

*Industrial heartlands of nature: The political economy of biological prospecting in Madagascar*

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Abstract: This article explores the contradictions that have emerged along the commodity chain of the endangered medicinal tree *Prunus africana* in Madagascar. The study provides a unique opportunity to build on theories of access, highlighting in particular the themes of social relations, culture and power in mediating access to natural resources and benefits that derive from commercialization. Commodity chain analysis is employed to illustrate that property rights, based solely on formal rights, legal claims or customary rights to 'natural commodities' are insufficient to measure who is able to gain and maintain access to the species. The results show that power, regulation and exclusion have a much greater impact on who is able to tap into the benefits of *P. africana* commercialization. This article illustrates how extraction firms in Madagascar have over the years finessed their way, through 'green conditionalities' or conservation concessions, into continued extraction of *P. africana* - all in the face of widespread regulation.