

Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI)
Supporting Resilient Forest Livelihoods
through Local Representation

Examining the Democracy Outcomes of Environmental Subsidiary

**The Case of a Carbon Forestry Initiative from
Central Mozambique**



Alois Mandondo

Examining the Democracy Outcomes of Environmental Subsidiarity

Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) Research Programme

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is a research and training program, focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It is jointly managed by the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC). It is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The RFGI activities are focused on 12 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The initiative is also training young, in-country policy researchers in order to build an Africa-wide network of environmental governance analysts.

Nations worldwide have introduced decentralization reforms aspiring to make local government responsive and accountable to the needs and aspirations of citizens so as to improve equity, service delivery and resource management. Natural resources, especially forests, play an important role in these decentralizations since they provide local governments and local people with needed revenue, wealth, and subsistence. Responsive local governments can provide forest resource-dependent populations the flexibility they need to manage, adapt to and remain resilient in their changing environment. RFGI aims to enhance and help institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local wellbeing, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions.

REDD+ is a global Programme for disbursing funds, primarily to pay national governments of developing countries, to reduce forest carbon emission. REDD+ will require permanent local institutions that can integrate local needs with national and international objectives. The results from RFGI Africa research will be compared with results from collaborators in Asia and South America in order to enhance RFGI comparative scope, and to broaden its geographic policy relevance.

RFGI Working Paper Series Editors' Note

James Murombedzi, Jesse Ribot
and Gretchen Walters

Struggles for control over and access to nature and natural resources; struggles over land, forests, pastures and fisheries, are struggles for survival, self determination, and meaning. Natural resources are central to rural lives and livelihoods: they provide the material resources for survival, security, and freedom. To engage in the world requires assets that enable individuals, households, and communities to act in and on the world around them. The ability to accumulate assets and the ability to access government and market services depends partly on such resources along with the political-economic infrastructure – rights, recourse, representation, markets, and social services – that are the domain of government. Democracy, which both enables and requires the freedom to act, is predicated on these assets and infrastructures. Since the 1980s, African governments have been implementing local government decentralization reforms aimed at making local government more democratic by making them responsive and accountable to citizen needs and aspirations; in many places this has been done through a decentralisation of natural resource governance to local administrations. In order to be responsive to individual, household and community demands, local governments, too, need resources and decision-making powers. There must be a public domain – a set of public resources, such as forests or fisheries, which constitute this domain of democracy, the domain of decisions and services that citizens can demand of government. Natural resources, when decentralized into the domain of local authority, form an important part of the resources of individuals, households, communities and governments, making possible this move toward local democracy.

Natural resources provide local governments and people with wealth and subsistence. While nature is not the only source of rural income, the decentralization of natural resources governance is a core component of local government reform. However, governance reforms have been implemented in a context broadly characterized by an enduring crisis of the Western economic and financial systems, which in turn has stimulated privatization and liberalization in every sphere of life, including nature. The process has deprived local governments of public resources – depriving individuals and communities of a reason to engage, as a powerless government is not worth trying to influence. Privatization is depriving forest-dependent peoples of their access to formerly ‘public’ or traditionally managed resources. National governments, as well as international bodies such as the United Nations programme, titled the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), further this trend as they collaborate with private interests to promote the privatization of natural resources. The resulting enclosures threaten the wellbeing of resource-dependent populations and the viability of democratic reforms.

The specter of climate change is deepening the crisis of enclosure. A key response to climate change has been the attempt to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through enhancing the capacity of forests in the developing world to store carbon, ostensibly for the benefit of the atmosphere as well as the communities who use these forests. UN REDD seeks to pay communities, through their national governments, to conserve their forests as carbon storage. A plus ‘+’ was added to REDD, forming REDD +, to call for improved ecosystems services, forest management, conservation, forest restoration and afforestation to enhance the capacity for carbon storage. Designed on the basis of similar payments for environmental services (PES) schemes, REDD+ has the potential to inject vast new sums of money into local resource use and governance. In the context of fragile local governments, nascent democracies and powerful private interests, such cash inflows result in the commercialization and privatization of forests and natural resources and the dispossession of local resource users. This financialization of natural resources grossly diminishes the scope for democratic natural resource governance schemes. To be sure, the implementation of REDD+ can also learn from and avoid the pitfalls experienced in these PES schemes, especially if they represent local interests in natural resource governance decision making.

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is an Africa-wide environmental-governance research and training program focusing on enabling responsive and accountable decentralization to strengthen the representation of forest-based rural people in local-government decision making. Since January

2012, the programme has carried out 33 case studies in 12 African countries, with comparative cases Nepal and Peru, to assess the conditions under which central authorities devolve forest management and use decisions to local government, and the conditions that enable local government to engage in sound, equitable and pro-poor forest management. Aimed at enabling local government to play an integrative role in rural development and natural resource management, these case studies are now being finalized and published to elicit public discourse and debate on local government and local democracy. This Working Paper series will publish the RFGI case studies as well as other comparative studies of decentralized natural resources governance in Africa and elsewhere that focus on the intersection between local democracy and natural resource management schemes. Using the concepts of institutional choice and recognition, the cases deal with a comprehensive range of issues in decentralized forest management in the context of REDD+, including the institutional choices of intervening agencies; the effects of such choices on accountability and representation; and the relationships between local government and other local institutions. The series will also include syntheses discussing the main findings of the RFGI research programme.

Based at CODESRIA, and funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the RFGI is a three year collaborative initiative of CODESRIA, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). RFGI working papers and documents, including the background papers, the RFGI programme description, and the RFGI Methods Handbook, can be found on line at:

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CODESRIA publishes *Africa Development*, the longest standing Africa based social science journal; *Afrika Zamani*, a journal of history; the *African Sociological Review*; the *African Journal of International Affairs*; *Africa Review of Books* and the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. The Council also co-publishes the *Africa Media Review*; *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*; *The African Anthropologist*, *Journal of African Transformation*, *Méthod(e)s: African Review of Social Sciences Methodology*, and the *Afro-Arab Selections for Social Sciences*. The results of its research and other activities are also disseminated through its Working Paper Series, Green Book Series, Monograph Series, Book Series, Policy Briefs and the *CODESRIA Bulletin*. Select CODESRIA publications are also accessible online at www.codesria.org

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Abstract

Many scholars believe environmental decentralizations throughout many of the world's forests are not a failure, but a failure to implement decentralization. This study used a mixed-methods case study to examine the democratic outcomes of an initiative where decentralization appeared to be structured along environmental subsidiarity principles, considered crucial for democracy. It is based on a project in which a private company, through an elected local committee, facilitates communities living in an area adjacent to a national park in central Mozambique to grow trees and conserve forests to sequester carbon in return for cash rewards. The design of this project entrenched existing power imbalances, reinforcing the appropriation of control by committee elites appearing to enjoy the support of influential company actors residing in one of the four study wards with them. Committee representatives from most of the other wards pulled out because of the power tussles and high transaction costs arising from their unremunerated roles. The remaining committee members appropriated control over decisions and benefits, entrenching the exclusion of the other wards where citizens became sceptical and resentful of the committee. Grievances over restrictions in forest resource use and inadequate and erratic financial rewards for growing trees remained unresolved. Excluded citizens began to believe it was futile to hold the committee and company to account. Most citizens stopped seeking recourse with the committee, with some tree growers beginning to shirk in their effort growing trees or destroying the trees altogether in frustration and anger. All these outcomes severely compromised local democracy. The study argues that subsidiarity is best addressed together with local level factors constraining democracy in forests.

Introduction

Perceptive synopses of diverse local natural resource management initiatives have helped unravel the principles required to make such initiatives robust (Ostrom 1990; Murphree 1991, 1999; Pomeroy *et al.* 2001; Anderies *et al.* 2004; Pagdee *et al.* 2006). These principles have been widely evaluated and debated (Western *et al.* 1994; Cleaver 1999, 2000; Bardhan 2000; Hume and Murphree 2001; Mandondo 2001). Pursuant to the lesson-building agenda, Ribot (2004) has proposed the central tenets defining *decentralized* natural resource management regimes, which he terms ‘environmental subsidiarity principles’ (p. 81). Using case studies drawn from around the world, he shows that most of the principles are seldom implemented. Where implemented, the necessary arrangements are attempted either piecemeal or in a half-hearted fashion. Hence, he argues that decentralization throughout much of the world’s forests cannot be considered a failure, but a failure to implement decentralization. While there is growing consensus around this observation (Oyono 2005; Sikor and Nguyen 2007; Diaw 2010; Karsenty 2010), its inverse has not received as much scholarly attention and debate. This study contributes to this need by using a case where the main elements of environmental subsidiarity appeared to be present to explore two main questions. Does the presence of key elements of subsidiarity result in more democratic outcomes in terms of substantive representation, or a situation in which representatives answer and respond to the needs of citizens who are able to hold them to account (sanction or reward them) based on their conduct and performance (Manin *et al.* 1999; Bovens 2007)? If not, what factors further intervene to undermine the attainment of substantive representation?

Before introducing the key tenets of Ribot’s (2004) environmental subsidiarity principles, the study will briefly outline their theoretical and philosophical

premises. The concept of subsidiarity is mainly rooted in late nineteenth century Catholic social teaching, but was more clearly elaborated through a 1931 papal encyclical by Pope Pius XI (Murray 1995). The subsidiarity principle stipulates that all functions that can be done by individuals or lower level organizations be left to them. Higher level organizations, such as governments, should only intervene in functions that lower level organizations cannot exercise on their own, or when these levels need help. Subsidiarity therefore denotes the idea that central authority should play secondary (subsidiary) roles after all the locally 'doable' primary functions have been devolved to 'the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent authority.'¹⁷ The philosophical basis of subsidiarity was to protect the energy, self-sustaining capacity and dignity of the human person against the centralizing and bureaucratic tendencies of the modern welfare state (Bosnich 1996). Subsidiarity should, however, not be misconstrued as implying that 'small is better' as some suggest (e.g. Schumacher 1973) when it actually means that 'decisions should be made at the lowest level possible and the highest level necessary' (Clarke 2012:1). Notions of subsidiarity have been widely adopted as organizing principles for the allocation of authority and responsibility across various levels of social and political organization. They have been applied with respect to business organization (Peters and Waterman 1982; Drucker 1968), governance in general (Coglianese and Nicolaidis 1996), human rights law (Carozza 2003) and federated government as elaborated under the Maastricht Treaty in the case of the European Union (Nicolaidis 2004), beyond all of which it has evolved into a central tenet of international law. Some scholars have applied subsidiarity with respect to natural resource governance (e.g. Crowley 2001; Ribot 2004; Marshall 2008; Lockwood *et al.* 2010). Of these, Ribot's (2004) synopsis distils amore instructive guide to the key elements of environmental subsidiarity.

The central tenets of environmental subsidiarity (*à la* Ribot 2004) encompass twelve principles that are classified into three sets for convenience. The first set concerns vesting the lowest appropriate (local government) levels with discretionary powers, or the latitude to make, implement and enforce decisions, rules and policies without overbearing state control. Though necessary, discretionary powers alone are insufficient for lower level authorities to respond to the needs of citizens. Hence, the second set of the subsidiarity principles revolves around availing the authorities with resources, materials and funds that give them the power or energy to respond. The material basis for responsive local level authorities can be fortified by vesting them with control over land and natural resource access, guaranteeing subsistence usufruct rights and granting them control over lucrative opportunities. This requirement goes hand in hand with the transfer of appropriate fiscal functions,

including the powers to borrow, tax and charge fees. Governments can further foster and protect fiscal self-sufficiency in lower level authorities by desisting from saddling them with costly responsibilities that they do not fund. Both of the above sets of power need to be transferred as 'secure rights and not retractable privileges' (Ribot 2004:81). This is mostly because governments tend to recentralize power when lucrative opportunities arise (Murombedzi 1992; Ekoko 1998; Ribot *et al.* 2006; Ribot 2009). The last set of subsidiarity principles concerns separating and balancing power within and across various levels of an organization. Separation of power entails fostering checks and balances among executive, legislative and judicial functions. Among other things, balancing power across the scale includes freeing local resource-use decisions from inordinate technical approvals. This principle extends to vesting local level authorities that bear the vagaries of resource use with control over access to commercially valuable resources.

Though none of the above sets of principles is sufficient on its own, Ribot (2004) considers the discretionary powers set to be the most important in terms of substantive representation, a construct that couples responsiveness with accountability (Manin *et al.* 1999). He argues that:

The domain of local discretion is important since it is the domain of freedom around which democratic government, citizenship, and civil society can form and develop. Even if elected, local authorities who do not hold discretionary powers are not democratic since they cannot be responsive. Nor do they have a meaningful domain of action within which the local population can judge and respond to their performance. (Ribot 2004:21).

If the lack of discretionary powers undermines local democracy (responsiveness and accountability), then does local democracy occur where discretionary powers exist? This study examined the latter counterfactual through a carbon forestry initiative promoted by a private company in central Mozambique. In this initiative, local people are represented by an officially recognized land committee that appeared vested with considerable discretionary powers and other elements of subsidiarity, such as secure land and resource rights. The study's findings show how power tussles that ensued behind a backdrop of a brand of discretion that almost left actors in the local arena to their own designs triggered multipliers of other adversities. With the distribution of power and influence weighted in favour of committee leaders allied to company officials residing in one of the wards, committee leaders from the other wards disengaged, fuelling the isolation and disengagement of citizens in these other wards. The disengagement of leaders and citizens in the other wards accentuated the existing power imbalances, worsening the appropriation of control

and benefits by the remaining committee leaders through modes akin to what is referred to in the literature as elite capture (Platteau and Gaspart 2003; Platteau 2004; Fritzen 2007). Elite capture fuelled resentment among the citizens, fuelling scepticism and resentment that undermined accountability and responsiveness.

Though it is a case study and not a 'true experiment' (Trochim and Donnelly 2008), this study subsumes a causal relationship around which the evidence is organized, namely that subsidiarity results in accountability and responsiveness. The next section therefore places land committees within the context of Mozambican land and natural resource laws and policies that created and recognized them as the lowest appropriate authorities. It lays emphasis on the extent to which the committees are vested with discretionary powers and other elements of subsidiarity. The section also sketches how the committees relate to other local institutions, in addition to describing the study site. The methods section mainly focuses on the dependent or outcome variables of responsiveness and accountability, detailing how these were measured and assessed. It also extends to how this study assessed the study committee's resources, personnel and their skills and influencing power since these have a bearing on the ensuing power plays and how they impinged on accountability and responsiveness. These outcomes are detailed under the findings section before the various components of the study under the discussion section are tied together. For reasons of confidentiality pseudonyms are used for all people and organizations other than public institutions that are referred to by their official names.

Contextual background and study site

The Policy Setting

Land committees have their origin in the country's 1997 Land Law. This law underpins a rural development model that secures the land rights of citizens while promoting foreign investment. For much of the peasantry these land rights are based on customary use and occupation. Use and occupation are defined in very broad terms on the grounds that although communities occupy small areas, their use of resources extends over large territories, including fields, fallow land, graveyards, rivers, mountains, etc. (Durang and Tanner 2004; Norfolk and Tanner 2006). Rights conferred are aligned with these expanses of territory, with the territory conceptually seen as bounded by an open border to allow for inflows of much needed investors, skills and technology, to stimulate development (Hanlon 2010). A territory is set out through 'delimitation', a legally prescribed process through which a community self-identifies itself, and it is usually facilitated by rural development NGOs. Delimitation is achieved through participatory mapping in which distinctive features at the ends of a territory are marked to facilitate identification of boundaries, which are then mapped. A certificate of recognition of such a territory is issued to a land committee democratically constituted by those residing within the territory (Norfolk and Tanner 2006).

Communities requiring formal title over their rights to use and benefit from the land proceed to 'demarcation', a stage at which territory boundaries are mapped, geo-referenced and entered into the national cadastre (Tanner *et al.* 2009). These rights are conferred through titles called DUATS (*direito de uso e aproveitamento da terra*). Mozambican land law obliges potential investors to 'consult' local

communities in negotiations that are supervised by administrators of local districts (Government of Mozambique 1997). A ministerial decree (93/2005) entitles the community, through its respective committee, to a 20% royalty on tax revenues from commercial forestry and wildlife operations on or adjacent to the community's territory. The decree is complemented by earlier preceding forestry and wildlife laws that provided for resource sharing in the early 1990s. NGOs working in central Mozambique have organized land committees to supersede natural resource committees established under these laws, or to become fused with them (ORAM Sofala 2011). Royalties generate significant income streams for areas rich in wildlife and timber resources.²

Legally vesting land rights in officially recognized community-level committees fulfils the environmental subsidiarity conditions of transferring secure and not easily retractable rights to the lowest accountable units. Though located much lower than the district level, which is the seat of local government in many countries, the committees represent all the citizens within the territory and are democratically constituted. This arrangement appears fortuitous because there is no elected rural local government in Mozambique. District governments are administrative extensions of the central government. The district governments are run by government appointees presiding over the lower echelons of the central government administration that extends down to the chief of the post (*chefe de posto*), and chief of locality (*chefe de localidade*), ending with customary chiefs (*regulo*) and sub-chiefs (*mfumu*) at the community level. Though the customary chiefs are ex-officio members of their respective committees, the committees have considerable discretionary powers because they operate independent of the government system. Beyond official recognition of the committees and the approval of their constitutions, the government exerts no control on the decisions and operations of the committees. Communities also enjoy autonomy over their financial resources, although the 20 per cent royalty that they are entitled to appears to fall short of the subsidiarity principle of adequately availing lucrative opportunities. These dividends, however, provide a platform on which communities can mobilize funds to independently pursue their own ventures. This economic opportunity is buttressed by secure land and resource rights that the communities hold through their DUATs.

As part of the land rights registration process, ORAM (Rural Association for Mutual Support), the NGO operating in central Mozambique, facilitates communities to produce constitutions that enshrine the principle of separation of powers. A committee consists of three organs that share power to ensure checks and balances. These organs include a management committee, a supervisory council,

and the general assembly. The management committee wields executive duties and responsibilities. The supervisory council presides over general meetings and elections held at five-yearly intervals to ensure their fairness and credibility. The general assembly consists of all the citizens within the DUAT-holding community who vote for members of the other two organs. It is designated as the supreme organ of the committee to which the management organ should submit past and future plans, budgets and accounts for approval. Scheduled general meetings allow the general assembly to pass judgments and sanction members of the other two organs.³ For purposes of consistency, the term committee will henceforth be used to refer to the management committee that wields executive powers, except where specified.

The Nexus between the Company and the Community

Investors prefer operating among DUAT-holding communities with officially endorsed constitutions because these provide a more solid basis on which they can negotiate and enter into contracts with the communities to secure their own investments (ORAM Sofala 2011). The study community (which holds a DUAT) lies adjacent to an iconic national park located close to a unique mountain ecosystem in central Mozambique. After the civil war ended in 1992, this area's unique setting attracted the attention of two (royalty-paying) commercial initiatives seeking to restore and conserve both the park and the mountain ecosystem. A private entity funded by an overseas family foundation manages the park on behalf of the Mozambican government, mostly based on the exclusion management model, although illegal hunting and encroachment by surrounding communities still occur. The other commercial player is a private company that has for the past 14 years promoted a project to sequester carbon, restore habitat, conserve biodiversity and improve the livelihoods of the study community in and around the buffer zone adjacent to the park (Envirotrade 2010). The project encourages the community's predominantly peasant farming households to produce these environmental services by planting trees on their landholdings and collectively protecting forest blocks in exchange for monetary rewards.

The company interfaces with the community through the Mutana committee, which is named after one of the four wards⁴ comprising a similarly named chiefdom under which the study community falls. The relationship between the company and the community is defined by a formal MoU in the context of the country's wildlife and forestry-based resource sharing laws. In addition to promoting the production of environmental services, the company facilitates

the sale of the accruing carbon credits on international markets subject to Plan-Vivo certification standards (Envirotrade 2010). The initiative's revenue-sharing formula is designed to cover the company and its international parent's local and overseas management, operational and transaction costs, with 33% reserved for disbursement to the local environmental service producers. The participation of households in planting trees and conserving forests is regulated by a contract between the farmers and the company. Rewards for tending trees for 25 years are disbursed in yearly instalments over an initial seven-year period. Women and men can enter into a contract in their own right or in partnership with their spouses on their family landholdings (Envirotrade 2010). What households realize depends on the extent of their plantings and the technical intervention undertaken. Estimates based on figures that La Via Campesina (2012) was able to access however suggest a farmer planting 0.22 ha earned US\$128 over the seven-year period, while a more rewarding intervention termed 'forest plantation' could earn the grower up to US\$670 over the same period on a per hectare basis.

The Study Site

In addition to Mutana ward, the Mutana chiefdom consists of three other wards that Spirc (2009) alternatively refers to as large villages. These are Hadabi, Nhacanjiri and Musambidzi. However there is no distinct boundary in terms of distribution of the settlement between Hadabi and yet another village that locals consider as part of Hadabi, which is the convention followed in this study. The chiefdom covers 20,000 hectares and consisted of about 1,000 households in 2008 (Hegde and Bull 2011) of which 20% are estimated to be female-headed (Envirotrade 2010). Hegde and Bull (2011) break down the distribution of households across the four wards as follows: 64 in Mutana, 64 in the combined Hadabi ward, 414 in Musambidzi and 441 in Nhacanjiri. Mutana and Hadabi lie in the east immediately adjacent to the national park, and are relatively more difficult to access. The more populous Nhacanjiri and Musambidzi wards lie in the west, straddling the country's national EN1 highway, thus enjoying better market access, particularly to the district centre. Musambidzi lies in closer proximity to the district centre (20 km) than Nhacanjiri (about 40 km). Nhacanjiri and Hadabi are located in the south along a major perennial river that boasts a major cultivable floodplain and some scope for fishing.

The predominantly Sena-speaking study community is characterized as relatively homogenous in terms of pervasiveness of poverty and heavy dependence on the natural resource base, particularly forests (Envirotrade 2010). Shifting

cultivation and forest resource extraction comprise the major livelihood activities in this dry forest area that, being predominantly peopled by peasant cultivators, is through forest policy classified as a multiple-use forest zone (Nhantumbo and Izidine 2009). Land and forest laws enable peasant households in multiple-use forest zones to use land for homesteads and fields as their own. The fields average 1 ha (Envirotrade 2010). The *regulo* (traditional chief) grants the permission to open up new fields. The laws also enable villagers to extract non-timber forest products (NTFPs) from surrounding woodland commons for their subsistence needs, but not for commercial use, which is only enabled through permits granted by the district administration (Schindler and Bruck 2006). Clearance of forests for fields combines with charcoal making, NTFP extraction and frequent fires⁵ as the major drivers of deforestation in these predominantly *miombo* woodlands (Campbell 1996). The project is intended to reduce these activities.

3

Methods

The study employed a mixed-method case approach covering four wards under the Mutana committee, which holds the DUAT for the Mutana chiefdom. There are also other communities around the 4,067 km² park from which Mutana was purposively selected because it is one of the country's pilot carbon forestry sites. Prior research at the site has mostly included ecological or rural economy studies (e.g. Mushove 2004; Hegde and Bull 2011; Spirc 2009; Lagrange 2010) that this study aimed to complement from a governance perspective. Data was initially gathered through individual and key informant interviews across all the wards to identify issues for more in-depth focus group discussions. The focus group discussions involved between 15-36 participants consisting of variable proportions of men and women managing to attend the discussions in each of the four wards. Attendance was higher in the more populous Nhacanjiri and Musambidzi wards. These preliminary activities led to the development of a household survey that was administered to male and female household heads captured through a random sample of ten households in each of the wards. Time and resource constraints did not permit more proportionate clustered random sampling to reflect a good balance across gender, resource use groups and the wards' different population sizes.

The study's interest was to examine whether a context featuring considerable subsidiarity resulted in responsiveness and accountability. Responsiveness pertains to the representatives, indicating the extent to which they adopt policies 'signalled as preferred by citizens' (Manin *et al.* 1999). On this basis, responsiveness was measured through what was actually implemented from among the issues adopted for deliberation (discussed) by the committee, as well as who owned and benefited

from these. The study investigated needs signalled as preferred by citizens through group discussions augmented by a household questionnaire that captured data on needs most resonantly voiced by the households since the inception of the project. From these, the two issues of a public goods nature most commonly voiced across all wards over the previous three years were considered as the needs signalled at the citizen level. The committee's responsiveness was determined through longitudinal reviews of the committee's minutes and records, focusing on their content in terms of resolutions on issues respectively discussed, and then implemented. Some of the minutes were missing while others turned out to be scanty on detail. This necessitated follow-up interviews with members of the committee.

However any authority vested with discretionary power without the necessary material and financial resources and skills cannot be responsive, even if it has the will to respond. It lacks the power to respond (Ribot 2004). The committee's power to respond was measured by its material and human capital endowments. The committee's financial capital endowments were arrived at through audits of the committee's financial records, which were verified where necessary with informal interviews with members of the executive and supervisory committees. The committee's physical capital endowments were ascertained through audits of the committee's asset inventories, verified through physical enumeration. The study targeted its assessments of the committee's human capital at members of its executive and supervisory organs. The focus was on these assessments of processes through which these members assumed office, their educational levels and technical skills, as well as their 'leveraging power' or the influence they were perceived by others in group discussions as possessing.

In line with Bovens (2007), this study considered accountability to have two components. The first concerns the extent to which representatives explain and account for their actions or justify their conduct that this author terms answerability. The second concerns the extent to which the represented judge these accounts and explanations, whether they are satisfied or not, and the consequent actions they take to punish or reward representatives. Answerability and sanctions were assessed through focus group discussions and the household survey. The group discussions tackled the extent to which leaders of the committee's executive organ were known, seen and heard, the explanations and accounts they gave, and how the participants viewed and responded to the representatives' explanations and actions. The study ascertained the wider resonance of sentiments expressed in group discussions through the household survey. Household survey respondents were asked if they received explanations or accounts on pertinent sets of issues identified in focus group discussions and if so from whom, and whether the

explanations were satisfactory and credible. The respondents were also asked how they expressed or voiced their satisfaction or dissatisfaction, in particular whether they sought to meet and engage with any authority over their concerns, and if so whom, and whether the concerns were resolved to their satisfaction. These concerns included the issue of poor rewards in relation to effort incurred by the farmers in growing trees and conserving forests, which dominated all the group discussions. Sanctioning was assessed in terms of what respondents ultimately opted to do when their concerns remained unresolved. Given the restricted sample size, questionnaire-based analyses were, in all instances, augmented and triangulated against qualitative data.

4

Findings and Outcomes

Onset of Power Struggles

Though the three organs of the Mutana land/natural resource committee exist, its operations have not been as plain sailing as envisaged in its constitution, but fraught with inconsistencies, discord and power struggles. The power struggle appears to have set in right from its inception in 2001. The constitution stipulates that the committee should consist of 12 members, with each of the community's constituent wards contributing three representatives who should be elected at ward level. All the adults from all the community's wards then elect the committee's president from among the 12 candidates. The community-level elections are held in the Mutana ward where the headquarters of the company and the committee are located approximately 3 km apart of each other. Only one election has been conducted since the committee's inception in 2001, not in 2006 as per five-yearly schedules, but a year later. That election was only convened to fill the vacant presidential post after the resignation of the inaugural president. The election, according to filed proceedings, pitted five candidates: two from Mutana, and one from each of the other three wards. They were not presided over by the president of the supervisory committee as per the established procedure for general assembly meetings, but by the far higher office of the *chefe de localidade*. In terms of outcomes, only two candidates garnered valid votes, with the victor from Mutana vanquishing his adversary by a factor of 7, though only 63 of the community's estimated 6,000 people attended the election. People said they did not vote because they had other more important things to do, including providing food for their families. One respondent of the questionnaire chided the foolhardiness of:

leaving the matrimonial bed in the coldness of early dawn (*mazakweshu*), to trudge back empty handed in the darkness of the night (*mudimawagugugu*), with nothing to offer your wife for the cooking pot.... It is a recipe for divorce.

Whether the initial elections passed the test of credibility, however, remained in doubt. Claims and counter claims were traded, as the elections' transparency and legitimacy variously got affirmed and contested. Although there was a secret ballot and the results were publicly 'accepted' by the loser, the outcomes were disputed by others (including the loser) in private settings outside Mutana. The latter attributed the magnitude of his loss to the company, which he claimed had rigged the election in favour of their protégé, the victor, portrayed as pliant to the company's designs. Voters have to traverse distances of up to 40 km, either walking or cycling. The company ordinarily provides free transport for voters from the other three wards to the venue in Mutana. Though viewed as a godsend by some, the gesture was loathed by others, especially those outside Mutana. For instance, supporters of the losing candidate viewed it as the tool through which the company delivered victory to those who, being 'without the interests of the people at heart', are inclined to comply with the company and in the process ensuring defeat for those considered 'difficult to work with'. The loser styled himself in the latter mould because he 'had the interests of the people at heart', and claimed the company deliberately transported fewer voters from non-Mutana wards seen as inclined to support him. Aspersions cast as to the transparency and credibility of the elections were vigorously rebutted: portrayed by the winner as 'sour grapes', and dismissed by a company informant as part of many ploys to render the company's contribution to the community invisible, including providing free transport not only for important meetings, and taking the sick to hospitals as far as over 100 kilometres away.

Group discussions reflected the division of opinion on the legitimacy of the elections as resonating more broadly within the community. For instance, an *ad hoc* group discussion I had with a group of youthful informants that I chanced upon at a market in Nhacanjiri alluded to the elections as 'not worth attending' and controlled by small groups of influential people across most wards. Focus group discussants in the non-Mutana wards also largely did not view the elections as credible and fair. The Musambidzi group claimed that although they elected representatives of their choice at ward level, these simply made up the numbers on the committee as they were shut out of influential positions through the scheming designs of the company. Company actors allegedly manipulated the process to promote leaders who sided with them or turned a blind eye even as they failed to pay tree growers adequately and on time as per the contract. Representatives who later turned out vocal were allegedly purged by the company and replaced by those more pliant to the company. The incumbent president was alleged to have won his position in this manner and was hence portrayed as a *shimumumu*, or the 'mum one' with respect to grievances from people other than those from Mutana, where he resides. Coincidentally, group

discussants in Mutana, where the president and the company are based, viewed the elections as credible and fair. Hence, control over the committee appears to have been geographically fissured from the onset in favour of Mutana in relation to the other wards, appearing further reinforced through the designs of influential company actors.

Outcomes in Terms of Disengagement of Representatives

In group discussions about why very few people participate in elections, participants from non-Mutana wards constantly distinguished between 'us' (the ordinary folk) and 'them' (the committee). This distinction appeared to underlie resentment and an impaired sense of belonging, albeit at the level of electoral participation. The president of the committee attributed the low turnouts to resource constraints, particularly the lack of transport to carry voters. This sentiment was, however, dismissed by some other disgruntled members of the committee, most of whom had disengaged from the committee. The committee is supposed to meet on Thursdays every week,⁶ but three sets of minutes over July 2011 showed that only three to four members consistently attended meetings, a situation the president of the committee confirmed. He considered the trend 'very worrisome', but understandable given that executive members are not remunerated while most of them lack transport to travel for the meetings. All the regular attendees were male, three from Mutana and one from Hadabi.

The manner in which most committee members lost their positions and ceased to be active on the committee partly confirms allegations of company-induced purges, although other factors also appeared to be at play. Of the committee's original members, the founding president resigned, with the resignation notified through a letter from the chairperson of the supervisory council on 25 April 2006. The letter did not specify why he resigned. Key informants suggested he was frustrated, having surrendered a large property he owned to the company, in exchange for rewards promised, but not delivered. An inactive committee member who had been elected to the committee together with the founding president claimed that the company had promised the founding president a modern house, a motorcycle and a cash payment of about US\$ 20,000.⁷ On pestering the company, the founding president is alleged to have lost its favour, and ultimately resigned. Of the eleven remaining members, one was elevated to the presidency while another got employed as a driver on the project, bringing the number down to ten. Of these ten, one vocal member styling himself as 'pro-people' claimed to be unreasonably elbowed out by the company. This brought the number of remaining committee members down

to nine. Of the nine, one saw other overriding priorities as presenting better use of time than participating in committee meetings that go unrewarded. Then there were eight. Of the eight, one got frustrated because bicycles were not bought to alleviate committee members' need to travel long distances to attend unremunerated meetings, then there were seven. Of these another stated:

I was an executive member since the committee's inception in 2001. Initially all appeared well, as I got trained by the company as a *tecnico* in agroforestry activities, doing good work training others in this area. A very good working relationship then existed between the community, the committee and the company. The then company manager was someone with the ordinary people's interests at heart. Many projects were initiated and accomplished, with farmers receiving more meaningful rewards (cash payments) for their effort planting trees. But things came to a head when the manager was replaced by the incumbent, who brought much havoc. I temporarily stopped participating out of frustration, but made up my mind to try and change things from within, but was stunned finding a set of 'entirely new faces' claiming to be committee members on my return in 2010. As a result, I quit, and I am not the first one to do this, neither do I presume to be the last.

Of the other six, two attended the executive committee meetings intermittently, one being a female from Hadabi whose reasons for failing to attend the meetings included overwhelming household chores and lack of transport. In sum, committee organs, as the infrastructural base for accountability and responsiveness, largely appeared to fail to take hold. Factors at play had little to do with whether significant elements of subsidiarity were missing, but more to do with appropriation of power and control by a few representatives (purportedly with the company's support) and the disengagement of representatives due to high transaction costs associated with being an unremunerated representative on the committee. The company and committee elites appeared to exert a significant bearing on who became or continued to be a community representative. This may be in part because the company places more emphasis on conservation than local livelihood goals, as observed by La Via Campesina (2012), and could thus be disinclined to support committee members not fully committed to such goals. In turn, most of the representatives who dropped out appear disposed to easily accede to these designs because the opportunity costs of their time representing others on the committee go largely uncompensated.

Onset of Elite Capture

This section provides evidence on four sets of information that the study set out to collect under measures of responsiveness: preferences expressed by citizens; the

management committee's responding power in terms of physical, financial and human capital resources; the leveraging power of those potentially in positions to influence how these resources are deployed; and how these all had a bearing on what was ultimately implemented and who benefited. The erratic nature of the minutes detailing the deliberations of the committee meetings rendered it difficult to fully track trends in citizens' preferences. Evidence from supporting techniques, however, suggested a rally of preferences towards widening the committee's revenue base by investing in income generating projects, with the following emerging as the dominant priorities in the three years preceding 2012:

- A grinding mill to help provide a much needed service to the community, whilst boosting the committee's finances.
- Purchase of a truck to be operated by the committee on behalf of the community to connect people from some inaccessible parts of the community with the public transport system.

The committee's revenue base has to be noted as relatively modest in relation to the community's needs over the same period. Thus, an analysis of trends in receipts over the period yielded the following results:

Community Royalties from Commercial Operations

This emerged as the major source of revenue for the community, with the park authority and the company comprising the major contributors over the years. Income from the former showed a rising trend over time, with the community's dividend over the three-year period preceding 2012 averaging about 24,640 Meticals (US\$850). In comparative terms, the overall disbursements from the park to the 16 communities adjacent to the park stood at 367,500 Meticals (\$13,125) in 2009. Disbursements from the company over the three-year period averaged US\$ 6,000.

Interest Accruing from Loans

The committee issues loans that in the past few years had been extended to small businesses, with sawmills getting 50,000 Meticals (US\$1786) and carpentry 20,000 Meticals (US\$714) in 2011. Interest on these was pegged at 3 per cent per annum. The committee had also issued a loan of 20,000 Meticals to an individual to buy a car, with another 87,000 Meticals (US\$3107) advanced to a group for the purchase of a grinding mill. Interest charged on the latter two items stood at 5 per cent per annum. This study overlooked assessing the repayment rates on the loans, but will consider the main beneficiaries of the above benefits in a later section.

Membership Fees

These are, in principle, agreed upon by the community but they are highly unpopular. In the previous year these were 10 Meticals per month but nothing was collected. The fees were imposed through a general assembly resolution. If these had been successfully collected they would have significantly added to the resources on which the committee could rely to respond to citizen needs.

The study next turns to ‘leveraging power’, which appeared to have a bearing on who ended up benefiting most. Analyses of perceptions of leveraging power suggested such power as lying within an axis comprised of the committee’s president, a company actor and the *regulo* (traditional chief). For instance, group discussants in Mutana ward portrayed the committee’s incumbent president as ‘clever’ and ‘sophisticated’, with the committee’s immense administrative burden seen as ‘firmly anchored upon his shoulders’. In the other wards he was often portrayed as an ‘adept schemer’ who, because he ‘does not have the interests of the people at heart’, ‘connives to with the company’, to ‘cheat people of their dues’.⁸ Some of these group assessments, nevertheless, appeared over-exaggerated, as some group informants had, in informal interviews prior to this, portrayed the president as a hardworking and well-meaning person. Though some among the executives were seen as also wielding power, the broad sentiment was that most appeared dwarfed by the president. The only exception appeared to be a former anti-colonial combatant, styling himself as a ‘brave-heart’ who, in standing up to the project’s many misdeeds (inadequate and erratic tree-growing rewards), got elbowed out for his efforts. Like a few other local people, the president had completed colonial primary education, considered as adequate for one to qualify as a teacher. He also had NGO experience with GTZ, which was seen as key in his rise to the committee’s presidency.

Though widely rumoured to be a drunk, the *regulo* was seen as making up for this by leaning heavily on the shoulders of an influential sub-chief who also resides in Mutana ward and is reckoned to be the ‘force behind the chief’. The most influential person on the company side was its non-resident manager who lives in the capital of an adjacent province, with the overall balance of power seen as tilted in his favour via his hold on the financial purse strings of the company (which disburses the rewards). Though leveraging power was not equally balanced among these actors, the trinity was portrayed as acting in concert, with the axis firmly entrenched in Mutana ward. So the concentration of custodianship and control of almost all the project’s assets and committee’s assets in Mutana ward also reinforced the imbalance. Thus, in the absence of a state oversight, the balance of power evolved tilted in favour of the company, the remaining committee and customary leader elites.

The above balance of power appeared to impinge on the political dynamics of responsiveness. The analysis of preferences expressed by citizens showed an overwhelming need for a grinding mill and public transport truck. The study tracked the fate of these demands from the citizen level to the stage where they were deliberated upon in committee proceeding through to the implementation stage over the matching period (Table 1). Although the issues of the truck and the grinding mill featured prominently in the committee's deliberations over this period, an additional need not expressed by citizens appeared to receive the same, if not more, attention. This issue concerned buying bicycles to alleviate the transport plight of committee executives who, because they are not remunerated for their services, viewed themselves as subsidizing the rest of the community, with opinion among the executives divided. A different picture appeared at the level of implementation. The grinding mill and the truck were bought.⁹ The bicycles were not bought although they had received prominence in the committee's deliberations. However a set of loans that had neither been demanded by the citizens nor predominantly discussed in the committee's deliberations were issued. A closer look, however, indicated that the committee members and their relatives in Mutana ward were either the new 'owners' of such assets or main beneficiaries to loans disbursed for their acquisition.

Table 1: Variances in Issues Demanded by Citizens and then Discussed and Implemented by the Mutana committee

Phase	Issue Signalled, Adopted or Implemented	Status
Preferred By Citizens	Buy a grinding mill to provide much needed service, whilst boosting the committee's finances	
	Purchase a community truck to connect people from inaccessible parts of the community to the public transport system, thereby boosting the community's finances	
Discussed	Buy bicycles to alleviate the transport plight of committee executives who, because they are not remunerated for their services, are effectively subsidizing the rest of the community (with opinion divided)	Added in and discussed
	Grinding mill signal	Retained and discussed
	Community truck signal	Retained and discussed
Implemented	Truck bought	Implemented
	Grinding mill bought	Implemented
	Bicycles not bought	Not implemented
	Loans issued out, sawmills (US\$1,786), carpentry (\$714)	Added in and implemented

In sum, the results indicate that the committee's wide discretionary power created a situation in which actors allied with influential members of the committee and those with ties to the company benefited more than others. Elite capture appeared to have negative implications on the accountability of the remaining members of the committee. It dented their credibility, fuelling scepticism among citizens about the efficacy of listening to them or engaging them over their other concerns. The main concerns centred on the issues of poor financial rewards for effort expended on growing trees and resource use restrictions imposed to conserve forests to ensure the production of carbon credits.

Implications on Accountability

Answerability

Before turning to how ordinary people sought to influence the conduct of the committee, the study briefly considers how widely its active members were 'seen' and 'heard', and whether their justifications of their conduct were considered 'credible'. These visibility analyses exhibited a gradient that appeared to mirror the geographical distribution of leveraging power. Summaries of verdicts from the group discussions were that these actors were:

- Very well-known and regularly seen and heard in Mutana.
- Though considerably known and often seen, were seldom heard in Hadabi.
- Less-known and seldom seen and heard in Nhacanjiri.
- Much less-known, seldom seen and virtually never heard in Musambidzi.

Group discussants in the wards where the active members of the committee were not well known and heard were sceptical of the explanations that these representatives provided. The general sentiment in Nhacanjiri and Musambidzi was that the information possessed by these actors was craftily sifted or withheld for nefarious ends¹⁰, capped by the retort: 'would a thief explain to you that she/he is about to steal from you?' These extremely negative sentiments in some instances appeared contradicted by the magnitude of support a company informant asserted as extended to the community by the company. Such support was indeed verified by some informants as significant, including transport for the sick and for meetings, as well as creating much-needed employment. At one stage the company employed over 100 people drawn from the community as the project's technicos to provide support to producers, but has since scaled these down to about 40, the gender balance of whom was not verified by this study. The staff reduction was a response to a slump in carbon prices on voluntary carbon markets attributed to the global financial crisis.¹¹

Group discussions on citizens' major concerns to which the committee provided some explanations that tended to be viewed with suspicion outside Mutana, included: inadequate and delayed payments from the company to the growers, broken promises that the payments would come, lack of transparency and favouritism in quantifying tree plantings and restrictions and prohibitions against the use of certain forest resources. Of these, the concern over delayed and inadequate payments turned out most prevalent, almost exclusively dominating even the most mundane of discussions across the wards. Survey data complemented this picture, reflecting a steep decline in levels of satisfaction with rewards realized for effort invested in growing trees and conserving forests. For instance, on a scale of 2 (highly satisfied) to -2 (highly dissatisfied), the respective index fell from 0.2 to -1.2 over the seven-year period from 2005 to 2012. Even though grievances over payments and ensuing patterns of engagements and investments unravelled in an essentially local arena, an economist with the World Bank Country Office associated them with a chain of events that appeared to extend well beyond the local. She portrayed these events in the following terms:

Favourable price regimes that prevailed at global markets enabled the company to transmit price premiums to the local producers. But the prices slumped because of the global financial crisis, itself triggered by speculative borrowing and investments in the US housing market. The dire consequences played out at the local level through a crisis of expectations in which the company's ability to respond fully and adequately in terms of rewards due to producers was rendered precarious.¹²

Though viewed as 'evil' in some instances, concerns over shifts in resource use and rights were frequently viewed as 'necessary' on conservation grounds, with the sentiment coming out more pronounced in Mutana and Hadabi. These lie adjacent to the park, and are closer to the company headquarters, from where they may have received more environmental education. They are also the wards in which the active committee members live and have benefited more from the infrastructural developments that the committee has made over the years. Enumerations of such development by group discussants in Mutana included three boreholes, a clinic, grinding mill and a school, although it was not possible to physically verify some of these developments because of time constraints. In the other wards the discussants in Hadabi mentioned a school, those in Musambidzi a clinic, while those in Nhacanjiri claimed to not have received a significant investment. However some shifts in resource use rights arising from the project were clearly negatively viewed, particularly charcoal in Musambidzi and Nhacanjiri, both of which are located closer to an urban settlement along a national highway. For instance, an informant in the former ward alleged that his son was forced to emigrate from the

ward after failing to raise money for the huge fine imposed on him for making charcoal. In narrating her experiences from an enforcement encounter, an elderly informant at Mucinhar Novo, in Nhacanjiri likened it to a ‘war’:

The night of the raid resembled a war, with torches and vehicle beams flashing all over, as all our charcoal got confiscated. The next day company authorities gathered all the people at the *mfumu’s* place where they publicly asserted that the activity is forbidden. We protested because the agricultural department had authorized us to make the charcoal. In response to this the authorities dispatched a vehicle to fetch the agriculture people to then reiterate, in front of all present, that the activity was forbidden.¹³

Elite capture therefore appears to cause the explanations and accounts that committee members give to citizens to be viewed with scepticism, particularly in wards that are located further from where the active members live. Explanations relating to concerns over restrictions in forest use and uncertain carbon rewards were received with the greatest scepticism in wards outside Mutana. In consequence, people consider sanctioning the committee leaders over their grievances as futile.

Sanctioning

Findings from group discussions suggest an incremental, albeit ultimately futile, pathway through which tree-growing households engaged with a medley of authorities to voice their concerns, with failure at each stage appearing to fuel resentment and apathy. For instance, the Nhacanjiri group saw ‘no use’ in approaching the committee and the company any further now as they used to do. Further engagement was considered ‘an exercise in futility’, mostly because these institutions were ‘insensitive’ and perceived as ‘conniving with each other for the devious to appropriate benefits that are due to tree growers’. The futility of seeking redress from the committee or the company was illustrated by the extent to which even violent engagements over questionable and ambiguous quantifications of household tree plantings and erratic payments hardly brought change, other than, as indicated in Musambidzi: ‘the usual promises that go unfulfilled’. Quantification disputes were reported to often result in fisticuffs or near fisticuffs between some disgruntled tree growers and the company’s *tecnicos*, especially in Musambidzi. Approaching the committee any further was rated the most futile option in this ward, because, as articulated by a vocal discussant: ‘its members are also tree growers who are burning on the same fire as everyone else’; and thus, ‘if both the mother and the baby on her back are on fire, whom do you expect the mother to assist first?’ Women respondents in Nhacanjiri shunned further expressing their grievances to these institutions for fear of being viewed as the ‘trouble makers’ or being embarrassingly ignored and dismissed as the ‘mad ones’.

Similar resentment appeared evident in the Hadabi group, with recourse to higher level authority, especially the District Administrator (DA), easily coming out as the best way forward for the group. The group had high expectations, portraying the DA in 'fatherly figure' terms, with the broad sentiment being that although the administrator's responses are sometimes delayed, they ultimately tend to get fulfilled. This was illustrated through the case in which people in the ward made an outcry about prohibitions against bush meat when the district administrator visited. In response to this the administrator commissioned a vehicle that took people to a dam in Manica Province to harvest fish, albeit on a one-time basis. The informants expressed immense satisfaction with the gesture. The Musambidzi group were not hopeful because a strident clamour they had made over erratic payments had proved futile, even at levels far higher than the district. This was portrayed in terms of their ineffectiveness that a high-powered delegation that included the Provincial Governor exhibited when they last visited the area:

We have expressed our concern over low and erratic payments we are getting for our trees that you are asking about countless times to no avail. The committee knows it. The company knows it. The *chefe de localidade* knows it, so does the *administradore*, or even the Provincial Governor. All these people were present at the meeting where we last raised this issue. The Governor asked the project administrator what he was doing about our concerns, and the latter indicated that he was looking into them. Over a year has since lapsed, and still nothing has happened.¹⁴

Community level household survey findings largely corroborated the above sentiments about the futility of approaching the committee over grievances of poor and erratic rewards and shifts in local people's bundles of rights to resources induced by the project. For instance, on a scale of 0 (no response given) to 2 (comprehensive response given), the degree to which some response was given by the committee for the 25 households that indicated approaching it with regards to low and erratic payments stood at 0.03. And on a scale of - 8 (highly dissatisfied) to 8 (highly satisfied), the extent to which these households were satisfied with the responses they got each time they sought recourse was - 0.47. Respective figures for grievances over shifts in bundles of use rights for 10 households that sought recourse was 0.02 for the response rate, and - 0.18 for the degree of satisfaction with the nature of response given.

However a more disaggregated analysis showed a highly variable picture of the households that were satisfied or dissatisfied with the response they got when they approached the committee to intercede with the company to address the problem pertaining to monetary rewards (Table 2). The actions that the households subsequently took were also highly variable (Table 2). The count of households

that were satisfied with the committee's responses and commending it for the good work stood at 9 out of the 10 households in Mutana. This was done by less than three households in the other wards. Only one household in Mutana continued to approach the committee for recourse despite being unhappy. Some households simply stopped approaching the committee while they continued to invest the same amount of effort tending their trees when they were unhappy. Of these none were in Mutana. Some households expressed their unhappiness by not only stopping to seek recourse with the committee but also shirking on the effort they invested in tree growing. These households were only found in Musambidzi and Nhacanjiri. Some other tree growers expressed their unhappiness by destroying the trees in frustration and anger. None of these were from Mutana.

Table 2: What tree-growing households did when they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the management committee's responses to their concern over uncertain environmental service rewards

	Mutana	Hadabi	Musambidzi	Nhacanjiri
Total number of households	64	64	414	441
Households sampled	10	10	10	10
Satisfied growers commending committee for good work	9	2	3	2
Unhappy but continuing to seek recourse with committee	1	0	0	0
Unhappy and stopped seeking recourse but without shirking on effort	0	6	3	5
Unhappy and stopped seeking recourse but without shirking	0	0	2	1
Unhappy and stopped seeking recourse and destroyed the trees	0	2	2	2

Elite capture therefore appears to induce a generally widespread lack of trust in the committee and the company. Explanations and accounts that the active committee members provide to justify their conduct are viewed with scepticism in the few instances that they are heard by tree growers, especially those outside Mutana. When representatives inspired little or no confidence in farmers, the farmers in the disgruntled wards began to consider it futile to approach the representatives for redress. The likelihood of the represented to hold committee leaders to account was severely diminished as people gave up.

Discussion

This study examined the democratic outcomes of environmental subsidiarity principles in a climate forestry initiative meeting most of these principles in a setting with little or no control from upper level authorities. Outcomes were largely not democratic. The design of this project entrenched existing power imbalances reinforcing the appropriation of control by committee elites appearing to enjoy the support of influential company actors residing in one of the four study wards with them. Committee representatives from most of the other wards pulled out because of the power tussles and high transaction costs arising from their unremunerated roles. The remaining committee members appropriated control over decisions and benefits, entrenching the exclusion of the other wards where citizens became sceptical and resentful of the committee. Grievances over restrictions in forest resource use and inadequate and erratic financial rewards for growing trees remained unresolved. Excluded citizens began to believe it was futile to hold the committee and company to account. Most citizens stopped seeking recourse with the committee, with some tree growers beginning to shirk on their effort growing trees or destroying the trees altogether in frustration and anger.

These outcomes ensued within a context in which a committee had been bestowed with considerable discretion. The outcomes do not imply that wide discretion is bad. Neither do they justify that Mozambique should retract the relatively wide discretion that it bestows on actors involved in diverse natural resource management initiatives in its countryside (World Bank 2012). Instead, they indicate that though environmental subsidiarity is necessary, it remains an insufficient condition for democracy to take hold. The agenda to put sufficient conditions for democratic local natural resource governance in place is an incremental one (Mandondo 2000; Ribot 2004). Subsidiarity mainly concerns

resolving ambiguities in the distribution of authority and responsibility across levels of social organization. The study findings suggest that similar attention needs to be paid to the local drivers of adverse outcomes, if the incremental gains are to be achieved. This study has shown some of these drivers. Yet this study cannot be overly prescriptive on the basis of a single case study. The study, however, still makes an important contribution to the lesson-building agenda from the perspective of determining what remains locally necessary when other conditions for democratic decentralization (e.g. subsidiarity) appear nearly sufficient. This is crucial to attaining Clarke's (2012) more balanced conception of subsidiarity as striving to place decisions 'at the lowest level possible and the highest level necessary'.

The first lesson concerns the political dynamics of elite capture for which it appears unreasonable to consider all forms of higher-level oversight as unnecessary in the name of subsidiarity. It would certainly be naive to expect peasants in an area in which literacy stands at single digit levels (ORAM Sofala 2011) to even out the playing field on their own against sophisticated committee elites boasting NGO experience. Admittedly, this is a particularistic outcome from an isolated pilot site in a country where the amount of land that has been applied for by investors wishing to promote climate forestry interventions in diverse areas stands at close to 40 per cent of the country (World Bank 2012:97). The literacy picture across much of the rural countryside however remains more or less the same, while rural development NGOs continue to facilitate the establishment of committees around more educated local actors (Ecorys 2008). Hence this study's call for some form of higher-level oversight to initiatives that involve investors and local communities is broadly applicable. It envisages arrangements structured along a national 'Code of Conduct for Implementation'(COCI) for climate forestry projects that comes with clearly specified performance targets and indicators, conceivably coming complete with an oversight body to appropriately monitor democratic performance by both the companies and committees. Going national with the COCI is far from entirely ill-conceived as the World Bank (2012:97) reports 'more than 600 communities organized in the context of benefit sharing of forest and wildlife royalties'.

The second lesson pertains to capacity, conceived as the skills and knowledge required for accountability relationships to evolve between leaders and those they represent. Whereas learned actors tend to be elected into committees, the majority of the citizens largely lack the skills and know-how to hold them to account. Furthermore, rural development NGOs emphasize training committee leaders to lead rather than training followers to hold them to account (ORAM Sofala

2011). This may in part account for why most of the represented people could have been easily inclined not to hold representatives to account. On this basis, I recommend training interventions that capacitate leaders and followers alike. The capacity-building agenda in environmental decentralization, however, comes with a paradox that has to be taken cognizance of. Governments often withhold conferring lower authorities with meaningful power on the pretext that they lack capacity. Hence, Ribot (2004) argues that capacity should come before powers. In that sense, the arrangement in which ORAM and other rural development NGOs facilitate capacity building for power to be given to land/natural resource committees in Mozambique is sage.

My final reflection concerns the appropriateness of the scale of territories represented by the committees. Findings show that mostly citizens in one ward were satisfied with the benefits from the project, while those in the other wards felt otherwise. Imbalances in responsiveness may mirror the distribution of political power and influence as they indicate that the committee's responding 'power' is out of phase with the scale of its jurisdiction. Murphree (1991) uses the term 'lowest accountable units' to describe the most appropriate scale which, he argues, should be defined by the dictates of existing spatial and socio-political constraints (Murphree 2000). Territories over which natural resources committees preside in Mozambique are 'self-defined' by the communities, usually equating with huge expanses of land that, for expediency, are often arbitrarily aligned with old colonial boundaries of chiefdoms (Norfolk *et al.* 2003). The sizes of these units may need to be scaled down, if resource constraints suggested by committee executives as detracting from their reach in terms of answerability and responsiveness are anything to go by. This suggestion is far from anachronistic: the creation of such territories is currently work in progress in Mozambique, with much ground still needing to be covered (Nhantumbo and Izidine 2009).

Notes

1. This summation of the most appropriate locus of authorities for exercising primary functions is borrowed from Wikipedia (downloaded 10 March 2015).
2. Interview with Edite Cunhete, Carlos Chiteve and Beatrice Roque, ORAM staff, Beira, 11 June 2012.
3. The analysis in this paragraph is based on the Nhanguo community constitution, which is similar to the one applying to the Mutana community.
4. Prior researchers in the area have loosely used the term ward to refer to areas that have distinct settlements that they alternatively refer to as large villages (Hegde and Bull 2008, Spric 2009). These wards are not formal local government administrative units but comprise chiefdoms that are recognized as administrative units of the central state.
5. Fire outbreaks are common in the dry season and are associated with burning of trees felled when land is opened up for cultivation. Hunters also burn the bush to drive wild animals out of their hideouts.
6. Interview with the president of the Mutana committee, 29 June 2012.
7. Interview with a committee member who has become inactive, 3 July 2012.
8. The sore point in this project is that most tree growers feel short-changed through low and erratic rewards that are incommensurate with their conservation effort. Some feel that the company's technicians undercount their trees or unfairly disqualify some species they plant. However, some tree growers are happy with the assessments and feel adequately compensated. Others are indifferent because tree growing is a minor livelihood activity to them.
9. It was not physically possible to ascertain whether the truck was bought but the president of the committee indicated that a loan had been advanced for this purpose.
10. These ends included entrenching elite capture and currying favours with the company and thus not holding it to account for erratic and declining payments that tree growers were receiving for their conservation work.
11. Interview with a senior company representative, 27 June 2012. The real reasons for the collapse of the carbon market are to do with the market imperfections as well as the inadequacies of markets to allocate carbon costs and benefits. This could also be an important explanation for the erratic performance of the company and its negative influence on subsidiarity.

12. Interview with a senior economist in the World Bank Mozambique Country Office.
13. Response by an elderly woman during an informal discussion with a group of women in Nhacanjiri on 28 October 2012.
14. Interview with an elderly man in Nhacanjiri on 28 October 2012. This respondent ultimately stopped tending the trees in frustration over unresolved grievances.

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