

RHYTHMS OF POWER AND INSTITUTIONAL REENGINEERING IN CONSERVATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effects of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) initiative on local institutions in Zimbabwe. Using the case of Sengwe ward in Chiredzi district, data was collected using key informant interviews, semi-structured questionnaire survey, focus groups, participant observation and non-participant observation. The following results are observed. First, the GLTFCA initiative established new institutional structures that increased bureaucracy affecting the sustainability of such structures. Second, the loci of power of existing local structures and representation in higher level structures were lost. Last but not the least, decision-making by local people and their sense of ownership of the initiative diminished with time. The study concludes that the GLTFCA initiative, marginalizes local institutions and impedes their participation in decision-making. The practical implications of the study is that sustainable development can be achieved in conservation initiatives by increasing participation and decision making by local people through creating supportive institutional structures that allow for local representation at all levels. This paper contributes to the understanding of contemporary issues in the governance of natural resources in transboundary settings.

Keywords: Power, Institutions, Transfrontier Conservation, Transboundary Natural Resources Management, Decision Making, GLTFCA.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the conservationist paradigm has been adopted in the implementation of Transboundary Natural Resources Management (TBNRM) initiatives. These initiatives involve governments who collaborate to manage ecosystems that span political boundaries and mutually benefit (Griffin, 2000; IUCN, 2004; Jones and Chonguiça, 2001). The TBNRM approach is applauded as a management option that not only creates opportunities for sustainable ecological management but generates chances to improve rural livelihoods as well as regional integration and development (Jones and Chonguiça, 2001). The TBNRM approach is not new. The first implemented initiative was during the 1930s. That is the Waterton Glacier International Peace Park, which is a partnership between Canada and the United States of America.ⁱ In literature, a peace park is also referred to as a transfrontier conservation area - TFCA (Peace Parks Foundation, 2002).ⁱⁱ They constitute wide-ranging areas or component of, which span boundaries of two or more countries (SADC, 1999). It is reported that there are 227 TFCAs covering an estimated area of over 4.6 million km² (UNEP-WCMC, 2007). In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, there are 18 existing or potential TFCAs covering over 700,000km² (ibid). For Zimbabwe, 5 TBNRM initiatives are at different stages of implementation, with the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area - GLTFCA (*which is the focus of this paper*), as the “the world's greatest animal kingdom” (Peace Parks Foundation, 2014).ⁱⁱⁱ

While much research was conducted to look at the ecological and economic benefits accruing to respective actors (governments, the private sector and local industry), not much has been done to look at the effects of the initiatives on local institutions. As such, this paper comes at a time when relatively little is known about the effects of transboundary initiatives on local institutions, particularly in Sengwe, which is my study area described below. Let me turn to the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area.

The Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area Initiative

In 2002, the governments of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe signed a treaty to collaborate in the establishment of a conservation area called the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area - GLTFCA (Peace Parks Foundation, 2002; 2004). It lies between 30.700 E and 35.000 E, and 25.500 S and 20.300 S. The total size of the initiative is not well defined. Peace Parks Foundation (2014) estimates the total area at 100,000km². In South Africa, the conservation area incorporates the Pafuri Strip and the Kruger National Park. The Limpopo National Park, Zinave National Park, the Massingir and Corumana areas in Mozambique are also incorporated while the Gonarezhou National Park, Malipati Safari Area, Manjinji Pan Sanctuary form part of the initiative in Zimbabwe. Over and above these designated areas, various privately owned and state-owned conservation areas in Zimbabwe and South Africa are incorporated in the initiative (GLTFCA Treaty, 2002).

The GLTFCA is guided by three goals. These are to: i. foster transboundary collaboration between Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South Africa; ii. strengthen local economies through the sustainable management of natural resources; generate income through trans-border eco-tourism, and facilitate the creation of a sub-regional economic base; and iii. enhance ecosystem

integrity through the creation of a large reserve; and promote alliances in the management of natural resources among the different user groups (GLTFCA Treaty, 2002).

Given that three countries are directly involved in the management of the GLTFCA, suggests that the governance of the initiative is complex. By governance I refer to what Wolmer describes as the exercise of power in practice, from the global to local scales (2003, p. 267). In particular, I consider the governance structures, regarding their roles, and representation as well as the effects they have on the authority over and loci of power on local institutions while espousing their mandates (See also Bevir, 2013; Hufty, 2011). The paper regards institutions (formal and informal) as the set rules for a particular cause, while institutional structures are taken to be the groups of actors who relate to each other for a common cause (North, 1990). An analysis of the roles of the identified institutions in the GLTFCA (hereinafter referred to as the initiative) arena play and influence access to and use of natural resources in the study area shall be made. My emphasis. As such, issues to do with their effectiveness and accountability shall be covered. At the end, I look at how local institutions respond to transforming structures and authority during the implementation of the initiative, what I shall call institutional reengineering.

In this paper, my major contentions are that the planning and implementation of Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs, herein after referred to as conservation areas) are top-down and marginalizes local institutions creating imbalances of power that generates conflicts among actors. And there is a gap between policy (of the initiative), and practice. This in turn compromises the sustainability of such initiatives. Considerations are on the oversights of the initiative's plan on the decision-making authority by local people in the implementation process. By presenting empirical material (including ethnographies) that explores the changing aspects on the loci of power by different institutional structures established by the initiative, the paper provides and identifies potential impediments to the existing institutional framework for natural resource access to, control over and management. Particular attention is given to the case of Sengwe ward in Chiredzi district in the Zimbabwe prefecture, which not only is adjacent to the designated conservation area but part of which shall be set aside to establish a wildlife corridor.

Subtle to the initiative is that a proposed 392km² wildlife corridor is one way the Zimbabwe sector can be linked to the rest of the conservation area. For instance CESVI (2002, p. 5); Sibanda (2010, p. 10). Almost 13 years after the establishment of the initiative, this wildlife corridor is yet to be put in place. More profound, however, the wildlife corridor shall cover an average of 94% of my study area. Implied is the greater extent to which it shall affect local institutions and livelihoods of local people who face imminent relocation. And this evokes what happened during the colonial period when land was appropriated from local people (ibid).

Colonial and Post-colonial Policy Frameworks

The legislative framework during the colonial period (1890 – 1980), can be summarized as, it subjugated local people and took the form of land expropriation as well as other assets such as livestock from local people. See (Nhira, Barker, Gondo, Mangono and Muranda, 1998, p. 35-37; Magome and Murombedzi, 2003; Sibanda, 2010, p. 63-67). Such legislature include the Game Law of 1896^{iv}, Game Preservation Ordinance No. 6 of 1899^v, Native Reserve Forest Product Act of 1928^{vi}, Game and Fish Act of 1929^{vii}, Land Apportionment Act of 1930^{viii}, Native Colonial Councils Act of 1937^{ix}, Natural Resources Act of 1941^x, Land Forest Act of 1948^{xi}, Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951^{xii}, Tribal Trust Land Act of 1967^{xiii} as well as the Land Tenure Act of 1969^{xiv}. In spite of the multiplicity of legislature in place during the colonial period, problems associated with effective policing remained perennial. This is because the governance system was command and control and local people's insights were not captured in policy (Chingwenya and Manatsa, 2007; Katerera, 1999).

During the post-colonial period, legislature from the colonial period was inherited but effort was made to de-racialize them. These are the National Parks and Wildlife Act of 1982,^{xv} RDC Act of 1988,^{xvi} Prime Minister's directive of 1994,^{xvii} Traditional leaders Act of 1998,^{xviii} Land Acquisition Act of 1992,^{xix} Forest Act of 1999,^{xx} and the Environmental Management Act of 2002^{xxi}. Even for the post-colonial period, environmental problems remain recurrent regardless of a number of policy instruments in place. In this paper, I consider policy transformations brought about the GLTFCA initiative with recurring effects on loci of power on local institutions in Sengwe, what I shall call the rhythm of power.

The Study Site – Sengwe Ward

Sengwe ward lies in the eastern lowveld in Chiredzi district of Masvingo province. It consists of 29 villages (CESVI, 2002; Sibanda, 2010). Sengwe lies against the southern international border of Zimbabwe adjacent to Mozambique on the Eastern side, and South Africa on the Western. The eastern part of Sengwe borders the western boundary of Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe. Half of the western part of Sengwe is adjacent to the northern border of Kruger National Park, South Africa, while the eastern half lies adjacent to Chicualacuala district of Mozambique (CESVI, 2002). AREX (2006), estimates the Sengwe area at 172,500ha.

From the Zimbabwe regional classification, Sengwe is in region V, which is characterized by unreliable rainfall with mean annual precipitation of between 400mm (ARDA, 1993) to 466mm (Gandiwa, 2011), and high temperatures are between 25°C and 50°C in summer (FAO, 2004; ARDA, 1993, p. 2 respectively). Soils are mostly sandy, which make it difficult for reliable crop production. Livelihoods in Sengwe include, livestock production, dryland crop production, migrant labor, marketing of non-timber forest products and hunting (Sibanda, 2010, p. 22).

The ethnic population in Sengwe is diverse. The Shangaan dominates followed by the Karanga, and Ndebele. There are minority groups who are the Ndau and Venda speaking. Another group which is not confirmed in literature exists in Sengwe constituting of intermarriages as well as government and NGO employees who came from different districts of Zimbabwe

but have over time settled in the ward (Sibanda, 2010, p. 49). In most parts of the ward, communication in this remote part of Zimbabwe is enhanced by sporadic access to the South African cellular network (Sibanda, 2010).

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study adopts a case study approach and qualitative research methods. Because of the need to have a deep understanding of the complex nature of local people's perceptions about the changing aspects on loci of power among institutions, the adopted approach was thus appropriate. Using the case of Sengwe ward, data was collected using key informant interviews, focus groups, participant observation and non-participant observation. Secondary sources were consulted including robust sources on the internet. Four villages namely Chilohlela, Dumisa, Kotsvi and Sengwe were purposively selected as representative samples. These were selected based on general accessibility and distance from the privately owned conservancies and the Gonarezhou National Park.^{xxiii} To reach out for other local people in Sengwe a semi structured questionnaire survey was administered to 66 households. The questionnaire survey assisted in gathering data from many households that could not be consulted during focus groups, reduced the chances of bias and captured questions that I deliberately excluded from focus group discussion (See also inferences by Bernard, 2002, p. 258-260). Questions of causality were addressed since data was collected at more than one point in time (interlinked phases). That is during my postgraduate studies between 2006 and 2010, then further research was conducted in 2013 and 2014.

Different institutions at local levels were purposively selected for group discussions. These were project based, custom or the so called traditional as well as legal structures. Members of focus groups were selected by gender and age regardless of their socio-economic status in Sengwe. A total of 8 focus groups were conducted and 19 key informants consulted. Key informants include the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) personnel, government departments, NGO focal persons, lease holders in the adjacent conservancy areas, local leaders and their councils, spirit medium as well as local authorities (Rural District Council and District Administration officials). Authorities at head offices of government departments and NGOs in Masvingo and Harare were interviewed. Permission was sort from respective authorities and permits to access the Gonarezhou National Park and relevant records granted. For ethical reasons, respondents were made aware of the objectives of the study and their consent was sort. In this paper, pseudonyms are used and the actual designations of respondents are safeguarded. The following section presents research findings and discussion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

On 11 March 2006, around 08:00hrs, I picked up two National Parks Authority (NPWMA) officials, from their Gonarezhou offices to attend a meeting. I organized this meeting to discuss issues around governance in the initiative's Zimbabwe sector with local leaders at the Malipati guesthouse in Sengwe. The local leader extended his apologies to me the day before, when I went round in the study area to confirm the meeting was on to all invited guests. He indicated to me that he was attending to another meeting in the district town of Chiredzi. This was not unusual as impromptu meetings called by the national ruling party were the order of the day.

Because the two officials and I arrived earlier than other attendants did, we started talking about events in the initiative. When I asked them about access to natural resources and associated conflicts, I was assured that wildlife was responsible for the destruction of the ecosystem in the national park area and not local people. The senior official said: “Elephants are causing destruction on vegetation, not local people”.

When I further asked the two parks officials about local institutions responsible for conservation in the initiative and how they function, at first, they both laughed. Then I asked them the reason for laughing. The senior official answered saying that: “Look, every initiative brings along its institutional requirements, within which is supposed to operate and collaborate with existing institutions. This, I think, is not necessary because they [initiatives], always take for granted already existing systems of managing natural resources at local level”. His remarks points at the cynicism about the governance of the initiative and his position as an authority regarding the governance structure of the initiative, and what was happening on the ground. Immediately, I asked them about the governance structure of the initiative, how it is organized and operating. Their tone suddenly changed.

In his reply, the junior official defended the initiative governance structure in place that: “What do you expect when we are now talking about a multinational project [initiative]? There are three governments involved in this project, so local institutional structures have to be reconstituted” (11, March 2006). Here, the park authority suggests that the initiative is exempted from working with local institutions in their original form or status, because it involves more than one government. Implied in his assessment is the complex nature of such high level partnerships, which have effects on local institutions particularly on the loci of power. Especially that local people are least powerful among various actors in transboundary initiatives (Gandiwa, 2011; Tavuyanago and Makwara, 2011; Wolmer 2004). A question thus can be raised about the sustainability of such initiatives. The cynicism shown by the parks authorities above is not untypical of the GLTFCA policy, which introduced other institutional strata increasing bureaucracy in the governance of natural resources. These new strata generated conflicts among actors as this paper shall illustrate.

During my fieldwork, the increased presence of government state agents, the police and the army raised suspicion about security in the Zimbabwe context. And as such, the attitude by the local leader to outsiders is skeptical. The local leader’s position is politically unique. As a resident within the proposed wildlife corridor, he shall be relocated from the current homestead. Probably because of this juxtaposition, the analysis of conservation initiatives in Sengwe by the local leader is as follows:

We have never stopped any development project here even those we knew from the beginning they are going to fail. Even your projects especially the crèches [referring directly to me and the initiatives implemented by my former employer], we knew these do not work here but as usual, would gain something when these projects finally come to an end. It has always been the trend here. As far as I can see, the transfrontier [GLTFCA], is a once-a-life-time monster because it is going to take us away from our homes, our land and all our inheritance. The wild animals will have their freedom, the tourists can see them without being disturbed by our presence, and the hunters will kill wildlife as they please, while

the lodges reap all the profits. Where are we, in this mathematics [meaning formulation, situation or puzzle]? Now you see, this is what they really want [while pointing his finger to the ground and stressing his argument]. (28 March 2006).

Sentiments by the local leader above brings out important issues about: i) the effects of initiatives and institutional behavior of the agencies; ii) the ability of local people to forecast the end results (effects) of initiatives in their area; iii) the dispossession of land and other resources from local people that evokes the colonial period characterized by appropriation; and more importantly iv) the promotion of tourism, which he suggests disregard the welfare of local people.

The metaphor of the initiative as 'a-life-time monster' illustrates not only the effect of the initiative on relocation but also portrays an image of the magnitude of the initiative's power over that of local institutions. This brings up the context of asymmetries of power among actors in Sengwe that has created conflicts. According to the local leader, local people only came to realize later that their perceptions to gain something after the initiative ends are defeated. Wolmer (2003), points out to an important argument regarding the planning and implementation of transfrontier initiatives in Africa. He says:

As large scale regional planning and investment initiatives [like the GLTFCA] spanning differing institutional frameworks and with varying degrees of collaboration between the state, private sector and civil society they superimpose further layers of politics and raise important questions about power, control, authority, accountability and legitimacy at a variety of scales (2003, p. 1). *My emphasis.*

The above discussion with park authorities and the quotation by Wolmer, give a starting point to examine the governance system in the initiative. In the following sections, I look at the decision-making processes, how these are implemented and the existence of systems for power sharing. Considerations are on how decision-makers are held accountable, the existence of conflicts and how actors react to or resolve these.

Conflicts in the GLTFCA arena emerged from the outset of its implementation. This has led local people to be hostile towards conservation initiatives in Sengwe. Escobar, writes that resistance was [is] one of the many ways in which the third world groups [in this case people residing in Sengwe] attempted to create new identities (1995, p. 216; 2002). The findings are similar to those among Malayan peasant farmers who adjusted to changing policy and legislation, which threatened their sources of livelihoods in Sedaka village (see Scott, 1985; 1989). As the elderly local leader in Sengwe village observes:

When we started the CAMPFIRE program, many organizations came and we organized meetings with local leaders at village and ward level to discuss the project. It was transparent as far as I can see it. Our local Spirit medium was consulted too. Traditional rituals were performed before the project could be implemented. Now you see this is what we always do.... The GLTFCA [initiative] is like a thief. It came unexpectedly. We were misled and then taken by surprise. This is not good. So, is this what you call consultation? Is this the best way of making people participate? How do you expect the community to participate when you want them to be removed from this place [to create the wildlife corridor]? (8, May 2006).

The remarks above by the local leader, tell us that the impasse started at the initial consultation stage, in the implementation of the initiative. Major issues raised by the local leader are on: i) Consultation, compliance with local protocol and respect for local institutions; ii) Transparency; iii) Local people being misled and not taken along the roll out of the initiative; and iv) the involvement (participation) and cooperation of local people in the intervention. His views of the lack of transparency are in his statements that points at the initiative as a ‘thief’. The statements above seem to suggest that although they realized that they were not sufficiently consulted and at the same time misled, they do not have a platform to contest. This takes us to the discussion on governance of the initiative, what I shall call Institutional Reengineering.

Institutional Reengineering of Local Structures

The situation of local people living in some parts of Sengwe that lie within the designated wildlife corridor is uncertain. Although debates continue, they await relocation, which has not taken place almost 13 years after the GLTFCA Treaty was signed. But local people do not know to where, when and under what conditions they will be relocated. This is because communication has been absent from the authorities in spite of what is enshrined in the initiative policy that says: “... to disseminate accurate information to quell understandable fears in communities about forced relocation and dampen any unrealistic expectations about the benefits the park will bring to the communities” (GLTP Treaty, 2002, p. 10). Let me move on to discuss how the initiative’s structures and institutions evolved, and look at how their loci of power is exercised in Sengwe.

After signing the Memorandum of Understanding among the three parties in 2000, the first governance structure was commissioned. It had a four tier strata composing the Trilateral Ministerial Committee (see article 8 of the GKG Conceptual Plan, 2000) at the top, followed by the Technical Committee (article 9), the Coordinating Party (article 10), and at the bottom but lastly the Working Group (article 11). This structure was operational only for 2 years. In 2002, the Xai-Xai Treaty, established a three tier strata with the Ministerial Committee (article 10) at the top, followed by a Joint Management Board (article 11) and Coordinating Party (article 12), at the bottom.

The role and authority of the Trilateral Ministerial Committee as the overall policy body, monitors progress in the implementation of action plans for the Transfrontier Park among other responsibilities. Decisions made by the members were by consensus (GKG Conceptual Plan, 2000, p. 8). Reporting to the Trilateral Ministerial Committee was the Technical Committee, composed of senior representatives of the Competent Authorities and/or their respective Ministries of the Parties. Like those of the Trilateral Ministerial Committee, decisions of the Technical Committee were by consensus. Chaired on a rotational basis, members met at least twice a year, or more frequently, depending on the urgency of the issues tabled for discussion.

The Technical Committee, however, was dissolved in 2002 and replaced by the Joint Management Board that reports to the Trilateral Ministerial Committee. It consists of eight members with the following representatives: i) two from each of the National Implementing Agencies of the Parties; ii) one from the national institutions responsible for borderline control of the

Parties; and iii) one appointed as deemed fit by each of the Parties. Suffice is to say that unavoidably, representation of local people is a challenge at this interface, within the Trilateral Ministerial and the Technical committee as well as the Joint Management Board level. The construction and restructuring of the coordinating body unveils the dynamism involved as far as its jurisprudence is concerned. Indeed what matters is however, an understanding of their jurisdictions (Murphree, 2004, p. 6), issues surrounding accountability (Paavola and Adger, 2005, p. 356; Ribot, 2004, p. 3) and their effectiveness (Narayan, 2000, p. 115; Ribot, 2004, p.17).

Reporting to the Joint Management Board are three management committees which provide advisory services on conservation, safety and security, finance, human resources, legislation and tourism. The Coordinating Party is claimed to promote accountability and sustain momentum in the Transfrontier Park implementation process.^{xxiii} Among other roles, it ensures that: an effective Joint Management Board is maintained, with full representation by all the Parties and that a working programme focused on achieving the objectives of the Transfrontier Park is sustained (GKG Conceptual Plan, 2000, p. 8). At the lowest level of the old institutional structure is the Working Group, composing of representatives appointed by the Competent Authorities of the Parties and/or representatives delegated by the relevant Ministries of the Parties. In this tier, representation of local people in each country having one Working Group is instituted. The three of them make up the Tri-nation Community Representative Committee (TRINCRECO). From the outset, while TRINCRECO accepted to be incorporated into the governance structure of the conservation area, it however, expressed concern over the lack of its membership on the Joint Management Board. This remains the situation 13 years after the establishment of the initiative. Probably, authorities have kept the need to incorporate representation of the local on the way side.

In spite of its existence, the TRINCRECO receives guidance and supervision from the Technical Committee regarding its activities. The Working Group is entitled to ensure full participation by all appropriate actors in the preparation of policy recommendations, resource management plans, and other relevant documents relating to the initiative. It also liaises and collaborates with other relevant regional initiatives, such as the Maputo Development Corridor, in the establishment, development and management of the Transfrontier Park (GKG Conceptual Plan, 2000, p. 8-9). While there is a structure that seems to represent local people, it does not support that they make any decisions; hence the implementation of recommendations from members is not guaranteed. In his speech delivered at Inwent-IUCN Workshop on Transfrontier Conservation Areas in Southern Africa into Guidance and Networking, 2003, Fakir, avows that: "... TFCAs can easily transform themselves from monuments of prosperity to exclusion and abandonment of the hopes of many of the poor who have tied or anchored their future to these vehicles of resource mobilization and development" (2003, p. 1). Let me turn to experiences in the Tanzania and Kenya's Kilimanjaro Heartland TBNRM looking at its governance structure before I go on to discuss views by respondents in Sengwe.

In 2001, Frohardt and Muruthi, analyzed transboundary natural resource management efforts in the Tanzania and Kenya sectors in terms of the social, political, cultural and institutional context. Their *Study on the Development of Transboundary Natural Resource Management Areas in Africa: Kilimanjaro Heartland Case Study*, 2001, chronicles the conservation experience. Recounting at a period of over 30 years in which the Africa Wildlife Foundation (AWF) was operating in

Amboseli-Longido area, the scholars elucidate that the applicability of transboundary natural resource management is elusive. They argue that “the opportunity costs of wildlife game and protected areas are fairly high to local people, in terms of lack of access to water, user rights and lack of or limited shared revenue” (ibid., 2001, p. 14). See also Campbell et al. (2000).

However, in contrast to the GLTFCA policy, they show how the March 1998 enacted wildlife policy in Tanzania (Wildlife Utilization section, item 2.4.3:10), that facilitates the decentralization of wildlife management at local level through the establishment of wildlife management areas (WMA). At village level, wildlife management is selected as a land use and economic activity thus providing opportunities for strong local control (2001, p. 12-13). Because, the Heartland area covers private ranches, they joined up to form a Wildlife Association (for example the Amboseli-Tsavo Group Ranch Wildlife Association). The arrangement in the Amboseli-Tsavo initiative suggests that sustainable development can be achieved by involving all relevant stakeholders at all levels from planning to the implementation of initiatives. Let me turn back to the Sengwe case.

Respondents of different age groups and gender in Sengwe were aware of the GLTFCA institutional structures but are not satisfied with their effectiveness and representation. Comments such as those below reflect this.

- They always decide on what to do but we do not always follow what they want.^{xxiv}
- We just wait for them to tell us what to do.^{xxv}
- We do not know what there is for us in this transfrontier - *Ahitivi kuri kune yini shahina/ ahitivi kuri hingaphuneka hiyini kona kwale.*^{xxvi}
- They always meet in nice hotels to decide our future. They do not even know how we survive here. It is worse this time because we did not vote for the ruling party, and I know we are paying for that.^{xxvii}
- After all, it is their project. They are the ones who gain and we suffer.^{xxviii}
- We are fed up with people who always talk as if they represent us when they are there to pursue their agendas.^{xxix}
- They always grow fat while we grow thinner, time after time - *Svipihuna varangeli tsena, hina ahikumi tshumu/ varangeli hivona vashurako tsena, hina hile vusiwanini mikari hinkwayo.*^{xxx}
- They do not respect existing traditional [local] structures.^{xxxi}
- Resource management plans are not compiled by us, but by them. It is a waste of time giving them anything because they always change them to suit their interests. Look, the corridor has expanded from 5kms to 15kms and there is talk of 26kms [referring to the concept paper compiled by an international NGO, CESVI].^{xxxii}
- My friend, nothing has changed. We have no power to decide on anything to do with the project. But they always tell us to collaborate and reduce poaching.^{xxxiii}
- This is where you witness power in action. And we are on the receiving end.^{xxxiv}

In spite of the knowledge of the existence of the GLTFCA institutional structures, the respondents above also suggest some level of gross mistrust, political interference, lack of sharing of information at local level, representation and a sense of disassociation from the initiative that defeats its conceptualization and policy.

The above quotes also suggest that the initiative’s governance structure is consistent with the strengthening of bureaucracy

that marginalizes the decisions made by local people. Sentiments by local leaders illustrate the level of redundancy of grassroots authorities, disenfranchisement of local institutions and to some extent, lack of hope brought about the conservation area's governance structure in the study area. On the one hand, the initiative proposes to encourage coalitions through enhancement of socio-economic partnerships among local communities (GLTFCA management plan, 2002, p. 2). On the other, local people have developed bitterness towards any conservation initiatives in Sengwe as elucidated by elderly men in Pahlela village. In addition to the above sentiments, respondents also believe the marginalization of local institutions as politically motivated.

Throughout my fieldwork, respondents indicated that they did not participate in the planning of the initiative and remained passive in all aspects of the implementation process. See also inferences by Chirozva (2013, p. 49) and Wolmer (2004). For instance, when the initiative changed its status and names from the Gaza-Kruger Gonarezhou Park (GKG), to the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTP), and then finally to the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area, local people were neither given an opportunity to contribute nor made aware of these processes. Local people also stressed that feedback from authorities although necessary, has not been forthcoming and they remained unacquainted. One disgruntled elderly woman from Dumisa says: "We need to plan our future, so we need to know what these authorities are discussing about us and the park [the initiative]" (8 April 2006). During my subsequent visits in 2013 and 2014, the status quo had not changed. This scenario contradicts with the principles of sustainable development by not promoting social integration of local people in conservation initiatives.

Respondents in local leadership positions in Sengwe, argue that it is the Joint Management Board, which continue to make decisions unabated. They said that these decisions always overshadow those of the established Community Working Groups at local level or the TRINCRECO. For instance, when I asked them about whether or not they were informed by authorities concerning the launching of the initiative and subsequent translocation of elephants from Kruger to Limpopo National Park, respondents said that no communication was made by the authorities. This persistent lack of sharing of information between authorities and local leadership is surprising considering the representation of local people in the governance structure, which provides avenues of communication. As one disgruntled elderly man and local leader, says:

In 2002, we [leadership] got the news last minute that there will be an official opening of the GKG and the former president of South Africa [Mr. N. Mandela] was coming to officiate. Of course some of us as local leaders were picked up by some NGO representatives and attended, but without a clear vision of what was happening (13, November 2006).

This quote reveals the gap between the GLTFCA policy provisions for transparency on the one hand and what is happening on the ground on the other. Of this scholars such as Kearney et al. (1994) have stated, that interventions might enhance the capacity of people to act in consent while coping with the threats and opportunities at hand (1994, p. 22). According to local leaders, GLTFCA Zimbabwe sector is equivalent to the infliction of pain to local people. He says: "they [officials and agencies working in the initiative] are "kicking us on the stomach – *Vahiraha mukwiri*".

“Kicking us on the Stomach”

It is not only the governance structure that has effects on local institutions but other actors' influence on the GLTFCA policy. These are NGOs in the Sengwe prefecture. In relation to issues of representation, power and its related dynamics, local people consider NGOs to having overriding power to influence conservation policy. NGOs operating in the Sengwe prefecture include CESVI, IUCN, WWF, Peace Parks, SAFIRE, The Heifer Project and ZimTrust. These encouraged the participation of local people in the initiative through capacity building of local institutions, provide advisory role in the planning and implementation of the initiative. They also implement a number of livelihood enhancing programmes in Sengwe. Inferences by Wolmer (2003) indicate that bilateral and multilateral donors, international NGOs and multinational companies and sub-national entities often by-pass state authority structures (2003, p. 262). In 2006, Duffy made a similar argument saying that powerful international conservation NGOs and consultancy companies or facilitating agencies often exercise considerable power in collaborative management arrangements (2006, p. 91-94). A good example is that of the Integrated Tourism Development Plan developed by a private consultant that is the guiding tourism plan for the initiative. Not even one respondent was aware of this plan. This raises question about “who owns the plan?” I argue that the planning and implementation of Conservation Areas are top-down, marginalizes local institutions creating imbalances of power that generate conflicts among actors. This manifests itself in the exigency of donor power expressed in initiatives within individuals and implementing agencies such as NGOs.

Apart from facilitating the establishment of new institutional structures in Sengwe on the one hand, NGOs and local people reviewed the performance of these structures and devised ways they could be improved. These platforms, created by NGOs obliged local people to deal publicly with issues of governance, an experience that sometimes was not well represented on the performance of the conventional administrative mechanisms of the state (Vernooy et al., 2003, p. 222). On the other hand, NGOs are said to strengthen local peoples' capacity to actively participate in conservation discourse especially as they act as brokers of the initiative among different actors that include the authorities and donors. Such approaches that improves the human capital's ability to deal with issues have proved to enhance the sustainability of development initiatives.

Accordingly, NGOs have leverage to influence policy with consequences that seem to suggest promoting the betterment of local people's livelihoods. An immediate example is the proposal for the establishment of the wildlife corridor by the initiative. A distressed local leader said:

I blame ... [an Italian NGO]. It came here many times. Right now there are 2 Project Officers in Sengwe. What are they doing? Of course, nothing. They took us in their big vehicles moving from place to place. We decided as a community [local people] that the so-called Chipise to Sengwe wildlife Corridor be established at a 5km radius from the Limpopo River. We seemed to have understood each other [local people and the NGO authorities] during several meetings here. They went away and the next thing they tell us is that the Corridor is going to run either at 15km or 25km radius [in fact, it is 26km]. This is the highest degree of insensitivity of NGOs here. So, who is going to remain in Sengwe? Wild animals have suddenly become more important than people. There lies their interest - *Hisvina vasvirandako*. And they think we are blind - *Vahleketa ku ahisvivoni*. They are kicking us on the stomach - *Vahiraha makhwiri*

[He said this hitting the ground with a stick and throwing it away illustrating his distress]. (8, May 2006).

This example by the local leader illustrates how actors such as NGOs bring about conflicts and dissatisfaction among people in Sengwe by “inflicting pain”, which is also locally expressed as *Isvi sviyatikomba*. It also raises the important issue about the recognition of rights in the Zimbabwe sector. The acquisition of land in Zimbabwe sector requires the issuance of a legal notice this also applies in Sengwe. But this important step has not been taken, 13 years after the signing of the GLTFCA treaty that establishes the wildlife corridor. The perceived shocks and stress exerted by relocation might have repercussions on local livelihoods. While it is legal to relocate people in Zimbabwe local people have not been issued with notices for such an exercise regardless of the treaty among the participating countries.

As the pressure mounts, the Zimbabwe sector has to fulfill its obligations in the establishment of the wildlife corridor to clear any human settlements within. Whether it is politically right or wrong, the Zimbabwe government is accountable to the other Parties in the GLTFCA arena. Statements such as: “What is going on?” by an elderly man and local leader in Sengwe, reflect the absence of hope and transparency among relevant actors. Typically, even such respected local leaders have suddenly lost influence and loci of power by their institutions rendering their livelihoods vulnerable. Other local leaders were also not well informed of any relocation plans in place, their rights over land they occupy and or any subsequent compensation to the 740 affected families in Sengwe ward. The disgruntled local leader explains that:

... [an NGO] took us on a field trip to the Makulele people across the river [referring to South Africa] and we were able to learn from them on how they benefit from the project [initiative]. Those people [the Makulele] have rights to their ancestral land. We do not have that in Zimbabwe and the government can always remove us as and when it pleases. They can even victimize anyone who might want to contest in court our rights to this land. It is impossible to adopt what happens on the South African side. I do not think we will be able to claim such rights over the wildlife corridor when we relocate. Only if it was initiated here, then I think that way we can benefit. But our government is deaf and the judiciary heavily politicized - *Hulumende yahina ayi ingisi, emabandla eminawo nawona ane tipolitikisi*. I do not think we will even be compensated. So, who will listen to us? (8, May 2006).

Above, the local leader raises a fundamental issue in the above quote about human rights in the country is a highly contested arena. A number of reports have shown that the judiciary in Zimbabwe has over a number of times ruled cases in favor of the elites in the ruling party irrespective of the gravity of such cases, against those who are known to be loyal to the opposition. Nonetheless, regarding the Makulele case whereby the courts granted the land rights (on the Pafuri Triangle), The local leader was not informed about, the legal battle that transpired between local people there and the South African National Park (see also Spierenburg and Wels, 2006, p. 6-9). It is reported that the Makulele people then entered into a partnership with a certain private company to collaboratively manage a tourist venture in Pafuri triangle. The dangers of such partnerships especially at local level are not hard to distill (ibid., 2006, p. 295). This according to Spierenburg *et al* (2008), is an unfair concession between the local people and the private company because the contract neither ascertains the private sector partner to a certain level of performance nor establishes a well-defined exit clause in favor of the Makulele to withdraw from

the partnership when need be (2008, p. 92). Indeed, these so called partnerships or networks seem to be affiliations of convenience. Similarly, in *Reinventing a Square Wheel*, 2002, Wilshusen *et al.*, argue that “Where protected areas bring up memories of elite control and colonial power dynamics, they can symbolize legacies of imperial domination” (2002, p. 23). And the GLTFCA arena proves the assertions by the above authors. Work by Wolmer *et al.* (2003), affirms that conservation and business obviously do not necessarily work collaboratively and when they do it can be to the detriment of local people other than investors (2003, p. 97). See works by Tevera and Chimhowu (2003, p. 35), for instance. As we contemplate on the concession in the South Africa sector, the affected families in Sengwe do not know how they shall be compensated and how the so-called partnership expounded by the initiative is going to be structured.

In the quote above by the local leader refers to the Zimbabwe government as deaf, because not only the voices by local people through different institutional structures and fora are silenced but also their concerns are brushed aside. The ineffective communication by authorities in Sengwe facilitates the continuation of the impasse unabated. As one disgruntled middle-aged man, a former member of the Community Working Group in Sengwe says:

I do not know when and how the relocation is going to take place ... I also do not know what is the status regarding the final boundary line for the wildlife corridor fence, whether it is the 5, 8, 15 or the 25km radius that people talk about. They [authorities] do not tell us anything until they are up to something - *Avahibyeli handle keloko varine lesvi valavako kahina*. We remain in the dark and even if you ask the Parks Authorities, they always say they do not know. I know that they know but they do not want to tell us but are waiting for instruction from somewhere. (9, August, 2006).

Even those in the representative local level institutional structures introduced by the initiative, do not have information about the decisions made by authorities.^{xxxv} The respondent above is, however, confident that park authorities are informed but are not passing on the information to local people in Sengwe. Imperative to note is that 13 years after the establishment of the initiative, relocation has not been implemented. But the question about what will happen to the 740 families in the rest of Sengwe remains to be considered. In 2003, Hammill and Besançon argued that the establishment of transboundary initiatives is primarily driven by high-level, non-local forces such as government departments or national or international conservation NGOs.

This protracted disorder fosters the interests of more powerful groups through subversion of instruments and legitimacy of the state (see also work by Bayart, 1993, p. 8). And the superimposition of institutional strata, further subverts local institutions diluting their effectiveness to contribute meaningfully in the decision making process. In spite of the dilution and ultimate loss of authority by local institutions, parks authorities continue their claim to collaborating with them. The senior official from the National Parks, for instance, says:

We work with ward CAMPFIRE Committees very well. They assist us [NPWMA], in reporting problem animals for our action. They also contribute towards the development of quota systems for hunting in Naivasha. They used to invite us when they were disbursing funds from hunting dividends in the villages. We work with the Chief, Headmen and Village heads alongside their councils. They assist

us in passing important information to their constituencies. They link us with Puzani the Spirit medium of this area. Unfortunately, we have not worked with SEVACA [a local women's craft producing group] or the VRMCs [Village Resource Management Committees] you talked about. (11, March 2006).

With the advent of dwindling loci of authority by local institutions, policing of formal institutions in the GLTFCA arena at local level remains a challenge. Being the custodian of resources in the district, the Rural District Council do not have the capacity to manage natural resources without collaborating with local institutions particularly in Sengwe. I spoke to officials at the Rural District Council and provincial offices in Masvingo, who argue that the local authority (RDC) neither has sufficient financial and human resources to implement conservation initiatives at the local level. Nor does it have the effective means to provide enough services to meet the needs of its constituents. As one authority says: "*Izvi ndezve kungokiya-kiya* meaning - This is about working within a tight budgetary constraint and performing piece meal operations".^{xxxvi} The same authority confirmed this eight years later that, "*Shamwari* – friend, nothing has changed. In fact, it is even worse".^{xxxvii}

As the drift in the loci of authority over access and utilization of natural resources in the GLTFCA arena, moves away from local institutions, I contend following scholars such as Tyler (2006), who argue that the old ideas of command and control, of blaming poor people for mismanagement of natural resources, have been overturned (2006, p. 4). I further disagree with scholarship that argues that the paradigm shift in conservation has moved from top-down, to the adoption of bottom-up, participatory approaches, aimed at ensuring sustainability in the use and management of natural resources (see Ribot, 1999; Fakir, 2001). Neither is it true that there is a paradigm shift in conservation away from costly state-centered control towards approaches in which local people play a much more active role as advocated by scholars such as Murphree (1991, 2001, 2006) and Shackleton and Campbell, (2001). However, I agree with a body of literature, which predicted that transfrontier conservation areas will further disenfranchise and displace local users (Whande, 2007; Dear & McCool, 2010; Sibanda, 2010; Lunstrum, 2008; Wolmer, 2005), and disenfranchise local institutions.

CONCLUSION

This paper has shown that the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area has brought about institutional structural changes which resulted in the marginalization of local institutions in terms of decision-making. Indeed this loci of power that has been reduced at local level increased conflicts between local people and authorities. One of the valuable lessons of the Sengwe case is that despite that the GLTFCA policy emphasizes local people's participation, it is seldom made unequivocal in practice. Further, the existence of a multiplicity of actors, institutions and management structures with overlapping mandates and jurisdictions have contributed towards the generation of conflicts. After my meeting with local leaders at Malipati guest house in Sengwe, I realized that none of the existing local institutions had authority over access to and management of natural resources in the conservation area. Their loss of power was a gain in authority by the institutions superimposed by the initiative. This recurrence of continuous loss of power by local institutions has turned into a rhythm of power that is seen from the colonial to the postcolonial period in the study area, which raises the sustainability of such

institutions. It is safe to conclude that the Sengwe case suggests an authoritative governance in conservation discourse through marginalizing local people while policy proclaims to forge alliances in the management of natural resources among the different actors. The practical implications of the study is that conservation initiatives can increase participation and decision making by local people through creating supportive institutional structures that allow for local representation at all levels to attain sustainable development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Much of this work was conducted while I was affiliated to the Fort Hare Institute of Social and Economic Research. Further work was also done during successive years while affiliated to the Great Zimbabwe University. Special thanks to the people of Sengwe for allowing me to carry out the research in their ward.

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NOTES

- ⁱ See <http://www.nationalparks.org/about-us>. [Accessed 25 March 2015]
- ⁱⁱ See details at <http://www.peaceparks.org/story.php?pid=100&mid=19>. [Accessed 25 March 2015]
- ⁱⁱⁱ TFCA's being implemented in Zimbabwe are ZIMOZA, Lower Zambezi-Mana Pools, Greater Mapungubwe, Chimanimani and the GLTFCA. See details at <http://www.peaceparks.org/story.php?pid=100&mid=19>. [Accessed 25 March 2015].
- ^{iv} Regulated utilization of wildlife through issuing of licenses and permits to privately owned land.
- ^v It sanctioned certain game species as protected and regulated periods for hunting.
- ^{vi} Prohibited use of forest products from protected areas.
- ^{vii} Declared certain game, fauna and fish protected and preserved game for educational purposes.
- ^{viii} Segregated land by allocating 51% to settlers, 30% for local people, and 19% state land.
- ^{ix} Chieftainship was extended from hereditary to include appointed chiefs and removed the jurisdiction of local populations over natural resources.
- ^x Gave authority to allocate land to the president
- ^{xi} Managed commercial exploitation of timber on state land and private land.
- ^{xii} Transferred powers of the chief to allocate land to the state.
- ^{xiii} Disempowered local people from accessing benefits from the natural resources in their area.
- ^{xiv} The share of land allocated to local people increased from 30% to 53%.
- ^{xv} Extended benefits from wildlife resources to local people by appropriating authority from the state to the RDCs.
- ^{xvi} (Re) centralized power from the state level to the district level whilst making the power unilateral and top-down.
- ^{xvii} Promoted the democratization of district plans and popular representation.
- ^{xviii} Chief's role was to ensuring that the land and its natural resources are used and exploited in terms of the law.
- ^{xix} Provides procedures for the compulsory acquisition of land.
- ^{xx} Regulates access to and utilization of forest resources.
- ^{xxi} It provides a set of institutional set-ups and legal foundation for the sustainable management of natural resources and the protection of the environment.
- ^{xxii} A conservancy is a legitimate conservation arrangement among recognized land and resource owners and authorities (Murphree and Metcalfe, 1997, p. 3; Wolmer *et al*, 2003, p. 88).
- ^{xxiii} Xai-Xai Treaty (2002, p. 8). See http://iea.uoregon.edu/pages/view_treaty.php?t=2002-GreatLimpopoTransfrontierPark.EN.txt&par=view_treaty_html. [Accessed 25 March 2015].
- ^{xxiv} Interview with elderly man, Pahlala, 6 June 2006.
- ^{xxv} Interview with middle-aged man, local leader, ex-councilor, Sengwe, 4 March 2005.
- ^{xxvi} Interview with middle-aged man, CAMPFIRE Committee member, Pahlala, 1 November 2006.
- ^{xxvii} Interview, middle aged single mother, Sengwe, 19 May 2006.
- ^{xxviii} Interview with middle-aged woman, Dumisa, 8 April 2006.
- ^{xxix} Interview with an 18-year-old young man, Chilohlela, 21 April 2006.
- ^{xxx} Interview with elderly woman, Kotsvi, 14 July 2006.
- ^{xxxi} Interview with elderly man, member of the village council, Dumisa, 8 April 2006.
- ^{xxxii} Interview with elderly man, traditional leader's Aide, Davata, 1 September 2006.
- ^{xxxiii} Interview with elderly local leader, Sengwe, 4 August 2014.
- ^{xxxiv} Interview with elderly local leader, Kotsvi, 6 August 2014.
- ^{xxxv} Although this speech was made more than 8 years after my talk with the respondent above, the situation remains the same.
- ^{xxxvi} Interview with local authority officer, Chiredzi, 22 October 2006.
- ^{xxxvii} Interview with elderly male RDC authority, 5 August 2014.