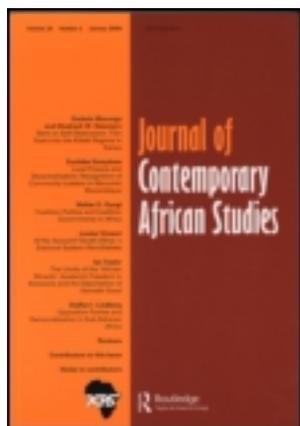


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Constructing walls of carbon - the complexities of community, carbon sequestration and protected areas in Uganda

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Constructing walls of carbon – the complexities of community, carbon sequestration and protected areas in Uganda

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Carbon forestry represents a degree of continuity and discontinuity with traditional conservation practices, rescripting forestry management/governance and land access through projects on the ground in variegated, context-dependent ways. Utilising the comparative lens of two distinct projects operating on state-led protected areas in the east of Uganda, and focusing on their contested boundaries, this paper reflects on these dynamics and tries to make sense of the implications for the rural communities within the project vicinities. The projects and their framings reassert the claims to territory of the state in different ways which are contingent upon and emergent from the local institutional and historical context, or ‘legacies of the land’, which can be seen in context to be disputed and contested. Whilst it must be said that there can be selectively progressive elements within carbon forestry initiatives, it can be observed that techno-centric interventions, which depoliticise their local contexts and selectively transnationalise access to land and forestry resources, can further marginalise local communities in the process.

Keywords: carbon forestry; community-based conservation; market environmentalism; territorialisation; marginalisation

Controversies involving allegations of ‘land grabbing’ and enforced, uncompensated evictions have placed the spotlight on carbon forestry projects and protected areas in East Africa. These have included New Forests (UK) at Namwasa Forest Reserve in Uganda and a pilot project – Reducing the Effect of Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) – in the Rifuji delta of Tanzania that was mooted to involve WWF. Paralleling a strong focus on ‘land grabbing’ in contemporary discourse on the agricultural sector in Africa, there are strains of critical geographic investigations exploring variations of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey 2009), these allegations extend the debate into the sphere of carbon and forestry through what Bumpus and Liverman (2008) conceptualise as ‘accumulation by decarbonisation’. These claims contradict the assumption of ‘win–win’ for community and environment in carbon forestry and centre concern around carbon forestry’s potential impact on rural African communities. REDD+ and ‘forest degradation’ in Africa must be considered alongside its high population growth, poverty and contested land politics that are all so intimately tied up with what Agrawal and Narain (1991) call

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'survival emissions': i.e. emissions resulting from basic needs, including agricultural practices.

These concerns pose questions about the contested nature of the spatial (re-)organisations engaged under carbon forestry projects and the way they relate to protected 'natures'. Central to this are the particular changing dynamics, roles and claims to (often disputed) territory that arise in the shifting relationship between the state, private/NGO actors and communities within project vicinities. Here the carbon economy and the processes of 'carbon fixation' are rearranging institutional structures, interacting with differing national frameworks in variegated, context-dependent ways, and with new actors and practices evident in the reproduction of new 'local' natures under the organising principle of carbon.

A range of authors have attempted to understand processes of neoliberalisation and how they relate to 'the environment' in its differentiated contexts (Harvey 2009; Castree 2003, 2008; McCarthy and Prudham 2004; Heynen 2007; Peluso 2007; Brenner, Peck, and Theodore 2010; Brockington and Igoe 2007). This 'neoliberalisation of nature' for Castree (2008), is simultaneously a social, environmental and global project, involving the renegotiation of the boundaries between the market, state and civil society so that more areas of people's lives and the biophysical world are governed by the economic logic of the 'invisible hand' which is spatially expansive and socially and environmentally exorbitant (Castree 2008).¹ At the multilateral level, for instance, Goldman (2004) analyses how 'Nature' has increasingly been incorporated into strategies of actors such as the World Bank. In so doing, he examines how these processes provide new cultural/scientific logics and domains of political-economic calculation, which reinterpret qualities of a state's territory, legitimating 'devices' for enclosing/transnationalising access to territories and 'improving' conditions of nature and populations in 'the degraded periphery' (Goldman 2004).

Carbon forestry projects can be understood to be one of this suite of broader strategies deployed to render climate change governable (Oels 2005). The main proponent of REDD+ activities and 'readiness', for instance, is the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, housed within the World Bank. These forms of new, programatised eco-governmentality (Agrawal 2005) find their operationalisation not only through multilateral and state institutions but also through non-state (NGO) and private entities, including private carbon providers and multinational companies. The resulting renegotiations between these entities alter or augment local governance structures to facilitate and support the framework of carbon offsetting and devolution of management to private or NGO actors. As Sassen (2005) asserts, 'globalisation' or transnationalisation can be said to unfold and be constituted locally. This also suggests we need to understand states in more nuanced ways: as complex, shifting and contingent assemblages of institutions, actors and policies enabling and also limiting access to resources (Bakker 2005). This is occurring as a process of self-maintenance and legitimation; here in the face of both the challenges and shifting forms of donor funding attendant to climate change.

An important component of this rescaling of the state is a reinforced emphasis on 'community-based conservation', in this case through the creation of 'local' sequestration sites. Indeed, this forms a core component of REDD+ and carbon forestry, privileged as the equity pillar in 'win-win' roll out, for climate and community. However, a critique this approach explores is how this devolution of

management to the level of the 'local' also purports to entail community participation and ownership (Murphree 2001), the lack of which is often responsible for the failure of such programmes. Further criticisms stem from the limited degree of decision-making autonomy allowed (Tipa and Welch 2006), since states typically retain legal control over natural resources (Ribot 2002), or the lion's share of power and revenues from natural resources that they loath to relinquish to local jurisdictions (Alcorn, Kajuni, and Winterbottom 2002). Thus, while the state's roles in management entail a renegotiation under carbon forestry, changing form, scale and type of practice, the state does not 'disappear' and remains constitutive of neoliberal regimes (Peluso 2007). Enclosures of 'natures' and their assembled renegotiations of state and private do not mean that neoliberal natures are disembedded from states, power structures and existent social relations and inequalities, contra to the trope and central myth of orthodox neoliberalism of 'free (carbon) markets' (Peluso 2007). As Ferguson (2004) has argued, however, modernising initiatives can often obfuscate these realities for the purposes of implementation.

This paper focuses on two particular carbon forestry projects on protected areas in Eastern Uganda which demonstrate these issues at a variety of scales. Drawing from a Ph.D. research conducted by the first author in Uganda in 2012, this paper focuses on the boundaries of the areas and how they are interpreted and reasserted in the projects' framings in order to carve out spaces of carbon sequestration. This sets the scene for a deeper exploration of 'what it is these projects do' as spatialising entities. As we will demonstrate, the two initiatives involve interactions of state and non-state actors in rearrangements in the framing of their localities and the protected areas they take up for their selective new purposes of carbon sequestration. These have distinct spatial and social impacts – selectively re-emphasising 'fortress conservation' and unevenly re-emphasising the relationships between state and 'community'. Exploring the two carbon forestry projects in this way, this paper aims to repoliticise their respective contexts and contested legacies of the lands within which the projects become enwrapped. Finally before proceeding, it is important to keep in mind that carbon forestry and its variants are still emerging. In this vein, this paper does not seek to provide a uniform explanation for all these processes (which are diverse and sometimes contradictory), but does suggest that these overarching logics, interconnectivities and commonalities need to be comprehended if local variations are to be understood in all their complexity in different social and geographic contexts.

Project framings and community contestations

In keeping with the theme of 'old land new practices', we proceed to set out and explore the spatialising dynamics within carbon forestry as project and practice through the lens of two examples in Uganda (see Figure 1). The first is the Busoga Forestry Company (henceforth BFC), which is a subsidiary of Norwegian Multi-national Green Resources AS. Its activities in Bukaleba Central Forest Reserve involve a Voluntary Carbon Standard (VCS) – a carbon sequestration project – in Mayuge District. The second project is the Mt Elgon Regional Ecosystems Conservation Project (MERECP) on the Kenya border. The Mt Elgon Conservation project is working towards piloting a Reducing the Effects of Deforestation and

under-acknowledged governance issues sit in tension with the country's developmental orientation, and subsequent donor-funded reforms, which prioritised commercial forestry and what became corrupted centralised National Forestry Authority control within forestry management. Various reasons have led to the compromise of protected area territories and the increase in encroachment from 180,000 individuals in 2005 to 270,000 in 2009 (NFA 2009).

The legacy of these factors is evident in the fragmented physical and social landscapes at both sites, with heavy deforestation in Mayuge and in particular at the Bukaleba's compatriot South Busoga Central Forest Reserve. Bordering the Mt Elgon National Park, unsustainable land use practices and population pressures have seen the degradation of the ecosystem, with deforestation, a loss of soils due to runoff and erosion. Communities are moving higher up the steep slopes of Mt Elgon to cultivate because of land competition and scarcity, which contributed to landslides in 2010 and 2012 in Bududa district and Wanale sub-county.

Moreover, both projects exhibit contested land politics that have important lessons about the types of orientation and problem framing evident within carbon forestry that we will now begin to set out. On the one hand, the BFC project frames its activities under a strict carbon approach under the VCS, which depoliticises its local context and de-legitimises alternative land claims to its project site *qua* 'old land'. This paper argues that the reason for this is largely due to the fact that the project is enwrapped in an assemblage prioritising logging interests and transnational capital. The discourse of 'encroachment' that results disregards local claims with important ramifications for local communities. In contrast, and more positively, the MERECP project unofficially acts as a buffer between the community and the Mt Elgon National Park protected area, working to mediate conflict and establish incentives for its conservation. However, its benefits are selective and limited in scope, and contoured by local power relationships, and its mediation of conflict is as much dependent on local circumstances and the agency of pre-existing community organisation as on its own activities.

The BFC's VCS project

The carbon offset component of the BFC activities at Bukaleba Central Forest Reserve, bordering Lake Victoria, comprises of 2134 ha under the VCS standard. It integrates closely into their commercial activities as an industrial plantation and timber company as a subsidiary of Green Resources AS (Norway). Green Resources' strategic orientation and activities in carbon offsets, forest products and renewable energy, are augmented by local acquisitions, including Lango Forestry and BFC in Uganda, which merged in 2012. These have seen it develop into the largest forestry operation in Africa, with 14,000 ha under production and 610,000 ha under development, of which 12,000 ha is in East Africa (with 3500 employees), with significant areas in Tanzania (34,000 ha of land, with a further 120,000 ha in the process of acquisition), Mozambique (172,000 ha) and Sudan (179,000 ha) (Green Resources 2010). It also owns East Africa's largest sawmill, Sao Hill, which was originally built by Norwegian development aid in the mid-1970s.

The BFC bought out the 50-year lease to the approx. 9500 ha Bukaleba Forest Reserve from Tree Farms in 2006. The reserve is officially the jurisdiction of the NFA and includes defined areas with specific characteristics of unplantable, conservation

and riparian buffer zones, as well as a disputed area set aside for beef ranching during Amin's regime (1971–1979) that now houses a school and Christian NGO. In total, this means that approximately 5000 ha of the 9500 ha is considered plantable land suitable for forestry. The Reserve also includes an area of 500 ha set aside by Tree Farms, under duress after contestations with communities. This 500 ha was promised to community residents for forest-friendly activities in 1993 by the then Minister for Water, Lands and Environment Hon. Ruhakana Rugunda. It was subsequently claimed as a community development initiative by the BFC after its lease of the reserve. The land referred to as 'community forest management' land by the NFA was meant to be allocated to communities, as they and the BFC saw it, for the assisted planting of tree species to maintain the integrity of the Reserve. However, as the NFA range manager attests 'the interest of the community is not in growing trees, but in settlement and farming in the reserve' (NFA Official, interview by the first author, Jinja, July 2012).

By November 2011, 4134 ha of the remaining plantable 4500 ha was available for 'productive use' according to the BFC Range Manager at Bukaleba, with the overall exotic species planted at about 40% eucalyptus and 60% pine. The specific 50-year time frame of BFC's lease would afford the company two rotations of planting and harvesting from the soil which would comprise about 40–45 years of the 50-year lease. The company, as 'still a young plantation' (BFC Official, interview with the First Author, Jinja, July 2012) has no plans in place yet for its reclamation after that time. This is a cause of concern that the local District Environment Officer (DEO) emphasised in an interview, relating to the detrimental effects of the plantation on the lake and on soil fertility in the reserve. The strict focus on maximising carbon sequestration from its VCS approval in 2012 to cover trees planted after 2004 – for which it is now looking for a buyer for an expected first payment of USD 15,000 – has implications for the communities in the project areas, who are framed as 'encroachers' and which the implementers actively seek to exclude.

The company paints itself as oriented towards 'sustainable development', citing the building of roads, clinic support and employment as community benefits, the allocation of the 500 ha provided by Tree Farms as indicative of its commitment to community benefits. However, these benefits remain scant and difficult to access for the majority of people in the area. Furthermore, the 500 ha remains contested and has not effectively been allocated as official Community Forestry Management land due to a stand-off between communities and the company which holds that the land should be planted with trees not crops. This is not least because of subsequent promises to de-gazette the area at election time by politicians, including Uganda President Museveni himself in 2010 (URN 2011). Although these have not yet been forthcoming, they are 'in process', according to Idi Isabirye, the National Resistance Movement MP for Bunya South Constituency (interview with the first author, Kampala, July 2012). Communities, however, also interpreted this directive as a mandate to go into the forest reserve and claim land, with residents burning and clearing pine trees on 70 acres. Residents also destroyed another 30 acres of eucalyptus trees in one night next to the 500 ha before being stopped by the BFC and armed personnel in early 2011. As a result of this incident, the BFC served an intention to sue the Attorney General, the NFA and the District local Government over the 'failure to advise the government correctly' on the status of the area (Anti-Corruption Coalition Uganda 2010). The cropping is not limited to the disputed

500 ha however, and even at a glance the hillsides (considered unfit for tree planting) above the tree lines and below the infertile ridge tops can be seen to be filled with local maize crops.

The BFC's approach is to simplistically lay the problem at the feet of the Forestry Authority and local politicians, who either through action or inaction undermine the territorial integrity of the Reserve stipulated in the lease contract they negotiated. The Bukaleba project was unable to secure either A/R CDM certification or to attain the Climate, Conservation and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) standard. According to interview respondents, this failure is attributable to the issues of encroachment and a lack of demonstrable net social benefit (as indicated in the projects VCS documentation (DNV 2012)). On the ground, the company has, by its own admission, planted the 'easier' areas of the Reserve first, including most of its southern section, and the remaining areas to the east by observation are the ones most 'encroached' by communities within and adjacent to the reserve. Representatives from village local councils interviewed by the first author estimated populations to be roughly 4778 people in Walumbe and approximately 3200 in Nakalaanga both of which are in the reserve's buffer zone between the designated 'forest land' and the lake. Smaller numbers of people are also to be found at the Bukaleba village at the centre of the BC Forest Reserve. In Lwanika village adjacent to the Forest Reserve, numbers are estimated at 7000. Given the degree of contestation so far and the population numbers in the project vicinity, it remains to be seen exactly how further planting will proceed.

The company employs a full-time team of approximately 30–40 for forest protection to protect the plantation from fire, encroachment and property thefts. According to its range manager (Interview with the first author, Bukaleba, June 2012), the company has taken a 'softly softly' approach to 'encroachers'. He argues that 'the principle has not been to fight people, just to plant', protecting their trees and incrementally clearing and planting areas to free them up from encroachment.

Communities adjacent to and within the Reserve, however, consider the current situation to be extremely difficult, with few opportunities outside agriculture, declining fish stocks and rising fuel costs. Furthermore, there is a fairly pervasive negative perception of the company's impact amongst community members interviewed, even on the part of temporary employees (whose employment has dwindled now that the bulk of clearing and planting have been done) who cite low pay and poor working conditions. In the worst case, a Nakalaanga resident cited low (and irregular) payments of 50,000 Ugandan shillings a month (US\$23), unpaid over 10 months. Residents decry the cutting of their crops in the designated reserve lands, although some Bukaleba village residents asserted that they had paid BFC guards who used a 'soft touch', in allowing them to do their planting. Residents also lament the lack of opportunities to plant according to the old Taungya system, where crops could initially be planted amongst the growing trees before the canopy shaded them out. Additionally, they cite the small and inadequate benefits from the company, with long distances to the small primary school and clinic along poor roads, and the reduction in land as they are squeezed by project planting expansion. Interviewees in Lwanika and Budhala commented on the degradation of conditions at the villages in comparison to 1999, when a report by Makerere University Academics documented their livelihoods (UFRIC 1999).

‘In 99 people were better off, could practise fishing, and also cultivate maize on the unplanted land; we also had a smaller population. Evictions have brought about limited land, and all which was taken away was planted so there is almost no land left. It is almost now famine’ (Local Councillor (LC), interview with the first author, Lwanika, July 2012).

The Mt Elgon Regional Ecosystem Conservation Programme (MERECP) prospective REDD+ project

Contrastingly, the Mt Elgon Restoration Conservation Project (MERECP) has a very different spatial orientation in its regional approach to the conservation of the Mt Elgon water catchment area, the primary feeder system for Lake Victoria and the Nile itself (LTS International 2011). Though not as yet a certified carbon forestry project, the project has submitted terms of reference for Project Idea Note (PIN), which is the first step in a lengthy REDD+ project formalisation process. Additionally, during a meeting in August 2012 in Kampala with the National REDD secretariat and working group, there was discussion about ‘demonstration’ REDD activity status for the project.

The MERECP project’s aims were initially ambitious in its scope. However, as a donor-funded project there was some dissatisfaction on the part of the donor partner Norway with the project initiators – the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) – with the costs of its administration far outweighing the benefits in the ground as they saw it. After its Mid-Term Review, the project was reformulated under the Lake Victoria Basin Commission and it was suggested that the project be scaled down and more targeted, reducing the scope to one sub-county each in three districts on the Ugandan side, and aiming at working closely with community groups in these localities. The objective of the project was to protect the transboundary Mt Elgon National Park, the gazettement of which caused a large degree of social conflict (as discussed in the next section), and as such a core component of the MERECP work was to target this dynamic in the project area, mediating boundary conflicts between the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) and specific community-based organisations.

The project seeks to improve livelihoods for the neighbouring communities and to protect the park through the removal of the need to encroach, or at least provide incentives to avoid doing so. However, it is certainly evident that the community organisations were central to the mediation of the conflict, and that, to a large degree, the livelihoods improvements augmented and expanded by MERECP were already in emergence due to the activities of the groups. Additionally, the incremental improvements in relationships between these groups and the Wildlife Authority were further lubricated by the MERECP funding. Two of the nine groups involved in MERECP in Uganda, in Wanale Subcounty, demonstrate this dynamic, namely the Bushiuyo Dairy Development Group (hereafter called the Bushiuyo Dairy Group) and the Budwale Honey Enhancement Group, initiated by the former in 2008. Both began from humble origins as lending groups with meagre funds. In 2007, the Bushiuyo Dairy Group, after realising some benefits and accumulating knowledge of proposal processes, applied for a 20% revenue sharing grant from the Wildlife Authority’s park gate takings.² This grant was to purchase cattle for the group, which they augmented with a small agricultural loan. With the animal manure for short-

term crops such as cabbage, potatoes, peas (needed to make a turnover to keep the benefits coming in the short-term before longer-term dairy development) they were able to 'decrease their appetite for encroachment' and improve the relationship with UWA staff in the area. The Budwale honey group followed suit in 2008.

By 2009, MERECP, after seeing the progress made by these two groups, gave 20 million shillings (approx. US\$ 20,000) as a community revolving fund (one component of MERECP's activities) to the Bushiuyo Dairy Group for dispersal to community members at low interest rates. Investments from this fund have thus far included 30 dairy animals, cash loans to the group and loans to 15 individuals for agroforestry woodlots who decided that as the money was from the forest they wanted to assist to mitigate the climate. Now in its second loan cycle, the revolving fund has increased from 20 to 24 million Ugandan shillings. The Budwale Honey Group subsequently qualified for alternate MERECP project components. These included a significant contract to do 'enrichment planting' in the Park boundary, which employed locals to reforest degraded areas of the park with native species, and a carbon sequestration scheme to pay selected villagers for sequestering carbon through agroforestry. These activities are not however present in all the sub-counties and nine community group's working relationships, with revolving funds in only three of the nine Ugandan sites. The most visually obvious impact of the project in Wanale sub-county, under the management of both community organisations is the MERECP 'livelihoods plantation'. This is a 20-m wide boundary of eucalyptus that acts as a demarcation to separate the National Park along its (contested) 1993 park boundary and the 'sustainable use zone' which comprised the land under dispute and which must by agreement with MERECP be managed sustainably. This buffer between the communities and the park is impressively visible, and the communities own the trees and share in the revenues of their 'thinning' – 70% to the community fund and 30% to the neighbouring sub-counties. The members show pride in their achievements and their area (the community organisations even renovated the road along Wanale) and attest that they themselves now protect the park from encroachment, and work to sensitise the local community about its benefits.

Historicising 'encroachment' and the contestation of space

Historicising both protected areas and project boundaries provides a fuller picture of the evolution of control over those territories which were only relatively recently taken up and inscribed as the project localities. This provides a view to a very different picture than the project framings themselves allow. It also re-politicises the spatial and social terrain to allow a contextualised examination of the contestations over the spaces of sequestration foreclosed by the *de jure* legitimacy of the projects' claims to state protected land, and the actors and activities these both legitimate and exclude.

A number of the diverse communities in Mt Elgon contest what they consider the customary lands bordering the National Park and specifically a boundary dispute deriving from the 1993 gazettement and renaming of the Park from its prior designation as the Nkokonjuli forest reserve (gazetted in 1964 and governed under the Forestry Department until 2003). According to the Ugandan Wildlife Authority (UWA) this was for its environmental protection, which was necessary due to population pressures and unsustainable land use practices on the area's steep slopes

neighbouring it. The disputes stem primarily from the inadequately marked boundaries, which UWA officials themselves attest was problematic (using chain and compass methods). As the communities see it, since 2002/2003 the UWA attempted to ‘encroach onto public land’ (Namisindwa Land Owners Association members, interview with the first author, July 2012), to which they had customary claims. The communities the first author spoke to in Namisindwa, for instance, explained that their being prevented from performing circumcision rites on the graves of their ancestors (which is seen as necessary in order to fulfil cultural obligations) has resulted in their sons’ inability to marry or produce children. This fierce defence of claims to land is recorded in ethnographic research by Suzette Heald (1989) on Mugisu masculinity and the ‘anger’ of the Mugisu people, and is evidenced with the fierce defence of cultural norms such as circumcision.³

This ‘encroaching into Public land’/‘reassertion of boundary’ dichotomy has resulted in long-lasting conflict between UWA and residents within the Mt Elgon region. The area – comprising Manafwa, Bududa, Sironko and Mbale counties – has had ongoing boundary conflicts and protracted resistances for over a decade. These have included a number of deaths of both community members and UWA rangers. These followed evictions in 1993, in which there were no consultations or compensation, and in 2002, when the UWA evicted 550 families from Mt Elgon and destroyed their houses and crops. The situation required the ‘intervention’ of the President in 2010. His assessment was that the 1993 boundary should be followed, but Mr Adonia Bintooro, the community conservation officer at UWA, asserts that this was instead interpreted by various communities as a directive to go back onto the park.

The complexity and multiplicity of boundary contestations since this time have played out differently over the park; for example, communities were asked to respect the 1983 park boundary in the Sebei region and the 1993 boundary in Bugisu. Two of these multiple contestations are particularly relevant to this analysis. The first is one of three lawsuits over the disputed land. After forming in 2004, the Naamisindwa Land Owners Association filed a suit against UWA and reoccupied disputed territory from the centres in which they had been concentrated after the eviction. The suit resulted in an ongoing court injunction on further activities by either party since 2005 pending a reappraisal by surveyors. However, the community assert that after the injunction this decision was not respected by the UWA until a human rights network officer began to intercede. This resulted in the removal of problematic staff at UWA. The second case concerns the MERECP sites (still admittedly very few) where the project has enabled communities to successfully mediate conflicts and tacitly retain circumscribed access to the disputed territory, reinscribed as a ‘sustainable use zone’. This approach, ostensibly under the prospective REDD+ project, contrasts strongly to the engagement that is evident with communities at Bukaleba.

The Tsetse flies in the statue

At Bukaleba Forest Reserve the *de jure* legal context at first appears clear. The only contestation, or ‘encroachment’ as project implementers and Forestry Authority officials would have it, is due to relatively recent migrations, stemming from the political turmoil over successive regimes and the civil war and the repression and

disruption under Amin in the 1970s. This reflexively legitimises the continued territorial integrity of the reserve. However, delving deeper into both the history of the area, and that of the villages predating the project and forest reserve, reveals a more complex process of community disenfranchisement in the face of the colonial state. Whilst making a case for individual community claims to land is beyond the scope of this analysis, it is clear that the legacies of these villages as spaces of inhabitation (some predating the colonial period) have contributed to the current plight of the communities and their *de facto* claims to the meagre, circumscribed livelihoods they sustain under the *de jure* legitimacy of the project. Some of these historical factors predate the colonial period, other more recent ones concern their interaction with external factors such as poll-booth politics⁴ and external land pressures leading ultimately to their being trapped ‘between a rock and a hard place’ (FERN 2000).

Villager’s oral histories corroborate the aforementioned 1999 UFRIC report which traces the origins of the Bukaleba Forest reserve to the late 1930s, i.e., during the colonial period (UFRIC 1999). Political and ecological control of the Bukaleba forest along with its inhabitants was cemented after an episode of sleeping sickness in 1939. As a consequence, residents of the whole area were removed under the East African Tsetse Fly Control (EATFC) Acts.⁵ As part of this, hunting and eating of game meat were banned. The communities were promised they could return once the situation was under control, but their return was fragmented by large numbers of deaths, departures north to towns such as Soroti, and further control measures over three periods of infestation, culminating in the gazetting of the reserve in 1974 as a Forest Reserve.⁶

With the politically demarcated territory of the reserve formalised through tsetse fly control activities, communities continued to plant areas and ‘encroachment’ persisted until between 1989–1999, when people were evicted from the forest without compensation. Those who resisted were imprisoned and it is alleged that some were killed in the process. The aforementioned report (UFRIC 1999) mentions starvation and suffering, loss of property and over-crowding as a result of the evictions in villages such as Lwanika, Nakaanga and Walumbe. It highlights the inevitable tensions between the Forest Department personnel and the neighbouring local communities, despite the fact that the communities had tacit settlement and agricultural ties to the land demarcated as forest reserve. These tensions continued after 1997 when a prior planting project by the Norwegian ‘Tree Farms’ began. Jutta Kill, a member of FERN, wrote in 2003 that the project: ‘threatened to evict some 7000 people living on the land to be turned into a carbon offset project. International criticism at the time stopped the project from claiming carbon credits to ‘offset’ a Norwegian power plant’s emissions, but nonetheless, the project continued and trees were planted’ (WRM 2003, 1).

Delving even further, the local elder at Lwanika relates a village story that indirectly attributes Colonial agency to the dispossession of the land from communities. The story relates to Bishop Hannington, ordained as the first Bishop of Equatorial Africa in 1885. He arrived by boat, landing at Lwanika – bordering the contemporary Bukaleba – where he was captured; for his part in what was percolating to be a conflict between the Muslim, Catholic and Protestant missionaries for influence in the Buganda state. The then Kabaka (‘king’) of the Buganda was Mawanga II, a fiery and tenacious character, who saw his influence

over his state under threat from foreigners. He ordered the execution of the Bishop, whose last words to the soldiers who killed him were allegedly to inform Mwanga that he had purchased the road to Uganda ‘with my [Hannington’s] blood’ (Reason 1978).

The story follows that years later, in what could be interpreted as a symbolic claim to new colonial territory, a statue of Hannington was erected at the site of his death near Bukaleba. The local population thought that there were minerals hidden in the statue and went to smash it down to retrieve them. What they found however was that as a trick ‘the colonists’ had instead placed Tsetse flies in the statue that proceeded to visit a plague of revenge upon the Baganda for the killing of the Bishop. Such stories may be conceptualised as ‘selectively factual’ narrative devices or idioms for local understandings, discussion of, and sometimes action on, or in response to, processes of social transformation. These range from marginalisation to prosperity, and may include changes in structural conditions, attribution of actor agency or other associated agencies. Furthermore, it is also accurate in its attribution of colonial agency to the incidence of tsetse fly outbreak, as the next section will demonstrate; where implicating the colonial state in the ecological control of territory is directly linked to the opportunities for dispossession and enclosure.

Narrative ‘friction’ and the contemporary spatial state assemblage

With an idea of the complex histories of both sites in place and a politicised appreciation of the orientations of the actors present in the respective landscapes, it is possible to reassess project claims to legitimacy and the spatial implications of implementation. In doing so we move beyond project framings to consider the broader interactions that comprise the spaces of sequestration.

As an initial observation, both projects work to re-enforce the claims of the state, or to be more specific, particular parts of the state apparatus, to territory. Both projects seek to bolster the respective jurisdictions of the NFA and UWA in the Bukaleba Reserve and Mt Elgon National Park, which is an attempt to secure the internal territorialisation of the State, an element of territorialisation often unconsidered in the social sciences (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). This re-emphasises exclusionary ‘fortress conservation’ approaches, albeit those which the MERECP project works to mitigate, whilst at the same time asserting at least rhetorical attention to community ‘development’ and management practices (more on this shortly). The project histories however, which are reinterpreted by the respective project developers, adopt very specific temporal views of the bounded territories they adopt.

In the Mt Elgon context, the renaming of the Park at the time of its conversion from the forest reserve became the symbolic starting point from which current claims by UWA to the park’s integrity are drawn, or transferred from the previous park. According to a senior member of the Bushiuyo Dairy Group, there was a realisation of the necessity of a name change to accompany its new dispensation. This was because, as he saw it, parliamentarians appreciated that communities had a historical claim to the area. Successively alienating those claims through both the act of holding the lands ‘in trust’ for the people by the colonial, and subsequently post-

colonial governments, and then through the reinscription as a renamed national park discursively rendered the land available as a national park.

Similarly, the starting point for the Bukaleba project, with its inception in 2006, draws its legitimacy from the park gazettement in 1974. These framings delegitimise prior land claims, such as villagers' symbolic and cultural claims to the land. For instance, the village of Walumbe was settled in 1972, two years before the gazettement, near a giant Mvule tree (*Chlorophora Excelsa*) that for villagers houses the spirit of Walumbe (meaning Death in Luganda), the brother-in-law of Kintu, the Baganda founding father. It is from this tree that the village name is drawn, and which they attest is a sacred site for Kalichoro believers. Similarly, at Lwanika there is an 'Enkuni Shrine' which superseded a large Mvule tree, that was destroyed by lightning in 1999 (UFRIC 1999), and the sacred initiation/circumcision sites and ancestral graves in Wanale and Nakaalanga in Mt Elgon. These sites, as identifiers of place, form a crucial part of people's relationship to the land, not as a static entity, but as an ongoing social (re)production in the face of fluxes, including the incoming of migrants and the challenges they face with the company.

These framings of community 'place' and project 'space' come into 'friction' (Tsing 2005) with each other. The narrative reworkings of the project are thus necessarily selective and incomplete. The BFC has for instance inadvertently given tacit encouragement to encroachers; through employment of the cheap labour of individuals from the villages within the reserve – which allows the company to claim 'development benefits' for the local communities. In the case of Walumbe village, the company avoided cutting out the Mvule tree in deference to the community and (it can be assumed) the potential conflict it could entail. Additionally perhaps the most subtly pernicious friction is that the BFC and the carbon project owe their presence in the Bukaleba CFR to the 'degraded' state of the forest reserve; a situation pertaining from its 'encroachment'. This is because Bukaleba's official designation under the NFA's 'Forest Functions and Classification' of 2005 (delineating which activities may be undertaken in specific CFRs) as a CFR of 'ecological and biodiversity importance' because of its proximity to the lakeshore. Although the classification allows the 'sustainable use' of a designated 'production zone' in the CFR, this should preclude industrial forestry activities which have only gone forward as a 'pragmatic' course of action in the face of the 'degradation'. Frictions are thus also productive (Tsing 2005), reflexively enabling the discourse of 'degraded' or 'empty' lands that can then be taken up by the project just as they marginalise communities in the process.

Particular actor–state assemblages

Just as new spatial discourses work to de-emphasise or discard prior claims to land, they rescript project 'locality' narratives for particular ends; and for particular assemblages of the state apparatus and other private and non-governmental actors. We say 'particular assemblages' both to emphasise and implicate the central state in its contemporary assemblage as arbiter of claims to territory, and to simultaneously pluralise the conception of 'state' to encapsulate the specific alignments of actors: in the project cases; logging interests and the quasi parastatal NFA, and donor/NGO networks with UWA. This type of assemblage analysis (DeLanda 2011) is gaining traction in multi-scalar analysis, and we suggest it could be of particular importance

to the assemblings of ‘Green Economy’ and the associated costs they might entail such as the carbon forestry projects considered here.

It is easiest to identify the continuity of ecological control by such assemblages through formal legal challenges of the selective, place-based reinterpretations of legitimacy in the project localities. These challenges have included lawsuits in three of the districts (non-MERECF it must be noted) around Mt Elgon, and at least two explicit carbon forestry cases, relating to the New Forests Namwasa Reserve mentioned in the introduction. Both sets of suits assert claims to inter-legality and overlapping sets of laws and constitutional rights, challenging the specific claims to territorial sovereignty of the NFA and the UWA. The Namisindwa Land Association is contesting customary rights, conveyed through long use, to the disputed land between the successive MENP boundaries and title issued under the Amin regime. The appeals under CFR land are bolstered by research by the Ugandan civil society organisation Advocates Coalition for Development and Environment into the conflict between the NFA’s management of forest reserves and the rights of those occupying that land which concludes that the Forestry and Tree Planting Act conflicts with other provisions of National Law. As Mugenyi (2005, 26) notes:

It is legally conceded that uncontested long possession of land ultimately confers legal title to the occupier irrespective of the formal or documentary record of ownership. This common law principle forms the foundation of the bona fide occupants recognised under the Land Act of 1998.

Such provisions of the Land Act are precluded from applying to Protected Area lands however, under the provisions of the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act of 2003. This was promulgated under the Forestry Sector Reform process in the early 2000s that led to the creation of the National Forestry Authority and the National Forestry and Tree Planting Act of 2003. Hybrid actors in assemblage analysis are important for the multiple roles they play, and during the reform process a number of such actors were also working in roles linked to carbon forestry, or for instance in an advisory capacity to the Presidential advisory process on how to deal with encroachment in CFRs during the same period. A letter from one such actor emphasising this fact in the face of contestations cites ‘The [Central Forest Reserves] are held in trust for the people of Uganda (those are my words in Section 5 of the Act) – nobody is allowed to “own” land in them, or even to live in them, unless it is part of the forestry purpose that has been licensed’ (Letter to Dame Barbara Stocking (Oxfam) by the Chairman of the Uganda Carbon Bureau, October 2011). Whilst such an assemblage and indeed worldview hold ‘*de jure*’ legitimacy, and can be legitimated at the national scale through the perceived need to build ‘the forestry industry’, social theorists are charged to ask at what costs are these assemblings and their often asymmetrical processes and results achieved? And what alternative land uses, and land histories in this case, are precluded?

A new practice?

The type of spatialising process we are discussing has evident historical precedent, and has been fundamental to the emergence of the modern territorial state in the region. Indeed, Neumann (2004) attributes the British colonial administration’s

efforts to reorder 'nature', production and human society within its East African territories as a process of state-building, entailing an enclosure of the commons enacted under its 'civilising mission'. The spatial strategy employed to make its far flung citizens 'visible', contained and ordered are one side of the same process as the bounding and containing of 'wild nature' in parks and reserves, creating 'wilderness' spaces, of which MENP and Bukaleba CFR are a derivative. These are not vestigial 'pre-modern' spaces but rather a product of modernisation efforts, and as such a critical component of the 'landscape of modernity' (Neumann 2004). Such perspectives from historical ecology reveal that all environments have long and complex human histories and are anthropogenic to some degree (Erikson 2008).

Drawing this into the context of Bukaleba, such perspectives add explanatory weight to the local narrative of the tsetse flies in the statue that effectively attributes colonial agency to tsetse fly outbreaks and the opportunities for subsequent control and local dispossession that followed them (Ford 1971). In this vein, Reader (1999) and Kjekshus (1977) both locate the disruption of local systems of ecological control (and hence local pre-colonial economies and livelihoods) by colonial authorities to the outbreak of tsetse flies and Trypanosomiasis. They assert that the disruption of existing grazing patterns in East Africa directly contributed to the regrowth of the bush lands which harboured explosions in tsetse fly numbers. Reader (1999) attributes the death of 90% of East African cattle between 1900 and 1910 to the spread of colonial systems of ecological control.⁷ Finally, the legacy of Idi Amin Dada is a crucial dynamic to reconcile with the spatial understanding of carbon forestry and its selective interaction with the Ugandan state assemblage. His declaration of an economic war to double agricultural production under the Land Reform Decree of 1975 announced that every Ugandan was free to settle in any part of the country. The IUCN has estimated that 25,000 ha were encroached as result of Amin and Obote II (IUCN official, Interview with the first author, August 2012, Kampala) and subsequent mismanagement has exacerbated the problem. Thus, in Mt Elgon, people will invoke the Amin period when justifying their presence through the licences allocated during that time (such as those held by Namisindwa Land Alliance) but which they are retroactively told is illegal, illegitimate or fake by UWA or the NFA in alignment with the post-1990 NRM government. Projects themselves, imbricated in the new assemblage, invoke this period when citing encroachment problems and seek to delegitimise the prior claims of the Amin state to territory which work against their interests as the following assertion indicates: 'Inevitably this resulted in mass encroachment of CFRs, and successive governments have struggled to reverse this action' (Green Resources 2010, 31).

The problem with this inconsistency, and in terms of the frictions at the project level outlined above, is that communities are caught up in 'state schizophrenia'. Whilst Bukaleba residents interviewed by the first author base their claims for compensation on long residence, the NFA and BFC say they cannot formally recognise 'illegal encroachers'. This 'illegality' is not only stopping the allocation of the 500 ha of community managed CFM land, but is also having other pervasive effects. According to the assistant district forest officer, communities in the reserve do not get full government services, or NGO support (apart from donor water pumps in two villages; interview by the first author, July 2012). To live as such is to exist in an interstice, a space of unacknowledged contestation.

Conclusion

We have examined the framings of both projects and explored how they work in different ways to re-emphasise the claims of differentiated assemblages of actor–state networks to control over protected area territories. These assemblages are bolstered by claims to the sequestrations of carbon and the conservation of forestry resources at the project sites, which transnationalise local spaces (Neumann 2004) in an attempt to externalise, or ecologically fix (Harvey 2009) the costs of climate mitigation. In questioning where these costs then fall, this paper considered the project's respective interactions with communities on and within their borders. Community management practices, dovetailing with state actor involvement, engendered through community forestry management (CFM) arrangements have been shown to be non-existent at Bukaleba and limited or only selectively successful at Mt Elgon. The MERECP project, in what Lewis (2009) would call a 'progressive space of neoliberalism' has a more positive alignment in empowering local interests. This is evidenced in their attempts to facilitate access to the disputed territory under the banner of the 'sustainability zone', promoting multifunctional landscapes and direct forest benefits. However, the MERECP example also shows how limited in scope such activities are, which themselves are far from a-political. Benefits here are dependent on limited project funds, good relations with UWA and the ability to conform to a specific eco-governmentality (Agrawal 2005) through organisation into community organisations with sufficient collateral and evidence of suitable financial management capacities. Sections of communities are unable to meet these requirements and thus 'fall through the gaps'.

When looking beyond the myopic lens of community benefits however it is evident that these project entities exhibit an uneasy fit with the legacies of the land in their respective protected area 'localities'. This is made most visible by the resulting contestations at both sites. This can be either through direct conflict and challenge to the protected area's territoriality as at Mt Elgon, or through communities' subtle and variegated strategies of resistance in simply making do as best they can. This is not only reflected at Bukaleba but at other A/R CDM-oriented projects as well (CCS 2012).

These difficulties in the case of Uganda are particularly evident during election time. Klopp (2012) has noted that democracy is one of the major drivers of deforestation in Kenya, and a similar assessment could be made of Uganda where multiple disparate localities or sites of democratic state control 'on the ground' come into friction with vote buying and opportunities for patronage. These dynamics reveal the complexity and imbrication of both the contemporary African state and its attendant tension within carbon forestry, and the neoliberal environmental management constellations (Peluso 2007) they comprise.

As we have seen, the problem framing of the projects offers a simplification of messy dynamics that comprise their project sites. A holistic appreciation of the interrelated complexities within the project areas entails a movement away from simplistic characterisations of 'encroachment' to a broader problem set which points to multifaceted pressures on protected areas which include, but are not limited to

- Declining livelihoods needs exacerbated by declining land availability in Mayuge (an average land holding of only one acre in the district, against the national average of 2.6) and Mt Elgon.
- Population and agricultural pressures, exacerbated in Mayuge district by a voracious sugarcane industry⁸ receiving prioritisation within National development plans, and at Mt Elgon due to coffee price fluctuations (Sassen et al. 2013).
- A development-fortress conservation nexus, with limited human and financial resources, within which the active promotion of industrial plantations and logging interests – such as at Bukaleba – precludes a focus on district forestry and community engagement.
- Unclear boundary demarcation, limited UWA/NFA capabilities and disrupted/inconsistent conservation approaches over the years
- Issues compounded by a local politics which both amounts to vote buying and falsely purports to take local needs into account.

Finally, whilst the experiences discussed in the two case study projects cannot be said to be representative of all possible carbon forestry projects, unpacking the evolution of two such projects can reveal the full implications, commonalities and differences of their local variations in all their complexity. Understanding these spatial orientations allows the viewer to traverse the myriad of interactions and processes that projects are enwrapped in and take up as a part of their activities, and make visible the complexities (both in continuity and originality) that link old land and new practice. One aspect that stands out is that failing to acknowledge the contested legacies of the land in project localities and to adequately engage with communities by merely painting them as perpetrators does not reconcile socio-political histories with current realities. Here communities are not dealt with, given their situation. They are continually marginalised.

Notes

1. Critics of carbon forestry assert that market environmentalism underpinning carbon forestry cannot be seen to amount to effective climate mitigation whilst simultaneously attempting to reconcile with large industrial emitters, or as is relevant to New Forests, large industrial plantations (CCS 2012). This is not to say that profit maximisation is the only motivation for carbon forestry. Indeed, as Bakker (2005) has pointed out, there are broad array of goals and a variety of social, cultural and environmental factors in the neoliberalisation of nature.
2. The BDDG was granted 2.7 million shillings (UGX) which they used to purchase 20 cows (which were given to 10 beneficiaries who then passed on the calves produced to other members) to share between its members, and to fertilise with manure their fields which before that date had poor soil fertility.
3. This was evidenced by the xenophobic forced circumcisions of ‘outsiders’ by gangs of youths in Mbale in 2012 (on the basis that ‘outsiders’ working there should also likewise be circumcised).
4. Where politicians promise the land in return for votes; notable in the 1980s and more recently in 2006 where a minister famously stated ‘trees don’t vote, people do’.
5. Bans on hunting and eating of game meat were also imposed at this time.
6. In a VCS document (DNV 2012), the BFC claims the forest was gazetted in 1948, however the UFRIC report and villagers put the date at 1974.

7. This sort of contextualised colonial history has its corollary in the relationship between colonial agriculture and malaria proliferation in Egypt, documented in Timothy Mitchell's book entitled the 'Rule of Experts' (2002).
8. The District Environment officer for Mayuge asserts that district(s) with sugar production tend to be poorer in comparison to other regions of the country (Interview by the first author, July 2012).

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