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"Exploring Institutional Factors Influencing Equity in Two Payments for Ecosystem Service Schemes"

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Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) are considered promising instruments for promoting conservation and addressing socio-economic goals, including equity. While several studies analyse how institutions enable the delivery of cost effective conservation, fewer studies focus on the role that informal institutions play in influencing equitable outcomes especially in Africa. Focussing on the role of formal and informal institutions, this article contributes to the emergence of work that reflects alternative conceptualisations to mainstream neoclassical understandings of PES. A qualitative research approach is applied analysing two Kenyan cases to illustrate how historical institutional processes influence present day equity outcomes. The study explores both procedural and distributive equity. The results reveal that despite very similar land tenure origins, the schemes differ considerably regarding their equity outcomes. Formal and informal institutional interplay was found to influence perceptions of land value over time and bargaining processes are identified as determinants of the different equity outcomes. The study also reveals that institutional interplay may influence the simultaneous achievement of different equity dimensions. The study therefore recommends the integration of mechanisms that reconcile both formal and informal institutions, such as land tenure distribution and cultural norms in design and implementation of PES schemes to better achieve equity. (Text from authors' abstract)

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