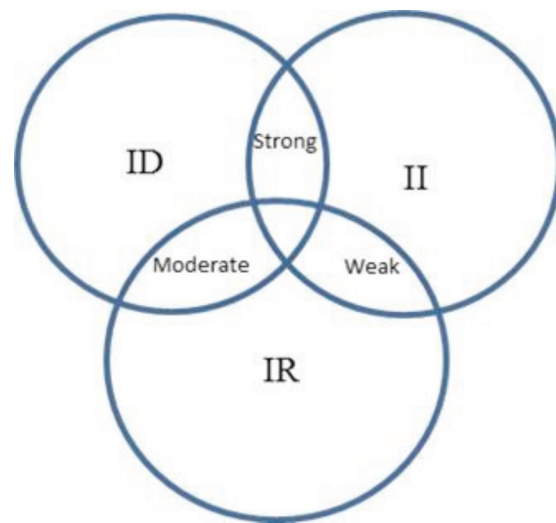


Figure 1: Typology of agency based on whether an actor designs a technology, receives (IR), or implement technology (II). Source: Authors.

3.4. Methodological limitations

There are particular shortcomings to the approach we used in this research. A general problem stems from the fact we did not compare the agency measured from the network analysis to other continents. Further, our study has not considered the heterogeneity of Africa in much de-

tails except on issues of coalition building. It is possible that individual strengths of countries or small groupings which can shape the global rules on REDD+ were overlooked.

4 Results

4.1 Typology of actors and their roles in the global REDD+ design

The global REDD+ design arena is characterised by a wide array of international, national and sub-national actors. In a broader sense, these include but not limited to states and non-state actors drawn from global level UN agencies, intergovernmental organisations, multilateral agencies, consultants, civil society as well as private actors. For the purposes of this paper, we broadly categorised actors along three main areas of the global REDD+ architecture: methodology, finance and safeguards (Figure 2).

The main focus of the methodological actors has been to advance scientific methods, approaches and modules aimed to quantify carbon emissions and monitor greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions of activities that reduce mosaic deforestation. These actors are also very instrumental in undertaking research activities for designing and propagating different approaches for monitoring landuse changes, carbon accounting procedures for REDD+. Some the main actors we encountered include but not limited to Specialised UN Agencies (e.g. FAO); Inter-governmental research organisations (e.g. Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) and the IPCC); private consultants (e.g. German Climate Action, Winrock International Ltd); Civil society and non-governmental organisations (e.g. World Wide Fund for Nature

(WWF) and Climate Care) and certification authorities such as the Voluntary Carbon Standard Board and the GOFC-Gold.

For those actors in the area of REDD+ finance, our research findings suggested the domination of international organisations and multilateral intermediaries such as the World Bank; UN-REDD and international banks and private companies interested in carbon business. Other broad actors identified here include regional economic funding bodies such as the Africa Development Bank (AfDB) and Inter-American Development Bank (IADB). These actors have been very instrumental in mobilising funds to support and promote the implementation of REDD+ across the globe. For instance, the UN-REDD has mobilised over \$256 million (UNREDD 2015)¹ to support REDD+ projects across while the FCPF has also mobilised over \$357 million by 2014 (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility 2014).

There are also corpuses of actors interested in promoting safeguards for REDD+. REDD+ safeguards (also known as safeguard information systems) cover a range of environmental and social issues, which include transparent decision-making, participation by local and indigenous communities, the protection of vulnerable people, and the enhancement of social and environmental benefits (Arhin 2014). This element of REDD+ has been advanced strongly by developing countries (e.g. Congo; Bolivia), civil society groups and forest people organisations that represent the interests of local communities in the REDD+ policy process (e.g. Forest People Program, Greenpeace International) and political ecology scholars. Figure 1 shows an exploratory network diagram depicting a typology of actors and their connectedness across these vari-

¹ <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/fund/CCF00>

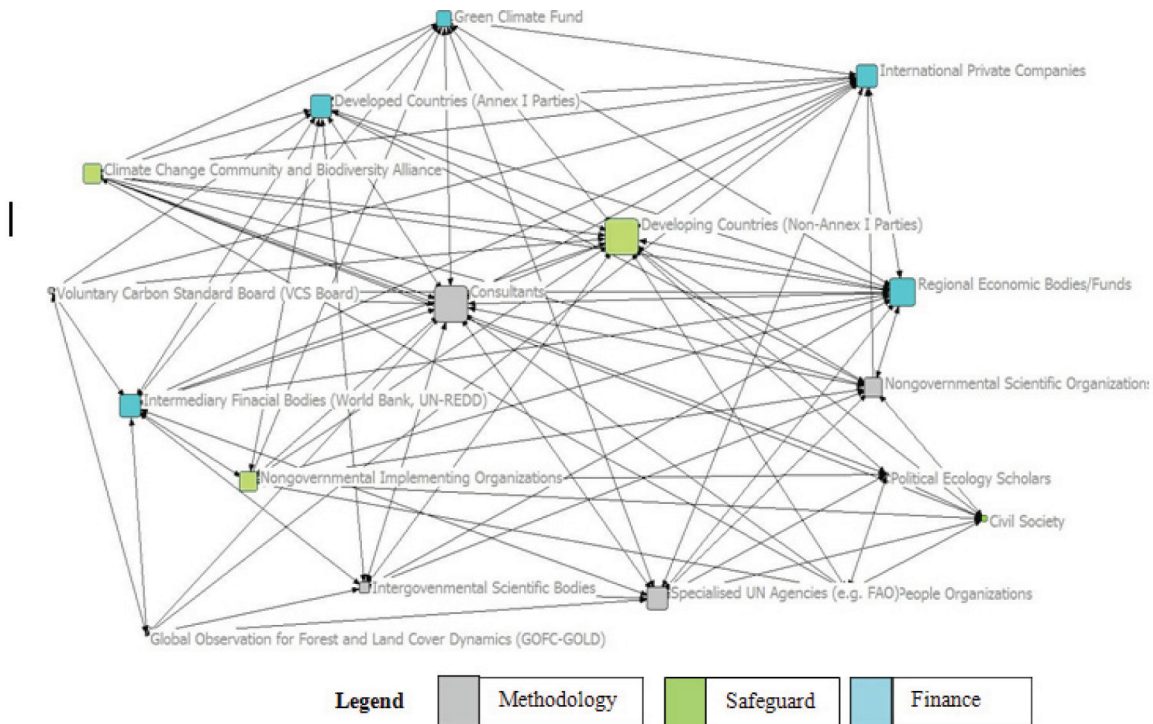


Figure 2: Network diagram indicating actor connections across REDD+ design components.

ous REDD+ design components (methodology, finance and safeguards). The connections depict that all actors are linked to each other in one way or another.

4.2 Agency of the actors

The analysis of our empirical materials further showed that, there are three main roles performed by these actors as far as the design of the global rules. REDD+ rules are concerned: designing information, receiving information and implementing information to give feedback to the negotiating processes. In analysing the agency of Africa in the design of REDD+ architecture, we focused on whether the continent (and their states) participate as information designers (IDs), information receivers (IRs) and information implementers (IIs). The IDs are actors who generate and package ideas e.g. specific MRV methodologies for verifying REDD+ projects and use these evidence to inform design rules. The IRs are actors who receive or are informed about the

packaged ideas from other actors and have to be helped in understanding these ideas because they did not generate the ideas themselves. At the same time, the IIs are actors who, through on-the-ground actions, implement/demonstrate the design options generated by themselves or by other actors. For the purpose of our analysis, an actor has a strong agency if it plays all the three broad roles (ID+IR+II). An actor having a moderate agency should mainly design information and also implement (ID+II) while a weak agency implies that such an actor mainly receives or being informed by and implement the resultant information (IR+II). The agency of the various actors including those of Africa is shown in fig. 3.

The result of the Social Network Analysis as shown in fig. 2 showed that Africa and other developing countries have high centrality score (Degree = 14 and Betweenness= 10.6). Centrality scores depict the connections that an actor has while the betweenness shows the links that an ac-

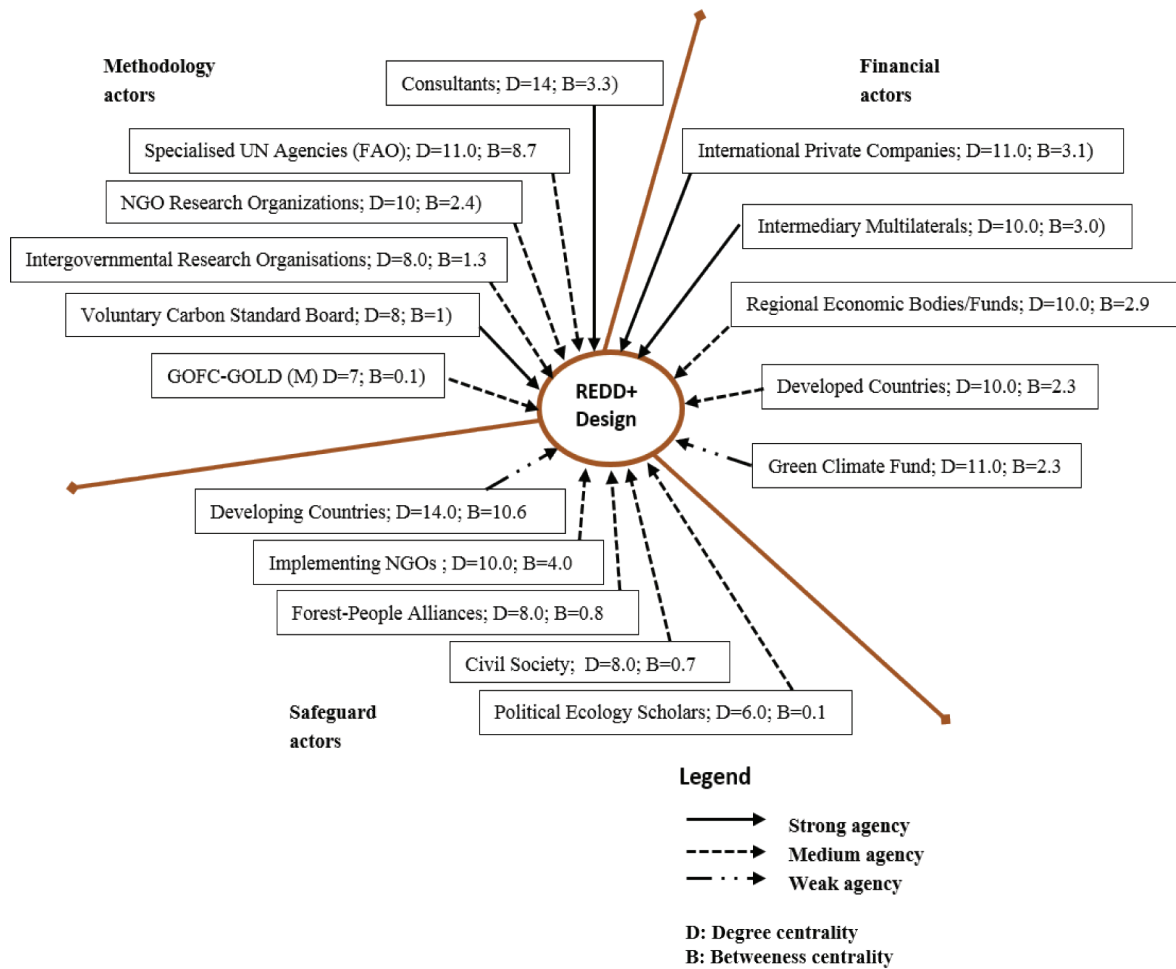


Figure 3: REDD+ actors and their agency based on their role in REDD+ design information. Developing countries in this case refer to the low income segment of developing countries to which most African countries participating in REDD+ belong.

tor has with others. It is important to stress that the centrality scores are only indicative of which actors could have more input into the REDD+ design but do not depict the actual actor influence. The centrality score shows that countries in Africa remain significant sources or targets of the information governing the design of REDD+ rules. Other actors with relatively high centrality scores in the network included consultants (D=14; B=3.3), multilateral private companies (D=11; B=3.1), multilateral intermediaries (D=10; B=3) and specialised UN agencies (FAO) (D=10; B=8.7). The result, for the Africa countries, further shows that there was no significant relationship with the level of agency ($p < 0.000$ at coefficient of 0.07 for degree and 0.30 for be-

tweeness). This implies that despite their centrality or importance in the REDD+ debate, the overall agency of Africa in terms of roles played in the REDD+ information flow is weak. What emerged through our analysis is that Africa countries mainly tend to be recipients of technical and financial support from a variety of actors, rather than taking a leading role in shaping particular rules about the REDD+ architecture.

We further analysed the agency of different actors across the three main elements of the REDD+ architecture. In the area of methodology, consultants and the VCS board were the main actors with strong agency. The remaining actors (including Africa countries, UN specialised

agencies such as the FAO, GOF-C-Gold and other research organisations) showed moderate agency from the network analysis. The strong agency of Consultants could be attributed to the fact that they are usually hired by various actors across the design components to develop REDD+ methodologies (IDs) and oversee the implementation (II) of demonstration projects within Africa and other developing countries. Through this process, they have garnered knowledge upon which most developing countries rely on for the global REDD+ negotiations and on-ground demonstrations. International consulting firms e.g. the German Climatic Action, Winrock consulting Ltd, Climate Care and Climate Focus currently support developing countries e.g. Kenya with national REDD+ implementation, greenhouse gas inventory and global negotiation procedures. Additionally, consultants serve as a neutral source of knowledge although the politicised nature of their expertise is increasingly being illuminated (Keeley and Scoones, 2003; Bock, 2014). In our interviews, one of the submissions from consultants/private sector which came out as having an influential role on the design of REDD+ was the McKingsey Cost-curve. The cost-curve claims to give decision-makers a bird's eye view of carbon mitigation measures and consequently helped to frame the REDD+ debate over 'cheap' reductions of emissions that are possible from the forest sector, and what actions should be prioritised (for more on the influence and politics of the McKingsey curve refer Dyer and Counsell, 2010 ; Bock, 2014; Greenpeace, 2011).

As an example, the cost estimates proved to be influential in the report of the Informal Working Group on Interim Finance for REDD (IWG-IFR) in 2009. In the case of the VCS board, it has a strong agency plausibly because it is comprised

of private sector actors that are currently designing and certifying VCS methodologies. The VCS is the main carbon standard upon which more than half of global REDD+ credits are currently verified. Most private multilaterals aligned to the VCS board are also implementing more than 80% of the REDD+ projects globally. The moderate agency of Africa and other developing countries can be as a result of the fact that, these actors often submit methodological suggestions to SBSTA but their submissions mostly outline administrative structures for coordinating the externally designed technical information.

In the area of finance, private sector/business firms and multilateral intermediaries such as the World Bank showed a strong agency as information designers on finance, recipients and transmitters into global and national policy decisions. Regional economic bodies and developed countries showed a moderate agency. Africa and other developing counterparts appeared to have weak agency in contributing funds but are mainly recipients of the financial support from these multilateral intermediaries or from bilateral arrangements with developed countries. This is not surprising as REDD+ is being designed to provide incentives for countries in the global south to reduce forest loss (Angelsen, 2009; 2012). Private sector businesses (e.g. Althelia, Macquarie-International Finance Corporation, Ned Bank group, Wildlife Works and Terra Global Capital) are also instrumental in the financing of REDD+. They do so either through multilateral intermediaries or directly. In direct funding, these companies develop (IDs) and implement (II) REDD+ methodologies and sub-national demonstration projects in developing countries. For instance, the first REDD+ project 'the Kenya's Kasigau project' to sell credits in the voluntary carbon market is a private initiative 'the Wildlife-Works

Co Ltd. The project has been showcased as an example in the global platforms. The private multilateral companies currently implement over 80% of REDD+ projects globally. These private companies are also the main buyers of carbon credits and are able to control and influence carbon prices for the whole REDD+ portfolio. Ultimately, multilateral companies have strong agency in the REDD+ design process. The strong agency of intermediary multilateral agencies such as World Bank could be explained by the fact that, they are able to redefine (IDs) funding conditions and oversees execution of implementation process (II). Invariably, they are able to design information and also act as recipients and transmitters into global and national policy decisions. For example, a host of developed countries e.g. Norway, Australia, UK now channel REDD+ funds to developing countries through the World Bank's FCPF and the United Nations Collaborative programme on REDD (UN-REDD) (See table 2). Also, the World Bank's FCPF and the UN-REDD for example provide expertise and financial support for national level REDD+ implementation in about 48 developing countries (16 from Africa). They have established various carbon funds e.g. REDD+ carbon fund and the Biocarbon fund to implement on-ground REDD+ activities. The intermediaries, then present to the global negotiations, experiences from the national and local level implementation as empirical evidence. These make the Bank have a strong agency as both IDs and IIs. According to a UNFCCC expert, multilateral intermediaries are currently the main sources of empirical evidence for the global REDD+ design process.

In relation to safeguards, the result showed that Africa and other developing countries have weak agency. The weak agency of Africa appeared surprising in view of the fact that the idea of safe-

guards had emerged as a way to protect interests of communities in countries where REDD+ is being implemented. A further analysis however showed that most of the current safeguard provisions included in the UNFCCC text were mainly designed, submitted and advocated for by advocacy groups such as the civil society and internationally established forest people organisation. Our interviews also suggested that, several African countries such as Kenya have safeguard provisions in their environmental laws, they are expected to merge these with the new REDD+ safeguard rules emerging from the UNFCCC process. Thus, although Africa and other developing countries play a role in safeguarding the socioeconomic interests of their citizens, their agency is weakened by external procedures which they are mainly expected to report on how they are implementing the safeguards. A case in point is observed during the thirty-eighth session of the SBSTA. Here, the SBSTA requested developing country Parties to submit experiences with implementing the UNFCCC safeguards. Some developing countries made submissions out of which ten Africa countries made a joint submission through the Republic of Chad. The joint submission mainly explained the policy structures being put in place and financial support necessary to address the safeguards. Thus, Africa and other developing countries mainly receive (IRs) and implement (IIs) safeguards designed and advocated for by the international civil society bodies and other actors in the negotiation process.

Several other actors such as the civil society and forest people organisations have moderate agency. These actors have been designing, submitting and advocating for most of the safeguard provisions included in the UNFCCC text (Table 2).²

² <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2014/smsn/ngo/469.pdf>

While civil society organisations and advocacy groups design and advance arguments about safeguards, their advocacy is mainly targeted towards the global negotiation process without much direct influence at the national level processes.. This partly explains while civil society groups had moderate but not strong agency. This is in sharp contrast with those of multilateral intermediaries who are able to influence country level processes through their funding. Civil society groups generally have limited mechanisms (resources and legitimacy) to enforce these provisions at the national level implementation.

4.3 A further look at Africa's agency through representation in REDD+ design platforms

The design of global REDD+ architecture takes place in a number of arenas, chiefly the SBSTA, COP and also through the IPCC. Generally, representation of states on these joint climate platforms are likely to allow co allow countries including African States to participate and shape the direction of particular agenda. In this subsection, we further examine agency by focusing primarily on Africa's representation in SBSTA sessions (in particular session 30) and partly on the IPCC work upon which much of the debates on REDD+ draw from.

The SBSTA process involves annual meetings of government experts and observer groups including specialised UN agencies such as FAO and the World Bank, international scientific committees and implementing NGOs. The general agenda of a SBSTA meeting is set by the COP which often asks SBSTA for technical advice on specific REDD+ design components. SBSTA experts collect and synthesise written views from States and observer organisations then presents

these for discussion and consensus building at its meetings. The meetings often follow multiple agendas. For example in SBSTA's 30th Session (FCCC/SBSTA/2009/3) there were ten agendas including REDD+ and other climate change issues. Representation in SBSTA negotiations is recognised both in terms of specific country delegates and negotiation coalitions bringing together delegations of several countries.

In terms of delegations, SBSTA has no clear rules on the delegation size representing particular governments or observer organisations. Analysis of the list of delegates attending SBSTA shows that Africa is largely underrepresented in many of these crucial meetings which set agenda and provide technical basis for decisions that are adopted by the Conference of Parties (COP). For instance, in the 30th SBSTA meeting that included REDD+ as part of the agenda³, Brazil and Germany were represented by 20 and 71 delegates respectively, while Kenya and DRC had only two and three delegates respectively participating in the meeting (FCCC/SB/2009/MISC.1). Overall, most African States had less than four delegates in total. Indeed, a count of participants from countries in Africa showed that, the continent was represented by less than 2% (about 60 out of 4216) of the total SBSTA delegation compared to 16% and 46% from Asia and Europe respectively (FCCC/SB/2009/MISC.1). This low delegation presents problems in at least two ways. First, the few African delegates present are often unable to participate in all the parallel negotiation sessions. As such, they may be unable to learn and internalise design options packaged by other actors due to physical absence from certain sessions. Second, they may also not be able to effectively interact and lobby others in informal side events

³ (FCCC/SB/2009/MISC.1)

where useful information e.g. new tested technologies or funds for REDD+ are often showcased. This low representation, we argue, could have serious implications about the agency of Africa countries in shaping global rules on REDD+. As a UNFCCC staff noted during an interview, because of their low numbers, African delegates have to make trade-offs between attending REDD+ sessions or other sessions on issues such as addressing adaptation and vulnerability that they often consider more important for their contexts⁴.

We also followed the SBSTAs 35th expert session held in Bonn, Germany getting a sense of how Africa countries participate in the expert sessions. The expert sessions are organised by the SBSTA on specific issues e.g. setting for reference levels for REDD+.⁵ These sessions are usually brief, spanning only two days, within which several participants have to showcase their experiences on particular issues in question.⁶ The finding also showed a low representation from Africa countries which potentially weaken their agency in shaping the design of global REDD+ rules. In the meeting, ten presentation on experiences and suggestions on forest reference levels were made out of which only one presentation was from Africa. The presentation details of the African expert (outlined in paragraph 21 of the expert report) usefully outlined general methodological guidance such as result-based and national level monitoring but lacked insights on Guinea's or Africa's experiences and circumstances for setting reference levels. As such, decisions from such sessions overlook the specific contextual conditions in Africa. For instance, a decision made in this 35th session that '... technical issues, including technical adjustments to forest reference emission levels and forest reference levels, should be separated from the policy issues and

socioeconomic and development considerations of a country'⁷ does not fully resonate with the situation in Africa. Ideally forests serve socioeconomic roles supporting national economy and local livelihoods, thereby influencing reference levels. The foregoing examples reveal that the agency of Africa in terms of its role and representation in some of the main design platforms for REDD+ is weak.

4.4. Africa's representation through negotiation coalitions

While general representation of Africa countries in negotiating platforms is generally low, formation of coalitions, alliances and blocs have been the cardinal strategy through which agency has been exercised within the UNFCCC negotiations. Historically, developing countries (including African states) have been cooperating through the G-77/China bloc. This bloc (i.e. G-77/China) has acted in concert during negotiations over desertification, ozone layer, biodiversity convention and climate change. But as Allan and Dauvergne (2013) have observed, there is a daunting challenge of states maintaining unity of interests which leads to break-aways or fractures into other smaller coalitions. For example, positions of developing countries have dissipated into regional groups such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Group, Central American countries and the Amazonian Pact, which is led by Brazil. Within Africa, the Central African Forest Commission (COMIFAC) stands out as one of the influential coalitions that have been influencing the debate of REDD+. Its first submission in 2006 championed the addition of 'degradation' to the scope that saw the broadening of RED to REDD in Bali, 2007 (Allan and Dauvergne, 2013; Pistorious, 2012). This group made up of the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon,

4 Interview UNFCCC, Bonn March 2013

5 FCCC/SBSTA/2011/INF

6 FCCC/SBSTA/2011/INF

7 (FCCC/SBSTA/2011/INF: paragraph 33).

have been able to leverage the importance of the Congo Basin forests for regulating the global climate.

While COMIFAC has been able to advance a common position, the picture is however different when viewed through the lens of the wider continent. The African Union established the Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN) during the 1992 Earth Summit. The AGN aims to pull together African delegates in common negotiation positions. Although AGN is a relatively small group, it also connects with several other groups e.g. G77/China, BASIC, CfrN, LMDC, LDC, AOSIS etc. which potentially makes it a bridge between different groups. Interviews and documents reveal that the AGN mainly adhere to a common position on issues of financing adaptation but is often in disagreement on issues of REDD+ due to varying regional economic interests. For example, Africa's rainforest countries such as those in the Congo basin are committed to REDD+ but those in the Sahel see little economic value in REDD+. The AGN often negotiates with the G77+China which brings together developing nations in climate negotiations. This group is a critical voting block but members often have competing interests informed by their national contexts. Some countries are more interested in agricultural mechanisation and large scale energy mitigation, e.g. China, and this limits commitments to REDD+, especially if REDD+ does not promise adequate economic returns for economic growth. The opinions of smaller African delegations within the group are often overshadowed by the positions of larger economies of Asia (e.g. India, China) and Latin America (e.g. Brazil).

African delegations also get disfranchised by several coalitions pursuing different interests. For

instance, Kenya, Ghana, Congo and South Africa are all members of the Coalition for Rainforest Nations, which is committed to forest mitigation but they also belong to the G77 whose general position has been that developed countries need to take mitigation responsibility and pay for climate damage. South Africa is also part of the emerging economies including Brazil, India and China (BASIC) whose interests in industrialisation sometimes overshadow the REDD+ agenda. In the mix of interests and multiple negotiation issues, REDD+ as an agenda itself gets overshadowed and is often picked up by non-State actors in side events. The position of the small number of African delegations gets further weakened through the layers of interests and coalitions. Thus, in terms of coalitions, what is emerging is that the ability of African delegates to bargain for their preferences through negotiation coalitions is complicated by diverse interests within coalitions. The diverse and often conflicting interests combine to collectively weaken the agency of several states from Africa.

5. Discussion

Various actors are playing varying roles in designing REDD+, both at the global level and also nationally. The results presented here show that although African countries are targeted for REDD+, their agency in designing various REDD+ components is weak. These countries receive ideas from many actors intending to support, collaborate or test technologies with them. This could explain why these countries have the highest centrality scores yet their agency is weak. Quantitative network measures were mainly useful in visualising the quantity of information diffused to and from actors involved in designing REDD+ but qualitative aspects of the networks

in the policy process provided insights on actor influence over decisions. (Crona & Bodin 2006).

The weak agency of African countries partly results from their inability to generate and transmit scientific information needed for technical decisions. This could be explained by a number of factors. Africa's economic constraints limits governments' investments in research that could help develop in-built technical capacity to inform REDD+. Priority in resource allocation is given to development and pressing livelihood matters while investment in research is marginal e.g. only 0.6% share of world gross expenditure on research and development (GERD) comes from Africa, compared to Asia's and Europe's 30.5% and 27.2% respectively (Teng-Zeng 2009). Other studies also report this weak technical agency of Africa in climate regimes (Najam *et al.* 2003; Nhamo 2011; Makina 2013). These studies recommend technology transfer as part of the solution.

Technology transfer is acknowledged in the UNFCCC text (UNFCCC 1992). This can partly take place through globally established negotiation forums and joint scientific platforms where actors showcase and learn new approaches (Makina 2013). However, this Paper reveals that Africa does not make any meaningful contribution to knowledge exchange in these forums because they are represented by fewer delegates (in the negotiations) and authors (in the IPCC land use reports) compared to other regions. Larger delegations from other regions often get their preferences into decisions due to more voting power and diverse expertise able to interpret and critique information and lobby across multiple sessions and side events during negotiations (Minang 2009; UNfairplay 2011; Makina 2013). Conversely, the smaller delegations from Africa compromise the continent's ability to bargain for appropriate interventions that suit their

circumstances or question others' suggestions to enhance their own understanding. While various REDD+ technologies are not alien to Africa's circumstances because they have been developed and tested in Africa either through international scientific bodies or other non-African experts, inbuilt capacity within governments is necessary to effectively and sustainably implement such techniques.

Even though economic constraints are commonly blamed to be responsible for Africa's lack of expertise and subsequent underrepresentation in the climate regimes, this paper further finds that interest in REDD+ and other climate funds also contribute to the weak agency. The belief that climate change results from developed countries, as championed by negotiation coalitions and embedded in the wider political economy, casts Africa as 'a victim' eligible for help rather than as a source of technological solutions. Funding for sustainable development is the main issue Africa has pursued collectively both in REDD+ and in other climate debates (Frost 2001; Najam *et al.* 2003; Nhamo 2011). This paper has not investigated the role political economy plays in REDD+ design in a detailed manner but the possibility that Africa's financial interests in climate regimes could undermine its own technical interests in REDD+, needs further research attention. The story about Africa's weak agency in climate regimes may not be new. In the context of REDD+ though, it is a key concern because the programme is specifically expected to be implemented and coordinated by African governments.

It is important to note that the evidence presented here mainly indicate the agency at the time of this research. It is worth acknowledging that the AGN is now beginning to embrace various pathways to negotiations e.g. minilateralism which involve using the regional economic blocks (SADAC, COMESA, IGAD) to draw negotiation positions

and front a more systematic and contextually relevant positions at the UNFCCC (Mbeva et al., 2015). This, overtime, will potentially enhance the agency of Africa in climate negotiations but at the present, the weak agency has implications for REDD+ implementation at the national and local levels. Specifically, findings of this analysis reveal that a major implication of the weak agency is the emergence of new actor constellations to exercise both design and implementation agency on behalf of African countries (Gupta, 2008, Delmas et al., 2011, Bouteligier, 2011). Such actors have emerged as arbitrators or ‘hybrid actors’ mediating both expertise and resources between dominant and marginalised actors (Okereke and Dooley, 2010, Vatn and Vedeld, 2013). This is the case of environmental consultancy firms which now provide technical support to several African countries including Kenya (Atela et al., 2015), Cameroon (Minang et al., 2014) among others. The firms also support the design of sub-national demonstration projects deemed feasible within marginalised local communities in developing countries (Palmer Fry, 2011). In a similar manner, findings indicate that intermediary financial actors such as the World Bank’s FCPF have emerged to mediate funds and expertise between resources endowed private sector actors in the developed world and African countries most of whom are now receiving technical and financial support from the FCPF. While these emerging actors could usefully enhance the agency of African countries, the ability of such hybrid actors to factually represent the circumstances of African countries is contested. For instance, global consultancy firms may not adequately represent the interests of particularly African countries in designing national REDD+ frameworks because these firms act on the interests of those who pay

for their services (Nepal, 2012). Similarly, the opinions of the African states multilateral readiness process could be compromised through the financial support the countries receive to attend REDD+ readiness meetings (Thompson et al., 2011). Ultimately, these concerns are recipes for implementation deficits especially poor coherence between resulting REDD+ design and existing African policies and socioeconomic circumstances.

6. Conclusion

There are bright indications that REDD+ will become an important post-Kyoto policy option for mitigating climate change. In this paper, we focused on the agency of Africa in the evolving REDD+ architecture and discussed implications for implementation. Drawing on interviews and document analysis, this study has shown that that multiple state and non-State actors are involved in the global process. However, the agency of Africa in the global REDD+ process is weak partly as a result of numerical and technical underrepresentation in the various policy negotiation arenas and the inability of many countries to produce comparable scientific publications and submissions informative to REDD+ design. We have further highlighted that several African countries consider themselves as victims of climate change and thereby eligible for funds rather than sources of technological solutions. This framing thus creates a fixation by a focus on REDD+ funds and further weaken the agency of Africa. This paper has also drawn attention to the fact that, the weak agency of Africa could contribute to implementation deficits by creating spaces for new actor constellations to exercise agency on behalf of African countries but whose interests may not

fully resonate with the policy and socioeconomic circumstances of these countries. The findings in this study are critical in rethinking various pathways to enhancing Africa's strategies in engaging in multilateral climate change negotiations especially in the context of rising number of climate change regimes specifically targeted at developing countries.

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