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Integrating multiple benefits in market-based climate mitigation schemes: The case of the Climate, Community and Biodiversity certification scheme

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) certification scheme with a particular focus on its aim to deliver multiple benefits and contribute not only to climate mitigation but also to biodiversity conservation and socio-economic development. To that end, the article analyses the main storylines underpinning the CCB scheme. Our findings suggest that although the scheme is informed by notions of participation and poverty alleviation, it is dominated by a market orientation that focuses on trading environmental services, and by a technocratic logic that focuses on scientific standards to enable monitoring, centralized control and marketing. Drawing on these findings we argue that the dominance of market-based and technocratic storylines potentially threatens the capacity of the Climate Community and Biodiversity certification scheme to deliver multiple benefits in practice. The paper concludes by arguing for the importance of a more balanced debate about multiple benefits in climate mitigation projects.

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1. Introduction: climate change, forests, and sustainable development

Global climate change is at the fore of contemporary debate on global environmental change. The current understanding of climate change was initially shaped from 1985 to 1992 on the basis of scientific analysis of the greenhouse effect, in particular the first assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),

and in response to the emerging need for a wide range of environmental-protection and greenhouse gas emission control policies (Cohen et al., 1998; Hulme, 2008). Nowadays, the climate debate is closely linked to forestry and forest conservation. Combating deforestation, conserving forests and reforestation are seen as important climate mitigation strategies.

Recently, the role of forests in climate mitigation has been given a much broader scope. Delegates at the Conference of Parties (COP) 15 (2009) and COP 16 (2010) of the United

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Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) discussed the inclusion of multiple benefits, including climate change mitigation, biodiversity, and social and economic benefits, in the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation mechanism (REDD+). However, the simultaneous achievement of such benefits is no simple matter. The debate about land-based climate change mitigation recognizes the possible negative implications of climate mitigation for issues such as poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation, and the potential trade-offs between them (Putz and Redford, 2009). Indeed, afforestation–reafforestation projects carried out under the UNFCCC's Clean Development Mechanism have been criticized for failing to achieve broader sustainable development goals (Boyd et al., 2009; Olsen, 2007). In practice, the emphasis on the efficient delivery of climate mitigation objectives has often favoured centralized neoliberal schemes and technocratic processes (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2006; Cohen et al., 1998) at the expense of social benefits such as poverty alleviation (McAfee and Shapiro, 2010). These criticisms suggest that globalized, technocratic and market-based strategies are potentially incompatible with achieving social benefits in practice. While these incompatibilities and problems are now recognised, it is unclear to what extent they have impacted upon climate mitigation governance and practice (Bäckstrand and Lövbrand, 2006; McAfee, 2012). It is thus critical to investigate how land based climate mitigation projects and schemes try to achieve multiple benefits, and in particular, how they incorporate social benefits. Such an analysis is relevant given that a possible post-2012 UNFCCC agreement is likely to include, and further elaborate, REDD+.

This paper focuses on the Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) certification scheme. This particular scheme is relevant for the purpose of the paper because it contains standards, criteria and indicators for climate, community and biodiversity benefits (Kollmuss et al., 2008; Putz and Redford, 2009; Streck and Scholz, 2006). Moreover, as a global market-based certification scheme, the CCB scheme can be expected to face similar tensions and incompatibilities to those discussed above. The CCB certification scheme was launched in 2003 by the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) as a global partnership. This alliance devised the CCB Standards, which are considered to be among the more advanced in terms of including multiple benefits and sustainability aspects. They include a set of environmental, ecological and economic sustainability criteria and indicators grouped around three main elements: climate, community and biodiversity. The CCB Standards are used to evaluate projects in the design or early implementation stage in order to assess whether they merit approval. The evaluation is carried by a third party (such as the Rainforest Alliance, the Technischer Überwachungs Verein (TÜV), or Scientific Certification Systems (SCS)). In 2010, the CCB Standards certified the second-largest volume of carbon credits in the voluntary market (most of them tied to the Voluntary Carbon Standard) (Peters-Stanley et al., 2011). Using discourse analysis, we have analysed several CCB documents to investigate how they frame climate change mitigation and how they hope to achieve multiple benefits in practice.

2. Analysing the CCB certification scheme: a discursive approach

This article uses a Foucauldian discursive approach (Sharp and Richardson, 2001). The central argument of discourse theorists is that language does not simply represent empirical phenomena but – by giving meaning to them – actively creates these phenomena and shapes the ways in which we understand, interpret and act upon them (Gottweis, 2003; Paul, 2009; Wetherell et al., 2001). Hajer (2006) (p.77), emphasizes the political importance of discourse as follows: 'Language has the capacity to make politics, to create signs and symbols that can shift power-balances and that can impact on institutions and policy making' (Hajer, 2006, p.67). Discourse is understood here in a broad sense as 'the ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices' (Hajer, 2006, p.67).

Current international debates about climate change are shaped by different, often conflicting but also partly overlapping environmental, discourses (den Besten et al., 2014). Authors such as Dryzek (1997), Hajer (1995) and Grist (2008) have traced how discourses of sustainability, neoliberalism and ecological modernization have emerged, arguing that these discourses have come to structure global environmental governance. They have also shown how each of these discourses promotes specific conceptualizations of environmental problems, including on the causes of these problems (which are framed as lack of knowledge, imperfect markets, state failure, injustice and uneven development) and on their solutions (which are cast as improved technical knowledge, global control, more efficient markets and participation). Hajer (1995, 2006) calls these specific articulations of problems and their causes and solutions storylines. Storylines are condensed forms of narrative used by people as 'shorthand' in discussions. As such, storylines can be seen as the discursive elements that make up a discourse and which can be assessed in texts or speeches.

In this paper, we identify the storylines used in the CCB certification scheme and how they are connected. This enables an understanding of how the CCB scheme presents itself as a climate change mitigation strategy and how it envisions benefiting communities. For the purpose of our analysis we identify four main storylines: marketization, technocratization, participation and poverty alleviation. Although the climate governance literature does not have a commonly accepted typology of climate discourses and storylines, these storylines have been identified as important discursive elements of the climate governance debate. By analysing the presence of and connections between marketization and technocratization on the one hand and participation and poverty alleviation on the other, we are able to identify how a global market based certification system like the CCB incorporates social benefits. We now briefly introduce the four storylines.

1. The marketization storyline promotes market-based approaches to solve the problem of climate change and

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