

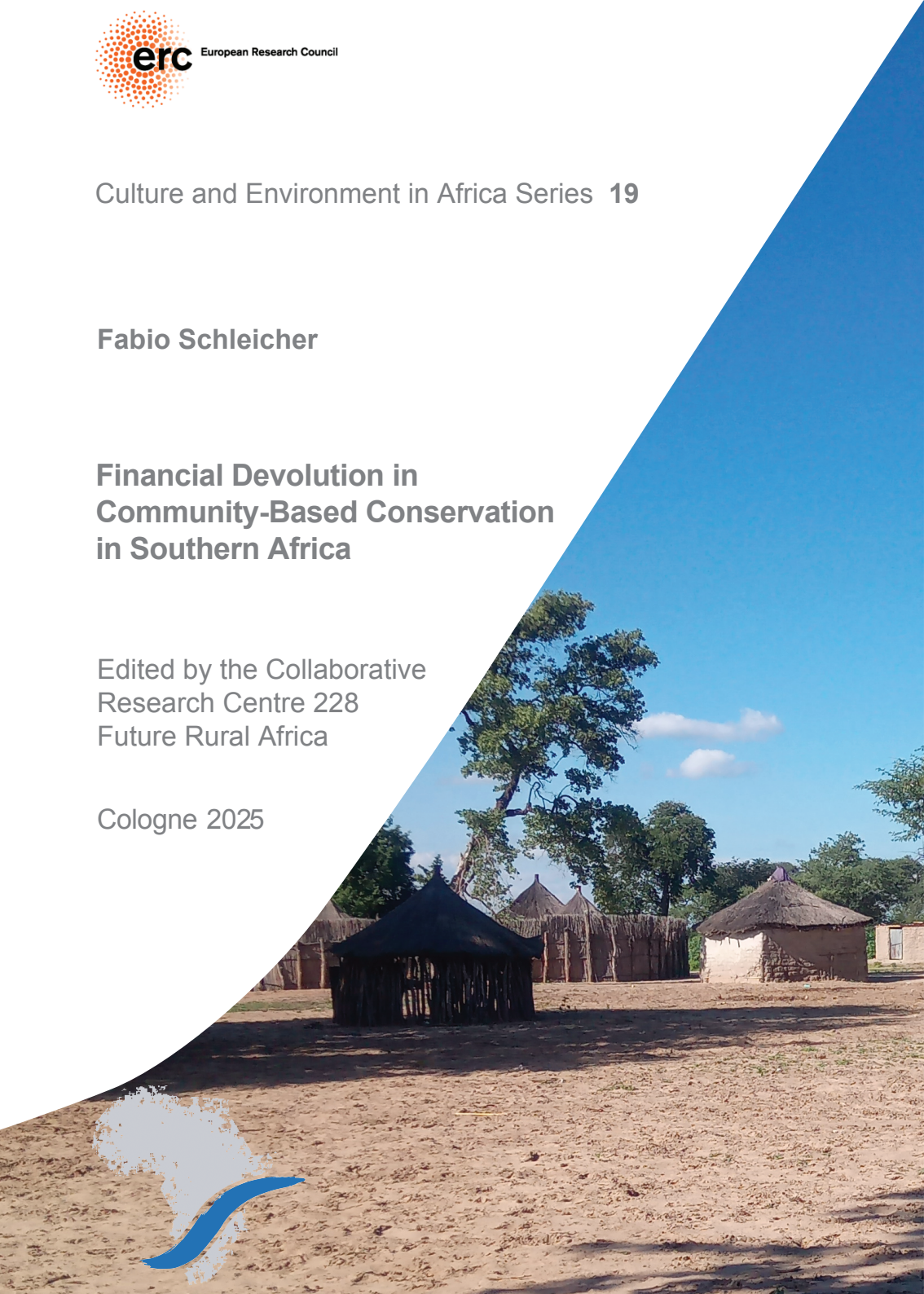
Culture and Environment in Africa Series **19**

**Fabio Schleicher**

## **Financial Devolution in Community-Based Conservation in Southern Africa**

Edited by the Collaborative  
Research Centre 228  
Future Rural Africa

Cologne 2025





**Fabio Schleicher**

**Financial Devolution in Community-Based Conservation in  
Southern Africa**

CULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT IN AFRICA SERIES

Edited by the Collaborative Research Centre 228

Future Rural Africa

Issue 19

2025





## **Preface**

Community-based conservation has been promoted by various international agencies concerned with rural development and with conservation. Community-based approaches to conservation were primed as an alternative to fortress conservation since the mid 1980s and gained prominence since 1992's Rio de Janeiro World Summit on Sustainable Development. Community-based conservation was rolled out on the African continent with the promise that conservation and rural development could be achieved at the same time. The simple underlying assumption was that as soon as people saw immediate benefit accruing from wildlife conservation they would abstain from poaching and expanding farmlands into conservation areas. Community-based conservation projects were also deemed to foster rural democratization and participation. Such approaches fostered the establishment of local institutions of resource governance based on democratic participation and accountability. To foster such approaches governments had to decentralize the governance of wildlife and conservation landscapes. Fabio Schleicher has selected four (of the five) countries that established the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Areas (KAZA TFCA) in 2011 to study their approaches to decentralization and devolution in community-based conservation. He identifies pertinent differences in their approaches and singles out financial devolution as a key aspect of devolving rights and obligations to lower levels of governance. Schleicher's thesis offers an extremely well researched account of decentralization and devolution efforts in conservation in four southern African countries.

Michael Bollig

## **Abstract**

This thesis provides a comprehensive analysis of financial devolution in community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) across the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA), focusing on Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. It offers a large-scale overview and comparison of how national governance strategies have shaped financial devolution in these countries, emphasizing the role of local communities in conservation efforts. Despite the decentralization trend since the 1980s and 1990s, the study finds significant variation in financial autonomy, with challenges such as elite capture, revenue recentralization, and restricted local decision-making. Through case studies within the borders of the KAZA TFCA, it highlights disparities in wildlife-revenue management and financial independence. The thesis concludes that stronger devolution frameworks and improved governance structures are essential for sustainable CBNRM and long-term conservation success in the region.

## Table of Contents

<b>Preface .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Conceptual and Theoretical Background .....</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 Brief Introduction into the Complex Setting of Natural Resource Governance .....	5
2.1.1 The Concept of Governance .....	5
2.1.2 Decentralization and Devolution.....	6
2.1.3 The Gap between Devolution in Theory and Practice .....	7
2.1.4 Why Financial Devolution in CBNRM Matters .....	8
2.1.5 State of Research .....	8
2.2 Decentralization in the Context of Natural Resource Governance .....	10
2.2.1 The Emergence of Decentralization as a Global Trend .....	10
2.2.2 Relevance of Decentralization .....	11
2.2.3 Terminology of Decentralization.....	12
2.2.4 Decentralization in Natural Resource Management .....	14
2.2.5 Limitations of Decentralization .....	15
2.3. Financial Devolution .....	17
2.3.1 Definition and gradations of financial devolution.....	17
2.3.2 Drivers of Financial Devolution .....	18
2.3.3 Potential Benefits and Risks of Financial Devolution .....	18
2.3.4 Key Design Elements for Effective Financial Devolution.....	19
2.3 Community-based Natural Resource Management and Conservation .....	20
<b>3. Methodology .....</b>	<b>24</b>
3.1 Choice of Method.....	24
3.2 Choice of Literature .....	25
3.3 The Exclusion of Angola from the Analysis .....	26
3.4 Limitations of Methods and Literature, and Future prospects.....	26
<b>4. Results and Analysis .....</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1 The Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area .....	28
4.2 Analysis of the KAZA Member States CBNRM Governance.....	32
4.2.1 Conservation Success in Botswana: Bypassing Local Communities..	32
4.2.2 Financial Devolution in Botswana's CBNRM: Challenges and Opportunities.....	36
4.3.1 Pioneering CBNRM: The Case of Namibia.....	37

4.3.2 Financial Devolution in Namibia's CBNRM: Successes and Shortcomings .....	41
4.4.1 Zambia: Rich in Biodiversity – Inconsistent in Devolution .....	45
4.4.2 Financial Devolution in Zambia: District Government as Gatekeeper ..	52
4.5.1 Zimbabwe and the Pilot Project in CBNRM: CAMPFIRE .....	54
4.5.2 Financial Devolution in the CBNRM System of Zimbabwe .....	61
5. Discussion .....	65
5.1 Comparative Analysis of KAZA Members' CBNRM Approaches .....	65
5.2 Financial Devolution: Assessing Fiscal Governance in CBNRM .....	67
6. Conclusion and Outlook .....	70
Bibliography.....	72

## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ADMADE	Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CBC	Community-based Conservation
CBNRM	Community-based Natural Resource Management
CBO	Community-based Organization
CC	Communal Conservancy
CRB	Community Resource Board
CWC	Community Wildlife Conservancy
DNPW	Department of National Parks and Wildlife
DWNP	Department of National Parks
GMA	Game Management Area
JVP	Joint-Venture Partnership
KAZA	Kavango-Zambezi
LIRD	Luangwa Integrated Rural Development Project
MET	Ministry of Environment and Tourism
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PA	Protected Area
RDC	Rural District Council
TFCA	Transfrontier Conservation Area
USAID	United Nations Agency for International Development
VAG	Village Action Group
ZAWA	Zambian Wildlife Authority



## 1. Introduction

“Few matters are more central to the daily lives of African societies than the use and governance of natural resources.” (Nelson, 2010, p. 4)

Natural resource governance in Africa is so highly relevant because it directly impacts economic development, social stability, environmental sustainability, and the overall well-being of “Africa’s human population [which] relies to a major part on the resources that grow on the land, and the ecological services which underpin agricultural and pastoralist livelihoods” (Nelson, 2010, p. 4). Effective governance mechanisms are essential to harness the potential benefits of natural resources while mitigating the risks and challenges associated with their extraction and exploitation.

One area of application in which most of the mentioned key factors come together is the field of conservation. Conservation is viewed here as the form of natural resource management that deals with the natural resources of wildlife and biodiversity. Natural resource governance is integral to conservation efforts as it influences land-use decisions, protected-areas management, community engagement, anti-poaching efforts, climate-change resilience, and international cooperation – all of which are essential for safeguarding Africa’s rich biodiversity and ecosystems for future generations (Nelson, 2010).

In the conservation landscape of southern Africa, community-based approaches have become widespread since a general decentralization trend in governance of the developing countries in the 1980s and 90s emerged. The community-based approach aims to provide both social and economic benefits for the local populations that live near conservation areas and to successfully protect and increase biodiversity, effectively devolving rights and responsibilities over nature to the local communities (Shackleton et al., 2012; Galvin, Beeton and Luizza, 2018; Hohbein and Abrams, 2022).

One center of gravity in the region when it comes to conservation and how to best achieve it is the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA). Founded in 2011 with a surface coverage of 520,000 km<sup>2</sup>, KAZA is the world’s largest transfrontier conservation area. The land area is shared, and the KAZA treaty was signed, by Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (KAZA, 2019; Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019). As one main goal is “to sustainably manage the Kavango Zambezi ecosystem, its heritage and cultural resources based on best conservation and tourism models for the socio-economic wellbeing of the communities” (KAZA, 2022, p. 9), KAZA TFCA is highly suitable as a study area for a comprehensive country analysis of community-based conservation (CBC) approaches in southern Africa.

A substantial corpus of scientific literature on community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) of which CBC<sup>1</sup> is one form next to others such as community-based forest management, has emerged in recent decades. While there are numerous studies on the approach as an overarching concept, including all elements for successful implementation such as social, ecological and governance-specific factors (e.g. Brooks, Waylen and Mulder, 2013; Oldekop et al., 2016; Galvin, Beeton and Luizza, 2018), there are comparatively few scholars analyzing individual sub-elements of community-based conservation approaches in detail. One of these elements, the importance of which in any socio-economic process is undeniable given the fact the African safari tourism industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry<sup>2</sup> (Zhang, 2023), is the financial element of CBNRM projects. While the central role of value streams in nature conservation is evident with regard to the commercialization of natural assets (Fairhead, Leach and Scoones, 2012), there has been a noticeable paucity of research on the topic in the context of community-based projects to date.

This research gap is addressed in the present thesis by examining the national conservation governance strategies of KAZA TFCA member states, with a particular focus on how these strategies deal with the devolution of financial rights and responsibilities to local communities in conservation. Therefore, “*financial devolution*” is employed in this study to analyze specific CBNRM projects and strategies in the KAZA TFCA region, with a view to situating them in the context of the respective national governance strategies. This will contribute to a better picture of the status of implementation of such conservation efforts based on a decentralizing governance approach and examine whether such policies are in favor of both biodiversity and community well-being in this globally significant key conservation area.

To investigate the performance of financial devolution and to be able to make comparable statements about financial devolution in the field of CBNRM in conservation, this paper’s focus lies on national governance strategies and the decentralization efforts of the respective national governments. For a further increased comparability, the KAZA TFCA is particularly interesting for the study of such a specific governance practice as financial devolution because it develops its own institutionalism, policy, and governance dynamics, approved by all member states, which are independent of the policies of the individual member states (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019). An institution like KAZA makes it possible to compare the outputs of financial devolution efforts within the study area as a common

---

<sup>1</sup> CBC is regarded here as a form of CBNRM. CBNRM refers to the management of various natural resources, such as forests, REDD, and raw materials, and also wildlife. Statements about CBNRM in this paper can therefore also be considered valid for CBC. For the sake of simplicity, this paper will use the term CBNRM. Should differentiation be necessary, the term CBC will be used explicitly and separated from CBNRM.

<sup>2</sup> Africa’s safari industry generates over \$12 billion in revenues with the top wildlife destinations alone (Zhang, 2023). The southern Africa Tourism Market Size is expected to reach a volume of \$23.1 billion by 2030 (Research and Markets, 2024).



institutional ground while at the same time the chances of being able to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of national governance policies based on the outputs are promising.

The main objective of this paper, therefore, is to critically investigate the performance and efficiency of financial devolution efforts in CBNRM projects that lie within the borders of the KAZA TFCA. To this end, the respective national governance strategies in the area of decentralization of nature and wildlife conservation must first be examined more closely. This will be achieved through a repeated process of highlighting the historical background and the emergence of CBNRM in the member states, analyzing the institutional architecture and functioning of the CBNRM sector, identifying challenges and providing recommendations for the CBNRM system of the member state in question. Given the relatively divergent country contexts, this may increase the comparability of the analysis and increase the informative value of the discussion. In a second step, case studies are to be identified which on the one hand lie within the research area described and on the other allow conclusions to be drawn about the status of financial devolution. The discussion of these results is based on the four key design principles for financial devolution, which are defined in the theoretical part of this thesis. This provides a large-scale overview and assessment that allows for comparisons of national governance strategies and case studies. Furthermore, it offers insights into future challenges and milestones for successful financial devolution and its added value. In doing so, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- How have the national governance strategies of the KAZA member states developed since the decentralization trend at the beginning of the 1980s, and how do they compare with each other?
- What conclusions can be drawn from case studies in the KAZA region with regard to the performance of financial devolution and the respective national governance strategies?

This work contributes to the debate on whether decentralization reforms as a governance practice can help reconcile conservation and preservation with development cooperation and, in the best case, create a win-win situation. The selected study region is particularly suitable for both areas of interest, as the TFCA is of key importance in the protection and conservation of biodiversity and is located in an area of southern Africa where development cooperation is both present and needed.

To suit the presented research objectives, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the essential background to natural resource governance in southern Africa. It presents a synthesis of relevant literature (2.5), key terms and concepts (2.1). Subsequently, the theoretical framework of governance is detailed, with particular emphasis on decentralization

and financial devolution as the core focus of the study (2.2-2.4). Chapter 3 delineates the case-study methodology. Chapter 4 commences with an examination of the geographical context and governance strategies of the member states of the KAZA TFCA – namely, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe – focusing on the history of decentralization, the current structures of CBNRM, and the enabling governance conditions for (financial) devolution in each. The second part of Chapter 4 examines financial devolution in each country's CBNRM sector, supported by KAZA-specific case studies. These case studies offer insights into community-based conservation strategies and the impact of financial devolution. Chapter 5 discusses these findings in relation to the study's central research questions and situates them within the broader KAZA context and CBNRM financial development. Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of findings and an outlook for future research.

## **2. Conceptual and Theoretical Background**

This chapter will set the theoretical basis and conceptual background for the presented analysis. The chapter therefore begins by giving an overview of the relevant concepts and literature and gives orientation about its relevance, then continues with a detailed overview over the concept of decentralization and its different forms and definitions. This sets a basis for defining financial devolution in the next step (Chapter 2.2). Chapter 2.3 then connects the presented governance phenomenon with the context of CBNRM.

### **2.1 Brief Introduction into the Complex Setting of Natural Resource Governance**

The conservation governance landscape in southern Africa is constituted by a complex network of political, economic and social currents that interact in a mutually reinforcing manner. To contextualize the present analysis, the most pertinent concepts will be introduced in the following paragraphs, together with a brief overview of the relevant literature. In order to facilitate an informed discussion of the concept of decentralization and, building on this, the concept of devolution, it is first necessary to introduce the terminology of governance and situate it within the present context.

#### **2.1.1 The Concept of Governance**

As introduced, governance is highly relevant in the field of natural resource management and therefore highly relevant for conservation. Governance can be described as the overarching environment in which institutions, from federal states to small clubs and associations, conduct their activities, and in which management processes are executed. It encompasses a multitude of activities, including the assignment of rights and responsibilities, the establishment of objectives and policy agendas, and the exertion of political power (Berkes, 2010). There is a growing tendency for governments to transfer their exclusive decision-making authority to other actors, including civil society and private entities, thereby allowing for a more prominent role in the decision-making process (Cubitt, 2014). This shift has resulted in a blurring of the boundaries between the public and private sectors, a phenomenon that is encapsulated in the concept of governance (Berkes, 2010). Governance can be defined as the totality of public and private interactions that are aimed at addressing societal problems and creating opportunities. It involves the formulation and application of principles that guide these interactions, as well as the maintenance of institutions that facilitate them (Kooiman and Bavinck, 2005; Berkes, 2010). The concept of governance gained attention and spread widely through the social-science and policy world with the beginning of the 1990s, when the World Bank introduced the idea of “good governance” to international development (Kooiman and Bavinck, 2005; Cubitt, 2014). In addition to the concept of “good governance”, the field of

international relations is introducing the term “global governance”; both indicate the shift in the meaning of political control, from a focus on the central government to a greater emphasis on various other entities such as the private sector, civil society and, in the context of development cooperation, non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The bottom line is that the concept of governance recognizes that non-state actors have an equally relevant, if not more influential, position from which to steer political processes (Kooiman and Bavinck, 2005).

Institutions are fundamental to the governance of society underpinning human economic activities and social interactions. They include both formal and informal rules. Institutions form the substantive basis of governance, both analytically and operationally. Formal institutions include laws, policies, and constitutions that define, distribute, and limit the powers of states and citizens. Informal institutions include norms, customs, and ethical beliefs that serve as collective means of regulating human behavior through social rules (Nelson, 2010). Especially in the field of governance of natural resources, institutions such as property rights play a critical role in determining who can use a resource and who can access or capture its value. The distribution of rights to natural resources, as defined by institutional arrangements, fundamentally shapes patterns of resource use and conservation. For example, in an “open-access” scenario, common in sub-Saharan Africa, the state may claim ownership of a resource but fail to enforce that right. As a result, wildlife is often exploited unsustainably because local users have no legal rights to the resource and therefore no incentive to invest in conservation measures that would promote sustainable use (Roe, Nelson and Sandbrook, 2009; Nelson, 2010).

Resources subject to open access are effectively ungoverned, leading to overexploitation, a situation referred to in Garrett Hardin’s (1968) “tragedy of the commons”. Institutions critically influence how resources are used by distributing rights, authority, and responsibilities among different levels of society. Thus, effective natural resource governance depends significantly on the robustness and enforcement of both formal and informal institutions that govern human interactions and resource use (Roe, Nelson and Sandbrook, 2009; Nelson, 2010).

### 2.1.2 Decentralization and Devolution

Natural resource governance has shifted from centralized control during the colonial and postcolonial periods to a continent-wide decentralization trend since the 1980s, driven by dissatisfaction with the inefficiencies of central governments (Shackleton et al., 2012; Berkes, 2010; Juma and Mulongo, 2014; Hohbein and Abrams, 2022). This shift, particularly in regions where conservation and development aid coincide, comes from an understanding that local communities are often better equipped to manage natural resources (Nelson, 2010), leading

to a focus on decentralized policies and stakeholder involvement in southern Africa (Berkes, 2010).

This shifting trend is also reflected in the scientific discourse. A key debate about Africa's natural heritage exists between "nature protectionists", who advocate for strict human exclusion for conservation, and "social conservationists", who advocate for the involvement of local communities for sustainable conservation. Referred to as the "new conservation" or "parks vs. people" debate, the central question is whether conservation should integrate human development or isolate nature (Miller, Minter and Malan, 2011; Holmes, Sandbrook and Fisher, 2017; Bollig, 2022).

Following the social conservationist's approach to conservation requires the decentralization of governance to involve local communities. The subsidiarity principle in the UN Agenda 21 (UNDSD, 1992) institutionalized user participation at the lowest feasible level, triggering decentralization reforms in most African countries in the 1990s (Berkes, 2010; Harrison, 2015). However, decentralization as a governance concept often only transfers responsibilities within government branches, which may not be sufficient for community conservation. From a social conservationist perspective, effective conservation, in terms of ecological and social output, therefore needs an even more localized approach, known as devolution, which transfers rights and responsibilities to local groups and governments with autonomous decision-making powers (Berkes, 2010; Shackleton et al., 2021). The differentiation between decentralization and devolution will be elaborated in detail in the following theoretical background chapter.

Since the late 1980s, international development bodies such as the World Bank mainly had two primary expectations regarding the promoted decentralization reforms in the direction of devolution (Berkes, 2010): First, devolution enhances democracy by involving citizens in local decision-making, ensuring that their voices are heard. Second, it also addresses the complexity of managing natural resources by distributing decision-making among various actors, including civil-society and private sectors, rather than having governments as the sole decision-makers. This approach is intended to treat citizens more as active participants in governance, improving both democratic engagement and resource management (Berkes, 2010).

### 2.1.3 The Gap between Devolution in Theory and Practice

Natural resource governance aiming to devolve rights to the local level is often implemented in the form of CBNRM programs. Research at this level of analysis quickly suggests that there appears to be a major gap between the theory of devolution (Chapter 2.2) and its practical implementation (Nelson, 2010; Nelson et al., 2021). Nelson (2010) also introduces the topic in his work by referring to an influential global review by Ribot (2004), who states that many

decentralization reforms in natural resource management are effectively “charades”. Although the rhetoric of decentralization, devolution and local empowerment has been adopted by the governments, decentralization reforms are characterized frequently by the absence of substantive, in-depth institutional reforms. Particularly when valuable natural resources are at stake, discretionary control remains in the hands of by centralized government organs and local tenure remains insecure (Nelson, 2010).

#### 2.1.4 Why Financial Devolution in CBNRM Matters

Two aspects that are relevant in any devolution process, which include the problems just presented, are financial flows and decision-making powers over spending budgets and revenues. Financial devolution is a crucial part of devolution, which essentially is also intended to lead to successes and an improvement in the quality of life of the local population if it is used in their interests. This applies not only to the transfer of financial responsibility for investments at the local level, but also to the effective transfer of revenues from natural resource management to the people. Financial devolution is important because it promotes local empowerment, responsive governance, fiscal sustainability, economic development, reduced regional disparities, accountability and transparency, and the building of institutional capacity. The devolvment of financial powers enables local governments and civil-society groups to better address the diverse needs and aspirations of their communities, ultimately contributing to more inclusive and sustainable development (Wagana, Iravo and Nzulwa, 2017; Hobdari et al., 2018; Sima, Liang and Qingjie, 2023).

#### 2.1.5 State of Research

Decentralization research in natural resource governance has grown a decent body of literature since the described emergence of the decentralization trend in the late 1980s and 90s. Scholars such as Jesse C. Ribot, Fred Nelson and Fikret Berkes, who have extensively studied the emergence, functioning and development of this current from its origins to the present day, have been particularly influential in the present work (Larson and Ribot, 2004; Ribot, 2004; Ribot, Agrawal and Larson, 2006; Berkes, 2010; Nelson, 2010; Nelson et al., 2021). The fact that the governance of natural resources is a particularly complex application of decentralization governance is also reflected in the mixed assessments regarding the success rate of community-based approaches, which are examined as the main implementation approach in the context of natural resource decentralization. This also emerges from the “literature of the commons” centered around the Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom, whose work was characterized by “emphasizing the significance of common rights” (Berkes, 2010, p. 493) for decentralization and arguing that meaningful decentralization works “only when governments devolve property rights to resources” (Berkes, 2010, p. 493).

Large-scale assessments conducted at the continental level for the entire African continent, as exemplified by the work of Galvin et al. (2018), or at the global level, as demonstrated by Oldekop et al. (2016), have furnished a comprehensive and detailed account of the current state of implementation in this field. It is evident that community-based approaches to natural resource management still face challenges in terms of efficacy. This thesis makes a meaningful contribution to this topic of interest by emphasizing a focus topic that has not yet been widely researched: financial devolution.

In regard to the collection of empirical data in the form of case studies, two principal conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, the success of CBNRM is contingent upon a multitude of contextual factors, which also gives rise to a considerable degree of variation in outcomes across countries. Secondly, although the extensive body of literature encompasses a multitude of perspectives on the concept (Balint and Mashinya, 2008; Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011; Lyons, 2013; Mbaiwa, 2013; Lindsey *et al.*, 2014; Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015; Mogende and Kolawole, 2016; Milupi, Somers and Ferguson, 2020; Shereni and Saarinen, 2021; Cassidy *et al.*, 2023), the subject of financial devolution and the management of value creation and distribution from conservation initiatives is not a prominent focus in the majority of studies. This also appears to be associated with the extent to which the decentralization of management of natural resources is consequently implemented at the national level. In the case of Namibia, for instance, there are a number of studies that explicitly examine the distribution of added value from conservation at the community level and the extent to which this reaches the population at the household level (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022; Vehrs, Kalvelage and Nghitevelekwa, 2022; Goergen, 2024). This is made possible by the fact that CBNRM is already highly advanced in this regard, with devolution of land rights being a significant area of progress. The communities are reaping the benefits of this, and the database of the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NASCO) also allows for a great deal of analysis to be conducted. It would be beneficial for further research to be conducted on the KAZA TFCA to determine the extent to which this institution could contribute to providing more comprehensive data on and evaluations of community-based nature conservation projects within its borders. An additional method for acquiring information regarding the distribution of benefits up to the level of households is to conduct an analysis of community perceptions (Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015; Dube, 2019; Shereni and Saarinen, 2021). This approach has been particularly prevalently employed in Zimbabwe and is often more meaningful than analyzing policy papers and statements, which, as previously noted in the literature, are not always implemented.

## **2.2 Decentralization in the Context of Natural Resource Governance**

As previously stated, decentralization represents the central governance instrument for the implementation of CBNRM approaches. In order to guarantee a comprehensive and accurate analysis, the governance concept of decentralization is presented in detail in this chapter. As is the case with numerous significant and impactful academic domains of inquiry, it is important to acknowledge that the theoretical landscape of decentralization is characterized by a dynamic and evolving lexicon, with terms that are used interchangeably to describe distinct phenomena. A selection is therefore presented below, which provides an adequate foundation for the present work. Furthermore, in this section, this paper also sets out a clarification of the theory and terminology applicable to the present study. The intention is to ensure a precise analysis, and to avoid any ambiguities in the terminology.

### **2.2.1 The Emergence of Decentralization as a Global Trend**

Since the 1980s, decentralization can be witnessed as a global movement including most developing countries (Larson and Ribot, 2004; Berkes, 2010). While in the 1950s and 1960s, central governments mainly had control over the implementation of a development agenda beneficial for all citizens, in the 1980s concerns grew that these centralized systems were no longer able to plan, administer and implement the management of natural resources in a proper manner for the common good (Berkes, 2010; Juma and Mulongo, 2014). Stakeholders, including development agencies and academia, questioned the government's centralized management of natural community resources. This was with regard to issues of equity in distribution and sustainability. During the same period, there was a growing interest in community-based management in response to the disappointment of central governments. This approach promises to provide communities with the opportunity to manage common resources in a bottom-up manner, utilizing local and traditional knowledge that is more beneficial to the actual users on the ground (Berkes, 2010).

Consequently, numerous sub-Saharan countries initiated a process of decentralizing rights and control over natural resources to the local level. This was not solely a consequence of a lack of satisfaction with centralized management, but also a result of significant political and economic transitions in the region, largely due to the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s. As a consequence of the crisis, a considerable number of states have been obliged to embark upon externally driven policy-reform processes and structural adjustments, largely as a result of constraints in their capacity to act (Nelson, 2010). The World Bank played a pivotal role in driving the decentralization movement in the 1990s, particularly in southern Africa. As a key advocate of governance reforms, the World Bank promoted decentralization as a strategy to improve governance efficiency and accountability across developing regions



(Berkes, 2010). Central to these efforts was the principle of subsidiarity, which emphasizes decision-making at the lowest feasible level (Kooiman, 2003). This concept became a cornerstone of the earlier mentioned “good governance”,<sup>3</sup> gaining further traction through its inclusion in UN-Agenda 21 at the 1992 Rio Summit and its enshrinement in the Maastricht Treaty. These reforms reflected a global shift towards grassroots, bottom-up approaches, emphasizing public participation and local-level governance (Berkes, 2010; Harrison, 2015).

### 2.2.2 Relevance of Decentralization

Decentralization is described in the scientific literature and by political decision-makers as a concept with great development potential (Larson and Ribot, 2004). Especially for the management of natural resources, decentralization reforms can impact whole regions that depend on a particular natural resource. Ribot (2004) describes the change in the institutional landscape through decentralization efforts as it is strengthening the local institutions and authorities that make decisions over local natural resources (Ribot, 2004). Through empowerment, the kinds of decisions made change, and the relations of accountability between central state, local government, other local institutions and the local population also change; furthermore, this has an impact on the added value of the natural resource and, most importantly, on the extent to which the local population benefits from it (Ribot, 2004). As Brugere (2006) illustrates, many scholars also emphasize the enhanced efficacy compared to centrally implemented policies that frequently fail to align with local needs and preferences (Brugere, 2006). Larson and Ribot (2006) see the efficacy potential in the better-targeted policies and reduced information and transaction costs that are enabled based on the usage of local knowledge for decision-making. Because of the inclusion of local minorities in decision-making, not only does the feeling of ownership of and engagement with the management and conservation of the natural resources increase, but the equity of natural resource governance is also strengthened (Larson and Ribot, 2004). More precisely implemented policy reforms, the authors continue, can bring economic advantages like rural development, poverty alleviation, an increased public service performance, a relaxation of financial difficulties, stability in governance, a collective identity and administrative strengthening (Larson and Ribot, 2004). The latter is also and above all favored by increased accountability in both directions, which results from decentralization reforms. The concept of accountability in both directions implies that a reinforced local government can respond more effectively and accurately to the specific needs of the local population, thereby ensuring their democratic self-determination, and also possesses the capacity to exert greater control over entities of the

---

<sup>3</sup> A key term in development governance, introduced by World Bank and now in widespread use in the institutional landscape of development agencies worldwide.

central government through its position as an institution with the support of the local population (Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001; Brugere, 2006; Ribot, Agrawal and Larson, 2006).

### 2.2.3 Terminology of Decentralization

In terms of its definition, decentralization is most commonly understood to be “any act by which central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy” (Ribot, 2004, p. 9). Ribot presents several primary objectives of decentralization. Accordingly, decentralization aims to reduce or limit the size and influence of the central government, to promote national cohesion, to enhance central authority by offloading risks and responsibilities, to boost local engagement and grassroots democracy, to enhance the efficiency and fairness of service delivery at the local level, and, finally, to empower local governments (Ribot, 2004). The previous section addressed the relevance of decentralization, and the potential of the objectives just presented. The next section will address the conditions that must be met to achieve these decentralization goals and the limitations on their implementation. Prior to this, however, it is necessary to introduce further terminological differentiations of decentralization.

Technically, decentralization theory distinguishes between two sorts of decentralization, which are presented by scholars, e.g. Larson and Ribot (2004), as the two primary forms of decentralization. The first primary form of decentralization is called **Deconcentration** or **Administrative Decentralization** and occurs when decision-making powers within the government are shifted to more local branches of the same government (Larson and Ribot, 2004; Ribot, 2004). As an extension of the central state, these upwardly accountable bodies are considered to exemplify the weaker of the two primary forms of decentralization, due to its lack of downward accountability to the local people. Nevertheless, it can be said that, in theory, this shift allows the government to respond much better and more precisely to the local needs of the population, provided it has the will to do so (Ribot, 2004). Furthermore, it enhances the efficacy of governmental operations, facilitating the optimal allocation of resources and labor at the local level (Larson and Ribot, 2004). The second primary form – considered to be the strongest form of decentralization – is known as **Democratic Decentralization** or **Political Decentralization**, or also **Devolution**. It mainly differs from Deconcentration in the direction of accountability, as it “involves the transfer of power to actors or institutions that are accountable to the population in their jurisdiction” (Ribot, Agrawal and Larson, 2006, p. 1865). Elections ensure this accountability and empower local communities to make decisions through their elected local authorities. Furthermore, *Democratic Decentralization* strengthens public involvement in local decision-making processes as it represents a formalized version of the participatory process, with theory suggesting it offers the greatest potential benefits for local populations (Ribot, 2004). To avoid

confusion, it should be noted that in the context of decentralization, the term “local government” can have differing meanings, depending on the form of decentralization it is applied to. In the case of *Deconcentration*, the first primary form of decentralization, the term “local government” denotes an arm of the central government that has been transferred to the local level. In contrast, in the context of *democratic decentralization*, the second primary form of decentralization, the term “local government” refers to a government institution that was actually elected by the local population.

Two further concepts introduced by Ribot (2004), which are also relevant to this paper, relate more to the economic aspects of decentralization. ***Fiscal decentralization*** refers to the process of transferring financial resources – such as block grants, portions of national tax revenue, or the authority to generate funds through taxes, fees, grants, or fines – to local governments. However, Ribot underlines that this transfer of funds or fundraising powers is not viewed as a distinct form of decentralization. While funding is crucial to decentralization efforts, it is seen as just one type of power that can be decentralized. Therefore, fiscal decentralization should not be considered a separate category on par with *democratic* or *administrative decentralization*, as it often is. Instead, the transfer of financial resources to a democratically elected local government is simply a part of *democratic decentralization*, similar to the delegation of regulatory responsibilities to the same body, which is the reason why this work speaks of ***financial devolution*** when referring to this process (Ribot, 2004). ***Privatization*** is a particularly salient concept in the context of natural resource governance. However, as Ribot has observed, it is not a form of decentralization. Although privatization is frequently mentioned in the context of decentralization or as a form of decentralization, the

exclusive logic, compared to the inclusive public logic of decentralization, is the reason why Ribot does not count the concept among the terminologies of decentralization (Ribot, 2004).

As indicated in the introductory section of this chapter, it is favorable to consider one's

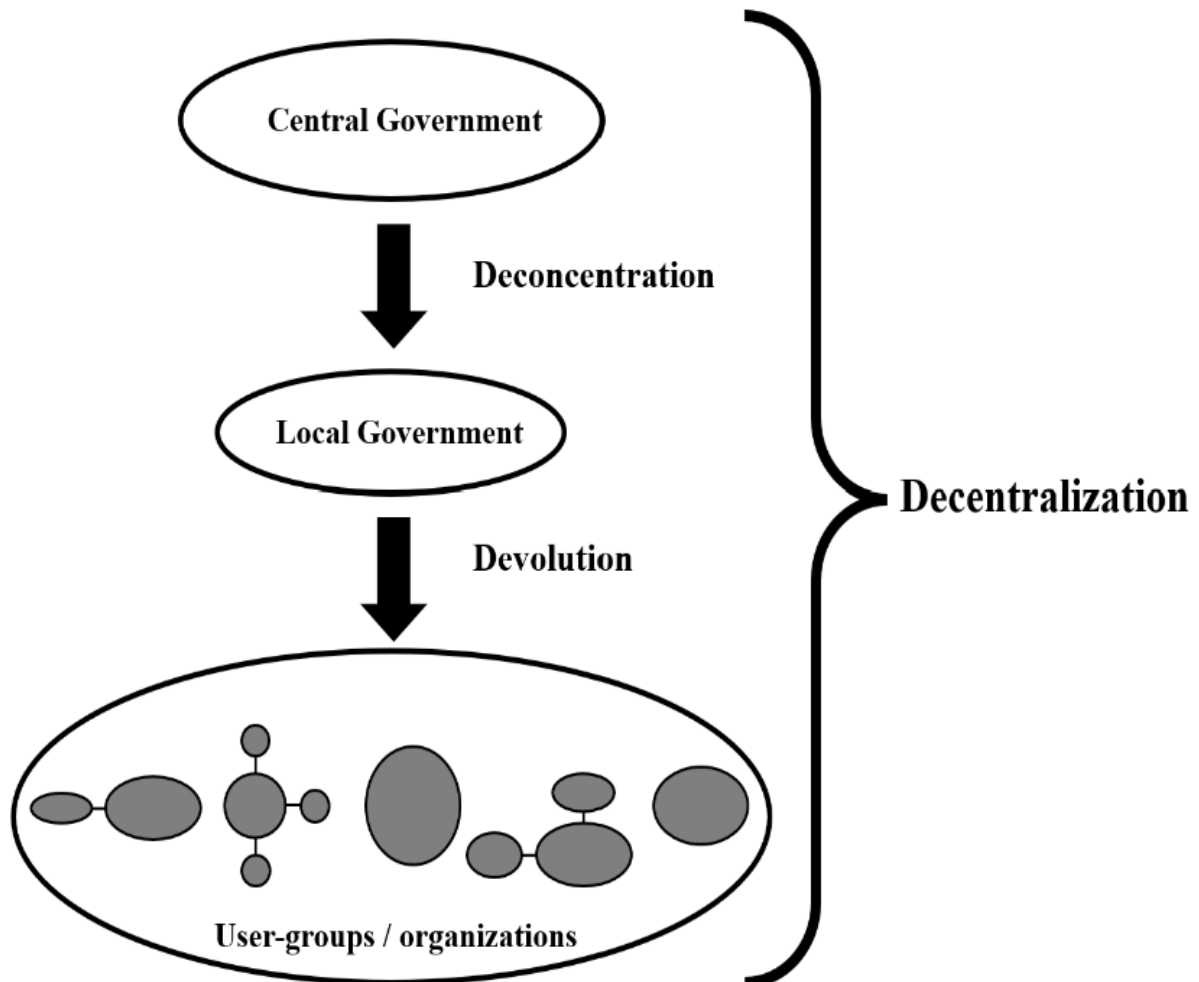


Figure 1: Different levels of decentralization. Own illustration, adapted from Berkes (2010).

position within the spectrum of terminology of decentralization. In this analysis, the terminology is consistent with that presented by Ribot (2004). Accordingly, the term **deconcentration** is used to describe the first primary form of decentralization, while **devolution** is employed to refer to the second primary form of decentralization. The term **decentralization** itself will be retained as an umbrella term, in alignment with the approach taken by Ribot and others. **Figure 1** illustrates this differentiation and gradation of the various decentralizations once again and clearly assigns the relevant terms.

#### 2.2.4 Decentralization in Natural Resource Management

Decentralization is pivotal in shaping how local actors exercise newly acquired powers and the resulting impacts on communities and natural resources. However, the type and extent of

decentralization alone do not fully explain these dynamics. Several other factors are critical to understanding decentralization's effectiveness in natural resource governance.

First, the implementation of decentralization is crucial. The economic context surrounding specific natural resources influences how local actors manage them. Central governments' actions, including their commitment to decentralization, local capacity-building, and ensuring social equity for marginalized groups, also play a significant role. Moreover, grassroots movements and donor pressures can heavily influence governments' willingness to adopt or resist decentralization (Larson and Ribot, 2004). These factors collectively determine whether decentralization leads to positive or negative outcomes.

Four key elements shape local decision-making in decentralized natural resource management: the capacity of the decision-making body, local power dynamics, the incentive structure for resource management, and the prevailing environmental and social ideologies (Larson and Ribot, 2004). These factors influence whose interests are prioritized and how resources are managed, highlighting the complexity of decentralized governance.

Decentralization is particularly meaningful when viewed through the lens of natural resource governance. Natural resources are essential for local livelihoods and a significant source of wealth for governments and national elites, creating a dual-faceted challenge in governance (Larson and Ribot, 2004).

Local democratic decision-making can enhance natural resource management and strengthen local democracy. Natural resource management requires extensive local knowledge due to region-specific environmental characteristics. Democratic representation helps to integrate this local knowledge and diverse perspectives into decision-making, leading to more sustainable and equitable resource use. Thus, democratic processes at the local level not only improve resource management but also empower communities (Ribot, 2004).

#### 2.2.5 Limitations of Decentralization

As already mentioned earlier, since the period of the fiscal crisis in the 1980s, a lot of international (financial) efforts went into the introduction of decentralization reforms in national African governments (Berkes, 2010). Upon examination of the advancements made in the implementation of these reforms and a comparison with the theoretical ideal of decentralization, numerous scholars (Ribot, 2004; Ribot, Agrawal and Larson, 2006; Berkes, 2010; Nelson, 2010) have acknowledged the significant discrepancy between theory and praxis. Ribot, Agrawal, and Larson (2006) identify two key arguments that impede decentralization efforts. Primarily, the decentralized rights, or those transferred to the local level, are often constrained to such a degree that they lack meaningful substance. Secondly, responsibility is delegated to local institutions that align with government interests, a strategy employed to maintain control over the region and its resources. This resistance to

decentralization on the part of governments can be explained, among other things, by looking at the last century, which was politically focused on extractive, productivity-oriented resource policies (Ribot, 2004). Governments are hesitant to surrender control over the extraction and value creation of raw materials. Instead, they tend to prioritize the allocation of rights, responsibilities, and resources to newly elected institutions that do not pose a threat to the state's vested interests. This results in an apparent decentralization, which, in reality, is a decentralization that benefits not the local population but the government (Larson and Ribot, 2004; Ribot, 2004).

In addition to the limitations already presented, Berkes (2010) differentiates further and distinguishes between central-level and local-level problems. The inadequate transfer of rights and power to local institutions is frequently associated with the phenomenon called “**offloading**”, which means that local institutions are being entrusted with significant responsibilities while the central state simultaneously withholds the financial and legal resources necessary to fulfill those responsibilities (Berkes, 2010). The local jurisdictions are thus rendered practically incapable of acting, and this is accompanied by the aforementioned support and strengthening of local institutions loyal to the central state (Berkes, 2010). At the local level, Berkes (2010) observes that the pre-existing uncertainties regarding the control of resources can give rise to new conflicts. Furthermore, local elites may exploit the resulting power vacuum created by decentralization reforms to consolidate control over local resources. This pervasive phenomenon in natural resource governance is more commonly referred to as ‘**elite capture**’ (Berkes, 2010).

An overarching general limitation of decentralization is that, because of the mentioned reasons, decentralization takes time. Successful implementation of decentralization necessitates gradual introduction, in order to give institutions, stakeholders and society room to adapt. Success in decentralization relies on building consensus through a transparent and inclusive approach, encouraging participatory decision-making, and strengthening institutional, technical, and human capacities. Additionally, it requires ensuring sufficient financial resources and incentives, adapting objectives to fit local contexts, and maintaining the flexibility to respond to varying situations and evolving conditions (Berkes, 2010). Ribot (2004) and Berkes (2010) identify the necessity for caution and thoroughness in the implementation of decentralization and add that it is important to steer the policy process from a realistic and patient perspective without giving up too early, because “those who are threatened by decentralization are quick to declare its failure – even where it has never been implemented” (Ribot, 2004, p. 15).

## 2.3. Financial Devolution

The research question presented seeks to address the significance of financial devolution for CBNRM in southern Africa. Consequently, financial devolution is presented in greater detail below, drawing upon the insights of the decentralization chapter.

### 2.3.1 Definition and gradations of financial devolution

Financial devolution has emerged as a critical policy tool in many sub-Saharan African countries, driven by the general trend towards decentralization that has already been the subject of discussion, and demands for greater local participation in decision-making and efforts to promote social cohesion (Hobdari et al., 2018). This chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings of financial devolution and examines its definitions, variations, potential benefits, and risks, for the south of Africa. The argumentation presented herewith follows the line of reasoning set out in the previous chapter, which understands devolution as a form of decentralization – specifically, democratic decentralization. Financial devolution was introduced in Africa through the continent-wide decentralization trend in the early 1990s and has since then expanded to meet the diverse political, economic, and social needs of sub-Saharan African developing countries, where in parts a significant portion of government spending now occurs at the subnational level (Hobdari et al., 2018; Sima, Liang and Qingjie, 2023).

Financial devolution is generally defined as the transfer of authority over revenue generation, spending, and borrowing to subnational governments (Hobdari et al., 2018). Depending on the degree of autonomy and control delegated to the local governments this process can take different forms. As Bird and Vaillancourt (2008) outline, there are three commonly recognized types of this kind of decentralization (Hobdari et al., 2018; Sima, Liang and Qingjie, 2023). (*Financial*) **deconcentration** refers to the redistribution of financial responsibilities from the central government to regional or local offices. These offices operate within a vertical hierarchy and possess limited decision-making authority. (Bird, 2008; Dafflon and Madies, 2012). The next-highest degree of autonomy and control for local governments is defined as (*Financial*) **delegation**. This means that, in this model, local governments act as agents for the central government, implementing policies and managing resources in accordance with the mandates issued by the central government. However, the delegation model is frequently constrained by central oversight, leading to a system that may be characterized as quasi-deconcentrated, as discussed by Bird (2008) and Dafflon and Madies (2012). If a local government is granted both the authority to make decisions and the responsibility to finance their policies, scholars speak of (*Financial*) **devolution**. True financial devolution encourages a greater local accountability and autonomy (Bird, 2008). It is important

to highlight that financial devolution, in conjunction with the terminology previously established for decentralization in general (democratic decentralization or devolution), represents the most comprehensive and robust form of financial decentralization.

### 2.3.2 Drivers of Financial Devolution

As far as the potential drivers of financial devolution are concerned, the literature highlights two main points. Firstly, political and ethical cohesion is a crucial key driver. Decentralization is frequently regarded as a strategy for mitigating political and ethnic tensions by facilitating regional autonomy, particularly in nations with diverse ethnic compositions. This is especially pertinent in contexts where decentralization serves to reduce ethnic rivalries and advance inclusive governance (Hobdari et al., 2018; Sima, Liang and Qingjie, 2023). Secondly, financial devolution is regarded as a means of stimulating regional economic growth and development, whereby local governments are empowered to control resources and make autonomous decisions based on the specific local needs of their respective jurisdictions (Hobdari et al., 2018).

### 2.3.3 Potential Benefits and Risks of Financial Devolution

At this point, the potential of financial devolution to reduce regional income disparities by giving marginalized groups more control over their resources and service delivery should certainly be emphasized first. A redistribution like this can promote development, particularly in areas where central governments may have previously neglected investment. So, poverty alleviation is therefore the first potential benefit to mention (Hobdari et al., 2018). Another benefit is the enhanced accountability and transparency financial devolution can generate. When financial powers are devolved, local governments become more accountable to their citizens. This fosters transparency in the use of resources, particularly if combined with mechanisms for public participation in decision-making (Hobdari et al., 2018).

Aside from the benefits already discussed, financial devolution also presents a number of potential risks. To illustrate, the transfer of fiscal responsibility at the subnational level could heighten overall macroeconomic risks. This is due to the fact that such a shift may result in a lack of national fiscal discipline, should subnational governments exceed their budgetary limits or fail to generate sufficient revenue. Such a non-internalization of the expenditures of the local government can lead to imbalance and increased public debt (Hobdari et al., 2018). Also, local governments often have weaker administrative capacities, which can result in inefficient spending and public service delivery. This weakness also opens the door to corruption and increases the risk of the aforementioned elite capture (see chapter 2.2.5) and meaning that resources may be mismanaged or appropriated by local elites (Dafflon and Madies, 2012; Hobdari et al., 2018). If there is a gap between investment responsibility and revenue capacity,



this can force local governments to levy special taxes to close the gap. These can have a negative impact on the local business environment (Hobdari et al., 2018). Especially when it comes to the natural distribution of natural resources, financial devolution can exacerbate regional disparities, particularly when wealthier regions retain the majority of their natural resource revenues. This situation leads to uneven development and can fuel regional grievances (Hobdari et al., 2018).

#### 2.3.4 Key Design Elements for Effective Financial Devolution

Regarding the key design elements for effective financial devolution, Dafflon (2012) and Hobdari et al. (2018) are largely in agreement. The implementation of a comprehensive and well-structured framework to avoid potential risks and achieve potential benefits of financial devolution is a prerequisite for this. Following the suggestions of Hobdari et al. (2018) the four most important design elements are now presented. Firstly, it is vital that spending responsibilities are clearly assigned and communicated. Clearly defined responsibilities for local and central governments reduce inefficiencies and avoid one party being able to duck away because it shifts responsibility to the other party and vice versa. Ensuring a certain flexibility, laws rather than constitutional mandates should define these responsibilities (Dafflon and Madies, 2012; Hobdari et al., 2018). The second crucial design element aims at the devolvement of revenue-generation powers. Allowing local governments to raise their own revenues enhances fiscal responsibility and reduces dependence on central transfers. However, local taxation powers are often limited in low-income countries, where subnational governments remain highly reliant on central funds (Hobdari et al., 2018). As mentioned in the presentation of the risks of financial devolution, there is often a gap between the spending responsibilities and the revenue opportunities for local governments. It is therefore very important to design effective transfer systems: this is the third key design element for effective decentralization. Transfers from the central government should be structured to incentivize local revenue collection and efficient spending. In southern Africa, most subnational spending is funded by central transfers, with own-source revenues covering only a small percentage (Bird, 2008; Dafflon and Madies, 2012; Hobdari et al., 2018). The fourth and final design element this chapter presents is that of imposing budget constraints on the subnational governments. Strict borrowing limits and clear accountability frameworks are necessary to prevent excessive subnational debt accumulation. Legally enforced fiscal discipline is crucial to maintaining macroeconomic stability (Hobdari et al., 2018).

To summarize, financial devolution in southern Africa presents both opportunities and challenges. When implemented effectively, it can reduce poverty, enhance local accountability, and promote economic development. However, without adequate safeguards, it can lead to inefficiencies, increased corruption, and regional inequalities. The design of financial

devolution frameworks must be tailored to each country's specific needs, balancing local autonomy with national oversight to ensure sustainable development outcomes (Dafflon and Madies, 2012; Hobdari et al., 2018).

### **2.3 Community-based Natural Resource Management and Conservation**

The concept of decentralization in the previous chapter was only partially specific to natural resource governance, as the presented decentralization theory is generally applicable to a much broader spectrum of state-governance cases. The same statement is valid for financial devolution. Therefore, the reference to natural resource governance, and conservation as a form of natural resource governance, is made in the following by further introducing and contextualizing the concept of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), and community-based conservation (CBC) as one form of CBNRM, as concrete implementation approaches for decentralization in the area of natural resource governance.

CBNRM has emerged as a key strategy in addressing the challenges of sustainable resource use and biodiversity conservation, particularly in rural Africa. According to Roe and Nelson (2009), "Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) is [...] a term to describe the management of resources such as land, forests, wildlife, and water by collective, local institutions for local benefit" (Roe and Nelson, 2009, p. 5). The approach places local communities at the center of resource management, entrusting them with the responsibility and authority to manage, use, and benefit from their natural resources.

CBNRM was developed in response to the shortcomings of centralized management systems, particularly in African states where such regimes often function as "de facto open access regimes" (Nelson and Agrawal, 2008, p. 557). In these contexts, resources were poorly managed due to the absence of local stewardship. As previously discussed, the concept of the "tragedy of the commons" is applicable in this case. Therefore, granting local users rights over these resources is seen as a corrective measure that not only supports sustainable management but also enhances community livelihoods.

Similarly, Galvin, Beeton, and Luizza (2018) define CBC as "a suite of transformational institutional arrangements, the goal of which is to enhance human social well-being and sustain biodiversity through conservation-development initiatives" (Galvin, Beeton and Luizza, 2018, p. 2). This dual focus on development and conservation is an essential component of the CBC approach, as they go on to state that CBC can be seen as "an institution that simultaneously enhances human development – especially for people living directly with nature – and conserves biodiversity" (Galvin, Beeton and Luizza, 2018, p. 2). In essence, CBC represents efforts to bridge the gap between conservation and development. This is done by recognizing that biodiversity preservation must go hand in hand with improving the welfare of local communities.

The principles of CBNRM are not new. Historically “local groups of people have managed the land in which they live and the natural resources with which they are surrounded for millennia” (Roe and Nelson, 2009, p. 5). Local communities have historically practiced sustainable resource management based on traditional knowledge, and this connection remains significant in the present day. It is estimated that over one-quarter of the world’s terrestrial area, which encompasses 75% of the world’s ecoregions, is governed by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities. This vast area offers immense sociocultural and conservation value (Fariss et al., 2023).

However, the processes of colonialism and the establishment of centralized governance systems resulted in the disruption of these systems, which led to the alienation of communities from their resources (Roe and Nelson, 2009). The continuation of centralized management in the period following independence resulted in the degradation of natural resources and the further marginalization of local populations.

In the 1980s, the shift towards decentralization was exemplified by initiatives such as the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe and Namibia’s Communal Conservancies (CCs), which reintroduced community-based resource management (Roe and Nelson, 2009). This was in alignment with the emerging development theories that advocated for local empowerment and sustainable collective management, inspired by scholars such as Berkes (1989) and Ostrom (1990). These developments highlighted the failures of exclusionary conservation models and the necessity for community inclusion in resource governance, and were accompanied by the previously mentioned “new conservation debate”.

In addition to placing CBNRM in the nature-conservation discourse, it is even more important to link the concept back to the decentralization theory discussed above. Roe and Nelson (2009) clearly state that according “to this governance typology<sup>4</sup>, CBNRM effectively requires democratic decentralization [= devolution] rather than deconcentration, because in deconcentration local resource users are not granted authority over resource management decisions and uses” (Roe and Nelson, 2009, p. 10). Nevertheless, a reality check reveals that fully devolved systems that rely solely on the self-organization of local resource users have rarely been achieved. This is primarily due to the reluctance of national governments to fully devolve governance, as well as the significant financial implications associated with funding and organizing such systems (Galvin, Beeton and Luizza, 2018). Consequently, it is essential

---

<sup>4</sup> The authors are referring to the decentralization terminology used by Ribot (2004) which was already presented earlier and distinguishes between **deconcentration** as shift of governance responsibilities towards more local branches of the same government (upwardly accountable) and **democratic decentralization (=devolution)** as the transfer of powers to locally elected authorities that are by definition downwardly accountable.

that partnerships are established between local communities, governments, and NGOs in order for CBNRM projects to function effectively. These partnerships must align with local cultural perspectives on the relationship between people and nature, recognizing that conservation objectives can vary and involve multiple stakeholders (Galvin, Beeton and Luizza, 2018). Similar results were obtained by Oldekop et. al (2016), who found that protected areas (PAs) managed to promote sustainable resource use, particularly when local people were empowered, which led to more positive conservation outcomes. On the other hand, co-management of PAs by local communities and conservation bodies was more likely to deliver socioeconomic benefits than other governance forms, such as community- or state-managed PAs (Oldekop et al., 2016). Instead, co-management appears to strike a balance between conservation goals and local development needs. It seems that these results support the thesis that the fully decentralized systems that would be desirable in theory for CBNRM approaches but are not present in reality are bridged by such partnership-based institutional arrangements: “communities co-managing PAs alongside other organizations are likely to benefit from additional institutions that strengthen tenure rights and participatory decision-making processes while also promoting monetary benefits and more equal distribution of these benefits” (Oldekop et al., 2016, p. 139).

The success of community-based projects is also influenced by the national context. As indicated by Fariss et al. (2023), variables such as environmental democracy, political stability, and accountability have a considerable impact on outcomes. These factors are of critical importance for ensuring that communities have access to information, the capacity to engage in decision-making processes, and pathways for seeking justice in environmental matters (Fariss et al., 2023). The presence of robust community leadership and institutions is also a crucial element, as they facilitate collective action, enforce compliance, and support conflict resolution (Fariss et al., 2023). Conversely, the presence of weak governance structures, corruption, and elite capture can act as significant barriers to the success of CBNRM initiatives. Trust-building represents another crucial element in the effective governance of CBNRMs, as it serves to enhance social cohesion and improve governance outcomes (Fariss et al., 2023). Investment in capacity-building efforts at the community and supralocal levels can enhance participation and ensure more equitable decision-making processes (Fariss et al., 2023). Nevertheless, Brooks, Waylen, and Mulder (2013) advise that socioeconomic challenges, such as low standards of living and restricted access to education, may impede long-term conservation endeavors, as immediate survival needs frequently supersede sustainable resource utilization (Brooks, Waylen and Mulder, 2013).

In conclusion, it is essential to consider the local and national contexts in which CBNRM governance initiatives are implemented. The promotion of both conservation and socioeconomic outcomes hinges on the establishment of effective leadership, community

involvement, and partnerships, coupled with the implementation of stable governance structures.

### **3. Methodology**

The present analysis of this master thesis was based on a review of the relevant literature. The exact procedure, techniques, thoughts, advantages and limitations within the chosen method are introduced below.

#### **3.1 Choice of Method**

A qualitative assessment was conducted on secondary literature and case studies to facilitate the present analysis. There are two overarching reasons for this:

Firstly, the research project is designed on a very large and ambitious scale, encompassing supranational, national and regional contexts. With financial devolution in CBNRM, the research object is strongly context-dependent and varying in its outcomes and is yet to be adequately researched. Therefore, a qualitative literature analysis was deemed the optimal method for synthesizing the diverse but relatively limited existing research.

The potential for developing an analytical framework to assess the status of financial devolution in CBNRM in southern Africa was considered. This was inspired by the continental and global-scale reviews conducted by Galvin et al. (2018) and Oldekop et al. (2016), in which the authors undertook a large-scale systematic evaluation of CBNRM and its social impacts in Africa and globally. Given the relatively limited advancement and research coverage of financial devolution in the CBNRM projects of southern Africa, a systematic approach was not adopted in this study. Furthermore, there were no comparable studies or reviews that could have provided inspiration and guidance for an analytical framework in the area of financial devolution. Additionally, the analysis demonstrated that the range of financial devolution in the four countries under examination is relatively extensive, making it challenging to identify a grid that would align with all country cases and yield meaningful, comparable statements.

This issue is similarly apparent in the work of Galvin et al., who included 28 studies from Namibia and a maximum of ten studies per country from the other eleven countries that were part of their analysis (Galvin, Beeton and Luizza, 2018). With a total of 73 selected studies on CBC in Africa, consequently, any assertions regarding the general status of CBC in Africa are significantly shaped by the circumstances in Namibia. This introduces a degree of bias into the overall assessment of results, obscuring the true extent of implementation progress. Furthermore, the present study, which encompasses only four countries, illustrates that a systematic comparison, such as that conducted by Galvin et al. (2018) and Oldekop et al. (2016), would have yielded less informative results regarding the overall situation than a qualitative analysis of secondary literature and case studies. This latter approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the diverse national contexts.

The second reason for the selection of a qualitative analysis of secondary literature and case studies as the principal method was the unfeasibility of the author conducting their own field research in the study area. On the one hand, this was due to personal factors, such as financial limitations, professional obligations, and time constraints. On the other hand, it would have been impractical to collect quantitative data in the assessed research area, as it would have exceeded the scope of a master thesis in terms of effort. However, as will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, this does not imply that the author is not in favor of collecting quantitative data through field research in this field of interest. The collection of further data, with a particular emphasis on financial aspects in CBNRM, would serve to enhance the field of research by providing a significant additional building block.

Although the basis of these cases is multifactorial, common denominators can be identified for analysis, thus providing an analytical framework for the study. In practice, country analyses of the respective CBNRM landscape always cover three main areas: the historical development of CBNRM, the institutional architecture of CBNRM in the country, and challenges and recommendations for the sector. This approach allows for the analysis of highly divergent contexts while maintaining comparability of results. The same procedure is employed for the assessment of financial devolution. Afterwards, the profitable results of the case studies from the KAZA area of the respective country are consulted and finally assigned to the four key principles for effective financial devolution design, as presented in Chapter 5.

### **3.2 Choice of Literature**

In order to select the appropriate literature for the theory and context of the thesis, a comprehensive literature search was conducted using the snowball sampling technique. Initially, a set of key relevant articles was identified through database searches (e.g., Google Scholar, Web of Science, SpringerLink, JSTOR) or based on their prominence in the field. From these initial sources, further relevant studies were identified through a systematic review of the reference lists of each selected article. This process was repeated iteratively, with each new set of references reviewed for additional relevant works, until no new significant literature emerged, indicating that the relevant literature had reached saturation point.

The empirical basis of the country analyses was established by an inductive method. This approach is a common one in existing research areas, as evidenced by the work of Mogende and Kolawole (2016). A literature corpus is created for each country using the following keywords: “CBNRM” (long version too), “CBC” (long version too), “conservation”, “environmental governance”, “natural resource governance”, “sub-Saharan Africa” and the respective country name “Angola / Botswana / Namibia / Zambia / Zimbabwe”. This corpus provides extensive information on the national governance strategies in the area of community-based nature conservation.

The existing body of literature on each individual member state was also subjected to analysis in order to identify potential case studies that could prove valuable in the subsequent stages of the analysis. Similarly, the snowball technique proved an efficacious and expedient method of locating relevant material. Moreover, a considerable number of case studies were identified through the direct application of the aforementioned search criteria. In order to ensure a focused analysis of financial devolution, it was necessary to set certain exclusion criteria for the case studies. As the KAZA TFCA was only signed in 2011, thereby becoming active, and as has been discussed and demonstrated, the development of CBC projects or decentralization in general takes time. Consequently, no studies were included that were older than the year of publication, 2013. Furthermore, the studies were analyzed to ensure that financial aspects of the CBC projects were explicitly addressed in order to ensure that statements about financial devolution could also be derived from them.

### **3.3 The Exclusion of Angola from the Analysis**

At this point, the reason for the exclusion of Angola must also be introduced. The systematic literature review procedure described above yielded almost no results for Angola. CBC and CBNRM are only mentioned in passing in the literature, and have never been the main subject of research in scientific studies. For this reason, it must be assumed that community-based approaches do not play a significant role in Angola, which makes an investigation obsolete. Studies such as the one by Nieman and Nieman on poaching in south-east Angola (KAZA TFCA area) underline this assumption by proposing an orientation towards community-based conservation as the main recommendation of their study (Nieman and Nieman, 2024). On the other hand, the absence of literature on which to base an analysis of CBC or financial devolution also means that a comparison with the other member states is not possible.

### **3.4 Limitations of Methods and Literature, and Future prospects**

Furthermore, the current literature base presents a significant challenge with regard to the analysis presented here. The topic of financial devolution in CBNRM and CBC systems in southern Africa remains under-researched, resulting in a scarcity of data pertaining to concrete financial values. Only in Namibia are there a few studies that focus directly on the financial aspects of CBNRMs. These include the work of Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig (2022) and Goergen (2024). Both research projects were able to benefit from the comprehensive database of NASCO, the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organizations. Since the inception of the Namibian conservancies, NASCO has conducted systematic evaluations of the Namibian communal conservancies and made this data freely available on its website. Next to the fact that this has the additional advantage of increasing transparency within the CBC



system, this is also highly beneficial for research into the (financial) conservation landscape. It is therefore recommended that countries not included in this analysis should aim to implement a similar system of systematic evaluation of their own CBNRM activities.

For further statements on financial devolution, especially in the other countries, information and data on the revenue-sharing system and the governance system in general were conducted. Furthermore, studies that investigated the perceptions of local people regarding the country's CBNRM program at the household level were particularly insightful. In the case of Zimbabwe, studies of this kind have proved especially useful in providing insights into the complex web of governance policies, the intentions of policymakers and the impact of economic crises on the ground. They offer a unique perspective on the actual revenues reaching the people. It is notable that Shereni and Saarinen (2021) and Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015) have made a significant contribution to the mapping of financial devolution in Zimbabwe for this thesis. Their main finding is that people are dissatisfied with the CAMPFIRE program because benefits are not reaching them at the household level.

Future research could initially focus on the creation of a complex theoretical model for financial devolution in CBC, as Galvin et al. (2018) have done for CBC in general. The model could be tested in the field in Namibia, where NASCO already has a substantial corpus of financial data, and where, as confirmed in this thesis, financial devolution in CBC is the most advanced. Subsequently, the model could be subjected to rigorous field testing and augmented with additional data, thereby facilitating the derivation of more robust theoretical insights and rules pertaining to financial devolution in CBC. In light of these findings, it would be prudent to extend the investigation to other countries, with a view to exploring and promoting the importance of financial devolution in CBC.

## **4. Results and Analysis**

In order to analyze the national governance strategies of the KAZA member states and, subsequently, to determine the status of financial devolution in these countries, it is first necessary to introduce the geographical context of the KAZA TFCA in greater detail.

### **4.1 The Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area**

The KAZA TFCA represents the largest transfrontier conservation area in the world, spanning five southern African countries: Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Fig. 2). Ratified in 2011, KAZA encompasses an area of approximately 520,000 km<sup>2</sup>, a figure that exceeds the total area of the country of Spain (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019). The overarching purpose of this large-scale project is to conserve biodiversity, foster socio-economic development, and promote peace across the region (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019; KAZA TFCA, 2022). The establishment of KAZA goes hand in hand with the acknowledgement that natural resource management must occur across borders to be effective. The conservation area encompasses 36 national parks, game reserves, communal lands, and wildlife-management areas situated along the Chobe-Zambezi River basins, representing one of the most ambitious and expansive conservation projects ever undertaken (Mogende, 2016). Notable tourist destinations, including the Okavango Delta (a UNESCO World Heritage Site), the famous Victoria Falls, and the Chobe National Park, provide further evidence of the area's global significance (Mogende, 2016).

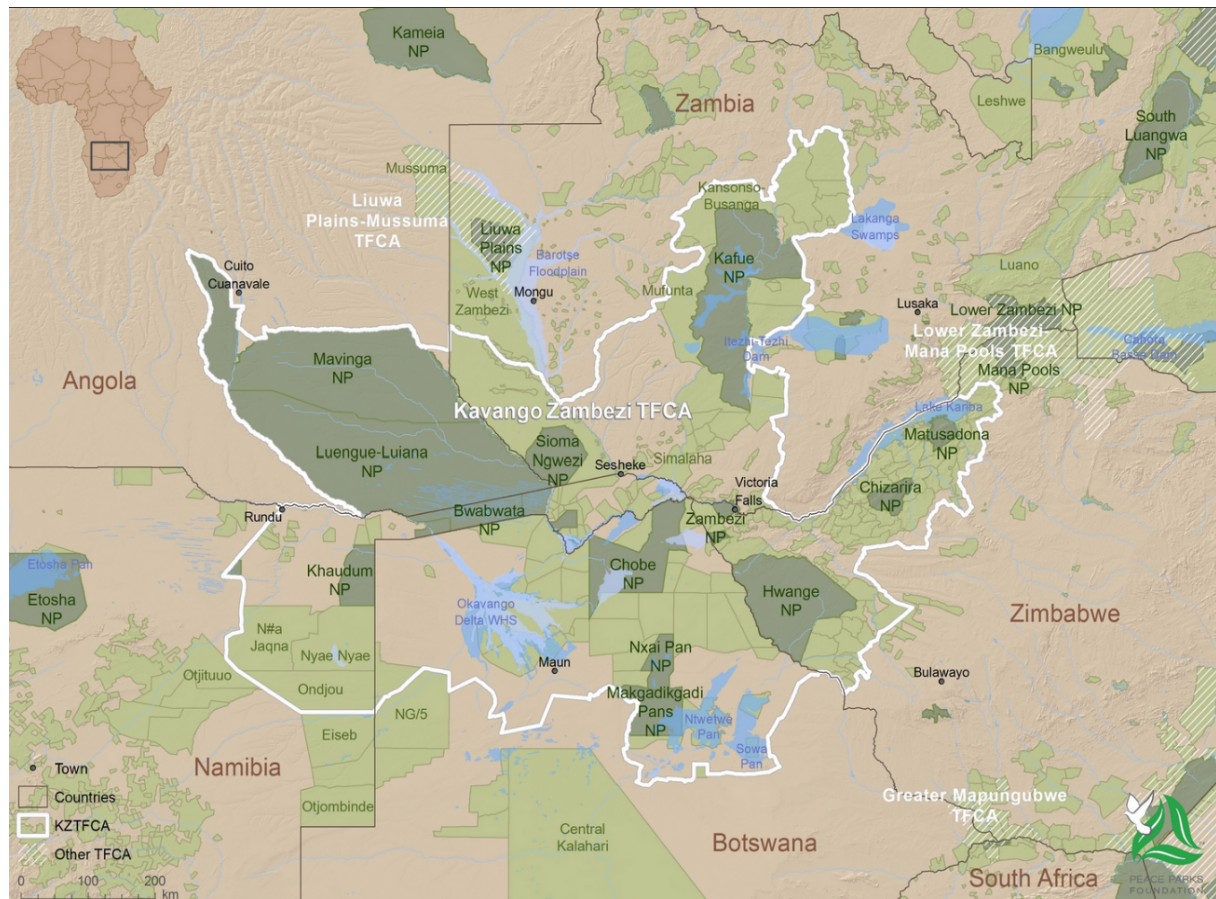


Figure 2: KAZA TFCA Map - Source: Peace Parks Foundation (2024).

### *Institutional Origins and Framework*

The origins of the KAZA TFCA can be traced back to the early 2000s, when ministers from the five countries involved began to collaborate on matters related to conservation and tourism. This initial collaboration resulted in the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding in 2006 and the subsequent development of a strategic plan in 2010. The initiative was formalized in 2011 with the ratification of the Kavango-Zambezi Treaty, a framework designed to ensure sustainable management of shared natural resources across national borders for the benefit of both present and future generations (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019). KAZA's institutional framework is characterized by a high degree of complexity, encompassing a multitude of governance bodies. These include the Ministerial Committee, the Joint Management Committee, and National Committees, among others. These organizations operate at the national level as well as transboundary levels and have been supported from the beginning by the Peace Parks Foundation, a nonprofit organization that is actively engaged in promoting transfrontier conservation across sub-Saharan Africa (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019). Furthermore, the southern African Development Community plays a pivotal role in facilitating the institutional evolution of KAZA by providing personnel to the KAZA secretariat (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019). Of the 520,000 km<sup>2</sup> that KAZA covers,

371,394 km<sup>2</sup> are designated for conservation purposes, while the remaining area is mainly used for agriculture and rangeland (Stoldt et al., 2020). The region is home to the largest unified population of elephants in Africa, as well as approximately 25% of the world's wild dog population (Stoldt et al., 2020).

### *Ecological and Socioeconomic Objectives*

KAZA's objectives are multifaceted, encompassing the preservation of ecosystems, sustainable development, and the improvement of livelihoods for the nearly two million people living within its borders (Mogende, 2016, KAZA TFCA, 2022). The primary objective is to establish the region as a leading global tourist destination, with tourism serving as a catalyst for biodiversity conservation, economic development, and poverty alleviation (Mogende, 2016). In order to achieve these goals, KAZA seeks to create job opportunities for local communities, reduce poaching, and mitigate the overexploitation of natural resources (Mogende, 2016). One of the exceptional characteristics of KAZA is its community-based approach. In contrast to other conservation areas where communities are frequently displaced to accommodate the establishment of protected areas, KAZA permits local populations to remain in place and participate in conservation efforts as legitimate stakeholders (Mogende, 2016). This is corroborated by the KAZA Treaty, which was signed and recognized by all member states. The treaty assigns a pivotal role to local communities in the stewardship of natural resources and, concurrently, guarantees them a fair share of the benefits derived from their natural and cultural heritage (KAZA TFCA, 2010). Nonetheless, for the sake of completeness, it must also be mentioned here that there are indeed reports of displacements, for example in Namibia, where Vehrs et. al (2023) discuss that the creation of Mudumu National Park involved displacement of local communities from their ancestral lands, which is a common issue in the implementation of large-scale conservation projects like the KAZA TFCA (Vehrs, Kalvelage and Nghitevelekwa, 2022). In any case, in general these communities rely significantly on natural resources, including water, edible plants, firewood, and wildlife, for their livelihoods (Mogende, 2016). To facilitate these endeavors, communities are organized into CBNRM initiatives, although cross-border collaboration remains limited (Mogende, 2016).

### *Institutional Challenges and Limitations: Towards Policy Harmonization*

Although without a doubt KAZA holds a huge potential for collective action, its establishment has revealed significant challenges, particularly related to institutional capacity and policy harmonization among the five member states (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019). A main driver of the latter is the variety in state capacities. While Namibia and Botswana for example

demonstrate high levels of governance effectiveness, Angola and Zimbabwe face significant challenges related to political instability and weaker institutional frameworks (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019). This imbalance makes joint governance of the TFCA more difficult, as driving states feel left in the lurch while structurally weaker member states could feel left behind and put under pressure.

The implementation of conservation policies and enforcement of regulations represent another significant challenge, as social control mechanisms exhibit considerable variation across the countries involved. In regions where traditional authorities retain considerable influence, compliance with natural resource management policies tends to be more effective. Nevertheless, in regions where state institutions have replaced traditional leadership structures, there has frequently been opposition to conservation initiatives (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019).

A related issue is the lack of policy harmonization across borders, particularly regarding hunting regulations. For example, while Namibia allows professional hunting to stimulate rural economies, Botswana has banned hunting (until 2019), creating friction that undermines transboundary cooperation (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019). These discrepancies not only complicate enforcement but also contribute to human-wildlife conflicts, particularly along borders, which wildlife crosses frequently. The tricky nature of this issue is illustrated very well by the following quote from an interviewee in the study by Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström (2019):

“I believe this came about as a way of trying to allow animals to live naturally in their natural habitat without boundaries and also to reduce the conflict that comes with these boundaries. Because an elephant is mine today, tomorrow it’s yours because it crosses the boundary, you know, they always do. So, I think that was also a way of trying to manage that conflict between different countries” (Linell, Sjöstedt and Sundström, 2019, p. 61).

### *Socio-Ecological and Political Significance of the Conservation Area*

The ecological strategies within KAZA are designed to address key conservation challenges by focusing on issues such as law enforcement, the establishment of conservancies, and sustainable agricultural practices (Munthali et al., 2018). These efforts are accompanied by socioeconomic strategies that are intended to promote community-private partnerships, reduce human-wildlife conflicts, and encourage land-use planning that strikes a balance between conservation and development (Munthali et al., 2018). Additionally, the KAZA region holds significant political importance, as it is perceived as a means of promoting peace and stability in a region that has historically been affected by conflict. By linking fragmented habitats across borders and encouraging regional collaboration, the KAZA initiative is expected to play

a pivotal role in securing the long-term survival of wildlife populations and enhancing the resilience of ecosystems (Stoldt et al., 2020).

## **4.2 Analysis of the KAZA Member States CBNRM Governance**

The KAZA TFCA's relevance in the context of regional nature conservation and the associated ambitions regarding the involvement of local communities in achieving nature conservation goals were introduced. This was done in the context of the treaty signed by all member states, which sets out these ambitions. The following section will focus on the individual KAZA areas of the member states, examining the status of community-based conservation initiatives and the efforts and importance of the national governance strategies of the individual members.

### **4.2.1 Conservation Success in Botswana: Bypassing Local Communities**

Botswana contributes 153,662 km<sup>2</sup> of land to the KAZA TFCA, which represents 30% of the total protected area of KAZA, and is the largest contribution of any of the countries involved; this land-mass includes important natural heritage areas like the Okavango Delta, which incorporates Moremi Game Reserve, and the Chobe National Park (KAZA, 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, Botswana stands out as a model of political stability and good governance. Acknowledged for its low corruption and strong economic performance, Botswana has managed to use its natural resources, particularly wildlife, to enable economic growth, with wildlife tourism playing a pivotal role since the 1980s (Rihoy and Maguranyanga, 2010). CBNRM programs were established with the intention of combining conservation with local economic development and empowering communities to benefit from their natural surroundings. Nevertheless, despite the programs' initial promise and the countries overall success in conservation, the implementation of CBNRM in Botswana has encountered considerable governance challenges, particularly with regard to the equilibrium between decentralization and the central government's control over resources.

#### *Botswana's Natural Resource Management Approach: Deconcentration*

Botswana's governance structure consists of a dual-level system that includes both the central and the local governments. However, the local governments operate without constitutional guarantees of autonomy, as their authority is determined by central government institutions (Mooketsane, Bodilenyane and Motshekgwa, 2017). This top-down approach results in local governments, including those involved in natural resource management, remaining dependent on decisions made by central authorities. While CBNRM was initially conceptualized as a decentralization tool, the process that can be witnessed in Botswana is more accurately

described as a process of deconcentration<sup>5</sup> (Mooketsane, Bodilenyane and Motshekgwa, 2017).

This deconcentration has resulted in a reduction in the efficacy of CBNRM. While administrative responsibilities have been decentralized to the local level, key decisions regarding resource management, such as the allocation of wildlife quotas and land leases, remain centralized. This partial decentralization does not empower local communities, which is consistent with the description given above of deconcentration as the weakest form of decentralization, thereby limiting their capacity to manage resources and fully benefit from conservation efforts (Mooketsane, Bodilenyane and Motshekgwa, 2017).

#### *The Evolution of CBNRM in Botswana*

CBNRM in Botswana has its origins in 1989, when it was initiated by the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) with the financial support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Rihoy and Maguranyanga, 2010). Initially, CBNRM appeared to be a promising approach, particularly in areas with rich wildlife and low population density. The policy approach enabled communities to establish trusts or community-based organizations (CBOs), which could then apply for user rights to wildlife and generate revenue from conservation initiatives, including tourism and controlled hunting (Rihoy and Maguranyanga, 2010).

Nevertheless, despite this potential, CBNRM was never entirely devolved in Botswana. Local communities were permitted to enter into joint-venture partnerships (JVPs) with commercial operators, yet the authority to make critical decisions remained concentrated at the central level. Local communities had minimal influence over the utilization of resources, extending only to the selection of tour operators and the administration of revenue generated by these partnerships (Cassidy, 2021). Furthermore, while the initial phase permitted communities to retain 100% of wildlife revenue, this arrangement was modified through a series of recentralization policies that constrained their financial autonomy (Rihoy and Maguranyanga, 2010).

#### *Wildlife as “National Assets”: The Recentralization of Botswana’s CBNRM*

To make these recentralization policies more concrete, in 2001, the government issued a directive stating that revenues generated by CBNRM activities would be retained in central government accounts, with distribution to communities dependent on government approval (Cassidy, 2021). This represented a notable recentralization of control over natural resources,

---

<sup>5</sup> See again Chapter 2.2 for the definition of deconcentration. In this context it can be stated that it is a transfer of administrative duties and implementation roles rather than decision-making power that has occurred.

especially wildlife. Further modifications were introduced with the 2008 CBNRM policy, which established that communities could retain only 35% of revenue generated from wildlife activities, in contrast to the 100% mentioned previously. The remaining 65% were directed to a National Environmental Fund for projects, which has the purpose of distributing the funds across the country (Rihoy and Maguranyanga, 2010). These policies had the effect of greatly diminishing the financial independence of CBOs, centralizing revenue management and limiting the autonomy that CBNRM was designed to foster.

The government justified these measures as being in the national interest, citing broader resource-management principles incorporated into Botswana's constitution. In a similar manner to the treatment of diamond revenues as national assets (see "diamond debate" in the literature for more) the government has applied the same principle to wildlife, arguing that central control ensures an equitable distribution of benefits. Nevertheless, this rationale has resulted in the marginalization of local communities, whose role in CBNRM has been reduced to that of implementers, rather than decision-makers (Rihoy and Maguranyanga, 2010).

#### *Threats to CBNRM in Botswana: Elite Capture, Governance Gaps and Cultural Disconnect*

The governance developments described above bring to light some considerable challenges for CBNRM in Botswana. One of the most significant, and already mentioned in the theoretical introduction of this thesis, has been the issue of elite capture in Botswana's CBNRM context (see Chapter 3.1, referring to Berkes, 2010). In a significant number of cases, powerful local elites have been observed to exercise control over CBOs, resulting in the misappropriation of resources and benefits for personal gain, with the wider community bearing the burden of the resulting losses (Rihoy and Maguranyanga, 2010). The combination of weak governance structures on the local level and poor accountability mechanisms and the state's favoritism towards private companies has enabled this dynamic to persist, thereby undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of CBNRM (Hitchcock et al., 2015).

Furthermore, as Mogende and Kolawole (2016) have observed, while the CBNRM approach advocates for the empowerment of local communities, the actual structure remains significantly flawed (Mogende and Kolawole, 2016). The authority to make decisions regarding the utilization of resources, including the distribution of hunting quotas, is retained by central government institutions, particularly the DWNP. The communities' designated "rights" to natural resources are merely partial and do not afford the comprehensive control necessary for effective management (Mogende and Kolawole, 2016).

Moreover, the government's preference for deconcentration over full devolution has resulted in considerable shortcomings in the governance of CBNRM. Deconcentration merely



transfers administrative burdens to local offices while leaving the central government in charge of critical decisions. The term “off-loading”, which was also introduced in theory with reference to Berkes (2010) (see Chapter 3.1), is applicable here. As a consequence, there has been a considerable degree of dissatisfaction among the members of the communities, who perceive themselves to be excluded from the decision-making processes that have a direct impact on their livelihoods (Mogende and Kolawole, 2016).

Additionally, Mogende and Kolawole (2016) underscore the cultural dissonance between CBNRM and local communities. The program was introduced as a foreign model, shaped significantly by the input of foreign donors and environmental organizations. This external origin gave rise to the perception that CBNRM was a program designed for the benefit of “white people” and not genuinely rooted in local values or governance systems. This disconnect has made it challenging for CBNRM to gain local legitimacy and acceptance, which has further undermined its success (Mogende and Kolawole, 2016).

#### *Moving Towards Reform: Opportunities and Limits in Botswana’s CBNRM*

In recent years, there has been a notable shift towards reform within Botswana’s CBNRM framework. In 2019, President Mokgweetsi Masisi indicated a shift in policy towards greater community participation and the reversal of recentralization politics (Cassidy, 2021). The Land Bank initiative, which transferred control of community-owned land to the Botswana Tourism Organization on behalf of the government. (Cassidy, 2021), has been partially overturned. However, private investors continue to exert control over numerous areas that were previously managed by communities (Cassidy, 2021).

Nevertheless, the demands of Mogende and Kolawole (2016), who argue that reforms in Botswana have not gone far enough yet, remain valid. While communities are empowered in theory, in practice they still lack the decision-making authority necessary to exercise real control over natural resources. The central government’s continued hesitation to fully devolve power continues to limit the potential of CBNRM. Without substantial reforms, including genuine devolution and increased local governance capacity, they state, the long-term sustainability of CBNRM in Botswana remains uncertain (Mogende and Kolawole, 2016).

In summary, it should be noted that the experience of CBNRM in Botswana underscores the complexities of decentralizing natural resource management in a governance system that remains highly centralized. While the program was originally intended to empower local communities and promote sustainable development, its implementation has been hampered by recentralization, elite capture, and a lack of genuine devolution. Communities have been largely excluded from meaningful decision-making, and the financial benefits of conservation are increasingly controlled by central government structures. While recent

political shifts offer some hope for reform, significant challenges remain, particularly with regard to governance structures and the role of local communities in managing their natural resources.

#### 4.2.2 Financial Devolution in Botswana's CBNRM: Challenges and Opportunities

In order to build on the findings just presented and to be able to make further statements specifically on financial devolution, several studies that deal more specifically with the financial aspects of CBNRM decentralization governance in Botswana will be consulted. A major contribution to this is the long-term study by Cassidy et al. (2023) which examines long-term impacts of CBNRM on household-level adaptive capacity in Botswana. The results underline the lack of devolution already identified and discuss the consequences for the excluded local population at the household level. Pienaar, Jarvis and Larson (2013) focus on creating effective incentives for CBNRM communities, and identify several barriers, including a lack of compensation for wildlife damage, an inequitable distribution of revenues, and conflicts between conservation and recourse use. Rylance and Spenceley (2017) provide a broader discussion about the economic impacts of tourism and the importance of local retention of tourism revenue. The study from Kasane, Botswana – a destination in the north of the country and central in the KAZA TFCA – implies that effective governance structures are needed to enhance local benefits from tourism.

##### *The Consequences of Recentralization: Profit Exclusion.*

As noted above, the recentralization policy of 2007 marked a significant turning point, with the government taking control of the tourism-tendering process and revenue-sharing (Pienaar, Jarvis and Larson, 2013). Under this policy, a National Environmental Fund was created to manage tourism revenues, and only a portion of these funds (35%) were assigned to community-approved projects, limiting direct financial benefits to communities (Pienaar, Jarvis and Larson, 2013). This centralization has undermined the original goals of CBNRM, reducing local incentives to conserve wildlife and constituting a substantial hindrance to the process of financial devolution in the context of CBNRM (Mogende and Kolawole, 2016). As Cassidy et al. (2023) have observed, this governance model concentrates decision-making authority in the hands of the central government, thereby limiting the financial autonomy of communities. This has resulted in a scale mismatch, whereby the costs associated with living with wildlife are shouldered by households, while the financial benefits are retained at the community or national level. Consequently, local communities have struggled to see direct benefits from CBNRM revenues, which has led to a reduction in household-level adaptive capacity and well-being (Cassidy et al., 2023). In summary, in addition to the lack of involvement of local

populations in decision-making processes, it is above all the centralized revenue-sharing model that fails to address the financial needs of households, weakening the overall incentive structure for wildlife conservation.

#### *Addressing Financial Challenges: Revenue Management and Elite Capture*

In order to enhance the efficacy of financial devolution within Botswana's CBNRM program, a series of reforms must be implemented. Pienaar et al. (2013) propose the establishment of a village conservation corps, financed by CBNRM revenues, for direct employment of community members in conservation initiatives. Such a reform would decentralize financial control and provide direct incentives for conservation at the household level. Furthermore, Cassidy et al. (2023) propose a restructuring of governance models to target benefits more directly at the households most affected by wildlife. This would ensure that the costs of living with wildlife are more equitably offset by the financial gains of CBNRM. It should be noted, however, that these particular proposals have been tailored to align with the prevailing circumstances. A review of the theoretical aspects of financial devolution in Botswana indicates that the most appropriate term is financial deconcentration, or at best financial delegation (referring to Bird and Vaillancourt (2008) from Chapter 3.2). To achieve financial devolution, significant reforms would be necessary, affecting not only the distribution and allocation of revenues, but also the distribution of expenditure budgets for investments and a stable financial transfer system from the central government to the local level where nature conservation takes place.

#### 4.3.1 Pioneering CBNRM: The Case of Namibia

##### *Historical Shifts: From Colonial Legacy to CBNRM*

Namibia's natural resource governance, particularly in the context of wildlife conservation, is deeply influenced by the country's historical development and the policies that emerged in response to the colonial legacy. Central to this is the CBNRM framework, which was developed in the mid-1990s and marked a significant shift in the way Namibia approached conservation. Following Namibia's independence from South African rule in 1990, there was a clear need to address the inequalities and environmental degradation that had been passed down from both German colonialism and the apartheid regime (Heffernan, 2022). The country's colonial history, beginning with German occupation in 1884 and followed by South African rule, had entrenched a system in which wildlife and land management were used to marginalize black Namibians (Heffernan, 2022). Under apartheid, wildlife management remained tightly controlled by the state, and traditional authorities, often infested by colonial powers, were given preference in resource governance (Bollig, 2016). However, Namibia's independence created

a crucial “window of opportunity” for legal and policy reforms that would devolve wildlife rights to local communities (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011).

The evolution of CBNRM in Namibia can be traced back to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, which provided global momentum for decentralized, community-led conservation efforts, and has already been mentioned above (Bollig, 2016). By 1995, the Namibian government had set the foundation for Communal Conservancies (CCs), allowing communities to benefit economically from wildlife management (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). The formalization of this policy came with the passing of the Nature Conservation Amendment Act of 1996, which enabled local communities living on communal land to acquire rights similar to those provided by previous wildlife legislation, particularly the 1975 Ordinance (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). This legal framework empowered communities to directly manage wildlife resources, subject to the registration of conservancies, and made Namibia one of the first African countries to devolve such rights to local groups (Turpie and Letley, 2021).

The first CC, Torra, was established in 1998, thereby initiating a wave of similar conservancies across the country (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009; Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). CBNRM in Namibia was not solely a response to environmental crisis, including wildlife depletion due to civil war, drought, and poaching. It was also a strategy to address rural poverty (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). Neighboring countries like Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Botswana had already set precedents for community-driven conservation efforts, which inspired Namibian policymakers to explore similar models (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011).

The implementation of CBNRM encountered significant challenges, particularly in the form of bureaucratic resistance. This was due to the reluctance of certain government actors to give up control over wildlife management. However, the timing of Namibia’s independence, coupled with robust political support for CBNRM from prominent figures such as Namibia’s first Minister for Environment and Tourism, Niko Bessinger, proved vital in overcoming these challenges (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). Furthermore, international donors, notably USAID, provided substantial financial and technical assistance, ensuring that local communities possessed the capacity to effectively manage conservancies and form productive partnerships with private-sector actors (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). The involvement of NGOs, such as Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, contributed to the program’s growth by providing capacity-building support at the local level (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011).

As a consequence, the CBNRM initiative in Namibia has yielded a number of favorable outcomes, including an improvement of environmental conditions, and an increase in economic opportunities for local communities (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). The policy not only promoted sustainable rural development by integrating conservation with economic gain but also empowered communities through the *devolution* of significant resource-management rights to them (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). The Namibian CBNRM model is currently

regarded as a pioneering example of how community-led conservation can align the goals of environmental sustainability with those of economic development and social empowerment (Heffernan, 2022).

### *Ensuring Institutional Stability through Communal Conservancies*

The current status of CBNRM in Namibia reflects a sophisticated system of governance that devolves partial rights over wildlife resources to local communities, with significant involvement from the government, NGOs, and international donors. Communities may establish CCs if they meet the necessary requirements, which include identifying conservancy boundaries, defining membership, selecting a representative management committee, and drafting a constitution (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). Once established, conservancies are granted limited rights to manage and utilize wildlife resources, subject to approval by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET). Revenues generated from activities such as tourism and trophy hunting are distributed directly to the conservancy (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009).

It is obligatory for conservancies to develop comprehensive management plans, robust institutional structures and clearly defined resource-management strategies in order to achieve their stated objectives. Furthermore, CBNRM activities, such as training in conservancy management and tourism, are frequently financed by external sources, which further promotes the capacity-building of community members (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). The major income sources for conservancies include joint-venture tourism fees, trophy hunting, and the utilization of game for local consumption. Household benefits extend from employment and cash compensation to meat distribution and infrastructure development, such as water points and schools (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). The expansion of wildlife populations and enhanced biodiversity underline the ecological advantages of CBC in Namibia (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2009). The rights that have been devolved to communities include partial entitlements to wildlife, which are managed through a locally negotiated quota, and the ability to lease land to private investors. Although ownership remains with the state, communities gain substantial income and social benefits like governance structures and a management plan, with the profits generated from the commoditization of resources (Bollig, 2016). The devolution of conservation rights has been demonstrated to be economically and environmentally sustainable, with rural incomes increasing, and significant wildlife recovery evident (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). Furthermore, the program of CC provides a platform for community participation in governance, with conservancy meetings offering regular opportunities for local decision-making (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011).

The legal framework for conservancies requires communities to negotiate boundaries, identify members, and form a management committee with a wildlife-management plan and

benefit-distribution strategy (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). Once these requirements have been met, conservancies are able to apply to the MET for official recognition, thereby gaining legal status, securing land-use rights and opening doors to business partnerships, particularly in the field of (wildlife) tourism (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). The increased self-sufficiency of conservancies has resulted in representatives becoming accountable to both donors and members, thereby emphasizing the devolution of rights to the local level (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011).

Namibia is frequently referenced as a case study in legal empowerment, where CBNRM enhances property rights for economically disadvantaged individuals, thereby fostering a stable environment for business and conservation initiatives (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). By 2008, Namibia had 53 registered CCs, 12 of which were financially self-sufficient. Furthermore, the benefits of CBNRM extended to local communities through infrastructure development, education, and human-wildlife conflict mitigation (Jones and Weaver, 2008; Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). It was found that joint-venture lodges contributed the most to conservancy income. In addition, the social capital gained from these partnerships helped to build resilient social-ecological systems (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011).

By 2015, Namibia had 82 CCs established, representing 53% of the total area of communal land, and generating over N\$102 million in revenues (Turpie and Letley, 2021). Despite its success, CBNRM remains a complex system with multiple stakeholders, evolving to meet ongoing challenges (Heffernan, 2022). The program's governance structure reflects a balance between local empowerment and global conservation goals, with a partial devolution of power allowing local communities to manage resources while the state retains oversight (Heffernan, 2022).

Namibia's CBNRM is widely regarded as a model for legal empowerment and rural development. However, its reliance on NGOs and international donors raises questions about the autonomy of local decision-making (Heffernan, 2022). Nevertheless, the program's benefits, including economic gains and increased biodiversity, demonstrate its efficacy as a tool for sustainable resource management and community empowerment (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011; Heffernan, 2022).

### *Overcoming Challenges: Bureaucratic Resistance and the Role of International Support*

Despite the notable achievements of CBNRM in Namibia, a number of persistent challenges remain, particularly with regard to the incomplete devolution of rights, human-wildlife conflicts, governance matters and land-tenure issues. These challenges present a significant threat to the long-term sustainability of conservancies and their ability to fully achieve their intended goals (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011; Goergen, 2024). One of the fundamental shortcomings

of the CBNRM framework is the incomplete devolution of management and utilization rights to local conservancies. Despite the transfer of management responsibilities to local communities, the state maintains ownership of communal lands and retains significant control over key decision-making processes. The government, for instance, determines hunting quotas and holds authority over problem animals, which some conservancies argue limits their potential revenue, especially from trophy hunting (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011). This lack of full legal authority creates a disconnect between the responsibility for wildlife management and control over land, which hinders effective conservation efforts (Heffernan, 2022). A further significant issue, related to the first challenge, is that of land-tenure insecurity. As the state holds title to communal lands, conservancies frequently encounter the perception that these lands are open-access. This absence of exclusion rights undermines the capacity of communities to restrict unwelcome external intrusions and jeopardizes local efforts to sustainably manage natural resources (Boudreaux and Nelson, 2011; Heffernan, 2022).

It can be concluded that the strategy of devolution of conservation rights to CCs (although incomplete), combined with the founding conditions for such institutions, which guarantee a certain degree of capacity and stability, has been successful in terms of both economic and ecological outcomes. However, the CBNRM system in Namibia also encounters the typical challenges associated with local community-conservation models, wherein the state maintains ultimate authority over land rights. Consequently, the following analysis will focus on the financial aspects of Namibia's CBNRM landscape, with the objective of providing insights into the actual benefits of the programs at the household level and addressing the research question initially posed.

#### 4.3.2 Financial Devolution in Namibia's CBNRM: Successes and Shortcomings

##### *Assessing Financial Returns: Variability in Income Generation and Economic Impact*

It can be reasonably argued that financial devolution plays a pivotal role in the ultimate success of Namibia's CBNRM program. As previously stated, 82 CCs and 32 community forests were established by 2015, collectively covering over half of all communal land and generating approximately N\$102 million in revenues from photographic tourism and hunting (Turpie and Letley, 2021). However, only 26% of these conservancies are earning more than N\$1 million annually, while 17% earned no cash income at all (Turpie and Letley, 2021). This variability in financial outcomes reflects inconsistency in the financial sustainability of conservancies, thereby underscoring the challenges that the program faces.

Namibia's CBNRM program aims to transfer wildlife-management revenues to local communities. Conservancies can enter JVPs with private tourism companies, creating income streams from wildlife tourism. However, structuring and implementing these agreements often

requires financial expertise (Heffernan, 2022). There has been a varied experience of the devolution of financial benefits. Devolution of financial benefits yields revenue for local communities, yet simultaneously introduces the potential for mismanagement and corruption at the local level (Heffernan, 2022). Thus, in 2018, the Namibian government introduced a 50% reinvestment rule requiring conservancies to reinvest revenues back into their communities to guarantee that financial benefits are distributed to the wider community rather than being concentrated in a few hands (Heffernan, 2022).

As mentioned above, the principal sources of revenue for conservation are hunting and photographic tourism. In 2022, these activities constituted 97% of total conservancy income, with hunting representing the more rapid and widespread revenue generator (Goergen, 2024). While hunting typically begins generating income approximately 2.9 years after a conservancy is established, photographic tourism takes longer to start, but thereafter yields a significantly higher median annual income, outperforming hunting by 447%. Furthermore, the presence of Big Five species, conservancy size, and environmental factors (e.g., precipitation levels and elevation) also exert a significant influence on the income generated from these activities (Goergen, 2024).

The management and governance structures of conservancies represent a further crucial factor influencing financial outcomes. A positive correlation has been identified between enhanced performance in management and governance, and increased income. This suggests that improvements in governance structures could facilitate the unlocking of a greater financial potential (Goergen, 2024). Further, Gorgen (2024) also observes the presence of NGOs and the regular occurrence of Annual General Meetings to have a positive effect on income, as these mechanisms provide critical oversight and operational guidance (Goergen, 2024).

### *Confronting Financial Challenges: Mismanagement and Inequitable Distribution*

Namibia's CBNRM program differs from other southern African initiatives in that it ensures wildlife revenues are retained exclusively by conservancies (Hoole, 2010). Some CCs, like Torra, have become self-sufficient by using money from wildlife conservation to cover their costs, including staff salaries (Hoole, 2010). However, despite these success stories, a number of financial devolution challenges remain. Institutional issues, such as elite capture and fund mismanagement, have undermined trust in local conservancy committees, thereby preventing the equitable distribution of benefits among community members (Turpie and Letley, 2021). Mistrust is exacerbated by financial irregularities and is particularly acute where income is generated from JVPs. Furthermore, women tend to contribute less to conservancies than men,



possibly due to a gender bias in CC management, which further complicates community dynamics (Turpie and Letley, 2021).

The most significant challenges include a lack of financial literacy and effective oversight, which has resulted in instances of mismanagement and corruption within some conservancies. It is proposed that external oversight may offer a potential solution in instances where internal governance has proved ineffective (Heffernan, 2022). The issue of financial sustainability remains a significant concern, particularly for those conservancies that are relatively new, many of which continue to rely on the support of non-governmental organizations. The incongruence between conservation success and financial viability represents a significant threat to the long-term survival of these initiatives (Humavindu and Stage, 2015; Goergen, 2024).

While donor funding and ecotourism partnerships have provided revenue, a significant proportion of this income does not reach the local level. The misappropriation of funds and the externalization of profits to private enterprises have constrained the community's ability to derive benefits from conservation efforts (Hoole, 2010). It is imperative that further efforts are made to guarantee that financial devolution results in concrete, long-term benefits for all members of the community.

#### *Evidence from the KAZA TFCA: Regional Disparities in Revenue Distribution*

In order to connect the current analysis with the overall research question of how financial devolution is actually performing in the KAZA TFCA (in Namibia), the results of two case studies will be presented which investigate the financial impact of CBNRM on local communities in the Zambezi Region, which is located in the north-eastern branch of the Namibia, in the center of the TFCA. This region provides a revealing case for assessing the impact of CBNRM. The studies by Vehrs, Kalvelage, and Nghitevelekwa (2022) and Kalvelage, Revilla Diez, and Bollig (2022) highlight key challenges in realizing the promised benefits of CBNRM programs.

The results of both studies indicate a notable discrepancy between the anticipated benefits of CBNRM and the actual outcomes observed in communities. While conservancies generate considerable revenue from tourism, these funds do not result in substantial benefits for local households (Vehrs, Kalvelage and Nghitevelekwa, 2022). Only a minor proportion of the value generated by tourism – in their study Kalvelage et al. (2022) find this to be 20% for the Zambezi region – is retained locally, with the majority being captured by external actors, primarily foreign tourism operators (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022). This issue is particularly evident where community members lack the skills or capital to engage in meaningful tourism beyond low-wage employment (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022).

This creates further dissonance between CBNRM's expected benefits and households' realities. This trend can be further emphasized: In 2019, 90% of the income generated by the 86 Namibian conservancies came from hunting and safari tourism, amounting to a total of N\$156 million (roughly US\$10 million). In strong contrast to these figures, Kalvelage et al. (2021) found in another case study that tourism and conservancy profits in the Zambezi Region contributed only 5.5% to income at the household level (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2021). This underscores a key limitation in CBNRM: while conservancies produce substantial revenue, the distribution mechanisms often fail to significantly impact local livelihoods.

This is also reflected in the labor market for local communities created by tourism: Employment in conservancies is limited and poorly paid. To illustrate: conservancies in the Zambezi Region provide approximately 780 jobs, yet wages remain relatively low, ranging between N\$1,200 and N\$1,600 per month (Vehrs, Kalvelage and Nghitevelekwa, 2022). The income from tourism, while substantial at the conservancy level, does not sufficiently translate into meaningful economic improvements for most community members. Moreover, the tourism sector in the Zambezi Region largely operates as an enclave economy, with limited linkages to other local businesses. This lack of local economic integration further limits the potential for conservancies to generate widespread benefits (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022).

The strategic orientation of the region's tourism sector has further weaknesses regarding the value captured locally: The Zambezi Region's conservancies, despite their resource richness, demonstrate a low degree of local ownership and control in tourism operations. For instance, only 13% of income in Zambezi conservancies comes from joint ventures with lodges, while a staggering 81% comes from hunting concessions sold to foreign operators (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022). This shows that conservancies have little bargaining power when negotiating contracts. Conservancies must be able to negotiate effectively to capture value. However, they often lack the capability to secure favorable agreements (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022). Some conservancies have improved their negotiating abilities, but still struggle to capture value. Furthermore, there is a lack of transparency in hunting-quota sales (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022).

The influence of individual negotiating skills on conservancies is further evidenced by the findings of Kalvelage et al. (2022), which revealed a significant range in value capture from tourism across conservancies. For instance, value capture for Zambezi conservancies ranged from 10% to 54%, underscoring the pivotal role of institutional capacities in value capture (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022). This is further compounded by the fact that, of the revenue that does in fact reach the conservancies, only a small proportion (7%) is paid out to conservancy members in the form of direct cash payments. 70% of the revenue must be spent on operational costs, leaving only 30% that can be allocated to these cash payments or community projects (Vehrs, Kalvelage and Nghitevelekwa, 2022).

The two studies illustrate the existence of considerable difficulties inherent to the existing structure of CBNRM in the Zambezi Region. While conservancies contribute to wildlife conservation and generate income through tourism, the distribution of these benefits is uneven (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022; Vehrs, Kalvelage and Nghitevelekwa, 2022). A significant challenge is the phenomenon of elite capture of resources, whereby a disproportionate share of benefits is absorbed by conservancy management structures, with limited trickle-down effects to the broader community (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022). Furthermore, the significant reliance on hunting tourism, which reproduces colonial power dynamics and excludes a considerable proportion of community members from wildlife utilization, serves to exacerbate these challenges (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022). These findings further underscore the significance of community-based capacity-building for the effective management of nature-conservation initiatives.

In conclusion, while CBNRM has the potential to capture value from global tourism networks and prevent enclave-tourism economies, its effectiveness in the Zambezi Region is undermined by limited local ownership, weak institutional capacity, and uneven benefit distribution. To address these challenges, it is necessary to implement more robust policies that enhance local value capture, improve conservancy governance, and facilitate greater local economic integration (Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig, 2022; Vehrs, Kalvelage and Nghitevelekwa, 2022).

#### 4.4.1 Zambia: Rich in Biodiversity – Inconsistent in Devolution

Zambia is exceptionally rich in natural resources, which form the backbone of rural livelihoods in the country. A significant proportion of the population depends on small-scale agriculture, forest products, wildlife and other natural resources for food and income (Davis et al., 2020). Iconic natural sites like the Victoria Falls and the Luangwa Valley, both key parts of the KAZA TFCA, contribute significantly to the national economy, generating approximately US\$742 million annually through tourism (Davis et al., 2020). However, despite this wealth of resources, the country faces pressing environmental challenges, particularly related to deforestation and wildlife depletion, with only 10-20% of the country's original wildlife populations remaining (Lindsey et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2020).

Zambia's land-tenure system and governance structures play a critical role in natural resource management. Approximately 94% of the country's land is held as customary land under traditional authorities, with Game Management Areas (GMAs) covering 23% of the national territory. Although the Department of National Parks and Wildlife (DNPW) retains responsibility for wildlife management, traditional authorities have considerable influence over GMAs, where large rural populations are highly dependent on wildlife and forest resources for their livelihoods (Davis et al., 2020). This interdependence of rural livelihoods and natural

resource use makes CBNRM particularly important for both biodiversity conservation and economic development. Zambia has 20 National Parks and 36 GMAs, covering approximately 30% of the country's land area. Trophy hunting is a major land use in many GMAs, which are managed through sport-hunting concessions (Davis et al., 2020). However, increasing human settlements, deforestation and unsustainable hunting practices are putting considerable pressure on wild animals in GMAs, pushing their densities far below their potential (Lindsey et al., 2014).

### *Zambia as Early Adopter: The Emergence of CBNRM Approaches*

Zambia was an early adopter of community-based conservation strategies, introducing pilot CBNRM programs in the middle of the 1980s. This shift was driven by several factors, including declining government budgets for the parks department, a poaching crisis that severely affected wildlife populations, and growing opposition to top-down conservation policies (Lyons, 2013). External funding opportunities also facilitated alliances between government, conservation organizations, and international donors, further supporting the move towards community involvement in wildlife management (Lyons, 2013).

The country's colonial past has played a significant role in shaping land use and conservation policies. During the British colonial period, large pieces of land were set aside for commercial agriculture and protected areas, often at the expense of indigenous people who were displaced from their ancestral lands (Chisanga, 2016; Adeyanju et al., 2021). Zambia's first National Park, Kafue National Park, was established in 1924, displacing several villages and restricting local access to natural resources (Adeyanju et al., 2021). These historical displacements have had long-lasting effects on land rights and natural resource management in the country.

In the 1980s, the Zambian government recognized the need for greater community involvement in wildlife conservation, particularly in GMAs. Inspired by early pilots from neighboring countries like Zimbabwe, initial attempts at decentralization, such as the Administrative Management Design for Game Management Areas (ADMAGE) and the Luangwa Integrated Rural Development Project (LIRDP) both initiated during the 1980s, laid the foundations for Zambia's CBNRM initiatives (Davis et al., 2020; Adeyanju et al., 2021). Both programs aimed to involve local communities in wildlife management through benefit-sharing mechanisms, although they faced challenges including problems with law enforcement and elite capture of benefits (Davis et al., 2020; Adeyanju et al., 2021).

CBNRM in Zambia has been shaped by complex interactions between government policy, donor interests and local governance structures. While these early efforts marked a shift from state-controlled to CBNRM, they also highlighted the need for more inclusive

governance and equal distribution of benefits. Despite challenges, CBNRM has been a central strategy for integrating rural livelihoods with biodiversity conservation. However, achieving sustainable outcomes requires that careful attention be paid to governance structures, benefit-sharing mechanisms and the empowerment of local communities, which will be subjects of the following parts of this chapter.

### *Institutional Framework of CBNRM in Zambia: Complex and Ambitious*

The above-mentioned GMAs have been central to the development of the CBNRM framework in Zambia as a common ground for the Zambian government, communities, and external stakeholders to collaborate in both wildlife conservation and the promotion of local development.

The enactment of the Zambian Wildlife Act of 1998 marked a significant shift in wildlife governance, as it replaced the National Parks and Wildlife Act of 1971 (Davis et al., 2020). A significant change was the transformation of the DNPW into the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA), a semi-autonomous entity with the primary responsibility of revenue generation, predominantly through trophy hunting in GMAs (Lindsey et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2020). ZAWA was inspired by analogous bodies in neighboring countries, such as Kenya's Wildlife Service, and aimed to enhance wildlife management and conservation by cultivating a more intimate relationship with local communities (Davis et al., 2020). Its responsibilities include law enforcement, hunting concessions, and the setting of hunting quotas (Lindsey et al., 2014). The institution's operations were heavily reliant on revenues derived from trophy hunting, which constituted between 45% and 67% of its total income (Lindsey et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2020). However, ZAWA encountered considerable obstacles due to inadequate funding, limited capacity for anti-poaching operations, and an inherent conflict of interest – its reliance on hunting fees frequently overshadowed its conservation mandate: "Including the ~USD4.6 million generated from trophy hunting, ZAWA's resources equate to USD20-60/km<sup>2</sup>/year, which compares poorly with the USD358-455/km<sup>2</sup> required to manage protected areas effectively" (Lindsey et al., 2014, p. 7). Despite ZAWA's intention to empower local communities, in practice it retained control over key decisions, including the setting of hunting quotas and the management of wildlife revenues. This centralized approach constrained the capacity of communities to engage in the genuine management of their resources (Lindsey et al., 2014; Chisanga, 2016). The dissolution of ZAWA in 2015 and its replacement by the DNPW, which falls under the Ministry of Tourism, was intended to improve this balance. Nevertheless, a considerable degree of decision-making authority remains concentrated at the central level, which has the effect of limiting the extent of effective community involvement (Davis et al., 2020). In light of the aforementioned considerations, it can be posited that

Zambia's decentralization status in the domain of natural resource governance is best characterized as deconcentration.

Next to ZAWA, the Wildlife Act of 1998 furthermore established Community Resource Boards (CRBs), which are local governance bodies tasked with co-managing wildlife in collaboration with ZAWA. The formation of a CRB necessitates that communities share a common interest in local wildlife and be residents of areas defined as chiefdoms. The composition of these boards consists of elected representatives from village groups and local authorities who complement the traditional chief, who serves as the CRB patron. CRBs allocate revenues derived from hunting to community-development projects, thereby ensuring that local people benefit from wildlife-conservation efforts (Davis et al., 2020; Adeyanju et al., 2021). For the lowest level of government, Village Action Groups (VAGs), consisting of elected members that are guided by a community constitution, assign the wildlife revenues in alignment with the CRBs to projects or households at general assemblies (Davis et al., 2020). CRBs also serve as platforms for external development organizations seeking entry points for community development, making them key players in both conservation and local development (Davis et al., 2020).

Over time, the legal and policy frameworks of Zambia have sought to address some of the structural challenges present in the governance of wildlife. The 2015 Wildlife Act, for instance, sought to decentralize wildlife management by dissolving ZAWA and replacing it with the DNPW, which was placed under the Ministry of Tourism and Arts (Davis et al., 2020). The Act was based on the National Parks and Wildlife Policy, which was finally issued in 2018, and promised to devolve user rights, costs, and benefits to communities and private landowners (Davis et al., 2020). The 2018 policy set out a number of strategies, including the decentralization of management in protected areas, the promotion of public-private partnerships, and the development of wildlife-based economies with a view to improving local livelihoods (Davis et al., 2020). In GMAs, the policy reaffirmed a commitment to the advancement of CBNRM principles and the facilitation of community involvement in wildlife management (Davis et al., 2020). Nevertheless, despite these progressive policy statements, the Wildlife Act of 2015 did not fully implement the promised devolution of power to communities. In contrast, the central government continued to exercise significant authority, notably in the determination of hunting quotas and the administration of revenue from photographic tourism. The latter is not shared with communities; only revenue from hunting is shared in this way (Chisanga, 2016; Davis et al., 2020).

Despite their potential, CRBs continue to have limited decision-making authority. The responsibilities of the CRBs primarily revolve around co-managing wildlife with the DNPW, appointing community scouts, and developing land-management plans in consultation with government officials (Davis et al., 2020). This constrained role is indicative of broader issues

of centralization in Zambia's natural resource governance system, where community input is often marginalized (Chisanga, 2016).

Recent developments in Zambia's CBNRM approach have included reforms to the governance of both wildlife and forests. The Forest Act of 2015 introduced two new schemes: Community Forest Management and Joint Forest Management. These schemes decentralized forest management and further promoted community involvement in resource governance (Adeyanju et al., 2021). The 2018 Wildlife Policy reaffirmed the intention to devolve management responsibilities and benefits to communities, particularly in GMAs (Adeyanju et al., 2021).

The Zambia CBNRM Forum, established in 2005, has served as a pivotal coordinating body for diverse stakeholders and a vital source of support for thematic working groups in the context of CBNRM (Adeyanju et al., 2021). Notwithstanding these aspirations, significant challenges persist. The centralization of ownership and control over wildlife and natural resources under the authority of the republican president has constrained the capacity of local communities to exercise meaningful control or to derive sufficient benefits from CBNRM initiatives (Luaba et al., 2023). Furthermore, persistent issues pertaining to in-migration, habitat loss, deforestation and inequitable benefit-sharing persist (Hachoofwe, 2022; Luaba et al., 2023).

#### *Poor Resources and Weak Governance Structures: Challenges for CBNRM in Zambia*

The elaboration of the history and institutional status of CBNRM in Zambia has revealed a number of challenges that the sector must address. These will be presented in a systematic manner in the following section and will then be enriched with recommendations for a more sustainable future for the sector.

A significant hindrance to the effective implementation of CBNRM in Zambia has been the absence of community rights to engage in decision-making processes and to derive benefits from natural resources, particularly GMAs. Over the last 30 to 40 years, there has been a notable absence of devolution of user rights over wildlife to local communities, which has served to deepen their marginalization from legal benefits, including revenues derived from trophy hunting (Lindsey et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2020). Also, the legislation fails to acknowledge communities as the rightful owners of the land and wildlife within GMAs, which further exacerbates the limitation of revenue sharing and the marginalization of communities in decision-making processes (Lindsey et al., 2014). The centralized control over wildlife and financial returns from hunting has served to increase inequalities and is limiting community participation and ownership, which in turn gives rise to a sense of disenfranchisement among local populations (Lindsey et al., 2014).

The effectiveness of CBNRM governance is further constrained by structural issues. A persistent challenge is the top-down governance structure that is prevalent in both state and community conservation. This structure can result in restricted community involvement, the deterioration of relationships between key stakeholders, instances of corruption, a lack of transparency, and a reduction in accountability (Luaba et al., 2023). The existence of conflicting interests among stakeholders, such as those pertaining to land and resource utilization, serves to exacerbate the prevailing governance challenges and erode the foundations of trust and cooperation (Luaba et al., 2023). The fragmentation of CBNRM governance serves to exacerbate these challenges. There is a lack of coordination among stakeholders, the absence of a permanent coordinator, and the prevalence of administrative and traditional power struggles that impede unified action (Hachooofwe, 2022). Moreover, CRBs, which are responsible for co-managing GMAs, are frequently under-resourced and lack adequate support, thereby limiting their effectiveness in managing resources (Hachooofwe, 2022). This not only has a top-down exclusion effect, but also results in many community members, particularly those in VAGs, having a poor understanding of the CBNRM concept, which further hinders their involvement in decision-making (Hachooofwe, 2022). Furthermore, the benefits from natural resource use are often unevenly distributed. While some communities gain employment opportunities through national parks and GMAs, the benefits at the household level are frequently inadequate (Lindsey et al., 2014; Hachooofwe, 2022). This inequality represents a significant challenge to the success of CBNRM in achieving its dual objectives of conservation and community development (Hachooofwe, 2022).

The sustainability of Zambia's CBNRM efforts is further undermined by broader environmental and economic pressures. The rapid growth of the human population in GMAs has resulted in an increase in the poaching of bushmeat and expansion of human settlements into habitats, thereby exacerbating the stress on already vulnerable ecosystems (Lindsey et al., 2014). The underfunding of ZAWA has resulted in inadequate law enforcement, thereby allowing illegal activities such as poaching to continue unchecked (Lindsey et al., 2014). Furthermore, the practice of relying on hunting revenues to fund operations, rather than investing in alternative sustainable revenue streams such as ecotourism, constrains the long-term sustainability of CBNRM (Lindsey et al., 2014).

Furthermore, corruption and unfavorable terms for hunting operators represent a significant obstacle. These issues act as a deterrent to investment in GMAs, which in turn leads to the degradation of wildlife habitats and a reduction in wildlife densities in protected areas (Lindsey et al., 2014). The absence of exclusive rights for communities over land and wildlife in GMAs gives rise to an open-access system that serves to accelerate the degradation of resources (Lindsey et al., 2014).



To address these challenges, several key recommendations have emerged from studies on CBNRM in Zambia. Zambia's CBNRM sector has shown potential, particularly in community forestry, but the wildlife sector lags behind. Improvements must therefore address major shortcomings in the areas of legislative reforms, community empowerment, a transparent and fair benefit-distribution system and capacity-building.

The 2015 Forest Act and 2018 Community Forest Management Regulations represent a shift in rural Zambian community rights. The reforms have allowed communities to manage timber and carbon rights in community forests, making Zambia a pioneer for forest management in Africa (Davis et al., 2020). However, this has not led to similar developments regarding wildlife, where rights and benefits remain constrained.

The 2018 Wildlife Policy places an emphasis on the devolution of rights, costs, benefits, and management to communities. Nevertheless, this has yet to be effectively implemented, with the central authorities retaining a significant degree of control over wildlife revenues (Davis et al., 2020). In order to facilitate progress in this area, it is recommended that legislative reforms should aim to decentralize wildlife management and give communities more control over resources in GMAs. The introduction of new legislation could facilitate the allocation of 99-year leases and comprehensive user rights over wildlife to local communities, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility (Lindsey et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2020).

This objective should also be pursued in the governance strategy with regard to community empowerment. It is imperative that communities are engaged more actively in decision-making processes if the efficacy of CBNRM initiatives is to be enhanced. A transition from representational governance to more direct involvement in local decision-making has been demonstrated to foster ownership and accountability (Adeyanju et al., 2021). Consequently, it is recommended that community governance structures are redesigned with the objective of enhancing direct participation, as opposed to relying solely on representation. The implementation of downward accountability, whereby local leaders are held to account by their constituent members, has the potential to substantially improve transparency and trust within CBNRM frameworks (Adeyanju et al., 2021). Additionally, it is crucial to build local capacity in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of CBNRM initiatives. This encompasses the provision of training in natural resource management, law enforcement, and financial management, with the objective of ensuring that communities are equipped with the requisite skills to manage conservation projects independently (Adeyanju et al., 2021; Luaba et al. 2023).

The other key area for improvement in the CBNRM system in Zambia is definitely financial. Future CBNRM programs must ensure that communities receive a larger share of

revenues from natural resources. Transparent, bottom-up revenue-distribution processes will empower communities to monitor funds and ensure sustainability (Luaba et al. 2023). As the research question of this thesis concerns financial devolution, this topic is examined in greater detail in the following subchapter and is therefore only briefly addressed here.

Further recommendations for the CBNRM sector in Zambia include the intensified development of “Integrated Landscape Approaches”, which address ecological, social and economic challenges on a broader scale and also involve a wider range of stakeholders from the government, the private sector and civilian society (Adeyanju et al., 2021). Lindsey et al. (2014) similarly identify significant potential in the advancement of Community Wildlife Conservancies (CWCs). These are based on collaborative initiatives between communities and private-sector entities, as exemplified by the Namibian model. They facilitate shared responsibility and the generation of profits from wildlife resources. The establishment of CWCs within GMAs would afford communities greater control over land and wildlife, thereby ensuring that they directly benefit from wildlife-conservation initiatives. However, this model would necessitate legislative amendments to grant communities long-term leases and full user rights (Lindsey et al., 2014).

It is evident that Zambia must implement significant reforms in the domains of governance, legislation, revenue distribution and capacity-building to ensure the long-term sustainability of its CBNRM program. As has already been demonstrated, the incorporation of financial participation and incentivization can serve as a catalyst for this process. Therefore, the following section presents an analysis of financial devolution attempts in Zambia's CBNRM sector.

#### 4.4.2 Financial Devolution in Zambia: District Government as Gatekeeper

The financial governance and revenue-sharing mechanisms of Zambia's CBNRM programs are subject to considerable challenges. The aforementioned issues have resulted in the unequal distribution of benefits, the restriction of financial devolution to local communities, and a deficiency in transparency.

The revenue-sharing framework within Zambia's CBNRM program is characterized by inequitable distribution and inadequate financial devolution. The concession fees paid by private entities for the utilization of resources are initially collected by the central government. While a portion of these revenues is intended to be transferred to CRBs, funds have frequently been retained to address budgetary shortfalls at the national level. Consequently, communities are often left to await promised funds, which frequently arrive later or do not materialize at all (Davis et al., 2020). These deficiencies can be observed in the relatively unambitious initial stages of CBNRM in Zambia from a financial devolution standpoint: The ADMADE program distributed a sum of just 17.5% of revenues derived from wildlife to community projects, with

the majority of the funds retained by the government. This distribution of funds provided communities with only a minimal level of financial support for essential projects (Adeyanju et al., 2021). Similarly, in the LIRD, the initial phase returned 40% of revenues to communities, while the subsequent phase increased this to 80%, indicating enhanced local engagement (Adeyanju et al., 2021). However, both programmes demonstrated that top-down approaches frequently failed to address local needs.

But also in more recent research, the same problem is evident. To illustrate, Milupi et al. (2020) identify that ZAWA is indebted to the communities within the Mumbwa and Lupande GMAs (only the former is situated within KAZA boundaries) due to the institution's failure to utilize the 50% of natural resource revenues allocated to it under the Wildlife Acts of 1998 and 2015 for the intended purpose of reinvesting in the communities. This is attributed to ZAWA's chronic underfunding, which ZAWA itself considered to be a consequence of the government's inadequate funding (Milupi, Somers and Ferguson, 2020).

#### *Deconcentration as a Stop Sign for Financial Devolution: Reaching the Local Level*

The concentration of financial authority within Zambia's CBNRM system has impeded the realization of substantial financial benefits for local communities. The DNPW retains a significant proportion of revenues derived from consumptive tourism activities, such as trophy hunting. Conversely, only 20% of concession fees and 50% of trophy-license fees are remitted to local communities (Luaba et al. 2023). Furthermore, the disbursement of funds to communities is frequently delayed, irregular, and lacks transparency. The inconsistent flow of funds, coupled with their portrayal as "handouts" rather than a legitimate form of compensation for the utilization of resources, serves to further erode community confidence in the CBNRM process (Luaba et al. 2023). A review of the literature indicates that communities frequently lack representation in financial decision-making processes, and therefore have minimal influence over the generation and distribution of revenue (Luaba et al. 2023). This restricted involvement not only alienates communities from the financial governance of natural resources but also perpetuates a cycle of mistrust. This is exemplified by the study by Luaba et al. (2023), investigating two GMA communities. In one of them, Kaindu community north-east of Kafue National Park, local stakeholders expressed severe mistrust regarding the government's capacity to fulfil financial commitments (Luaba et al. 2023).

The unequal distribution of financial benefits derived from wildlife utilization has resulted in a significant number of households being impoverished. Centralized control, coupled with delayed payments and a lack of accountability, has rendered it challenging for communities to reap tangible benefits from wildlife-conservation initiatives. Consequently, illegal wildlife hunting persists, as the financial incentives for legal participation in wildlife

conservation are inadequate in comparison to the immediate gains from poaching (Lindsey et al., 2014; Chisanga, 2016).

Furthermore, the financial resources allocated for rural community development are distributed in a manner that is not optimally efficient due to the growth of populations in GMAs, which serves to diminish the impact of the benefits that are already limited in scope (Chisanga, 2016). Furthermore, the financial burden is exacerbated by the reality that CRBs, which are responsible for overseeing resource management and benefit distribution, frequently lack the necessary funding and capacity to effectively fulfil their mandates (Hachooofwe, 2022), and in addition, frequently suffer from elite capture, as Davis et al. (2020) also confirm in their research case studies in central and border areas of Zambia's KAZA regions.

The necessity for reforms to Zambia's CBNRM financial structure has been demonstrated. These include direct benefits for communities. It would be beneficial for communities to receive financial benefits directly, without intermediaries such as ZAWA or other government entities, in order to create more transparent links between conservation efforts and local livelihoods (Lindsey et al., 2014). Furthermore, community ownership should be enhanced. The transfer of user rights over wildlife and long-term land leases to local communities would facilitate communities' capacity to negotiate contracts and benefit from wildlife-based tourism (Lindsey et al., 2014). And finally, improved transparency and capacity-building should be striven for. The implementation of transparent financial processes and the fostering of stronger community involvement in financial management are crucial for the rebuilding of trust and the assurance of equitable benefit distribution (Luaba et al., 2023).

As a conclusion it can be stated that the financial landscape of CBNRM in Zambia is characterized by inequitable revenue distribution, limited financial devolution and a lack of transparency. While progress has been made in certain areas, there is still much to be done to ensure that communities benefit meaningfully from the natural resources they help to conserve. It is imperative that key reforms, centered on direct community ownership, improved transparency and capacity-building, be implemented in order to address the financial challenges of CBNRM and promote sustainable, inclusive development.

#### 4.5.1 Zimbabwe and the Pilot Project in CBNRM: CAMPFIRE

Zimbabwe's conservation history is deeply intertwined with the country's turbulent socio-economic and political landscape spanning roughly the pre-colonial period, before 1890, the era of British colonialism, from 1890 until 1980, and the post-independence period since 1980. However, the country's conservation evolution has been significantly shaped by the dominant ideologies of these different periods of time (Harrison, 2015). This historical context is essential for understanding the development of conservation policies such as the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE), a flagship model of

CBNRM in Zimbabwe and for the broader region (Harrison, 2015; Shereni and Saarinen, 2021).

### *Colonial Legacy and Early Conservation Efforts*

Zimbabwe's colonial period from 1890 to 1980 laid the foundation for the country's conservation challenges. Under British rule, land-tenure policies were highly unequal, with more than half of the agriculturally productive land reserved for European settlers, while indigenous people were relegated to less fertile areas with lower, more irregular rainfall and higher disease prevalence. This unequal distribution of land was exacerbated by the population distribution at the time: around 1930, only 2% of the population were European colonial settlers while the remaining 98% consisted of indigenous people (Harrison, 2015). Furthermore, the establishment of national parks and protected areas further marginalized indigenous people, who were displaced and/or banned from hunting, while settlers were allowed to engage in trophy hunting in these areas. The exclusion from the nature reserves, usually located in prime agricultural spaces, and the hunting rights imposed, fed perceptions on the part of the indigenous population that animals were valued more highly than indigenous people at that time (Harrison, 2015). Another defining influence of Zimbabwe's colonial era was the drastic decimation of the wildlife population due to the hunting practices of the colonialists and their attitude towards wildlife, which was considered a plague at the time. Between 1919 and 1960, approximately 680,000 wild game animals were killed in a systematic process of "game elimination", shaping any future conservation efforts toward a focus on the conservation of megafauna and their habitats (Harrison, 2015).

### *Facing Poverty Alleviation: Independence and the Evolution of CAMPFIRE*

Following Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, there was a significant increase in poaching, which was seen as a form of rebellion against colonial restrictions on the one hand, but on the other hand also as a means to reduce damage from wildlife to local community members' crops and livestock, or to gain some profit from the illegal selling of wildlife (Harrison, 2015; Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015). In the early years of independence, the government initiated a slow process of resettlement aimed at democratizing local governance by merging colonial district councils, which previously governed the colonial population, and rural councils, which were for governing the indigenous population, to form Rural District Councils (RDCs) – an institution that would be of decisive importance for the future landscape of nature conservation. This first trend towards decentralization in Zimbabwe, together with the need for equitable natural resource management, laid the foundation for the introduction of the CAMPFIRE program (Harrison, 2015). CAMPFIRE was designed as a CBNRM program to devolve wildlife-

management authority to rural districts. It allowed RDCs to offer safari-hunting concessions within their administrative areas and use the revenue to support community development. The program sought to integrate local communities into wildlife management by providing them with economic incentives for conservation (Balint and Mashinya, 2008; Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019).

CAMPFIRE was intended to be a win-win model for conservation and rural development. By the early 1990s, with international donor support, it had become a role model for similar initiatives across southern Africa, influencing policy in neighboring countries such as Botswana, Namibia and Zambia (Balint and Mashinya, 2008). The program was based on three core principles: recognizing wildlife as an agricultural resource, eliminating conflicts between wildlife tourism and agriculture, and viewing wildlife tourism as complementary to agricultural farming (Child, 2003; Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015). Furthermore, CAMPFIRE focused on poverty reduction, decentralizing resource control from the state to communities, and managing wildlife as a means of poverty alleviation (Child, 1996; Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015).

Despite its initial success, CAMPFIRE was not without its challenges. The decentralization of authority to RDCs, rather than directly to the communities themselves, limited local ownership and participation in decision-making processes (Harrison, 2015; Dube, 2019). Furthermore, the reliance on trophy hunting as a primary source of revenue (accounting for 90% of CAMPFIRE's income) raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of the program, particularly as economic and political instability in the 2000s severely affected Zimbabwe's tourism industry (Dube, 2019).

#### *External Crisis: Challenges and the "lost decade"*

Zimbabwe's "lost decade" of economic decline, hyperinflation and political instability had a profound impact on the CAMPFIRE program. The end of international donor funding in 2000 and the country's general financial crisis led to a recentralization of natural resource management, as local government authorities, underfunded by the central government, increasingly retained a greater share of CAMPFIRE revenues. This shift reduced the benefits accruing to local communities and weakened their sense of ownership (Harrison, 2015). Environmental degradation also worsened during this period as economic pressures pushed people back to their rural homesteads, increasing land and population pressure and leading to increased agricultural expansion and greater human-wildlife conflict. The resulting strain on wildlife habitats further complicated conservation efforts, while rising poverty levels among rural populations hampered their ability to participate meaningfully in programs such as

CAMPFIRE, where immediate survival needs took precedence over long-term conservation goals (Harrison, 2015).

### *Institutional Architecture of CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe: the RDCs in Central Role*

The institutional structure of CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe represents a synthesis of centralized oversight and local governance mechanisms, which were initially designed to foster wildlife conservation through community involvement. A review of the guiding principles presented by Child (1996) in the earlier phase of the program provides insight into the discrepancy between the original concept of the conservation project and the actual implementation of these initiative approaches against the background of the crisis in the country just presented. The fundamental guiding principles of CAMPFIRE are oriented towards the principles of devolution, economic incentives, community participation, and revenue distribution. These principles reflect the program's broader goals of addressing wildlife conservation while providing tangible benefits to rural communities.

Central to the CAMPFIRE approach is the devolution of authority. As has already been presented in detail, this principle entails the transfer of rights to manage and benefit from wildlife to local communities, thereby providing them with both the responsibility and the incentives to conserve these resources (Child, 1996). However, while the program theoretically promotes community control, in practice the authority has largely been decentralized to RDCs, the lowest legally recognized government entities, rather than to local communities themselves (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). At this instance, a distinct theoretical correlation can be established between the concept of deconcentration, as introduced in the preceding theory chapter, and its application within the context of this thesis. The CBNRM system in Zimbabwe, which is primarily represented by the CAMPFIRE program, can thus be classified as the first and weakest primary form of decentralization. This incomplete devolution has been the focus of a persistent critique of the program. Although RDCs represent local communities, they are often viewed as failing to grant genuine decision-making power to the communities themselves (Harrison, 2015; Ntuli and Muchapondwa, 2018; Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019; Shereni and Saarinen, 2021).

The other three key elements, namely economic incentives, community participation and revenue distribution, are closely linked – and so are the reasons for their failure. The idea behind the implementation of economic incentives was to make wildlife conservation a lucrative and sustainable pursuit for communities. The generation of revenue through activities such as safari hunting and eco-tourism should encourage communities to perceive wildlife as an economic asset rather than a threat to their livelihoods (Child, 1996). This economic model reinforces the conviction that wildlife represents the optimal land-use option in numerous

remote regions where agricultural productivity is constrained (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). Building up on this, the program emphasizes involving local communities in decision-making processes related to resource management, thus enhancing their ownership and engagement in conservation efforts and increasing community participation (Child, 1996). And lastly, the principle of revenue distribution goes hand in hand with the other principles as well. Originally, a significant portion of the income generated from wildlife – targeted at 80% – was supposed to be returned to the producer communities, catalyzing economic development on the grassroots level and aiming to strengthen feelings of ownership and community participation (Child, 1996). Against the backdrop of Zimbabwe's economic and political crisis, many scholars give these three principles a failing grade. As already mentioned, also from this perspective, they are mutually interdependent: facing economic instability, the limited financial resources the RDCs by the central government resulted in the retention of a considerable proportion of the wildlife revenues, which were necessary for their continued survival (Harrison, 2015). The issue of elite capture further highlights the insufficient transfer of profits from nature conservation to those local populations who rely on it (Harrison et al., 2015; Shereni and Saarinen, 2021). The failure to distribute profits to local communities means, that as a consequence they cannot enjoy the prospect of economic incentives; nor are they motivated to participate in a conservation system, as they feel systematically excluded from it anyway (Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015; Shereni and Saarinen, 2021).

The crisis has also resulted in a lack of clarity regarding the environmental governance structure, with numerous actors involved, some of whom have overlapping or duplicative functions. The RDCs, which are actually recipients of the appropriate authority from the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, are in practice under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Local Government, Urban and Rural Development, which audits and supervises the RDCs. At the community level, CAMPFIRE committees are constituted, comprising elected members who oversee the program's operations and represent the community in negotiations with other stakeholders, including safari operators and conservation organizations (Shereni and Saarinen, 2021). These committees, in theory, play an invaluable role in addressing local concerns, such as human-wildlife conflict, and ensuring that conservation efforts are aligned with the interests of the communities in question. In practice, as stated, limited devolution of rights, authority and revenues restricts its influence, to the point of insignificance.



### *The Tribute of the Crisis: Local Communities as Passive Recipients in CBNRM*

The CAMPFIRE program, as the preceding observations already suggest, faces several challenges that have hindered its full potential to benefit local communities and achieve sustainable natural resource management. A key issue is the lack of direct benefit transfer to local communities. Although there was no legally binding instrument installed, the general understanding of revenue sharing stipulated that a minimum of 50% of the revenues that the RDCs received are to be forwarded to the communities. Another 35% were designated to general wildlife management costs while 15% remained for administrative maintenance costs of the RDCs. However, and due to reasons already mentioned like the chronic underfunding from central government, the RDCs did not comply with this distribution formula. By 2001, and contrary to the 15% guideline, more than 40% of CAMPFIRE's revenue was being used by some government district offices, leaving the communities largely empty-handed and reducing the economic impact on the intended beneficiaries (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019).

Corruption, poor governance, and a lack of accountability have further undermined the program. These systemic problems have resulted in CAMPFIRE failing to deliver on its promise to uplift poor rural communities (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). The program's inefficiencies have become a warning sign: other southern African countries, such as Namibia (and partly Botswana), have learned from its shortcomings and implemented more successful CBNRM models (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). In contrast to the formal recognition by policymakers of the importance of community involvement, there has been a reluctance to devolve actual decision-making power to the grassroots level (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019).

As a result, local communities often remain passive recipients of the actual profit shares delivered, without having any real control over the management of natural resources. Elite capture is prevalent and exacerbates the problem of inadequate transfer, allowing a few individuals to benefit at the expense of the broader community (Shereni and Saarinen, 2021).

Harris et al. (2015) underline these findings by identifying the limited devolution of authority as one of the main causes of the challenges described above. While CAMPFIRE aimed to decentralize wildlife management, the process did not extend beyond the RDCs, limiting the autonomy of local communities. This failure to devolve authority to village-level institutions, instead leaving the system as stated in the status of deconcentration, has undermined the program's objectives and long-term stability (Harrison et al., 2015). Furthermore, weak land-tenure security further complicates the situation, as local communities bear the costs of natural resource management without fully controlling the benefits (Harrison et al., 2015).

### *Overcoming the “Lost Decade”: Improved Governance and Community Participation*

In their policy guide, Harrison et al. (2015) summarize the urgent recommendations for the CBNRM landscape and CAMPFIRE in Zimbabwe. Taking up the challenge stated above, they demand a clear shift from deconcentration to devolution: there is a need to fully devolve authority beyond RDCs to sub-district community entities. Legal recognition of these entities would enable them to obtain user rights over wildlife and participate more effectively in management decisions. This would empower local communities, address the issue of passive involvement of communities, and promote a more equitable distribution of benefits (Harrison et al., 2015; Shereni and Saarinen, 2021). Building upon this point, the policy paper suggests that the governance structures of CAMPFIRE need reform to reduce elite capture and corruption and to improve governance and accountability. Implementing an effective administrative oversight system and technical advisory services would increase transparency and ensure that local communities benefit from resource management. Greater transparency in the revenue-sharing process and stronger accountability mechanisms at the local level are critical to rebuilding trust and improving the program's outcomes (Harrison et al., 2015). This also includes strengthening the capacity of both RDCs and local community organizations to ensure that they can fulfill their roles effectively. Enhancing their technical, administrative, and governance capacities is seen as necessary to manage resources sustainably and in a way that benefits the broader community (Harrison et al., 2015). In order to design, manage and implement more effective projects, it is also recommended to strengthen partnerships and improve communication between all actors such as government agencies, local communities, and private actors. This would better inform decision-makers about local realities (Harrison et al., 2015). Coming back to enhanced governance, Harrison et al. (2015) conclude by pointing out that power dynamics between local communities, private actors, and governmental bodies must be balanced to ensure sustainable governance. This includes providing legal recognition and rights to community-level entities, improving transparency, and ensuring that local communities have mechanisms to hold more powerful actors accountable (Harrison et al., 2015).

In conclusion, addressing the structural challenges within CAMPFIRE requires a shift towards genuine devolution of power, improved governance and enhanced community participation. These reforms are essential to ensure that the program not only achieves its conservation goals, but also delivers tangible economic benefits to the local communities it was designed to support.

#### 4.5.2 Financial Devolution in the CBNRM System of Zimbabwe

Interestingly, for the study region of the KAZA TFCA area in Zimbabwe, there is a substantial body of empirical evidence that focuses on the perceptions of community members at the local level towards the CAMPFIRE program. These perceptions are also particularly valuable for analyzing financial devolution, as they reflect the lived experiences of local communities, which can be seen as a more accurate impression of the impacts compared to policy papers or similar. In order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the financial devolution process in the KAZA region, this section of the study will concentrate on the perspectives, sentiments and recommendations of local community members in the Hwange and Binga districts. The studies conducted in Binga and Hwange districts by Muzirambi et al. (2019), in Hwange District by Dube (2019), and in three villages in Matetsi, Hwange District by Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015) as well as the study by Shereni and Saarinen (2021) conducted in three wards near the National Park of Hwange district have provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of financial devolution under Zimbabwe's flagship CBNRM program, CAMPFIRE.

##### *No Voice for Locals: Exclusion from Decision-making*

A recurring issue in the literature is the marginalization of local communities from decision-making processes related to natural resource management. It is frequently the case that communities are engaged in low-skilled labor, such as maintaining boats and fences, with minimal economic benefit or decision-making power (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). Despite suggestions from authorities that this exclusion is due to a lack of local skills, the argument is made that training could bridge this gap and promote meaningful participation (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). Similarly, Dube (2019) observes that villagers perceive themselves to be marginalized in the context of the CAMPFIRE program, where decisions regarding wildlife consumption, revenue distribution, and wildlife management are made without community input. The absence of consultation and exclusion from decision-making is also reflected in the findings of Shereni and Saarinen (2021), which indicate that 95% of the surveyed community members identify this issue as a significant challenge (Shereni and Saarinen, 2021).

##### *Bypassing the Local Population: Exclusion from Economic Benefits*

The economic benefits derived from CAMPFIRE rarely reach the grassroots level, with financial decentralization effectively halting at the district level, as Muzirambi et al. (2019) confirm for the Binga District council in their research (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). The economic instability and political turbulence in the country have also resulted in a reduction in funding, which has served to exacerbate this issue, as has already been indicated

before (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). There is a perception among communities that they are excluded from the cash proceeds generated by wildlife management and tourism projects, which appears to benefit only a select few individuals and institutions and is another indicator of the present problem of elite capture (Dube, 2019).

In Hwange District, the participants of the surveyed focus group expressed concerns regarding the lack of transparency in the management of the trophy-hunting industry, indicating that the benefits derived from it rarely reach the communities that inhabit the areas in close proximity to the wildlife (Dube, 2019). This perception is also reflected in the findings of Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015), which indicate that respondents believed that while wildlife was being sold, the revenue was being allocated elsewhere, resulting in limited or no direct benefits for communities. Similarly, Shereni and Saarinen (2021) reported that many community members stated that they had not received any benefits from CAMPFIRE in recent years (Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015; Shereni and Saarinen, 2021).

#### *From Another Time: Partial Distribution of Social Benefits*

Although there has been minimal economic benefit, there have been some social benefits, particularly with regard to communal infrastructure projects. Revenues, primarily derived from safari hunting, have been employed to fund social services such as schools and clinics. However, this distribution has not been systematic, which leaves open the question of how such benefits are then distributed locally across the regions. (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). The overall perception of CAMPFIRE's impact on social infrastructure development has been positive in the research area of Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015) (Hwange District), with respondents agreeing that infrastructure improvements were a key benefit (Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015). However, at the household level, benefits have been minimal, and the lack of accountability surrounding administrative funds has raised concerns about corruption (Muzirambi, Musavengane and Mearns, 2019). In addition, Shereni and Saarinen (2021) reported that "The few benefits mentioned such as construction of community halls, provision of grinding mills and funding of income generating projects were received a long time ago when the project was still viable" (Shereni and Saarinen, 2021, p. 889).

#### *No Compensation for Wildlife Damage: Suffering Due to Human-Wildlife Conflicts*

One of the most significant issues facing local communities is the lack of adequate compensation for wildlife damage. High numbers of wild animals, particularly carnivores, pose a significant threat to agricultural livelihoods, including crop production and livestock herding (Dube, 2019). The perceived threat from wildlife has led to negative perceptions, with many

villagers advocating for control measures against animals such as lions, which are seen as a direct threat to livestock (Dube, 2019).

The issue of compensation for wildlife damage remains a low priority within the CAMPFIRE program, as evidenced by the low perception scores identified in the studies conducted by Tichaawa and Mhlanga (2015). Shereni and Saarinen (2021) also confirm these findings, and add that this shortcoming contributes to a broader dissatisfaction with the program (Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015; Shereni and Saarinen, 2021).

#### *Negative Perceptions of CAMPFIRE by locals: Disappointed Expectations*

This dissatisfaction can also be explained by the fact that the communities' expectations of CAMPFIRE differ considerably from reality. In their study, Shereni and Saarinen (2021) confirm that respondents felt excluded from decision-making processes and expressed dissatisfaction with the unequal distribution of benefits. A significant number of communities continue to anticipate considerable benefits from CAMPFIRE, including financial support for income-generating initiatives, the development of infrastructure, and compensation for wildlife-related losses. However, these expectations remain unfulfilled. This discrepancy between the anticipated benefits and the actual benefits received has led to an increasingly negative perception of CAMPFIRE.

#### *Increasing Transparency: Recommendations for Financial Devolution*

In order to address these challenges, a number of recommendations have been put forth. It has been proposed that villagers could be compensated for crop losses, livestock depredation and human casualties caused by wildlife in order to garner greater community support for conservation efforts (Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015). Furthermore, enhanced awareness and education regarding conservation and the environment could reinforce the sustainable utilization of wildlife, a fundamental tenet of the CAMPFIRE philosophy (Tichaawa and Mhlanga, 2015).

Community members have proposed the reactivation of village CAMPFIRE committees, enhanced communication between leadership and locals, and the provision of compensation for wildlife-related losses (Shereni and Saarinen, 2021). Such measures, in conjunction with capacity-building through enhanced training for community leaders, could facilitate the integration of local communities into the management of CAMPFIRE. Furthermore, the establishment of buffer zones and the implementation of effective fencing to mitigate wildlife-livestock conflicts would serve to enhance local attitudes towards wildlife conservation (Shereni and Saarinen, 2021).

By addressing these critical areas – especially through greater transparency, compensation mechanisms, and the involvement of local communities in decision-making – the financial devolution of CAMPFIRE could be more effectively realized, thereby enhancing its long-term sustainability.

## **5. Discussion**

In advance of the discussion, it can be stated that the evaluations of the natural resource governance strategies of the KAZA member states, with a particular emphasis on CBNRM and decentralization practices, have provided a fairly clear and comprehensive overview of the status of CBNRM in southern Africa. This comprehensive assessment is of particular significance for two reasons. Firstly, the four countries included in the study are key players in the decentralization reforms towards CBNRM in Africa and beyond. Secondly, the study area, KAZA TFCA, is of global significance in terms of biodiversity and natural heritage conservation (Munthali et al., 2018; Stoldt et al., 2020).

In the following section, the research questions initially proposed will be revisited through a comparison of the most important results for the governance analysis of the natural resource management of the countries in question. This comparison will offer insight into the status of CBNRM in southern Africa. Subsequently, the discussion will focus on the results of the analysis of financial devolution and its implications for the broader CBNRM landscape.

### **5.1 Comparative Analysis of KAZA Members' CBNRM Approaches**

To initiate a comparative analysis, it is first necessary to acknowledge that the policy domain of natural resource governance has undergone a process of transformation, characterized by distinct phases of development in individual countries since the beginnings of the decentralization movement at the end of the 1980s and continuing up until the present day. This is emphasized by theoretical evidence which indicates that decentralization efforts towards devolution are slow processes, occurring over an extended period and encountering considerable resistance from political actors who perceive their position of power to be undermined. Furthermore, the success of such processes is contingent upon the specific context of the political system in question (Ribot, 2004; Berkes, 2010).

The countries have also exerted mutual influence as neighboring states. For instance, Namibia and Botswana were able to learn from the shortcomings of Zimbabwe and Zambia in initiating CBNRM approaches that transfer greater rights to local communities from the beginning to manage natural resources. The initial consistency of Namibia's CBNRM concept has been demonstrated to be effective, and it has subsequently assumed a pioneering role within the region. In the case of Botswana and Zimbabwe, however, the contextual dependency of the success of decentralization in the area of natural resources is also evident. In Botswana, for example, the internal political influences of the political system's recentralization measures were the determining factor in the observed distance from devolution. In Zimbabwe, the external influences of crisis that put the country into the

economically disastrous situation were the reason for the decline of the initially ambitious and successful CBNRM program, CAMPFIRE.

However, an overall evaluation of the decentralization initiatives in the four countries reveals that, as evidenced, at least in three of the four countries, namely Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, there is a tangible instance of deconcentration present. In this instance, the transfer of decision-making and organizational power along the government structures to the local level merely results in the establishment of a top-down governance structure that largely fails to engage local communities in the decision-making processes. In Namibia, however, the concept of communal conservancies represents a notable exception, offering an approach that goes one step further in the direction of devolution through the transfer of land-use rights to the (institutionalized) communities themselves. Nevertheless, it is also important to note here that the central government maintains ownership of the land and retains control over the distribution of hunting quotas and licenses.

As has been demonstrated, these top-down structures also have an adverse effect on the accountability of the respective administrative entities. The lack of resources available to local communities frequently precludes them from having the requisite political, legal, or institutional capacity to hold decentralized government entities to account. Firstly, this indicates that local communities are afforded minimal or no consideration in the distribution of profits derived from the management of natural resources associated with nature conservation. This not only fosters negative perceptions of CBNRM among the population but also contributes to the gradual structural weakening of rural areas. Concurrently, local government institutions are confronted with the phenomenon of offloading (see Berkes, 2010), whereby far-reaching management responsibilities are transferred from the central government to local governments without the provision of requisite resources for implementation. This is exemplified by the chronically underfunded ZAWA as a local government entity in Zambia, or the RDCs in Zimbabwe. Secondly, the low level of accountability provides opportunities for elites to exploit natural resources through personal appropriation. As has been demonstrated, the phenomenon of elite capture (see Berkes, 2010), represents a significant challenge faced by all four countries under analysis. It is notable that Namibia has implemented governance structures, including a 50% reinvestment rule, with the objective of preventing elite capture within conservancies. Nevertheless, the dependence on external donors and NGOs gives rise to concerns regarding the long-term viability of these accountability structures.

In summary, the lack of devolution of decision-making powers in natural resource management limits the accountability of local governments to communities and creates space for elite capture and non-transparent or exclusionary benefit-sharing systems, with an overall negative impact on the adaptive capacity of local communities. This not only leads to poverty,



but logically means that local people are not incentivized to actively engage in conservation. The following recommendations result from this assessment:

To promote more effective community-based governance, a stronger commitment to devolution is needed in all countries. Full devolution of rights, including land-tenure and wildlife-user rights, would empower local communities, improve their capacity to manage resources and ensure that they are directly involved in key decision-making processes.

The strengthening of downward accountability mechanisms is crucial. It is vital that local communities are empowered to hold leaders, government agencies and private actors accountable with regard to resource management and revenue distribution. This may be achieved through the implementation of more transparent governance systems, such as the regular publication of revenue and expenditure data, the establishment of robust legal frameworks that guarantee community representation in decision-making processes, and the creation of local oversight bodies.

In order to ensure the long-term sustainability of CBNRM, it is essential that governments invest in local capacity-building initiatives that equip communities with the requisite skills to manage natural resources independently. This encompasses training in financial management, natural resource governance, and negotiation skills. Furthermore, the reduction of reliance on external donors through the development of local revenue streams and the fostering of greater community ownership of CBNRM programmes will contribute to the achievement of more sustainable outcomes.

## **5.2 Financial Devolution: Assessing Fiscal Governance in CBNRM**

While decentralization in CBNRM governance is broadly discussed above, a critical dimension that requires focused analysis is the financial aspect. *Financial devolution*, the transfer of fiscal control from central governments to local communities, remains a major challenge across all four countries. In each case, the mechanisms by which communities gain (or fail to gain) financial benefits from conservation efforts reveal both structural weaknesses and opportunities for reform.

In order to facilitate a meaningful theoretical discourse on the subject of financial devolution, the four fundamental principles that underpin this concept, as introduced in Chapter 2.3 and based on Hobdari et al. (2018), are presented and subjected to this discussion.

Starting with the first principle of “**clear assignment and communication of responsibilities for local institutions**”, it becomes apparent that although the transfer and communication of responsibilities does take place, these are not supplemented by the corresponding implementation resources on the part of the central government. As has often been discussed under the term offloading, a legally and financially strengthened local government would be able to achieve significantly more for the communities than is the case,

for example, with the chronically underfunded local governments in Zambia (ZAWA) and Zimbabwe (RDCs). Even within the framework of financial deconcentration, this would lead to more stability in the management of natural resources and empower local governments to implement infrastructure measures, retain fewer revenues for their own survival and thus strengthen the rural population in and around nature reserves in a sustainable and comprehensive manner. From the perspective of achieving the optimal outcome for nature conservation through complete devolution to communities, it is evident that communities with devolved rights for managing their natural resources should also be provided with the necessary financial resources for effective implementation and management. This should be in addition to the responsibility and co-determination rights, to avoid offloading.

The second key principle of financial decentralization, “**devolution of revenue generation powers**”, requires the complete devolution of land-use and leasing rights. This is exemplified by the case of Namibia. It is only when communities are empowered, as in Namibia, to enter into JVPs with tourism operators or to sell hunting quotas and licenses to trophy-hunting operators, that effective profit distributions can be ensured for the local populations. In Botswana, the state has historically demonstrated a lack of commitment to effectively redirecting the profits generated from nature-conservation tourism into the communities that rely on it. It is notable that in Zimbabwe and Zambia, the majority of revenue generated through CBNRM activities is derived from trophy hunting. Such reliance constrains the potential for broader financial sustainability and leaves communities susceptible to fluctuations in hunting demand and international pressure on ethical hunting practices. By contrast, Namibia provides an example of diversification, with photographic tourism generating significantly greater revenue than trophy hunting. Nevertheless, even in Namibia, a considerable proportion of this revenue is retained by external tourism operators, thereby constraining the financial benefits for local communities.

In countries such as Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe, where financial devolution has not yet or not fully reached the local level, the third key principle, “**Effective transfer systems**”, is of particular importance. This is in order to ensure that the locally appointed governments are also empowered to manage natural resources in the area of nature conservation effectively and for the benefit of the local population. This argument can also be applied to the issue of the absence of compensation payments for wildlife damage in subsistence farming, which were identified especially for Zambia and Zimbabwe.

With regard to the fourth key principle, namely the “**imposition of budget constraints on subnational governments**”, it can be stated that a deficit was identified in all countries. This was due to the fact that the guidelines laid down in policies regarding the transfer of conservation revenue to local communities, for instance, or the reinvestment of revenue in regional infrastructure, were often not or only partially adhered to. It may be argued that greater

insistence on compliance with such regulations is required at this stage, which could be achieved through the introduction of stronger legal obligations and enhanced financial resources for locally appointed governments to increase accountability.

It can be concluded that there are a number of recommendations that can be made in regard to the financial devolution of the CBNRM sector in southern Africa, in light of the scientific questions that were posed at the outset of this discussion.

**Direct Financial Benefits:** To enhance community participation and trust in CBNRM, direct financial benefits to communities should be prioritized. As seen in Zambia and Zimbabwe, the intermediary role of governmental entities has created barriers to efficient and equitable revenue distribution. Direct financial transfers to communities, bypassing government agencies, would help to improve transparency and incentivize conservation.

**Improved Financial Literacy:** capacity-building initiatives that focus on financial literacy, negotiation skills, and revenue management are essential for ensuring that communities can effectively manage and benefit from CBNRM activities. Namibia's success in partially devolving financial control highlights the importance of building local governance capacity.

**Diversification of Revenue Sources:** encouraging diversification of income sources within CBNRM, especially through the promotion of photographic tourism (as in Namibia), would reduce the reliance on trophy hunting and help to create more sustainable revenue streams.

**Transparency and Accountability:** strengthening mechanisms for financial oversight and accountability, including local audit systems and transparent benefit-sharing and reinvestment frameworks, would help to address elite capture and reduce corruption, as seen across all four countries.

## 6. Conclusion and Outlook

In order to finally address the first of the two scientific research questions presented at the beginning, it can be stated that the comparative analysis initially confirmed a central point that has often been made in scientific analyses. The effective governance of natural resources is contingent upon a nuanced understanding of the contextual factors at play, necessitating a sensitive examination of the locally specific elements that inform decision-making processes such as contextual variables, including political stability, environmental democracy and accountability. (e.g., Fariss et al., 2023). The Namibian case study demonstrates that the devolved land-use rights, when combined with the national CBNRM concept of communal conservancies, represent a robust form of natural resource governance that serves to benefit local communities and includes them in the conservation process. The institutional strengthening of communities by establishing conditions of access to land-use rights through communal conservancies and the associated connection to revenue streams from wildlife, creates institutional stability and serves to prevent the problems identified in the analysis of CBNRM, such as elite capture and exclusion from decision-making. The function of the deconcentrated systems in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe has demonstrated that deconcentration as a decentralization governance strategy for natural resource management enables a broad spectrum of problems that, in essence, are all disadvantageous to the local communities that live from and with wildlife. A final conclusion with regard to the first stated research question can therefore be that devolving revenue generation rights to local communities is a recommended course of action, as it has been shown to enhance poverty alleviation and the motivation of communal populations to engage in conservation. However, it is important to ensure that communities are required to implement robust institutional structures and governance concepts to prevent individual appropriation.

Regarding the second research question of interest for this thesis, it has been demonstrated that national governance strategies exert a direct influence on the matter of financial devolution. Effective revenue distribution is impeded at the point where national governance strategies decentralize land-use rights and decision-making powers. The consequence of such decentralization is that the power to decide on the distribution of profits becomes diffused and revenue streams come to a standstill. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that the successful devolution of financial responsibilities is closely intertwined with the transfer of land-use rights and decision-making authority. This is regarded as a pivotal aspect of effective community-based conservation strategies. In conclusion, community-based approaches are contingent upon the ability to function as a viable economic entity. The sustainable generation of profits and their equitable distribution among all members of the system is of paramount importance for the system's long-term sustainability. The full devolution

of rights, including land tenure, wildlife-user rights and decision-making powers, has been shown to result in improved capacity and greater engagement in conservation and decision-making processes, and therefore represents a clear recommendation for the promotion of financial devolution. Also, the strengthening of downward accountability through increased transparency, robust legal frameworks and external financial oversight has been demonstrated to be recommendable.

It would be beneficial for future research to build upon the knowledge gained in this study by developing well-founded theoretical models or analysis schemes that can be used to systematically map the financial devolution of a CBNRM system. The four key principles introduced by Hobdari et al. (2018) could serve as a valuable foundation for developing a systematic evaluation system, as exemplified by the approaches taken by Galvin et al. (2018) and Oldekop et al. (2016) for CBNRM as a whole. One possible starting point for this research would be Namibia, given that it has the most advanced devolution, the strongest local institutions and the best data situation. A detailed investigation, with a particular focus on financial devolution in CBNRM, could prove highly beneficial in this context. The preliminary evidence that Namibia is an appropriate location for research into financial flows in the field of conservation is further substantiated by the findings of the studies of Kalvelage, Revilla Diez and Bollig (2022) and Vehrs, Kalvelage and Nghitevelekwa (2022). Nevertheless, it would be reasonable to posit that future research would not have to await the lead of Namibia. It has been demonstrated that diversification of income is a pivotal factor in revenue generation. It is evident that countries such as Zimbabwe and Zambia, which are reliant on revenue generated mostly from trophy hunting, fail to recognize the significant financial potential of photographic tourism for the community level, which is evidenced by the assessment of Namibian CBNRM. Further investigation of the money streams from this, which are of great relevance to the entire African Value Chain, would be beneficial, especially in cases where these flows bypass the local population. This could also contribute to a more robust empirical foundation for further research and the promotion of financial devolution in community-based conservation and natural resource management.

Further investigation is particularly recommended into this significant topic in the context of the KAZA TFCA study area. As has been demonstrated, this international institution serves to unite the national interests of member states with regard to the valuation of their biological heritage and the livelihoods of significant portions of their respective populations. This is achieved through the implementation of joint forces, policy harmonization, and cooperation. There is considerable potential for the KAZA TFCA to benefit local rural populations in southern Africa, which future research can bring to light.

## Bibliography

- Adeyanju, S., O'Connor, A., Addoah, T., Bayala, E., Djoudi, H., Moombe, K., Reed, J., Ros-Tonen, M., Siangulube, F., Sikanwe, A. and Sunderland, T. (2021). Learning from Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) in Ghana and Zambia: lessons for integrated landscape approaches. *International Forestry Review*, 23(3), pp. 273-297. <https://doi.org/10.1505/146554821833992776>.
- Agrawal, A. and Ostrom, E. (2001). Collective Action, Property Rights, and Decentralization in Resource Use in India and Nepal. *Politics and Society*, 29(4), pp. 485-514. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032329201029004002>.
- Balint, P.J. and Mashinya, J. (2008). CAMPFIRE During Zimbabwe's National Crisis: Local Impacts and Broader Implications for Community-Based Wildlife Management. *Society and Natural Resources*, 21(9), pp. 783-796. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920701681961>.
- Bandyopadhyay, S., Humavindu, M., Shyamsundar, P. and Wang, L. (2009). Benefits to local communities from community conservancies in Namibia: an assessment. *Development Southern Africa*, 26(5), pp. 733-754. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03768350903303324>.
- Berkes, F. (2010). Devolution of environment and resources governance: trends and future. *Environmental Conservation*, 37(4), pp. 489-500. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S037689291000072X>.
- Bird, R.M. and Vaillancourt, F. (2008). Fiscal decentralization in developing countries: an overview. In: Bird, R.M. and Vaillancourt (Ed.) (2008). *Fiscal Decentralization in Developing Countries*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-48. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511559815>.
- Bollig, M. (2016). Towards an Arid Eden? Boundary making, governance and benefit sharing and the political ecology of the "new commons" of Kunene Region, Northern Namibia. *International Journal of the Commons*, 10(2), pp. 771-799. <https://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.702>.
- Bollig, M. (2022). Twenty-First Century Conservation in Africa: Contemporary Dilemmas, Future Challenges. In: Greiner, C., van Wolputte, S. and Bollig, M. (Ed) (2022). *African futures*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 111-124. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004471641>.
- Boudreaux, K. and Nelson, F. (2011). Community Conservation in Namibia: Empowering the Poor with Property Rights. *Economic Affairs*, 31(2), pp. 17-24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0270.2011.02096.x>.
- Brooks, J., Waylen, K.A. and Mulder, M.B. (2013). Assessing community-based conservation projects: A systematic review and multilevel analysis of attitudinal, behavioral, ecological, and economic outcomes. *Environmental Evidence*, 2(1), pp. 2-34. <https://doi.org/10.1186/2047-2382-2-2>.
- Brugere, C. (2006). Can Integrated Coastal Management Solve Agriculture–Fisheries–Aquaculture Conflicts at the Land–Water Interface? A Perspective from New Institutional Economics. In Hoanh, C.T., Tuong, T.P., Gowing, J.W. and Hardy, B. (Ed) (2006). *Environment and Livelihoods in Tropical Coastal Zones: Managing Agriculture–Fishery–Aquaculture Conflicts*. CAB International, pp. 258-273. <https://doi.org/10.1079/9781845931070.0258>.
- Cassidy, L. (2021). Power dynamics and new directions in the recent evolution of CBNRM in Botswana. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 3:e205. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.205>.
- Cassidy, L., Pricope, N.G., Stevens, F.R., Salerno, J., Parry, D.C., Murray-Hudson, M., Hartter, J. and Gaughan, A.E. (2023). Assessing long-term conservation impacts on adaptive capacity in a flagship community-based natural resources management area in Botswana. *Ecology and Society*, 28(4), 12. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-14487-280412>.
- Child, B. (1996). The practice and principles of community-based wildlife management in Zimbabwe: the CAMPFIRE programme. *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 5(3), pp. 369–398. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00051780>.

- Chisanga, A. (2016). What explains success and failure in Community Based Natural Resource Management? A comparison of Botswana and Zambia. *Göteborgs Universitet*. <https://gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/44849>.
- Cubitt, C. (2014). An Introduction to Governance in Africa. *Governance in Africa*, 1(1), pp. 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.5334/gia.ae>.
- Dafflon, B. (2012). Institutional and Fiscal Decentralization: Blueprint for an Analytical Guide. In: Dafflon, B. and Madies, T. (Ed) (2012). *The Political Economy of Decentralization in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Implementation Model in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, and Senegal. Agence Française de Développement and the World Bank*. pp. 9-43. <https://doi.org/10.1596/978-0-8213-9613-1>.
- Davis, A-L., Blomley, T., Homer, G., Sommerville, M. and Nelson, F. (2020). Community-based Natural Resource Management in Zambia: A review of institutional reforms and lessons from the field. *The USAID Integrated Land and Resource Governance Task Order under the Strengthening Tenure and Resource Rights II (STARR II) IDIQ*. [https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Zambia-CBNRM-Review-Report\\_Final-1.pdf](https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Zambia-CBNRM-Review-Report_Final-1.pdf).
- Dube, N. (2019). Voices from the village on trophy hunting in Hwange district, Zimbabwe. *Ecological Economics*, 159, pp. 335–343. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2019.02.006>.
- Fairhead, J., Leach, M. and Scoones, I. (2012). Green Grabbing: a new appropriation of nature? *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 39(2), pp. 237–261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2012.671770>.
- Fariss, B., DeMello, N., Powlen, K.A., Latimer, C.E., Masuda, Y. and Kennedy, C.M. (2023). Catalyzing success in community-based conservation. *Conservation Biology*, 37: e13973. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.13973>.
- Galvin, K., Beeton, T. and Luizza, M. (2018). African community-based conservation: a systematic review of social and ecological outcomes. *Ecology and Society*, 23(3), pp. 39. <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-10217-230339>.
- Goergen, J.D. (2024). Effects of Environment and Governance on Financial Stability of Communal Conservancies in Namibia. *Michigan State University*. <https://d.lib.msu.edu/etd/51780/NDLTD/download>.
- Hachoofo, E.M. (2022). Linking natural resource governance to rural livelihoods and wildlife conservation: a case study of Mufunta game management area, Zambia. *Stellenbosch University*. <http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/124712>.
- Harrison, E. P., Dzingirai, V., Gandiwa, E., Nzuma, T., Masviele, B. and Ndlovu, H. (2015). Progressing Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Zimbabwe. *Sustainability Research Institute Briefing Note Series*, No. 6. University of Leeds. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275824844\\_Progressing\\_Community-Based\\_Natural\\_Resource\\_Management\\_in\\_Zimbabwe](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275824844_Progressing_Community-Based_Natural_Resource_Management_in_Zimbabwe).
- Harrison, E.P. (2015). The Governance of Natural Resource Management in Zimbabwe: Unravelling the Relationships between Conservation and Development. *The University of Leeds*. [https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/12081/1/Harrison\\_EP\\_SRI\\_PhD\\_2015.pdf](https://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/12081/1/Harrison_EP_SRI_PhD_2015.pdf).
- Heffernan, A. (2022). Development, Conservation, Empowerment: The Trilemma of Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Namibia. *Environmental Management*, 69(3), pp. 480–491. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-021-01589-1>.
- Hitchcock, R.K., Sapignoli, M., Main, M. and Babchuk, W.A. (2015). The Politics and Economics of Community-Based Natural Resource Management in /Xai/Xai, Ngamiland, Botswana. *African Study Monographs*, 36(4), pp. 211–260. <https://doi.org/10.14989/202828>.
- Hobdari, N., Nguyen, V., Dell’Erba, S. and Ruggiero, E. (2018). Lessons for Effective Fiscal Decentralization in Sub-Saharan Africa. *International Monetary Fund, African Department (Series)*, 18(10). <https://doi.org/10.5089/9781484358269.087>.
- Hohbein, R.R. and Abrams, J.B. (2022). Conservation, Human-Wildlife Conflict, and Decentralised Governance: Complexities Beyond Incomplete Devolution. *Conservation and Society*, 20(4), pp. 293-303. [https://doi.org/10.4103/cs.cs\\_20\\_97](https://doi.org/10.4103/cs.cs_20_97).

- Holmes, G., Sandbrook, C. and Fisher, J.A. (2017). Understanding conservationists' perspectives on the new-conservation debate. *Conservation Biology*, 31(2), pp. 353–363. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12811>.
- Hoole, A.F. (2010). Place – Power – Prognosis: community-based conservation, partnerships and ecotourism enterprise in Namibia. *International Journal of the Commons*, 4(1), pp. 78–99. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.112>.
- Humavindu, M.N. and Stage, J. (2015). Community-based wildlife management failing to link conservation and financial viability. *Animal Conservation*, 18(1), pp. 4–13. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acv.12134>.
- Juma, T. and Mulongo, L.S. (2014). Devolution and Governance Conflicts in Africa: Kenyan Scenario. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 4(6). <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2461292>.
- Kalvelage, L., Revilla Diez, J. and Bollig, M. (2021). Do Tar Roads Bring Tourism? Growth Corridor Policy and Tourism Development in the Zambezi region, Namibia. *European Journal of Development Research*, 33, pp. 1000–1021. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41287-021-00402-3>.
- Kalvelage, L., Revilla Diez, J. and Bollig, M. (2022). How much remains? Local value capture from tourism in Zambezi, Namibia. *Tourism Geographies*, 24(4–5), pp. 759–780. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2020.1786154>.
- Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA) (2019). KAZA Conservation Area. <https://www.kavangozambezi.org/kaza-conservation-area/>.
- Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA TFCA) Secretariat (2022). State of Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area: 2006–2019. KAZA TFCA. <https://www.kavangozambezi.org/download/78/kaza-publications-english/2162/state-of-kaza-report-english.pdf>.
- Kooiman, J. (2003). Governing as governance. SAGE. <https://philpapers.org/rec/KOOGAG>.
- Kooiman, J. and Bavinck, M. (2005). The governance perspective. In: Kooiman, J., Bavinck, M., Jentoft, S. and Pullin, R. (Ed) (2005). Fish for Life, Interactive Governance for Fisheries. *Amsterdam University Press, MARE Publication Series*, 3, pp. 11–24. <https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/35130>.
- Larson, A. and Ribot, J. (2004). Democratic Decentralisation Through a Natural Resource Lens: An Introduction. *The European Journal of Development Research*, 16(1), pp. 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09578810410001688707>.
- Lindsey, P.A., Nyirenda, V.R., Barnes, J.I., Becker, M.S., McRobb, R., Tambling, C.J., Taylor, W.A., Watson, F.G. and t'Sas-Rolfes, M. (2014). Underperformance of African Protected Area Networks and the Case for New Conservation Models: Insights from Zambia. *PLoS ONE*, 9(5), e94109. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0094109>.
- Linell, A., Sjöstedt, M. and Sundström, A. (2019). Governing transboundary commons in Africa: the emergence and challenges of the Kavango–Zambezi Treaty. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 19(1), pp. 53–68. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-018-9420-2>.
- Luaba, K., Muller, K., Vedeld, P. and Nyirenda, V. (2023). A Comparative Analysis of Collaborative Natural Resource Governance in Two Protected Areas in Zambia. *PanAfrican Journal of Governance and Development (PJGD)*, 4(2), pp. 36–68. <https://doi.org/10.46404/panjogov.v4i2>.
- Lyons, A. (2013). The Rise and Fall of a Second-Generation CBNRM Project in Zambia: Insights from a Project Perspective. *Environmental Management*, 51(2), pp. 365–378. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00267-012-9996-1>.
- Miller, T.R., Minter, B.A. and Malan, L.-C. (2011). The new conservation debate: The view from practical ethics. *Biological Conservation*, 144(3), pp. 948–957. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2010.04.001>.
- Milupi, I.D., Somers, M.J. and Ferguson, W. (2020). Inadequate community engagement hampers sustainable wildlife resource management in Zambia. *African Journal of Ecology*, 58(1), pp. 112–122. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aje.12685>.
- Mogende, E. (2016). The politics of Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA) TFCA in Botswana. *University of Cape Town*. <http://hdl.handle.net/11427/23761>.



- Mogende, E. and Kolawole, O. (2016). Dynamics of local governance in natural resource conservation in the Okavango Delta, Botswana. *Natural Resources Forum*, 40(3), pp. 93–102. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1477-8947.12098>.
- Mooketsane, K., Bodilenyane, K. and Motshekgwa, B. (2017). Is decentralisation in Botswana a democratic fallacy? *African Journal of Public Affairs*, 9(5), pp. 47-60. <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/59091>.
- Munthali, S., Smart, N., Siamudaala, V., Mtsambiwa, M. and Harvie, E. (2018). Integration of Ecological and Socioeconomic Factors in Securing Wildlife Dispersal Corridors in the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area, Southern Africa. In: Şen, B. and Grillo, O. (Ed) (2018). Selected Studies in Biodiversity. *InTech*. pp. 181-203. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.70443>.
- Muzirambi, J.M., Musavengane, R. and Mearns, K. (2019). Revisiting devolution in community-based natural resources management in Zimbabwe: Towards inclusive governance approaches. In: Stone, M.T., Lenao, M. and Moswete, N. (Ed) (2019). Natural Resources, Tourism and Community Livelihoods in Southern Africa: Challenges of Sustainable Development. *Routledge*, pp. 143-158. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429289422>.
- Nelson, F. (2010). Introduction: The Politics of Natural Resource Governance in Africa. In: Nelson, F. (Ed) (2010). Community rights, conservation and contested land: The Politics of Natural Resource Governance in Africa. *Earthscan*, pp. 3-31. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781849775052>.
- Nelson, F. and Agrawal, A. (2008). Patronage or Participation? Community-based Natural Resource Management Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Development and Change*, 39(4), pp. 557–585. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2008.00496.x>.
- Nelson, F., Muyamwa-Mupeta, P., Muyengwa, S., Sulle, E. and Kaleo, D. (2021). Progress or regression? Institutional evolutions of community-based conservation in eastern and southern Africa. *Conservation Science and Practice*, 3(1), e302. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.302>.
- Nieman, W.A. and Nieman, K. (2024). Unveiling poaching patterns and threat sources for informed conservation in southeast Angola. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 77, 126532. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnc.2023.126532>.
- Ntuli, H. and Muchapondwa, E. (2018). The role of institutions in community wildlife conservation in Zimbabwe. *Journal for Nature Conservation*, 37(1), pp. 106-121. <https://doi.org/10.18352/ijc.803>.
- Oldekop, J.A., Holmes, G., Harris, W.E. and Evans, K.L. (2016). A global assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas. *Conservation Biology*, 30(1), pp. 133–141. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12568>.
- Pienaar, E., Jarvis, L. and Larson, D. (2013). Creating Direct Incentives for Wildlife Conservation in Community-Based Natural Resource Management Programmes in Botswana. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 49(3), pp. 315-333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2012.720366>.
- Research and Markets (2024). Southern Africa Safari Tourism Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report 2024-2030: Focus on Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe. *GlobeNewswire*. <https://lmy.de/gScyl>.
- Ribot, J.C. (2004). Introduction-Democracy and Natural Resources. In: Ribot, J.C. (Ed) (2004). Waiting for democracy: the politics of choice in natural resource decentralization. *World Resources Institute*, pp. 7-16. [http://pdf.wri.org/wait\\_for\\_democracy.pdf](http://pdf.wri.org/wait_for_democracy.pdf).
- Ribot, J.C., Agrawal, A. and Larson, A.M. (2006). Recentralizing While Decentralizing: How National Governments Reappropriate Forest Resources. *World Development*, 34(11), pp. 1864–1886. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2005.11.020>.
- Roe, E.D., Nelson, F. and Sandbrook, C. (Ed) (2009). Community management of natural resources in Africa: Impacts, experiences and future directions. *International Institute for Environment and Development*. <https://www.iied.org/17503iied>.
- Shackleton, S., Campbell, B., Wollenberg, E. and Edmunds, D. (2002). Devolution and Community-based Natural Resource Management: Creating Space for Local People to

- participate and benefit? *Natural Resource Perspectives*, 76, pp. 1-6. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/91369/NRP76.pdf>.
- Shereni, N.C. and Saarinen, J. (2021). Community perceptions on the benefits and challenges of community-based natural resources management in Zimbabwe. *Development Southern Africa*, 38(6), pp. 879–895. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0376835X.2020.1796599>.
- Sima, M., Liang, P. and Qingjie, Z. (2023). The impact of fiscal decentralization on economic growth: A comparative analysis of selected African and OECD countries. *Heliyon*, 9(9), e19520. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e19520>.
- Stoldt, M., Göttert, T., Mann, C. and Zeller, U. (2020). Transfrontier Conservation Areas and Human-Wildlife Conflict: The Case of the Namibian Component of the Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA) TFCA. *Scientific Reports*, 10, 7964. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-64537-9>.
- Tichaawa, T. and Mhlanga, O. (2015). Community perceptions of a community-based tourism project: A case study of the CAMPFIRE programme in Zimbabwe. *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance*, 1, pp. 55–67. <https://my.de/mZOUT>.
- Turpie, J. and Letley, G. (2021). Would community conservation initiatives benefit from external financial oversight? A framed field experiment in Namibia's communal conservancies. *World Development*, 142, 105442. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105442>.
- United Nations Division for Sustainable Development (UNSD) (1992). United Nations Conference on Environment & Development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992, AGENDA 21. *United Nations*. <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21.htm>.
- Vehrs, H.-P., Kalvelage, L. and Nghitevelekwa, R. (2022). The Power of Dissonance: Inconsistent Relations Between Travelling Ideas and Local Realities in Community Conservation in Namibia's Zambezi Region. *Conservation and Society*, 20(1), pp. 36–46. [https://doi.org/10.4103/cs.cs\\_32\\_21](https://doi.org/10.4103/cs.cs_32_21).
- Wagana, D.M., Iravo, M.A. and Nzulwa, J.D. (2017). Analysis of the Relationship between devolved Governance, Political Decentralization, and Service Delivery: A critical Review of Literature. *European Scientific Journal*, 11(31), pp. 457-472. <http://localhost/xmlui/handle/123456789/3297>.
- Zhang, F. (2023). Tourist Economy: The Impact of Safari in Developing African Countries. *Berkley Economic Review*. <https://econreview.studentorg.berkeley.edu/tourist-economy-the-impact-of-safari-in-developing-african-countries/>.

## **Culture and Environment in Africa Series**

### **Edited by the Cologne African Studies Centre**

- Issue 1**      **Goodman Gwasira 2011**  
A Rare Combination of Engravings and Paintings in the Dome Gorge,  
Daureb/Brandberg: A potential core element for World Heritage Status.
- Issue 2**      **Eric Mutisya Kioko 2012**  
Poverty and Livelihood Strategies at Lake Naivasha, Kenya: A case study of Kasarani  
Village.
- Issue 3**      **Willis Okumu 2013**  
Trans-local Peace Building among Pastoralist Communities in Kenya: The Case of  
Laikipi Peace Caravan
- Issue 4**      **Innocent Mwaka 2014**  
Bee-keeping and honey production as alternative livelihood strategies among the  
Pokot of Baringo County, Kenya
- Issue 5**      **Florian Chisawani Silangwa 2014**  
Migration and demographic changes. Its implications on land transformation and  
changing socio-economic development in the Lake Eyasi Basin in Karatu District,  
Tanzania
- Issue 6**      **Leonardo Lembcke 2015**  
Socio-Ecological Change and Migration in South-East Lake Naivasha, Kenya
- Issue 7**      **Esemi Olwage 2015**  
“Growing together”: The politics of knowing and creating an urban commons in Cape  
Town, South Africa
- Issue 8**      **Jonathan H.M. Kempen 2016**  
“Sharing is over!”: A Case Study on Sharing Norms in the Namibian Resettlement  
Projects of Skoonheid and Drimiopsis
- Issue 9**      **Joel Kigenyi 2016**  
Coping with resource extinction: The case of medicinal plants in Kawete village,  
Iganga district, Uganda
- Issue 10**      **Katrin Sowa 2017**  
Street-Level Bureaucrats and Passport Networking: Practices of Immigration Law  
Enforcement in Northern Uganda
- Issue 11**      **Tanyaradzwa Edith Whande 2018**  
Energy Sources, Access and Women’s Livelihood Strategies: A Case Study of Micro-  
Hydroelectricity Access in Chipendeke Village, Zimbabwe
- Issue 12**      **Adelina Matinca 2018**  
Human-Wildlife Conflict in Northeastern Namibia: CITES, Elephant Conservation and  
Local Livelihoods

## **Culture and Environment in Africa Series**

### **Edited by the Cologne African Studies Centre**

- Issue 13**      **Emily Mika Thuening 2018**  
Causes of Expansion of Urban and Peri-Urban Crop Cultivation in Northwest Namibia
- Issue 14**      **Wilfrida Omusheni Kuta 2018**  
Wildlife conservation on communal pastoral land: A case study of Il Ngwesi  
Conservancy in Laikipia County, Kenya
- Issue 15**      **David Greven 2018**  
Conservancies and their Impact on Livelihood and Environment: The Example of  
Impalila Conservancy
- Issue 16**      **Katharina Deichsel 2019**  
“Our Lake Is Our Farm”: Local Knowledge of Tugen Fishermen on Environmental  
Changes of Lake Baringo, Kenya
- Issue 17**      **Jennifer Hagemann 2022**  
The value of an elephant: Conservation politics and its impact on human-elephant  
relations in the Kunene Region/Namibia
- Issue 18**      **Sandra Tamara Tikale 2025**  
Reviving local seeds? Practices and narratives around maize, *mahangu* and sorghum  
seeds in Northeast Namibia
- Issue 19**      **Fabio Schleicher 2025**  
Financial Devolution in Community-Based Conservation in Southern Africa