



# Green transformations, charcoal and social justice in rural east-central Tanzania

Mathew Bukhi Mabele



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## **List of abbreviations**

- ICDP Integrated conservation and development policy
- FMU Forest Management Unit
- PES Payments for Ecosystem Services
- REDD+ Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, plus the role of conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries
- SCP Sustainable Charcoal Project
- SDC Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- TFCG Tanzania Forest Conservation Group
- VLFR Village Land Forest Reserve
- VLUMC Village Land Use Management Committee
- VLUP Village Land Use Plan
- VNRC Village Natural Resources Committee

## Abstract

Over the last 30 years, Tanzania has taken different policy approaches towards the conservation of forests. Intriguingly, from the earlier integrated conservation and development approach to the 'newer' green economy, the idea that providing livelihood benefits is a key strategy for achieving conservation effectiveness has dominated. This one-dimensional conception of what 'local people' value and why precludes a clear understanding of substantive social justice considerations – what is being contested, why and by whom – when conflicts arise in policy implementation settings. Using a green economy project that addresses charcoal-driven forest loss in Kilosa, the paper examines a conflict between forest conservation and farming, and studies the variegated notions of justice that farmers express in relation to the conflict. The paper builds upon a developing strand in the political ecology literature, that of empirical analyses of rural people's conceptions of justice in environmental conservation, to demonstrate the analytical and practical values of a multidimensional justice framework. Its main contribution lies in illustrating how the framework can help to assess and reframe environmental interventions, going beyond one-dimensional conceptions, to focus attention on the diverse ways in which justice can be recognised or denied, at different levels and in different ways, for different groups of people. Particularly, it highlights that context matters, as despite the distributional 'success' of the project, disregarded concerns over procedural dimensions and the recognition of justice led to farmer evictions, covert resistance and continued struggles over land compensation. This paper therefore underlines that being attentive to a range of justice dimensions can reveal locally valued and contested aspects of conservation, and can guide more equitable and more just environmental conservation.

**Keywords:** conceptions of justice, charcoal-driven forest loss, forest conservation, multidimensional justice framework, political ecology, provision of livelihood benefits, social justice

# 1 Introduction

In Tanzania, forested villages with no ‘formal’ land use plans have unreserved forests on village lands. Sungusia and Lund (2016) call such areas ‘open area forests’, a term commonly used for spare land employed for future communal or individual uses. The national Land Act of 1999 problematically categorises lands with open area forests as general land, defined as ‘all public land, which is not reserved land or village land, and includes unoccupied or unused village land’ (URT 1999: 24). General lands fall under the central government’s control. Ulaya Mbuyuni, a village in Kilosa, had open area forests. Its leadership governed all land uses (excluding timber harvesting) on open area forests. In the forests, few villagers obtained residential and farming lands legally (via a village committee and with the knowledge of the village assembly); many such lands were obtained illegally (via a powerful village chairperson and with the knowledge of the assembly).

That changed in late 2012, when a green transformation initiative called the Sustainable Charcoal Project (SCP) brought three changes to the village’s resource governance. Funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG), the initiative falls under the burgeoning ‘green economy’ agenda in the Global South, the execution of which is framed as enhanced environmental protection along with ‘modernised’ and changed access to and control over natural resources (Bergius and Buseth 2019). The first change was the development of its Village Land Use Plan (VLUP), which is central to the land governance system in Tanzanian villages (Huggins 2018). The second was the designation of a Village Land Forest Reserve (VLFR) and its Forest Management Units, which occupied 3,540 out of the 5,789 hectares – over 60 per cent – of the total village land. In the third change, new resource governance institutions were crafted, bringing in modernised mechanisms for managing people–forest interactions, such as locally elected resource committees, a forest users’ group and ‘sustainable’ tree harvesting practices. Two formulated local committees, the Village Natural Resources Committee (VNRC) and the Village Land Use Management Committee (VLUMC), were mandated duties to create and oversee rules to govern the interactions.

On 3 December 2015, the VNRC exercised its power by giving written eviction notices to 48 farmers, categorised as forest encroachers in the reserve, who had earlier rejected the VNRC’s verbal eviction notices. The VNRC cited the national Forest Act of 2002, which prohibits residency and farming in designated forest reserves. The farmers had obtained their farmlands illegally. The VNRC set 30 August 2016 as a final eviction date, which the farmers challenged at a magistrates’ court, demanding a deliberative space for their concerns.

The above account gives just one example of ongoing struggles over social justice under a ‘green transformation agenda’ in the Global South (Buseth 2017). The Tanzanian ‘green transformation’ policy framing draws heavily on the green economy discourse – that technical and market-driven interventions provide the best policy solutions for addressing economic and environmental challenges, including those related to achieving sustainable development, by re-orienting agriculture, energy and environmental conservation towards so-called ‘green modernisation’ (Bergius and Buseth 2019). In terms of conservation, this approach often targets common-pool resources, such as forests in rural areas, for formal management for use in sustainable production (i.e. charcoal, crops) or for marketised conservation for use in Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) schemes (Brockington and Ponte 2015; Buseth 2017). Despite an increased emphasis on foreign investment, finance and private-sector actors in bringing about ‘green transformations’, the role of local actors in green economy-aligned conservation tends to follow the older logic of the integrated conservation and development policy (ICDP) approach, ‘that providing livelihood benefits is a key strategy for achieving conservation effectiveness’ (Martin 2017: 130). However, the discourse of aggregate ‘livelihood benefits’ has a



'flattening' effect, glossing both power and knowledge differentials among stakeholder groups and masking tensions that can arise between different actors and organisations pursuing particular conservation and development agendas and those concerned with livelihoods, as in the conflict here between forest conservation and farming. In addition, it instrumentalises and homogenises 'the community'. Thus, at the core of the tensions are concerns over one-dimensional conceptions of what 'local people' value and why, conceptions often formulated by non-local actors. This approach precludes a clear understanding of substantive justice considerations – what is being contested, why and by whom – when conflicts arise in implementation settings.

In response, critical analysts have called for a multidimensional conception of social justice to be placed at the centre of environmental conservation (Martin 2017; Schlosberg 2007; Walker 2010). A multidimensional social justice framework directs attention not only to unequal outcomes of environmental interventions along important axes of social difference, including gender, ethnicity and social class, but understands them through these intertwined justice dimensions: distributional justice; procedural justice; and contextual and recognitional justice (Dawson et al., 2018; Law et al., 2017; Martin, 2017; McDermott et al., 2013; Zafra-Calvo et al., 2017). The framework can help to assess and reframe interventions, going beyond technical and economic indicators, to focus attention on the diverse ways in which justice can be recognised or denied, at different levels and in different ways, for different groups of people, and thus can guide more equitable and just governance (Zafra-Calvo *et al.* 2017). In this paper, I demonstrate the framework's analytic and practical value by using it to analyse a common-pool resources governance regime that implements a charcoal greening initiative in rural Kilosa, Tanzania.

Earlier discussions on the ICDP approaches emphasise utilitarian justice theories that prioritise aggregate conservation outcomes over the interests of the marginalised individual (Martin 2017; Sikor *et al.* 2014). These discussions employ a livelihood benefits discourse, one dominated by simplistic economic conceptions of local claims to conservation impacts. They conceive of justice only in distributional terms, i.e. who gets what under what principles (Schlosberg, 2007; Walker, 2010). An emerging strand in political ecology has recently applied the multidimensional framework to study conservation justice using empirical approaches (e.g. Fisher *et al.* 2018; He and Sikor 2015; Sikor *et al.* 2014). Yet many of these accounts use this framework to demonstrate how pluralistic justice conceptions inform conservation practices within the dynamics of PES initiatives. Such initiatives constitute marketised conservation, following neoliberal logics of privatisation, marketisation and commodification (Fletcher and Büscher 2017). These initiatives differ from the ongoing green economy-aligned conservation interventions in the Global South, which target common-pool resources in rural areas to institute formal management for use in sustainable production (Bergius and Buseth 2019; Buseth 2017). Thus, the literature contains relatively few analyses that apply the framework to explore conservation struggles within green economy interventions that target environmental resources for efficient use in sustainable production.

Using the charcoal greening project as an empirical case, this paper therefore aims to fill the gap by answering these questions: (i) what conceptions of justice do rural individuals express, and why? And (ii), how do the expressed conceptions shape individuals' responses to conservation interventions? My analysis of the project's conservation–farming conflict illuminates how its utilitarian distributive justice conceptions run counter to local contexts and contradict some local ideas about justice, leading to the farmers' removal, covert resistance and struggles over compensation. That is, despite social justice being a central feature of the 'green economy' discourse (UNEP 2011), in practice, its aligned interventions repeat the tendencies towards reproducing social injustices for the greater good, like the older ICDP approaches. This paper therefore argues that considering rural people's multiple expressions of justice, in relation to uneven past and present socio-cultural and political conditions, exposes locally valued and contested conservation impacts. This allows for a richer understanding of their responses to the green economy-aligned conservation interventions and their outcomes. In practice, this

understanding can guide more equitable and just conservation, especially as the interventions increasingly target environmental resources critical for rural livelihoods.

In the next section, the paper details the multidimensional justice framework. I then explain my methodology, followed by a description of the study site and context, outlining how a green transformation is made manifest. The paper's results (Section 5) apply the framework to discuss how claims about justice are made at the local level, revealing site-specific struggles and tensions over justice. Finally, the paper reflects on this analysis's contribution to the political ecology literature with a demonstration of the analytic and practical value of the framework within the ongoing green economy-aligned conservation interventions, in calling for conservation that is more just.

## **2 Applying a multidimensional justice framework to a charcoal 'greening' initiative in Kilosa**

The multidimensional justice framework applied in this paper builds upon that of Martin (2017) and borrows insights and examples from Dawson *et al.* (2018), Law *et al.* (2017), McDermott *et al.* (2013), Sikor *et al.* (2014) and Zafra-Calvo *et al.* (2017). The framework accepts a case-based contextual approach to demonstrate how embracing multiple conceptions of justice could be key to developing and implementing socially just environmental conservation interventions. The case-based contextual approach confines itself to the claims, situations and positionalities of *individuals* (as opposed to communities), taking individuals as the subjects of inquiry (Martin, 2017). Its emphasis is on understanding justice conceptions that are important to individuals and on analysing how the conceptions shape individuals' claims to their rights, and their responses to conservation interventions. The contrasting approach – the normative approach – tends to identify generalised principles of what is just and unjust in any given context (Martin, 2017). It adopts a utilitarian conception of justice that prioritises 'societal outcomes over individual ones' (Martin 2017: 11). As Sikor *et al.* (2014) note, the conception is inappropriate in contexts of environmental conservation in the Global South, due to pronounced inter- and intra-community socio-economic, cultural and political inequities. Under such settings, the conception, when applied, brushes aside pre-existing distributional, recognitional and procedural inequities, leading to the displacement of disadvantaged people and their exclusion from access to resources (e.g. Fisher *et al.* 2018).

The livelihood benefits discourse tends to follow utilitarian distributive conceptions that assume conservation actions to be right in principle, as long as the majority are happy and their welfare is improving – even when the rights of some individuals are disregarded (Martin 2017; Sikor *et al.* 2014). The discourse dominates in environmental justice discussions, particularly those applying generalised notions of justice. In the discourse, justice is exclusively defined as a question of equity in the distribution of social goods (Schlosberg 2007; Walker 2010). It often carries promises of substantial future economic and livelihood benefits, i.e. an 'economy of expectations' (Fletcher *et al.* 2016: 674). He and Sikor (2015) show that in the discourse, conservation actors, across local to national scales, usually share a primary concern with how conservation costs and benefits are justly distributed, despite prevailing differences in their understanding of justice. The discourse adopts a conception that fairness is defined as a just distribution of goods and bads (Schlosberg 2007). This narrow conception precludes the multifaceted relations within societies and between environmental resources and people; thus, it hides forms of inequities that are not defined in distributional terms (Walker 2010). These critical analysts do not disregard distributive justice; they rather emphasise that livelihood benefits alone cannot influence conservation effectiveness, as the benefits and their distributive patterns should be thoroughly understood in relation to other locally valued interests of fair capability, procedure and recognition (e.g. Martin 2017).

The multidimensional framework therefore introduces a multifaceted approach to justice based on a thorough understanding of its distributive, procedural and recognitional dimensions. The distributive dimension is concerned with the sharing of conservation impacts and responsibilities between different individuals and groups; the procedural deals with inclusions and exclusion in environmental decision-making; finally, the recognitional concerns respect and disrespect for difference and the avoidance of domination. I draw on Martin’s (2017) framework to make sense of these diverse justice dimensions. The framework’s pluralistic conception assumes that context matters and that therefore no universal justice principles can generate an ethical consensus in all cases to resolve questions about just distribution, procedure and recognition (Martin, 2017). This assumption necessitates a thorough understanding of the contextual dimension of justice. However, in the literature, this contextual dimension is often disregarded or taken as part of recognition. Following Law *et al.* (2017) and Dawson *et al.* (2018), I consider it an independent dimension. I here incorporate McDermott’s *et al.* (2013) explanation. For McDermott and colleagues, the contextual dimension concerns past and present socio-cultural conditions (beliefs, institutions, power dynamics and ethnicity) that define what is right or wrong. Schlosberg (2007) categorises this dimension as capability; it is focused on individual agency and functioning in the context of a given society. It normally considers the uneven playing fields that the conditions create, when examining differences in people’s abilities to be recognised, participate in decision-making and lobby for just distribution (Law *et al.* 2017; McDermott *et al.* 2013; Schlosberg 2007). Such conditions often define what is required or not required to enable or constrain the pursuit of socially just conservation (Zafra-Calvo *et al.*, 2017). Table 1 below summarises these dimensions and their characteristics.

**Table 1. The characteristics of multidimensional social justice**

Justice dimension	Characteristics
Recognition	Recognises and respects diverse actors, their identities, interests, aspirations and values Recognises and respects marginalised groups
Procedural	Chances to participate and influence decision-making Fulfilment of commitments made by resources institutions Fairness in rule-making and enforcement Fairness in political processes that allocate resources and resolve disputes Clearly defined and agreed responsibilities of actors
Distributive	Fair sharing of conservation burdens and benefits Equitable distribution of rights and responsibilities Mitigates any costs to marginalised groups through compensation or alternative resources
Contextual	Considers broad social, governance, economic and cultural contexts, past and present Considers power imbalances among the actors Recognises the variegated capabilities of individuals to participate in decision-making processes, influence decisions and capture benefits

*Sources:* Author, based on Dawson *et al.* (2018), Law *et al.* (2017), Martin (2017), McDermott *et al.* (2013) and Zafra-Calvo *et al.* (2017).

The framework shows that environmental justice struggles are deeply contextual. In contrast to the utilitarian conceptions, what is sought here is a contextual grounding in identifying local justice claims based on claimants’ positionalities, and their past and present socio-cultural and political situations. McDermott *et al.* (2013) note that claimants’ positionalities and the underlying situations can (re)produce inequities in the other three dimensions, as they may create inequalities in: (i) the

distribution of conservation benefits, rights and responsibilities; (ii) being heard, i.e. actively participating and influencing decision-making; and (iii) demanding recognition of claimants' aspirations, interests and values in the political process. Claims and their associated justice framings are usually unevenly persuasive, as due to existing differences in power and social identities, some become more noticeable while others are concealed. In conservation interventions, it is thus common to find some claims being supported as morally right, and others encountering substantial disapproval (Fisher *et al.* 2018; He and Sikor 2015). For instance, in two carbon forestry projects in Uganda, people demanded that their cultural linkages with the forest and the historical (contextual) colonial and post-colonial processes of land alienation be recognised. They received little attention from local authorities, who were more concerned with the creation of employment opportunities (Fisher *et al.* 2018). However, what is morally right or wrong within the interventions is defined by universal conceptions about what constitutes justice and injustice (Martin, 2017). But local people's justice claims are endogenous, as they are shaped by past and present socio-cultural and political situations (He and Sikor 2015). The framework and its case-based contextual approach thus emphasise the importance of empirically grounded observations of how justice conceptions are conceived and applied in practice, when dealing with real-world conservation problems, such as the conflict between forest conservation and farming in rural Kilosa.

The recent literature advances concerns over social justice in greening<sup>1</sup> interventions in the Global South (Barkin and Fuente 2013; Fisher *et al.* 2018; He and Sikor 2015; Scoones *et al.* 2015). Scoones *et al.* (2015: 3) boldly argue that '[I]n many, perhaps especially developing country contexts, there is unlikely to be any green transformations if questions of social justice are not part of the debate'. Barkin and Fuente (2013) analyse contrasting justice logics differing between local people and advocates of the greening of the forestry sector in Mexico; Fisher *et al.* (2018) examine notions of justice that local people express in two contrasting PES initiatives in Uganda; while He and Sikor (2015) study justice notions embedded in state policy and those held by villagers and local state officials in China, and how villagers' notions shape their reactions to a state forest greening programme. He and Sikor note how a primary concern for distributive rather than procedural and recognitional justice produces a positive reaction among villagers to the livelihood benefits that the programme provides. Meanwhile, Fisher *et al.* (2018) empirically derive justice notions in the two carbon forestry projects to produce a fuller understanding of local people's reactions to the projects and their outcomes. Therefore, it is the associations between rural people's variegated conceptions of justice and how the conceptions influence their justice claims and responses to greening interventions – which target environmental resources for efficient use in sustainable production – that I explore in the sections below.

### 3 Methodology

The information for this analysis comes from a range of ethnographic methods carried out during seven months of fieldwork (April to September 2016, and January 2017); I lived in the village from June to early September 2016. The primary methods of data generation were: semi-structured interviews in the form of expert and key informant interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) and participant observation. I conducted expert interviews with: the Kilosa district's forest manager; SCP's field officers; SCP's technical adviser; and SDC's programme officer. I conducted 32 informant interviews with: farmers; charcoal makers; and selected members of the village council, natural resources and land management committees. I undertook four FGDs with charcoal producers, and with members of the village council, natural resources and land management committees to understand the on-the-ground

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<sup>1</sup> Here the term 'greening' indicates actual implementation of policy processes and practices that respect environmental limits and end the systematic exploitation of nature (Leach 2015).

background contexts and insights, explore how local resource users talk about the functioning of SCP and VNRC, and compare the experts' insights with the locals'.

I participated as an observer in two closed meetings: a special farmers' meeting that had the eviction as one of the agendas; and charcoal producers' workshop with SCP's officials, which discussed strategies to meet SDC's conditions for continued financial support to the project. I also shadowed two events in the village: the allocation by the VNRC of charcoal plots to registered producers; and the summoning by the village executive officer, sub-village chairpersons and VNRC and VLUMC members of the alleged forest encroachers (farmers) to explain their cultivation in the forest reserve, and their refusal to accept the eviction notices. As a participant observer, I viewed 'each moment as an opportunity for both data gathering and reflection, not knowing what will ultimately be important' (Corson *et al.* 2014: 24). I occasionally employed reflexive analysis (Burawoy 2003) by positioning gathered data against theories, and by developing further questions to explore. Appendix A has a list of all research participants and methods used.

I used ethnographic methods 'to be sufficiently grounded in context so as to be able to draw informed distinctions' (Corson *et al.* 2014: 24). I therefore do not generalise the empirical results of the case, but report insights from rural Kilosa. I argue that political ecology discussions on social justice within green economy understate the importance of including a multidimensional conception of justice. The goal is then 'to produce knowledge that reveals where existing theory falls short of explaining social phenomenon, and then modify it accordingly' (Corson *et al.* 2014: 24). I thus provide theoretical generalisation (Lewis and Ritchie, 2003), as I introduce empirical insights generated from rural Kilosa that are of wider significance to the political ecology literature on socially just environmental conservation.

## 4 The case: SCP in Kilosa

This study focused on Ulaya Mbuyuni village. This has six sub-villages, comprising a total of 3,473 people. According to SCP field officers in Kilosa, it is one of the earliest and most successful villages to implement charcoal greening in the woodlands.<sup>2</sup> It is composed of mixed ethnicities: Sagara, Kaguru, Bena, Yao, Ngindo, Pogoro, Gogo, Hehe, Sukuma, Ha and Ndendeule. The majority of the residents are farmers – 81.2% (UVC 2012). The villagers produce charcoal as a by-product when clearing new farmlands, and as an alternative income-generating activity during the off-farm season. This makes 'traditional' charcoal-making a secondary livelihood strategy and land-use practice, one which is often cited as an unsustainable and a major driver of deforestation in Kilosa (Forrester-Kibuga and Samweli 2010; Mugasha and Katani 2016).

This perspective on charcoal-making as a driver of deforestation is dominant in Tanzanian forest policies (Doggart and Meshack 2017). However, as charcoal production tends to consist of temporary clearing of all standing forest biomass, rather than long-term loss of forest cover, charcoal-making is linked to degradation more than deforestation (Mwampamba *et al.*, 2013). However, the TFCG still framed charcoal as the driver when they made a proposal for greening charcoal production in the woodlands to the SDC (TFCG, 2011). The TFCG undertook a forest change study to depict the deforestation history in the village (see Table 2). According to the study, most of the deforestation has taken place on unreserved forests on the village land, i.e. open area forest. This is where most farmers practice both

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<sup>2</sup> Miombo is a Tanzanian Nyamwezi name for *Brachystegia boehmii*, which was later used by the Germans to describe woodlands dominated by trees of the genera *Brachystegia* and *Julbernardia*. Miombo woodlands are characterised by low diversity of canopy tree species and high species richness of the flora, and are maintained by frequent dry-season fires and grazing regimes (Chidumayo 2017).

cultivation and charcoal-making, and is an area where struggles over access and justice are made manifest.

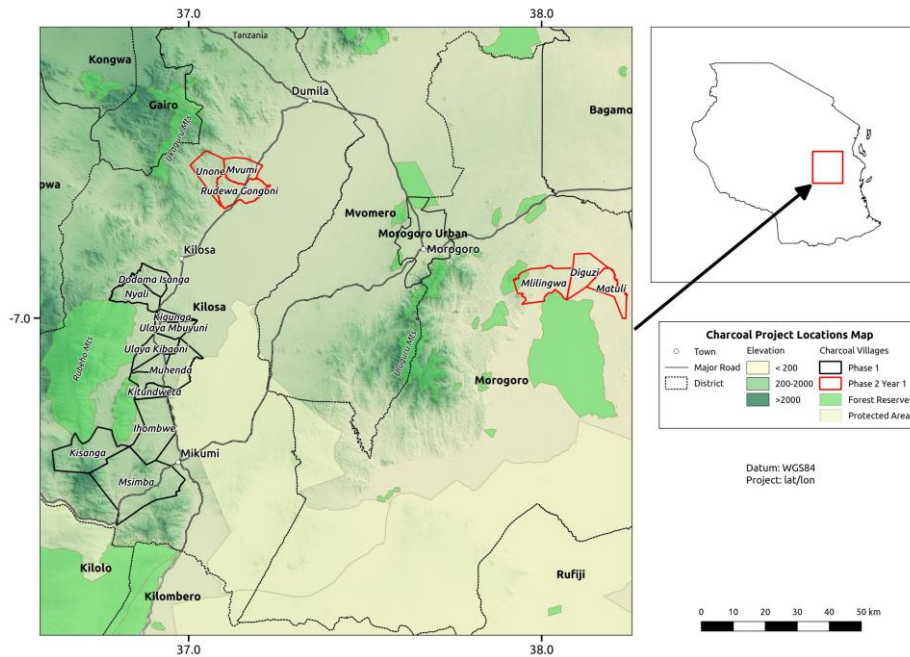
**Table 2. A short history of forest change in Ulaya Mbuyuni village**

Forest change	2007–10 (hectares)	2010–14 (hectares)	2014–15 (hectares)
Forest loss in the village forest	228.69	375.84	21.78
Forest loss in the village forest reserve	143.28	244.53	13.5

Source: TFCG forest change data

Deforestation contributes around 6–17 per cent of global anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (Baccini *et al.* 2012). As tropical forests are increasingly becoming sources of CO<sub>2</sub> (Baccini *et al.* 2017), tackling deforestation ‘is seen as one of the low-hanging fruit that can be targeted rapidly to reduce carbon emissions’ (Brockington and Ponte 2015: 2198). Along these lines, the TFCG implements the SCP with the goal of discontinuing ‘business-as-usual’ traditional charcoal production practices (TFCG 2011). The TFCG implements the SCP with a green transformation vision. The vision is to increase wood utilisation efficiency, and thus minimise wood loss, through improved basic earth-mound kilns, installed in the designated charcoal Forest Management Units. The vision is paired with a 24-year coppicing rotation system, selective cutting practices, and cutting trees at knee height (~50 cm) to leave behind a stump and the roots, all designed to enhance tree regeneration within the woodlands. The vision aligns with Tanzania’s green transformation agenda, which puts forests at the heart of a green economy (UNEP 2015). The policy practices aim to have cleaner and more stable forests, i.e. to reduce forest and wood loss; the SCP epitomises such practices. The VNRCs, established in each of the eight implementing villages (see Figure 1 below) supervise this process, within the existing Community Based Forest Management framework (see Blomley and Iddi 2009 for an overview).

The SCP began by identifying village land uses and establishing by-laws for land governance through a village land use planning (UVC 2012). It created the VNRC, the members of which are elected at the assembly, as a responsible institution to govern land affairs in the forests, giving it the ability to act on villagers’ behalf. Village land falls into three categories: *communal* for public utilities; *individual* for a person, family or group of persons (URT 1999); and *spare* for future communal or individual use (Locher 2016). A VLUP was produced during the process, which the majority of villagers endorsed at the village assembly (UVC 2012). As the public space for resident adult villagers (over 18 years old) to ‘discuss the conduct and the decisions of the village leadership’ (Greco 2016: 24), the assembly is the supreme authority over village affairs (URT 1982). The Village Land Act sees planning as a participatory process, whereby local users identify land uses and participate in relevant decisions (URT 1999). However, as Huggins (2018) notes, in practice, local elites dominate the process, furthering their own agendas, which in some contexts are in conflict with rural people’s livelihoods and conceptions of justice, as I show in this analysis.



**Figure 1. Map showing the SCP project villages in Kilosa district. Credit: This map was produced by TFCG for the SCP Project.**

In relation to the ongoing greening agenda for ‘natural forests’, the SCP adopts a utilitarian logic that prioritises aggregate outcomes to justify conservation actions that serve the greater societal good, particularly in terms of future economic and livelihood benefits. Over the last 30 years of forest policy formulation and implementation in Tanzania, promises of livelihood benefits have been a key discursive commodity that decision makers and practitioners have used to validate their next ‘silver bullet’ to address socio-ecological problems (Lund *et al.* 2017).

As a recent community-based resource management scheme, the SCP in Ulaya Mbuyuni presents an interesting context to examine how newer green economy-aligned conservation tends to follow the older logics of the ICDP approach, and what such continuity implies for justice. Particularly, it demonstrates how the discourse of aggregate livelihood benefits precludes a clear understanding of substantive social justice considerations, when conservation collides with people’s livelihoods – and why and how the multidimensional justice framework can be analytically and practically valuable in the pursuit of socially just environmental conservation.

## 5 Notions and claims of justice in the greening initiative

### 5.1 ‘Livelihood benefits’ and project acceptance

In the Global South, green economy-aligned conservation interventions carry promises of livelihood benefits alongside environmental protection (e.g. Bergius and Buseth 2019; Fisher *et al.* 2018; Lund *et al.* 2017). The same applies to the charcoal greening and forest conservation initiative in Ulaya Mbuyuni. According to an informant, during the SCP introductory meetings, the majority of villagers accepted the project, the VLUP and its land use categories, following two promises given. First, farmers with lands inside the designated VLFR would receive land compensation, and those with *makazi mashamba* (pieces of land that combine both farmlands and settlements on the same plot) could remain in the VLFR as long as they did not clear new farmlands. ‘We were told that we can remain in the forest to be the village’s informants and guards against illegal forest access,’ one farmer said (participant observation,

15 August 2016). They were promised that the forest conservation that the greening initiative intended to achieve could take place amid their farming activities. The SCP field officers told them that it was possible to have forest patches that would cumulatively establish the VLFR, an informant noted (interview, 28 August, 2016). Second, as an aggregate societal benefit, the village would retain 100% of the charcoal revenues for community development initiatives and forest management (FGD, 10 August 2016). One charcoal producer said, '[T]he goal of producing charcoal is for me to get profits, and the village too' (interview, 26 August 2018). Charcoal producers noted that they were being incentivised to agree to the project to promote forest conservation with the promise that they would earn sustainable livelihoods and generate village revenue (FGD, 10 August 2016). Such voices of environmentalism are typical in Tanzanian villages (Brockington, 2005).

Furthermore, the experiences of neighbouring villages with livelihood benefits were key to the initial acceptance of the project. Villagers had confused the SCP with REDD+<sup>3</sup> initiatives. In those villages, TFCG was piloting REDD+ as part of Tanzania's trial engagement (see Lund *et al.* 2017). Villagers heard that the TFCG gave trial REDD+ payments in the form of individual dividends to all registered residents in those villages. The TFCG used the same vehicles in its project villages; these had its logos and a sticker with words, 'Making REDD Work for Communities and Forest Conservation in Tanzania'. This caused Ulaya Mbuyuni villagers to visualise 'REDD+ benefits' in their lives and village, as several informants said. In its 13 REDD+ villages in Kilosa, the TFCG promised income-generating such as improved agricultural practices, beekeeping, chicken-rearing and sustainable charcoal-making (Vatn *et al.* 2017). In addition, it had other SCP villages in Kilosa (see Figure 1), where Ulaya Mbuyuni villagers heard about charcoal revenues and a reduction in villagers' cash contributions for village development initiatives. One informant said that Ulaya Mbuyuni has a history of coercive monetary collections for its development initiatives (interview, 24 August 2016). This is typical of Tanzanian villages (see Brockington, 2008; Fjeldstad and Semboja, 2001). One informant noted that such experiences and promises of future livelihood benefits moved most villagers towards project acceptance (interview, 26 August 2016).

In these cases, the VNRC was an agent of the aggregate livelihood benefits discourse. TFCG officials taught members of the VNRC about the project's goals: producing charcoal sustainably; forest conservation; generating village revenues; and collective sharing of conservation benefits (interview, 31 May 2016). As the knowledge broker, the VNRC spoke at village gatherings about the benefits that the village would obtain. Several informants spoke about how communal conservation benefits were emphasised, while discounting the risks and costs associated with project implementation to individuals. In some discussions, discussants noted that the promises of collective benefits made most villagers unsympathetic towards those who had settlements and farmlands inside the designated VLFR. During participant observation at various VNRC activities, I heard members employing the utilitarian thinking that for the good of the current and future community, the forest must be protected from the degradation that settlers and farmers inside the VLFR supposedly caused. They justified the labelling of the settlers and farmers as encroachers, and the intention to remove them, based on the notion that the SCP brought greater societal good from charcoal revenues to fund communal development initiatives. And they noted that through the initiatives, the equitable sharing of conservation benefits could be realised.

Until June 2018, TZS 158,557,429<sup>4</sup> has been generated as tariffs from charcoal sales. In productive Community Based Forest Management schemes, VNRCs usually receive 40% and village development initiatives 60% of the total forest revenues (e.g. Sungusia and Lund 2016). In Ulaya Mbuyuni, the VNRC oversees the administration and distribution of all revenues; it gets 60% of the revenues, while the

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<sup>3</sup> REDD+ refers to the global policy mechanism for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus the role of conservation, sustainable forest management, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (Lund *et al.* 2017).

<sup>4</sup> As per the Bank of Tanzania's forex rates of 28 March 2019, USD 1 is equivalent to TZS 2,278.



remaining 40% goes on communal development projects. Table 3 below summarises the initiatives funded.

**Table 3. Village development initiatives funded by charcoal revenues**

Initiative	Funds received (in TZS)	Completion stage
Constructing two primary school classrooms and a teachers' office	32,566,000	Ongoing
Contributing to the costs of laboratory construction for the secondary school	4,250,000	Completed
Covering one year of health insurance for every resident	4,250,000	Completed
Constructing a well	19,280,000	Completed
Budgeting for the construction of a dispensary	10,000,000	Ongoing

Source: Fieldwork data

However, those settlers and farmers mobilised several villagers and questioned the practicality of utilitarian distributive justice. Three aspects were involved. First, they built on the realisation that REDD+ is unrelated to the SCP. In a neighbouring village of Chabima, the REDD+ trial payment per household was about USD 46; in other project villages, the payment was around USD 40 (Vatn *et al.* 2017). Several informants spoke of being disappointed with the SCP due to the realisation there are no individual dividends in their village. Second, there were discontents with the health insurance cover. Due to the deficient medical services at a private dispensary, villagers perceived the insurance cover as a waste of money. Several informants noted the difficulties they had experienced in using their medical insurance at the dispensary. They recounted that many common diagnoses, treatments and medicines were not covered by the insurance at the dispensary. They are asked to pay in cash. The villagers then agreed to set a budget to construct their own dispensary, which will cost TZS 38,000,000. So far, TZS 10,000,000 has been allocated.

Third, there are growing feelings that only charcoal producers and VNRC members benefit from the greening initiative at the individual level. In closed meetings or seminars that the TFCG or VNRC organises, each participant receives an allowance of TZS 5,000. In addition, the VNRC's secretary and treasurer each get a monthly allowance of TZS 70,000. Every member also receives TZS 10,000 as an allowance for forest patrols, carried out twice a month, and TZS 5,000 for a monthly VNRC meeting (interview, 23 August 2016). Producers too receive TZS 5,000 whenever the TFCG organises learning workshops for charcoal production (participant observation, 16 August 2016). There are 80 registered producers, 45 of them active, based on the yearly allocation of production plots inside the VLFR (interview, 27 August 2016). In 2016–17, 54 plots were provided. On average, a producer makes 50 charcoal sacks – 50 kg each – from a 50x50m<sup>2</sup> plot. With an average price sack of TZS 12,000, a producer can generate TZS 600,000 during the off-farm season – July to October, the active production period (FGD, 10 August 2016). If there are open plots, any producer is eligible to receive more than one plot per year, and thus generate more revenue (interview, 28 August 2016). Dokken and Angelsen (2015) show that mean annual total household income is about USD 371 in rural Kilosa. These few individuals are thus fairly well off compared to the majority of the villagers. The disappointments and growing perceptions of unfair benefit distribution have made it easier for the settlers and farmers to regain the villagers' sympathy and make their case vis-à-vis the conflict.

5.2 *The contextual dimension to the forest conservation–farming conflict*

*‘[R]ecently, some villagers received eviction notices, demanding them to get out of their lands where they used to live and farm. The notices claim that they have invaded lands that are part of the village forest. This is something that is not right, to call your own villagers invaders, while they have been there before the project. We fail to understand this; has the project come to harass villagers or to help them?’*

A passage from a letter dated 17.01.2016 that Ulaya Mbuyuni farmers wrote to their Village Executive Officer

In the discussions with members of the village council – a village political board of a maximum of 25 locally elected representatives – villagers painted the VNRC as the most powerful committee in the village. Table 3 below summarises its powers and roles in the SCP. I then discuss how they are made manifest in the conflict.

**Table 4. The VNRC’s roles and powers in the SCP**

<i>Site of manifestation</i>	<i>Roles and powers</i>
In the village’s office	Receiving and evaluating applications for charcoal production Registering accepted producers Granting forest entrance permits Issuing certificates of admission for infraction and penalties Rewarding any villager who reports on forest infractions Resolving disputes in relation to forest management
At the village assembly	Providing quarterly reports on forest revenues and expenditure Delivering promises of aggregate livelihood benefits Educating villagers on sustainable forest use practices
Inside the VLFR	Allocating charcoal-making plots to registered producers Carrying out forest patrols, twice a month

Source: Fieldwork data

As a result, on 3 December 2015, the VNRC wrote a letter to each of the 48 farmers, referred to as ‘invaders’ (as in the passage quoted above). In total, there were 64 farmers cultivating inside the designated VLFR: 29 farmers living and farming inside the VLFR; and 35 farmers farming in the VLFR, but living in the village (interview, 28 August 2016). The letter’s heading was ‘Ban notice on farming and settlement inside the Ulaya Mbuyuni village land forest reserve’. Its content is reproduced here:

*Refer to the heading above.*

*From today, the Ulaya Mbuyuni village natural resources committee is giving a ban notice that from 30 August 2016 it is prohibited for anyone to have settlements, or farming activities inside the area of Ulaya Mbuyuni’s village land forest reserve.*

*In case anyone will not adhere to this notice, strict legal measures will be taken against that person, including being sent to court for further legal sanctions.*

A local magistrates' court advised the VNRC to write the letters, according to a committee member, when the VNRC opened a case against those who had rejected verbal notices (interview, 23 August 2016). Signing the letter meant accepting removal from the land, which was now the VLFR. The VNRC's chairperson and secretary, the village chairperson, and the village executive officer were the supervisory authority, witnesses and signees. At the court, the VNRC labelled settlements and farmlands inside the VLFR as encroachments. It referred to the Forest Act of 2002. Section 26 (a–s) of the Act mentions activities prohibited within forest reserves without permission from an existing right holder (in this case, the VNRC on behalf of the village). Erecting residential buildings or other structures, clearing land for cultivation, sowing crops and livestock grazing are among the prohibited activities (URT 2002). Using the Act, the VNRC identified as 'invaders' the 29 farmers with *makazi mashamba* and the 35 farmers only farming inside the VLFR. The VNRC told the local magistrate that it first issued a verbal ban and removal notices to the farmers: 16 farmers, mostly from those who lived and farmed inside the reserve, departed; 48 farmers rejected the notices.

One contextual aspect that the VNRC and the broad SCP project overlooked (intentionally or not), which caused the conflict to emerge, was the preceding land allocation system. As noted earlier, Ulaya Mbuyuni had unreserved forests on its land. It had about 3,540 hectares of open area forest (see Table 5). The country's forestry policy community often labels open area forests as 'open access', in the sense that they are under heavy pressure for conversion to other land uses (such as farming, livestock grazing settlements and 'unsustainable' wood utilisation). However, villagers see open area forests as spare lands for future communal or individual land uses, such as investments, expansion of farmlands and settlements. The 64 farmers used the open area forest for settlements and farmlands. The Village Land Act of 1999 grants the village council authority over village land, on behalf of the village assembly (URT 1999). Section 8(4) of the Act allows the council to establish a committee to advise it on village land management. Section 8(5) instructs that the council cannot allocate land or grant right of occupancy without the prior approval of the assembly (URT 1999).

**Table 5. Land use categories before and after SCP**

Land use category	Size before SCP (hectares)	Size after SCP (hectares)	Change (hectares)
Housing and settlement	67	86	+19
Agriculture	4,084.5	2,065	-2,019.5
<i>Makazi mashamba</i>	1,642.1	32	-1,610.1
Grazing	0	18	+18
Forest reserve	0	3,540	+3,540

*Source:* Ulaya Mbuyuni's 2012–32 VLUP

However, prior to the project and the development of the VLUP, the village had an illegal land allocation system, which was based on the powers of one former village chairperson. Historically, the first ethnic groups to settle in a land occupied a higher social stratum in Kilosa (Beidelman 1978). The firstcomers classified all ethnic groups that came later as outsiders. They had the authority to accept or reject the outsiders, and their land use, and established themselves as more entitled to village resources (Beidelman 1978). The Sagara was the first ethnic group to settle. Discussions with some elders revealed that the Sagara claimed political authority over land resources; latecomers had to recognise the Sagara's ritual authority over the land. The former village chairperson is affiliated to the Sagara. His ethnic

affiliation also ties him to powers of sorcery. In many Tanzanian societies, sorcery beliefs are profound and pervasive (Mesaki, 1993). In Kilosa, it is always assumed that pioneer settlers possess the strongest sorcery powers from ancestral ghosts, and a mystical connection with the land (Beidelman 1971). In addition, his wife is a *mganga wa kienyeji* (a local healer). Local healers are feared and believed to possess sorcery powers too, as they can cleanse someone from witchcraft (Mesaki 1993).

Following this history, the former chairperson created his own land allocation system in the open area forest. The system was illegal as it did not go through a village land committee and receive villagers' endorsement at the assembly, as the Village Land Act instructs. And it did not fall under the statutory/customary hybrid law (Locher 2016). The 48 farmers, all latecomers, obtained their lands<sup>5</sup> through the chairperson. One informant said that an allocation was made between the chairperson and a villager needing land; the chairperson used a village seal to stamp an allocation agreement on a piece of paper (interview, 18 August 2016). Several informants said that he used his ethnic affiliation and the attached powers to allocate land illegally and unchallenged. For villagers and village council's members who attempted to challenge him, he used 'threatening' words such as 'I will deal with you' and/or 'You cannot do anything to me'. The informants said that the words connoted threats of causing harm through sorcery. Knowing that witchcraft is an inherently endowed power to harm and a means of doing evil (Mesaki 1993), villagers and other village leaders remained submissive to the chairperson and his land allocation system, as an informant narrated (interview, 28 August 2016). Thus, all of these gave him structural power over land governance, the kind of power that adversely affects the 'beneficiaries' of the system, today under the SCP, as I illustrate in the following section.

### 5.3 *Farmers' perspectives on the conflict*

Several farmers signed the ban and removal letters, and others refused. On 15 August 2016, a special village inquiry was organised for the farmers who had refused to sign. During the inquiry, under pressure from the supervisory authority, one farmer signed the letter (participant observation, 15 August 2016). However, others still did not sign. In this section, I explain the farmers' logics in addition to the earlier concerns noted over the stated utilitarian benefit-sharing mechanism.

The farmers questioned the political process under which their removal was taking place. 'The VNRC has no authority to remove a villager from a land', one farmer lamented (interview, 23 August 2016). The farmers questioned the VNRC's authority over a villager's land occupancy. At the inquiry, when asked why they had not signed the notice, two farmers responded as follows:

*I have not signed the notice, because it has been prepared and written by the committee [the VNRC], which has no authority for removing a villager from anywhere. If the village council had written the notice, then I would have signed. (Farmer 1; participant observation, 15 August 2016)*

*The committee has written the eviction notice, even using its letterhead. But I got my land from the village government through the [former] village chairperson. So, if I sign this eviction notice, where will I go to claim my right? (Farmer 2; participant observation, 15 August 2016)*

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<sup>5</sup> These lands are located on the village's margins. In the view of the firstcomers, the lands were not fertile, were good for no more than one or two years of farming and required formidable labour to clear. Farming in such lands is completely rainfed. Firstcomers own valley gardens, which they cultivate even when there are no rains. So, for the firstcomers, lands in the open area forest has no economic significance. The latecomers lacked land, so they cultivated these.

When I asked one farmer why he had not signed the notice, he responded: 'I told them [the VNRC], you [the VNRC] do not have authority to remove me [from the land inside the now VLFR]. The village [former] chairperson has such authority, as he allocated the land to me' (interview, 23 August 2016).

The farmers did not accept the VNRC's authority over their land occupancy. In fact, the Forest Act, the national Community Based Forest Management guidelines, and the 1982 Local Government (District Authorities) Act, and even the VLUP vest all executive powers over village affairs and ownership of land resources to the village council on villagers' behalf (MNRT, 2007; URT, 2002; URT, 1982; UVC, 2012). Regarding forest management, the Forest Act notes that the VNRC works on the council's behalf (URT, 2002). The farmers doubted the VNRC's legal justification for the removal from village land, an aspect that falls under the council's authority. One farmer went further, even doubting the VNRC's legality in writing the notice, suggesting that its tenure was already over: 'Even the eviction notices that they [the VNRC] have provided are not valid' (interview, 23 August 2016). The tenure is three years; then new members must be elected. When asked about this, one VNRC leader noted that at that time the village had no leadership, as the village chairperson had been suspended because of corruption allegations over the well initiative. As a result, the village could not hold an election, as there was no village leadership to officially call for the village assembly. Yet it was true that the VNRC had exceeded its tenure limit.

Furthermore, the farmers questioned the fairness over the enforcement of forest management rules. At the special farmers' meeting, the farmers doubted the VNRC's fairness, citing how it failed to deal with the Maasai's livestock invasions in the VLFR (participant observation, 16 January 2017). Benjaminsen *et al.* (2009) note, as Maasai pastoralists are a minority in Kilosa, they compensate by bribing local officials. 'Put simply, herders have the wealth to bribe officials', Brockington (2005: 108) notes. However, it is difficult to find evidence for bribing activities (see Brockington 2005). Yet local narratives suggest that pastoralists sell their livestock for cash to bribe officials (participant observation, 16 January 2017). This creates what farmers call an 'unequal playing field', as they do not have quick access to cash as do pastoralists.

The farmers also reminded the VNRC and the broadly SCP about two earlier commitments: (a) that they could remain inside the VLFR as long as they did not clear new land; and (b) that they would receive land compensation. They thus questioned the fulfilment of the commitments. As noted in Section 5.1, the farmers were promised that it was possible to remain inside the reserve, as the greening initiative could take the forest patches that would cumulatively make up the VLFR, an informant noted (interview, 28 August 2016). Another informant said that they [the farmers] even raised this concern at the magistrates' court (interview, 23 August 2016). The compensation commitment was the more widely expressed. A total of 3,629 hectares of cultivation land were lost to the VLFR (see Table 5). Section 8(2) of the Village Land Act states that no village land shall be transferred until 'the type, amount, method, and timing of the payment of compensation has been agreed upon' (URT 1999: 30). There are three contextual aspects of interest here, which the farmers expressed.

The first concerns the 'legality' of their land ownership in the open area forest, and the transparency of the allocation process and its implications for eligibility to compensation. Section 6(a) of the Act stipulates that whenever there is a transfer and allocation of village land (<250 hectares) to a villager or a group of villagers, the village council shall inform the village assembly so it may approve or refuse the grant (URT 1999). However, as I noted earlier (Section 5.2), the village had an illegal land allocation system. A former village chairperson used his higher social stratum – as a 'first settler' – to run the system. It is the village land committee established under Section 8(4) of the Act and the assembly that are responsible to govern land allocations of <250 hectares in the village (URT, 1999). Nevertheless, the former chairperson allocated lands on his own. He took advantage of an influx of migrants into the village in the early- to mid-2000s, using the influx as a rent-seeking opportunity, and thus allocating farmlands and settlements inside the open area forest (now the VLFR), without following allocation

procedures, an informant narrated (interview, 25 August 2016). He provided no acceptable 'legal' documentation to prove the land occupancies of his victims – the evicted farmers and settlers. Another informant recounted that the allocation process was not transparent, as the chairperson never disclosed the allocations to the land committee, council or assembly (interview, 28 August 2016).

Greco (2016) claims that this tendency is common with individuals from village governments in rural Tanzania. She links the tendency to practices of petty corruption. However, in this case, there was lack of free deliberation over land governance. This resulted from the chairperson's structural power over land governance, which was based on his ethnic affiliation and perceived powers of sorcery. Most villagers were afraid to speak out against his abuses of power and petty corruption to avoid retaliation. Several informants said that this fear prevented many villagers from raising their concerns in decision-making arenas. As a result, when the VNRC told the farmers that only those with land obtained legally would be eligible for compensation, the farmers knew they would not be compensated, as nobody had ever received land following formal statutory or customary procedures (interview, 28 August 2016).

Second, the farmers were unhappy with the procedural process for land compensation that the VNRC proposed. One VNRC leader noted that, out of sympathy (as they knew that the farmers had no legal documentation for their occupancies), the VNRC and the village leadership agreed to compensate one hectare of land to each evicted farmer (interview, 28 August 2016). However, at the special farmers' meeting, I learned that the village proposed the one-hectare plan for all villagers – i.e. it was not specific to the evicted farmers – as a way to ensure younger villagers could get lands for settlement and cultivation (participant observation, 16 January 2017). At the meeting, several farmers lamented that even if the VNRC's plan included them, it was unfair, as many had occupied lands of more than one hectare – some had more than 20 hectares of land in the forest. Fair and full compensation is one of the fundamental principles of the national land policy (URT 1999). In addition, they said that compensation procedures were not followed. Land compensation takes place through the Land Acquisition Act of 1967, regulated by the Land (Assessment of the Value of Land for Compensation) Regulations of 2001. Section 14 of the Act stipulates that land must be assessed before compensation is granted; compensation shall be granted for land of equal market value with the consent of the person entitled to compensation (URT 1967). And only a qualified land valuer shall conduct the assessment, factoring in disturbance allowance, transport allowance, accommodation allowance and loss of profits (URT 2001). These procedures did not take place and the farmers were not individually informed about compensation.

Third, the farmers distrusted the VNRC over the physical availability of land for compensation. One evicted farmer, who used to be in a village committee, knew that the commitment would not materialise (interview, 27 August 2016). The farmer said that he knew that during the village land use planning stage, no land had been reserved for future uses, i.e. there was no spare land. At the FGD with members of the VLUMC, I learned that there was an oversight regarding the spare land. 'There is no spare land. Therefore, for the next generation there would be hardships in the availability of farm fields', a discussant noted (FGD, 11 August 2016). In attempt to resolve this and compensate the farmers, the VLUMC proposed to take a forest area that was allocated for firewood collection. The farmers and other villagers saw the proposal as problematic as firewood is 'the single most valuable forest product' in rural Kilosa (Dokken and Angelsen 2015: 205). Removal of the firewood collection unit to create space for land compensation would thus result in other episodes of injustice.

Finally, the farmers expressed their concerns over the political process that the VNRC followed to resolve the conflict. When the farmers rejected the written notices, the VNRC went back to the court several times. Some farmers were called and expressed their grievances over compensation and how the VNRC had failed to fulfil its initial promises and commitments. The magistrate then gave a preliminary order that the eviction and its measures should be discussed and decided at the village assembly, and the court would use the assembly's decision to make a ruling, an informant noted

(interview, 23 August 2016). As the supreme authority on all matters of general policy-making and affairs in the village, the farmers saw the assembly as a space for high-quality deliberation on the conflict. As one of the VNRC's witnesses, the current village chairperson was ordered to convene an extraordinary village assembly. Section 103(3) of the Local Government Act allows an extraordinary assembly to be convened to 'discuss and decide upon any matter of extraordinary public importance' (URT 1982: 44). However, the chairperson did not convene the assembly. 'The [current] village chairperson was also present [at the Court] and he rejected to convene the assembly for an issue that villagers had already agreed since 2012/13', one VNRC member said (interview, 28 August 2016). Instead, the VNRC – with village leadership – summoned the farmers who had rejected the notices. At the inquiry, a farmer, when asked why he had not signed the notice, responded: 'I cannot sign because our case is still in the Court. So, I am waiting for the Court ruling' (participant observation, 15 August 2016). Another farmer lamented: 'I remember being at the Court four times. And what I know is that the Court has not made a ruling. So, why do you summon me at the village office for the matter that is still to be decided at the Court?' (participant observation, 15 August 2016).

'We [the farmers] want the committee [the VNRC] and village to adhere to the Court's order', one farmer said (interview, 23 August 2016). The farmers wanted fresh deliberation over the project implementation, believing that issues such as initial project promises, the previous land occupancy system, the VNRC's authority, land compensation and benefits distribution require villagers' appraisal, as several farmers said at their meeting. They wanted their concerns and needs to be recognised in the project implementation. For instance, as the VLUP had not set aside spare land, the farmers demanded their land claims be legitimised in hopes of changing the VLUP to provide land for them (interview, 23 August 2016). At the meeting, there was a belief that, as the supreme political authority, the assembly would overrule the eviction notices or at least change the VLUP to create space for land compensation, as some villagers were disappointed with initial project expectations and perceived that there was an unfair distribution of benefits (participant observation, 16 January 2017).

## 6 Discussion and conclusions: in pursuit of multidimensional justice

In this charcoal greening project, people express different notions and claims about justice. The project thus highlights a complex mix of interconnected dimensions of justice. There is a primacy of the distributive dimension among charcoal producers, VNRC members and members of the village council. The centrality of the dimension among local officials is well-documented in justice research that uses empirical approaches (e.g. He and Sikor 2015). Often this group receives greening and conservation education from TFCG officials, emphasising the project's goals of producing charcoal sustainably, conserving forest resources, generating revenues for the village and sharing benefits collectively. The education provided promotes the notion of societal greater good, and disregards risks and costs associated with the project implementation to individuals. This group's justice concern is entrenched in how the SCP galvanises village development, a common distributive justice notion among officials in conservation interventions (He and Sikor, 2015). Influenced by the initial project expectations and promises, villagers who had no land occupancies in the open area forest also express similar distributive concerns. Their goal of avoiding coercive development levies, overcoming poverty and improving their living standards produce a focus on distributive matters. Thus, their initial overriding concern for distributive justice has led them to support the project. This is common in conservation interventions that prioritise utilitarian distributive justice conception (e.g. He and Sikor 2015; Fisher *et al.* 2018).

On the other hand, villagers who had *makazi mashamba* and farmlands (farmers) in the old open area forest, now the VLFR, frequently raise matters of contextual, procedural and recognitional justice – for instance, by demanding consideration of the preceding land allocation system that provided them with land occupancies in the forest, respect of their needs for land compensation, and a fresh deliberation

over the project implementation. Unlike the above group, this group associates their distributive justice with concerns over the other dimensions of justice. I argue that the over-promotion of economic dimensions should not occur at the expense of the other justice dimensions, as I discuss below.

The farmers want their needs be recognised in the SCP implementation. Zafra-Calvo *et al.* (2017) note that recognition is often demanded when some people feel inferior, excluded and invisible. It is associated with acknowledgement and respect for differences in values and interests (Dawson *et al.* 2018). The farmers assume that recognition of their needs would facilitate their distributive justice, considering that the utilitarian distributive logic adopted by the project and VNRC is not materialising as most villagers expected. They see the logic as unfolding unfairly since they perceive that only charcoal producers and members of the VNRC get bigger shares. They demand equity in the distribution of costs and benefits, a common claim wherever there is primacy of the distributive dimension (e.g. Fisher *et al.* 2018). They are also troubled with how the VNRC fails to deal with other forms of forest 'encroachments' and 'invasions', such as livestock grazing inside the VLFR. Zafra-Calvo *et al.* (2017) note that perceptions over how conservation impacts are shared among social groups are one of the qualitative indicators for understanding recognition. Here the farmers' concern is over how their socio-economic statuses – they are unable to gain quick access to cash like pastoralists – deny them equitable resource access, another common concern in distributive dimension (e.g. Fisher *et al.* 2018). In consequence, they want the system through which they acquired land in the now VLFR be recognised and legitimised, hoping that such a process would form a path for changes in the VLUP that would provide them with security of tenure. Through this they would avoid being put in a more disadvantageous position that the ban and removal notices had put them.

Their appeal for compensation conveys concerns over prior unequal power relations and mitigation to a conservation cost. They are distressed that the VNRC and village leadership brush aside pre-existing land governance, which was centred on powers of a former village chairperson, and that the VNRC uses the utilitarian distributive justice to dismiss their demands. Their compensation demands expose the unfair sharing of conservation burdens that the greening initiative has brought to individuals, as the initiative stresses collective benefits. Compensation is thus their mechanism to claim equity in both resource access and the distribution of the costs of greening charcoal. In empirical approaches to environmental justice, compensation is documented as an effort to mitigate the costs and losses that conservation initiatives bring (e.g. He and Sikor 2015). However, as an agent of the utilitarian distributive logic, the VNRC disregards prior power dynamics that shape individuals' capabilities to contest poor land governance. The former village chairperson's perceived 'higher' social status as a first-comer and husband of a local healer – feared to possess sorcery powers that can harm individuals (Mesaki 1993) – deters farmers' efforts to hold him accountable.

Furthermore, the farmers raise matters of procedural justice in the project. They hold the VNRC accountable for the eviction, poor dispute resolution process and failure to fulfil initial commitments. These are some of the elements that define procedural justice (see Table 1). The farmers exhibit strong concerns over the initial promise that they could remain in the forest, and how the VNRC and the project have failed to fulfil it. Failure to fulfil institutional commitments is a qualitative indicator for lack of procedural justice (Dawson *et al.* 2017). The farmers assume that if the SCP officials talked about having accumulated forest patches to make the VLFR, then it is possible to have cultivation amid *Miombo* conservation. Chidumayo (2017) shows that *Miombo* woodlands are products of successive cycles of cutting, clearing and burning for cultivation and livestock grazing over thousands of years. Besides, recent research confirms their assumption, as Wintle *et al.* (2019) shows that even small patches of natural habitat play a vital role in conservation. Moreover, the farmers are concerned with the refusal to convene an extraordinary village assembly, as the court instructed. In Tanzanian village land politics, the assembly is a political platform for full and effective participation and the deliberation of all relevant actors in decision-making (Greco 2016). Their dissatisfaction with how the VNRC and village leadership ignore the court's decision to grant the assembly authority to deliberate over the conflict creates



discontent over how decision-making unfolds, an indicator of inequitable procedural justice (Zafra-Calvo *et al.*, 2017).

This analysis goes further than discussing overlapping notions of justice (e.g. He and Sikor 2015) or interrelations of the notions (e.g. Fisher *et al.* 2018) to highlight that social justice in rural areas is a complex mix of poor governance and variegated responses to conservation initiatives due to locally changing justice claims and notions. Thus, the disregard by the project and the VNRC of the preceding land allocation system and the former chairperson's abuse of power highlights the importance of context. Its illegality presents a situation where victims of his abuse, i.e. the farmers, cannot claim legal land occupation on either statutory or customary bases. Recent reviews of PES literature show that contextual factors such as prior governance compliance, property rights regime, inequalities and resource struggles matter in determining the outcomes of PES interventions (Börner *et al.* 2017). For the green economy interventions that target environmental resources for efficient use in sustainable production, attention to past and present social, governance and cultural contexts, power imbalances and variegated capabilities of individuals to participate and influence decisions, is therefore fundamental.

These findings are in line with Martin (2017): attaining equitable conservation interventions is more than just considering livelihood benefits and the greater societal good as crucial. This narrow utilitarian conception produces a partial understanding of conservation impacts that are locally valued or contested. It also precludes a clear understanding of substantive justice considerations and the multifaceted relations within societies and between people and natural resources, thus concealing forms of injustices that are not expressed in economic terms (Schlosberg 2007; Walker 2010). Like other critical analysts, I do not disregard livelihood benefits and related distributive concerns. I rather emphasise that livelihood benefits alone cannot influence socially just conservation, as the benefits and their distributive patterns should be thoroughly understood in relation to other locally valued interests of fair capability, procedure and recognition. My analysis of the SCP's conservation–farming conflict therefore underlines how the project's utilitarian distributive justice concerns contradict some local contexts and justice claims, leading to farmers' removal (with several rejecting removal notices) and their covert resistance to the project. Despite social justice and consideration of critical livelihoods being key features of the 'green economy' discourse (UNEP 2011), in practice, its aligned interventions repeat the tendencies of reproducing social injustices for the greater good, like the older ICDP approaches. By sticking with the one-dimensional utilitarian distributive conception, the green economy agenda thus offers little insight into the way in which concerns for locally valued interests and aspirations for fair procedure and recognition would produce socially just conservation.

Broadly, I have accentuated the analytical value of the multidimensional justice framework in understanding the evolutions of resource use conflicts and how to resolve them by paying particular attention to pluralistic conceptions of what matters and what does not to rural people. I argue that conflicts arising in the implementation of conservation interventions result from differences in justice notions. I highlight social injustices that might prevail in Tanzanian villages containing unreserved forests on village lands, i.e. open area forests, as many villagers still lack planned land uses (Huggins 2018). These areas offer spare lands for future communal and individual uses, bringing them in conflict with the green economy agenda that puts forest protection at the heart of the agenda. This makes attention to understanding people's justice claims and notions, and to prior historical and cultural contexts of resource use and governance, essential. I thus argue that considering people's multiple justice expressions, in relation to past and present uneven socio-cultural and political conditions, exposes locally valued and contested conservation impacts. It is about illustrating how different individuals and groups experience justice and argue their own justice claims as individuals or collectively. This approach allows for richer understandings of their responses to the green economy-aligned conservation interventions and their outcomes. In practice, these understandings can guide more equitable and just

conservation, especially as the interventions increasingly target environmental resources critical for rural livelihoods.

## Appendix A: List of participants and methods

No.	Type of participant	Method	Date	Place of participation
1	District forest official	Expert interview	30.05.2016	Kilosa
2	SCP project official	Expert interview	31.05.2016	Kilosa
3	Sub-village chairmen	FGD	09.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
4	VNRC	FGD	10.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
5	Charcoal producers' association	FGD	10.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
6	VLUMC	FGD	11.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
7	Ordinary villager, elderly male	Informant interview	12.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
8	Ordinary villager, elderly male	Informant interview	12.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
9	Ordinary villager, youth male	Informant interview	13.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
10	Ordinary villager, adult female	Informant interview	13.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
11	Ordinary villager, elderly	Informant interview	13.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
12	Ordinary villager, adult female	Informant interview	13.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
13	Special village inquiry meeting	Job shadowing	15.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
14	Ordinary villager, elderly female	Informant interview	15.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
15	Ordinary villager, elderly male	Informant interview	15.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
16	Project's workshop with charcoal makers	Participant observation	16.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
17	Ordinary villager, elderly male	Informant interview	16.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
18	Former village leader/charcoal maker	Informant interview	17.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
19	Ordinary villager, adult male	Informant interview	17.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
20	Ordinary villager, adult male	Informant interview	17.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
21	Ordinary villager, adult female	Informant interview	17.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
22	Village leader	Informant interview	18.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni

23	Ordinary villager, adult male	Informant interview	18.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
24	Allocation of charcoal plots	Job shadowing	20.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
25	Village leader	Informant interview	22.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
26	Village leader	Informant interview	22.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
27	Ordinary villager, adult male	Informant interview	22.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
28	Former VNRC member	Informant interview	23.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
29	VNRC member	Informant interview	23.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
30	Ordinary villager, adult male	Informant interview	24.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
31	VLUMC member	Informant interview	24.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
32	Former forest officer	Informant interview	25.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
33	VNRC member	Informant interview	25.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
34	Suspended village leader	Informant interview	25.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
35	Charcoal maker	Informant interview	26.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
36	Village leader	Informant interview	26.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
37	Village leader	Informant interview	26.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
38	Former VNRC/charcoal maker	Informant interview	27.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
39	Charcoal maker	Informant interview	27.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
40	VNRC member	Informant interview	28.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
41	VLUMC member/charcoal maker	Informant interview	28.08.2016	Ulaya Mbuyuni
42	SCP technical adviser	Expert interview	06.09.2016	Dar es Salaam
43	SDC official	Expert interview	07.09.2016	Dar es Salaam
44	Internal farmers' committee meeting	Participant observation	16.01.2017	Ulaya Mbuyuni

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# Green transformations, charcoal and social justice in rural east-central Tanzania

## STEPS Working Paper 112

Over the last 30 years, Tanzania has taken different policy approaches towards the conservation of forests. Intriguingly, from the earlier integrated conservation and development approach to the 'newer' green economy, the idea that providing livelihood benefits is a key strategy for achieving conservation effectiveness has dominated. This one-dimensional conception of what 'local people' value and why precludes a clear understanding of substantive social justice considerations – what is being contested, why and by whom – when conflicts arise in policy implementation settings. Using a green economy project that addresses charcoal-driven forest loss in Kilosa, the paper examines a conflict between forest conservation and farming, and studies the variegated notions of justice that farmers express in relation to the conflict.

This paper builds upon a developing strand in the political ecology literature, that of empirical analyses of rural people's conceptions of justice in environmental conservation, to demonstrate the analytical and practical values of a multidimensional justice framework. Its main contribution lies in illustrating how the framework can help to assess and reframe environmental interventions, going beyond one-dimensional conceptions, to focus attention on the diverse ways in which justice can be recognised or denied, at different levels and in different ways, for different groups of people. Particularly, it highlights that context matters, as despite the distributional 'success' of the project, disregarded concerns over procedural dimensions and the recognition of justice led to farmer evictions, covert resistance and continued struggles over land compensation. This paper therefore underlines that being attentive to a range of justice dimensions can reveal locally valued and contested aspects of conservation, and can guide more equitable and more just environmental conservation.

