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Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI)
Supporting Resilient Forest Livelihoods
through Local Representation

The Process of Institutional Choice and Recognition for Decentralized Forest Management in Charcoal-Producing Zones of Tambacounda, Senegal

Poonam Jusrut

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Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) Research Programme

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is a research and training program, focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It is jointly managed by the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC). It is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The RFGI activities are focused on 12 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The initiative is also training young, in-country policy researchers in order to build an Africa-wide network of environmental governance analysts.

Nations worldwide have introduced decentralization reforms aspiring to make local government responsive and accountable to the needs and aspirations of citizens so as to improve equity, service delivery and resource management. Natural resources, especially forests, play an important role in these decentralizations since they provide local governments and local people with needed revenue, wealth, and subsistence. Responsive local governments can provide forest resource-dependent populations the flexibility they need to manage, adapt to and remain resilient in their changing environment. RFGI aims to enhance and help institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local wellbeing, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions.

REDD+ is a global Programme for disbursing funds, primarily to pay national governments of developing countries, to reduce forest carbon emission. REDD+ will require permanent local institutions that can integrate local needs with national and international objectives. The results from RFGI Africa research will be compared with results from collaborators in Asia and South America in order to enhance RFGI comparative scope, and to broaden its geographic policy relevance.

RFGI Working Paper Series Editors' Note

James Murombedzi, Jesse Ribot

and Gretchen Walters

Struggles for control over and access to nature and natural resources; struggles over land, forests, pastures and fisheries, are struggles for survival, self determination, and meaning. Natural resources are central to rural lives and livelihoods: they provide the material resources for survival, security, and freedom. To engage in the world requires assets that enable individuals, households, and communities to act in and on the world around them. The ability to accumulate assets and the ability to access government and market services depends partly on such resources along with the political-economic infrastructure – rights, recourse, representation, markets, and social services – that are the domain of government. Democracy, which both enables and requires the freedom to act, is predicated on these assets and infrastructures. Since the 1980s, African governments have been implementing local government decentralization reforms aimed at making local government more democratic by making them responsive and accountable to citizen needs and aspirations; in many places this has been done through a decentralisation of natural resource governance to local administrations. In order to be responsive to individual, household and community demands, local governments, too, need resources and decision-making powers. There must be a public domain – a set of public resources, such as forests or fisheries, which constitute this domain of democracy, the domain of decisions and services that citizens can demand of government. Natural resources, when decentralized into the domain of local authority, form an important part of the resources of individuals, households, communities and governments, making possible this move toward local democracy.

Natural resources provide local governments and people with wealth and subsistence. While nature is not the only source of rural income, the decentralization of natural resources governance is a core component of local government reform. However, governance reforms have been implemented in a context broadly characterized by an enduring crisis of the Western economic and financial systems, which in turn has stimulated privatization and liberalization in every sphere of life, including nature. The process has deprived local governments of public resources – depriving individuals and communities of a reason to engage, as a powerless government is not worth trying to influence. Privatization is depriving forest-dependent peoples of their access to formerly 'public' or traditionally managed resources. National governments, as well as international bodies such as the United Nations programme, titled the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), further this trend as they collaborate with private interests to promote the privatization of natural resources. The resulting enclosures threaten the wellbeing of resource-dependent populations and the viability of democratic reforms.

The specter of climate change is deepening the crisis of enclosure. A key response to climate change has been the attempt to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through enhancing the capacity of forests in the developing world to store carbon, ostensibly for the benefit of the atmosphere as well as the communities who use these forests. UN REDD seeks to pay communities, through their national governments, to conserve their forests as carbon storage. A plus '+' was added to REDD, forming REDD +, to call for improved ecosystems services, forest management, conservation, forest restoration and afforestation to enhance the capacity for carbon storage. Designed on the basis of similar payments for environmental services (PES) schemes, REDD+ has the potential to inject vast new sums of money into local resource use and governance. In the context of fragile local governments, nascent democracies and powerful private interests, such cash inflows result in the commercialization and privatization of forests and natural resources and the dispossession of local resource users. This financialization of natural resources grossly diminishes the scope for democratic natural resource governance schemes. To be sure, the implementation of REDD+ can also learn from and avoid the pitfalls experienced in these PES schemes, especially if they represent local interests in natural resource governance decision making.

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is an Africa-wide environmental-governance research and training program focusing on enabling responsive and accountable decentralization to strengthen the representation of forest-based rural people in local-government decision making. Since January

2012, the programme has carried out 33 case studies in 12 African countries, with comparative cases Nepal and Peru, to assess the conditions under which central authorities devolve forest management and use decisions to local government, and the conditions that enable local government to engage in sound, equitable and pro-poor forest management. Aimed at enabling local government to play an integrative role in rural development and natural resource management, these case studies are now being finalized and published to elicit public discourse and debate on local government and local democracy. This Working Paper series will publish the RFGI case studies as well as other comparative studies of decentralized natural resources governance in Africa and elsewhere that focus on the interesction between local democracy and natural resource management schemes. Using the concepts of institutional choice and recognition, the cases deal with a comprehensive range of issues in decentralized forest management in the context of REDD+, including the institutional choices of intervening agencies; the effects of such choices on accountability and representation; and the relationships between local government and other local institutions. The series will also include syntheses discussing the main findings of the RFGI research programme.

Based at CODESRIA, and funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the RFGI is a three year collaborative initiative of CODESRIA, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). RFGI working papers and documents, including the background papers, the RFGI programme description, and the RFGI Methods Handbook, can be found on line at:

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Abstract

In Senegal, the mix of local institutions entrusted with forest resource management is an outcome of choices made by the national government and international agencies. This paper explores how local institutional partners are chosen by national and international institutions in a decentralized forest governance context. In the Tambacounda region of Senegal, Forest Management Committees (FMCs) run by members of the public were created and chosen by USAID and World Bank projects to work with the democratically elected local government (the rural council) and the forestry services. Although the new multi-institution configuration presents potential for democratic resource management, the ensuing division of tasks among the various chosen institutions created new opportunities for collusion among elites who captured positions in the chosen institutions. Such a capture involved a small number of favourably placed villagers intercepting a disproportionately large amount of benefits from forest resources and excluding the poor majority of the population. Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina's (2008) 'Institutional Choice and Recognition' framework provided the overarching conceptual lens and Grindle's (2005) 'Process of Policy and Institutional reform', was used to operationalize the analysis of the institutional choice component.

1

Introduction

In Senegal, forest resources are essential in meeting Senegal's domestic energy demands (Tappan et al. 2004; World Bank 2010). Ensuring the supply of forest-based fuel to Senegal's urban centres and the creation of income-generating opportunities for the rural communities required a reconfiguration of the local institutional mix for managing the resource. The country's 1996 decentralization laws and 1998 'decentralized' forestry code allowed the rural communities, represented by the elected local Rural Councils, to have the right to manage and commercially produce charcoal in their forests. The institutions that manage access to the natural resources are vital to the livelihood of local communities, especially in poor rural regions where income-generation opportunities are scarce. The local-level institutions chosen and recognized by the higher-level institutions influence the way that local populations have an equitable control over and access to their forests.

The mix of local institutions managing forest resources in rural Senegal is explained in this paper as an output of the process of institutional choice and recognition led by national government and international agencies. The local institutions implementing policy reform and project actions were chosen to serve several specific purposes. In this case, the purposes were mainly to achieve the goals of meeting the increase in demand for wood-based charcoal in Senegal's urban centres in an environmentally sustainable way, of creating wealth in the rural charcoal-producing zones where the forests are located, and of enhancing the forest resource management abilities of the rural communities through supporting participatory and democratic institutions. These goals and the local institutions chosen to help achieve them were decisions taken by higher-level institutions.

The analysis of institutional choice, i.e. the process through which higher-scale agencies choose the institutions they will work with in the local arena, aims at understanding why certain institutions (and not others) are being chosen and

recognized by the central government and donor agencies (Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008). Institutional recognition involves the acknowledgement and support of the chosen institution via the transfer of powers to them, partnership in projects or their involvement in decision-making activities (Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008). Institutional choices are made by higher-level institutions in order to have local partners to implement the strategies adopted by the state and donors and to involve local rural communities in the execution of the project. Since powers and resources tend to be concentrated at the centres, be it the national government of Senegal or the international agencies located in the West, they have to be devolved or transferred from those higher-level institutions to selected local ones. This study examines the process through which the institutional choices are made as these choices have implications for the establishment of democratic decentralization: a goal of government and of the projects. Democratic decentralization is believed to foster democratic representation at the local level. Democratic representation is framed as accountability and responsiveness of leaders to the people. It could be considered as a means of politically empowering a wider swath of the populations in those rural communities and keeping in check the calculated actions fuelled by the self-preservation and/or predatory instincts of those who have significant economic interests and who are well positioned to exploit the institutional machinery (Przeworski et al. 1999; Beck 2008; Young 1997; van de Walle 2001).

Developing managed exploitation of a profitable natural resource at the local rural level in Africa involves a whole set of policy and institutional reforms. The state and the customary authorities are no longer the sole managers and custodians of commercially exploitable forests in Senegal. There are now additional institutional nodes that share those forest management functions. Each institutional node represents one institution delimited by its own sets of rules, being a composite of actors, powers ascribed to it and any mechanisms of accountability (Jusrut forthcoming). In addition to the democratically elected local government known as the Rural Councils and the Ministry of Environment's Forest Service, there are now forest management committees created by externally funded forestry project interventions: the World Bank's PROGEDE (Sustainable and Participatory Energy Management) and USAID's Wula Nafaa (Agriculture and Natural Resources Management) projects which have become part of the forest resource management institutional landscape. These committees provide additional institutional nodes for the sustainable management of forests and for the control of access to commercial charcoal production. They have been placed under the authority of elected local governments and supervised by the Forest Service local brigade already active prior to project implementation.

This article examines how and why higher-level institutions such as the central government and international organizations choose institutions for managing access to forests and benefits from wood-based charcoal production in rural Senegal. The current choice of institutions, denoting a strong shift in forest management from state-managed to ostensibly citizen-managed, was leveraged through decentralization. The decentralization reforms of Senegal and forestry projects have created a new public local management that allows for greater private economic access to the resource for rural dwellers. The findings reveal that despite the overall increase in charcoal production by local producers, the chosen institutional arrangements have stunted political representation, leading to the weakening of participatory practices for the poor and marginalized in relation to access to forest resources. The chosen mix of institutions has facilitated the interception of opportunities and benefits from forests by a small group of elite villagers and favourably placed officials. Access to forests and distribution of benefits has improved only for certain groups of villagers since charcoal production has been opened up to rural communities.

Driving this enquiry were the following questions: What specific mix of institutions, including the elected local governments, would best foster a democratic local context that could also achieve local environmental and developmental objectives? Under what conditions, and why, do formal state and donor actors choose such institutions? What are the effects of the actual choice of local institutions on access to wealth-generating opportunities from natural resources for different categories of local people? This paper responds to these questions by exploring the choice of local institutions by higher-level institutions in the decentralized management of charcoal-producing forests in the Tambacounda region of Senegal. Furthermore, this study also adds to the existing scholarship on democratic representation and charcoal production in Senegal which has until now been concentrated on the struggle to remove the monopoly of urban-based merchants and their long-standing stalwarts: the foresters of the forestry services so that rural communities can have access to charcoal production in their forests. The focus on the post-decentralization transition phase of forest management exposed how institutional choice and recognition has influenced the outcomes of democratic representation in the rural zones studied.

Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina's institutional choice and recognition framework is used in this study to explore the factors underlying the choice of local institutions and the effects of the recognition that these choices generate (Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008). To operationalize the choice component, I devised a schema (see Fig. 1) based on Grindle's (2005) 'The Process of policy and institutional reform' model. A combination of the Ribot et al. and Grindle framings is used to examine

the conditions under which higher-level institutions choose the mix of institutions they want to partner with at the local level. Grindle's model conceives of the process of policy and institutional reforms as an interactive one, wherein the choice of institutions to implement policy reforms is shaped by the interests and institutions in various arenas. The different arenas identified by Grindle are: agenda setting, design, adoption, implementation and sustainability of policy implementation and institutional re-arrangements. Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina's framework proposes how to analytically approach an action, that is, institutional choice and recognition, which has profound implications for how institutions shape access to a natural resource at the local level and how they affect the effectiveness of decentralization. Ribot et al.'s framework provides a conceptual receptacle for Grindle's model, situating it in a larger continuum of the policy process, that is, Ribot et al.'s framework tells us where to look and Grindle's model tells us what to look at there while this study tells us what was found when the gaze was shifted in the direction of where policy and institutional reforms are planned and why it mattered using empirical evidence from where the reforms unfold. Ribot et al.'s framing starts at the point where local institutions are selected to implement policy and Grindle's schema takes into account factors preceding and affecting that stage. Ribot et al.'s framework extends into the phase where policy implementation unfolds on the ground, which is treated by the recognition component.

The main methods of primary data collection included interviews, observation (both participant and unobtrusive) and questionnaire surveys. From the 167 interviews carried out, around 49 were semi-structured and structured interviews of officials of line ministries: the Ministry of Environment and donor agencies (USAID and World Bank), the staff of the PROGEDE and Wula Nafaa projects, and also officials of the Forest Services which is the executive branch of the Ministry of Environment as part of 'studying up'. The element of choice was empirically researched using 'studying up' methods (Nader 1974), looking at the upper and middle institutional structures, enlarging and furthering the field of vision to include the architects of projects and policy reform and the sources of ideological constructs underlying the selection. The recognition part was researched by fieldwork in the villages of mainly two rural communities in the Tambacounda region to studying the structures lower down the hierarchy, describing why the institutional landscape for forest resource management is what it is. Three questionnaire surveys administered provided data contributing to a deeper understanding of the context.

2

Background

The Two Projects: Wula Nafaa and PROGEDE

PROGEDE and Wula Nafaa are the two largest and longest standing forestry projects in Senegal. PROGEDE (Sustainable and Participatory Energy Management) is financed by the World Bank and Wula Naafa (Agriculture and Natural Resource Program) is funded by USAID and implemented by the US-based contractor, International Resources Group (IRG).

PROGEDE, whose first phase was from 1998 to 2004 and whose second phase is from 2010-2016, has the main goal of meeting an important part of the rapidly growing urban demand for household fuels, without the loss of forest cover or the ecosystem's carbon sequestration potential and biodiversity. The project development objective is to increase the availability of diversified household fuels in a sustainable way and to increase the income of affected communities while preserving the forest ecosystems (World Bank 2010).

The activities of Wula Nafaa (WN), whose first phase was from 2003 to 2008 and the second phase from 2009-2014, are within the framework of two strategic objectives that were agreed upon by USAID and the Government of Senegal. The objective of Wula Nafaa was to contribute to poverty reduction and to sustainable local development by increasing rural communities and producer revenues through handing responsibility to local authorities and encouraging decentralized, integrated and participatory resource management (USAID 2008).

The democratic decentralization reforms of Senegal, inscribed in the decentralized forestry laws, were crafted so that local populations would have control over their forests via democratically elected local leaders. These reforms are not, however, producing the expected outcome of more equitable access among all

groups of people in those societies (Ribot & Larson 2012). Several factors account for such a deficient outcome, but the foremost cause identified by international agencies was that institutions are unable to meet the demands and needs of citizens (Grindle & Thomas 1989). This article examines the link between this inability and the choice-making process through which local institutions are, or become, recognized in a decentralized forestry management context in rural Senegal.

The practical significance of institutional choice and recognition performed by the higher-level institutions is that by choosing specific kinds of local institutions, they also define the type of citizens who they believe would be most able to use what the chosen institutions have to offer. Besides enhancing the capacity of the local populations as charcoal producers, the outcomes of these choices have not been innocuous. The creation of Forest Management Committees and partnering them with Rural Councils and Forest Services added to the complexity of the politico-administrative structure of forestry resource management while also creating openings for elites to capture the benefits that emerge.

Elite capture, whereby a small group of favourably placed villagers use their social, political or economic privileges to accumulate more benefits from forests at the expense of the non-elites, is symptomatic of the exclusionary effect that the mix of institutions has engendered (Platteau 2004). The international agencies' evaluation of projects' targets and goals does not capture the intra-community disparities that have started appearing with the opening up of the charcoal production sector to the Rural Communities. Instead the dysfunctions introduced through the institutional choice and recognition within those rural communities get masked behind the indicators showing improvement, such as the increase in charcoal produced, or the rising numbers of participants in meetings and workshops. However, they do not tell us who among the villagers has obtained the lion's share of the profit earned from charcoal production or who cannot get their fair share and why that is so. The indicators do not tell us whose participation mattered and was effective or who got what out of the meetings and workshops.

The self-interested compliance of the elites to the projects' actions can be capitalized on by the projects. The elites, being the type of citizens most apt to execute project tasks in the villages, have become the *de facto* development agents. They are also most able to manipulate and divert resources and power for themselves. Foregoing the input of such local elite as *de facto* project executors would be a disadvantage for projects that are pressed by time and budget constraints and the need to positively impact on performance and output indicators. The entrenchment of patterns of accumulation of forest-based benefits by the elites has implications for the overall advancement of the rural community.

Although greater technical and administrative capacity to manage forests and produce charcoal was built through the intervention of projects, inequalities in access to the resource between the well-off and the socially and economically deprived were strengthened due to the institutional setup being prone to capture by the local elites. When charcoal production was first legally opened up to populations in the rural communities, the majority resisted engaging in the activity, perceived as being environmentally deleterious and socially debasing. This resistance to charcoal production gradually turned into an almost frenzied rush to produce what has become known as the 'black diamond', when the news about the profitability of charcoal production spread in these communities.

The institutional landscape of forest management in Tambacounda is composed of multiple institutions characterized by a division of tasks among the institutions. The forest management committees set up by the projects and run by the villagers take care of and respond directly to the day-to-day in charcoal production administrative and financial procedures. The rural council oversees the functioning of the forest management committees (in the Wula Nafaa project zone) and represents the rural community during interaction with higher-level institutions. The forestry services assist both the Rural Council and the forest management committees with technical and some administrative support, while maintaining their policing role. When the actors in these chosen institutions became aware of the benefits they could derive by joining forces with each other, they built their informal network of elites connecting instead of competing with better and less-recognized institutional nodes (Crook & Manor 2000; Evans 1996). Members of the project management committee, the Rural Council and the Forest Services and bigger local charcoal entrepreneurs colluded to maintain control over local charcoal production mostly by giving each other preferential access to production permits and allowing the illegal interception and sale of permits.

3

Merilee Grindle's Process of Policy and Institutional Reform: Unpacking the Stages of Institutional Choice Making

This section describes the process of institutional choice making. The Ribot et al. framework identifies institutional choice as a crucial element that sets in motion a series of actions when a specific configuration of institutions is chosen and specific institutions are recognized when they are conceded with authority and resources. The schemata in Fig 1. depicts the stages of institutional choice and recognition for policy reform and institutional change in the context of decentralized forest management for charcoal production in Senegal. It draws from Merilee Grindle's framework in 'The process of policy reform and institutional reform' (Grindle 2005) that operationalizes the analysis of choice and recognition by breaking it down into a process extending over a number of arenas, namely the 1) agenda-setting arena, 2) design arena, 3) adoption arena, 4) implementation arena, and 5) sustainability arena. Grindle's schema focuses on what happens at the higher level, addressing in a more systematic way the role of actors and institutions at the higher level (as depicted by Fig. 1): parsing actors' intentions, ideological foundations underlying projects, the ends and the means as well as any possible feedback loop at each stage of the choice-making process. By complementing each other, both the Choice and Recognition Framework and the Process of Policy and Institutional reform provide an adequate analytical and descriptive model of institutional processes and outcomes.

The Agenda-setting and Design Stage

Different types of interests exist in all the arenas of policy change and institutional reform. The interests that take precedence are the ones at the agenda-setting and design level, thus influencing the institutions which are chosen to implement the projects or the policies. The interests and institutions implicated in the agenda-setting and design arenas play a larger role in bringing salient issues to the fore. Thus, the institutions active at those stages, namely the international agencies and the national government, are the architects of projects and initiators of reform. In the case of the current forest management in rural Senegal, the agenda-setting and design stages involved a confluence of interests both emerging from the actors historically involved in the implementation of development interventions and laws and policies concerning forests as well as rooted in the prominent economic, development and environment trends of the moment. The set of actors figuring prominently in these two arenas are the World Bank and USAID and their respective implementing agencies (the Forest Service for the first phase of PROGEDE, replaced by independent consultants for the second phase and the International Resource Group (IRG)), the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Environment with its executive branch: the Forest Services.

The agenda-setting arena is one dominated by the international agencies with input from the Senegalese officialdom. For instance, what mandates to fund or support rests on the donor agencies' preference for which portfolio to support. There is now, for example, a diminished interest in funding forestry-related programs for one of the agencies. As an official pointed out, the Natural Resource Management Section of USAID-Senegal is now re-orientating its funding and project intervention attention towards food security issues in the Sahel and away from forest management (interviews 2012). The arguments to justify those interventions, often developed within the confines of western universities and shaped by the agenda of donor agencies, provide the blueprint for institutional configurations in the recipient countries' aid packages (Goldman 2005; Easterly 2007; Brautignam 1992; Burkey 1993). International actors playing the role of policy champions are often the international linkage, bringing what they believe to be urgent issues requiring external support, to the attention of international agencies.

'Policy champions', individuals who have experience or knowledge and who can be advocates of the policy, can affect policies (IDS 2007; Devlin-Foltz & Molinaro 2010). The influence of 'policy champions' in policy changes surrounding charcoal production is notable. The knowledge and connections possessed by policy champions across the aid industry, the Senegalese forestry services or part

of western academia, often evolves to find its way as a shaping force into policy concerning the forest sector that underlies the charcoal industry. Sometimes the long-standing consultancy and research interests in the chain of charcoal production of a policy champion have translated into advocacy for democracy practices and eventually actions modifying the social and political implications of the charcoal industry. The pressure exerted by such policy champions in this case by researchers studying the subject, consultants involved at various stages of the policy process and institutional reform is palpable throughout. This was the case for the uproar especially within the forestry services and the urban-based charcoal merchants in Dakar created by the showing of a film revealing the dark underbelly of charcoal industry (Ribot 2014). This policy champion has also been an advocate within the funding agencies' circles and has been particularly persuasive about the democratic decentralization stance in Community-Based Natural Resource Management, participating in the drafting of the documents and providing conceptual framing to the goals and ideological approach used by the projects.

The policy role of the executive can be illustrated by how the Forest Services upholds discourses that orient decision outcomes in favour of interests of high/mid-level officials in the hierarchy. One example of such a discourse was the 'for the national good' discourse that used to be heavily evoked by the Forest Services to justify why rural populations should let their forests be exploited by wealthy outsiders for commercial purposes, for little local benefit (Ribot 2009). The prominent position that the Forest Services has had in any actions concerning forestry resources means that its input such as its experience and feedback still has weight when decisions about forestry interventions are made. Foresters of the Forest Services are cognizant of the daily matters of charcoal production in the villages and are part of the information feedback loop with the mid- and higher-level officials in Dakar who participate in the agenda-setting and design arenas.

The question 'who decides which local institution should do what?' pertains more to the design arena in the Grindle schema as it sequentially arrives as a preoccupation after the pertinence of an issue has been determined in the agenda-setting arena. During interviews, that question consistently received the answer that the role is not assigned to one single person or institution but that the officials from the donor agencies and from the various ministries sit around a table and discuss how the project is to be implemented.

The choice and the presence of certain types of institutions is based on the function of the institutions, that is, the type of tasks they are meant to accomplish either to fill in lacunae or consolidate the existing institutional infrastructure for

forest management or delivery of administrative services (Brinkerhoff 2001). Institutional choice is influenced by the type of goals that the externally funded programs want to achieve. From the project documents, it was garnered that higher-level institutions are more inclined to choose project goals with tangible output potential using procedural democracy (World Bank 2010; USAID 2008). Such a preference has been attributed to several reasons such as: expediency in the execution of tasks; the belief that using institutions that involve mostly civil society would equate to democracy; an anti-government stance resulting from a disenchantment based on the government's track record and the conscious or unconscious tendency to create spaces that privilege certain economic activities that promote clientelism (Ribot and Oyono 2005).

International agencies, therefore, opted to create their structures to implement project actions because of dissatisfaction about the local government's ability to execute the project goals. In recent decades, donor agencies have been more inclined towards civil-society-based approaches to forestry resource management while they have been more restrained towards choosing local government as partners. Their discriminative reluctance to choose already existing democratically elected partners may close opportunities for building a stable and democratic representative system within the already existing politico-administrative structure. The recognition of an institution goes beyond the mere acknowledgement of its authority to also consist of the creation and consolidation of authority, which becomes a political act, having deep implications for democracy (Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008).

Underlying the penchant for certain types of goals and the ensuing choice of institutions based on those goals may be a product of the need to maximize benefits for certain groups or in the self-interest of the state[1] (North 1990; Bates 1981). Such types of goals also lend themselves to policy designs currently used by donor agencies and central governments but may not be the best goals to meet the needs and aspirations of the majority of the local community. Simultaneously, the need to manufacture certain forms of success out of these projects overlooks the procedural aspects such as the presence of a terrain that will enable democratic culture to flourish (Baviskar 2004; Conyers 2007). Dovetailing of both types of goals is possible but is most potent if an enabling environment already exists, evincing the necessity of being more attentive to the broader socio-economic and historical context. Having project goals consistent with democratic ideals needs to be complemented by output assessments with an emphasis on what has brought about meaningful changes to people in all segments of the local communities. However, the instrumentalisation of procedural democracy by projects has meant

that aspects of procedural democracy (such as choosing representatives by holding local elections) are used as a voucher of good governance and gain precedence over substantive aspects of democracy (that is, the actual inclusiveness and representation of people by working in the interest of people).

Although the two projects adopted different institutional configurations, the local institutions chosen by both projects fit the credos of participation and economic performance. Producing outputs to attain project objectives was ensured by choosing institutions that enshrine the value system shared by the donor. For instance, the democratically elected local government was recognized as the overhead institution by Wula Nafaa, which sought to stimulate forest-based wealth creation through good governance and environmentally sustainability conduits. Institutions were also recognized based on their ability to efficiently perform the tasks set in the project plans in a manner unhindered by local politics as far as possible. This was observed as being mostly the case in zones where the PROGEDE project is active. One of the credos of both projects was the participation of the local people because local people are expected to be the ultimate beneficiaries and a democracy provides the possibility of harnessing the checks provided by mechanisms of accountability. On the ground, this would translate as the application of sanctions by citizens to ensure responsiveness from the institutions since they operate in a democratically decentralized environment. The other credo pertains to economic development: the two projects examined in this study sought to transform a predominantly peasant population into active agents in the market economy of charcoal both as a means to improve their own livelihoods and also as producers of affordable domestic fuel vital to the country's urban centres (Ferguson 1994). Institutions were chosen by the projects to actualize these two objectives that follow the local democracy and local development canons of modernization (Bates 1981; Przeworski 1991).

Figure 1: The stages and process of institutional choice and recognition for policy reform and institutional change in the context of decentralized forest management for charcoal production in Senegal. This schema is inspired by Grindle (2005) and adapted to the two forestry-related projects studied.

	ARENAS			
	Agenda Setting	Design & Adoption	Implementation	Sustainability
Institutions	Higher-level institutions: -World Bank, USAID -Government of Senegal: Ministries of Environment, Energy and Finance	The higher-level institutions The legal, administrative and executive structures Inter-institutional linkages (among institutions at various scales)	Project implementing agencies/ institutions: IRG, Forest Service Local executive institutions: Rural Council, project – created FMCs, Forest Service	Local institutions New stakeholders
Interests	Policy characteristics: decentralization International linkages Issue salience The agenda of policy champions	The design team's profile Institutional preferences of the design team Characteristics of the implementers Bureaucratic interests	Interests of mid- and high-level officials Interests within local populations Conflicts Implementer incentives	Management of conflicts New interests
Actions	Policy reform and institutional change initiation Developing proposal	Choice of local institution participating and Consultation with stakeholders	Building local leadership Mobilization of local populations Negotiations Feed-back loops	Intra-local alliances Local leadership strategies

The exchanges among the actors in the various arenas as set out in this schema inspired by Grindle's process of policy process and institutional reform model, especially between those who provide the ideological framework, the institutional contract design and those who oversee the implementation process defines the purpose of the project and how its accomplishment will be measured as well as what would be considered an achievement.

The Adoption and Implementation Stage

The agenda-setting and design stages are about the higher-level institutions' 'officializing strategies' of translating the ground-level concerns into authorized categories to be acted upon. During these two stages, broader project operational and tactical concerns are also taken into consideration and the output of these phases includes the choice of institutions to implement project activities. The characteristics of the implementers (project staff and government officials) and the interests affected gain their full importance during the adoption and implementation phases during which the policies and the projects realize themselves.

The bureaucratic cultures as well as the intergovernmental structures need to be abided to by the international agencies. As the head of operations of one of the projects pointed out, 'We have to respect the sovereignty of the country we are intervening in' (interviews, Dakar 2012). The inter-governmental distribution of powers concerning forest resource management is structured by the existing decentralization laws and forestry code. This means that international agencies cannot ignore or circumvent the institutions recognized by the State of Senegal in the management of forest resources prior to the intervention of projects, which in this case are the Rural Council and the Forest Services.

Externally-funded projects are often seen as being cash cows by the Senegalese Forest Services who seek to maximize personal gains by being hired to work on the projects. This contributes towards the exacerbation of the problem of bureaucratic capture by those who want to capitalize to the maximum on their position within the project (interviews, Dakar 2012; 2013). The government official views secondment to external projects as an opportunity to acquire new skills or hone existing ones through the training programs provided, or to extend their network of contacts that can make them more marketable for consultancy or other jobs outside the public service (interviews, Dakar 2013; Blundo 1998; 2011).

The differences in the profile of the staff of these two projects reveal variations in the bureaucratic consciousness of the international agencies. The officials hired during the first phase of PROGEDE l were from the Forest Service; however, a

noticeable shift took place in the profile of those who were hired for the second phase of the project. For instance, regional heads for the project are now no longer officials of the Forest Service, but holders of qualifications to fulfill the requirements of those positions. The main reason put forward for this change is to loosen the grip that the officers of the Forest Service had over the charcoal supply chain, who exercised their power to assign commercial exploitation rights over forest resources in a way that unjustly favoured urban-based charcoal traders (interviews, Tambacounda 2012.).

4

Institutional Characteristics Shaping Institutional Choice

The recognition of the type of institutions to implement projects is based on a conglomeration of actions, choices based on the various interests and institutions in the different arenas as conceived by Merilee Grindle's *The process of policy and institutional reform*. In addition to analysis according to Grindle's schema, we define four characteristics sought by higher-level institutions during their process of choosing and recognizing local partners. Those four elements are: 1) efficiency, 2) integrity, 3) democracy/participation, and 4) reliability. Each of these characteristics connects factors emerging both from the ideological realm and the practical realm, and they are often enmeshed. For instance, the integrity element contributes to efficiency by limiting leakages through corruption. The democracy element is ensconced in democratic decentralization, which offers the possibility of harnessing the participation of local populations making the internalization[2] of costs and benefits more effective.

The pertinence of this additional analytical optic is demonstrated by the difficulty for the project to backtrack in any major way with respect to the actions and choices made in the agenda-setting and design stages. By the time the project lands in the recipient zones in rural Senegal, it is too late to make major adjustments despite the presence of feedback loops. The feedback loops were in the form of evaluation meetings regrouping stakeholders, intermittent assessments made by independent consultants or communication between villagers and project staff. These feedback loops led to single learning loops comprising of straightforward problem-solving: overhauling the organization of forest management structures, fixing the nuts and bolts of the project when the functioning became egregious

but not correcting mismatches at a deeper level, therefore perpetuating their possibility to recur. They did not involve a second learning loop at the higher institutional level comprising of a re-examination of these institutions of their own modus operandi, the logics, values and beliefs needed to trigger a process of re-education (Friedmann 1989).

The examination of the rationale behind institutional choices made by the higher-level institutions has led us to derive a set of characteristics or qualities sought in 'candidate' institutions. The activation of the initiative to induce policy reform through institutional recognition begins with the choice of the institutions. This takes place in two dimensions. The first dimension is that the chosen institution fits the ideology of the higher-level institutions and the second dimension has to do with the factors related to the delivery of the project through the chosen and recognized institutions. From observations and data collected during fieldwork, I identified four prominent characteristics sought by higher-level institutions in the institutions that are likely to be chosen and recognized. By understanding these characteristics we understand the reason behind the peripheralization of certain institutions and the legitimization and recognition of others.

Efficiency

Administrative efficiency was the predominant type of efficiency that higher-level institutions took into consideration while recognizing their local partners. The administrative efficiency incorporated considering other elements other than the service provision.

The efficiency of the interventions is measured using a repertoire of indicators whereas that of the decentralization is mostly gauged through the mismatch between the rhetoric in the laws and in practice. Efficiency in service delivery is often associated with decentralization. Relevant to this case, efficiency would be in terms of the internalization of costs through localization. The wave of decentralization[3] that swept Senegal in 1996 did not involve a form of democratic decentralization that would be ideal for efficiency because the powers, especially the financial and materials resources to manage forests that were transferred to locally elected government, were insufficient or insignificant and the rural taxes collected by Rural Councils were negligible. Achieving project goals and successful policy implementation was the primary driver behind the recognition of Forest Management Committees. Forest Management Committees are composed of and run by villagers, but are outside of elected local bodies, meaning they can be removed from being under the control of Rural Councils (as in the case of

PROGEDE II) as well as being just annexed to the Rural Councils (as in the case of Wula Nafaa). As Agrawal puts it, 'Communities accomplish local regulation at significantly lower costs than any central government can' (Agrawal 2005).

The capacity of the Rural Council to manage forests, as judged by higher-level institutions and then by the rural councils themselves, are thought to be insufficient to accomplish the goals set out by the decentralization policies and the project goals, and so additional institutional 'support' was introduced by the donors. This support has been through the creation of forest management committees by the projects, known under different titles in each project and depending on the level in the hierarchy of the structure. The forest management committees for both projects are composed of and run by villagers but do not have a legal status. This support has been in the form of administrative and financial management capacity building, undertaken mostly by Wula Nafaa, and technical skills training such as how to produce charcoal was undertaken mostly by PROGEDE in its zone of intervention.

The focus on the economic growth as a path to development has a long track record consisting more often of failures than successes which have set in motion a shift in the approach of international organizations' development-related interventions (Crush 2005; Peet and Hartwick 1999; Nustad 2001). As a result, higher-level institutions have to balance their focus between the material gains from exploitation of nature and the social benefits that can be derived from the way that nature and those gains are governed. This concern has played a role in influencing how aid is channelled into countries receiving them, which in turn impinges on the institutions through which the aid flows. Alongside of this is the overarching political and economic outlook towards international aid and funding of the western countries 'giving' the money and the prevailing policies of the recipient country and their rationale for allocative efficiency which still mostly supports this very top-down approach (North 1990; Brown 2005; Sklar 1987; Ake 1996).

The perceived need to have multiple or additional institutions in the forestry sector arises for several reasons, ranging from addressing the improvement in economic performance of charcoal production and administrative task specialization to enhancing democratic practices in resource governance and access. Institutional configurations with several types of institutions present promising conditions for democratic resource management (Cohen and Peterson 1999; Urbinati and Warren 2008). It could also lead to efficiency in responsiveness and service provision arising from a division of tasks among the various institutions based on their strengths (Tamanaha 2008; Galvan 2008; Ostrom, 1996; Vira et al. 1997). Furthermore,

each institution has its own mechanisms of responsiveness and accountability, providing more avenues for people to engage with the institution(s) they find most receptive and responsive to their needs as well as representative in political processes. However, the functioning of these mechanisms is marred by elite capture of the chosen institutions, that is, a small number of favourably placed individuals use these institutions as instruments to accumulate a disproportionate amount of opportunities and benefits excluding the non-elites (Jusrut forthcoming). As a result, institutional arrangements sometimes leave people with few alternatives but to revert to the existing structures, namely patronage arrangements, under which they continue to be dominated by the elites. Recognized and chosen institutions may sometimes offer only a façade of democracy and participation, thereby reproducing inequalities, instead of more durable deeper changes (Beck 2008; Villalon and Von Doepp 2005). Thus, in spite of the significant support from donor agencies in terms of redressing inequalities in access to resources through local participation, the chosen institutional configuration in forest management has led to inequitable access to lucrative charcoal production opportunities within the two studied rural communities in the Tambacounda region (Ribot and Larson 2012; O'Brien 1971; Boutinot 2005).

Integrity

The efficiency factor provides the major thrust for integrity as an important consideration when choosing and recognizing local institutions. The conditionality imposed by the donors also factored in the choice and recognition of which institutions would be a good fit for meeting the project goals. Donors are reluctant to inject any kind of resource into settings which do not offer any sort of guarantee of penalties for or safeguards against any inefficiencies, even those resulting from informal and illegal practices occurring within the partner institutions. 'You know how the American agencies are, right? One has to account for every dollar that is given out', said an official of one donor agency while referring to how stringent the monitoring and accounting methods are when it comes to the donor's money (interviews 2012). While the concern about the aid going into the right 'hands' looms ubiquitously within international agencies, achieving efficiency and effective democratic practices provides the main thrust for making integrity an important consideration.

Capacity to limit corruption and informal transactions that could provide unfair access to the resources to a few and depriving those who might not be able to afford such privileged access despite the resource is a common one. The presence of accountability mechanisms is an indication of the possibility of

keeping in check such transactions and ensuring integrity of institutions. This was important in this case study because corruption in the charcoal sector is rampant. It gives those with a higher socio-economic status and more resources or connections an advantage in gaining access to the resource. Informal transactions of influence, gifts, money, and illegally manipulating administrative procedures were widespread among forestry agents, some members of forest management committees and Rural Councils and local charcoal producers. The industry is dominated by those who have the privilege of corruption.

Wula Nafaa circumvented the direct involvement of opportunistic forestry services officials by employing independent consultants as project staff. There was however, a radical change in the profile of the project staff hired in the second phase of PROGEDE, which resembled more that of Wula Nafaa's staff make-up. By bringing in professional staff not affiliated to the forestry services, there was a greater thrust towards enforcing the new forest management unit structures that would be more autonomous and less within the grips of those who divert an unfair amount of advantages in an unrestrained manner. Several actors, such as the charcoal producers and forestry service staff were disgruntled with the actions and decisions of the new PROGEDE staff because it disrupted the smooth running of their slush fund or overrode their direct involvement, hence, preventing them from being in contact with flows of money or access to privileges. Wula Nafaa on the other hand focused more on building the managerial capacity of the local people and submitted those managerial units, that is, the Forest Management Committee, to the oversight of a democratically elected authority: the Rural Council, which was a way of meeting the democracy or representation of rural community criterion. Such an institutional arrangement met the procedural needs that emerged out of the formalization of the charcoal industry at the local level as well as the requirement of functioning under the authority of the democratically elected local government as stipulated by the laws of decentralization. The tweaking of the project tools such as the changes in the structure of Forest Management Committees as the second phase of PROGEDE reflects the necessity for additional needs assessment. The institutional needs of the new policy environment is left solely to higher-level officials or consultants who then devise participatory structures that merely require attendance rather than creating spaces for sustained political development. The reshuffling led to forestry agents who were formerly feasting on opportunities to informally earn money by abusing their power to allow illegal activities in charcoal and timber-producing forests to be posted in zones where minimal economic exploitation of the resource takes place, removing opportunities to earn something 'on the side' from their official salary.

Another example of how the re-arrangement of the linkages between institutions was used to stall corruption among conniving actors was the relegation of the role of the Rural Council to that of an overseer of the financial audit, without any direct links to the newly reorganized executive structures. This step was taken during the second phase of PROGEDE in reaction to the reported diversion of funds by Rural Council members during the first phase of the project. Under normal circumstances, the democratically elected local government is involved in all the meetings organized by the projects because by law, the Rural Council is the gatekeeper of rural communities with no activity allowed to take place without its approval. Furthermore, two rural councils were asked to form one unique account for collecting charcoal taxes (for the Missirah-Kothiary forest), and one of the Rural Council presidents was reluctant to merge the charcoal tax coffers because that would have led to mutual co-inspection of financial transactions preventing any fraudulent activities from going undetected (meetings, Tambacounda 2012-2013).

The criteria for membership in the new forest management committees proposed in 2013 were that (1) only villagers who are not charcoal producers are eligible to be members of the executive bureau of the structure, and (2) candidates for positions in the bureau should be sufficiently literate in the French language. These criteria were supposed to prevent vested interests of executive members from interfering with decisions or actions taken by them while in office and from misusing their power. Since members of the elite are usually more educated, possess the literacy and numeracy skills necessary, and have the time to engage in political activities, almost half of the bureau was occupied by members who used to be directly involved in charcoal production. One of the newly selected executive members in 2013 shared during an interview that now that he has got this position in the bureau, he is going to use this opportunity to help his family members and relatives to gain from charcoal production. The same bureau member had himself produced charcoal in the past but had abandoned it after a court case he filed against one of the *banaa-banaas* (middlemen) with whom he left his stock of charcoal in Dakar but who did not reimburse the money obtained from the sale of the charcoal. After this incident, it would be very difficult for him to re-enter the charcoal business because of the social sanctioning that might prevent him from getting another *banaa-banaa* to sell his products and he is still waiting to be compensated for the remaining amount due from the sale of charcoal by the prosecuted *banaa-banaa*, added to which is his discouragement resulting from this bad experience (interview, Missirah 2012).

Administrative procedures are a double edged-sword in Senegal; on the one hand they help to regulate the production and sale of the commodity in question and on the other hand they offer the agents opportunities to manipulate administrative

procedures to informally extract benefits. Interviews reveal the bureaucratic hurdles they have to overcome in order to earn income from the opening up of the forests to rural communities. The extent of difficulty was often related to the density of the network of the local producer's relations in the various spheres of life. As shown in Jusrut's (forthcoming) article on gender in this sector, women, especially lower class, poorer women, were at a disadvantage to enter and to participate actively in the productive sphere, that is charcoal production, ensuing from the change in the governance style, that is the decentralization of forest resources.

The relation the charcoal producer had with other members of the community or with officials or with institutions was one of the factors that defined how burdensome the administrative procedures could be to a particular local charcoal producer. For instance, as a local charcoal producer puts it:

> There is a problem of documents, permits to cut trees for people who want to do so. They can have 20 permits but the villages are numerous. They get permits but the whole procedure is messy. The permits are gone early but their problems remain. It is the forestry services who calculated the number of permits that need to be distributed to the charcoal producer groups in the villages.

The forestry service agents make inventories at regular frequencies to record the quantity of charcoal in production in each production block of the forests so as to estimate the number of permits required by each group of villages. During the inventory outings where the forestry agents would be accompanied by a member of the rural council, a member of the forest management structure (often the president of the secretary) revealed that sometimes the members of those inventory convoys would connive to falsify the quantities reported in a way that the figure would be inflated so that more permits could be issued. Those 'extra' permits are then captured by either the agents or their collaborators who are often people in positions of authority such as members of the Rural Council, members of the forest management structures and sometimes *banaa-banaas* (informal sector middlemen between producers and charcoal traders). In the past, regardless of the 'extra' permits created based on fictitious figures invented by the forestry agents, the share of permits due to go to the villagers was often diverted by groups of the local elite.

Democracy & Participation

Donor agencies acknowledge the ideological appeal and the practical advantages of the direct involvement of the local populations; projects are designed in a way to include the local beneficiaries at some point along the whole implementation

process (Chambers 1997; 2006; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Muller and Miltin 2007; Kothari 1992; Beneria 2003). Since the coming into force of the participatory approach as the norm of how development is practiced in developing countries, this has influenced the choice of institutions entrusted with the task of carrying out the project actions (Beard et al. 2008; Pritchett and Woolcock 2004). The core principle of democracy being 'for the people, by the people' and elections being one of the procedures created and adopted for operationalizing that principle, these both underpin the 'good governance' component of the projects and the choice of institutions (Putnam 1994; Ake 1996; Edigheji 2006). In this case, the potential of achieving an institutionalized democratic way of carrying out CBRNM is reified through an association with a democratically constituted institution, which in this case is the democratically elected local government (Ribot 2004; Bazaara 2006; Ribot, Lund and Treue 2010).

Alignment of the donor agencies (albeit to varying degrees for each project) with the country's decentralization reforms is also mandated by law. This means that the recognition of the democratically elected local government, that is, the Rural Council was also by default, although the Rural Council is the institution possessing formalized mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness. Tapping into the participatory potential of the rural council requires an informed and politically savvy population. Harnessing the agency of a citizenry able to meaningfully engage with representatives and with the ability to demand accountability could increase access to the resource (Agrawal 2005; Mamdani 1996).

The majority of implementing project staff interviewed said they consider the participation of people with an emphasis on the responsibility of local populations, good governance and the strengthening of technical capacities as fundamental for the good implementation of forestry-related projects. The interviewees mention 'participation' and an 'inclusive approach' as a key element for successful project implementation but to several, participation is a 'local initiative', 'responsible participation' and the necessity of 'a bigger responsibility on behalf of the beneficiary populations'. 'Good governance and transparency in the management of forest and financial resources' was also frequently brought up by the interviewees with one of them even suggesting 'an internal system of control by and for the populations'. 'The strengthening of capacities' was also brought up as an important aspect to be realized through the 'adoption of a forest management plan', 'respect of technical norms which allows for the guarantee of the sustainability of forest', the 'strengthening of technical and organizational capacities of local government and community-based organizations (CBOs) by a better treatment and support of transferred powers'.

The consideration of citizens as political equals when it comes to representation is also problematic in this context (Pitkin 1972) where not every member has the same minimum level of empowerment and awareness. In a democratically decentralized natural resource governance context, it is mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness that make participation of people effective. The value of democratic ways is uncontested by intervening agents when it comes to involving the people. The architecture of the chosen institutions that are supposed to be endowed with all the powers and resources to carry out policy and project goals is imbued with ideological framings reflecting the donor's preference for democracy (USAID 2008, World Bank 2010). However, by imposing certain kinds of institutions, the donors inadvertently also define what types of citizens are more apt to use such institutions. Exhortations about setting civil society as providing a counter-power is unyielding because of the quasi infeasibility of 'making' citizens who would exactly fit the institutional configurations to make the most of opportunities. Citizens are formed from historical processes, often specific to a society, and the expectation that a certain type of citizenship would put everybody on a level playing field to engage with the recognized institutions, even if they are democratically elected (Tilly 1995; Lister 2003). Instead, members of the local community who are more apt to capture the opportunities created through project-supported institutional forms and reform do so at the expense of the less-privileged members of the rural communities.

The enforcement of mechanisms of accountability was relegated to the background by the projects because the managerial capacity of the whole institutional setting that was prioritized. Moreover, it was almost taken as a given that by associating[4] with the democratically elected rural council, that the whole polity would become automatically democratic. Relying on electoral modes of accountability is insufficient and incompatible with contextual specificities and work mostly when there are good leaders committed to improving the wellbeing of the whole community (fieldwork 2012, 2013; Tendler 1997). This is demonstrated by how the Rural Councillors' growing awareness of the profitability of charcoal and of their important role in representing their respective rural communities at a higher level has led them to exploit that position. Rural Council Presidents have started negotiating for their rural communities to be allowed to produce a greater quantity of charcoal. However, how the permits are distributed after the quantity negotiated gets approved is often prone to the discretion of the Rural Council president who might participate in allowing his cronies to intercept more production privileges than allowed or adopt a more transparent and fair stance.

Reliability

Reliability is defined as having the proven capacity to use resources efficiently and in all transparency to meet project goals and higher-level institutions' expectations. This characteristic encompasses all the previously described elements but has a cumulative dimension to it, that is, it is a trait that the institution builds over time.

This type of reliability is still being built by local institutions in Senegal, taking into consideration that the decentralization process is just out of its 'stumbling steps' phase. This means that at only a decade and half after the inception of the decentralization process, Rural Councils had a history of only three regimes until the most recent local elections in 2014. The familiarization of the local populations with institutions entrusted with authority and resources to manage forests, including where to place the Rural Council and Forest Management Committees in the institutional landscape, requires a lag time.

The palimpsest-like mode that characterizes how donor agencies choose the institutions they wish to channel their resources through as development aid could be very revealing about the conditions that have influenced the choice and recognition of certain institutions and not others. In the 1960s, the state was the preferred institutional partner of donor agencies because back then, they used to abide by the notion of the 'developmental state' (Young 1997). Then in the 1980s the epoch began in which the role of the state was being questioned especially due to the influx of streams of economic neoliberalism which was bent on eschewing the state. In the late 1990s, donor agencies backtracked to an approach that involved closer collaboration with the State (Blundo 2011). Changes in approaches to implementation is not only mere trying and erring. Macro-political and macro-economic climates together with the donors and state's ideologies[5] are good predictors of what the policy is going to be. In this case, gaining an understanding of factors crucial to the formulation of policy guiding US-based donor agencies can explain the development paradigm used by the donor agencies. Although donor agencies' efforts to reduce the distance between what they want to achieve and what local populations are perceived as wanting in terms of participation, their commitment to bottom-up and the trend of empowering locals through participatory approaches is still being carried on through projects to date. Several interviewees compared the Wula Nafaa project with the PROGEDE one by stating that the former put greater emphasis on the institutional aspect, that is, on the ways of organizing the local populations and building the capacity of the institutions meant to serve this purpose such as the Forest Management

Committees. The latter concentrated on enhancing the technical skills of people in wood-cutting and charcoal production methods. The interviewees observed that although both projects brought benefits to the local communities, Wula Nafaa proved to be more effective and most likely to produce durable results than PROGEDE whose evaluation revealed that more attention needs to be paid to institutional configurations and composition in order to reach project goals. During a meeting held in May 2012 in Tambacounda to assess PROGEDE's first phase, which regrouped representatives of all the stakeholders, participants declared openly that PROGEDE needed to learn from how Wula Nafaa proceeded in its activities.

The credibility for the intervening agents of the 'candidate' institutions is influenced by the reputation of their reliability and how well they share the politico-ideological bearing of the donors, for instance, if they abide by the same democratic ethos. The failure of local institutions chosen in the past to perform adequately according to the norms set by higher-level institutions becomes part of the profile of 'candidate' institutions.

According to the higher-level officials and project implementing staff interviewed, there are many considerations when deciding which local institutional partners to choose. These include the quality of their performance, as interviewees stated 'There needs to be good governance - if the institution can work in terms of capacity, management, and mobilization as well as in transparency', and, 'The leadership of the president of the rural council matters'. The officials also mentioned contextual factors that influence the performance of institutions. One interviewee brought up that, 'Very often the cultural factors are forgotten', and another noted that, 'We need to consider their position with respect to the ruling power; the charisma (or the popularity) of leaders'. The formal status of institutions is considered to be an important factor in determining which institutions they work with: 'The legal standing of institutions which are the point of entry plays a role as we cannot work on natural resources without going through Rural Council first. USAID works on forestry since projects like NRBAR (Natural Resource Based Agricultural Research Project), since more than 30 years. A lot of strategic thinking is involved in USAID'S program for research, tools of participation, institutional organization'(interviews, Dakar & Tambacounda 2013).

The sum of these aspects mentioned by the officials influences the reliability of the institution as a partner for policy and project implementation. Although the quality and style of leadership within the chosen local institutions affect the policy and project outcomes and outputs, the choice and recognition of local institutions have to comply to uniformity in application. The institutional landscape has not

only offered more flexibility to the elites but has even extended the range of action within which the elites can accumulate more forest-based wealth. In practice, only a few favourably positioned people take over newly introduced institutions or place their allies or subordinates to run them. The forest management committees are institutions that are increasingly starting to bear the characteristics of entities with restricted membership and unequal membership with categories of producers able to produce only a small amount tethered to more powerful and bigger charcoal producers. These committees follow the prescriptions provided by the project documents but they do not challenge the skewed balances in access to forest resources as they themselves form a clique that wants to maintain the privileges of access to charcoal production among themselves. This mix of chosen institutions prioritized the securing of economic development for a select group. This dynamic allowed for the entrenchment of many rural elites' economic interests.

5

Concluding Discussion

The choice and recognition of institutions by the state and international agencies has carved the institutional landscape of forest resource governance, impacting the overall improvement of the rural societies in Tambacounda. The outcomes of institutional choice and recognition, as demonstrated by the case examined in this article, have implications for the extent of the success of externally supported interventions, and state-led policies of decentralized forest resource management.

Reconciling Wealth Generation and Participatory Governance

The study of institutional recognition reveals the strengths and the lacunae of choosing certain local institutional partners and how those institutions are configured with respect to each other. Both projects recognized institutional configurations conducive to economic development and favoured a participatory style of governance so as to create possibilities for inclusiveness and equitability in access to forest resources. Choosing and recognizing democratically elected local government provided the advantage of democratic representation to the local populations but this was not always congruent with everybody's wealth-accumulation aspirations. The costs of introducing market-oriented reforms even in a democratically decentralized context have resulted in the privileged few benefiting from reforms. Participation and representation often require disinterested cooperation that the market-oriented reforms based on models of economic efficiency, hence competition, might not offer (Przeworski 1991).

The costs here are social costs and institutional costs which are paid by those segments of the populations who should have been the ones benefitting from rather than incurring the costs. The social costs linked to institutions include

the loss of trust in institutions that fail to be equitably responsive to the needs of villagers. This social cost is a major hindrance to citizen empowerment and undermines the very initiatives that seek to build equity in the distribution of access to wealth-creation opportunities. The social costs are again paid by the poorer, less politically and socially well-placed groups in the villages, resulting in lower access to forest-based income-generating activities for these groups and contributing to the reproduction of social inequalities. Elite capture prevents non-elite members of these communities from being able to count with reasonable certainty on the responsiveness of the institution approached or leave those members with a feeling of helplessness about making the institutions accountable. On the other hand, the elites can rely on the recognized institutional mix because it opens a stable platform for co-opting each other for sustaining mutually beneficial rackets without being sanctioned for crossing boundaries of formally and legally permissible transactions.

Once a Winner Always a Winner? The Entrenchment of a New Cycle of Elite Capture

The chosen local authorities (committees and elected local governments), each with their imputed distinctive mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness, did not translate into the harmonious, well-adjusted syncretism that can be taken advantage of by all groups within the local populations. An empowered local population could be considered as being an essential element in producing more 'winners' out of villagers so that they are able to take advantage of benefits brought about by policies and projects and to protect themselves against domination and exploitation (Scott 1987; Chambers 1983). We have found that citizenry is not, however, a level playing field in the charcoal producing rural communities studied. Elites are more proficient citizens who, even within democratic institutions, can make their needs and aspirations heard and have more leverage in applying mechanisms of accountability because of their privileged status.

The expectation that with a set of development prescriptions, democratic elections and civil-society-run forest management committees, any villager would be able to transform him/herself automatically into a citizen skilled in applying mechanisms of accountability did not always translate into reality. It was most likely to do so when villagers possessed the necessary access qualifications to have participation calibrated to project needs (Ribot and Peluso 2003; Blaikie 1989). People tap into their already differentiated sources of agency, which might not be found within electoral or non-electoral accountability repertoires, but there are

differentiated abilities to use the media, legal resources, or transparency measures. The villagers with means often navigate their way through the institutional system social and political relations to obtain access to charcoal production. Villagers would go to institutions that they perceived as being able to resolve their issues regardless of whether or not the institution has formal mechanisms of accountability. Similarly, villagers sought responsiveness from institutions that have proximity to the issues related to charcoal production or which they are personally close to instead of approaching the local institutions that officially and legally have the authority and the resources but lack familiarity with the issues.

Thus, for their forest-related demands, the villagers did not always go to the institutions that are democratically constituted, such as the democratically elected local government, but as in any forum-shopping activity, they went to the institutions demonstrating greater ability regarding their specialized requests, which in this case was the Forest Management Committees (von Benda-Beckmann 1981; Baviskar 2004). In the rural communities studied, such resources are provided by the projects in the form of Forestry Management Committees that now handle the administrative and managerial tasks. These committees are more able to provide a rapid and adapted response and also act as a relay between the charcoal producers and other authorities and project staff. Such forest management committees do not have a formalized function to represent the local population. Yet they are delegated management responsibility by the democratically elected local governments, which are downwardly accountable to the public.

The findings further highlight the functional relevance of considering the 'political game' prevailing in a specific location where a project is intervening in order to calibrate not only the choice of institutions but also how the chosen ones are to be positioned in relation to other institutions. Linking the forest management committees to the elected rural councils has had mixed results depending on the democratically elected representative's, that is, the President of the Rural Council's, own personal or political agenda regarding charcoal production. The personal characteristics of democratically elected leaders in the different Rural Councils is a defining feature of how the institutional choice of democratically elected local representatives performs with respect to policy (Tendler 1997). Democracy-imbued institutions are posited as counter-powers to underlying social and political-economic systems deemed to be discriminatory and unconducive to equity. However, at the same time, these institutions place the onus of action on the villager, expecting villagers to be proficient in using institutional tools maladjusted to their realities. The conceptualization of citizenship here needs to be extended and enlarged to accommodate citizen formation as constant and an outcome of

historical processes that are place-specific; something that can rarely be induced by only an institutional re-arrangement but has to emerge from a combination of factors that are beyond the scope of one sector's activity. Thus, mobilizing change outside of the forest sector or charcoal industry related interventions becomes indispensable. Choosing and recognizing specific types of institutions, even if they are democratically constituted defines what kind of citizens can use these institutions, therefore strengthening the position of one group of citizens with specific status, resources and skill sets. Although progress was made in policy implementation for formalizing administrative and financial management of access to forest resources, they are still insufficient for guaranteeing a broad representation of the social interest.

Notes

1. 'Institutions are not necessarily or even usually created to be socially efficient; rather they or at least the formal rules, are created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to devise new rules' (North 1990). If one goes by this logic, then the state or central authorities would seek at all cost to maintain control over profitable resource bases.
2. Internalization results by outsourcing decision-making and execution to the local populations. It is considered economically and managerially efficient because the local populations have the advantage of making decisions more socially and economically meaningful to them and less likely to opt for decisions/actions least harmful as they would be on the frontline for paying the costs.
3. Blundo (2012) holds that the political reasons behind the inception of the laws of decentralization in Senegal weighed more heavily than the administrative and social efficacies. In that respect, the rule of law or legality was used both as a legitimizing ideology and a principle of organization (Ghai 1986). The paradox is that legal texts and their amendments proliferate which could be a misleading indication that the ideologies vehicle by these texts are being internalized and lived by. It has to be highlighted that laws are not abstract norms or 'laws of nature' but they are products of decisions concerned with the creation, distribution, exercise, legitimatizing effect and reproduction of power (Shivji 1989; Okoth-Ogendo 1991).
4. Either by subordinating the other structures to it or arranging co-management roles.
5. Expressed as the organization's mission goals and the type of regime prevalent can give an indication about the supporting ideologies.

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The Process of Institutional Choice and Recognition for Decentralized Forest Management in Charcoal-Producing Zones of Tambacounda, Senegal

Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) Research Programme

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is a research and training program, focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It is jointly managed by the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC). It is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The RFGI activities are focused on 12 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The initiative is also training young, in-country policy researchers in order to build an Africa-wide network of environmental governance analysts.

Nations worldwide have introduced decentralization reforms aspiring to make local government responsive and accountable to the needs and aspirations of citizens so as to improve equity, service delivery and resource management. Natural resources, especially forests, play an important role in these decentralizations since they provide local governments and local people with needed revenue, wealth, and subsistence. Responsive local governments can provide forest resource-dependent populations the flexibility they need to manage, adapt to and remain resilient in their changing environment. RFGI aims to enhance and help institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local wellbeing, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions.

REDD+ is a global Programme for disbursing funds, primarily to pay national governments of developing countries, to reduce forest carbon emission. REDD+ will require permanent local institutions that can integrate local needs with national and international objectives. The results from RFGI Africa research will be compared with results from collaborators in Asia and South America in order to enhance RFGI comparative scope, and to broaden its geographic policy relevance.

RFGI Working Paper Series Editors' Note

James Murombedzi, Jesse Ribot

and Gretchen Walters

Struggles for control over and access to nature and natural resources; struggles over land, forests, pastures and fisheries, are struggles for survival, self determination, and meaning. Natural resources are central to rural lives and livelihoods: they provide the material resources for survival, security, and freedom. To engage in the world requires assets that enable individuals, households, and communities to act in and on the world around them. The ability to accumulate assets and the ability to access government and market services depends partly on such resources along with the political-economic infrastructure – rights, recourse, representation, markets, and social services – that are the domain of government. Democracy, which both enables and requires the freedom to act, is predicated on these assets and infrastructures. Since the 1980s, African governments have been implementing local government decentralization reforms aimed at making local government more democratic by making them responsive and accountable to citizen needs and aspirations; in many places this has been done through a decentralisation of natural resource governance to local administrations. In order to be responsive to individual, household and community demands, local governments, too, need resources and decision-making powers. There must be a public domain – a set of public resources, such as forests or fisheries, which constitute this domain of democracy, the domain of decisions and services that citizens can demand of government. Natural resources, when decentralized into the domain of local authority, form an important part of the resources of individuals, households, communities and governments, making possible this move toward local democracy.

Natural resources provide local governments and people with wealth and subsistence. While nature is not the only source of rural income, the decentralization of natural resources governance is a core component of local government reform. However, governance reforms have been implemented in a context broadly characterized by an enduring crisis of the Western economic and financial systems, which in turn has stimulated privatization and liberalization in every sphere of life, including nature. The process has deprived local governments of public resources – depriving individuals and communities of a reason to engage, as a powerless government is not worth trying to influence. Privatization is depriving forest-dependent peoples of their access to formerly 'public' or traditionally managed resources. National governments, as well as international bodies such as the United Nations programme, titled the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), further this trend as they collaborate with private interests to promote the privatization of natural resources. The resulting enclosures threaten the wellbeing of resource-dependent populations and the viability of democratic reforms.

The specter of climate change is deepening the crisis of enclosure. A key response to climate change has been the attempt to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through enhancing the capacity of forests in the developing world to store carbon, ostensibly for the benefit of the atmosphere as well as the communities who use these forests. UN REDD seeks to pay communities, through their national governments, to conserve their forests as carbon storage. A plus '+' was added to REDD, forming REDD +, to call for improved ecosystems services, forest management, conservation, forest restoration and afforestation to enhance the capacity for carbon storage. Designed on the basis of similar payments for environmental services (PES) schemes, REDD+ has the potential to inject vast new sums of money into local resource use and governance. In the context of fragile local governments, nascent democracies and powerful private interests, such cash inflows result in the commercialization and privatization of forests and natural resources and the dispossession of local resource users. This financialization of natural resources grossly diminishes the scope for democratic natural resource governance schemes. To be sure, the implementation of REDD+ can also learn from and avoid the pitfalls experienced in these PES schemes, especially if they represent local interests in natural resource governance decision making.

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is an Africa-wide environmental-governance research and training program focusing on enabling responsive and accountable decentralization to strengthen the representation of forest-based rural people in local-government decision making. Since January

2012, the programme has carried out 33 case studies in 12 African countries, with comparative cases Nepal and Peru, to assess the conditions under which central authorities devolve forest management and use decisions to local government, and the conditions that enable local government to engage in sound, equitable and pro-poor forest management. Aimed at enabling local government to play an integrative role in rural development and natural resource management, these case studies are now being finalized and published to elicit public discourse and debate on local government and local democracy. This Working Paper series will publish the RFGI case studies as well as other comparative studies of decentralized natural resources governance in Africa and elsewhere that focus on the interesction between local democracy and natural resource management schemes. Using the concepts of institutional choice and recognition, the cases deal with a comprehensive range of issues in decentralized forest management in the context of REDD+, including the institutional choices of intervening agencies; the effects of such choices on accountability and representation; and the relationships between local government and other local institutions. The series will also include syntheses discussing the main findings of the RFGI research programme.

Based at CODESRIA, and funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the RFGI is a three year collaborative initiative of CODESRIA, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). RFGI working papers and documents, including the background papers, the RFGI programme description, and the RFGI Methods Handbook, can be found on line at:

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Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI)

Supporting Resilient Forest Livelihoods
through Local Representation

The Process of Institutional Choice and Recognition for Decentralized Forest Management in Charcoal-Producing Zones of Tambacounda, Senegal

Poonam Jusrut

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Abstract

In Senegal, the mix of local institutions entrusted with forest resource management is an outcome of choices made by the national government and international agencies. This paper explores how local institutional partners are chosen by national and international institutions in a decentralized forest governance context. In the Tambacounda region of Senegal, Forest Management Committees (FMCs) run by members of the public were created and chosen by USAID and World Bank projects to work with the democratically elected local government (the rural council) and the forestry services. Although the new multi-institution configuration presents potential for democratic resource management, the ensuing division of tasks among the various chosen institutions created new opportunities for collusion among elites who captured positions in the chosen institutions. Such a capture involved a small number of favourably placed villagers intercepting a disproportionately large amount of benefits from forest resources and excluding the poor majority of the population. Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina's (2008) 'Institutional Choice and Recognition' framework provided the overarching conceptual lens and Grindle's (2005) 'Process of Policy and Institutional reform', was used to operationalize the analysis of the institutional choice component.

1

Introduction

In Senegal, forest resources are essential in meeting Senegal's domestic energy demands (Tappan et al. 2004; World Bank 2010). Ensuring the supply of forest-based fuel to Senegal's urban centres and the creation of income-generating opportunities for the rural communities required a reconfiguration of the local institutional mix for managing the resource. The country's 1996 decentralization laws and 1998 'decentralized' forestry code allowed the rural communities, represented by the elected local Rural Councils, to have the right to manage and commercially produce charcoal in their forests. The institutions that manage access to the natural resources are vital to the livelihood of local communities, especially in poor rural regions where income-generation opportunities are scarce. The local-level institutions chosen and recognized by the higher-level institutions influence the way that local populations have an equitable control over and access to their forests.

The mix of local institutions managing forest resources in rural Senegal is explained in this paper as an output of the process of institutional choice and recognition led by national government and international agencies. The local institutions implementing policy reform and project actions were chosen to serve several specific purposes. In this case, the purposes were mainly to achieve the goals of meeting the increase in demand for wood-based charcoal in Senegal's urban centres in an environmentally sustainable way, of creating wealth in the rural charcoal-producing zones where the forests are located, and of enhancing the forest resource management abilities of the rural communities through supporting participatory and democratic institutions. These goals and the local institutions chosen to help achieve them were decisions taken by higher-level institutions.

The analysis of institutional choice, i.e. the process through which higher-scale agencies choose the institutions they will work with in the local arena, aims at understanding why certain institutions (and not others) are being chosen and

recognized by the central government and donor agencies (Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008). Institutional recognition involves the acknowledgement and support of the chosen institution via the transfer of powers to them, partnership in projects or their involvement in decision-making activities (Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008). Institutional choices are made by higher-level institutions in order to have local partners to implement the strategies adopted by the state and donors and to involve local rural communities in the execution of the project. Since powers and resources tend to be concentrated at the centres, be it the national government of Senegal or the international agencies located in the West, they have to be devolved or transferred from those higher-level institutions to selected local ones. This study examines the process through which the institutional choices are made as these choices have implications for the establishment of democratic decentralization: a goal of government and of the projects. Democratic decentralization is believed to foster democratic representation at the local level. Democratic representation is framed as accountability and responsiveness of leaders to the people. It could be considered as a means of politically empowering a wider swath of the populations in those rural communities and keeping in check the calculated actions fuelled by the self-preservation and/or predatory instincts of those who have significant economic interests and who are well positioned to exploit the institutional machinery (Przeworski et al. 1999; Beck 2008; Young 1997; van de Walle 2001).

Developing managed exploitation of a profitable natural resource at the local rural level in Africa involves a whole set of policy and institutional reforms. The state and the customary authorities are no longer the sole managers and custodians of commercially exploitable forests in Senegal. There are now additional institutional nodes that share those forest management functions. Each institutional node represents one institution delimited by its own sets of rules, being a composite of actors, powers ascribed to it and any mechanisms of accountability (Jusrut forthcoming). In addition to the democratically elected local government known as the Rural Councils and the Ministry of Environment's Forest Service, there are now forest management committees created by externally funded forestry project interventions: the World Bank's PROGEDE (Sustainable and Participatory Energy Management) and USAID's Wula Nafaa (Agriculture and Natural Resources Management) projects which have become part of the forest resource management institutional landscape. These committees provide additional institutional nodes for the sustainable management of forests and for the control of access to commercial charcoal production. They have been placed under the authority of elected local governments and supervised by the Forest Service local brigade already active prior to project implementation.

This article examines how and why higher-level institutions such as the central government and international organizations choose institutions for managing access to forests and benefits from wood-based charcoal production in rural Senegal. The current choice of institutions, denoting a strong shift in forest management from state-managed to ostensibly citizen-managed, was leveraged through decentralization. The decentralization reforms of Senegal and forestry projects have created a new public local management that allows for greater private economic access to the resource for rural dwellers. The findings reveal that despite the overall increase in charcoal production by local producers, the chosen institutional arrangements have stunted political representation, leading to the weakening of participatory practices for the poor and marginalized in relation to access to forest resources. The chosen mix of institutions has facilitated the interception of opportunities and benefits from forests by a small group of elite villagers and favourably placed officials. Access to forests and distribution of benefits has improved only for certain groups of villagers since charcoal production has been opened up to rural communities.

Driving this enquiry were the following questions: What specific mix of institutions, including the elected local governments, would best foster a democratic local context that could also achieve local environmental and developmental objectives? Under what conditions, and why, do formal state and donor actors choose such institutions? What are the effects of the actual choice of local institutions on access to wealth-generating opportunities from natural resources for different categories of local people? This paper responds to these questions by exploring the choice of local institutions by higher-level institutions in the decentralized management of charcoal-producing forests in the Tambacounda region of Senegal. Furthermore, this study also adds to the existing scholarship on democratic representation and charcoal production in Senegal which has until now been concentrated on the struggle to remove the monopoly of urban-based merchants and their long-standing stalwarts: the foresters of the forestry services so that rural communities can have access to charcoal production in their forests. The focus on the post-decentralization transition phase of forest management exposed how institutional choice and recognition has influenced the outcomes of democratic representation in the rural zones studied.

Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina's institutional choice and recognition framework is used in this study to explore the factors underlying the choice of local institutions and the effects of the recognition that these choices generate (Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008). To operationalize the choice component, I devised a schema (see Fig. 1) based on Grindle's (2005) 'The Process of policy and institutional reform' model. A combination of the Ribot et al. and Grindle framings is used to examine

the conditions under which higher-level institutions choose the mix of institutions they want to partner with at the local level. Grindle's model conceives of the process of policy and institutional reforms as an interactive one, wherein the choice of institutions to implement policy reforms is shaped by the interests and institutions in various arenas. The different arenas identified by Grindle are: agenda setting, design, adoption, implementation and sustainability of policy implementation and institutional re-arrangements. Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina's framework proposes how to analytically approach an action, that is, institutional choice and recognition, which has profound implications for how institutions shape access to a natural resource at the local level and how they affect the effectiveness of decentralization. Ribot et al.'s framework provides a conceptual receptacle for Grindle's model, situating it in a larger continuum of the policy process, that is, Ribot et al.'s framework tells us where to look and Grindle's model tells us what to look at there while this study tells us what was found when the gaze was shifted in the direction of where policy and institutional reforms are planned and why it mattered using empirical evidence from where the reforms unfold. Ribot et al.'s framing starts at the point where local institutions are selected to implement policy and Grindle's schema takes into account factors preceding and affecting that stage. Ribot et al.'s framework extends into the phase where policy implementation unfolds on the ground, which is treated by the recognition component.

The main methods of primary data collection included interviews, observation (both participant and unobtrusive) and questionnaire surveys. From the 167 interviews carried out, around 49 were semi-structured and structured interviews of officials of line ministries: the Ministry of Environment and donor agencies (USAID and World Bank), the staff of the PROGEDE and Wula Nafaa projects, and also officials of the Forest Services which is the executive branch of the Ministry of Environment as part of 'studying up'. The element of choice was empirically researched using 'studying up' methods (Nader 1974), looking at the upper and middle institutional structures, enlarging and furthering the field of vision to include the architects of projects and policy reform and the sources of ideological constructs underlying the selection. The recognition part was researched by fieldwork in the villages of mainly two rural communities in the Tambacounda region to studying the structures lower down the hierarchy, describing why the institutional landscape for forest resource management is what it is. Three questionnaire surveys administered provided data contributing to a deeper understanding of the context.

2

Background

The Two Projects: Wula Nafaa and PROGEDE

PROGEDE and Wula Nafaa are the two largest and longest standing forestry projects in Senegal. PROGEDE (Sustainable and Participatory Energy Management) is financed by the World Bank and Wula Naafa (Agriculture and Natural Resource Program) is funded by USAID and implemented by the US-based contractor, International Resources Group (IRG).

PROGEDE, whose first phase was from 1998 to 2004 and whose second phase is from 2010-2016, has the main goal of meeting an important part of the rapidly growing urban demand for household fuels, without the loss of forest cover or the ecosystem's carbon sequestration potential and biodiversity. The project development objective is to increase the availability of diversified household fuels in a sustainable way and to increase the income of affected communities while preserving the forest ecosystems (World Bank 2010).

The activities of Wula Nafaa (WN), whose first phase was from 2003 to 2008 and the second phase from 2009-2014, are within the framework of two strategic objectives that were agreed upon by USAID and the Government of Senegal. The objective of Wula Nafaa was to contribute to poverty reduction and to sustainable local development by increasing rural communities and producer revenues through handing responsibility to local authorities and encouraging decentralized, integrated and participatory resource management (USAID 2008).

The democratic decentralization reforms of Senegal, inscribed in the decentralized forestry laws, were crafted so that local populations would have control over their forests via democratically elected local leaders. These reforms are not, however, producing the expected outcome of more equitable access among all

groups of people in those societies (Ribot & Larson 2012). Several factors account for such a deficient outcome, but the foremost cause identified by international agencies was that institutions are unable to meet the demands and needs of citizens (Grindle & Thomas 1989). This article examines the link between this inability and the choice-making process through which local institutions are, or become, recognized in a decentralized forestry management context in rural Senegal.

The practical significance of institutional choice and recognition performed by the higher-level institutions is that by choosing specific kinds of local institutions, they also define the type of citizens who they believe would be most able to use what the chosen institutions have to offer. Besides enhancing the capacity of the local populations as charcoal producers, the outcomes of these choices have not been innocuous. The creation of Forest Management Committees and partnering them with Rural Councils and Forest Services added to the complexity of the politico-administrative structure of forestry resource management while also creating openings for elites to capture the benefits that emerge.

Elite capture, whereby a small group of favourably placed villagers use their social, political or economic privileges to accumulate more benefits from forests at the expense of the non-elites, is symptomatic of the exclusionary effect that the mix of institutions has engendered (Platteau 2004). The international agencies' evaluation of projects' targets and goals does not capture the intra-community disparities that have started appearing with the opening up of the charcoal production sector to the Rural Communities. Instead the dysfunctions introduced through the institutional choice and recognition within those rural communities get masked behind the indicators showing improvement, such as the increase in charcoal produced, or the rising numbers of participants in meetings and workshops. However, they do not tell us who among the villagers has obtained the lion's share of the profit earned from charcoal production or who cannot get their fair share and why that is so. The indicators do not tell us whose participation mattered and was effective or who got what out of the meetings and workshops.

The self-interested compliance of the elites to the projects' actions can be capitalized on by the projects. The elites, being the type of citizens most apt to execute project tasks in the villages, have become the *de facto* development agents. They are also most able to manipulate and divert resources and power for themselves. Foregoing the input of such local elite as *de facto* project executors would be a disadvantage for projects that are pressed by time and budget constraints and the need to positively impact on performance and output indicators. The entrenchment of patterns of accumulation of forest-based benefits by the elites has implications for the overall advancement of the rural community.

Although greater technical and administrative capacity to manage forests and produce charcoal was built through the intervention of projects, inequalities in access to the resource between the well-off and the socially and economically deprived were strengthened due to the institutional setup being prone to capture by the local elites. When charcoal production was first legally opened up to populations in the rural communities, the majority resisted engaging in the activity, perceived as being environmentally deleterious and socially debasing. This resistance to charcoal production gradually turned into an almost frenzied rush to produce what has become known as the 'black diamond', when the news about the profitability of charcoal production spread in these communities.

The institutional landscape of forest management in Tambacounda is composed of multiple institutions characterized by a division of tasks among the institutions. The forest management committees set up by the projects and run by the villagers take care of and respond directly to the day-to-day in charcoal production administrative and financial procedures. The rural council oversees the functioning of the forest management committees (in the Wula Nafaa project zone) and represents the rural community during interaction with higher-level institutions. The forestry services assist both the Rural Council and the forest management committees with technical and some administrative support, while maintaining their policing role. When the actors in these chosen institutions became aware of the benefits they could derive by joining forces with each other, they built their informal network of elites connecting instead of competing with better and less-recognized institutional nodes (Crook & Manor 2000; Evans 1996). Members of the project management committee, the Rural Council and the Forest Services and bigger local charcoal entrepreneurs colluded to maintain control over local charcoal production mostly by giving each other preferential access to production permits and allowing the illegal interception and sale of permits.

3

Merilee Grindle's Process of Policy and Institutional Reform: Unpacking the Stages of Institutional Choice Making

This section describes the process of institutional choice making. The Ribot et al. framework identifies institutional choice as a crucial element that sets in motion a series of actions when a specific configuration of institutions is chosen and specific institutions are recognized when they are conceded with authority and resources. The schemata in Fig 1. depicts the stages of institutional choice and recognition for policy reform and institutional change in the context of decentralized forest management for charcoal production in Senegal. It draws from Merilee Grindle's framework in 'The process of policy reform and institutional reform' (Grindle 2005) that operationalizes the analysis of choice and recognition by breaking it down into a process extending over a number of arenas, namely the 1) agenda-setting arena, 2) design arena, 3) adoption arena, 4) implementation arena, and 5) sustainability arena. Grindle's schema focuses on what happens at the higher level, addressing in a more systematic way the role of actors and institutions at the higher level (as depicted by Fig. 1): parsing actors' intentions, ideological foundations underlying projects, the ends and the means as well as any possible feedback loop at each stage of the choice-making process. By complementing each other, both the Choice and Recognition Framework and the Process of Policy and Institutional reform provide an adequate analytical and descriptive model of institutional processes and outcomes.

The Agenda-setting and Design Stage

Different types of interests exist in all the arenas of policy change and institutional reform. The interests that take precedence are the ones at the agenda-setting and design level, thus influencing the institutions which are chosen to implement the projects or the policies. The interests and institutions implicated in the agenda-setting and design arenas play a larger role in bringing salient issues to the fore. Thus, the institutions active at those stages, namely the international agencies and the national government, are the architects of projects and initiators of reform. In the case of the current forest management in rural Senegal, the agenda-setting and design stages involved a confluence of interests both emerging from the actors historically involved in the implementation of development interventions and laws and policies concerning forests as well as rooted in the prominent economic, development and environment trends of the moment. The set of actors figuring prominently in these two arenas are the World Bank and USAID and their respective implementing agencies (the Forest Service for the first phase of PROGEDE, replaced by independent consultants for the second phase and the International Resource Group (IRG)), the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Environment with its executive branch: the Forest Services.

The agenda-setting arena is one dominated by the international agencies with input from the Senegalese officialdom. For instance, what mandates to fund or support rests on the donor agencies' preference for which portfolio to support. There is now, for example, a diminished interest in funding forestry-related programs for one of the agencies. As an official pointed out, the Natural Resource Management Section of USAID-Senegal is now re-orientating its funding and project intervention attention towards food security issues in the Sahel and away from forest management (interviews 2012). The arguments to justify those interventions, often developed within the confines of western universities and shaped by the agenda of donor agencies, provide the blueprint for institutional configurations in the recipient countries' aid packages (Goldman 2005; Easterly 2007; Brautignam 1992; Burkey 1993). International actors playing the role of policy champions are often the international linkage, bringing what they believe to be urgent issues requiring external support, to the attention of international agencies.

'Policy champions', individuals who have experience or knowledge and who can be advocates of the policy, can affect policies (IDS 2007; Devlin-Foltz & Molinaro 2010). The influence of 'policy champions' in policy changes surrounding charcoal production is notable. The knowledge and connections possessed by policy champions across the aid industry, the Senegalese forestry services or part

of western academia, often evolves to find its way as a shaping force into policy concerning the forest sector that underlies the charcoal industry. Sometimes the long-standing consultancy and research interests in the chain of charcoal production of a policy champion have translated into advocacy for democracy practices and eventually actions modifying the social and political implications of the charcoal industry. The pressure exerted by such policy champions in this case by researchers studying the subject, consultants involved at various stages of the policy process and institutional reform is palpable throughout. This was the case for the uproar especially within the forestry services and the urban-based charcoal merchants in Dakar created by the showing of a film revealing the dark underbelly of charcoal industry (Ribot 2014). This policy champion has also been an advocate within the funding agencies' circles and has been particularly persuasive about the democratic decentralization stance in Community-Based Natural Resource Management, participating in the drafting of the documents and providing conceptual framing to the goals and ideological approach used by the projects.

The policy role of the executive can be illustrated by how the Forest Services upholds discourses that orient decision outcomes in favour of interests of high/mid-level officials in the hierarchy. One example of such a discourse was the 'for the national good' discourse that used to be heavily evoked by the Forest Services to justify why rural populations should let their forests be exploited by wealthy outsiders for commercial purposes, for little local benefit (Ribot 2009). The prominent position that the Forest Services has had in any actions concerning forestry resources means that its input such as its experience and feedback still has weight when decisions about forestry interventions are made. Foresters of the Forest Services are cognizant of the daily matters of charcoal production in the villages and are part of the information feedback loop with the mid- and higher-level officials in Dakar who participate in the agenda-setting and design arenas.

The question 'who decides which local institution should do what?' pertains more to the design arena in the Grindle schema as it sequentially arrives as a preoccupation after the pertinence of an issue has been determined in the agenda-setting arena. During interviews, that question consistently received the answer that the role is not assigned to one single person or institution but that the officials from the donor agencies and from the various ministries sit around a table and discuss how the project is to be implemented.

The choice and the presence of certain types of institutions is based on the function of the institutions, that is, the type of tasks they are meant to accomplish either to fill in lacunae or consolidate the existing institutional infrastructure for

forest management or delivery of administrative services (Brinkerhoff 2001). Institutional choice is influenced by the type of goals that the externally funded programs want to achieve. From the project documents, it was garnered that higher-level institutions are more inclined to choose project goals with tangible output potential using procedural democracy (World Bank 2010; USAID 2008). Such a preference has been attributed to several reasons such as: expediency in the execution of tasks; the belief that using institutions that involve mostly civil society would equate to democracy; an anti-government stance resulting from a disenchantment based on the government's track record and the conscious or unconscious tendency to create spaces that privilege certain economic activities that promote clientelism (Ribot and Oyono 2005).

International agencies, therefore, opted to create their structures to implement project actions because of dissatisfaction about the local government's ability to execute the project goals. In recent decades, donor agencies have been more inclined towards civil-society-based approaches to forestry resource management while they have been more restrained towards choosing local government as partners. Their discriminative reluctance to choose already existing democratically elected partners may close opportunities for building a stable and democratic representative system within the already existing politico-administrative structure. The recognition of an institution goes beyond the mere acknowledgement of its authority to also consist of the creation and consolidation of authority, which becomes a political act, having deep implications for democracy (Ribot, Chhatre and Lankina 2008).

Underlying the penchant for certain types of goals and the ensuing choice of institutions based on those goals may be a product of the need to maximize benefits for certain groups or in the self-interest of the state[1] (North 1990; Bates 1981). Such types of goals also lend themselves to policy designs currently used by donor agencies and central governments but may not be the best goals to meet the needs and aspirations of the majority of the local community. Simultaneously, the need to manufacture certain forms of success out of these projects overlooks the procedural aspects such as the presence of a terrain that will enable democratic culture to flourish (Baviskar 2004; Conyers 2007). Dovetailing of both types of goals is possible but is most potent if an enabling environment already exists, evincing the necessity of being more attentive to the broader socio-economic and historical context. Having project goals consistent with democratic ideals needs to be complemented by output assessments with an emphasis on what has brought about meaningful changes to people in all segments of the local communities. However, the instrumentalisation of procedural democracy by projects has meant

that aspects of procedural democracy (such as choosing representatives by holding local elections) are used as a voucher of good governance and gain precedence over substantive aspects of democracy (that is, the actual inclusiveness and representation of people by working in the interest of people).

Although the two projects adopted different institutional configurations, the local institutions chosen by both projects fit the credos of participation and economic performance. Producing outputs to attain project objectives was ensured by choosing institutions that enshrine the value system shared by the donor. For instance, the democratically elected local government was recognized as the overhead institution by Wula Nafaa, which sought to stimulate forest-based wealth creation through good governance and environmentally sustainability conduits. Institutions were also recognized based on their ability to efficiently perform the tasks set in the project plans in a manner unhindered by local politics as far as possible. This was observed as being mostly the case in zones where the PROGEDE project is active. One of the credos of both projects was the participation of the local people because local people are expected to be the ultimate beneficiaries and a democracy provides the possibility of harnessing the checks provided by mechanisms of accountability. On the ground, this would translate as the application of sanctions by citizens to ensure responsiveness from the institutions since they operate in a democratically decentralized environment. The other credo pertains to economic development: the two projects examined in this study sought to transform a predominantly peasant population into active agents in the market economy of charcoal both as a means to improve their own livelihoods and also as producers of affordable domestic fuel vital to the country's urban centres (Ferguson 1994). Institutions were chosen by the projects to actualize these two objectives that follow the local democracy and local development canons of modernization (Bates 1981; Przeworski 1991).

Figure 1: The stages and process of institutional choice and recognition for policy reform and institutional change in the context of decentralized forest management for charcoal production in Senegal. This schema is inspired by Grindle (2005) and adapted to the two forestry-related projects studied.

	ARENAS			
	Agenda Setting	Design & Adoption	Implementation	Sustainability
Institutions	Higher-level institutions: -World Bank, USAID -Government of Senegal: Ministries of Environment, Energy and Finance	The higher-level institutions The legal, administrative and executive structures Inter-institutional linkages (among institutions at various scales)	Project implementing agencies/ institutions: IRG, Forest Service Local executive institutions: Rural Council, project – created FMCs, Forest Service	Local institutions New stakeholders
Interests	Policy characteristics: decentralization International linkages Issue salience The agenda of policy champions	The design team's profile Institutional preferences of the design team Characteristics of the implementers Bureaucratic interests	Interests of mid- and high-level officials Interests within local populations Conflicts Implementer incentives	Management of conflicts New interests
Actions	Policy reform and institutional change initiation Developing proposal	Choice of local institution participating and Consultation with stakeholders	Building local leadership Mobilization of local populations Negotiations Feed-back loops	Intra-local alliances Local leadership strategies

The exchanges among the actors in the various arenas as set out in this schema inspired by Grindle's process of policy process and institutional reform model, especially between those who provide the ideological framework, the institutional contract design and those who oversee the implementation process defines the purpose of the project and how its accomplishment will be measured as well as what would be considered an achievement.

The Adoption and Implementation Stage

The agenda-setting and design stages are about the higher-level institutions' 'officializing strategies' of translating the ground-level concerns into authorized categories to be acted upon. During these two stages, broader project operational and tactical concerns are also taken into consideration and the output of these phases includes the choice of institutions to implement project activities. The characteristics of the implementers (project staff and government officials) and the interests affected gain their full importance during the adoption and implementation phases during which the policies and the projects realize themselves.

The bureaucratic cultures as well as the intergovernmental structures need to be abided to by the international agencies. As the head of operations of one of the projects pointed out, 'We have to respect the sovereignty of the country we are intervening in' (interviews, Dakar 2012). The inter-governmental distribution of powers concerning forest resource management is structured by the existing decentralization laws and forestry code. This means that international agencies cannot ignore or circumvent the institutions recognized by the State of Senegal in the management of forest resources prior to the intervention of projects, which in this case are the Rural Council and the Forest Services.

Externally-funded projects are often seen as being cash cows by the Senegalese Forest Services who seek to maximize personal gains by being hired to work on the projects. This contributes towards the exacerbation of the problem of bureaucratic capture by those who want to capitalize to the maximum on their position within the project (interviews, Dakar 2012; 2013). The government official views secondment to external projects as an opportunity to acquire new skills or hone existing ones through the training programs provided, or to extend their network of contacts that can make them more marketable for consultancy or other jobs outside the public service (interviews, Dakar 2013; Blundo 1998; 2011).

The differences in the profile of the staff of these two projects reveal variations in the bureaucratic consciousness of the international agencies. The officials hired during the first phase of PROGEDE l were from the Forest Service; however, a

noticeable shift took place in the profile of those who were hired for the second phase of the project. For instance, regional heads for the project are now no longer officials of the Forest Service, but holders of qualifications to fulfill the requirements of those positions. The main reason put forward for this change is to loosen the grip that the officers of the Forest Service had over the charcoal supply chain, who exercised their power to assign commercial exploitation rights over forest resources in a way that unjustly favoured urban-based charcoal traders (interviews, Tambacounda 2012.).

4

Institutional Characteristics Shaping Institutional Choice

The recognition of the type of institutions to implement projects is based on a conglomeration of actions, choices based on the various interests and institutions in the different arenas as conceived by Merilee Grindle's *The process of policy and institutional reform*. In addition to analysis according to Grindle's schema, we define four characteristics sought by higher-level institutions during their process of choosing and recognizing local partners. Those four elements are: 1) efficiency, 2) integrity, 3) democracy/participation, and 4) reliability. Each of these characteristics connects factors emerging both from the ideological realm and the practical realm, and they are often enmeshed. For instance, the integrity element contributes to efficiency by limiting leakages through corruption. The democracy element is ensconced in democratic decentralization, which offers the possibility of harnessing the participation of local populations making the internalization[2] of costs and benefits more effective.

The pertinence of this additional analytical optic is demonstrated by the difficulty for the project to backtrack in any major way with respect to the actions and choices made in the agenda-setting and design stages. By the time the project lands in the recipient zones in rural Senegal, it is too late to make major adjustments despite the presence of feedback loops. The feedback loops were in the form of evaluation meetings regrouping stakeholders, intermittent assessments made by independent consultants or communication between villagers and project staff. These feedback loops led to single learning loops comprising of straightforward problem-solving: overhauling the organization of forest management structures, fixing the nuts and bolts of the project when the functioning became egregious

but not correcting mismatches at a deeper level, therefore perpetuating their possibility to recur. They did not involve a second learning loop at the higher institutional level comprising of a re-examination of these institutions of their own modus operandi, the logics, values and beliefs needed to trigger a process of re-education (Friedmann 1989).

The examination of the rationale behind institutional choices made by the higher-level institutions has led us to derive a set of characteristics or qualities sought in 'candidate' institutions. The activation of the initiative to induce policy reform through institutional recognition begins with the choice of the institutions. This takes place in two dimensions. The first dimension is that the chosen institution fits the ideology of the higher-level institutions and the second dimension has to do with the factors related to the delivery of the project through the chosen and recognized institutions. From observations and data collected during fieldwork, I identified four prominent characteristics sought by higher-level institutions in the institutions that are likely to be chosen and recognized. By understanding these characteristics we understand the reason behind the peripheralization of certain institutions and the legitimization and recognition of others.

Efficiency

Administrative efficiency was the predominant type of efficiency that higher-level institutions took into consideration while recognizing their local partners. The administrative efficiency incorporated considering other elements other than the service provision.

The efficiency of the interventions is measured using a repertoire of indicators whereas that of the decentralization is mostly gauged through the mismatch between the rhetoric in the laws and in practice. Efficiency in service delivery is often associated with decentralization. Relevant to this case, efficiency would be in terms of the internalization of costs through localization. The wave of decentralization[3] that swept Senegal in 1996 did not involve a form of democratic decentralization that would be ideal for efficiency because the powers, especially the financial and materials resources to manage forests that were transferred to locally elected government, were insufficient or insignificant and the rural taxes collected by Rural Councils were negligible. Achieving project goals and successful policy implementation was the primary driver behind the recognition of Forest Management Committees. Forest Management Committees are composed of and run by villagers, but are outside of elected local bodies, meaning they can be removed from being under the control of Rural Councils (as in the case of

PROGEDE II) as well as being just annexed to the Rural Councils (as in the case of Wula Nafaa). As Agrawal puts it, 'Communities accomplish local regulation at significantly lower costs than any central government can' (Agrawal 2005).

The capacity of the Rural Council to manage forests, as judged by higher-level institutions and then by the rural councils themselves, are thought to be insufficient to accomplish the goals set out by the decentralization policies and the project goals, and so additional institutional 'support' was introduced by the donors. This support has been through the creation of forest management committees by the projects, known under different titles in each project and depending on the level in the hierarchy of the structure. The forest management committees for both projects are composed of and run by villagers but do not have a legal status. This support has been in the form of administrative and financial management capacity building, undertaken mostly by Wula Nafaa, and technical skills training such as how to produce charcoal was undertaken mostly by PROGEDE in its zone of intervention.

The focus on the economic growth as a path to development has a long track record consisting more often of failures than successes which have set in motion a shift in the approach of international organizations' development-related interventions (Crush 2005; Peet and Hartwick 1999; Nustad 2001). As a result, higher-level institutions have to balance their focus between the material gains from exploitation of nature and the social benefits that can be derived from the way that nature and those gains are governed. This concern has played a role in influencing how aid is channelled into countries receiving them, which in turn impinges on the institutions through which the aid flows. Alongside of this is the overarching political and economic outlook towards international aid and funding of the western countries 'giving' the money and the prevailing policies of the recipient country and their rationale for allocative efficiency which still mostly supports this very top-down approach (North 1990; Brown 2005; Sklar 1987; Ake 1996).

The perceived need to have multiple or additional institutions in the forestry sector arises for several reasons, ranging from addressing the improvement in economic performance of charcoal production and administrative task specialization to enhancing democratic practices in resource governance and access. Institutional configurations with several types of institutions present promising conditions for democratic resource management (Cohen and Peterson 1999; Urbinati and Warren 2008). It could also lead to efficiency in responsiveness and service provision arising from a division of tasks among the various institutions based on their strengths (Tamanaha 2008; Galvan 2008; Ostrom, 1996; Vira et al. 1997). Furthermore,

each institution has its own mechanisms of responsiveness and accountability, providing more avenues for people to engage with the institution(s) they find most receptive and responsive to their needs as well as representative in political processes. However, the functioning of these mechanisms is marred by elite capture of the chosen institutions, that is, a small number of favourably placed individuals use these institutions as instruments to accumulate a disproportionate amount of opportunities and benefits excluding the non-elites (Jusrut forthcoming). As a result, institutional arrangements sometimes leave people with few alternatives but to revert to the existing structures, namely patronage arrangements, under which they continue to be dominated by the elites. Recognized and chosen institutions may sometimes offer only a façade of democracy and participation, thereby reproducing inequalities, instead of more durable deeper changes (Beck 2008; Villalon and Von Doepp 2005). Thus, in spite of the significant support from donor agencies in terms of redressing inequalities in access to resources through local participation, the chosen institutional configuration in forest management has led to inequitable access to lucrative charcoal production opportunities within the two studied rural communities in the Tambacounda region (Ribot and Larson 2012; O'Brien 1971; Boutinot 2005).

Integrity

The efficiency factor provides the major thrust for integrity as an important consideration when choosing and recognizing local institutions. The conditionality imposed by the donors also factored in the choice and recognition of which institutions would be a good fit for meeting the project goals. Donors are reluctant to inject any kind of resource into settings which do not offer any sort of guarantee of penalties for or safeguards against any inefficiencies, even those resulting from informal and illegal practices occurring within the partner institutions. 'You know how the American agencies are, right? One has to account for every dollar that is given out', said an official of one donor agency while referring to how stringent the monitoring and accounting methods are when it comes to the donor's money (interviews 2012). While the concern about the aid going into the right 'hands' looms ubiquitously within international agencies, achieving efficiency and effective democratic practices provides the main thrust for making integrity an important consideration.

Capacity to limit corruption and informal transactions that could provide unfair access to the resources to a few and depriving those who might not be able to afford such privileged access despite the resource is a common one. The presence of accountability mechanisms is an indication of the possibility of

keeping in check such transactions and ensuring integrity of institutions. This was important in this case study because corruption in the charcoal sector is rampant. It gives those with a higher socio-economic status and more resources or connections an advantage in gaining access to the resource. Informal transactions of influence, gifts, money, and illegally manipulating administrative procedures were widespread among forestry agents, some members of forest management committees and Rural Councils and local charcoal producers. The industry is dominated by those who have the privilege of corruption.

Wula Nafaa circumvented the direct involvement of opportunistic forestry services officials by employing independent consultants as project staff. There was however, a radical change in the profile of the project staff hired in the second phase of PROGEDE, which resembled more that of Wula Nafaa's staff make-up. By bringing in professional staff not affiliated to the forestry services, there was a greater thrust towards enforcing the new forest management unit structures that would be more autonomous and less within the grips of those who divert an unfair amount of advantages in an unrestrained manner. Several actors, such as the charcoal producers and forestry service staff were disgruntled with the actions and decisions of the new PROGEDE staff because it disrupted the smooth running of their slush fund or overrode their direct involvement, hence, preventing them from being in contact with flows of money or access to privileges. Wula Nafaa on the other hand focused more on building the managerial capacity of the local people and submitted those managerial units, that is, the Forest Management Committee, to the oversight of a democratically elected authority: the Rural Council, which was a way of meeting the democracy or representation of rural community criterion. Such an institutional arrangement met the procedural needs that emerged out of the formalization of the charcoal industry at the local level as well as the requirement of functioning under the authority of the democratically elected local government as stipulated by the laws of decentralization. The tweaking of the project tools such as the changes in the structure of Forest Management Committees as the second phase of PROGEDE reflects the necessity for additional needs assessment. The institutional needs of the new policy environment is left solely to higher-level officials or consultants who then devise participatory structures that merely require attendance rather than creating spaces for sustained political development. The reshuffling led to forestry agents who were formerly feasting on opportunities to informally earn money by abusing their power to allow illegal activities in charcoal and timber-producing forests to be posted in zones where minimal economic exploitation of the resource takes place, removing opportunities to earn something 'on the side' from their official salary.

Another example of how the re-arrangement of the linkages between institutions was used to stall corruption among conniving actors was the relegation of the role of the Rural Council to that of an overseer of the financial audit, without any direct links to the newly reorganized executive structures. This step was taken during the second phase of PROGEDE in reaction to the reported diversion of funds by Rural Council members during the first phase of the project. Under normal circumstances, the democratically elected local government is involved in all the meetings organized by the projects because by law, the Rural Council is the gatekeeper of rural communities with no activity allowed to take place without its approval. Furthermore, two rural councils were asked to form one unique account for collecting charcoal taxes (for the Missirah-Kothiary forest), and one of the Rural Council presidents was reluctant to merge the charcoal tax coffers because that would have led to mutual co-inspection of financial transactions preventing any fraudulent activities from going undetected (meetings, Tambacounda 2012-2013).

The criteria for membership in the new forest management committees proposed in 2013 were that (1) only villagers who are not charcoal producers are eligible to be members of the executive bureau of the structure, and (2) candidates for positions in the bureau should be sufficiently literate in the French language. These criteria were supposed to prevent vested interests of executive members from interfering with decisions or actions taken by them while in office and from misusing their power. Since members of the elite are usually more educated, possess the literacy and numeracy skills necessary, and have the time to engage in political activities, almost half of the bureau was occupied by members who used to be directly involved in charcoal production. One of the newly selected executive members in 2013 shared during an interview that now that he has got this position in the bureau, he is going to use this opportunity to help his family members and relatives to gain from charcoal production. The same bureau member had himself produced charcoal in the past but had abandoned it after a court case he filed against one of the *banaa-banaas* (middlemen) with whom he left his stock of charcoal in Dakar but who did not reimburse the money obtained from the sale of the charcoal. After this incident, it would be very difficult for him to re-enter the charcoal business because of the social sanctioning that might prevent him from getting another *banaa-banaa* to sell his products and he is still waiting to be compensated for the remaining amount due from the sale of charcoal by the prosecuted *banaa-banaa*, added to which is his discouragement resulting from this bad experience (interview, Missirah 2012).

Administrative procedures are a double edged-sword in Senegal; on the one hand they help to regulate the production and sale of the commodity in question and on the other hand they offer the agents opportunities to manipulate administrative

procedures to informally extract benefits. Interviews reveal the bureaucratic hurdles they have to overcome in order to earn income from the opening up of the forests to rural communities. The extent of difficulty was often related to the density of the network of the local producer's relations in the various spheres of life. As shown in Jusrut's (forthcoming) article on gender in this sector, women, especially lower class, poorer women, were at a disadvantage to enter and to participate actively in the productive sphere, that is charcoal production, ensuing from the change in the governance style, that is the decentralization of forest resources.

The relation the charcoal producer had with other members of the community or with officials or with institutions was one of the factors that defined how burdensome the administrative procedures could be to a particular local charcoal producer. For instance, as a local charcoal producer puts it:

> There is a problem of documents, permits to cut trees for people who want to do so. They can have 20 permits but the villages are numerous. They get permits but the whole procedure is messy. The permits are gone early but their problems remain. It is the forestry services who calculated the number of permits that need to be distributed to the charcoal producer groups in the villages.

The forestry service agents make inventories at regular frequencies to record the quantity of charcoal in production in each production block of the forests so as to estimate the number of permits required by each group of villages. During the inventory outings where the forestry agents would be accompanied by a member of the rural council, a member of the forest management structure (often the president of the secretary) revealed that sometimes the members of those inventory convoys would connive to falsify the quantities reported in a way that the figure would be inflated so that more permits could be issued. Those 'extra' permits are then captured by either the agents or their collaborators who are often people in positions of authority such as members of the Rural Council, members of the forest management structures and sometimes *banaa-banaas* (informal sector middlemen between producers and charcoal traders). In the past, regardless of the 'extra' permits created based on fictitious figures invented by the forestry agents, the share of permits due to go to the villagers was often diverted by groups of the local elite.

Democracy & Participation

Donor agencies acknowledge the ideological appeal and the practical advantages of the direct involvement of the local populations; projects are designed in a way to include the local beneficiaries at some point along the whole implementation

process (Chambers 1997; 2006; Crewe and Harrison 1998; Muller and Miltin 2007; Kothari 1992; Beneria 2003). Since the coming into force of the participatory approach as the norm of how development is practiced in developing countries, this has influenced the choice of institutions entrusted with the task of carrying out the project actions (Beard et al. 2008; Pritchett and Woolcock 2004). The core principle of democracy being 'for the people, by the people' and elections being one of the procedures created and adopted for operationalizing that principle, these both underpin the 'good governance' component of the projects and the choice of institutions (Putnam 1994; Ake 1996; Edigheji 2006). In this case, the potential of achieving an institutionalized democratic way of carrying out CBRNM is reified through an association with a democratically constituted institution, which in this case is the democratically elected local government (Ribot 2004; Bazaara 2006; Ribot, Lund and Treue 2010).

Alignment of the donor agencies (albeit to varying degrees for each project) with the country's decentralization reforms is also mandated by law. This means that the recognition of the democratically elected local government, that is, the Rural Council was also by default, although the Rural Council is the institution possessing formalized mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness. Tapping into the participatory potential of the rural council requires an informed and politically savvy population. Harnessing the agency of a citizenry able to meaningfully engage with representatives and with the ability to demand accountability could increase access to the resource (Agrawal 2005; Mamdani 1996).

The majority of implementing project staff interviewed said they consider the participation of people with an emphasis on the responsibility of local populations, good governance and the strengthening of technical capacities as fundamental for the good implementation of forestry-related projects. The interviewees mention 'participation' and an 'inclusive approach' as a key element for successful project implementation but to several, participation is a 'local initiative', 'responsible participation' and the necessity of 'a bigger responsibility on behalf of the beneficiary populations'. 'Good governance and transparency in the management of forest and financial resources' was also frequently brought up by the interviewees with one of them even suggesting 'an internal system of control by and for the populations'. 'The strengthening of capacities' was also brought up as an important aspect to be realized through the 'adoption of a forest management plan', 'respect of technical norms which allows for the guarantee of the sustainability of forest', the 'strengthening of technical and organizational capacities of local government and community-based organizations (CBOs) by a better treatment and support of transferred powers'.

The consideration of citizens as political equals when it comes to representation is also problematic in this context (Pitkin 1972) where not every member has the same minimum level of empowerment and awareness. In a democratically decentralized natural resource governance context, it is mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness that make participation of people effective. The value of democratic ways is uncontested by intervening agents when it comes to involving the people. The architecture of the chosen institutions that are supposed to be endowed with all the powers and resources to carry out policy and project goals is imbued with ideological framings reflecting the donor's preference for democracy (USAID 2008, World Bank 2010). However, by imposing certain kinds of institutions, the donors inadvertently also define what types of citizens are more apt to use such institutions. Exhortations about setting civil society as providing a counter-power is unyielding because of the quasi infeasibility of 'making' citizens who would exactly fit the institutional configurations to make the most of opportunities. Citizens are formed from historical processes, often specific to a society, and the expectation that a certain type of citizenship would put everybody on a level playing field to engage with the recognized institutions, even if they are democratically elected (Tilly 1995; Lister 2003). Instead, members of the local community who are more apt to capture the opportunities created through project-supported institutional forms and reform do so at the expense of the less-privileged members of the rural communities.

The enforcement of mechanisms of accountability was relegated to the background by the projects because the managerial capacity of the whole institutional setting that was prioritized. Moreover, it was almost taken as a given that by associating[4] with the democratically elected rural council, that the whole polity would become automatically democratic. Relying on electoral modes of accountability is insufficient and incompatible with contextual specificities and work mostly when there are good leaders committed to improving the wellbeing of the whole community (fieldwork 2012, 2013; Tendler 1997). This is demonstrated by how the Rural Councillors' growing awareness of the profitability of charcoal and of their important role in representing their respective rural communities at a higher level has led them to exploit that position. Rural Council Presidents have started negotiating for their rural communities to be allowed to produce a greater quantity of charcoal. However, how the permits are distributed after the quantity negotiated gets approved is often prone to the discretion of the Rural Council president who might participate in allowing his cronies to intercept more production privileges than allowed or adopt a more transparent and fair stance.

Reliability

Reliability is defined as having the proven capacity to use resources efficiently and in all transparency to meet project goals and higher-level institutions' expectations. This characteristic encompasses all the previously described elements but has a cumulative dimension to it, that is, it is a trait that the institution builds over time.

This type of reliability is still being built by local institutions in Senegal, taking into consideration that the decentralization process is just out of its 'stumbling steps' phase. This means that at only a decade and half after the inception of the decentralization process, Rural Councils had a history of only three regimes until the most recent local elections in 2014. The familiarization of the local populations with institutions entrusted with authority and resources to manage forests, including where to place the Rural Council and Forest Management Committees in the institutional landscape, requires a lag time.

The palimpsest-like mode that characterizes how donor agencies choose the institutions they wish to channel their resources through as development aid could be very revealing about the conditions that have influenced the choice and recognition of certain institutions and not others. In the 1960s, the state was the preferred institutional partner of donor agencies because back then, they used to abide by the notion of the 'developmental state' (Young 1997). Then in the 1980s the epoch began in which the role of the state was being questioned especially due to the influx of streams of economic neoliberalism which was bent on eschewing the state. In the late 1990s, donor agencies backtracked to an approach that involved closer collaboration with the State (Blundo 2011). Changes in approaches to implementation is not only mere trying and erring. Macro-political and macro-economic climates together with the donors and state's ideologies[5] are good predictors of what the policy is going to be. In this case, gaining an understanding of factors crucial to the formulation of policy guiding US-based donor agencies can explain the development paradigm used by the donor agencies. Although donor agencies' efforts to reduce the distance between what they want to achieve and what local populations are perceived as wanting in terms of participation, their commitment to bottom-up and the trend of empowering locals through participatory approaches is still being carried on through projects to date. Several interviewees compared the Wula Nafaa project with the PROGEDE one by stating that the former put greater emphasis on the institutional aspect, that is, on the ways of organizing the local populations and building the capacity of the institutions meant to serve this purpose such as the Forest Management

Committees. The latter concentrated on enhancing the technical skills of people in wood-cutting and charcoal production methods. The interviewees observed that although both projects brought benefits to the local communities, Wula Nafaa proved to be more effective and most likely to produce durable results than PROGEDE whose evaluation revealed that more attention needs to be paid to institutional configurations and composition in order to reach project goals. During a meeting held in May 2012 in Tambacounda to assess PROGEDE's first phase, which regrouped representatives of all the stakeholders, participants declared openly that PROGEDE needed to learn from how Wula Nafaa proceeded in its activities.

The credibility for the intervening agents of the 'candidate' institutions is influenced by the reputation of their reliability and how well they share the politico-ideological bearing of the donors, for instance, if they abide by the same democratic ethos. The failure of local institutions chosen in the past to perform adequately according to the norms set by higher-level institutions becomes part of the profile of 'candidate' institutions.

According to the higher-level officials and project implementing staff interviewed, there are many considerations when deciding which local institutional partners to choose. These include the quality of their performance, as interviewees stated 'There needs to be good governance - if the institution can work in terms of capacity, management, and mobilization as well as in transparency', and, 'The leadership of the president of the rural council matters'. The officials also mentioned contextual factors that influence the performance of institutions. One interviewee brought up that, 'Very often the cultural factors are forgotten', and another noted that, 'We need to consider their position with respect to the ruling power; the charisma (or the popularity) of leaders'. The formal status of institutions is considered to be an important factor in determining which institutions they work with: 'The legal standing of institutions which are the point of entry plays a role as we cannot work on natural resources without going through Rural Council first. USAID works on forestry since projects like NRBAR (Natural Resource Based Agricultural Research Project), since more than 30 years. A lot of strategic thinking is involved in USAID'S program for research, tools of participation, institutional organization'(interviews, Dakar & Tambacounda 2013).

The sum of these aspects mentioned by the officials influences the reliability of the institution as a partner for policy and project implementation. Although the quality and style of leadership within the chosen local institutions affect the policy and project outcomes and outputs, the choice and recognition of local institutions have to comply to uniformity in application. The institutional landscape has not

only offered more flexibility to the elites but has even extended the range of action within which the elites can accumulate more forest-based wealth. In practice, only a few favourably positioned people take over newly introduced institutions or place their allies or subordinates to run them. The forest management committees are institutions that are increasingly starting to bear the characteristics of entities with restricted membership and unequal membership with categories of producers able to produce only a small amount tethered to more powerful and bigger charcoal producers. These committees follow the prescriptions provided by the project documents but they do not challenge the skewed balances in access to forest resources as they themselves form a clique that wants to maintain the privileges of access to charcoal production among themselves. This mix of chosen institutions prioritized the securing of economic development for a select group. This dynamic allowed for the entrenchment of many rural elites' economic interests.

5

Concluding Discussion

The choice and recognition of institutions by the state and international agencies has carved the institutional landscape of forest resource governance, impacting the overall improvement of the rural societies in Tambacounda. The outcomes of institutional choice and recognition, as demonstrated by the case examined in this article, have implications for the extent of the success of externally supported interventions, and state-led policies of decentralized forest resource management.

Reconciling Wealth Generation and Participatory Governance

The study of institutional recognition reveals the strengths and the lacunae of choosing certain local institutional partners and how those institutions are configured with respect to each other. Both projects recognized institutional configurations conducive to economic development and favoured a participatory style of governance so as to create possibilities for inclusiveness and equitability in access to forest resources. Choosing and recognizing democratically elected local government provided the advantage of democratic representation to the local populations but this was not always congruent with everybody's wealth-accumulation aspirations. The costs of introducing market-oriented reforms even in a democratically decentralized context have resulted in the privileged few benefiting from reforms. Participation and representation often require disinterested cooperation that the market-oriented reforms based on models of economic efficiency, hence competition, might not offer (Przeworski 1991).

The costs here are social costs and institutional costs which are paid by those segments of the populations who should have been the ones benefitting from rather than incurring the costs. The social costs linked to institutions include

the loss of trust in institutions that fail to be equitably responsive to the needs of villagers. This social cost is a major hindrance to citizen empowerment and undermines the very initiatives that seek to build equity in the distribution of access to wealth-creation opportunities. The social costs are again paid by the poorer, less politically and socially well-placed groups in the villages, resulting in lower access to forest-based income-generating activities for these groups and contributing to the reproduction of social inequalities. Elite capture prevents non-elite members of these communities from being able to count with reasonable certainty on the responsiveness of the institution approached or leave those members with a feeling of helplessness about making the institutions accountable. On the other hand, the elites can rely on the recognized institutional mix because it opens a stable platform for co-opting each other for sustaining mutually beneficial rackets without being sanctioned for crossing boundaries of formally and legally permissible transactions.

Once a Winner Always a Winner? The Entrenchment of a New Cycle of Elite Capture

The chosen local authorities (committees and elected local governments), each with their imputed distinctive mechanisms of accountability and responsiveness, did not translate into the harmonious, well-adjusted syncretism that can be taken advantage of by all groups within the local populations. An empowered local population could be considered as being an essential element in producing more 'winners' out of villagers so that they are able to take advantage of benefits brought about by policies and projects and to protect themselves against domination and exploitation (Scott 1987; Chambers 1983). We have found that citizenry is not, however, a level playing field in the charcoal producing rural communities studied. Elites are more proficient citizens who, even within democratic institutions, can make their needs and aspirations heard and have more leverage in applying mechanisms of accountability because of their privileged status.

The expectation that with a set of development prescriptions, democratic elections and civil-society-run forest management committees, any villager would be able to transform him/herself automatically into a citizen skilled in applying mechanisms of accountability did not always translate into reality. It was most likely to do so when villagers possessed the necessary access qualifications to have participation calibrated to project needs (Ribot and Peluso 2003; Blaikie 1989). People tap into their already differentiated sources of agency, which might not be found within electoral or non-electoral accountability repertoires, but there are

differentiated abilities to use the media, legal resources, or transparency measures. The villagers with means often navigate their way through the institutional system social and political relations to obtain access to charcoal production. Villagers would go to institutions that they perceived as being able to resolve their issues regardless of whether or not the institution has formal mechanisms of accountability. Similarly, villagers sought responsiveness from institutions that have proximity to the issues related to charcoal production or which they are personally close to instead of approaching the local institutions that officially and legally have the authority and the resources but lack familiarity with the issues.

Thus, for their forest-related demands, the villagers did not always go to the institutions that are democratically constituted, such as the democratically elected local government, but as in any forum-shopping activity, they went to the institutions demonstrating greater ability regarding their specialized requests, which in this case was the Forest Management Committees (von Benda-Beckmann 1981; Baviskar 2004). In the rural communities studied, such resources are provided by the projects in the form of Forestry Management Committees that now handle the administrative and managerial tasks. These committees are more able to provide a rapid and adapted response and also act as a relay between the charcoal producers and other authorities and project staff. Such forest management committees do not have a formalized function to represent the local population. Yet they are delegated management responsibility by the democratically elected local governments, which are downwardly accountable to the public.

The findings further highlight the functional relevance of considering the 'political game' prevailing in a specific location where a project is intervening in order to calibrate not only the choice of institutions but also how the chosen ones are to be positioned in relation to other institutions. Linking the forest management committees to the elected rural councils has had mixed results depending on the democratically elected representative's, that is, the President of the Rural Council's, own personal or political agenda regarding charcoal production. The personal characteristics of democratically elected leaders in the different Rural Councils is a defining feature of how the institutional choice of democratically elected local representatives performs with respect to policy (Tendler 1997). Democracy-imbued institutions are posited as counter-powers to underlying social and political-economic systems deemed to be discriminatory and unconducive to equity. However, at the same time, these institutions place the onus of action on the villager, expecting villagers to be proficient in using institutional tools maladjusted to their realities. The conceptualization of citizenship here needs to be extended and enlarged to accommodate citizen formation as constant and an outcome of

historical processes that are place-specific; something that can rarely be induced by only an institutional re-arrangement but has to emerge from a combination of factors that are beyond the scope of one sector's activity. Thus, mobilizing change outside of the forest sector or charcoal industry related interventions becomes indispensable. Choosing and recognizing specific types of institutions, even if they are democratically constituted defines what kind of citizens can use these institutions, therefore strengthening the position of one group of citizens with specific status, resources and skill sets. Although progress was made in policy implementation for formalizing administrative and financial management of access to forest resources, they are still insufficient for guaranteeing a broad representation of the social interest.

Notes

1. 'Institutions are not necessarily or even usually created to be socially efficient; rather they or at least the formal rules, are created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to devise new rules' (North 1990). If one goes by this logic, then the state or central authorities would seek at all cost to maintain control over profitable resource bases.
2. Internalization results by outsourcing decision-making and execution to the local populations. It is considered economically and managerially efficient because the local populations have the advantage of making decisions more socially and economically meaningful to them and less likely to opt for decisions/actions least harmful as they would be on the frontline for paying the costs.
3. Blundo (2012) holds that the political reasons behind the inception of the laws of decentralization in Senegal weighed more heavily than the administrative and social efficacies. In that respect, the rule of law or legality was used both as a legitimizing ideology and a principle of organization (Ghai 1986). The paradox is that legal texts and their amendments proliferate which could be a misleading indication that the ideologies vehicle by these texts are being internalized and lived by. It has to be highlighted that laws are not abstract norms or 'laws of nature' but they are products of decisions concerned with the creation, distribution, exercise, legitimatizing effect and reproduction of power (Shivji 1989; Okoth-Ogendo 1991).
4. Either by subordinating the other structures to it or arranging co-management roles.
5. Expressed as the organization's mission goals and the type of regime prevalent can give an indication about the supporting ideologies.

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