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Article

Wildlife Protection, Community Participation in Conservation, and (Dis) Empowerment in Southern Tanzania

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Abstract

The debate about conservation and human welfare (poverty or development) is no longer new in the literature. Yet, poverty and conservation challenges persist. This paper seeks to demonstrate how community involvement in conservation has both empowering and disempowering effects. The paper uses two villages in the Namtumbo district, one representing those villages that are involved in wildlife protection and the other representing those villages that are not involved in conservation. The paper addresses two questions: 1) does community participation in wildlife protection lead to their empowerment? and 2) does empowerment, in turn, lead to community development? Different methods of data collection were used, including quantitative interviews using questionnaire and the qualitative techniques (such as group discussions, observations, and secondary analysis of policies and village documents related to wildlife conservation projects). Findings from these sources drive the main argument of the paper that the relationship between community participation in conservation and economic empowerment remains problematic after two decades of community-based conservation interventions.

Keywords: community-based conservation, conservation and development, (dis)empowerment, human-wildlife conflicts, livelihood insecurity, wildlife management area, Namtumbo, southern Tanzania

INTRODUCTION

The past three decades saw the promotion of community-based conservation (CBC) as a tool for development. The fundamental idea behind CBC has been to empower community members and their respective institutions to protect wildlife that overflows in private and communal lands. By doing so, it was expected that conservation would result into economic prosperity for the participating communities through different ventures such as tourism and regulated wildlife harvesting. In many countries in south and eastern Africa, community-based conservation schemes have sort to set aside land for wildlife while giving villages control over revenues and resources on those lands (Nelson and Agrawaal 2008). Tanzania has been one of the pioneers in this trend. The Government of Tanzania established Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and their legal mechanism for promoting community participation in conservation (URT 2007a). According to United States Agency for International Development (USAID), until 2013 WMAs had secured 28,389 sq. km of village lands, equivalent of 3% of the total landmass, for the protection of wildlife outside the borders of protected areas (USAID 2013).

The argument of this paper is that these schemes can fail to achieve their ultimate goals even as they successfully enrol communities in that participatory process. The participation happens but it does not lead to empowering outcomes. The result is that, conservation goals are achieved but development goals are not. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the success of conservation through participation is simultaneously a failure of community development. This is a bleak argument considering that CBC was considered

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a welcome alternative to fortress conservation. At its most powerful, fortress conservation could see successful conservation gains regardless of local costs (Brockington 2002). In this instance we are arguing that the same injustice can arise in supposedly empowering participatory community conservation.

This paper draws from a project that assessed the viability of participatory wildlife conservation in poverty alleviation in eight villages that border the southern Selous ecosystem in Namtumbo district. That project assessed the livelihood impacts of conservation in all the villages that form the Mbarang'andu WMA. This paper reports findings from two of those villages, namely Nambecha and Mgombasi. The latter is not involved in conservation even though it is part of the southern Selous ecosystem. The two villages were selected to facilitate the analysis of the impacts of community participation or the lack of it when the same socio-economic and ecological conditions prevail. As Lund et al. (2010) argue broader analyses of the conditions under which community participation is empowering or disempowering require comparisons of different local contexts.

The key methodological strength of this paper is that we are comparing two villages, that are remarkably similar in every respect, except that one participated in CBC and the other did not. The two villages border each other and they share most of socioeconomic and ecological characteristics including their poverty, proximity to the game reserve, existence of wildlife in village areas, and their remoteness from major towns. The comparison is supplemented by extending the analysis beyond this local context drawing some lessons from other studies of similar nature in the country and beyond.

We used three key issues to explore development outcomes of CBC. These are village participatory land use planning, wildlife and forest utilization, and the use of land for crop cultivation. The main reason for choosing these variables is that they are central to CBC practices in Tanzania and, in our view, they determine how power is given and taken from local people during the participatory processes. It should be noted that land is not only the main economic asset for Tanzanians in rural areas (where 90% of them depend on crop cultivation), but also securing it for wildlife conservation is increasingly becoming an important issue across the world (Ramutsindela 2007; Spierenburg et al. 2008; Goldman 2009). These competing interests have made land use planning an important tool for releasing village land not only for conservation but also for different kinds of land-based investments. Land use planning is therefore a vital aspect of livelihood change and empowerment.

The choice of wildlife and forest utilization is closely related to the foregoing. As village lands become increasingly important for wildlife and forest protection, benefits and mechanisms for sharing have remained highly questionable. With land use planning, most of the seasonal agricultural practices, including rotational cropping and fallowing, are foreclosed, and 'unused' areas in the village are reallocated for wildlife and forest conservation. Two things emerge here: the loss of agricultural land and promotion of wildlife population with subsequent increase in human-wildlife conflicts (HWC) in village areas. It is these interrelated aspects of the three variables that make them vital to the assessment of (dis)empowerment.

This paper is organized in four sections. In the first section, the paper engages with the literature on community participation. In particular we examine diverse writings that explore the role of empowerment as a conceptual tool for assessing the development impacts of wildlife protection by such communities. The second section describes the study area and the research methodology. The third section presents the analysis and findings of the study to address the main argument of the paper. In particular, this section assesses the community's response to the fact that their land has become critical for wildlife protection, which limits their options for alternative land uses, increasing HWC and changing local livelihood strategies. The fourth section discusses how power is given (by the government and other actors) and how the same is acquired and lost (by the community). The fifth section presents the conclusion.

PARTICIPATION AND (DIS)EMPOWERMENT IN NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION

We can categorise studies of the impacts of participatory processes on development outcomes into two main groups: 1) those that explore variations in context setting and environment, and 2) those that explore the nature of participatory processes themselves. Amongst the first category, case studies in Kenya (Kabiri 2010), Namibia (Harring and Odendaal 2012), and Tanzania (Lund and Treue 2008; Sulle et al. 2011) have pointed to variations in biophysical as well as institutional settings in which participatory processes are operationalised. Others have pointed to the influence of pre-existing structures from which current participatory processes are anchored (Dressler et al. 2010), elite capture (Saito-Jensen et al. 2010) and reconsolidation of state control (Benjaminsen et al. 2013). All these factors account for the existing differences in arguments about whether or not participatory approaches lead to community empowerment.

In the second category, Bruns (2003) suggest that the extent of empowerment is determined by whether the participatory process considered all its important stages—also known as ladders of participation—that begins with inform, consult, involve, collaborate, partner, delegate authority, establish autonomy, advise, and enable. Note that, the form of participation is context specific. Bruns (2003: 7) makes it clear that throughout the nine steps of the ladder of participation, the participatory processes particularly in the natural resource management are affected by the characteristics of participating communities; their resource tenure rights, the nature and duration of the tasks involved (such as planning and management), and who initiates these activities (the government, external actors or community members).

Participation can lead to different forms of empowerment. There is the economic dimension, which seeks to ensure that people have the appropriate skills, capabilities and resources,

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access to secure and sustainable incomes and livelihoods (Luttrell et al. 2009); the social and psychological dimension to ensure multidimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives (Fetterman and Wandersman 2004), and the political, which raises capacity to analyse, organise and mobilise (Miller 1994). The empowerment approach views social actions as essential components in working with individuals, organizations and communities. Notably, different definitions of empowerment emphasise the essential connections between community empowerment and ecology (Serrano-Garcia and Bond 1994; Trickett 1994) and the connection between the two through a feeling of control (Itzhaky and York 2000). It is this view that led to the conceptualization of empowerment as a process, by which, people gain control over their lives, democratic participation in the life of their community and a critical understanding of their environment (Perkins and Zimmerman 1995). If all these aspects of empowerment are considered, community feelings of alienation from the oppressive institutions decrease while also helping individuals to take collective action (Rappaport 1984).

In the community development context, this concept of empowerment is used variously to influence creation of sustainable structures, processes and mechanisms over which local communities can increase their degree of control, from which, they can have a measurable impact on public and social policies affecting them (Craig 2002). Accordingly, participation and empowerment are connected through the material aspects of economic development—jobs, businesses, investment, income, productivity—that comprise the visible aspects of individual change and community building (Wilson 1996). It is argued, however, that the causal relationship is not necessarily straightforward, but more complicated by many factors. These factors include complexity in the decision-making process, the governance structures in which powers are devolved to lower tiers, and multiple interests and roles of internal and external actors (Stringer and Paavola 2013). Indeed, theory as well as practice has considered participation and empowerment as closely related to the issue of governance; community development is considered a specific form of community participation, the success of which is determined by the role of the *state,* the *complexity* of the *decision-making* and community participation process itself (Abbott 1995). Accordingly, the proponents of participatory development use the concept of empowerment as a multidimensional approach to poverty reduction arguing that if a person or group is empowered, they possess the capacity to translate their choices into desired actions and outcomes (Luttrell et al. 2009).

As community participation has not always lived to its expectations, empowerment theory is increasingly criticised for ambiguity and promises that do not match the actual impacts on development. CBC projects, especially on conservation in Africa, have recently come under scrutiny by both its own proponents and social analysts. On the one hand, the former's critiques point to the emphasis placed on 'community empowerment' and 'participation' as diluting the conservation agenda, and that the ecological impacts of CBC have been well below expectations (Mulrennan et al. 2012). On the other hand, state governments are alleged to be resistant to power devolution hence raising concerns that CBCs are partially decentralised programmes that are complex, bureaucratic and upwardly accountable to central governments (Nelson et al. 2007).

Elite capture has also emerged in the literature as one of the factors that determine whether or not communities are truly empowered by the participatory process. A growing number of critics argue that CBC is susceptible to elite capture, causing further oppression and marginalisation of the already marginalised (Saito-Jensen et al. 2010). Lund and Saito-Jensen (2013) caution, however, that elite capture does not necessarily preclude CBC projects from bringing about social change.

The foregoing critics do not dismiss claims of successful cases of participatory forest and wildlife protection. Bray et al. (2003) provide examples of these cases in Mexico and Nepal where forest recovery has been considered a function of community participation in conservation. Others have also reported successes in Botswana and South Africa where local communities are motivated to protect wildlife and negotiate benefits of commercialisation (Motlopi 2006). It is for this reason that Hardina (2006) argues that if a realistic approach is taken, community participation is a worthwhile undertaking.

Yet, particularly in the Tanzanian context, scholars have criticised CBC's focus on *conservation outcomes at the expense of community empowerment and social justice (Minwary 2009)*. For example, Lund and Treue (2008) evaluated impacts of participatory forest management where successes in forest growth and utilization were recorded. Revenues covered the costs of management and financing local public services, however, left the poorest worse off. Sulle et al. (2011) reports some progress on initial revenues accrued to villages that participate in wildlife conservation in the Enduimet, Burunge and Makame WMAs in northern Tanzania. Nevertheless, the study register concerns over reduced benefits as wildlife continue to intensify HWC that range from crop damage to people and livestock injury, and death. On the basis of the foregoing, it is clear that if empowerment deriving from CBC is to be effectively judged, then we must also consider the possibility that the opposite has happened, namely that there has been disempowerment. This paper responds to this call.

CONTEXT AND METHODS

The ecological and economic importance of the Selous ecosystem in southern Tanzania cannot be overemphasised. By its sheer size, which exceeds that of Switzerland, the ecosystem harbours about 60% of Tanzania's total elephant population (Stephenson 2004). Of these, 20% are found in the village lands bordering the game reserve. According to Siege and Baldus (2000), elephants roam over an area larger than 100,000 sq. km, which is an area 50% larger than the reserve. This overflow of wildlife into villages that surround core protected areas has, in the past two decades, been among

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the major challenges that attracted global attention on both conservation strategies and funding.

The two study villages (Nambecha and Mgombasi) are part of the southern Selous ecosystem in Namtumbo district. This part of the ecosystem is particularly famous for its large animal concentration, which, others have described as a representation of pristine wilderness of Africa (Baldus and Hahn 2004). Villages that surround the Selous game reserve (including Nambecha) were among the first to be involved in CBC through the Selous Conservation Programme (SCP) since the late 1980s. The SCP was jointly implemented by the Wildlife Division of Tanzania and the Government of Germany.

The SCP involved series of participatory and community-based measures to promote conservation and development outcomes. These include, for example, training of village leaders and game scouts, establishment of legal wildlife utilisation through quota hunting, and support for social services. Since the initial CBC projects were implemented on a pilot basis, participation was sought mainly from those villages that were located in strategic wildlife areas.

There are two main differences between these study villages. The first is their involvement in SCP. Nambecha has been involved since 1988 while Mgombasi has never participated. Otherwise they share a common history, socioeconomic and ecological conditions of the landscape. As such, the indigenous people of the area (who are mainly *Wahyao*, *Wandonde* and *Wandendeule*) are crop cultivators but they have a long tradition of game hunting as an alternative source of food and household income (Ashley et al. 2002). Hence, balancing between human needs and conservation objectives is complex across all the villages that neighbour the reserve including those that are not involved in conservation. The selection of the two study villages was therefore done purposively to get the representation of villages that participate in conservation and contribute their land to form a community wildlife management area, and those that do not participate in conservation. The assumption is that with over two decades of participation in conservation, Nambecha village is better positioned to benefit from conservation compared to Mgombasi.

The second difference, we contend, derives from the first. In terms of human population, the Mgombasi and Nambecha villages had a total of 3,680 and 3,274 people respectively during the 2002 population and housing census (United Republic of Tanzania (URT) 2005). By mid 2009 these villages had 5,610 and 3,431 people distributed into 566 and 572 households respectively. There has been a striking difference in population increase in the two villages since 2002, with that of Mgombasi increasing by 52.4% while that of Nambecha increased by only 4.8%. This is an equivalent of about 7.5% and 0.7% annual increase for Mgombasi and Nambecha respectively. Both internal population growth and in-migration may explain the observed difference in Mgombasi village and other parts of the Ruvuma region. The growth is also attributed to the expansion of the Mgombasi Township with various social services and businesses in food crops, charcoal, and firewood. In our view, and as it will be discussed later in the paper, the growth of these activities in Mgombasi is essentially a function of land availability and access to its resources (by both villagers and immigrants). In the overall context of this paper, this point to the fundamental success, in conservation terms, of the CBC scheme since possible expansion of human population through in-migration and related activities are foreclosed. Even though this may not be a development success it has meant more land for conservation, and fewer people.

Data for this paper were extracted from a larger project database, where both primary and secondary data had been collected qualitatively and quantitatively in 2009. Primary data (including human population, socioeconomic activities, and levels of production as well as involvement in wildlife conservation) were obtained through structured and semi-structured interviews with heads of households and key informants (government officials, NGOs and local community structures). A sample of 10% of the village households was randomly selected for structured questionnaire survey adding up to 122 people, 61 from each of the two villages. It should be noted that although this large quantity of data was collected during the main project, the strength of the current paper lays on the qualitative analysis of data from different sources including focus group discussions, field observations, and village statistics for people, crop harvests, and land use. One focus group was held in each village with six members in Mgombasi and eight in Nambecha. Members of these groups were selected based on the researcher's prior knowledge of their involvement in village development plans. Hence, the composition of these groups included members of village councils, environmental committees, and from villagers. Other sources of data were secondary including published and grey literature on regional and national policies, maps, and research reports from various sources that were subjected to situational analysis.

It is important to note that since Mgombasi village has never participated in any conservation project, it does not have any official data on village land use plans, wildlife and forest utilisation. Most of the data presented in the next section are, therefore, drawn from observation notes, group discussions and informal interviews with villagers and leaders.

RESULTS

In this section we present the results of the three key issues, namely, village participatory land-use planning, use of land for crop cultivation, and forest and wildlife utilization. Our main focus is particularly on how these features differentiate the two villages in terms of their access and control of resources for development.

Participatory village land use planning

Land use planning is considered a sustainable resource management tool that can provide security, ensure social accountability, and citizen's empowerment (URT 1998). Yet, only a few villages have such plans in the country for reasons ranging from financial barriers to technical constraints.

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However, they are increasing because of the emergence of community participation as an important component of development and conservation projects. In fact, large scale land investors are required to undertake and pay for such plans.

The major issue that arises from this kind of planning is that although community participation is compulsory, the planning process remains the investor's initiative, and this planning is normally engineered to respond to the investor's needs for the investment land. Recent studies have confirmed that village participation is mainly used to endorse land acquisition for different investment interests (Neville and Dauvergne 2012). Land use planning that serves these specific interests is entangled in practices that compromise local needs for land, and have often emphasised the production of lay-out plans that has essentially been a point of struggle over who should appropriate land value between the investors, the planning authorities, and holders of land rights (Neville and Dauvergne 2012).

In the context of this paper, those villages that are involved in participatory land use planning are expected to be more empowered through land security, sustainable use of resources, and social accountability that comes with land use planning. Nambecha village is among the seven villages that form the Mbarang'andu WMA. Land use planning (for ten years during2003-2013) for the seven villages was facilitated by the government, international conservation organisations and development partners, including the German Technical Agency (GTZ) and the World Wild Fund (WWF). Clearly, the main interest for these actors was to secure land for wildlife outside the reserve.

The influence of these actors in this study site is visible in the generosity that villagers demonstrated in setting aside land for conservation. The land use plan for Nambecha village indicates that about 28,700 and 12,480 ha are set aside for forest and wildlife conservation respectively (URT 2003). Put together, forest and wildlife areas form an expansive wildlife habitat representing approximately 92% of the total village land (Figure 1). Only 3,570 ha, which represent 7.9% of the total land, is set aside for agriculture, while the remaining 205 ha (0.5%) are for residential purposes. Combined, non-wildlife uses occupy only about 8% of the total village land. This makes clear an important observation that land contribution to wildlife protection is considered to be the most important determinant of village participation in conservation. Literally, through participation in community conservation schemes villages exchange their land for anticipated benefits that are in the form of hunting quota and improved social services such as health and education infrastructures.

Although the land use plans were drawn with community participation, concerns still emerge, particularly on the role of this kind of plans for empowerment, considering that human population is increasing. During the village land use planning, human population in Nambecha was 3,274, and the projections indicate that the population was increasing by 3.4% per annum. Put the other way, by 2015 the population will have increased 1.5 times that of 2002. In addition, there

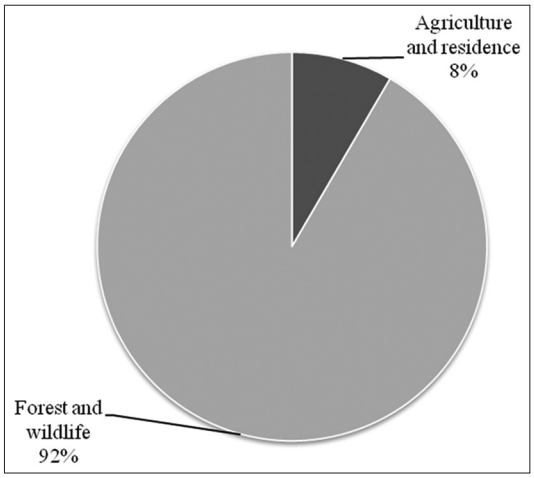


Figure 1
Land use plan for Nambecha village

is competing pressure from the growing wildlife populations. Official records for wildlife population in the village lands are not clearly established but villagers report that elephant population has grown substantially in their surroundings during the past few years. The reported increase in wildlife numbers is not surprising because more efforts have been directed towards their protection, restricting human activities in the area.

At Mgombasi, there has been no land use plan. Villagers have not set aside any land for wildlife or forest conservation. Even though wild animals roam in most parts of the village land, Mgombasi has not directly been of conservation interest. This, in our view, relates to the fact that village land is outside the borders of the reserve and that of the envisioned wildlife corridor. Thus there seems to be no direct contribution of land to the project. Notably, villages that have no prior conservation interests have all the land at their disposal, and villagers maintain traditional land use and farming systems that include, for example, seasonal cropping and fallowing. Despite increase in crop damage by wildlife that overflows from the reserve and the neighbouring village's wildlife areas, the land is currently serving the food and other needs under the current level of farming technology and affordability of farm inputs. Table 1 summarizes key issues that arise from the difference between the two study villages, particularly with the view of reflecting on how land use planning, which is considered by the government as an important aspect of community empowerment, affects other study variables in the two villages.

We should not overstate the significance of the difference in planning. Our data suggest that, the two villages do not exhibit any significant difference in terms of their economic conditions. For example, figures of percentage of individuals below the basic needs poverty line show high percent for the entire district of Namtumbo (54.8%) compared to other districts in the region[1] (Kessy et al. 2006). The two villages have therefore shared poverty conditions and the fact that agriculture still plays a dominant role in the economy of households (whether

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or not participating in wildlife conservation). Village statistics presented later in Table 2 attest to the shared conditions with both of these villages depending on maize, beans, and rice cultivation for household food, and groundnut and tobacco for cash income.

Nevertheless, the land use plan was part of the bargain, in which villages agree to swap their own use of land and resources for other income generating activities that would flow from village conservation areas. Unfortunately, these income earning opportunities have not yet materialised. The lack of difference between the two villages reflects the fact that the development potential of land use planning for conservation has not been realised.

Further, the importance of land use planning lies in the way it allows villagers to respond to problems of HWC. Simply put, Nambecha has created a huge amount of wildlife habitat that is likely to restrict human activities on non-conservation land. Since wildlife movements are not constrained much by local demarcations, numbers are increasingly reported in agricultural fields even where specific areas are set for their use. It is notable how much more frequently the villages complain about crop village in Nambecha than in Mgombasi (80% in the former and 31 in the later). Moreover, Nambecha village is tied to conditions of participation in conservation, which include giving up part of their land while Mgombasi village is facing the challenges of living close to wildlife but not obliged to surrender control of land.

All this means that participation in conservation has changed land tenure and rights but the lack of it does not necessarily give villages the benefit of using their land as they wish. Other studies in the country suggest that the two villages are not an isolated occurrence. Sulle et al. (2011) demonstrate that in the case of Enduimet in northern Tanzania villages have set aside over 90% of village land where 90% of community livelihoods come from farming and herding. Likewise, Homewood et al. (2012) report that in most pastoral communities, significant areas have been set aside for conservation but wildlife contributes less than 5% income to a small proportion of households. These two studies confirm that spectacular wildlife populations occupy village lands, attracting substantial conservation and tourism revenues, but villagers in these areas are among the poorest in the country. As Kessy et al. (2006) suggest Namtumbo district has among the highest rates of poverty in the country despite the fact that almost 65% of its total land is under wildlife and forest protection, which contributes 48% of the total income of the Wildlife Division. Generally, these criticisms expose CBCs as focusing on maximisation of economic returns from wildlife, over which communities have less control, instead of empowering communities to claim property interest on the land (Harring and Odendaal 2012).

Use of land for crop cultivation

Although the study villages differ in terms of the size of land available for agriculture, they remain similar in their dependence on crop cultivation as the main current source of livelihood and employment. This was confirmed by 99% of the respondents. We use village statistics for crop cultivation (food and cash crops) as presented in Table 2 to show that Nambecha village's food and cash crop production is constrained. This is visible in the low target of production for both food and

Table 1

Impacts of village participation in wildlife protection

Key variables	Nambecha	Actual and potential scenarios	Mgombasi	Actual and potential scenarios
Village land use planning	✓	• Formalised village land as wildlife management area • Irreversible change of land tenure (no changes to be made should human needs for land arise) • Increased wildlife population and human-wildlife conflicts	X	• Use of land to be determined by the needs of villagers • Increased wildlife population and human-wildlife conflicts (by virtual of neighbouring Nambecha) • Land and food insecurities (due to external and internal pressures for land)
Use of land for crop cultivation	✓	• Limited land available for crop cultivation • Food insecurity (due to lack of land, increased crop damage and limited access to game meat)	✓	• More land available for agriculture • Food insecurity (due to increased crop damage)
Wildlife and forest utilization	✓	• Increased access to game meat through quota hunting allocations • Controlled poaching and illegal logging • Increased revenue from wildlife-based investments	✓	• No legal rights to wildlife utilization (but traditional hunting continuous illegally) • Revenue from village forest utilization

Source: Author's field notes

Table 2

Crop production (target and actual harvests for 2006-2007 in tonnes)

	Crops									
	Maize		Beans		Rice/paddy		Groundnut		Tobacco	
Villages	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual
Nambecha	904	831.5	291.1	117.8	613.1	408.7	33.9	5.1	6.8	3.6
Mgombasi	1408.7	1308	162	211.5	882	735	67.9	35	17.1	11.4

Source: Village statistics for Nambecha and Mgombasi, 2008

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cash crops. Clearly, the Mgombasi village has enough land for crop cultivation, which is reflected in higher production targets. What this implies is that, in terms of food and cash crop production, Mgombasi village is doing better. Consequently, villagers in Mgombasi are likely to be comparatively not only more food secure but also financially in better positions to pay school fees, health and other social services. There is also an observable difference between the target and the actual production of both food and cash crops. Comparatively, this difference is evident with Nambecha failing to achieve the targeted production in every crop. In some cases cash crops (groundnut and tobacco) have production below 50% of the target, while Mgombasi has exceeded the target for beans and paddy, only maintaining a small gap in other crops.

This low level of agricultural productivity matters because Nambecha was meant to be empowered through its adoption of participatory wildlife conservation. However, it is clear that participatory conservation has not addressed the main challenges facing agriculture in this area. The major challenge reported across the villages is that agricultural inputs (particularly fertilisers) are too expensive, and the increasing need for the use of such inputs (Table 3). So farmers were more concerned about the availability and affordability of fertilizers for sustaining agricultural productivity, which raises yet another alarm about the declining level of natural soil fertility. Fertilizers were a concern especially in relation to the production of food crops. For cash crops such as tobacco, private companies provide subsidised fertilisers on credit and buy the harvests. As a condition, however, such fertilisers have to strictly be used in tobacco farms and not family food crops. Overall, 86.8% of the respondents are unable to buy fertilisers for food crops without subsidies, which subsequently contribute to low farm productivity.

Unaffordability of fertilisers is significant in the analysis of empowerment in the two villages. In particular, farms in Nambecha village have to be cultivated on a continuous basis with no fallow periods. Apart from the crop destruction, which was reported as the most significant challenge in the village, the lack of farm inputs ranked second. The consequent effect of restricted farm areas is declining soil fertility, which was expressed by 43.4% of the respondents. In Mgombasi, there are chances for fallowing in addition to clearing new fields in the available village forests. Hence, the declining fertility was expressed by only 18% of the respondents. Being outside the conservation programme, therefore, Mgombasi village is better placed in terms of availability of agricultural land and has more potential for agricultural expansion.

Table 3

Response on challenges associated with agricultural activities (per cent of total respondents)

Major challenges	Mgombasi	Nambecha
Lack of farm inputs	55.7	70.6
Grazing animals destroy crops	31.1	80.2
Lack of capital	45.9	39.3
Lack of markets	41.0	39.3
Transportation problems	32.8	44.3
Drought	31.1	36.1
Excessive rains	23.0	21.3
Livestock diseases	14.8	26.2
Insecure tenure of resources	6.6	3.3
Lack of extension services	6.6	1.6

Wildlife and forest utilisation

Findings from this study did not provide sufficient evidence to support that conservation is a livelihood option in the study area at present and in the near future. Wildlife-related land uses have relatively little contribution to food and cash needs of the community with, for example, local hunting through quota allocation as well as safari hunting contributing absolutely nothing for Mgombasi, and only a small fraction for Nambecha. As such, there is not one respondent for whom private sector or self-employment in wildlife-related businesses is a major livelihood option. Household surveys suggest that only 17% of respondents see local hunting as a possible undertaking in the future.

Further evidence is supported by official statistics for quota hunting in Nambecha village. Quota allocation and hunting is so far known to be the only legal subsistence wildlife utilisation, through which villages that participate in conservation access wildlife resources. This implies that Mgombasi village has never received quota allocations. The Nambecha village quota allocation during the 20072008 hunting season comprised of seven animals per year, which could only be utilised during the hunting season (July 1 to December 31). It is important to note that the money from meat sales is generated when villagers purchase the meat (at approximately USD 0.7/kg in 2009). For this reason it is not surprising that, for the villagers, access to quota meat is still restricted because not all have the money to buy the meat. Although the money accrued from meat sale is considered as 'community income', over half of it covers the recurring costs of wildlife protection and the hunting costs (ammunition, food for hunters, and transport).

Subsistence hunting has a different story in Mgombasi because the village does not qualify for quota allocation. Hunting remains illegal even though it is a vital livelihood activity and an important source of animal protein for most villagers. In this area subsistence hunting has been for the pot—to provide food for the families or to sell to other villagers in exchange for different types of food (Bonner 1993). It is also on this basis that villagers have high preference for game meat as compared to domestic meat sources (Ashley et al. 2002). With limitations in subsistence hunting in Nambecha and the lack of any form of legal sanction in Mgombasi, the amount of animal protein available for people in the two villages is low.

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DISCUSSION: THE EMPOWERING AND (DIS) EMPOWERING ROLES OF DIFFERENT ACTORS

Community-based nature conservation in southern Africa has become an important platform that elites, conservation NGOs, and governments have used to play roles that redefine rules of engagement with local communities. We need to set this in context. It is part of a broader trend in which land and resource transfer from local communities to the state, and investor interests are being legitimised and prosecuted in diverse locales. While land transfers are legitimised through legal manipulations, the process has always involved squeezing of some existing customary rights (Wily 2011; Harring and Odendaal 2012). Through these policy and legal manipulations, power is given (by the government and other actors) and acquired but also lost (by local communities) hence opening and closing avenues for such communities to develop (Ramutsindela and Noe 2012). Currently, new and modified laws across much of Africa have provisions for *de facto* expropriation of customary land rights through redefinition and transfer of unoccupied (traditional) lands, reinforcing the view that state, by default, is their legal owner (Shivji 2006; Wily 2011).

The results of this process in Tanzania and beyond have been widely criticised for allowing the government to retain its control over the flow of such benefits. Most of these critics point fingers to poor governance (Baldus 2006; Brockington 2007), corruption (Nelson et al. 2007), and elite capture (Benjaminsen et al. 2013). As Baldus (2006) report severe case of bad governance, elite capture relates particularly to the allegations that government officials collude with hunting investors (or own shares in hunting companies) hence influencing the allocation of wildlife user rights in community areas. Until recently, hunting concessions were still determined by the central government irrespective of whether or not communities have user rights to the same areas that private investors are allocated (Noe 2013); most of the revenues do not find their way down, hence the participating communities continue to endure the costs of wildlife protection. Other studies in eastern and southern Africa have argued along the same lines that extensive and well-protected nature has not translated into better lives for the most rural poor people. In fact, those who live closest to nature have continued to gain the least from nature's protection (Ashley et al. 2002; Minwary 2009). These allegations speak to widespread concerns about the role of good governance in ensuring that the envisaged balance between nature protection and community empowerment on one hand, and development on the other, is achieved.

The findings from this paper can only add to the dissatisfaction, but with a different twist. For we have shown that even on its own terms these CBC schemes are not providing the economic empowerment that they were designed to achieve. When we compare two similar villages, the one that was most engaged and involved in wildlife conservation was economically disadvantaged by that engagement. Stringer and Paavola (2013) correctly note that, amongst other things, community participation in conservation is used as a means to access financial resources necessary to transform the so called unoccupied lands into more productive uses such as wildlife conservation, agricultural and forest plantations. However it should be plain from these data that neither communities nor the private sector have had enough time to reflect on and seize the opportunities created by this policy.

More than that, it is also possible that, in the current policy framework the conservation gains that have been won in Nambecha (and paid for by reduced agricultural activity and prosperity) will negatively affect neighbouring villages in the future. Villages are not compensated from crop damage, or for loss of livestock to wildlife. Once the Selous-Niassa wildlife corridor is fully secure and protected, wildlife numbers will overflow even into Mgombasi village, which is not entitled to user rights such as those enjoyed by Nambecha. Residing within a well developed wildlife area without food security and legal protection against problematic animals will continue to disempower these already marginalised communities.

Despite these issues, the power of the state to create wildlife habitat on village land in Tanzania is expanding. The 2007 policy stated that "the government will ensure equitable distribution of costs and benefits that considers stakeholder roles in relation to categories of land and efforts invested by the institution in conservation" (URT 2007a: 28). Indeed, a new set of regulations for wildlife utilization (non-consumptive tourism) was formulated alongside the new focus of the wildlife policy (URT 2007b). The regulations were issued in September 2007, giving powers to the Director of Wildlife to control wildlife use on village land and set out schedules for payment of fees and other applicable charges at the Wildlife Division in Dar es Salaam (URT 2007b). In connection to this, changes were made to the Wildlife Conservation Act (1974) and the new law was passed in 2009 with new provisions that, for the first time, legitimise and empower the Ministry of Natural Resources (and not communities) to designate and protect wildlife corridors, dispersal areas, buffer zones and migratory routes (Section 21(1)) (URT 2009). These changes reflect a disturbing process of reconsolidation of state control over wildlife resources, expansion of conservation estate, and empowerment of few elites at the expense of local communities (Wily 2011; Benjaminsen et al. 2013). This challenge the image created of an empowered CBC regime that Murphree (2009: 2559) describes.

A properly empowered CBC regime is one, which has legitimate boundaries, members, and leadership, which has the right to plan for and use its resources, to determine the modes of that usage, benefit fully from their resources, determine the distribution of such benefits, set bylaws for management and negotiate with other social actors.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the relationship between community participation in conservation and empowerment. It suggests that securing land through community participation point to

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the fundamental success, in conservation terms, of the CBC scheme. However, this has not necessarily translated into local development. Villages considered their participation as a welcome alternative to fortress conservation hence agreeing to forego their traditional uses of land for anticipated benefits that have, nevertheless, not materialised. By comparing two villages that share socioeconomic conditions but differentiated by their levels of participation in conservation, this paper demonstrate how livelihood options of the participating village are constrained by the dominance of the emerging wildlife land use. Although the non-participating village is not tied to conditions of conservation, which include surrendering control of land, it still faces the challenge of bordering wildlife areas of the participating village. Implicitly, participation in conservation has changed land tenure and rights but the lack of it does not necessarily give villages the benefit of using land to support their traditional livelihoods. Accordingly, the success of conservation has simultaneously meant a failure of community development.

The three study variables were useful in assessing the way land is planned, access and rights of use of forest and wildlife resources are regulated. Through participatory land use planning land for conservation is secured but the process lack prioritisation of local needs for agricultural land and security against problem animals. With the growing number of people and wildlife, the future is blink for the former. Obviously, residing within a well-developed wildlife area without physical and food security will continue to disempower these already marginalised communities. The foregoing are central to our view that the priority given to wildlife over people has increased different kinds of insecurities (land, food and safety), which continue to create new conditions for elite capture, and state control that support poverty growth in the villages. Against this backdrop, this paper adds to the dissatisfaction, albeit with a different twist, that there are fundamental successes in conservation that do not translate into the economic empowerment that CBC schemes were designed to achieve.

Conceptually, CBC is part of a broader project, through which, land and resource transfers from communities to the state and elites are legitimised, and prosecuted in diverse locales. In the case of Tanzania, legal manipulations through different kinds of reforms have successfully redefined the rules of engagement with local communities and the power of the state to create wildlife habitat on village lands is expanding. New regulations for wildlife conservation and utilisation have mainly reconsolidated the state control over resources that are found in village lands. Legal and economic empowerment through ownership of resources by local communities remains an important but a lacking element of participatory process in Tanzania.

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NOTE

1. Tunduru (38.7%); Songea Rural (40.8%); Mbinga (28.0%) and Songea Urban (31.6%).

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