

Power Struggles of Conservation Partnerships in Tanzania's Wildlife Management Areas

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Abstract

Many African countries have witnessed the emergence of different modalities of wildlife protection since the 1980s that require partnerships between diverse stakeholders. In Tanzania, the protection of wildlife outside core-protected areas has seen the development of Community Wildlife Management Areas (CWMAs) as an important form of partnership between the government, local communities, private sector, conservation organizations, and development partners. CWMAs are central to many partnership debates about power struggles in conservation and development. This paper builds on the political ecology framework and conservation literature to explore the power struggles that determine who benefit, and who loses in CWMA partnerships. Drawing from data collected in Rufiji district, in Tanzania, the paper shows that a few powerful partners determine access to wildlife by local people, and make most decisions about the use of land, sometimes without villagers' consent. Rather than promoting local development, conservation partnerships have had unequal social impacts due to continued restrictions on wildlife utilization, and human-wildlife conflicts that include human attacks and loss of lives, thus fostering different kinds of livelihood insecurities. The paper sets these changes within broader economic dynamics, which have seen the rise of new cash crops, which are less vulnerable to wildlife damage. These could alter the economic and political costs and benefits associated with new wildlife partnerships.

Keywords: *power struggles, conservation, political ecology, community wildlife management areas, conflicts*

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s many countries have experienced power struggles in the formation of different kinds of community wildlife conservation partnerships. Historically, conservation of wildlife has been the preserve of states that have used top-down approaches. These tended to exclude local people living near protected areas such as national parks, forest reserves, and game reserves from the utilization of resources within these places (Brockington & Igoe, 2006; Fisher et al., 2005). The problem with community-based approaches to wildlife conservation is that local communities struggle for power to manage protected areas across the globe.

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The formation of these initiatives, which hinge on partnerships, aims to further conservation goals and as they are frequently found around existing protected areas to improve ecological connectivity (Noe, 2009; Ponte et al., 2020). Scholars argue that threats to wildlife (whether real or perceived) have continued to influence the evolution of conservation partnerships, power struggles, reduced access and brought related changes in conservation policies across Africa (Noe et al., 2017). These partnerships are part of a planned expansion of the world's protected area coverage, which is a cornerstone of biodiversity conservation targets as described in international conservation objectives (Watson et al., 2014; Naidoo et al., 2019).

The major actors in the formation of conservation partnerships have included governments, donors, local communities, private businesses, conservation organizations, and development partners. These actors and the private sector were also the major actors when community-based conservation (CBC) was introduced in areas adjacent to protected areas (Bluwstein et al., 2016; Noe, 2019). The literature on protected areas has shown that these actors can struggle for power to promote the conservation of biodiversity (Bluwstein et al., 2016; Kicheleri et al., 2018; Svarstad et al., 2018).

There are conflicts within conservation partnerships that are about struggles for power in decision-making over access to natural resources. Frequently, the outcomes of these struggles mean that communities' livelihoods suffer from reduced access to natural resources such as wildlife (Agrawal et al., 2011; Lund et al., 2017). There is evidence that partnerships that were meant to be beneficial have often caused harm to local livelihoods. Although some literature suggests that the well-being of the people living near protected areas is better than might be expected (Naidoo et al., 2019), it is not clear what role partnerships play in producing these findings.

Further, Naidoo's work did not consider the impacts of human-wildlife conflicts, which can be important in Tanzanian contexts. Nor do similar studies consider how restrictions on the access to game meat affect local communities. Such restrictions have increased different kinds of insecurities to local communities while granting access to tourists who enjoy game drives and hunting safaris in the backyards of the poorest people (Mavhunga, 2015).

This paper is about power struggles that have emerged between different actors in Community Wildlife Management Areas (CWMAs) in Tanzania. It analyses how powerful actors influence decisions on access to resources such as wildlife by local communities, hence making nearly all decisions about the use of natural resources (land, wildlife, fishes, and firewood), sometimes without considering

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villagers' preferences. Using these examples, the paper demonstrates how the establishment of CWMA as a form of conservation partnership has caused power struggles, and eventually reduced access to resources.

This paper is organized into six main sections. After the introduction, the second section provides theoretical and analytical contributions; the third section is about context and methods. Section four is concerned with how power struggles have reduced access to wildlife resources in CWMA through changes in wildlife regulations, increased human-wildlife conflicts, people killings, and land use planning. Section five summarizes the debate about living in wildlife management areas where local communities lack the power to resolve the conflicts in CWMA partnerships. Also, the paper discusses the rise of a new cash crop in the study villages that is less vulnerable to wildlife damages; whereas the last section provided a summary and conclusion of the paper.

2. Theoretical and Analytical Contribution

Different studies have examined power struggles within conservation partnerships, their effects on natural resources management (Kicheleri et al., 2018; Kajembe et al., 2016; Raik et al., 2008), and the power dynamics within these partnerships (Kicheleri et al., 2018). To exercise power means being able, in a special way, to control, use, decide, occupy, or even close the space of reasons for others (Lukes, 2018). Thus, actors' power can be demonstrated as the point to which they can influence or force others to accept decisions and follow certain options of action (van der Duim et al., 2011).

The challenges of local communities and other actors to have power on decision-making over access to resources have developed conflicts that arise from power struggles. However, when people are forced to accept decisions from other actors, this may cause the probability of conflicts between decision-makers and local communities (Serenari et al., 2017). In this paper, power struggles mean a process of decision-making where certain actors, at the cost of other legitimate actors, push forward their interests in the management of natural resources such as wildlife (Kicheleri et al., 2018).

Conflicts and power struggles have been observed in the management of natural resources in different protected areas around the globe (Noe et al., 2017; Nthiga et al., 2015). These conflicts are associated with the management of natural resources, whereby few powerful actors determine access to resources by less powerful actors such as local communities. The roots of this conflict lie with the fact that most of the decisions are based on unequal sharing of benefits from wildlife-based tourism between state organizations and local communities, and between local communities and private actors (Noe et al., 2017).

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The struggles for power in decision-making are meant to decide on who benefits and loses in CWMA partnerships, control funds, and determine access to wildlife by local communities. Therefore, the outcomes of these power struggles are analysed in terms of participation in decision-making, differentiation of roles, explicit rules, and regulations that govern wildlife utilization.

In Tanzania, different actors - such as NGOs, donors, and private actors supported the establishment of CWMA in areas adjacent to protected areas, with varied interests such as wildlife conservation, livelihood improvement, and resolution of human-wildlife conflicts. The establishment of CWMA was important for re-organizing local space, management institutions, as well as set terms of the right to use and control natural resources outside the core protected areas (Bluwstein et al., 2016; Noe, 2019). However, some scholars argue that CWMA have produced false promises during negotiations and agreements that have failed to address these conflicts (Noe et al., 2017). The struggles taking place within the CWMA, have been greatly reduced by the power of international conservation agencies which have influenced changes as discussed here by contributing to our thinking around political ecology and examines how power struggles are shaped and in turn shapes CWMA. It also highlights resistances that emerge as a result of reduced access to wildlife resources.

3. Context and Methods

3.1 Study Area

The Selous Game Reserve and its environments were recognised as a UNESCO world heritage site in 1982 (Noe, 2019). Then, the poaching of elephants changed the status of the game reserve and its surroundings to be in the list of world heritage sites in danger in 2014 (UNESCO, 2014). The game reserve is the largest in Africa (measuring over 50,000km²) that hosted 110,000 elephants in the mid-1970s (Baldus, 2008). However, by 2007 the population was down to 70,406; dropped further to 15,217 in 2014 (WWF, 2016). The Selous Game Reserve is surrounded by different districts such Kisarawe, Ulanga, Kilombero, Morogoro rural, Kilosa, Malinyi, Tunduru, Namtumbo, Liwale, Kilwa, and Rufiji.

This study was undertaken in Rufiji District, which is an important site for conservation as 60% of the total land is under conservation, of which 46.9% is in use by the Selous Game Reserve, 12.1% is taken by national forest reserve (RDC, 2017). It was specifically carried out in three villages, namely: Ngarambe, Mloka, and Tawi, which are located adjacent to the game reserve in Rufiji District (Figure 1), Southern Tanzania.

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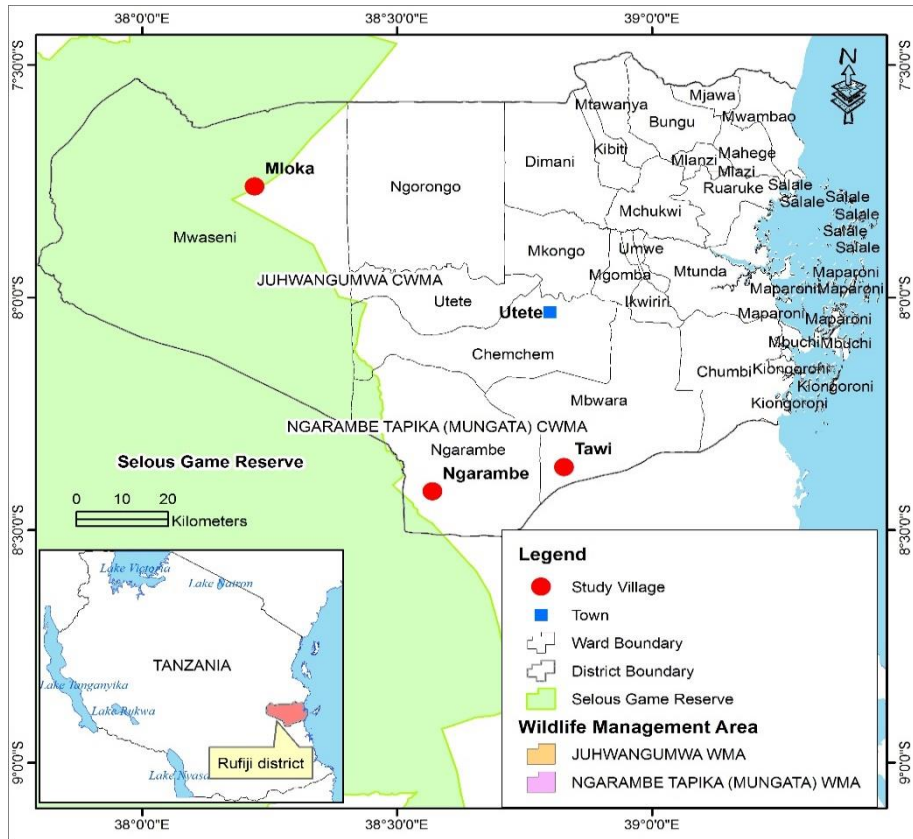


Figure 1: Map of the Study Villages in Rufiji District

Source: GIS Lab, UDSM-IRA (2017)

Wildlife conservation in Tanzania is included among state-protected areas and strict control of resources used throughout the colonial and post-independence eras (Nelson et al., 2007; Baldus et al., 2001). Despite different measures taken to protect wildlife, illegal use, as well as human-wildlife conflicts, increased in the 1960s and 1970s. By the 1980s species like black rhinos and elephants had been widely overexploited (Nelson et al., 2007; Songorwa, 1999). Human-wildlife conflicts and restricted access to land and wildlife resources (Noe, 2020; Holterman, 2020; Baldus & Hahn, 2009), and the loss of lives has a long history in the Selous Game Reserve (Holterman, 2020). It was these problems that influenced Tanzania's wildlife sector to engage in broad financial liberation and decentralisation (TAWA, 2017; Nelson et al., 2007). Donor agencies and foreign conservation organisations supported the move by the government of Tanzania to formulate policies that aim to increase the participation of local communities and decentralise wildlife management to the local level through the formation of CWMA (Kiwango et al., 2015; Nelson et al., 2007).

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The CWMA were established in the 2000s following the launch of the 1998 wildlife policy of Tanzania, which allowed partnerships between local communities and private actors to manage wildlife on the village land for their benefit (URT, 1998). In this regard, several community-based conservations were established to provide benefits to both local livelihoods and conservation interests (Baldus et al., 2001). Thereafter the Tanzania government formulated and adopted the Wildlife Policy of Tanzania (WPT) in 1998, revised in 2007; the CWMA regulations of 2002, revised in 2005 and 2012; and the wildlife conservation Act of 2009 to conserve wildlife for the benefit of people. The WMA regulations of 2002 came into formal practice in 2003, with the establishment of 16 pilots CWMA across the country (Kiwango et al., 2015).

Therefore, CWMA are communal property managements that were projected to encourage both conservation and development of local communities (Kicheleri, 2018). They act as buffer zones, migratory routes, and protect wildlife corridors around protected areas such as game reserves and national parks. Since their origination in 2003 to date, there are 18 CWMA with Authorised Association (AA) status, and 20 at different stages of development (AAC, 2016, cited in Kicheleri, 2018) (see Figure 2).

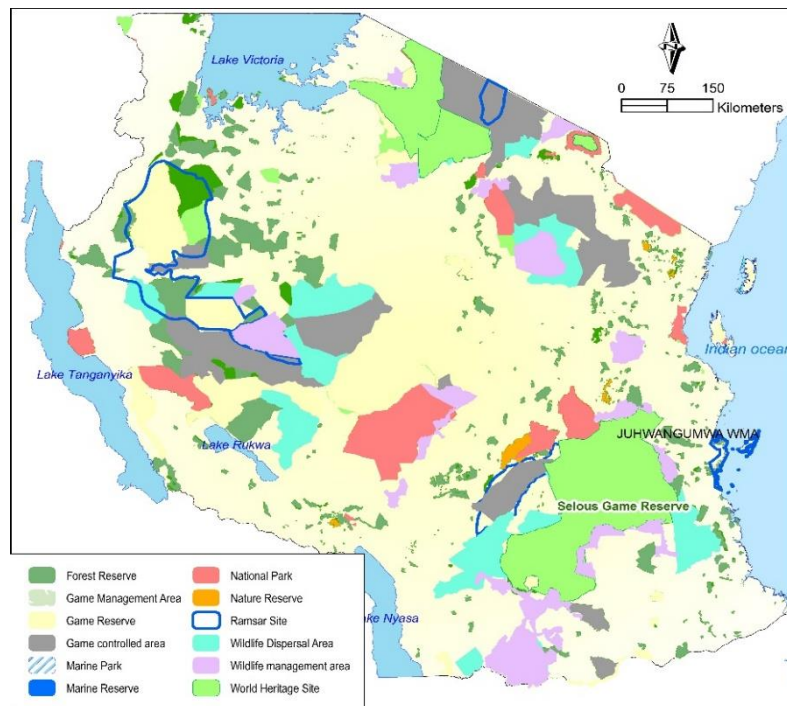


Figure 2: Protected Areas and CWMA in Tanzania
Source: GIS Lab, UDSM-IRA (2017)

3.2 Methods

The Selous Game Reserve is purposely selected due to its biological significance as the largest game reserve in Africa, and the host of almost 60% of Tanzania's elephant population. The reserve is considered an important conservation landscape that connects to other protected areas and CWMAs in the country, as seen in Figure 2.

The villages were selected based on three criteria: First, that villagers participated in wildlife conservation activities and that MUNGATA (Muungano wa Ngarambe na Tapika) was among the first operational Tanzanian CWMAs to be established in the country in the early 2000s; while JUHIWANGUMWA (Jumuiya ya Hifadhi ya Wanyamapori Ngorongo, Utete na Mwaseni) was among the latest CWMAs to be established in 2016. Second, the occurrences of partnership conflicts within the CWMAs whereas Ngarambe village is reported to have many cases of human-wildlife conflicts. Third, the location of all villages is adjacent to Selous Game Reserve which insinuates that they all share the same culture.

Data on conservation partnerships in Tanzania's CWMAs and its implications on power struggles in decision-making on wildlife utilization were collected over six months between March, August, and October (2017); and March to August (2018) in different places such as in the study villages (Mloka, Ngarambe, and Tawi); and Morogoro, Dar es Salaam and Rufiji district councils. The qualitative research methods used include in-depth interviews, observations, and 21 Focus Group Discussions (FGD). FGDs with respondents ranging from 7-12 were conducted with youths, women, men, village council members, CWMA executive committee, and elderly people from each village. In total, 74 interviews were carried out with 46 villagers, 11 government officials, 8 representatives of NGOs, 3 representatives of tour companies, and 6 game rangers.

Purposive and snowball sampling were employed for research participant selection. At least 15 people were interviewed in each village, including game rangers at the villages, village committee members, and villagers. Also, qualitative methods were complemented by one quantitative method in the form of a survey, whereby 133 questionnaires were administered in three villages. All interview data were translated from Kiswahili into English, analysed using content analysis, and then thematically organised in NVIVO 12 software.

4. Results

All actors engaged as part of this paper supported the objective of wildlife conservation, but for different reasons. While local communities regarded conservation as an opportunity to improve their livelihoods in CWMAs, the state

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and its agencies perceived it as an opportunity in the extension of protected areas, as well as improved revenue collection (Kicheleri et al., 2018). In doing so, the latter legitimate changes in wildlife policies, acts, rules, and regulations that manage resources and their environments. These changes are related to the reduction of access to wildlife resources by local communities, with the ban on resident hunting being among the implemented changes.

In Tanzania, the government is the most powerful agency in the management of natural resources and wildlife. The wildlife division is responsible for policy and coordination issues while Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) is responsible for the utilization of wildlife resources, the development and protection of wildlife in and outside the reserve, and supporting the livelihoods of the surrounding populations through community-based wildlife conservation.

In partnership with TAWA, other conservation partnerships, such as the World-Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and Belgian Technical Corporation (BTC) have also supported the government establishment of CWMA's in the country. WWF has supported the establishment of MUNGATA CBO and BTC has, in turn, supported the establishment of the JUHIWANGUMWA CBO through the project known as the Eastern Selous Project and Kilombero and Lower Rufiji Wetlands Ecosystem Management Project (KILORWEMP). Other bilateral partners e.g. the German government and its development agencies such as German Technical Corporation (GTZ), Frankfurt Geological Society (FZS), and German banks together with other NGOs collaborated with the Tanzanian government to establish conservation CBOs in the Rufiji District (Noe et al., 2019).

The WWF provided funds and supported capacity-building in local communities for the benefits of wildlife conservation and the improvement of livelihoods through the establishment of CWMA's in areas adjacent to the Selous game reserve. During the process of the establishment of CWMA's, local communities were promised that they will benefit through legal access to wildlife resources. Specifically, the WWF organizes this mostly in reserve buffer zones and wildlife corridors of the Selous, while the FZS and the German bank coordinate these partnership activities within the game reserve to improve infrastructure development.

The wildlife resources that local communities were promised to access through the CWMA's are surrounded by a lot of conflicts and politics. The conflicts occurred when local communities did not receive the promised benefits of accessing wildlife resources. For example, local communities who agreed to allocate a certain amount of their land as CWMA's disclosed the following during a focus group discussion with the JUHIWANGUMWA CBO executive committee:

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On 18th November 2016, the CBO under the Authorized Association Consortium announced a tender of hunting tourism block and expected to open the tender after 40 days. Traditional Africa Safaris TZ-2011 applied for the tender and paid US\$ 2000 as an application fee. We planned to open the tender on 13th January 2017, also we expected that the company will pay US\$30,000 as the second-class hunting block fee. Unfortunately, the Ministry told us to stop the tendering processes because the hunting block was not evaluated (JUHIWANGUMWA CBO leaders, March 2017).

Most conflicts occurred due to the unfulfilled promises to local communities by the government and its agencies. For example, the failure of JUHIWANGUMWA to conduct business as explained by CBO leaders is an example of how local communities are disappointed in accessing the benefits from the CWMA's area. Since JUHIWANGUMWA was established in 2016, the land allocated for tourism-related activities is unused and attracts illegal activities due to the lack of proper business management. Thus, local communities' access to wildlife resources was undermined through reduced access, ban of resident hunting, changes of rules and regulations, which led to conflicts that undermined conservation.

4.1 Reduced Access to Wildlife Resources

Focus group discussions in one of the study villages, disclosed that the establishment of CWMA's in Rufiji District has inflicted opportunity costs on local communities by restricting their access to natural resources such as game meat, land, thatching grasses, building poles, firewood, and fishing activities. Similarly, FGDs with the Ngarambe village council revealed that due to the village being close to the game reserve, keeping livestock is not possible at the village due to a lot of tsetse flies and wild animals that kill domesticated animals.

As mentioned above, the extraction of some resources from the reserve, such as game meat through resident hunting was banned in 2015 all over the country, under Government Notice (GN) 538 published on 27th November 2015. However, the study found out that the government decided to ban resident hunting permits because it was not benefiting local communities as it was planned. An interview with a government official at the Wildlife Division disclosed:

The government banned resident hunting due to misuse of the permits in 2015. Resident hunting was aimed to benefit local communities. The local government failed to manage and supervise resident hunting. As such tourist hunters operated under the shoes of resident hunting. We are preparing new regulations to manage resident hunting in selected sites in Manyara, Lindi, Coastal zone, Singida, and Tabora (Anonymous 2, 14/08/2018).

Similarly, interviews with TAWA officials showed that the issuing of resident hunting permits was surrounded by acts of corruption as district officers provided the permits to people who were not residents:

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The resident hunting was not conducted as it was planned, there were complaints of people who were given permits to hunt that were not citizens. Most of them were coming from other countries (Anonymous 1, 10/08/2018).

Resident hunting was the main way local communities could access game meat. After the ban, villagers in one of the study villages could access game meat from an investor after they have already taken the trophy. However, the discussion with the village councils revealed that villagers did not welcome these implementations with open arms:

We get the game meat after they had taken the entire trophy. We are given the carcass (mizoga) of wild animals which, according to Islamic religion, we are not allowed to eat (Village Council, 24/08/2018).

Thus, corrupt practices in granting hunting permits have led to a ban which has made it difficult for CWMAAs to fulfil the promise of providing access to game meat that was initially offered.

4.2 Changes of Rules and Regulations

Rules are a set of instructions issued by authority while regulations are part of the law. Local communities' access to natural resources was initially restricted during the preparations for the extension of protected areas and land use plans for CWMAAs. These plans restricted communities' access to land, wildlife, fishes in the game reserve, and building materials within the CWMAAs areas, in which most of the areas are left unused for conservation purposes (Figure 3).

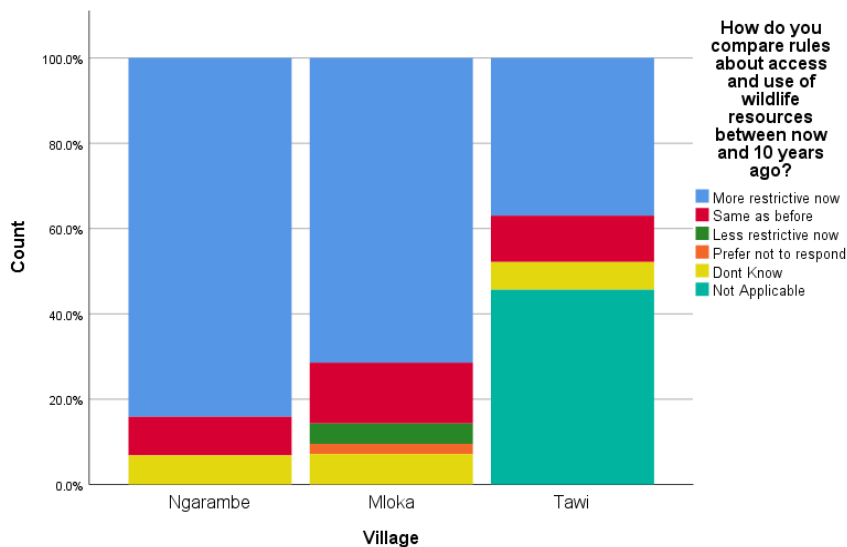


Figure 3: Rules on Access and Use of Wildlife Resources

Source: Fieldwork data (2017/2018)

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According to the rules and regulations, local communities are not allowed to conduct fishing activities in the ox-bow lakes located inside the game reserve. Over 65% of people in Ngarambe and Mloka villages (CWMAs) thought that the change in access and use of wildlife resources between now and ten years was more restrictive. The Wildlife Conservation act (cap 283) Regulations made under section 121 (a) and (f), in (Special Wildlife Investment Concession Areas) regulations of 2020, gives special concession to locals who have minimum investment capital of not less than Tanzanian shillings equivalent to \$20million and if the business is a joint venture between a Tanzanian citizen and a non-citizen, they should have minimum investment capital of Tanzanian shillings equivalent to \$50million. However, these regulations have made it difficult for locals to run tourists' businesses because of the high investment capital.

Moreover, several respondents contended that the Wildlife Division and its agencies have maintained power over revenue collection and control of wildlife utilization in the CWMAs. The application of the new wildlife utilization rules in south-eastern Tanzania left the community with more challenges associated with not only the changing role of wildlife as a traditional source of livelihood but also a discriminating nature of wildlife business (Noe, 2019).

Additionally, respondents were asked to differentiate the rules and regulations before the establishment of partnerships, and after partnerships (before CWMA, and after CWMA). One of the key respondents lamented:

The rules and regulations concerning natural resources are all restricted to protect wild animals; animals are more protected than us human beings. We cannot get forest products or game meat because of wild animals (Former Village Chairman, 03/08/2018).

In the same vein, while the Wildlife Conservation (Wildlife Management Areas) regulations of 2012 allowed local communities, through authorised association, to enter into contractual agreements with private investors in their hunting blocks, the same regulations instructed investors to pay fees directly to the Wildlife Division, which will return 75% of the money to the CWMAs. This means local communities had no control over such incomes.

4.3 Changes of Land Use Plan and Relocations

Land use plan reviews of CWMAs are normally done to set up limitations on local land use and access to wildlife resources, in return for a share of tourism income that is generated on the communal lands (Bluwstein et al., 2016). This is another area where more powerful partners use their influence to fulfil their interests. This can be seen from the example of the MUNGATA CBO (Figure 4).

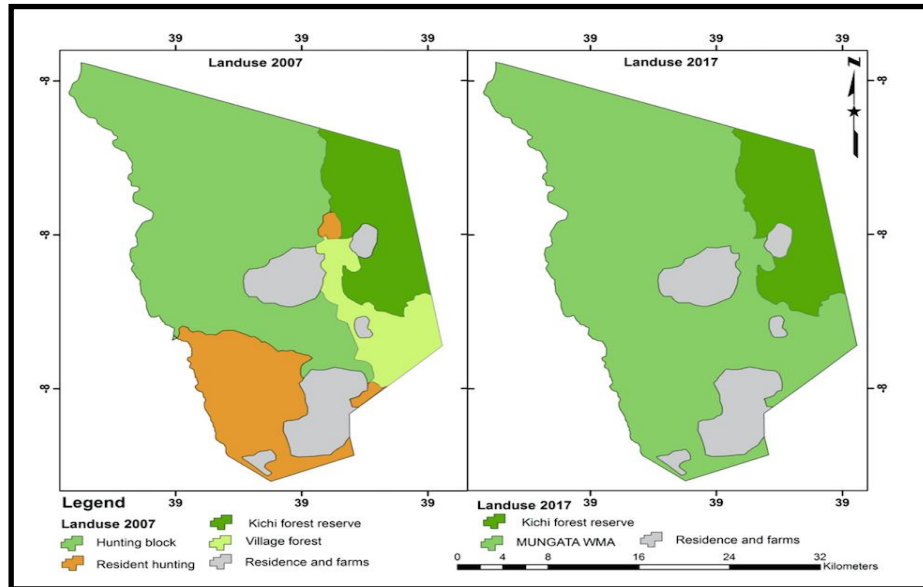


Figure 4: MUNGATA in 2007 and 2017
 Source: MUNGATA CWMA office (Ngarambe) (2017)

The land use plan for 2002-2012 showed that the CBO had set aside four land uses: farming and settlement, tourist hunting, resident hunting, and village forest harvesting. This CWMA general management plan was reviewed in 2011 by the CBO management, Community Wildlife Management Area Consortium (CWMAC), CWMA business investor, board of trustee members, Member of Parliament, District Game Officer (DGO), and other district officials.

The review introduced important changes in the MUNGATA land-use plan. it omitted forest harvesting and resident hunting block from local communities, and combined them to form a larger tourist hunting block (MUNGATA Executive Committee, 22/03/2017). The villagers suspected that people were given a certain amount of money (bribes) to agree and vote for such land-use changes (MUNGATA Executive Committee, 22/03/2017).

4.4 Increased Human-wildlife Conflicts

The increased human-wildlife collision occurred due to the success of conservation initiatives that increased the number of wildlife, which now stray to village lands. Evidence from the survey revealed that many people suffered the loss of crops to wildlife in all the study villages. Ngarambe village reported having more damage as compared to Mloka and Tawi (Figure 5). This is because of the location of the village, which is located only 5km from the game reserve.

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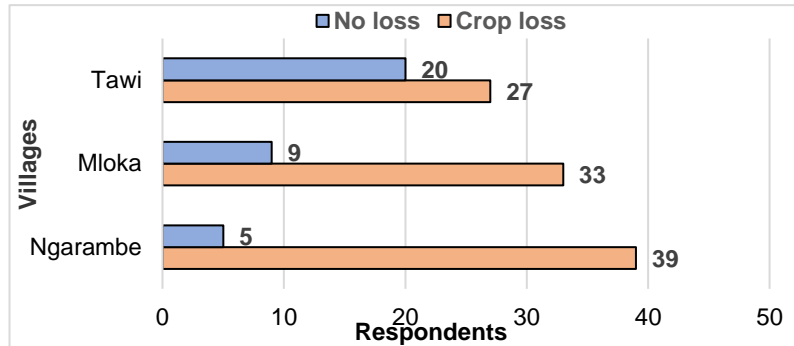


Figure 5: Loss of crops to wildlife
 Source: Fieldwork data (2017/2018)

Among the reasons for human-wildlife conflicts are the expansions of protected areas into the village lands where human beings and animals are struggling for living space and food. When local communities were asked how human-wildlife conflicts had changed in the past five years, most of them responded that human-wildlife conflicts had increased a lot (Figure 6).

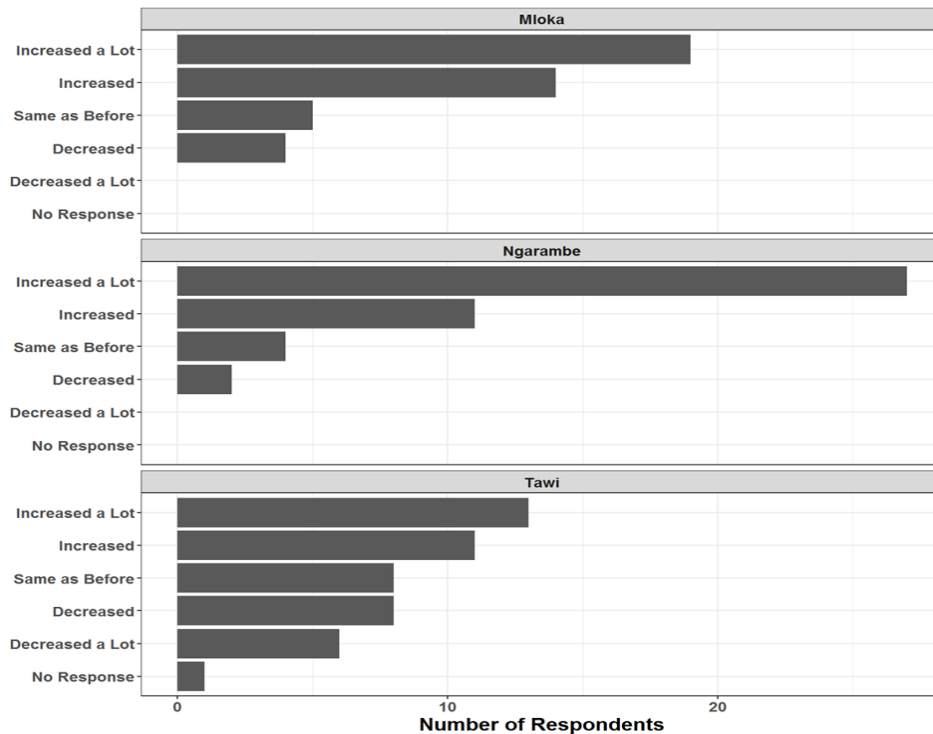


Figure 6: Perceived Changes in the Human-Wildlife Conflicts in the Past Five Years
 Source: Fieldwork data (2017/2018)

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Figure 6: shows that conflicts have increased a lot in Ngarambe, Mloka, and Tawi villages, in that order for the past five years. Due to the increased conflicts and reduced access to resources, local communities have decided to counter by killing wild animals in the villages and the game reserve.

4.5 Local Killings

Local communities were asked about their relationship with neighbours (game reserve officials). The answer was that it was not good because of restricted access to resources such as game meat and fishes in the game reserve (Youths' Group, 29/05/2018). FGDs conducted in the study villages revealed that there are incidences of local killings due to illegal fishing in the game reserve (ibid.). Also, local communities are attacked by wild animals in the villages, especially at night when wild animals move freely in the villages. One youth in one of the study villages narrated of the killing of fellow villagers as follows:

Our relationship with game rangers is not good, mainly due to the villagers' engagement in fishing with several lives lost from fishing in the oxbow lakes located in the Selous game reserve. Villagers are not allowed to enter the game reserve for fishing activities. The game rangers hate us because they think that many villagers are poachers. The villagers are forced to go fishing in the game reserve during the low season because of the hardships of their lives. Villagers who do illegal fishing in the game reserve are heavily punished and taken to court (Youths' group 14/03/2018).

Also, focus group discussions with the women group in the villages revealed the disappearance of villagers in the game reserve. Villagers normally go into the game reserve without a permit illegal fishing at night hours. Similarly, poachers enter into the game reserve during night hours. As such, rangers may get difficulties in separating the two groups and end up killing villagers, as narrated in a focus group with women in one of the study villages:

Many people have disappeared in the Selous after they went fishing. We know that they were killed in the game reserve and there is no legal access to game meat. The government banned resident hunting since 2015. A lot of crops are damaged by elephants and other wild animals. What else could people do for their living? For example, in 2013 three people went fishing in the game reserve and one guy was shot dead. The other two survived and came to give us the story. In 2013 the villagers decided to riot by closing all the entrances to the village because our sons have disappeared in the game reserve (FGD, 13/03/2017).

5. Discussion

The assessment, by Kicheleri et al. (2018), of power struggles in the management of wildlife resources in the Burunge CWMA in Tanzania showed that actors had unequal powers and different interests, which were the major causes of resource-use conflicts and power struggles between them. Consistent with the above arguments, this study has found that there is a power struggle on decision-making over access to wildlife resources and that these struggles have caused conflicts.

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This study affirms that the impacts of power struggles within protected areas were felt long before the CWMAAs were in place. Several protected areas in Tanzania were created in the colonial era, and have inherited the management formation of previous colonies (Bluwstein, 2019; Neumann, 1997). Besides, the conservation of natural resources has slowly developed from the colonial model, and some of its characteristics remain in the present-day policies in Tanzania (Bluwstein, 2019; Kiwango et al., 2015). This is despite the fact that, conceptually, the overall aim of creating CWMAAs entailed a redefinition and reallocation of rights and access to natural resources.

Studies have highlighted the negative impacts of CWMAAs, including increasing social differences, unfair distribution of benefits and the creation of high expectations on local communities without meeting targets (Homewood et al., 2020; Holterman, 2020; Bluwstein & Lund, 2018; Kiwango et al., 2015). Local communities in the study villages claimed that they suffer from crop damages by animals from the Reserve, while at the same time getting injured/killed by wild animals such as elephants and hyenas, with no compensation for losses. This corroborates Karki's (2013) argument that since the establishment of wildlife management areas, local communities have faced a decline in the production of harvest due to crop damage, and restrictions on resource use.

The findings of this study have established that the impact of power struggles on wildlife utilization has resulted into the loss of life by both wildlife attacks and game ranger shootings. The shrinking of access to natural resources near the protected areas has increased human-wildlife conflicts due to the increased wildlife population in the villages. Nevertheless, local communities trespass in the game reserve for illegal activities such as fishing and hunting as compensation for the loss of crops to wildlife.

However, the injustices and misfortunes associated with the power struggle are not weakening conservation in protected areas in any noticeable way (Brockington, 2004). Wildlife populations are rebounding as evidenced by the upsurge in elephant populations. The conserved area is so vast already, and the policing of it so violent; but the economic and international interests behind wildlife are so powerful that the poverty, impoverishment, and grievances of the local communities are being ignored. This recalls Brockington's (2002) argument in *Fortress Conservation* that local support can sometimes be dispensed with, if the distribution of fortune and misfortunes favours the strong ones.

6. Conclusion

The struggles for power in decision-making over wildlife utilization have resulted in reduced access to wildlife resources, conflicts, crop damage, local killings, and resistances as a response to denied access. The increased

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restrictions to access wildlife resources have also increased conflicts and insecurities in local communities, which fuels illegal activities.

This paper presented villages located adjacent to the Selous Game Reserve in CWMA as a case in point of how ecology is managed politically through different actors who struggle for power in the management of wildlife resources. It has shown how few powerful actors determine access to wildlife resources by local communities, and make most decisions about the use of community lands without villagers' consent. However, those who experience power being exercised against them can oppose the powerful and decide acts of resistance (Lukes, 2018). This has been demonstrated in this paper through illegal fishing in the game reserve and killings of wild animals.

The main issues emerging from the conservation partnerships in CWMA as a new form of wildlife management challenges the view that CWMA are community-based projects. Protected areas in Africa are often administered by powerful and irregular decision-making, and the occurrence of distant ties through colonial legacy, dependence on external expertise, financial support, and tourism (Ramutsindela et al., 2020). The argument from this paper is that although CWMA operate at the local scale, they are not local initiatives; and their foundation is predominantly top-down. Therefore, an analysis of the impact of conservation partnerships of CWMA on local communities should consider the broader ecological and economic contexts at which they are established.

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