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1 Article

2 Norm entrepreneurs sidestep REDD+ in pursuit of 3 just and sustainable forest governance—

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14 **Abstract:** This paper explores the dissonance between conceptions of justice among forest-adjacent
15 communities and their representation in global forest policies, a persistent barrier to delivering just
16 sustainability. We empirically track justice claims of rural villagers upwards through specific
17 intermediaries or ‘justice brokers’: civil society, state, or private sector actors operating at local to
18 international levels, who navigate different institutions to advance various social and ecological
19 interests. We draw on interviews with 16 intermediaries in each of Nepal and Uganda and find that
20 recognition of local values and practices such as customary tenure systems are key justice concerns
21 of forest-adjacent communities in each country. However, intermediaries perceive a low likelihood
22 of advancing those claims through national or international climate and forest policy debates, in
23 large part because deliberations on justice are subordinated to concerns such as carbon accounting
24 and arrangements for distributing monetary benefits. This suggests these policy processes must be
25 modified to offer potential for transformational pathways. Intermediaries who pursued recognition
26 justice issues developed innovative tactics in alternative forums. These ‘norm entrepreneurs’
27 adopted a suite of complementary strategies to attain influence, including: 1) formation of
28 associations at the grassroots level; 2) media and advocacy campaigns through national coalitions
29 to reach powerful international donors, and; 3) drawing on international support networks for
30 advice, training and to influence national government. In both Uganda and Nepal these strategies
31 were evidenced to enhance recognition for local values and practices.

32 **Keywords:** Climate change; REDD+; power; environmental justice; participation; environmental
33 policy; politics of scale; customary land tenure; indigenous peoples; cultural values

35 1. Introduction

36 A persistent disconnect exists between representations of justice, or equity, in global
37 environmental governance and the type of justice (‘social’, ‘environmental’ or ‘climate justice’)
38 sought by local communities and affected groups [1-5]. While some consider this perceived
39 dissonance to represent an implementation gap that may be closed through capacity building to
40 enhance social and ecological sustainability, others point to a ‘justice gap’ - ideological differences
41 between local justice concerns and the more constrained set of social objectives reflected in global
42 policy [6-10]. If local communities deem environmental management to be unjust, the implications
43 go beyond moral imperatives, i.e. protection of human rights, because these perceptions may also
44 result in contestation or undermining of projects, limiting the likelihood that they effectively

45 conserve ecosystems [11,12]. These links between social and environmental dimensions have long
 46 been acknowledged in sustainability science [13-15], such that the governance processes and power
 47 relations through which sustainability policies are determined at different scales have been
 48 highlighted as a key area for the generation of evidence to inform transformations to a more just
 49 sustainability [16-19]. It is increasingly important to acknowledge and close this justice gap due to
 50 the proliferation and accelerated implementation of globally-devised environmental governance
 51 impacting forest-dependent communities, including most recently the Sustainable Development
 52 Goals (e.g. SDG13 on climate and SDG15 on terrestrial habitats), and the Paris Agreement (e.g.
 53 Article 5 relating to forest conservation) [20,21].

54 A common source of contention for local communities regarding environmental management,
 55 particularly cultural minorities and Indigenous Peoples, is *lack of recognition* of their worldviews,
 56 identities, values, place attachments and practices in policy design and decision-making processes
 57 [22-25]. Significantly for forest governance, concerns often include values and practices pertaining to
 58 customary and communal tenure governing access to and use of land, places and resources.
 59 Recognition is considered one of three interrelated dimensions of environmental justice: the
 60 distribution of costs and benefits, the procedures through which decisions are made, and the
 61 recognition of different identities, values and practices in those processes and outcomes [26].
 62 However, prominent justice theorists have emphasized the centrality of recognition among the other
 63 dimensions, suggesting any attempts to promote fairer distribution of costs and benefits or to
 64 enhance participation in decision-making procedures may be meaningless if recognition of the
 65 fundamental differences in values between groups is lacking [27,28]. The crucial implication is that if
 66 policies or programs with social and environmental objectives are implemented without due regard
 67 to prominent recognition concerns, then they will create or reproduce injustices harming sections of
 68 local communities that may in turn lead to weak support and undermine both social and ecological
 69 outcomes [22]. Distinction between norms relating to different dimensions of justice (distribution,
 70 procedure and recognition) and the processes and interactions leading to their asymmetric
 71 representation in policy may therefore be ~~critical crucial~~ for assessing the justice gap between policy
 72 and local perspectives.

73 In this article, we explore the perceptions of intermediaries regarding their role in mobilising
 74 justice-related norms upwards from the local level, and the opportunities and barriers they face in
 75 doing so in different forums. Intermediaries are defined here as actors and institutions facilitating
 76 cross-scale communications amongst diverse actors on the identification, mobilisation and
 77 representation of justice-related norms. We concentrate specifically on normsthese relating to
 78 recognition of different values and practices held by communities living alongside forests in Uganda
 79 and Nepal. Our methodology, described in detail below, focuses on questions of which norms
 80 'travel' between local contexts and national policy arenas and how that travel is facilitated or
 81 constrained, a growing approach to explore the politics of scale [29,30]. Alternative conceptual
 82 approaches may emphasize the nature of participation and representation, affording greater
 83 attention to the mechanisms of governance for a specific policy process [31,32]. Intermediaries are
 84 ~~defined here as actors and institutions facilitating cross-scale communications amongst diverse~~
 85 ~~actors on the identification, mobilisation and representation of justice-related norms.~~ Nepal and
 86 Uganda were selected due to the importance of natural resources to their socially-diverse rural
 87 populations and, despite their contrasting political contexts, the current prominence of political
 88 debate surrounding land and forest governance in each. In the following section, we review
 89 literature on factors that may impede the travel or diffusion of norms from local to national and
 90 international levels and the characteristics of and actions employed by intermediaries who seek to
 91 mobilise local justice issues, with emphasis on recognition of ~~culturaltheir~~ values and practices.
 92 Through interviews with a variety of intermediaries operating at various levels, we then detail the
 93 attempts of intermediaries in Nepal and Uganda to navigate the political space to promote
 94 recognition-based norms. We characterise the strategies, actions taken and forums engaged in by
 95 those brokers of justice to influence policy, from the local level through to international policy
 96 negotiations, and describe some of the barriers to effective mobilisation of prominent local issues.

97 We pay specific attention to the intermediaries' perceptions of and engagement in REDD+ (Reducing
 98 Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, including conservation, sustainable
 99 management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks) and climate policy forums to reveal
 100 the multiple barriers and deficiencies within those processes in Nepal and Uganda, meaning they
 101 fail to offer a platform to negotiate diverse values or provide opportunities to advance rights and
 102 justice for local communities. We detail the alternative strategies that some norm entrepreneurs
 103 among the intermediaries pursue to advance recognition and shape transformative pathways of
 104 change.

105

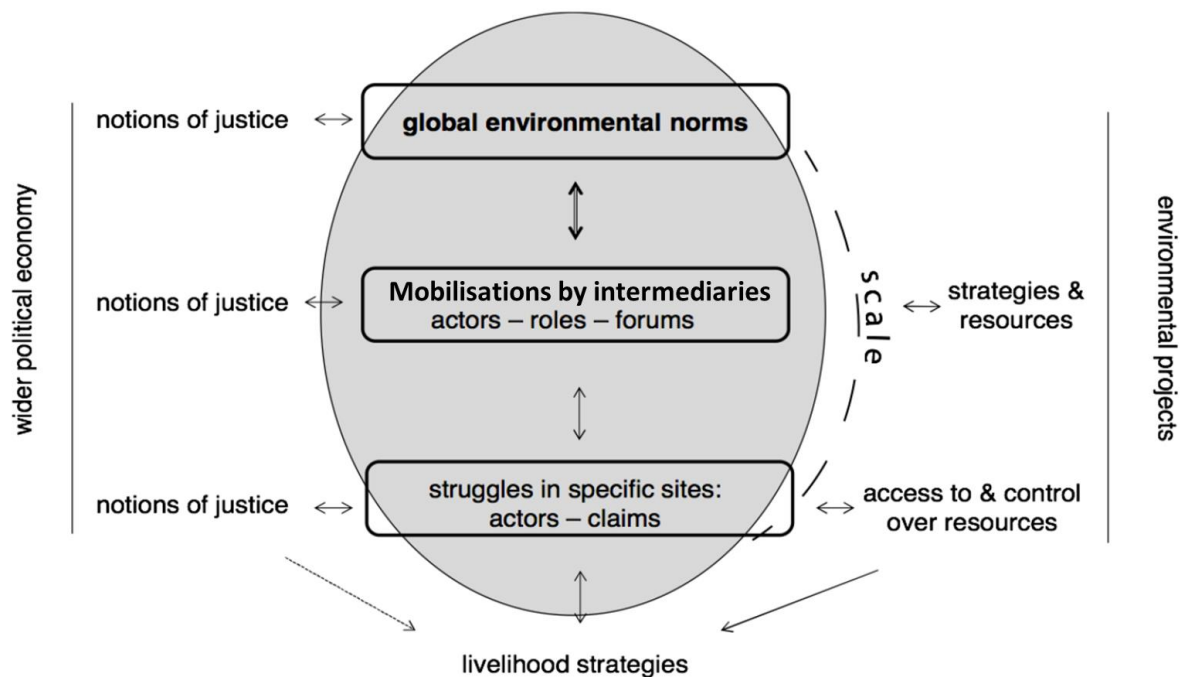
106 1.1 Conceptualising norm travel

107 As a well-functioning, inclusive and just policy process, global climate and forest governance
 108 would incorporate the diverse justice-related norms of remote local communities and any
 109 marginalised or vulnerable groups among them [33,34]. Justice-related norms represent shared
 110 understandings or commonly-held standards of how things should be and how things should be
 111 done [26]. Those norms can be diverse, complex and dynamic and are not simply diffused upwards
 112 or downwards between policymakers and local communities. Rather, for the justice-related norms to
 113 effectively travel from local level to national or even international levels, they must be
 114 acknowledged, mobilised and (re)presented in dynamic policy debates [29]. This brings to the fore
 115 the role of intermediaries (otherwise termed justice brokers), comprising state, private sector and
 116 civil society actors and institutions who operate across levels to mobilise local struggles for justice
 117 and to represent local issues and perspectives in different forums, comprising both formal and
 118 informal interactions and decision-making negotiations at various levels to ensure local norms
 119 effectively inform policies [Figure 1, 30,35,36-38].

120

121 Figure 1. A conceptual framework for the travel of norms between local and global levels

122



123

124

125 Intermediaries may range from those who follow or accept dominant norms, to activists and
 126 proponents of struggles who more actively seek to influence through advocacy, adaptation and
 127 effecting normative change. Numerous terms have been used to describe them and their work,
 128 including: imagineers, 'grassrooting vectors' [39], charismatic individuals or norm entrepreneurs
 129 [35]; we adopt here the latter term. In the face of barriers to facilitating norm travel, the 'politics
 130 of scale' becomes critical as intermediaries make choices about the norms they choose to mobilise, and

131 which they prioritise to articulate their concerns and make gains, the types of forums they seek to
132 influence and the other actors they interact and cooperate with, for both their own personal and
133 organisational objectives as well as those they seek to represent [40-42]. Yet the role of norm
134 entrepreneurs has received limited scholarly attention or empirical study within the wider norm
135 travel literature [30,43]. To account for the practices of these intermediaries, we therefore draw on
136 related research on 'boundary work' in sustainable development, notably the interface between
137 multiple sources of knowledge and multiple decision-making settings [44-46].

138 We view norms as dynamic and subject to continual negotiation such that, through
139 intermediaries, new ones may emerge, evolve, be revised or stagnate [47]. To collaboratively
140 promote the uptake of justice-related norms, intermediaries may share visions and responsibilities
141 and connect strategies [35] to form coalitions of interest [40], temporary 'assemblages' [41] or
142 transnational advocacy networks [48]. The forums they engage in are not restricted to formal policy
143 processes but can also include various media, public protest and informal processes involving
144 bargaining and lobbying where moments of influence may be realised as much as in formal arenas
145 [49]. To further their norm promotion, intermediaries may move horizontally between different
146 policy sectors, issues and arenas, and vertically across governance levels [50]. For example,
147 Indigenous Peoples representatives successfully introduced human rights arguments into climate
148 negotiations to attain greater policy acknowledgement [51]. In the face of national political
149 constraints, some civil society intermediaries bypass national policy forums to engage with more
150 progressive international networks such that those norms may then produce a subsequently greater
151 influence or political pressure on domestic debates, which has been termed a 'boomerang effect' [52].
152

153 | **1.2 Barriers to effective mobilisation and upward travel of justice-related norms**

154 Norms relating to all dimensions of justice have gained increasing importance, both spreading
155 globally and vertically to all levels in global environmental governance [26]. Yet there are reasons to
156 expect barriers to the effective upward travel ('governance uptake', in policy terms) of local norms.
157 Notably, at national and subnational level, there may be considerable political constraints to voicing
158 and mobilising certain notions of justice that go against dominant ways of thinking. For instance, in
159 many countries indigeneity is not formally recognised and therefore articulating mobilisations in
160 terms of recognition of rights for indigenous groups can have little impact or even result in
161 repressive measures [53]. Research on boundary work for sustainable management of natural
162 resources in developing countries has shown the asymmetric power relations often faced in the
163 valuation of indigenous and other local knowledge, which include the failure fully to recognise
164 normative claims about whose interests international biodiversity assessments and governance
165 serve [44,45]. The political negotiation of multiple sources of environmental knowledge with
166 multiple decision-making settings, as in REDD+, represents the most complex cases for
167 institutionalising the equitable treatment of alternative values regarding how things should be and
168 should be done [46].

169 Within climate and forest governance, key norms that reflect the three dimensions of
170 environmental justice include respect for the knowledge and rights of local communities and
171 Indigenous Peoples (covering recognition), principles related to full and effective participation and
172 free, prior and informed consent (related to procedure), and norms around equitable benefit sharing
173 (related to distribution) [54-56]. However, power relations guiding policy processes determine that
174 discourses emphasizing market-based ecological modernisation as solutions to complex
175 social-ecological problems tend to dominate, such that questions of human rights and respect for the
176 values and practices of cultural minorities remain lower down the hierarchy of norms [57,58].
177 Market-oriented approaches to environmental (and social) problems can include attention to
178 recognition issues, but have been evidenced to privilege ideals of economic efficiency while
179 alternative values, experiences, and potential forms of governance based on those values are
180 overlooked, subordinated or diluted such that outcomes and modes of governance fall short of the
181 type of justice sought by many local communities worldwide [6,7]. Issues of gender, claims of
182 indigeneity and rights over land and forest resources tend to be subordinated to or form part of

183 broader distributive framings relating to, for example, capacity building funds rather than being
184 fully debated as separate issues [59,60]. Technocratic arguments and approaches to delivering equity
185 through fulfilling safeguard principles tend to overshadow attempts to make global forest
186 governance more inclusive, and the knowledge, values and practices of marginal groups remain
187 unrealised [61-64]. Consequently, social safeguards associated with climate-related governance
188 represent weak interpretations of recognition-based norms, representing a “do no harm” principle
189 rather than facilitating specific debate about the nuances and different perspectives on these
190 disaggregated impacts and how to promote progressive realisation of human rights [65], and may
191 fail to address injustice in practice [66]. Rather than addressing a range of costs and benefits linked to
192 local values and practices, including loss of cultural and place attachments, distribution issues
193 themselves tend to be reduced to technical exercises for distribution of monetary benefits [67]. These
194 distribution-centric and technocratic approaches to delivering justice also permeate downwards to
195 national level policy debates through the influence of international donors [54,68], as evidenced
196 through analyses of safeguard approaches in numerous countries developing REDD+ structures,
197 including Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, Tanzania, Vietnam [69] and the Democratic Republic of Congo
198 [70].

199 Some authors suggest that procedural injustices remain a major failing in global environmental
200 politics because many views are inadequately represented, creating a “democracy gap” [71], and
201 despite establishment of some multilevel governance structures which involve civil society
202 organisations in national committees and working groups, their influence over policy direction is
203 seen to be minimal, particularly in the case of cultural minorities [59]. For REDD+ these factors have
204 contributed to the weak implementation of aspects such as free, prior and informed consent of local
205 communities [72], and loss of access, resources and reduced material wellbeing experienced by
206 forest-adjacent communities as a result of implemented projects, despite the existence of social
207 safeguards [73,74]. Global climate and forest policy processes are therefore criticised for their failure
208 to represent the various injustices faced by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities,
209 smallholders, women, the poor and those living in vulnerable locations [75-77].
210

211 2. Research Design and Methods

212 Nepal and Uganda form illustrative case studies for exploring the mobilisation of justice claims
213 among rural, forest-adjacent communities. Both have high levels of rural poverty and livelihood
214 dependence on natural resources, which are particularly acute among minority social and ethnic
215 groups. Dalits and indigenous people together make up approximately half of Nepal’s population
216 and their participation in policy, and impacts of policy upon them, are key issues in land and forest
217 governance [78]. Nepal’s forest sector implemented community-based forest management in the late
218 1970s with 20% of forests now under such governance schemes [25]. In contrast, in Uganda forest
219 governance comes under state control to a large extent but with extensive customary tenure
220 prevailing, leading to sometimes overlapping management regimes [79]. There are several
221 marginalised social or ethnic groups inhabiting Uganda’s forests or land adjacent to them, including
222 the Batwa and Benet, who have suffered severe impacts of forest conservation and whose distinct
223 cultural values and practices justify specific attention within the REDD+ process [80]. Civil society is
224 active in both countries but freedom of expression is constrained or unequal between social groups
225 [81,82]. Nepal has faced long-term political instability, including a ten-year civil war (1996-2006) and
226 frequent changes of government since becoming a multi-party democracy in 1990, whereas Uganda
227 has remained under the leadership of Yoweri Museveni since 1986. Both countries have participated
228 in REDD+ readiness activities since 2009 and are progressing towards implementation.

229 Our methodology focused on the perceptions of a range of intermediaries, regarding which and
230 whose claims they seek to mobilise, the strategies they pursue, various forums they engage in, other
231 norms they encounter and barriers or opportunities they experience to facilitate norm travel and
232 achievement of various social and environmental aims. This approach does not critically assess the
233 extent to which intermediaries effectively represent specific social groups or act in their own

234 strategic interests, yet does provide robust insights into actions and interactions to promote norm
 235 travel, reactions to perceived barriers and opportunities and claims regarding influence.
 236 Semi-structured interviews, each lasting one to two hours (see Supplementary Information for
 237 interview guide), were held with 16 intermediaries from Nepal and 16 from Uganda, who were
 238 sampled to include varied types of organisations with diverse objectives operating at a variety of
 239 scales. Participants primarily represented civil society organisations, but also included state officials,
 240 journalists and private sector actors, operating at various levels from local scale community work
 241 and mobilisations to national and international networks and policy forums (Table 1). Not one of the
 242 32 intermediaries functioned solely at local, national or international levels, and most worked at all
 243 three. For example, even local government officials had attended international UNFCCC
 244 conferences. Furthermore, both social and environmental objectives guided the climate-related
 245 forestry work of all 32 participants. All interviews were conducted by the authors, 26 during 2016,
 246 while six interviews were held with subnational intermediaries in Uganda in 2014.

247 Six interviews in each country were held at local level with intermediaries working in areas
 248 adjacent to forests where strict protection for biodiversity conservation has adversely impacted some
 249 local communities' resource access, land tenure security and place attachments: around Mount
 250 Elgon National Park in Eastern Uganda and Chitwan National Park in Southern Nepal. Again,
 251 intermediaries were selected to represent a diversity of organisations and perspectives on forest
 252 governance and associated social issues. Around both Mount Elgon and Chitwan National Parks,
 253 impacts have been particularly acute for Indigenous Peoples or cultural minorities inhabiting those
 254 areas, affecting access to ancestral lands, resources and cultural practices associated with their
 255 identities. Whilst these may appear to be extreme examples, similar concerns are evident around
 256 forest governance in other parts of Nepal and Uganda, as well as in many other countries [25,83-86].
 257 At Mount Elgon, carbon-based forest governance has been established, initially through The Uganda
 258 Wildlife Authority - Forests Absorbing Carbon Emissions (UWA-FACE) project from 1992 and more
 259 recently through the Mt. Elgon Regional Eco-System Conservation Programme (MERECP). For the
 260 site around Chitwan, REDD+ projects are in the planning stage, though pilot studies have been
 261 conducted within the same district [87]. The remaining ten semi-structured interviews in each
 262 country were conducted with intermediaries based in the capital cities, Kathmandu and Kampala.
 263 Participants were selected to represent a diversity of actors seeking to advance both environmental
 264 management and social outcomes of the rural population, and with potential to mobilise and
 265 advance justice-related norms based on recognition of local values and practices. The intermediaries
 266 participating in this study represented stakeholders in a variety of policy sectors, though all had
 267 some involvement in climate-related forest governance and the majority had been directly engaged
 268 in formal REDD+ policy processes.

269
 270 Table 1. Roles and scale of work of 16 intermediaries interviewed in Nepal and Uganda, based
 271 on participants' self-description. Organisation names have been removed to maintain anonymity.

Uganda		Nepal	
Description of role	Primary scale of work	Description of role	Primary scale of work
Civil society – human rights	Subnational	Civil society – indigenous rights	Subnational
Civil society – land rights	Subnational	Civil society – indigenous rights	Subnational
Civil society – land rights	National/International	Civil society – community forestry	Subnational
Government official – climate change and forestry	National/International	Civil society – environment and development	Subnational

Civil society – climate change and forestry	National/International	Civil society – biodiversity conservation	Subnational
Civil society – environment and development	National	Local government official – biodiversity conservation	Subnational
Private sector – commercial forestry	National	Civil society – gender and environment	National
Civil society – poverty and rights	Subnational/ national	Civil society – indigenous rights and climate change	National/ International
Journalist – environment and development	National	Civil society – natural resource conflict	National/ International
Local government official - forestry	Subnational	Civil society – community forestry and human rights	National/ International
Local government official – environment and development	Subnational	Government official - climate change and forestry	National/ International
Local government official – environmental protection	Subnational	Civil society – forestry and development	National/ International
Civil society – climate change and development	Local to international	Civil society – Dalit rights and environment	National/ International
Civil society – climate change and development	Local to international	Civil society – biodiversity and climate change	National/ International
Civil society – sustainable development and education	National/ international	Journalist - environment and development	National/ International
Government official – environmental conservation	National/ international	Private sector – environmental consultancy	National/ International

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Semi-structured interviews were flexible and exploratory, expanding across a range of topics. At the minimum, interviews sought to elicit perceptions of participants on specific themes in line with the conceptual framework (Figure 1): the intermediaries' priorities in their work; the justice concerns they seek to mobilise, and for which people; the actions and interactions they undertake in different forums to mobilise those concerns and influence different actors and policy debates; any barriers faced in doing so and responses to them; any successes enjoyed and factors enabling them; their perceptions of REDD+ and climate policy processes at different levels of governance, norms within them and level of engagement. Interviews were all conducted in English with answers noted as fully as possible. Transcripts were coded thematically in accordance with the concepts described above and analysed inductively using NVIVO 10 [88].

284 2.2 Case study sites

285 Mount Elgon National Park lies on the border between Uganda and Kenya. The Ugandan side
286 of the National Park is governed by the Uganda Wildlife Authority and covers more than 1,000km².
287 Due to the fertile volcanic soils and favourable climate for growing crops, the area is one of the most
288 densely populated rural areas in the country. An exclusionary protected area was first established by
289 the British in the early twentieth century, but periods of deforestation, conversion to agriculture and
290 settlement occurred post-independence, in the mid- 1970s and again in the early 1980s [89]. The area
291 was declared a National Park in 1993 followed by mass evictions without compensation of
292 potentially more than 100,000 people [90]. This has led to ongoing conflicts and legal proceedings
293 between local communities and authorities, particularly the Uganda Wildlife Authority, over park
294 boundaries, land tenure and human rights violations. These have been particularly acute among the
295 Bagisu and Sabinu ethnic groups, including the Benet, who claim ancestral connections to specific
296 lands around Mount Elgon [91]. Issues were exacerbated through a carbon forestry scheme
297 established in 1992, The Uganda Wildlife Authority - Forests Absorbing Carbon Emissions
298 (UWA-FACE) project, which aimed to reforest 25,000 hectares of degraded land within the newly
299 established park boundaries. Influenced by widely publicised human rights violations by UWA
300 staff, the project ceased formal operation in 2002, though many ongoing tenure disputes remain
301 unresolved [92,93].

302 In southern Nepal the establishment of Chitwan National Park in 1973 and demarcation of
303 boundaries resulted in large-scale relocation of the rural population residing inside the park.
304 Boundaries and governance have been intermittently renegotiated with further relocation, including
305 instances of compensated resettlement. Many of those living inside the park were indigenous Tharu,
306 and their gradual relocation, many being moved to New Padampur with very limited influence over
307 decisions made, has had profound economic, social and cultural impacts, including separation from
308 their ancestral lands and spiritual homes [94]. While more powerful villagers with ample resources
309 were able to gain considerable compensation helping them to adapt to a new environment, away
310 from their cultural practices around riverine resources and wetland farming, many others failed to
311 gain land or adapt their livelihoods to the new surroundings [95].

312 3. Results

313 3.1 Prominence of recognition issues for local communities

314 The interviews with intermediaries provided strong evidence that recognition-based concerns of
315 local communities are viewed as important factors to take account of in designing forest governance
316 programs. In Uganda it is widely acknowledged, as one intermediary put it, that *"customary land*
317 *tenure dominates across this country."* This emphasizes the prevalence of local values and practices and
318 the importance of related norms being adequately represented in national and international policy.
319 Programs devised externally by influential international actors are therefore viewed as possible
320 threats to this tenure system. For example, as another intermediary described, *"the World Bank is*
321 *about competitiveness and enterprise. They are looking for economic growth. That happens through*
322 *agricultural projects, dams, roads, and that can escalate land conflicts."* Forest conservation in Uganda has
323 been characterised by the imposition of strict protection, which has resulted in severe impacts for
324 local communities and Indigenous Peoples in many areas, including failure to recognise customary
325 tenure and access rights to resources important for traditional practices and livelihoods, with rights
326 being violated through evictions and physical abuse. As a human rights activist operating around
327 the Mount Elgon National Park described: *"Members of these communities claimed that this was their*
328 *ancestral land, they had the rights to access the land and their ancestors are buried there and they had their*
329 *homes in that place. After the government gazetted the park, they started to carry out evictions without*
330 *warning. These were totally violent evictions in which they burned houses, and made human rights violations*
331 *like rape. They killed around 100 men, women and children and people lost animals and property at that time."*
332 In Nepal, land tenure was also a recognition issue considered of primary importance. Although
333 community management of forests had a long history across the country, rights over land and
334 customary tenure were poorly recognised by the state. Civil society representative, Nepal: *"Rights*

335 *are held by the government and the system is not able to work for the people. If we want to overcome all the*
 336 *challenges and make sustainable natural resource and forest management we need to change the existing*
 337 *tenurial structure, we need tenure reform.... That's why we are asking for clear tenure on a communal basis."*
 338 Intermediaries in Nepal acknowledged that recognition-based injustices, similar in nature to those at
 339 Mount Elgon, had occurred both around Chitwan National Park and in relation to forest
 340 conservation across the country. Some highlighted the case of the Tharu around Chitwan, who had
 341 initially been forcibly evicted from the park, and later many were resettled, after very limited
 342 participation in decision-making, in areas which could not provide land and resources suited to their
 343 cultural practices of river-based livelihoods and agricultural practices. Those entering protected
 344 areas to try to access such resources risked being beaten or raped by armed forces. Examples of
 345 similar issues relating to non-recognition of values, customary tenure and traditional practices for
 346 indigenous groups (who officially make up 37% of the national population) and for Dalits,
 347 particularly women, were provided by intermediaries for protected areas across Nepal.
 348 Civil society representative, Nepal: *"Women are facing violence by armies. In Chitwan alone almost 300*
 349 *children have been born through gender based violence."*

350

351 **3.2 Intermediaries supporting distribution and 'do-no harm' as paths to sustainability**

352 Despite the intermediaries' awareness of recognition issues as relevant to climate-related forest
 353 governance, many of those interviewed did not mobilise recognition issues in their work. Half of the
 354 32 interviewees - nine in Uganda and seven in Nepal - paid little regard to issues of tenure or
 355 cultural identities and practices. Although all 16 pursue social objectives in their work, they
 356 commonly emphasize norms about distribution, particularly based around economic solutions to
 357 promote sustainability and address social problems, whilst downplaying issues of recognition. Local
 358 government officer, Uganda: *"If people remain in poverty, they will remain in rural areas. ... We are*
 359 *arguing for the government to come up with a big project for people nearby parks to urbanise and move out of*
 360 *poverty."*

361 This group of intermediaries tend to accept the dominant norm complex in climate-related forest
 362 governance, which treats the recognition of affected forest communities as of marginal relevance.
 363 Some view local practices to be in conflict with ecological sustainability rather than positively linked
 364 or part of potentially sustainable solutions; that local communities are responsible for creating
 365 conflicts through unreasonable claims to land, which are not recognised by, or valid in, law: these
 366 intermediaries therefore actively favour policy options which would work against recognition
 367 claims impeding the travel of recognition norms to national and international institutions on forest
 368 governance

369 Journalist, Uganda: *"People need to be educated, FACE (carbon forestry project at Mount Elgon) did the right*
 370 *thing by sticking to the 1993 park boundary, but people didn't like that. I haven't really seen any mobilization:*
 371 *people just respond and react. People might sometimes cause conflict, then UWA responds forcibly."*

372 In line with their focus on more tangible or objective social norms and a 'do-no harm' principle,
 373 some of those norm-takers do seek to mobilise local concerns when objective, physical harm is being
 374 imposed on local communities and clear human rights violations have been committed.

375 Local government officer at Mount Elgon: *"UWA was behaving like an organization that doesn't care*
 376 *about people's lives. They were just shooting people for taking firewood, and raping women with firewood who*
 377 *had strayed into the national park. We had to bring the head of police in, the inspector general of police. When*
 378 *UWA were raping women and dehumanizing men, and cutting crops when they were about to mature – we*
 379 *think this is really inhuman."*

380 From their perspectives, those norm-takers perceived that social safeguards within REDD+ and
 381 climate governance are adequate to address relevant social concerns, and focused on distribution of
 382 material benefits to minority groups or to promote alternative livelihoods to reduce their forest uses
 383 as primary mechanisms for providing more sustainable and just outcomes.

384 Government official, Nepal: *"If the money amount is big and they've reduced deforestation, then we can*
 385 *distribute some to households. The main guiding principle behind benefit sharing would be livelihood*
 386 *diversification to reduce dependency on the forests.....2nd is the social safeguards for marginalised groups. We*

387 *have to think about that as well so a percentage (of monetary benefit) will go for their welfare, also technical stuff*
388 *for training them too."*

389

390 **3.3 Norm entrepreneurs' efforts to mobilise recognition-based norms in support of sustainability**

391 The remaining half of the 32 intermediaries interviewed (9 in Nepal and 7 in Uganda) sought to
392 mobilise recognition-based claims of local communities to varying extents, emphasizing recognition
393 of local values and practices as a pathway to enhanced social outcomes and ecological sustainability.
394 From their perspective, enhanced recognition can reduce environmental conflicts that undermine
395 sustainable practices and foster greater legitimacy, trust and support for sustainable development
396 programs or regulations. As one norm-entrepreneur in Nepal expressed: *"There are so many customary*
397 *practices to manage natural resources sustainably, but the trust (of authorities) is gone, there is none of it*
398 *there."* Similarly, in Uganda a local representative of a community evicted from Mount Elgon
399 National Park elaborated: *When living on our piece of land, we kept the environment very well, we kept our*
400 *trees. But when UWA take over and there they are now doing charcoal burning and sawing - the park may not*
401 *be forested in ten years. But formerly, we were caring for trees. Now there is no good relationship between*
402 *community and UWA and there is no security for our environment."*

403 Furthermore, this group of intermediaries suggested that recognition of local natural resource
404 management practices can proactively empower local communities to mobilise against
405 unsustainable initiatives such as removing primary forests or damaging watercourses for short-term
406 extractive gains, proposals often supported by local and national government agencies. A Ugandan
407 civil society actor described: *"Especially where the ownership of the land is customary, those people have no*
408 *documentation of their entitlements, so we work mostly in that area at present..... Speculators are evicting*
409 *people with minimal compensation We gathered together two groups to give the people there greater*
410 *strength. They know their rights and can push away investors... The challenge is to represent the value of the*
411 *forest."*

412 The greatest examples of normative and transformative progress towards enhanced recognition for
413 local communities, particularly for cultural minorities in both countries, were made through several
414 simultaneous tactics which facilitated justice-related norm travel between local communities,
415 national advocacy coalitions and international donors. Described and exemplified below, this
416 mobilisation pathway was followed by four civil society interviewees representing either human
417 rights or land rights in Uganda, and in Nepal for seven intermediaries promoting Dalit rights, tenure
418 rights related to community forestry, Indigenous Peoples, gender equity and transformation of land
419 conflicts.

420 Initially, intermediaries worked at the grassroots level to support the establishment of local
421 associations among those with common recognition claims and promote awareness of rights and to
422 potentially pool knowledge and resources among them.

423 Civil society representative for land rights, Uganda: *"We advocate for fair land laws and policies. We are*
424 *strong at the national level, we influence policy effectively but most of our success is at grass roots level. Given*
425 *the very weak implementation of laws, the abusive policies which we face, we have to stand by people at the local*
426 *level. Where they are particularly vulnerable we stand by them..... We formed communal land associations on*
427 *clan grounds..... We are now trying to champion this across the country as a way forward."*

428 In tandem with building local groups, this particular justice broker, among others, then sought to
429 raise awareness, using various media channels and through building of coalitions of interest, to gain
430 the involvement of powerful external actors. Those actors included international donors and
431 multilateral organisations, who supported collective action based on norms within their
432 organisations or those promoted in democratic, developed nations, for example to seek legal redress
433 for human rights violations, while providing some protection against authoritarian reaction to those
434 local groups. For example, one interviewee described how he and other human rights activists
435 around Mount Elgon used radio and internet to publicise human rights violations by the Uganda
436 Wildlife Authority, culminating in support from international non-governmental organisations,
437 production of a powerful documentary which was widely disseminated and led to involvement of
438 important donors to Uganda, the European Union and World Bank, who applied pressure to the

439 Ugandan government ('Mount Elgon Violations', Uganda Human Rights Network
440 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OIDTRSO9exY>, Published 2011 by World Resources Institute).

441 Human rights activist, Uganda: *"When donors come, they put certain pressures on. The documentary was
442 helpful. When donor money is implicated in human rights violations, they cannot accept that – World Bank
443 money cannot be implicated in human rights violations. So we lobby them."*

444 This international pressure led to very direct norm travel, through a program conducted by
445 Uganda's Human Rights Network to train UWA staff, from rangers to senior staff, in human rights
446 approaches.

447 A third strand of this overall strategy was to act as part of, and advocate for change through,
448 multiscale networks focused on specific minority groups or recognition issues with international
449 umbrella organisations, forums and influence. Those umbrella organisations, or in some cases,
450 expert individuals, often provide training and advice on how to successfully advocate for change.

451 For example, an interviewee representing a civil society organisation in Nepal gained funding and
452 training from charitable bodies, academics and practitioners focused on mediation and conflict
453 transformation. Through internationally-led and funded training with government officials and
454 marketing campaigns including social media this has resulted in changed approaches to more than
455 75 land tenure-based conflicts across the country, often involving longstanding issues of

456 **non-recognition of the values and practices of** cultural minorities. In Uganda, a representative of a

457 land rights organisation reported that, through the International Land Coalition in Rome, such a

458 strategy is leading to the widespread piloting of communal land agreements, funded by the World

459 Bank, after almost 20 years of legal provision remaining dormant, unimplemented by the

460 government. That strategy was also reported to have helped prevent a government plan to reform

461 the constitution to make acquisition of land easier for large-scale private investment projects.

462 This strategy was, however, not successful for all intermediaries pursuing enhanced recognition. In

463 some instances, normative barriers were perceived to be too great, most evidently in the case of Dalit

464 rights, for whom mobilisation appeared to be normatively restricted at all levels of governance and

465 in all forums. Here the enduring structure of caste hierarchy points to constraints on the cross-scalar

466 movement of justice-as-recognition norms, arising from a particular political economy context.

467 As one civil society representative for Dalit rights in forest governance in Nepal stated: *"Dalits are not*

468 *recognised, there are no institutions to represent them.....Nepal does suggest in the UN conventions to get*

469 *Dalits recognised, but India always blocks that, and there are 200 million plus Dalit in India Our political*

470 *network is very weak ... even individual consultants have more power than us. The media just feel sorrow but*

471 *they can't really support us. You know everyone knows IPs (Indigenous Peoples) but no one in the world knows*

472 *Dalit."*

473

474 **3.4 Limitations in the REDD+ (national and international) and UNFCCC climate forums as**

475 **perceived by justice brokers**

476 Ostensibly, the set of strategies described above served to bypass mainstream policy fields such as

477 climate change, REDD+, biodiversity conservation, poverty reduction and so on at the national level.

478 Although norm entrepreneurs still maintained some involvement in these policy fields, these were

479 perceived to be more restricted spaces for progressive norm travel and transformative change.

480 Civil society representative, Uganda: *"People are not challenging that hierarchy, the knowledge barriers*

481 *they impose. Other people who would do something get lost in that process. At meetings people get very angry*

482 *at how they are run. So we need the capacity for people to challenge that at every level, the international,*

483 *national... It's become populated with people who won't rattle the cage. It's unimplementable."*

484 Civil society representative, Nepal: *"There are social criteria in implementation, a certain percentage of*

485 *money for women etc. But the question is really if you take that formal approach, it is not just a question of*

486 *distribution but one of marginalisation."*

487 Many justified their involvement in REDD+ policy or on the national working group not through

488 support for the program or the potential for enhanced recognition of tenure, values and rights, but

489 because of the need to maintain a presence to ensure sufficient protection against further injustice

490 through deterioration of rights or misrecognition.

491 Civil society representative, Nepal: *“The remaining rights and livelihoods Indigenous Peoples have, they*
492 *are already deprived, so there is chance of their titles being sold, whole areas can be restricted to people. So*
493 *instead of making these claims about REDD, we try instead to affect the discourse to ensure that those*
494 *Indigenous Peoples claims are at least there and recorded, so we can be sure that their tenure will not be*
495 *diminished even further.”*

496 Efforts to lobby government and donors through these processes were therefore viewed as less
497 effective strategies, and occasionally resulted in subsequent exclusion from them, as reported by
498 four different interviewees. For example, an interviewee acting as proponent of gender equity in
499 Nepal suggested that attempts to raise gender equity as a topic had led to exclusion from formal
500 REDD+ policy processes.

501 *“Like with REDD, I don’t get invited to the working group meetings anymore. I don’t know why. But it is*
502 *important to get knowledge heard in the process. It’s hard to get gender and inclusion in.”*

503 Subsequently that person opted to devote more resources to forums associated with the Sustainable
504 Development Goals rather than climate change or REDD+ due to greater perceived inclusion and
505 opportunity for influence.

506 Most norm entrepreneurs also avoided climate policy arenas at the international level, perceiving
507 them as constrained forums for debating recognition-based norms: mainstream policy is instead
508 heavily focused on inequality between nations and distributional mechanisms to provide technical
509 capacity to implement market-based solutions. As an exception, those supporting indigenous
510 groups in Nepal had gained status and (despite continuing instances of exclusion from some
511 discussions) increasing participation at United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
512 policy forums and sought to use those to gain meaningful recognition of their values, tenure systems
513 and practices in international policy, through which to indirectly influence recognition or at least the
514 level and quality of political participation at national level, for instance:

515 *“The Indigenous Peoples movement has a very long history and basis to be recognised as a separate*
516 *constituency under UNFCCC... There has also been elaboration of collective human rights. That*
517 *recommendation allows us to push issues forward.”*

518 Yet, even representatives of indigenous organisations felt their participation in such state-centred
519 international forums was highly constrained, stating that they relied on non-indigenous champions
520 and informal, opportunistic associations with political leaders to achieve meaningful moments of
521 political influence.

522 4. Discussion

523 Global forest governance is proliferating with considerable financial and institutional resources
524 being directed towards policy processes to inform projects targeting ambitious ecological and social
525 goals. Those processes involve a wide range of intermediary actors, or justice brokers, across civil
526 society, state and private sector. But although presenting potential forums to address the persistent
527 justice concerns of local communities and cultural minorities, justice-related norms tend to be
528 reduced to technical monitoring exercises geared towards doing no harm rather than progressively
529 recognising diverse identities, values, practices, vulnerabilities and potential contributions to
530 sustainable natural resource management [7]. Recognition-based concerns are essentially washed
531 out of equity framings carried forward in policy discussions such that the form of equity discussed
532 in formal policy processes carries a different meaning to the forms of justice sought by local
533 communities [69]. Yet, as our case studies show, REDD+ or forest and climate governance programs
534 are implemented not in simple socio-political contexts but complex situations of high social
535 diversity, power inequalities and longstanding recognition-based struggles, where lack of local
536 legitimacy and trust of authorities is likely to threaten their ecological effectiveness. These conditions
537 indicate an imperative for the ‘weaving’ of indigenous and local understandings of ecosystem
538 services and governance norms into mainstream policy processes [44], though such boundary work
539 to bridge normative differences is absent— in REDD+, being precluded because the institutions
540 designing and leading the processes struggle to accommodate justice-related recognition norms in
541 social safeguarding discourses and practices. REDD+, as debated in policy forums in Uganda and

542 | Nepal, offers weak opportunities for [upward travel of local norms and associated advances in](#) social
543 development because of the absence of boundary institutions as forums to negotiate these diverse
544 perspectives. Therefore, the way equity is framed is inadequate to address injustice, and a justice gap
545 between local perspectives and policy processes persists.

546 Although the constrained political space in climate governance has been detailed previously, at
547 international and national levels [8], our analysis of intermediary perspectives and actions in Nepal
548 and Uganda provides enhanced theoretical and practical understanding of the politics of scale and
549 barriers to reconciliation of contrasting justice-related norms. It supports a broad conception of
550 intermediaries (negotiating over the provision and effects of ecosystem services) as creating, and
551 operating in, both formal and informal networks depending on perceived opportunities for
552 influence [38]. Advancing such understanding is important to inform sustainability science, not least
553 “because how these intractable issues of justice are dealt with (or not) will be a crucial factor in
554 determining the effectiveness of the emerging climate regime,” [60].

555 It may appear, from participation activities underway, that REDD+ processes have gained
556 widespread participation from civil society, state and private sector stakeholders. However, our
557 in-depth analysis of governance processes and power relations reveals that intermediaries involved
558 in REDD+ are polarised between those who give precedence to recognition-based issues and those
559 who deprioritise them in favour of ecological goals or more simplistic framings of equity. This
560 brings into question claims of inclusivity and effective participation in national scale climate policy
561 processes. Our findings uncover how intermediaries seeking to mobilise recognition claims of local
562 communities do not target climate policy processes, including REDD+, as progressive forums for
563 transformative change and those who maintain involvement do so simply to avert further erosion of
564 rights and cultural recognition. Several evade REDD+ and climate policy processes altogether, in
565 favour of alternative forums and policy arenas offering more opportunities for progressive norm
566 travel, a tactic described in other studies on environmental policy negotiations [49]. The
567 prioritisation and pursuit of recognition-centred justice claims by half of the intermediaries in this
568 study, and their dissatisfaction with REDD+ and climate policy debates focused on issues of material
569 distribution or simplistic interpretations of procedural justice, supports the argument made by
570 prominent theorists that attempts to realise just, emancipatory outcomes, or even simply to gain
571 legitimacy among affected people, will fail if they disregard recognition of diverse values, identities
572 and practices [96,97]. Attention to recognition as a central pillar of just or equitable environmental
573 conservation policy has been severely lacking [22]. Our analysis shows that neglected aspects of
574 recognition include customary and communal tenure systems over land and resources and
575 group-specific place attachments. These themes, [and barriers to upward travel of norms related to](#)
576 [local tenurial institutions](#), were consistent for both Uganda and Nepal, despite their different social
577 and political contexts.

578 Our findings raise questions as to why opportunities to advance land tenure, human rights and
579 cultural respect (and their potential contribution to environmental sustainability) do not avail in
580 climate governance. The balance of institutional power leans towards economic and ecological
581 objectives, precluding not only consideration of aspects of local community wellbeing and
582 experiences, but of alternative forms of governance or debates about them, and forecloses the
583 potential for empowering transformation, including rebuilding of trust with local communities,
584 support for customary practices and enhanced local stewardship [98]. Programs formed as part of
585 global climate governance are consequently perceived as threats rather than opportunities by
586 vulnerable and marginal groups and civil society working on their behalf. Yet climate governance
587 consists of numerous sustainable and human development programs, such that the evident
588 suppression of contemporary (and in other governance regimes, powerful) norms on human rights,
589 indigenous knowledge and land tenure systems is counterproductive for REDD+ implementation.
590 To realise the possibility for both social and environmental gains for vulnerable and marginal
591 groups and overcome persistent issues of mistrust which impede them, progressive norms based on
592 recognising diverse knowledge systems, land and resource rights, and place-based identities must
593 be made central to governance processes for climate and sustainability [15,99]. Practically, this must

594 include continuous participation and representation of local communities and specific social groups,
595 with meaningful opportunities for them to influence policy, monitoring and program design, not
596 only through representation in national level processes. More effective coalition building, among
597 civil society groups with aligned normative stances and objectives, and strategic efforts across local,
598 national and international scales, could foster greater attention to recognition issues in REDD+, and
599 may yet emerge in numerous countries if negative social impacts continue to come to light.

600 Attention to the politics of norm negotiation and 'travel' have an important role in empirical
601 studies of justice and to inform critical sustainability sciences. Consideration of processes of policy
602 negotiation and norm travel as multidirectional, multidimensional and multi-scalar across a
603 diversity of forums facilitates greater understanding of the barriers and enabling factors for
604 appropriate negotiation to inform policy implementation approaches that may be considered
605 legitimate on the ground. Local-level norms are unlikely to be visible in policy and may be
606 underrepresented in discourses, such that the perspectives of actors at various scales require
607 elicitation, from local communities to justice brokers involved in mobilising social movements
608 [19,37]. The political dynamics involved in norm negotiation may serve to reproduce and perpetuate
609 injustice with important social and environmental consequences. In certain cases, the interactions
610 leading to mobilisation and uptake of local norms may help to overcome seemingly entrenched
611 injustices, and the factors enabling such advances can provide key lessons to inform emancipatory
612 initiatives and shape transformative pathways of change.

613 5. Conclusions

614 Justice brokers in forest governance face complex political and institutional contexts in which to
615 promote enhanced recognition of values and practices for forest-adjacent communities. Our findings
616 from Uganda and Nepal illustrate that those who manage to do so can truly be considered to have
617 exhibited norm entrepreneurship. Studies have described aspects of the political manoeuvring and
618 negotiation of power undertaken by intermediaries [43], yet the complexity of pathways taken to
619 overcome political barriers and further recognition of justice have seldom been elaborated. Norm
620 entrepreneurship in our study entailed not just a single tactic or opportunistic event, but a
621 cumulative strategic web involving multiple actions and interactions across diverse forums at
622 various scales. Each of the recognition norm entrepreneurs identified in this study engaged in
623 manifold tactics as part of their strategy, working at local, subnational, national and international
624 levels, across different networks, types of media, via capacity building support networks and found
625 pathways to reach powerful global organisations considered potentially responsive to their
626 normative cases. Climate policy processes, including REDD+, were perceived by many
627 intermediaries to be restricted political spaces where progressive debate of recognition-based issues
628 was absent or unproductive and local practices were commonly framed as threats to sustainability
629 rather than potential solutions. As a result, the civil society actors seeking to advance recognition
630 avoided participating in them or maintained involvement only to avoid a perceived further erosion
631 of rights. By engaging in a combination of grassroots activism, building national coalitions of
632 interest, undertaking advocacy campaigns and through embedding themselves within supportive
633 international networks outside of climate policy processes, civil society organisations in Nepal and
634 Uganda have made substantial gains for local communities and effected normative change on
635 human rights and the recognition of customary tenure, even in the face of challenging political
636 environments. Only through this strategic web of multiple interrelated tactics were they able to
637 create various conditions for and build momentum to facilitate travel of recognition-based norms,
638 working to close the justice gap between local perceptions and global sustainability governance.

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