

## A political ecology of REDD+: property rights, militarised protectionism, and carbonised exclusion in CrossRiver

Adeniyi P. Asiyebi<sup>1,2</sup>

adeniyi.asiyebi@kcl.ac.uk

This paper offers a critical assessment of REDD+ in Nigeria through a political ecology perspective. Focusing on questions of property rights and resource access, it maps the discursive articulations and contestations through which carbon rights are being determined. It also shows how these articulations and contestations are linked to land and forest rights, and how they shape everyday access to the forest. Evidence from the Nigerian case suggests that factors that complicate rights and undermine access to resources for forest communities under REDD+ are immanent to the contested terrain constituted in part by REDD+ proposals, proponents' discourses and practices geared towards securing the forest for REDD+. Efforts to secure property rights and guarantee the permanence of REDD+ forests align with economic, ecological and ideological aspirations of state and non-state actors to produce a regime of militarised protectionism. I demonstrate how, in addition to its material and symbolic facilitation of the emergent carbon forestry economy, militarised protectionism as a regime of exclusion also constitutes collateral political economies of 'more-than-carbon' forest resources (such as timber and non-timber forest products) which perpetuate capital accumulation by the elites. It is this kind of exclusion-accumulation dialectic legitimised by carbon forestry claims that this paper describes as carbonised exclusion. The paper thus furthers debates on the political ecology of REDD+ and other carbon forestry projects, while productively engaging technocentric literature on REDD+ and property rights.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Geography, King's College London, Strand Campus, London WC2R 2LS, United Kingdom

<sup>2</sup> Department of Development Studies, SOAS University of London, Thornhaugh Street, Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG United Kingdom

## 1.0 Introduction

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation plus sustainable forest management (REDD+) promises to transform rural landscapes, conserve forests and biodiversity, halt upward climate change trajectories, foster green development pathways, and bring prosperity to the rural poor (Angelsen et al., 2012; Hall, 2012). An important part of the emergent green economy, this global scheme has entailed a renewed valorisation of forest and forestland with wide-ranging implications for how new forest commodities (such as carbon offsets) and other forests resources (such as timber and non-timber forest products) are claimed, accessed, protected, used, and governed in tropical countries (McAfee, 2015; Leach and Scoones, 2015).

This paper focuses on property rights and resource control, a problematic aspect of REDD+ readiness implementation, and one that is already generating intense debates. In this journal alone, recent contribution to debates on property relations and resource control in carbon projects is significant (see for instance, Cavanagh et al. 2015; Dwyer et al., 2016; Hackett, 2015; Nel, 2015; Osborne, 2015). Increasingly, critical scholars show how REDD+ might, in fact, be reversing historical gains in decentralisation and devolution of control over forest resources (Barr and Sayer, 2012; Leach and Scoones, 2015; Phelps et al., 2010). Resource practices and property relations are being re-worked in ways that perpetuate regimes of unequal power relations, loss of local resource control, and various forms of dispossession (Arhin and Atela, 2015; Beymer-Farris and Bassett, 2012; Cavanagh and Benjaminsen, 2014; Mahanty et al., 2012, 2013; Milne and Adams, 2012; Nel, 2015; Osborne, 2015). These are also linked to forms of carbon violence, manifest in the resurgence of “fence-and-fine” protectionist approaches, part of which Leach and Scoones (2015 p.7) call “fortress carbon”. They are also connected to the growing securitization of the forest landscape, as states and non-state actors attempt to ‘secure’ property rights for REDD+ and combat organised criminal networks which purportedly undermine forest conservation and REDD+ efforts (Cavanagh et al., 2015; Dunlap and Fairhead, 2014; Dwyer et al., 2016; Nellemann, 2012). Nevertheless, there are cases showing indigenous communities consolidating land right under carbon forestry projects especially in the Americas (e.g. Hackett, 2015; Kull et al., 2015). These would appear to be isolated cases amidst widespread concerns about (re)centralisation, protectionism, and violence.

These concerns are also important in Nigeria’s case, where REDD+ claims to save the country’s ‘last rainforests’ and a part of Conservation International-designated global biodiversity hotspot (Oyebo et al., 2012; Myers et al., 2000). Efforts to enact REDD+ in Nigeria are driving significant institutional and structural changes at national, state (sub-national) and local levels. At the state level, REDD+ is being implemented as a total forest management strategy in mainly community forests and state forest reserves. In preparation for REDD+, the pilot state in Nigeria halted timber-based revenue targets, declared a total ban on logging, and created a militarised Anti-deforestation Task Force to enforce the ban.

Under these conditions, not only are community rights to forest carbon uncertain, but also their existing rights to land and forest resources are threatened. Nigeria's REDD+ thus foregrounds questions about property rights and access to resources.

Drawing on the discursive and the materialist political-economic basis of political ecology, this paper analyzes the contested spaces within which property rights and access to resources are being negotiated in the context of Nigeria's REDD+.<sup>3</sup> It pursues two linked overarching arguments. First, it responds to an important body of work on REDD+ property relations and tenure which has continued to approach these issues from a more technocentric point of view. Here REDD+ is often taken to be externally positioned to tenure problems, to which REDD+ implementers are finding 'interim solutions' (see Awono et al., 2014; Bolin et al., 2013; Resosudarmo et al., 2014; Sunderlin et al., 2013). Such a view, which largely effaces important political economic details, tells us too little about how and why property rights and access are changing under REDD+, whose interest is served by these changes, who benefits, who loses, and how is the environment transformed in the process (Karsenty, 2008; Osborne, 2015). This paper thus argues that REDD+ does not maintain a position of exteriority to tenure complexity in locales, but that the scheme drives, and, is in turn, shaped by property relations which emerge through interactions of power among actors who pursue various interests in REDD+ (Mahanty et al., 2012; Milne, 2012; Cavanagh et al., 2015; McGregor et al., 2015). It shows in the case of Nigeria that the factors that complicate property rights and access to resources for communities are immanent to the contested terrain constituted in part by REDD+ proposals, proponents' discourses and practices geared towards securing the forest for REDD+.

Second, in taking forward a political ecology of carbon forestry, this paper argues that the material enforcement of property rights most evident in efforts to secure the forest for value creation in REDD+ often also constitutes collateral political economies of 'more-than-carbon' forest resources such as timber and non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Declaring processes of exclusion as "the necessary... corollary" for value creation in carbon forestry also suggests a tacit assumption that the former's *raison d'être* is to facilitate a grand political economy of carbon (Cavanagh et al., 2015 p73; Dunlap and Fairhead, 2014). Yet, this paper contends that exclusionary processes that underpin the emergent carbon economy – insofar as they rework existing resource relations – also constitute collateral political

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<sup>3</sup> By property rights (or rights), I mean enforceable authority wielded by an individual or group to take certain actions in relation to a resource or in relation to others over that resource. Property right is considered in terms of "bundle of rights" with layers of authority (Agrawal and Ostrom, 1999; Karsenty et al., 2014). This layered right includes, respectively, right of access, right of withdrawal, right of management, right to exclude others. These rights are cumulative, with each right already including the preceding right. The sum of these rights is vested only in the 'owner' or 'proprietor'. Meanwhile, tenure is taken to mean "systems of rights, rules, institutions, and processes regulating resource access and use" (Cotula and Mayers, 2009 p.V). To secure tenure is to make certain – *de jure* and *de facto* – "that a person's rights to land will be recognized by others and protected in cases of specific challenges" (FAO, 2002 p 18).

economies of ‘more-than-carbon’ forest resources.<sup>4</sup> This implies malleable processes of capital accumulation not just through actual “decarbonisation” (Bumpus and Liverman 2008), but through more-than-carbon economies, legitimised by carbon forestry claims. It is this nuanced exclusion – accumulation dialectic that is here conceived as carbonised exclusion.<sup>5</sup> I illustrate this argument through the case REDD+ in Nigeria where carbon forestry claims justify a political economy constituted around a militarised protectionism that curtails local access to resources while perpetuating elite capital accumulation and forest decline.

The paper thus contributes to the growing political ecologies of carbon forestry in Africa and particularly, in Nigeria where REDD+ has so far received surprisingly little analytical attention (for exceptions see Nuesiri, 2016; Asiyambi, 2015).<sup>6</sup> It also extends the political ecologies of natural resources in Nigeria to the terrain of carbon forestry.<sup>7</sup> The paper draws on empirical materials gathered through in-depth interviews with 58 key REDD+ actors (drawn from government, NGOs, international REDD+ partners and local communities), participant observation, and analysis of project documents between October 2013 and September 2014. Data so gathered were analysed using critical discourse analysis and critical narrative in the qualitative research tradition. The paper begins with a background on REDD+ in Nigeria (2.0), before pursuing the key concerns of this paper under three major headings: Claiming land, forest, and carbon (3.0); everyday politics of access (4.0); and carbonised exclusion (5.0).

## 2.0 REDD+ in Nigeria’s Cross River

Activities leading to the commencement of REDD+ in Nigeria began in 2008, in Cross River State, one of the 37 federating units of the country. The state’s 7361.7 km<sup>2</sup> of tropical rainforest is a significant portion of the remaining tropical rainforest in Nigeria and part of an important biodiversity hotspot (Oyebo et al., 2010; Myers et al., 2000). An environment summit convened in Cross River State in June 2008, championed mainly by local and international environmental NGOs, declared a crisis in the forestry sector. The summit issued a communiqué with the top three recommendations asking the state to ‘halt [the] revenue target based on timber exploitation’, ‘declare a two-year moratorium on logging’ and ‘initiate action to take advantage of the carbon credit market’. The then state governor

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<sup>4</sup>The ubiquity of carbon in all forest biomass means that ‘more-than-carbon’ rather than ‘non-carbon’ is a preferred expression for other forest uses other than for carbon offset.

<sup>5</sup> Attention to these ‘more-than-carbon’ political economies in REDD+ is quite important given minimal implementation of REDD+ on the ground and a growing trend of non-materialization (or delayed materialisation) of actual carbon benefits. It can also potentially stimulate new debates on political economies in other domains of value creation, authorised by REDD+ (Asiyambi, 2015; Turnout et al., 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Schoneveld (2014) and Abua et al. (2013) referenced Nigeria’s REDD+ in Cross River, as part of discussions on large scale agricultural acquisitions and historical conservation interventions respectively.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance Watts (2013) and Obi (2010) for political ecologies of petroleum; Von Hellermann (2013) on timber forestry; and Ojo (2012) on bitumen

Liyel Imoke thus promptly began a process of institutional restructuring in the forestry sector. He would halt revenue target from forestry, impose a logging moratorium across the whole state, and set up a militarised Anti-deforestation Task Force (henceforth ATF) to enforce the ban.<sup>8</sup> Yet, the drive to implement REDD+ must also be understood against the state's lingering financial crisis, to which Governor Imoke had sought what he called creative funding strategies; this has included carbon finance along with new drive to attract agricultural, mining, and industrial investments (Imoke, 2012; Schoneveld, 2014 cf. Karsenty, 2016).<sup>9</sup>

These pioneering REDD+ efforts by Cross River meant that Nigeria would adopt a 'nested approach' to REDD+, where implementation proceeds simultaneously at the state (sub-national) and national levels, since REDD+ requires a national carbon accounting system. This paper focuses on state (sub-national) level implementation, where most of the demonstration activities are went on. Following three years (2008 – 2011) of groundwork, the UNREDD approved a US\$4 million readiness fund for Nigeria in October 2011. More funding (US\$ 3.6 million) came from the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) after the country's Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) was approved in December 2013. Additional support is provided by the California-led Governors' Climate and Forests Task Force (GCF). REDD+ proposals marked out three REDD+ pilot areas largely in community forests in Cross River, as shown in Figure 1. Foreign consultants working with government bureaucrats and local NGO actors drafted the Nigeria's REDD+ proposals, which are now being implemented at the national, state and local levels (see NPD, 2011; R-PP, 2013).

Nigeria's REDD+ builds on more than a century of colonial and postcolonial conservation interventions. More recent conservation efforts in Cross River peaked with the creation of the Cross River National Park between 1989 and 1991, and the management of enclave and buffer zone communities under an Integrated Conservation and Development Project (ICDP). Most analysts agree that these interventions generally yielded poor conservation and livelihood outcomes (Abua et al., 2013; Asiyambi, 2016; Oates, 1999). Yet, they catalysed the rise of an NGO sector and the growth of socio-environmental entrepreneurs, many of whom are prominent in the REDD+ processes (see Abua et al., 2013; Nuesiri, 2016; cf Rowe, 2015). Many NGO leaders were trained, employed or had volunteered in these earlier

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<sup>8</sup> The moratorium, a total ban on all forms of timber extraction throughout Cross River State, was declared late 2008 but began to take effect in January 2009. It was initially declare as a temporary measure for two years as part of the preparation for the shift to a carbon forestry regime. It was later extended indefinitely as proponents of carbon forestry began wielding the moratorium as an important demonstration of the state's political will to pursue REDD+.

<sup>9</sup> By 2008 Cross River state had accumulated huge financial debts mainly from failed spectacular tourism-oriented projects such as the 50 billion naira Tinapa business resort. Its oil-based federal allocation has also been declining consequent upon the transfer of its crude oil wells to neighbouring Akwa Ibom state. This followed a ruling by the International Court of Justice over Bakassi Peninsular which transferred the erstwhile Cross River peninsular to Cameroon (see Okafor-Yarwood, 2015).

interventions that sought to promote a more participatory conservationism.<sup>10</sup> Likewise, many of the support-zone communities of the Cross River National Park are listed as part of the REDD+ pilot. These communities, composed mainly of farmers, hunters, and forest gatherers, make up 70% of the rural population of Cross River whose livelihoods depend on the forests (NPD, 2011 p.11). Among these scores of REDD+ pilot communities, represented as clusters in Figures 1, are Ekuri, Iko-Esai and Mbe mountain communities which have long histories of forest management and conservation which are recognised nationally and internationally (Okali and Eyog-Matig, 2004; UNEP, 2012).

Given the importance of tenure and property rights to REDD+ (Sunderlin et al., 2013), efforts to implement REDD+ have also entailed various attempts to secure the forest and guarantee the permanence of areas – in both community forests and state forest reserves – marked out for REDD+ (See Figure 1). Besides being a standard REDD+ requirement, these efforts are also linked to a range of aspirations among REDD+ proponents. One is the state's commitment to using forest protection as a demonstration of 'political will' for REDD+, thus guaranteeing continued funding from international REDD+ partners. Another is the will to 'save Nigeria's last rainforest'. This is linked to ecological and ideological imperatives founded upon long-held beliefs especially among conservationists that Cross River forests were "natural" and "pristine" (Alashi, 1999 p.143), and that they showed "no signs of human" (Oates, 1999 p.137). This belief is partly reflected in the desire of REDD+ proponents in the state and among conservation NGOs to pursue conservation at the scale of the ecosystem, and their insistence on regenerating the forest with only trees species considered indigenous, and thus 'natural'. Saving Nigeria's last rainforest only grants a sense of violent urgency to the central requirement of clarifying carbon property rights and securing forests for the creation of economic value in Nigeria's emergent carbon forestry economy. This requirement is evident in project proposals and discourses of project's proponents which articulate with existing land and forest laws within a contested terrain that reinforces the status quo of state control of land and forest. Importantly, material efforts to secure the forest for REDD+ manifest as forms of carbonised exclusion, in which carbon credentials justify state resource control and a regime of militarised protectionism which curtails local resource access while perpetuating both elite capital accumulation and forest decline. This paper now turns to these dynamics by considering the discursive spaces within which carbon property relations are being forged and the material everyday politics of access and the emergent carbonised exclusion.

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<sup>10</sup> WWF UK and Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) played leading roles in these interventions which would lead to the proliferation and consolidation of foreign registered (e.g. Pandrillus, World Conservation Society, Cercopan) and local NGOs (e.g. Living Earth Nigeria, NGO Coalition for the Environment, and Green Concern for Development).

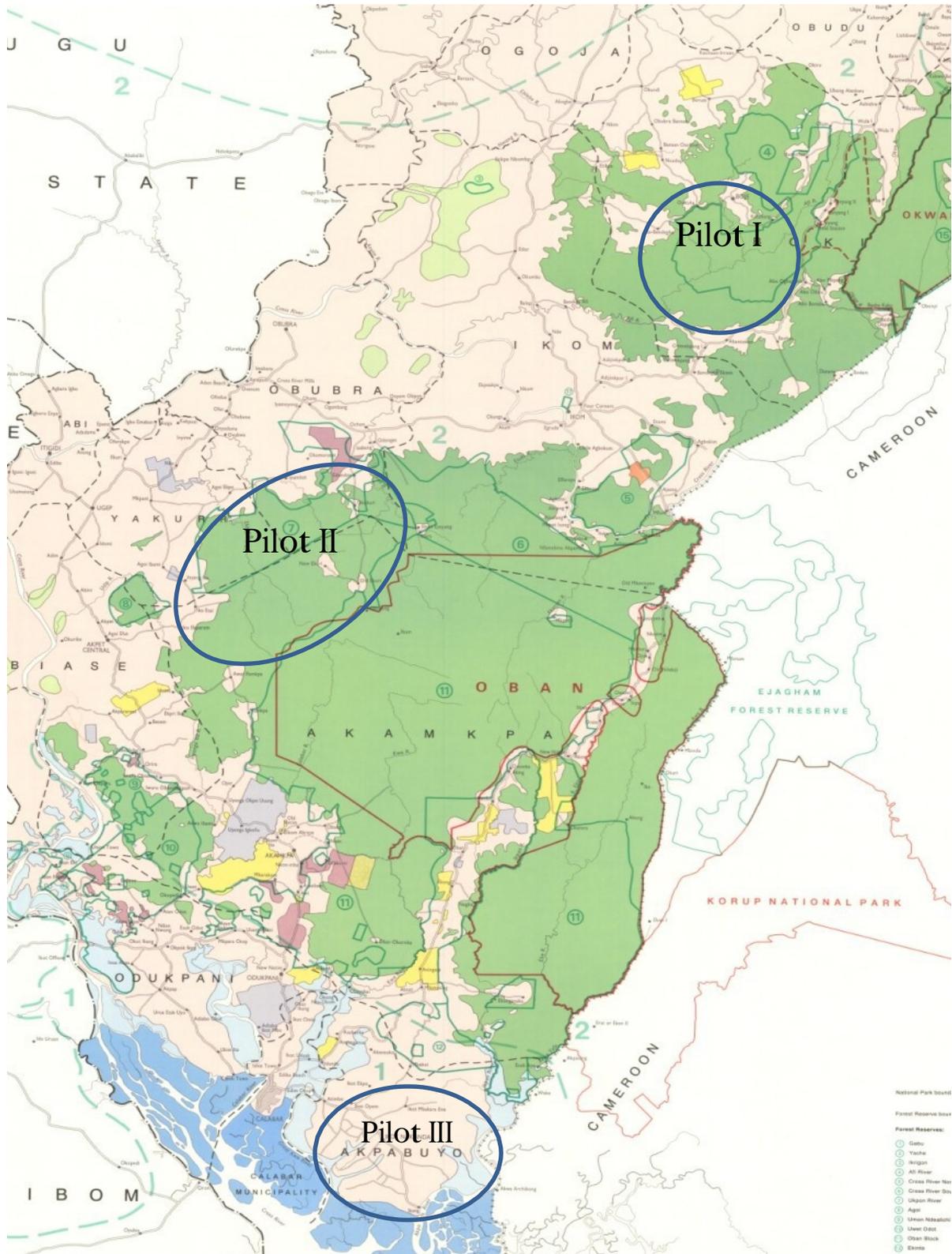


Figure 1: Map of Cross River State showing the location of the three pilot sites for REDD+

Map Source: Cross River State Forestry Commission; Data Source: Oyebo et al., 2010

Notes on REDD+Pilots: I - Mbe-Afi River Forest Reserve cluster: 50,000ha of forest, 18 communities  
 II - Ekuri-Iko Esai cluster: 94,000ha of forest, 12 communities  
 III - Mangrove cluster: 58,000ha of forest, >50 communities

### 3.1 Claiming land, forest and carbon

Forest carbon offsets, like any other commodity or resource, is thoroughly social. The making of carbon offsets from forests entails a complex and dynamic assemblage of actors, visions, processes, institutions, and practices, across multiple scales (Osborne, 2015; Mahanty et al., 2012; Li, 2014). The multiplicity of interests within this assemblage, and the historically contested nature of tropical forests also make forest carbon an eminent political resource (McGregor et al., 2015; Bryant, 1997; Peluso and Vandergeest, 2001). Yet, an important part of this socio-political assemblage is the ordering of the discursive spaces within which actors stake, negotiate and contest claims to the commodity. The need for such discursive ordering and clarification of claims has been described by analysts as a key requirement in REDD+ (Karsenty, et al., 2014; Sunderlin et al., 2013). It is also well reflected in public discourses of REDD+ in Nigeria.<sup>11</sup> For instance, the communiqué of the important National Validation Workshop held in February 2011 to validate the draft National Programme Document (NPD) states, as a matter of priority, the need for “due clarification and definition of carbon rights and land tenure matters as they affect REDD+” (NPD, 2011 p7). For proponents of REDD+, an important starting point for making and clarifying claims to carbon is through articulation with existing laws and institutions guiding rights to land and forests (Mahanty et al., 2013).<sup>12</sup>

### 3.2 Articulations with legal-institutional basis

The most significant law regarding land rights in post-independence Nigeria is the Land Use Decree of 1978 (later adopted by the civilian government as the Land Use Act – LUA of 1991). The LUA vests all land in the Governor of each state who holds it in trust for the people (LUA, 1990). This law builds on the legacy of the British Colonial Administration in Northern Nigeria under Lord Frederick Lugard, who claimed all Northern Nigerian land for the British colonial state, based, ironically, on the indigenous Fulani Maliki law (see Mabogunje, 2010). The LUA thus effectively extended state control beyond forestlands and economic tree species which had systematically come under state regulation through the elaboration and practice of scientific forestry especially in colonial Nigeria (Von Hellermann, 2013). But the LUA would also reinforce the state’s hold on forests, especially since the National Forest Policy (NFP) passed in 2006 only deferred to the LUA in specifying forest ownership: “the 1978 Land Use Act gives the lead on questions of land ownership and tenure. All land is owned, including trees growing on it either by government or private owners.” (NFP, 2006 p.68)<sup>13</sup>. Nevertheless, the National Forestry Policy, like the new Cross River State forestry law, does no more than affirm forest communities as stakeholders, with

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<sup>11</sup> Following understanding of discourses by Escobar, (1999), this paper takes a broader understanding of discourse beyond narrow concern with linguistic regularities.

<sup>12</sup> By articulation, I refer to kind of strategic linking and appropriation of elements into an alliance – in this case emergent claims around carbon and the suite of extant laws defining specifying rights and access to resources.

<sup>13</sup> Nigeria’s National Forest Policy is an ‘on-paper’ policy, since the federal government has no legal claim to forest or land. States formulate and enforce their own policies and laws.

recognised forest management efforts (NFP, 2006). In short, as in many other post-colonial tropical countries where formal and customary land claims overlap, the state retains a *de jure* right to land and forest while communities' *de facto* rights are recognised to varying extent (cf. Cavanagh et al., 2015; Nel and Hill, 2013).

So how are the proponents of REDD+ invoking this existing legal-institutional framework? One important way to understand this is to turn to REDD+ proposals. For instance, the REDD+ Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP, 2013 p52) submitted to the World Bank in 2013 notes that "the National Land Use Act vests ownership of all land in the state government and fails to formally recognize community tenure". This, the proposal observes, presents a problem since "lack of tenure security discourages long-term investment, and given the lack of finance and capacity to adequately enforce protection of dedicated conservation areas, much of the forests are left to predatory and opportunistic behaviour from companies and individuals." (R-PP, 2013 p52; see also Oyebo et al., 2010 p26). Thus, REDD+ proponents put forward a proposal to guarantee "forest use rights" to communities:

Without tenure, communities have little vested interest in their (forest) protection. Providing forest use rights to households, or communities where they can benefit from the area, will provide incentives for them to protect the area and help to stop encroachment. It will also ensure that local communities will benefit from REDD+. Therefore, any National REDD+ Programme must contain an element of ensuring forest use rights to local forest groups (R-PP, 2013 p52).

Remarkable here is the reduction of "community tenure" to "forest use rights" which reflects reluctance to suggest a legally defensible ownership and control rights for communities. This tacit reluctance is emblematic of the contradiction between the rhetoric of tenure security that, as proponents claim above, is supposedly required for long-term investments like REDD+, and the persistent "fear of the poor and of their claims to resources" in both colonial and postcolonial conservation (Peluso and Watts, 2001 p7-8). Also notable is the apparent utilitarian instrumentalist logic behind the call to guarantee use rights for communities. This logic suggests that the desirability of securing community tenure rests on the grounds that communities would, in their own interest, look after the forests if they are made to benefit from it (Resosudarmo et al., 2014). But this logic, in turn, arose mainly from the state's "lack of finance and capacity to adequately enforce protection" without the help of communities (R-PP, 2013 p52). A critical implication of this is that once the state is able to adequately enforce protection of dedicated REDD+ areas (including community forests mapped out for REDD+) – rendering them available – then guaranteeing even community use right might lose priority.

The recognition of the weakness of community tenure under REDD+ and a tacit reluctance to decisively address it run through the discourses of REDD+ proponents across the state, NGOs, and international REDD+ partners. Foresters' reluctance to yield full control over the forest to communities reflects well-known professional, even existential imperatives

(Interview Forestry Director; cf. Blaikie, 2006), while local and foreign NGOs often weigh the prospect of community tenure security against “what they understand to be in their interest” (cf. Bryant, 2005 p203). Thus, what is clearly evident in REDD+ proponents’ articulation with existing legal-institutional framework is a sense of ambiguity and a tacit evasion of the need to guarantee community ownership right over land and forest (cf. Biddulph, 2010). This pattern of ambiguity and evasion in Nigeria and in REDD+ projects more broadly render the determination of carbon right even more complex, thereby allowing for a whole range of possibilities among the complex array of stakeholders that carbon forestry summons (see Mahanty et al., 2012; Resosudarmo et al., 2014). So, how do all these relate to how REDD+ proponents and communities lay claim to carbon?

### 3.3 Claiming carbon: proponents’ discourses

REDD+ proponents make a number of sometimes contradictory claims about carbon rights. First, there are propositions in early REDD+ documents such as the Preliminary Assessment Report suggesting that carbon rights be decoupled from land rights (Oyebo et al, 2010 p94). Some proponents of the scheme maintain that nobody owns carbon and that though there are legislations on the ownership of timber and land, there is currently no document specifying any pattern for carbon ownership (Interview, State REDD+ Coordinator; Interview, REDD+ Consultant). These proponents warn that if current tenure arrangement which puts all land under the state control is strictly translated into carbon rights “that would be a disaster” since it will marginalise communities and other claimants to carbon benefits such as investors and consultants. This is consistent with a view in REDD+ literature that “linking ‘carbon rights’ to land tenure could jeopardize the objective of securing tenure rights for communities and local people, since ... it could encourage governments to refrain from transferring property rights” thereby fostering recentralisation of resource governance (Karsenty et al., 2014 p7; Phelps et al., 2010).

Second, later REDD+ proposals are in fact proposing such links between carbon rights and land rights, with specific reference to state ownership. For instance, the readiness proposal submitted to the World Bank in 2013 notes that while “legal instruments will be needed in order to define carbon rights and the associated benefit sharing mechanisms in any REDD+ endeavour, state ownership would consequently only apply if the land was formally state-owned” (R-PP, 2013 p60). This same document recognizes that “the National Land Use Act vests ownership of all land in the state government and fails to formally recognize community tenure” (R-PP, 2013 p52). This begins to clearly suggest that both the ambiguity and the deference to the status quo in REDD+ policy documents are serving to entrench state right over carbon. This was not lost on the World Bank assessors of the proposal who demanded that “greater clarity on carbon rights is required given state ownership of the land” (World Bank, 2013 p4). NGOs critical of this tendency have mobilized communities to resist the evident threat to community rights (Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the

Earth Nigeria, 2011).<sup>14</sup> As such, there is a strong suggestion in more substantive REDD+ documents to link rights to carbon, land, and forest.

Third, some REDD+ proponents suggest that carbon rights should focus more on sharing rights to benefit from carbon among relevant actors (Interview REDD+ Consultant; R-PP, 2013). This aligns with the view of carbon right as a bundle of rights with actors having different rights within the bundle (cf. Karsenty et al., 2014). However, even this still entails a clarification of the 'owner' in whom the cumulative rights are invested, including the right to fully exclude others. While proponents might claim that the ownership right to carbon from Nigeria's REDD+ is yet to be determined, the exercise by the state of the right to exclude others and protect the forest for the purpose of REDD+ is an indication of who has the rights that matter, not least the right to exclude others. As we shall see later in this article, these rights lie with the state. But state claims are never completely and uniformly pursued. They are often limited, challenged and even transformed by community counter-claims (Beymer-Farris and Bassett, 2012; Mahanty et al., 2012; McAfee and Shapiro, 2010). So, how do communities lay claim to carbon?

### 3.4 Claiming carbon: Community discourses

Communities such as Ekuri and Iko-Esai whose forests are being readied for REDD+ in Cross River have historically claimed de facto ownership of forests through customary institutions, and every day practices of use, management, and protection (Bisong and Andrew-Essien, 2010; Jimoh et al., 2012). These rights are also fostered partly by different kinds of recognition from actors including NGOs, donors, development agencies and researchers (Okali and Matig, 2004; UNEP, 2012). Some of these communities, especially those in the Ekuri-Iko Esai REDD+ cluster, do not differentiate between their forest claims and carbon rights. For them, statements such as "our forest absorbs carbon" leave no questions – at least in their minds – about who owns carbon in their forests (Interviews, Community Leader and Resource Manager). Although some community members are also keenly aware of the possibility that communities might be denied rights to carbon benefits, their reasoning is based less on doubts over ownership rights than over the possibility that REDD+ benefits might be captured by elites (Interview, Community Leader; Interview, Community Member).

Also reinforcing community claims to carbon is the perceived and anticipated sense of control that these communities sometimes express over the process of carbon measurement, accounting, and transaction. For instance, a community resource leader asserted: "our people would do the measuring. So at least we would be able to find out the

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<sup>14</sup> NGOs critical of REDD+ have organised a number of workshops with communities and members of the general public to discuss REDD+, its implementation and its potential adverse impacts on communities. These workshops have issued communiqués and circulated more critical accounts of REDD+ in efforts to sensitize communities to challenge the excesses of REDD+. In my interviews with them, community members have referred to these workshops as sources of alternative REDD+ discourses by which they evaluate and challenge the claims and promises of REDD+ proponents (see Lang, 2011).

truth about carbon content from people who would do the measuring. And we know the price of carbon... it is we who would tell them what carbon is in our forest and what it costs and we will know what our share of the benefit will be” (Interview, Community Resource Manager). Community youths confidently described how a machine will be brought by project proponents for them to use in measuring carbon, and how they will directly be in charge of the project (Interview, Community Youth Leader). Invocation of REDD+ safeguard conditionalities, especially Free Prior and Informed Consent by some REDD+ communities also reinforce community claims to forest and carbon (Interviews, Community Resource Managers).<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, the sense of control and ownership of carbon and forests expressed by communities does not preclude a readiness to share benefits from carbon, as gathered from community resource managers, and communities histories of shared access to land, forest and farmland (Interview, Community Leader and Resource Manager). However, tension ensues when communities are denied ownership right to carbon and other resources or when they are marginalised in the distribution of carbon benefits. An example is the state-proposed carbon credit sharing formula for REDD+ benefit which has been quietly included in the appendices of the new “Forestry Regulation and Tariffs for market and transportation of forest products and other forestry prescribed fees” dated August 2012.<sup>16</sup> The proposal which allocated the least proportion (10%) of carbon benefits in all forest types to communities has been challenged by community leaders (Interview Community Leader). Meanwhile, communities had received (at least in theory) up to 70% of timber royalty prior to the moratorium.

As such, indications in government laws, REDD+ documents, and proponents’ discourses reveal that forest communities occupy a less certain position with respect to carbon rights and rights to forest and land (cf Asiyanbi, 2015; Schoneveld, 2014). And since the material and the spatial basis for timber and carbon significantly overlap, the retention of the forest as carbon stock precludes its availability for a whole range of other uses, claims of REDD+ ‘co-benefits’ notwithstanding. This is even more so in Cross River where proponents of REDD+ seek to implement REDD+, not as one of various forest management strategies, but as an overarching and total forest strategy. The co-ordinator of REDD+ in Cross River who doubles as the Chair of the State Forestry Commission Board observes: “...before we came in, the mindset and the tradition towards forestry are that it is for exploitation of timber, that's all. But we rather felt there is a need to replace that with carbon forestry...” (emphasis mine). The concurrent materiality of timber and carbon means that forest access, an important dimension of property rights, must change as proponents attempt the

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<sup>15</sup> Safeguards are standard principles outlined by REDD+ donor agencies, and which recipient states must abide by in mitigating the negative impacts of projects on forest communities, indigenous peoples and the environment.

<sup>16</sup> The inclusion of a carbon benefit sharing code in this document never came to wider knowledge of most actors involved in REDD+ and was never the subject of a prior public consultation or debate. However, the document itself is available in the Forestry Commission headquarter and with few community leaders.

complex and contested process of replacing timber forestry with a total carbon forestry strategy. It is in recognition of this that the state declared a total logging ban in all forest areas in the first place. The discursive contestations so far analysed here are not merely consistent with various everyday efforts to secure forest areas for REDD+, they, in fact, authorise and legitimise these material processes which manifest in changing local access and ultimately as forms of carbonised exclusion.

#### 4.0 Everyday politics of access

Access is understood as the most basic of the bundle of rights in a resource, which is the right to benefit from the resource (Agrawal and Ostrom, 1999). Yet, following Ribot and Peluso (2003), access is also broadened to include the ability to derive benefits from a resource. This suggests that factors that mediate access to a resource go beyond formal right and recognition of this right. They include the totality of the agency, processes, and relations which enable or constrain an individual's chances of benefiting from a resource.

Indications of impending changes to community access to forest resources began to surface, first, in policy documents. Proposals marked out the entirety of forest areas held by pilot communities as REDD+ areas, with the important implication that proposals left no forest area for community livelihood and cultural activities (see Figure 1). Further, the Project Idea Notes (PIN) for REDD+ specified that: "the project is viable and attractive to carbon finance only if the project area includes the multiple community forests and forest reserves. A project considering only one of these areas would not be viable on its own" (Oyebo et al., 2010 p.89). Hence the clustering of forests and communities that lay claim to them. Clustering became the basis of a whole range of strategies to rescale, discipline, and render local forest governance legible to carbon grants (from international REDD+ institutions such as the World Bank and the UN), and ultimately global carbon market. This was based not on any pre-existing community ties but solely on forest contiguity and biodiversity potentials (see Ravilious et al., 2010). Unsurprisingly, this process that attempts to re-work existing community governance arrangements is stoking tension among communities.

An example is the boundary tension the project is stoking between Ekuri and Iko Esai, the two most prominent communities in the Ekuri-Iko Esai cluster. Iko Esai had contacted a REDD+ consultant (through a letter dated 17 February 2010) requesting "the sponsors of the carbon credit scheme to really find out the true position of Iko Esai for an appropriate boundary between the Iko Esai and Ekuri people, before a concrete execution of this noble project". This letter received no decisive attention. Yet, Ekuri community, warns that "the payment for ecosystem services is the underlying reason for Iko Esai's claims and frantic attempts to illegitimately gain control of part of Ekuri's forest ... and any attempt by Iko Esai to trespass...will be severely resisted" (Ekuri Community, 2011 p 10-11). Meanwhile, in Mbe-Afi REDD+ cluster in the North of Cross River, Mbe Mountains forest communities are

opposed to 'clustering up' with government-owned Afi forest area for fear of losing control of forest to the government. Mbe area had been under the close watch of conservationists who had proposed, without success, that the area which was considered an important wildlife corridor become part of the Cross River National Park between 1989 and 1991 (Oates, 1999; Ite and Adams, 1998). As such, it would appear that the more proponents of REDD+ seek to cluster community forests on maps as a continuous stretch of forest, the more communities are driven to further inscribe their own forest boundaries on the ground, prompting deeper local tensions.

Besides these smouldering tensions, clustered REDD+ pilot areas have become the focus of state efforts to secure property rights and retool local forest governance for REDD+. These efforts have entailed a two-pronged approach, namely incentivisation and militarised protectionism. However, since this incentivisation involves a one-time payment only to selected communities – an intervention that has proven inadequate to really incentivise forest conservation – the government has committed far more sustained efforts to protecting the forest.<sup>17</sup> Militarised protectionism is so central to Nigeria's REDD+ for a number of reasons. First, it represents the practical demonstration of the government's de jure powers to control land and by extension forest resources even in community forests. Second, such a demonstration underpins international support for Nigeria's REDD+, since it is often touted as a clear indication of 'political will' by the state government, and an indication that forest areas under REDD+ will be protected. Third, as a result of its material and symbolic facilitation of REDD+, militarised protectionism gains legitimacy as a hub around which a new exclusionary forest economy is organised, facilitating elite capital accumulation as wider public access to forest resources is curtailed. It is this third and the most important dimension that is at the core of carbonised exclusion.

## 5.0 Carbonised exclusion

As earlier noted, carbonised exclusion refers to the political economy of more-than-carbon forest resources which plays out through processes of exclusion and elite accumulation, justified by carbon forestry claims. Besides their role in facilitating the carbon economy, processes of enclosure and exclusion also constitute layers of 'more-than-carbon' political economies. In the case of Nigerian REDD+, carbon credentials justify entrenched state control and a regime of militarised protectionism which undermine community tenure security and local resource access while perpetuating both elite capital accumulation and forest decline. The rest of this paper will consider the key dimensions of carbonised exclusion in the Nigerian case, focusing on 1) militarised protectionism under REDD+; 2)

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<sup>17</sup> With the ban on timber exploitation, the State government introduced a flat-rate payment called 'loyalty' to replace the erstwhile timber 'royalty' received by forest communities from all timber extraction. Loyalty was a one-time payment to each community at the value of 100,000 Nigerian Naira (or USD 625) per annum, though timber royalty to some of these communities was as high as one million Nigerian Naira (or USD 6,250) per annum.

political economy of timber revenue; and 3) local access to Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs).

### 5.1 Carbonised exclusion: militarised protectionism under REDD+

As part of efforts to kick-start REDD+ in Nigeria, Cross River State had set up an Anti-deforestation Task Force (ATF) to protect the forest for REDD+. The ATF became a full-fledged Unit in 2011 after an American primate conservationist was appointed its Chair. That five out of the 11-member ATF Board are representatives of state military and security outfits (including the army, the navy, and the police) immediately indicates the militarised nature of the ATF. Critical scholars have sought to explain the convergence of wider and situated factors that underpin the ascendancy of discourses and practices of militarisation and securitization in conservation (see Lunstrum, 2014; Duffy, 2016; Cavanagh et al., 2015). Militarisation of REDD+ in Nigeria crystallized as the valorisation of the forest as carbon drives widespread criminalisation of the timber economy in Cross River. This intersects with the permanent militarisation of the Niger-Delta since the end of Nigeria's Civil War in 1970, the imbuing of Cross River forests with a nationalist value as 'Nigeria's last rainforest', and the alleged discovery of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in Cross River forests which lie south of the notorious Sambisa forest base of the terrorist group, Boko Haram.

In any case, the machinery of the ATF works with such efficacy that its Chair once boasted of its omnipresence: "we can be found anywhere, at any time. We show up anywhere in force!" (Green, 2009 p2). The ATF Board has co-opted some four dozens of state military and private security personnel, and a dispersed network of paid staff, paid informants and volunteers. In one year alone (2012) the ATF had reported a range of seized items: 105 chainsaws, 46 vehicles, 24 canoes, and 4 tractors. In 2013, it recorded: 184 chainsaws, 12 tractors, 89 vehicles, 20 canoes, 12 water pumping machines and hundreds of tons of timber. Cases of 'forest offenders' piled up so quickly that the ATF requested for the establishment of a mobile court which was established in February 2014. Yet, this efficacy which is violently exercised upon petty loggers and local communities – the main victims of the emergent carbonised exclusion – hides a significant level of illegality and deforestation that is, paradoxically, abetted by the ATF. For instance, the Legal Secretary who is also the Chief Prosecutor of the ATF confirms that up to 40% of the activities of the ATF itself is in illegal timber dealings and corrupt practices.<sup>18</sup> Corruption in the ATF is a public knowledge, having been variously revealed in state and national newspapers (e.g. Agbakwuru, 2012; Uzongu, 2012). What is difficult to assay is the extent.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The Legal Secretary of the Task Force, a civil servant seconded from the state ministry of justice to the Task Force, has a deep knowledge of, and often decried the illegalities in the ATF.

<sup>19</sup> These emergent dynamics hold implications and lessons for such initiatives as the European Union-led Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) of which Nigeria is a partner country. In the light of such impacts under REDD+ law enforcement, claims of synergy between REDD+ and FLEGT would require greater tempering.

Equally important is the spatial reach of the ATF, which is, in turn, an indication of carbon forestry's spatial ambition. Though only three pilot areas had been mapped out for REDD+ demonstration (as shown in Figure 1), the logging ban covered the total area of the state. This total logging ban was also meant to forestall state-level leakage, an important conditionality in REDD+. But there is more to this totalizing scope. NGO champions of REDD+ and the ATF seek an expansive landscape approach to forest protection. For instance, the Chair of the ATF asserts: "Cross River must be managed in its entirety because it is an entire ecosystem that supports human beings" (Interview, ATF Chair). This pursuit of forest protection at the level of the ecosystem is linked to a long-standing pursuit among conservationists in Cross River to establish wildlife corridors across some of the current REDD+ forests, especially in the northern Cross River REDD+ cluster (Ite and Adams, 1998). All these are linked to the wider pursuit of saving Nigeria's last rainforest, a cause which grants a sense of violent urgency to forest protection in Cross River partly by imbuing conservation spaces with nationalist values (see Lunstrum, 2014 for a similar process in South Africa's Kruger National Park). Consequently, local access to forests has been significantly curtailed.

The ways in which this militarised protectionism restructures forest access manifest as forms of carbonised exclusion. Having discussed militarised protectionism as an important node of the emergent carbonised exclusion, the following subsections (5.2 and 5.3) consider two other dimensions of this phenomenon, that is, capital accumulation by the ATF and other elites, and the undermining of local livelihoods in the non-timber forest product sector.

## 5.2 Carbonised exclusion: political economy of timber revenue

An analysis of the political economy of the timber is one of the important ways through which to appreciate how state protectionism redistributes and concentrates economic power in the hands of select elites. If Harvey's (2005 p.178) accumulation by dispossession "entails the loss of rights (through) fragmented and particular" processes, these processes in Nigeria's REDD+ would include the deployment of violence and intimidation, surveillance, law enforcement and prosecution, and abetted illegal logging all of which combine to deny local resource users forest access but at the same time facilitate a timber economy attuned to elites' interest.

The ATF's strategy for apprehending illegal logging mainly entails dispersed informants listening for chainsaws during on-going logging and conversion operations, and relaying information to the central ATF base. The other main strategy involves apprehending timber in transit or at points of sale (in timber markets). These mean that even if we put aside the illegalities it actively abets (as early noted), the ATF's main strategy of apprehending loggers during and after felling does not effectively prevent actual cutting of trees which has somehow continued in the absence of any alternative provision for public wood needs. Rather it often would confiscate timber being cut or those already cut. An important

implication of this is that the ATF, ironically, became the custodian of a thriving and significantly lucrative timber economy under the logging ban. Usually, confiscated timber is auctioned off, generating revenue. The ‘forest offender’ is prosecuted in the mobile court, and, if found guilty (which is often the case), imprisoned or made to pay significant fines – another revenue source. The cash flow of the ATF, shown in Table 1 is an important indication of how economic power is being concentrated, for instance, among the few actors who command the ATF.

Items	Amount in Naira (NGN) 12-month period (2012 -2013)	Amount in US Dollars (USD) 12-month period (2012 -2013)
ATF revenue (A; from sales and fines)	83,253,280	520,333
ATF Subvention (Upkeep allowance)	67,200,000	420,000
ATF revenue remitted to state purse (C)	20,311,920	126,950
ATF-controlled capital=(A+B)-C	130,141,360	813,384

Table 1: Summary of ATF accounts for 2012-2013

Source: ATF Office, 2014

Note: NGN 1 = USD 160 (Average rate as at December 2013)

What is striking in Table 1, sourced from discretely handled ATF documents, is the huge size of the timber economy controlled by the ATF under a total logging ban.<sup>20</sup> As its own legal adviser estimates, as much as 40% of the transactions and dealing of the ATF are illegal timber deals the proceeds of which escape formal records since they go into the pockets of the ATF elites and their patrons in the military and in the timber industry. As such, the revenue values reported here could as well be increased by as much as 40%. But even at the reported sales and fines proceeds of NGN 83,253,280 per annum, the ATF under a moratorium regime still sets a record of timber revenue for the state in any 12-month period, as a review of historical timber revenue reveals. The total ‘running cost’ of the ATF in one year NGN 130,141,360 (after NGN 20,311,920 is remitted to the state government’s purse) is more than three times the annual budget for all forestry capital projects in the state. Put in another way, the ATF’s total revenue of USD 813,384 is more than the World Bank’s USD 3.6million grant for Nigeria’s REDD+ over five years. This means that despite the ban, and in spite of REDD+ funds, there is still sufficient incentive for the illegal timber economy under the ATF’s control to continue since the NGN 130,141,360 revenue pays the

<sup>20</sup> Handing the ATF account information to me, a top ATF Officer noted that the account information had been kept away from most officers of the Forestry Commission and the general public. The former had accused the ATF of corruption, wastage of state resources and lack of transparency.

salaries, allowances and other running costs of the relatively small ATF band and their associates (Interview, ATF Legal Secretary; see also Uzundu, 2012). Another implication is that the timber royalty which hitherto went to communities now forms part of the ATF controlled capital within this formal, illegal timber economy.

Yet, a corollary of this thriving illegal timber economy is continued deforestation. In fact, all indications point to a much greater level of deforestation under the logging ban for REDD+. For instance, foresters (both serving and retired), some conservation NGOs, and local communities note that deforestation has increased or at least continued like before, pointing to constant sighting of movement of timber on the road and in rivers, corrupt dealings among ATF staff, cheaper prices of wood in neighbouring states to which much of the illegal timber now go, and also increased forest clearing for farming by displaced small-scale loggers and timber dealers. This is further confirmed by deforestation figures from the Global Forest Watch, which showed that the extent of deforestation in Cross River state has more than doubled each successive year since 2012. As Figure 2 shows, while deforestation decreased in the early years of the ATF activities (2010 to 2012), the extent of deforestation more than doubled between 2012 and 2013, and between 2013 and 2014. In fact, the 16,770 hectares of deforestation recorded in the three years 2012, 2013 and 2014 accounted for about 80% of the 21,100 hectares total deforestation in 14 years between 2001 and 2014. At least two things are clear: such staggering level of deforestation could not have occurred unaided by the ATF itself; and the repression of public wood needs in the early REDD+ years has bitten back, driving deforestation well past pre-REDD+ levels, even if commercial agricultural clearance in forest areas is also partly responsible for this rate (see Schoneveld, 2014).

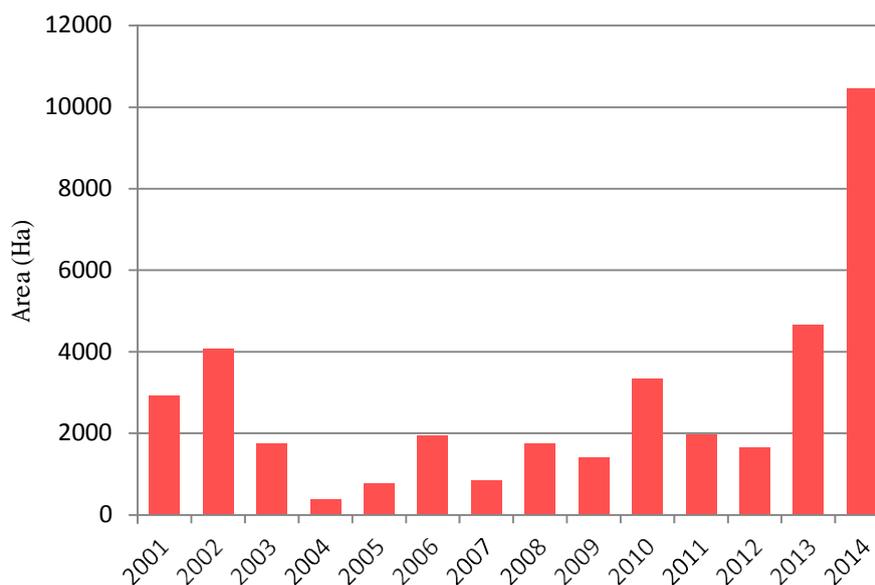


Figure 2: Extent of Tree Cover Loss in Cross River State (2001 – 2014)

Source: Global Forest Watch, 2016

Note: This data is based on 30% canopy density

Meanwhile, REDD+ proponents continue to wield the appearance of forest protection as an important indication of political will to the more removed international REDD+ partners and funding agencies, who continue to grant financial and technical support for REDD+. The state REDD+ coordinator notes: “If we are able to generate income from non-timber activities, I feel very strongly that we can extend the logging moratorium” (Filou, 2010 p2). As such, REDD+ drives capital accumulation both in the supposedly criminalised timber economy (controlled by the ATF, the military, and powerful timber dealers), and in the carbon economy (controlled by other REDD+ proponents). Yet, these accumulation processes could only have been possible through forms of exclusion which have implications for local livelihood and public wellbeing. Here, I briefly highlight exclusion from non-timber forest products (NTFPs) to give an indication of impacts of carbonised exclusion outside the timber economy.

### 5.3 Carbonised exclusion: accessing Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)

NTFPs such as fruits, vegetables, shrubs, canes, and wild game are an important part of community livelihood and wellbeing, since they are sources of food, clothing, shelter, ornaments, cultural artefacts, spiritual items, and income (Mfon et al., 2014; Ite and Adams, 2000). Besides, communities directly tax commercial NTFP collectors to buoy communal livelihood. For instance, Ekuri, a prominent community and one with the greatest forest extent (33,000 hectares) in the Ekuri-Iko Esai REDD+ pilot cluster had described the contribution of NTFPs to community development: “proceeds from sale of non-timber forest products and levies have enabled the initiative to build a 40km road, culverts, and bridges, so that farm and forest products can be transferred to markets, and that supplies can be brought for the building of two schools, a health centre and a civic centre....” (cited in UNEP, 2012 p.9). Though REDD+ methodologies do not seek to account for carbon in NTFPs, the ecosystem logic driving total enforcement of the logging ban in Cross River has meant that the ATF extended the logging ban to include a whole range of NTFPs including rattan, chewing stick, cattle stick, and firewood. This has been a very controversial move. It is a major source of conflict between the ATF and foresters who seek to ensure a steady supply of NTFPs to the public<sup>21</sup>. Not only did the 2012 annual report of the Commission identify this conflict as a major institutional constraint, a director of the Forestry Commission also laments:

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<sup>21</sup> The Forestry Commission has historically regulated the extraction of woody and commercialised non-timber forest products such including rattan, chewing stick, cattle stick, and fire wood, by issuing permits to collectors and dealers.

There is a conflict between the Forestry Commission and the Task Force Unit over revenue generation from NTFPs. Okay, you say we should keep hands off timber, what about the non-timber forest products? Whenever our people issue permits to collectors of NTFPs, the Task Force would impound the products from the collectors. Things like chewing stick (*Garcinia* sp.), shepherd's staff (*Carpolobia* sp.) – they impound these products from collectors so that people now question why they should come to the Forestry Commission to pay huge amount for permits when the products would be impounded by the Task Force. They now prefer to go extract these products illegally (Interview, Forestry Director).

Local communities and NTFP collectors whose livelihoods and businesses have been undermined by the ATF have written several petitions to the Cross River State Governor without succour. One such petition accessed at the Forestry Commission was written by Agbokim community, dated 28 November 2011, and was addressed to the State Governor. The community made a desperate plea for rescue from “the untold hardship [which] Peter Jenkins, the Chair of the Anti-deforestation Task Force is impacting on us outside of the law” (Agbokim, 2011 p1). They petitioned that “after having obtained a valid document from the Forestry Commission to officially evacuate processed chewing stick from Agbokim village, he (Peter Jenkins) impounded our vehicle” (Agbokim, 2011 p1). Failing such petitions, communities have resorted to everyday acts of resistance including the defilement of the repressive ban to access NTFPs – acts that the ATF would regard as ‘pilfering’ and other ‘forest offences’ (cf. Bryant, 1997; Scott, 1985). The ATF thus continued to arrest and prosecute local people for accessing NTFPs. For instance, the “forest offenders” arraigned in the mobile court which held on the premises of the Cross River State Secretariat in Calabar on 20 May, 2014 included two young men who were accused of “illegal transportation of cattle stick (*Carpolobia* sp)”, and were each sentenced to 1 year imprisonment or an option of fine amounting to NGN 470,000 (\$ 2,930 or 26 times the national minimum monthly wage). Another was accused of “cutting of cane in the forest” and was discharged after payment of NGN 10,000 fine.<sup>22</sup> Such were the NTFP cases for which people were arrested, harassed and arraigned in the forestry court.

Taken together, the curtailment of access to NTFPs, the specific political economy of timber revenue, and the workings of the state's militarised protectionism are interlinked dimensions of carbonised exclusion. Remarkable is how militarised protectionism began to form the core of an emergent political economy which is linked to timber-based capital accumulation by elites and the simultaneous exclusion of local communities from timber and non-timber forest resources. Yet this economy could not have been legitimised, even enabled without its material and symbolic facilitation of the carbon economy, and REDD+ to be precise. While carbonised exclusion continues to facilitate progress of the REDD+ readiness processes, ensuring the security of property in REDD+ forest and continuous flow

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<sup>22</sup> Evidence is based on a combination of personal observation at some of the court proceedings between February and June, 2014; and official documentation of these proceedings filed by the ATF.

of international grants and ultimately market-like performance-based payments, it is the more-than-carbon political economies of timber and non-timber forest produce that wreak immediate consequences for communities and local resources users. It is also at this level that the impacts of emergent property relations partly negotiated through discourses find expression in material terms.

## 6.0 Conclusion

This paper has analysed a political ecology of REDD+ in Nigeria, focusing on the complexities of property relations and the accumulation-exclusion dialectic which underpins various forms of carbonised exclusion. Through the case of Nigeria, it has sought to advance two main claims. The first is that emergent tenure complexities and the effects they are precipitating are not problems which a discrete REDD+ policy suddenly encounters ‘out there’. Rather these conditions are immanent to the contested terrain constituted in part by REDD+ proposals, proponents’ discourses and practices geared towards securing the forest for REDD+. Nigeria’s REDD+ proposals and their implementation do not only reinforce state control of forests, they also authorise and justify a range of actions including the re-specification of local forest governance through clustering, the militarisation of the forests landscape, the widespread exclusion of local resources users from the forest economy, and elite capital accumulation.

The second major claim advanced in this paper is that the regime of resource exclusion through which emergent property rights play out and a carbon forestry economy is facilitated also constitutes a collateral political economy of more-than-carbon resources. This is what this paper advances as carbonised exclusion. As demonstrated in the case of Nigeria, carbonised exclusion manifests through a political economy in which claims to carbon mitigation legitimise a militarised exclusion of local forest users from timber and non-timber forest resources, while facilitating elite capital accumulation. As such, carbonised exclusion extends the accumulation – exclusion dialectic, showing how analyst must pay attention to not only carbon-based value creation but also to layers of more-than-carbon economies which are legitimised by carbon claims. At the same time, carbonised exclusion would prove useful as an analytical category to interrogate similar processes in REDD+ and other carbon forestry projects elsewhere.

While technocentric scholarship on REDD+ property relations admits the existence of the kind of complexities that carbonised exclusion represents; it however does not often acknowledge that REDD+ policies and practices cannot be isolated from analyses of such complexities unfolding across locales (see Awono et al., 2014; Resosudarmo et al., 2014; Sunderlin et al., 2013). Rather measures such as intensified law enforcement, moratorium, militarisation which are becoming common means for pursuing REDD+ (see Cavanagh et al., 2015) are taken by technocentric scholars as “alternative policy options” through which

REDD+ implementers seek to address tenure complexities in locales (Bolin et al., 2013 p1). But these measures, as demonstrated in the case of Nigeria, only further complicate resource relations rather than resolve them. Specifically, a totalizing moratorium together with the militarisation of the forest is driving greater levels of illegality, with adverse impacts on both the forest sustainability and local forest access and governance. As such, emergent complexities in REDD+, as exemplified by carbonised exclusion analysed in this paper cannot be understood outside of these alternative REDD+ policy measures, which in Nigeria as elsewhere, efface the reality of rural poverty, weak institutions, historical conditions, and entrenched self-interest among the varieties of actors summoned by REDD+.

Conversely, political ecology critically scrutinizes these complexities as partly immanent to REDD+ policies and practices, and as partly constituted through ongoing struggles, histories and geographies of specific places. Framing these complexities in terms of carbonised exclusion expands existing understanding of the political ecology of carbon forestry. It does so by further specifying the accumulation – exclusion dialectic which has been fundamental to materialist critiques of carbon forestry and by showing how more-than-carbon political economies are of immediate and possibly greater implications for local communities and forest sustainability than the carbon economy proper.

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