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"Contesting Justice in Global Forest Governance: The Promises and Pitfalls of REDD+"

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For more than 30 years, diverse actors in global forest governance have sought to address the justice concerns of forest peoples—concerns about displacement, marginalisation, and loss of identity—related to forest interventions. Despite the mainstreaming of justice obligations into the global forest governance architecture and the proliferation of justice practices across multiple scales of governance, claims of injustice persist. The growing prominence of Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation plus the enhancement of carbon stocks (REDD+) as a primary mechanism for addressing global forest loss and degradation has again directed attention to the justice effects of global forest policies on forest peoples across the Global South. While REDD+ proponents argue that safeguard procedures and participatory processes will promote justice, opponents argue REDD+ will exacerbate injustices. To generate new insights into the persistent justice debates in REDD+, this paper draws attention to the role of norms in constraining and shaping policy designs and outcomes. It asks: to what extent and how does REDD+ as articulated in UNFCCC decisions respond to the established justice trajectory in global forest governance? How do current approaches in REDD+ create and constrain opportunities for justice for forest peoples? An empirical analysis of justice norms in global forest governance, including REDD+, demonstrate that while justice possibilities under REDD+ could narrow, opportunities for norm contestation are expanding. These additional opportunities can create conditions conducive to broader norm shifts in global forest governance. (Text from author's abstract)

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