Exploring dynamic relations between forests and people through **environmental justice** research: empirical insights from northern Lao PDR

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What is environmental justice?

- Theoretical, conceptual approach to researching social aspects of environmental issues
- Pays attention to **3 dimensions** of social-environmental issues
  
  Distribution  Procedure  Recognition

- Non-normative, allows for **plural notions of justice**: liberalism; indigenous philosophies; biocultural rights; responsibilities
- Way of exploring differences in **notions** of justice, competing **claims** and **highlighting solutions**
- Can emphasise marginal, under-represented perspectives
A framework for studying environmental justice

![Diagram](image-url)
A framework for studying environmental justice

Environmental Justice
- Distribution
- Procedure
- Recognition
- Claims
- Notions

Values
- Resources
- Outcomes
- Basic Needs
- Goals

Wellbeing
A framework for studying environmental justice

Drivers of change

Environmental, Economic & technological, Political, Social & demographic

Wellbeing

Values

Resources

Outcomes

Environmental Justice

Distribution, Procedure, Recognition

Claims, Notions
A framework for studying environmental justice

Drivers of change
- Environmental
- Economic & technological
- Political
- Social & demographic

Wellbeing
- Resources
- Outcomes (Basic Needs, Goals)
- Values

Environmental Justice
- Distribution
- Procedure
- Recognition
- Claims
- Notions

Ecosystem structure
- Ecosystem processes

Ecosystem services

Notions

Environmental Justice

A framework for studying environmental justice
Nam Et Phou Louey NPA, northeast Lao PDR

- Est. 1993 boundaries set 2008
- c.100 villages border 6,000 km² montane forest
- Village relocation 1970s-90s
- Shifting cultivation livelihoods
- Land use planning outside NPA
Mixed methods env justice research

- 3 villages: different conservation strategies
- Long introduction/ ethnographic methods
- **Focus groups**, participatory mapping
- **Semi-structured interviews** + life histories with individuals from **100 households**
- **GIS analysis**: land cover change 2000-2014 inside and outside NPA
- **Justice workshops** to validate, explore results
Most significant changes since 2000

• Park boundaries established – different zones

• Development projects to improve infrastructure, health and education services

• Some livelihood diversification

• Change from shifting rice cultivation to cash cropping (maize) = primary driver of ↑ incomes
### Justice - distribution dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Average farming income (m kip)</th>
<th>Average total land size (hectares)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KN</td>
<td>8.81</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Average</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Income and land size lower (significantly) where conservation most strict
- Illegal forest clearance and fines more common in PS (but not the poor)
- Solution through land use planning => degazette NPA to expand village land
Poverty 2004-2014

- Multidimensional poverty, 2004, 58%
- Food poverty, 2004, 10%
- Food poverty, 2014, 28%
- Multidimensional poverty, 2014, 18%
Poverty in context

• Poverty measures relevant to context show worsening trend. MPI does not consider land, livestock or food security

• Rice sufficiency worsening for the poorest: 21% with harvest lasts 6.5 months on average. Situation worst in village with strict conservation
Justice - procedural dimension

- Land tenure based on **complex, informal procedures**. Not all formal meetings and rules
- Maldistribution within villages a major issue. Village leadership plays key role.

⇒ **Distributive solution won’t solve trade-offs or alleviate poverty, requires attention to procedure**
Justice - recognition dimension

- Aspirations to leave shifting cultivation
- Broken promises of support from NPA management
- Claims now directed to flat productive land within NPA
- Rapid response to NTFP demand, e.g. red mushrooms to China
Implications of environmental justice approach

1. ↑ context-specific understanding of trade-offs


3. Can contribute to adaptive management

4. No single formula to promote just outcomes or synergies – social, political, economic context crucial

5. Application for Aichi Target 11 of CBD – “equitable management of protected areas” by 2020


**ESPA Project:**
Ecosystem Services, Wellbeing & Justice:
Developing Tools for Research and Practice