



6.1 Community forestry: a Namibian case study

CARSTEN SCHUSSER

Introduction

In article 1.1 Bas Arts and Ingrid Visseren-Hamakers briefly explain what forest governance is and how it emerged. As a solution to the vast and ongoing process of deforestation, community forestry is a new mode of forest governance. It follows the assumption that if government involves local people by giving them management rights and benefits to the use of forest resources, they will develop a feeling of ownership. They would then be more likely to conserve rather than damage these forest resources, because they depend on them. Community forestry would also help local people improve their living standards and reduce poverty. The main pillar of the concept is the direct involvement of forest users: the state must be willing to hand over some forest administration power to local communities.

As Arts and Visseren-Hamakers mention, the results of local forest management are mixed. Some positive ecological outcomes, such as increased vegetation cover, have been achieved (Brendler and Carey 1998; Chakraborty 2001; Charnley and Poe 2007; Tomas 2006; Devkota 2010; and Maryudi 2011). The empowerment and improved livelihoods of forest users has not been achieved, however; according to Edmunds and Wollenberg (2001:192), "the poorest forest users have become worse off than before."



OUTCOMES OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY DEPEND MOSTLY ON THE INTERESTS OF POWERFUL ACTORS.

Who determines outcomes in community forests if the forest users are not the main pillar of community forestry? Arts and Visseren-Hamakers cite critics who state that power is not addressed as an issue in forest governance research. This article tests the hypothesis that outcomes in community forestry depend mostly on the interests of powerful actors.

Carsten Schusser is a PhD student and coordinator of the Community Forestry Research Group at the Forest Policy and Nature Conservation Institute of Georg August University, Goettingen, Germany.

Methodology

The research focused on the CFN project (Community Forestry in Namibia, formerly Community Forestry in North Eastern Namibia, or CFNEN). The field research was conducted in separate periods from November 2007 to November 2009. The project studied 14 community forests in northeast Namibia.

To test the hypothesis, the study tried to answer the following questions:

- Who are the powerful actors?
- What are the interests of the powerful actors?
- What are the outcomes of community forestry?

Identifying powerful actors

The study included a preliminary quantitative survey and a qualitative follow-up survey (Schusser et al. in press). The method identified the actors involved in a specific community forest network, their power, their interests and the outcomes of community forestry. Actors included individual persons as well as institutions and organizations if they had the ability to intervene in community forestry. Standardized questions evaluated the power status of all actors, following a power theory developed by the author.

The theory is built on three elements that an actor might use to wield power:

- coercion: altering the behaviour of another actor by force;
- incentives: altering the behaviour of another actor by providing advantages or disadvantages; and
- trust: altering another actor's behaviour due to his or her accepting information without verifying it.

The quantitative information collected during the preliminary survey was used to separate the actors identified according to their level of power. The powerful actors were revisited during the qualitative follow-up study. Since this group was smaller more time could be spent with them. The qualitative survey does not quantify the power of an actor, but identifies the power sources.



Semi-structured interviews were used to gain more information and to carry out further observations and search for any other evidence indicative of the power that an actor might have. For example, if the quantitative survey determined that a certain actor had coercive power, the

qualitative investigation had to find irrefutable evidence of this. Priority was given to the qualitative survey due to the rich empirical evidence provided by qualitative interviews, documents and observations.

Identifying powerful actors' interests

Although it is possible to obtain information by asking actors directly what their interests are, the answers may not be accurate, especially if an actor wants to hide his or her real

interests. To avoid this the study analyzed the actors' interests following Krott's definition (2005: 8). He states that interests cannot be observed directly, but can be determined through observations of a given actor's behaviour. How the actor behaves and what he does are indicators of his interests.

Determining community forestry outcomes

The approach developed by Maryudi et al. (2011) was used to examine the social, economic and ecological outcomes of community forestry. The study defined the social outcome as empowerment of the forest user through participation in decision-making, and the economical outcome as improvement in the forest user's livelihood. To evaluate the ecological outcome the study searched for any proof of initial resource assessment and of follow-up monitoring based on it. If these were present, the study also analyzed these documents. Outcomes were then categorized (Table 1).



Table 1: Categorization of community forestry outcomes

	Low	Middle	High
Social outcome (forest user)	no participation in decision making	some participation in decision making	complete participation in decision making
Economical outcome (forest user)	no improvements in livelihood	some improvements in livelihood	significant improvements in livelihood
Ecological outcome (corresponding forest)	no improvements in biodiversity	initial natural resource management activities	improved biodiversity

Results

In all, 14 community forests and 349 interviews were analyzed. The number of actors involved in one community forest varies between 9 and 27.

Powerful actors

In February 2006 the Namibian government announced the first 13 official (gazetted) community forests. According to the regulations (Community Forest Guidelines 2005), an implementation and monitoring phase¹ should start after gazettelement. The first step is a forest resource inventory. The second step, based on the inventory, is an integrated forest management plan; the third step is the plan's approval by the Directorate of Forestry. Step four is implementation of the plan by the forest management committee.

The gazettelement happened suddenly and unexpectedly. At the time the project had been in existence for five years, but no process for a forest inventory had been approved by the

Directory of Forestry. It became obvious that completion of the first three steps would take a long time, and that only after doing so would the community be in a position to manage a community forest. To satisfy the communities and to motivate them to continue, the Directorate of Forestry designed a block permit. The block permit is an official document that allows the communities to harvest certain timber species and generate income from the harvest. This was an example of the incentive power element, since it offered benefits and changed the communities' behaviour.



Communities started to require a new block permit when the old one expired. The block permit does not appear in the guidelines or in the *Forest Act* as a legal community forest management tool and the communities never inquired whether it was the right procedure. This example shows how the study analyzed the power element trust. The study would only analyze the information provided by one actor if it was verified by another actor.

The Directorate of Forestry conducted inspections to monitor the implementation of the block permits. The *Forest Act* of Namibia provides a legal basis for this. According to it, officers in charge can issue fines or arrest suspects. The study observed these on several occasions. This could be seen as an example of the coercive power of the Directorate of Forestry.

The results of the qualitative follow-up survey were analyzed and are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of power elements used by powerful actors in 14 community forests

Name of powerful actor	Percentage of each power element present (%)		
	Trust	Incentives	Coercion
Directorate of Forestry	79	71	100
German Development Service	100	100	0
Traditional Authority	50	0	100
Forest Management Committee	71	0	0
Conservancy Management Committee	43	0	0
Village Head Man	14	0	0
Ministry of Environment and Tourism	14	0	0
Namibian Nature Foundation	14	14	0

Economic outcome

In 2006 the CFN Project began an initiative to generate income for the members of the Ncumcara community forest through the sale of dead wood for firewood.

The German Development Service provided a rotation fund that allowed the Forest Management Committee (FMC) to pay the firewood producers when they delivered the firewood. After the sale of the firewood, the costs were subtracted and the profit was deposited in the fund.

Forest users saw the firewood rotation fund as a possibility for generating additional household income. In addition, the Ncumcara community forest generated revenue through the collection of permit fees and the sale of confiscated timber. The money was not paid directly to the forest users; instead, it was invested in community projects that benefitted every member of the community forest, e.g., maintenance of a public water point. The forest users benefited from the sale of firewood, both directly and indirectly through the community projects, but not in a significant way. Based on these facts, it was determined that the economic outcome for the Ncumcara community forest belonged to the middle category. The economic outcomes for all 14 community forests studied are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the outcome analysis

Name of community forest	Social outcome	Economic outcome	Ecological outcome	Powerful actors involved	Powerful actors whose PIDO* corresponds with the outcome
Ncumcara	middle	middle	middle	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 6
Mbeyo	middle	middle	middle	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 6
Ncaute	middle	middle	middle	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3
Muduva-Nyangana	middle	low	low	1, 2, 3, 7, 8	1, 3
George Mukoya	low	low	low	1, 2, 3	None
Kapinga-Kamwalye	low	low	low	1, 2, 3, 4, 8	None
Masida	middle	middle	middle	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Kwando	middle	middle	middle	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Sashona	middle	middle	middle	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Mujako	middle	low	middle	1, 2, 3, 5	1, 2, 3
Izimbwe	middle	low	middle	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3
Ngoma	middle	low	middle	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	1, 2, 3
Makata	middle	middle	middle	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4
N#a Jagna Conservancy	middle	low	low	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 3

* PIDO = Powerful Interest Desired Outcome; 1. Directorate of Forestry; 2. German Development Service; 3. Traditional Authority; 4. Forest Management Committee; 5. Conservancy Management Committee; 6. Village Head Man; 7. Ministry of Environment and Tourism; 8. Namibian Nature Foundation

Ecological outcome

After gazettelement the German Development Service developed a forest inventory technique. They were highly active in having it applied in the field and paid most of the costs. The results were incorporated into the integrated forest management plan and submitted to the Directorate of Forestry for approval. Apart from ten Participatory Natural Resource Assessments and six unapproved integrated forest management plans, no other document existed to assess natural resources and no evidence of monitoring was found. The ecological outcome was found to be in the middle category in most cases (see Table 3).

Social outcome

The community forestry guidelines recommend the establishment of a forest management body. This was done in all community forests through the selection of an FMC, which would manage the community forest on behalf of all forest users. The committee was supposed to implement the management plan, but since no plans were approved, it had very limited decision-making power over the use of forest resources. In addition, the forest users depended on the block permit, and consequently, on the good will of the Directorate of Forestry. This also applied to other activities, such as fire management. Apart from the selection of the committee members and the participation in making decisions about how to use the generated community revenue, the forest users are not really involved in decision-making processes. For this reason, the social outcome was determined as middle for most of the community forests researched (Table 3).



Interest analysis

At the end of the field research in September 2009, ten years after the CFN project started, no management plan had been approved by the Directorate of Forestry. The directorate did support the FMCs in the detection and reduction of illegal harvesting. For example, illegal harvesting activities were discovered in the Mbeyo community forest: 100% of harvestable trees were cut down illegally. Before community forestry started in Mbeyo, the area was known as a hotspot for illegal harvesting activities, but no illegal activity was ever officially reported.² During that time the Directorate of Forestry was responsible for managing the Mbeyo forest, but it had neither the resources nor the personnel to do so on a regular basis. Through the involvement of the communities and the establishment of FMCs the directorate has now better control over the large forest areas. Because the directorate needs the involvement of the communities it is willing to hand over some management responsibilities, but it doesn't want the communities to decide on their own behalf. This is why the directorate is delaying or complicating processes. The interests of the powerful actors involved were analyzed and are summarized in Table 4.

Assessing the results

To test the hypothesis — that outcomes in community forestry depend mostly on the interests of powerful actors — the study compared the interests of powerful actors with the outcomes of community forestry. An indicator (Powerful Interest Desired Outcome, or PIDO) was designed (Table 3 and 5).

Table 4. Summary of interests of powerful actors in the 14 community forests

Name of powerful actor	Interests
Directorate of Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - control over forest resources - further funding for community forestry - improved status of the DoF at national level (community forestry contributes to the GDP via the mobilization of forest products, and with this, to rural development and poverty reduction)
German Development Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sustainably managed forests - poverty reduction - empowerment of the local resource users
Traditional Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintain and improve status/position - benefits
Forest Management Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - benefits
Conservancy Management Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - benefits
Village Head Man	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintain and improve status/position - benefits
Ministry of Environment and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expertise/knowledge on participatory natural resource management - benefits from the forest use will help to support the conservancy approach
Namibian Nature Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sustainably managed forests - poverty reduction - empowerment of the local resource users

The indicator shows the degree to which the actors' interests correspond to the outcome. Based on the actual community forest outcomes the study could test if the interest of the powerful actor corresponded to the outcome. The results of the test are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Correlation between actors' interests and outcomes

	Name of powerful actors	PIDO Social	PIDO Economic	PIDO Ecological
1	Directorate of Forestry	1	0	0
2	German Development Service	+1	1	1
3	Traditional Authority	1	0	0
4	Forest Management Committee	0	1	0
5	Conservancy Management Committee	0	1	0
6	Village Head Man	0	1	0
7	Ministry of Environment and Tourism	0	0	0
8	Namibian Nature Foundation	+1	1	1

PIDO +1: the powerful actor desires a high outcome; PIDO 1: the powerful actor desires a middle outcome; PIDO -1: the powerful actor desires a low outcome; PIDO 0: the powerful actor does not desire a specific outcome

Conclusion

The social and economic outcome results for the forest users presented in Table 3 were mostly determined as middle, indicating that the forest user benefitted only slightly from the community forest concept. They can decide who will be selected as an FMC member, and they are asked what should be done with the money generated through the community forest management. Often, the forest users benefit only through community improvements.



The results also indicated that a stable or improved biodiversity was not a desired outcome for most of the powerful actors. Only two powerful actors desired a high ecological outcome. Because of their involvement in ten cases, the community forests' ecological outcome was evaluated as medium.

In two cases that were in the initial stage of community forestry, the PIDO did not correspond to an outcome. In all other cases powerful actors have interests that correspond to an outcome. In eight cases even powerful actors have at least one interest that corresponds with an outcome.

These findings prove the hypothesis that outcomes in community forestry depend mostly on the interests of powerful actors, since most of the outcomes can be related to an interest of such an actor. The study analyzed the elements of power these actors have; the results show that they use their power to push through their interests. Who the most powerful actor is cannot be answered but it is clear that it is not the forest user.

Endnotes

1. See Community Forest Guidelines, 2005, p. 20
2. Interview sources were the chairman and former illegal harvester, the head man of the village and the first project coordinator for the German Development Service.

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