

WHOSE LAND, WHOSE TRANSITION?

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION



The **WHOSE LAND, WHOSE TRANSITION?** *series sheds new light on the controversial nature of the green transition, making people, their land rights and their traditions of landscape governance visible in a discourse dominated by global targets and global quantification.*

The need for the environmental transition is unfolding in a context of urgency: the effects of climate change, the loss of biodiversity and ecosystems and the increasing desertification of soils are at the heart of systemic challenges, such as those related to food systems, migration, peace and security, health, justice and economic prosperity. The need for measures to tackle the causes of these socio-environmental crises is incontestable, and international frameworks such as the UNFCCC, the UNCCD and the CBD have urged governments to formulate ambitious targets through national policies. However, one crucial pillar of those targets and interventions often remains invisible: land.

For a long time, Indigenous Peoples, small-scale farmers, pastoralists, commoners and other persons who make up local communities have governed and stewarded those very ecosystems that are indispensable for ecological security. However, the dominant framing and implementation model for achieving global environmental targets relies heavily on market-based instruments and technocratic governance, while social and political questions on land distribution, territorial rights and justice are recast as neutral matters of technical efficiency. Under these conditions, the rapid expansion of green initiatives is increasingly exposing those communities to the risk of dispossession, criminalisation and various forms of structural violence when projects are implemented without equity and meaningful participation. At the same time, the knowledge and the agency of communities drive the potential to turn this contested space into an opportunity to reinforce land claims – especially where it is possible to show that people-centred solutions are capable of contributing to those same ecological objectives, if appropriately protected and sustained.

Through four distinct but interrelated reports, ***Whose land, whose transition?*** unpacks different angles of this story.

THE HIDDEN TERRITORIAL FOOTPRINT OF THE GLOBAL ENERGY TRANSITION

One of the most evident and visible features of the green transition relates to energy: moving away from fossil fuels and towards the use of renewable sources of energy spurs investment in infrastructure and in the sourcing of minerals required for the technology of the new energy systems. These material changes do not come without an impact on landscapes and people.



Through a global spatial assessment of more than 150,000 renewable energy installations and over 17,000 critical mineral extraction sites, Global energy transition and its energyscapes: exposing the hidden territorial footprint evaluates the cumulative territorial footprint and systemic exposure of community lands to the energy transition.

Dynamics emerge that reach far beyond localised siting disputes, showing how the material and spatial demands of decarbonisation and competition for strategic commodities are reshaping landscapes at an unprecedented scale: the rapid enclosure of commons, resource competition with conservation and carbon schemes and the heightened vulnerability of customary governance of territories all raise urgent questions to be answered.

1



WHEN CLIMATE AND NATURE INTERVENTIONS EXERT PRESSURES ON COMMUNITIES

Through the cross-reading of twelve case studies (from Argentina, Brazil, Cambodia, Chile, Ecuador, Kenya, Madagascar, Morocco, Nepal, Palestine, Spain and Uganda), Green pressures on communities and land analyses typologies, conditions, means of execution and responses to land conflicts connected to the green transition.

We observe instances that are not limited to violence, but also include situations where dynamics of conflict are imposed on communities and territories by the inequitable implementation of approaches to solve the climate and nature crises: slow ecological violence, economic exclusion, the erosion of social fabric, criminalisation.

These frictions reveal a fundamental issue at the heart of the green transition. While such interventions target globally-relevant institutionalised goals, they will not be effective and sustainable if they undermine the local socio-ecological systems on which they rely; nor will they be just if they harm the livelihoods of people who live on and from the land. Investing in good land governance is therefore a foundation for climate and biodiversity interventions that are legitimate, equitable and durable.



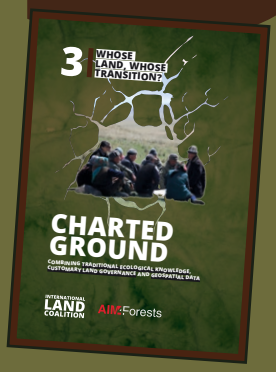
THE GENDER TOLL: A DOUBLE INJUSTICE

Land conflict's impacts are profoundly gendered. In Land conflict through a gender lens, eight case studies from six countries (Bangladesh, India, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria and Peru) apply a gender lens to analyse inter-community and intra-community conflict related to extractivism and climate-induced migration.

Across these different contexts, environmental and economic pressures interact with unequal inheritance systems, insecure tenure and patriarchal institutions. As land and natural resources become more contested, women face heightened risks of dispossession, livelihood loss, displacement and gender-based violence, while their formal rights are undermined or absent in the first place. The cases assessed underscore the urgent need to adopt, at all levels, an analysis framework that captures the gendered impact of these conflicts.

Yet women's organisations and leaders are advancing resistance and alternatives through legal empowerment, collective action, mediation and active participation, showing that strengthening women's land rights and agency is not only a question of equality, but also a pre-condition for resilient communities and legitimate environmental action.

3



FROM CONFLICT TO AGENCY: THE GREEN TRANSITION AS A SPACE FOR REINFORCING LAND CLAIMS

The green transition does not only translate into dynamics of friction; when communities seize the opportunity to demonstrate that they are contributing to existing climate and biodiversity targets, they can gain greater recognition for their own causes and claims.

Wisdom of the land looks at twelve local case studies (from Albania, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Montenegro, Palestine, Peru, the Philippines, Suriname and the United Republic of Tanzania) where communities have documented their people-centred practices and where ecological outcomes have been measured with the aid of remote sensing and digital maps.

The key message is that local communities are not obstacles to climate and environmental action but architects of viable, just alternatives. Their approaches are time-tested and work, potentially combining ancestral knowledge with modern tools, legal mechanisms with political mobilisation, and local stewardship with global advocacy.



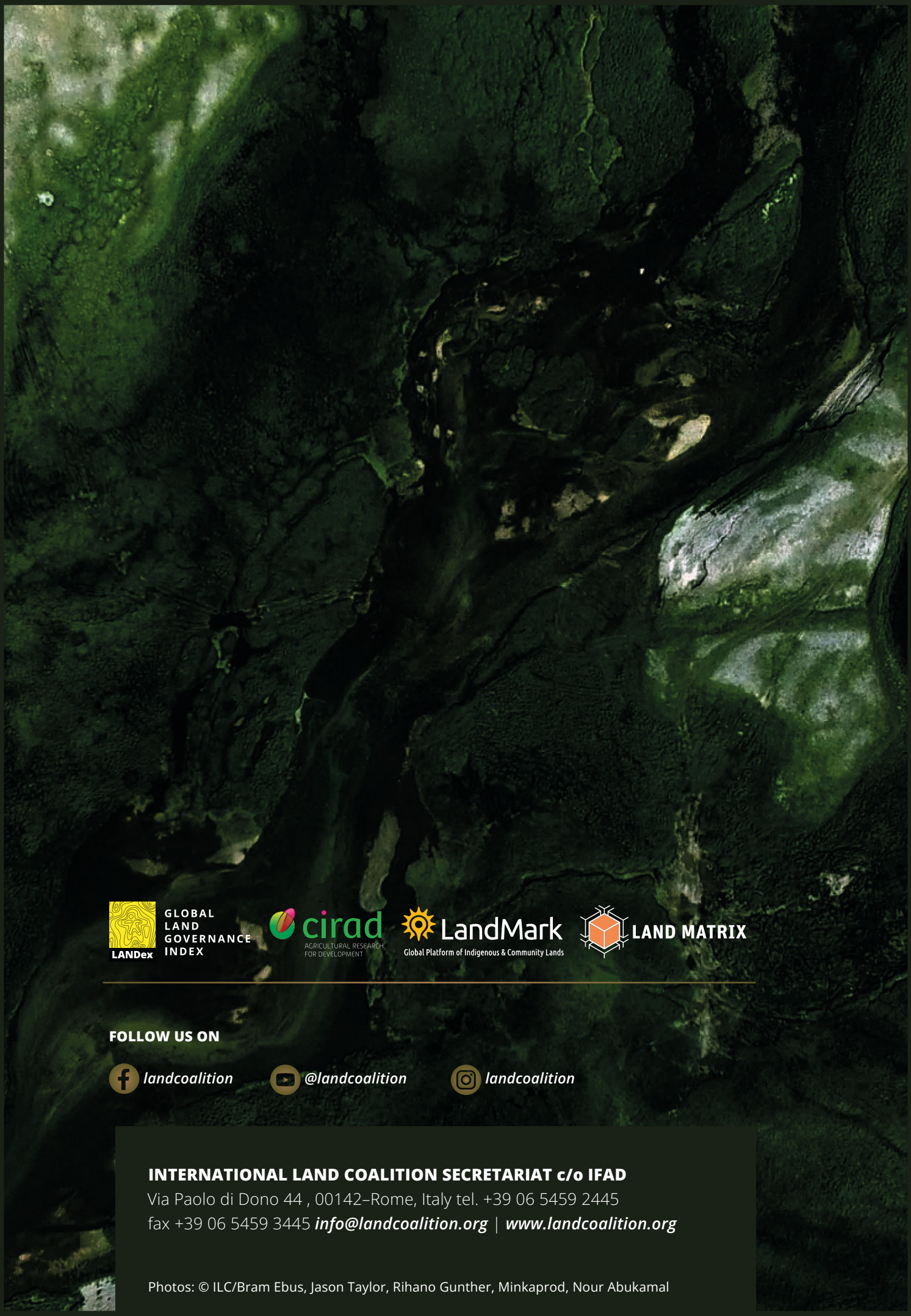
CONCLUSIONS

The cross-reading of the Whose land, whose transition? series provides a land rights framing and evidence of a reality that was already apparent in minority pockets of global political debates: that "green" is not synonymous with "just".

> *A just transition requires re-centring from a territorial perspective: recognising, safeguarding and supporting collective land rights and locally-relevant land governance models; promoting an approach that is not only gender-sensitive but that also aims to transform power dynamics at the root of gender injustices; legitimising Traditional Ecological Knowledge as another valid source of climate and biodiversity solutions; and demanding transparency and accountability from the design and implementation of widescale green programmes.*

Prosperity, especially in an era of socio-ecological crises, cannot be built on renewed cycles of exclusion and dispossession. *The most effective climate and biodiversity strategies are those that strengthen, rather than undermine, the communities who have long sustained the world's most critical ecosystems.*





GLOBAL LAND GOVERNANCE INDEX
LANDex

cirad
AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH FOR DEVELOPMENT

LandMark
Global Platform of Indigenous & Community Lands

LAND MATRIX

FOLLOW US ON

landcoalition *@landcoalition* *landcoalition*

INTERNATIONAL LAND COALITION SECRETARIAT c/o IFAD
Via Paolo di Dono 44 , 00142–Rome, Italy tel. +39 06 5459 2445
fax +39 06 5459 3445 ***info@landcoalition.org*** | ***www.landcoalition.org***

Photos: © ILC/Bram Ebus, Jason Taylor, Rihano Gunther, Minkaprod, Nour Abukamal