Challenges to the peace-promoting objectives of KAZA TFCA

A case study of the Zambezi Region, Namibia[1]

Lieneke de Visser[2]

The KAZA (Kavango Zambezi) Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA) was officially launched on 15 March 2012. KAZA TFCA is situated in the Okavango and Zambezi river basins, and encompasses parts of Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as thirty-six national parks, game reserves, conservancies and concessions. It extends over an area roughly the size of France, making it Southern Africa's most ambitious TFCA project to date. Approximately two million people and a rich diversity of wildlife, including many threatened species, live inside its boundaries. KAZA's new drawcard claims to ease cross-border tourism for international visitors, building upon established tourist attractions like the Okavango Delta, Chobe National Park, the Victoria Falls and the Zambezi Region. Tourists will thus be offered access to premier regional destinations and a chance to follow major wildlife migration routes across international borders.

KAZA is the fourth TFCA in southern Africa to be signed into treaty by its host states. Like earlier TFCAs, this is accompanied and supported by a peace-promoting discourse that has been employed by a variety of actors in the political, economic and nature conservation domains. In this narrative, international boundaries are reconceptualised as theatres of opportunity for peacemaking, rather than physical barriers and potential sources of dispute between nation states.[3] Peacemaking objectives are reflected in the Memorandum of Understanding between the five KAZA member states, which speaks of fostering transnational collaboration and cooperation.[4] This fits well with the aims of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and its guiding principles of solidarity, peace and security.[5] Indeed, as a recognised SADC project, KAZA enjoys international support from institutions such as the World Bank, WWF and the German government. A KAZA pre-feasibility study declares that a main objective of KAZA is the promotion of a culture of peace and regional cooperation, and elaborates: "TFCAs can play a major role in building good relations between partner countries as they strive to cooperate on a range of mutually beneficial activities.

---

[1] The Zambezi Region roughly coincides with the region known until 2013 as the Caprivi region.

[2] Lieneke de Visser is a PhD candidate at VU University, Amsterdam. Email: lienekedevisser@gmail.com. The article is based on a paper presented at the ABS World Conference, Joensuu / St Petersburg, June 2014.

[3] Duffy, Rosaleen, 'Peace Parks', p.63,75; Ramutsindela Maano, 'Scaling Peace and Peacemakers', p.75; Nugent, Paul & Asiwaju, A. I., African Boundaries.

[4] Cumming DHM, 'Constraints to Conservation', p.5

5 Treaty of the South African Development Community, Article 4(b).

With international boundaries all too often being the staging grounds for launching armed conflicts, an active commitment to promote a culture of peace in these sensitive areas and to demilitarise them should be an objective of all partner countries."[6] Promoting peace is also on the agenda of the Peace Parks Foundation (PPF), an organisation dedicated to the establishment of transfrontier conservation areas and heavily invested in the establishment of KAZA. PPF lists its objectives as "promoting regional peace and stability, conserving biodiversity and stimulating job creation by developing nature conservation as a land-use option."[7]

While the KAZA member states, as well as major stakeholders such as SADC and PPF, clearly identify peace-promotion as an important objective, explicit strategies on how this should be achieved are absent from the minutes of KAZA meetings, and from the countless studies, strategies, proposals and protocols that the project produces. The assumption seems to be that when countries cooperate in the establishment of a TFCA, harmonious relations will follow as a matter of course. By contrast, such expectations have been deemed unrealistic by scholars who have demonstrated a disjuncture in underlying values and policies among SADC states, including all five KAZA member states, as well as a lack of social systems and organisations that would promote unity within SADC.[8] Instead, they point out that KAZA may equally facilitate dispute, since political and security cooperation may be difficult to achieve and contentious issues hard to resolve.

A further potential for discord, which to date has received scant attention in literature on the KAZA project, is situated not at the state level, but rather at the interface between states and non-state stakeholders, as well as among stakeholders. KAZA non-state stakeholders include a host of actors, among them funding agencies, local communities, NGOs, community based organisations, the private sector, traditional authorities, corporate and business partners, conservation organisations, and research and academic institutions.[9] With such a diverse range of players involved, contention may result from conflicting objectives. For instance, while states may prioritise the eradication of poaching, local communities may be intent on safeguarding their livelihoods through hunting. And while conservation NGOs may be devoted to the management of biodiversity, tourism organisations, investors and transnational illicit trading networks alike can be expected to protect

---

[6] http://www.kavangozambezi.org/prefeasibility-study-vol-1, 2006, p.6.
[7] http://www.peaceparks.org/story.php?pid=100&mid=19.
[8] Ramutsindela Maano, 'Scaling Peace and Peacemakers', p.73; Nathan Laurie, 'The absence of common values', pp. 3,14-15.
[9] KAZA TFCA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. http://www.kavangozambezi.org/kaza-stakeholder-engagement-strategy, p.11-12.

their commercial interests. Indeed, complex projects such as KAZA offer untold possibilities for conflict situations. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that misgivings about KAZA's peace-promoting mission are related to two main issues that will be further explored in this article.[10] The first centres on local populations' discontent about longstanding socioeconomic deprivation, and the second is the presence of transnational poaching networks in the region.

The KAZA member states are keenly aware of challenges to stability and peace in the region. Indeed, as a strategy to mitigate grievances among resident populations, they joined KAZA in the expectation that tourism will generate inflows of international revenue and result in socio-economic development. However, to achieve real growth a significant boost in tourism is needed. For this, safety and stability are key requirements, ones that must be provided by the KAZA states. Moreover, since wildlife is a vital element in the enterprise of attracting tourists, the eradication of poaching networks has become an imperative that involves the security apparatus of all five KAZA states. It is at this point that the interests of KAZA and the host states intersect. Whereas the member states look to KAZA to provide an opportunity to pacify restive border populations by bringing economic development, KAZA expects the member states to provide a secure environment that will allow development of the region as a tourist destination on a much larger scale than before. Recognising that local communities are central to both these objectives, they were designated as key stakeholders in the KAZA project. The KAZA TFCA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy thus commits to "[d]evelop mechanisms and strategies for local communities to participate meaningfully in, and tangibly benefit from the TFCA."[11] The partner countries have likewise stated that all KAZA stakeholders should derive "equitable socio-economic benefits" and should be "actively engaged in its planning and development processes."[12]

This article examines how the establishment of KAZA TFCA may advance or challenge peace in the region. It does so by focusing on the Zambezi Region in Namibia, an area located in the heart of KAZA. The first part of the article provides the context, and sketches the twin challenges to the peace-promoting agenda: firstly a history of popular grievances against the central Namibian government; and secondly the evolving regional criminal network. The second and third parts

---

[10] Interviews conducted by author in Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia regions of KAZA during March-May 2014.
[11] KAZA TFCA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. http://www.kavangozambezi.org/kaza-stakeholder-engagement-strategy, p.5.
[12] KAZA TFCA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. http://www.kavangozambezi.org/kaza-stakeholder-engagement-strategy, p.4.

examine the solutions that are presumed to resolve these challenges: socio-economic development and the eradication by military means of crime networks. The last paragraph discusses the extent to which local communities, as key stakeholders whose support is deemed essential for the success of KAZA, and who have been promised 'tangible benefits' from the endeavour, are involved in the project.

Context

The Zambezi Region forms the easternmost tip of the panhandle protruding eastward from northern Namibia. At its widest, the area measures about 200 km east to west, and 80 km north to south. From the capital town Katima Mulilo it is an easy drive to any of four international borders with Angola, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Botswana. The Zambezi Region contains mixed livestock and wildlife areas, as well as communal lands where agro-pastoral land use is practiced. The Zambezi, Kwando and Chobe rivers, as well as Lake Liambezi, provide resources like fish and reeds. Residents of the region grow crops for own use and local markets, while beef is exported to South Africa and fish to neighbouring countries like Zambia and Botswana.

Residents of the Zambezi Region have had a troubled relationship with the Namibian government since independence. Although SWAPO won the first free national elections in 1989, in the Zambezi Region they were defeated by the opposition.[13] To this day residents of the region regard this outcome as a reason for their subsequent neglect by the SWAPO government, and maintain that scarce employment opportunities in the region go to loyal SWAPO supporters sent from the Windhoek capital. In terms of economic development the region has indeed fallen behind. In 1997 it was the poorest of Namibia, with the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS and the shortest life expectancy for its people, forty and fifty years respectively for men and women.[14] After a decline in poverty immediately after independence, since 2003 poverty has in fact increased significantly in the Zambezi Region. A study of 2010 found that more than half the population was still poor, while thirty-five percent of the population, the highest percentage of all regions in Namibia, was severely poor.[15] During the years following independence the Zambezi Region furthermore saw a number of events that fomented grievances and hindered peace in the region. The most important was an armed attempt at secession from Namibia in 1999. This short-lived insurrection was ruthlessly put

---

[13] De Visser, Lieneke, 'Winning and Minds', pp.87-88.
[14] Harring and Odendaal, 'God Stopped Making Land', p.3.
[15] Namibia Statistics Agency, 'Poverty Dynamics in Namibia', p.13;16.

down by Namibian security forces, resulting in accusations by local, national and international organisations of human rights abuses, including torture and lengthy detention without trial for scores of Caprivian prisoners.[16] The subsequent controversial treason trial, now running for over ten years, continues to polarise opinions at both the local and national level. Meanwhile, secessionist aspirations have not quite died out.

A further challenge facing the Namibian government in the Zambezi Region is that of organised crime. Transnational illegal networks in southern Africa aspire to access and control natural resources like ivory, rhino horn and timber for international trade.[17] In recent years poaching incidents have been sharply on the rise in Namibia. According to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), while between the years 2005 and 2011 only two elephant were killed, 121 were killed during the recent two and a half years, with a peak of 78 in 2012.[18] In the KAZA region an illegal syndicate is known to operate. Having originated in Botswana and Zimbabwe in earlier years, the network is longstanding and well organised, involving foreign traders from Congo, China and Senegal. Weapons, typically AK47, are brought in from Zambia, while in Katima Mulilo, the main Namibian town in the region, ammunition is readily available. The routes to the international market are circuitous, but effective. Tusks are transported from Chobe and the Zambezi Region to Lusaka, where the ivory is cut into smaller pieces and packaged. From there the ivory is smuggled in trucks to Windhoek, and on to Namibian harbours or to South Africa. A salient point is that according to a MET official, the network is by no means manned exclusively by foreigners and criminals who hail from urban centres. Instead, local residents in Botswana and the Zambezi Region are deeply involved, since they provide shelter, support and manpower to the poachers.[19]

Against this background of historical discord and contemporary challenges, KAZA was launched. The following paragraphs examine how the twin objectives of poverty alleviation and the eradication of illegal trade networks are to be attained, and how this may affect residents of the Zambezi Region and impact on local attitudes towards conservation or the KAZA initiative.

---

[16] Lamb Guy, 'Debasing Democracy', p.35.
[17] Söderbaum Fredrik, 'Modes of regional governance', p.430; Duffy Rosaleen, 'Peace Parks', p.63.
[18] The Namibian, 12 May 2014, Government and experts meet to tackle poaching. Online available at http://www.namibian.com.na/indexx.php?id=12700&page_type=story_detail.
[19] Interview with MET official, 9 April 2014.

Poverty Alleviation

Not only the Zambezi Region in Namibia, but all of the KAZA region is severely impoverished. According to the latest available figures at the World Bank, the percentage of the people living on less than $1.25 per day varies from thirty-one percent to seventy-four percent in the respective KAZA host countries.[20] Furthermore, a 2004 survey in the KAZA region found that although forty-nine percent of enterprises in the tourism industry were locally owned, they generated only nineteen percent of total turnover. In regard of employment the report was equally bleak: in a region boasting several premier tourist destinations, only 5500 local residents were employed in the tourism industry.[21] Indeed, the five host states purportedly joined KAZA in the economic interest of their borderland populations, and dignitaries at the KAZA launch repeatedly invoked the mantra 'socio-economic development through tourism'. Following SADC policy the chosen strategy to achieve this is grounded in the principles of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM).[22] CBNRM has been defined as: "a mechanism to address both environmental and social-economic goals and to balance the exploitation and conservation of valued ecosystem components."[23] In the Zambezi Region CBNRM practices have been implemented for the past fifteen years, and it may therefore be instructive to examine the success of CBNRM in alleviating poverty.

In line with CBNRM doctrine, nature conservation in the Zambezi Region is pursued through the establishment of conservancies. Conservancies are unfenced, multiple use areas that are zoned by local residents for their livelihood needs. There may be areas dedicated to crop and livestock farming, or areas for mixed wild and domestic animal grazing, but also exclusive areas for wildlife and tourism. In return for responsible management of wildlife, a conservancy has rights over its consumptive and non-consumptive use, and may for instance develop campsites or enter into partnership with tourist lodges.[24] Thirteen conservancies have been established in the Zambezi Region. To date, results from tourism in the conservancies fall short of expectations, and are reported to have had very little impact on alleviating poverty among rural communities.[25] Even where benefits do exceed costs, those benefits do not reach the household level. Instead, local elites

---

[20] World Bank 2008. Online available at http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/region/SSA. Data for Angola (2009), Botswana (1994), Namibia (2004) and Zambia (2010) only. Also see Suich 2008, p.52.
[21] Suich, 'Economic impacts of transfrontier conservation areas', p.47;49;52.
[22] SADC Protocol on Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement 199, Articles 4.2(g) and 7.8. Online available at http://www.sadc.int/files/4813/7042/6186/Wildlife_Conservation.pdf. pp.6,13; Büscher Bram, 'Transforming the Frontier', p.127.
[23] Gruber, 'Key Principles ', p.3.
[24] IRDNC website. Online available at http://www.irdnc.org.na/conservancies.htm.
[25] Barrett George, 'Markets of exceptionalism', p.468; Cummings DHM, 'Constraints to Conservation', p.19.

are said to ensure that they profit most, and conservancy management boards have been accused of nepotism, corruption, inefficiency and lack of transparency. Finally, one of the most important complaints against CBNRM is that it did not bring jobs to the region.[26]

Not only do local residents perceive that CBNRM has not improved living standards, but they feel that, in fact CBNRM is causing them to become poorer. CBNRM doctrine dictates that traditional forms of natural resource use are curtailed, and a ban on hunting and trapping of wildlife eliminates an important alternative food supply. In addition local residents worry about their continued access to fish, thatching grass, river reeds and timber products.[27] Moreover, conservancy benefits do not compensate for damage caused to crops and livestock, which are steadily rising along with wildlife numbers. And although there is an insurance scheme to cover losses, its criteria are restrictive and the compensation small.[28]

> "In the fields compensation for wildlife damage is according to hectares. If your field is not a hectare and the elephant eats your crops, they will not pay it […] They pay N$240 per hectare *(about US$ 22)*, that is nothing compared to the food that is lost."[29]

In direct contradiction to the direction KAZA is hoping to take, a number of CBNRM conservancies in the Zambezi Region are contemplating deregistration and a return to full-scale farming.[30]

As pointed out by David Cummings, three-quarters of KAZA territory is occupied by traditional and communal farmers, and the conservation success of KAZA will depend on them, since they are the *de facto* resource managers in the area.[31] Local farmers will only manage their land in ways that support conservation if it is to their benefit, and if these benefits outweigh traditional land and resource uses. Some of the challenges pertain to domestic livestock farming, which is an important part of people's income. A positive development in this regard is that one obstacle to the success of KAZA was removed. Control measures that aim to prevent transmittance of disease, for instance the spread of FMD (Food and Mouth Disease) from buffalo to cattle, have traditionally relied on extensive veterinary cordon fencing. In May 2015 the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) updated its Terrestrial Animal Health Code to allow a new quarantine-based value chain approach to

---

[26] Barnes JI, 'Economic Analysis of Land Use Policies', p.9; Matengu Kenneth, 'The Quest for Sustainable Community-Based Tourism', pp. 63-68;92-93.
[27] Interviews with MET official and tourist guide, April 2014.
[28] Collomb et al., 'Assessing the success of CBNRM', pp.20-23.
[29] Interview with villager of Choi in Zambezi Region, April 2014.
[30] Interviews with MET official and tourist guide, April 2014.
[31] Cummings DHM 'Constraints to Conservation', p.15.

beef production in African countries.[32] Although implementation will take time, "this policy change offers the unprecedented possibility of access to new beef markets for southern African farmers and pastoralists as well as unlocks the potential for restoring migratory movements of wildlife."[33]

A further point of concern is the growing trend towards foreign investments in conservancy projects and tourism. Conservation scholars have pointed out that partnerships between local communities and outside investors often rest on under-valuation and exploitation of natural resources like timber and wildlife, and they raise the question whether CBNRM and TFCA programmes prioritise investments or equity.[34] Do local communities really benefit from investments, or do partnerships constitute a license for 'resource raiding' by the private sector? Governments do little to protect communities from being enticed into asymmetrical partnerships with the private sector, and communities perceive that, with no other options for generating income, they are powerless to defend their interests against dominant outside actors. For instance, residents of the KAZA region fear that they will be forced to relocate in order to make way for elephant migration routes.[35] Indeed, although colonial fortress-type conservation based on dispossession and forced removals may be a thing of the past, conservation officials achieve similar objectives by pushing proposals to relocate as unavoidable, and by legitimising such plans with scientific data and seemingly irrefutable evidence. In addition, local chiefs who have been induced to support KAZA, may order the villages to move. Residents who resist may find that increases in wildlife numbers and the resulting loss of crops and livestock, will constrain their livelihood to the point where they actually have no choice but to leave.[36] Since villages are often located close to the regional rivers, relocating may mean loss of access to resources like fish and reeds. Finally, local people may find themselves barred from land around game lodges or camps when they do not conform to the expectations of tourists and spoil the fantasy of pristine wilderness.[37] In the Zambezi Region the experience of some conservancy communities has been that, when local residents' presence does not contribute to a romanticised image of indigenous tribespeople, powerful stakeholders such as tourism operators or lodge owners attempt to curb the community's access to the river.[38]

---

[32] Barnes JI, 'Economic Analysis of Land Use Policies', p.9; Cumming DHM, 'Constraints to Conservation', pp. 13-14,18; Ferguson and Chase, 'Elephants and fencing conflicts', p.177. See also the very informative KAZA page on WCS-AHEAD website http://www.wcs-ahead.org/workinggrps_kaza.html, and the documentary Beauty and the Beef, available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oH6wBlEZiU.
[33] WCS-AHEAD website http://www.wcs-ahead.org/index.html.
[34] Katerere et al., 'A Critique', p.22; Wolmer, 'Transboundary Conservation', p.265; Wolmer, 'Transboundary Protected Area governance', p.4; Duffy Rosaleen, 'Peace Parks', p.60.
[35] Interview with Botswana tourist guide, April 2014.
[36] Spierenburg et al., 'Transfrontier Conservation in Southern Africa', p.32.
[37] Barrett George, 'Markets of exceptionalism', p.467.
[38] Katerere et al., 'A Critique', p.22

"That is why you find, if the white people ask for land, they *[the community]* always mention this: If we give it to you, we know that after some years you will say: No, you cannot come here *[to the river]*. After the piece of land is given, and a camp or lodge is built, you find that the people from the community can not come near, they chase them away."[39]

Criminal Networks

Although security organisations like the military, police and intelligence were noticeably absent from the planning table during the early stages of KAZA, the region is rapidly becoming militarised.[40] In the Zambezi Region a special anti-poaching field force has been deployed. Units operate from camps in each of the national parks and can call on support from the Namibian Defence Force (NDF).[41] A major problem for the law enforcement units is that their jurisdiction ends at international boundaries, while local residents who have intimate knowledge of the rivers act as guides to poachers across the borders. In fact, large parts of the borders between the KAZA host countries have always been permeable; rivers are readily crossed unseen, and fences can be cut with ease. In response, the five KAZA member states increasingly present a united front in the struggle against poaching networks, and cooperative efforts have resulted in joint patrols and better information sharing.[42]

The newfound unity among KAZA states is a dramatic change from just a few years ago. In 2012, four months after the KAZA launch ceremony, two men from the Zambezi Region crossed the Chobe River to Botswana, where they were shot and killed by members of the Botswana Defence Force (BDF). Although early newspaper reports state that one of the men was found with a gunshot wound in the back of the head, Botswana officials insisted that the men were poachers who opened fire first. In response, the Zambezi Region's police commander commented on the attitude of the Botswana officers by saying that "You're in their territory. They believe very much in shooting instead of arresting, even if the person is unarmed."[43] The Namibian Minister of Safety and Security, Nangolo Mbumba, was also reported to have condemned the BDF actions. However, although in-depth investigations were announced by high ranking officials from both countries, at the national level and in security circles it was recognised that cooperation, and not recrimination,

---

[39] Villager from Choi area in Zambezi Region, interviewed in April 2014.
[40] Henk Dan, 'The KAZA TFCA project'.
[41] African Environmental Police, November 28, 2012, *Namibia deploys army in crackdown as elephant poachers rampage through Caprivi*, Online available at http://africanenvironmentalpolice.blogspot.nl/2012_11_01_archive.html.
[42] http://www.sadc.int/news-events/news/stakeholders-combat-poaching/
[43] http://sun.com.na/content/national-news/nam-botswana-relations-strained-over-chobe-killing.

was needed for better smuggling and poaching control. In the end, the two countries settled the affair with affirmations of mutual friendship and wishes for peaceful coexistence.[44] Since then, with the increase in poaching on the Namibian side of the border, the Namibian police have abandoned their critique of the "trigger-happy" Botswana Defence Force, even when a year after the shooting Botswana's Minister of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism, Tshekedi Khama, declared that "when we meet the poachers we do not negotiate. We just shoot. God will decide what to do with them. I am not apologetic about that."[45] Indeed, police in the Zambezi Region have petitioned the Namibian Inspector General to be allowed to shoot on sight like their colleagues on the Botswana side.[46]

Arguably, the militarisation of the Zambezi Region affects local residents as much as the poaching syndicates. Even after the establishment of conservancies, when according to CBNRM doctrine hunting became prohibited, the authorities turned a blind eye when villagers augmented their diet by small-scale hunting and snaring. This has changed, the practise now carries the danger of attracting attention of the anti-poaching units and being criminalised as a poacher.[47] Notwithstanding the perils, many villagers are in fact becoming involved in poaching. In return for providing shelter, support and manpower to the poachers, they receive meat and a small share of the proceeds. Accordingly, the villages are the first port of call for the anti-poaching units.[48] Every village has informers, and villagers are subjected to aggressive interrogation when a carcass is found:

"The tracks are examined to see which way they are running and then the village lying in that direction will get a visit. […] The rule of Namibia says you cannot beat anyone that has been caught, but now they are doing that. If you hear that they are looking for you, and you run away, they will take your wife and start beating her: Where is your husband? They will show her the rifle. […] If I go hunting I go alone. I am looking for a life for myself, my children and my wife. I must not tell a secret to my wife, because we know that the women talk. When they are beaten they start talking as soon as they feel pain."[49]

---

[44] http://www.caprivivision.com/namibia-condemns-bdf-shoot-to-kill-tactics/; http://www.mofaic.gov.bw/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=744:bbbbbbbbbbbb&catid=7&Itemid=95; http://www.caprivivision.com/botswana-denies-shoot-to-kill-tactics/; http://www.caprivivision.com/caprivi-governor-cautions-against-illegal-entry-into-foreign-land/.
[45] http://www.mmegi.bw/index.php?aid=4417.
[46] Interview with MET official, 9 April 2014.
[47] Interview with MET official , 9 April 2014. Barrett George, 'Markets of exceptionalism', p.471.
[48] Interview with MET official, 9 April 2014.
[49] Interview with tourist guide in April 2014.

Local Ownership

In the Zambezi Region the increasingly aggressive battle against poachers is interpreted as a byproduct of the conservation enterprise embodied by CBNRM and KAZA and imposed by the Namibian government. This extends to incidents of police brutality by the anti-poaching task force, who are seen to represent Windhoek. Furthermore, Zambezi Region residents, and especially the farmers, are keenly aware of the ways in which KAZA may jeopardise their precarious existence. They have become disenchanted with promises of economic gain that the establishment of conservancies and the CBNRM programme were to bring, and fear that the implementation of KAZA will aggravate their problems. Of course, as key stakeholders their concerns and interests should carry equal weight to those of conservation NGOs, transnational investors, states, and other parties. The question is whether narratives of local ownership have resulted in active involvement of local communities.

Invoking a discourse of equal partnership, ownership, participation and capacity building is one thing. Ceding a measure of control to local residents by inviting their perspectives and involving them in decision making and planning is quite another. TFCA projects have been charged with adopting participatory rhetoric as a means to procure public and political legitimacy and to facilitate investment, while employing top-down colonial-style management practices.[50] Indeed, in the Zambezi Region, rather than being consulted beforehand, local communities have generally been informed of decisions after the fact. This is illustrated by recent interviews with local residents:

> "There was a lady who was the KAZA spokesperson. […] She talked about their community liaison officers, and she asked who had had a chance to speak with them. Not one person had even heard of what she was talking about. It was a mystery."[51]

> "Even now you see, KAZA is still with the top officials. […] The communities hear about this thing that is coming. They do not understand how this thing will work."[52]

> "In the end you find the orders are coming from the president and they are saying: you must do this, the government decided. If you refuse, they will say you are a rebel, against the rule of the government."[53]

---

[50] Duffy, Rosaleen, 'Peace Parks', pp.61-63; Barrett George, 'Markets of exceptionalism', p.467; Cumming, 'Constraints to Conservation', p.12; Katerere et al., 'A Critique', pp.22,26; Wolmer, 'Transboundary Protected Area governance', p.6; Ron, Tamar, 'SADC proposed framework for TFCAs', p.24.

[51] Interview held in April 2014 at Katima Mulilo with an independent consultant / researcher.

[52] Interview held on 9 April 2014 at Katima Mulilo with a Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) official.

[53] Interview held in April 2014 at Katima Mulilo with a tourist guide.

When consultation does take place, it is often an imperfect process marked by the inclusion of some and exclusion of others.[54] For instance, KAZA policy demands that communities are approached through local elites: "In the case of local communities the nodes of entry to be recognised by KAZA are the traditional authorities i.e. Headmen and Chiefs or recognised community structures, such as the Community Based Organisations which may only be engaged with the consent of the traditional leadership."[55] Needless to say, local elites such as traditional authorities, conservancy management boards or village councils, may not represent the larger community. Moreover, donor funding that becomes available at the local level may generate intense competition and affect power dynamics. Some benefit more than others and some further their interests at the expense of others.

"You find at the end of the year, when the income has to be divided, the people who are supposed to divide that money, instead of bringing it, they take a part of the money and hide it."[56]

Whenever consultation relies on intermediaries who hold positions of local authority, and who moreover stand to benefit most from the establishment of TFCAs, the input of local residents may be limited, and consultations may only take place with those who are already 'on board'. The outcome of such a consultation process assumes homogeneity where it does not exist, and presents a false appearance of consensus.[57]

Processes of inclusion and exclusion are illustrated by the following example of a KAZA pre-feasibility study. Stakeholders were consulted on a variety of topics, some of them extremely relevant to local residents. In total 276 people from the five KAZA states were invited to share their views on the potential benefits, risks and challenges of KAZA, as well as suitable areas for inclusion in KAZA territory. However, the final report states that unfortunately "in the time available for this work, comprehensive consultations with local communities have not been possible, and this vitally important component will have to be deferred until the next stage." Thus, out of 276 only twenty-one people were from local communities. The Namibian part of the survey accounts for twelve of the community members that were interviewed, a number much higher than in Angola (1), Botswana (2), Zambia (4) and Zimbabwe (2). However, closer reading reveals that of the twelve community members six were NGO workers and one was a lodge owner. In fact

---

[54] Turnhout et al., 'How participation creates citizens'.
[55] KAZA TFCA Stakeholder Engagement Strategy. Available at http://www.kavangozambezi.org/kaza-stakeholder-engagement-strategy, p.13.
[56] Interview held in April 2014 at Katima Mulilo with a tourist guide.
[57] Barrett George, 'Markets of exceptionalism', p.467; Barnes JI, 'Economic Analysis of Land Use', p.9; Collomb et al., 'Assessing the success of CBNRM', p.24; Turnhout et al., 'How participation creates citizens'; Hammill and Besancon, 'Measuring Peace Park Performances', p.61.

therefore, just five were actually local residents in the KAZA region. Moreover, those five were all part of the local elite. Completing this dismal picture, in the report's detailed summary of stakeholder contributions the views of these five were not included, so that in fact the final report was compiled without any community input from Namibia at all.[58]

Conclusion

TFCA and Peace Parks narratives insist on the peace-promoting effects of transborder conservation initiatives. Indeed, although it has been pointed out that a joint venture of such magnitude as KAZA may advance discord as much as peace, the shared security concerns of the five KAZA member states has facilitated greater cooperation. Since KAZA host states all suffer to greater or lesser extent from lack of control over their respective border regions and are challenged by transnational illicit trading networks, it makes sense to bundle capacity and streamline procedures. The real challenge to KAZA's peace-promoting objectives may instead be rooted in a long history of grievances and distrust between the region's populations and their governments, as well as the poverty and lack of economic opportunity that today sustains and fuels both discontent and illicit activity. It has become a truism that conservancy projects cannot succeed if local residents perceive that their poverty is caused by conservation that bars their access to land, prohibits customary livelihood strategies and causes harm through damage by wildlife. It is therefore in the interests of both KAZA and the five member states that local populations should benefit from the KAZA project in tangible ways. It is reasoned that this may persuade local residents to support conservation initiatives, may resolve hostile attitudes towards the central government, and may weaken the temptation for local residents to become involved in poaching activities.

The five member states hope that the establishment of KAZA will lead to an influx of foreign investment and growth in tourism. The chosen strategy to achieve these aims rests on CBNRM principles. As was seen, residents of the Zambezi Region have little faith in such an approach. Instead, CBNRM experience teaches local communities that they may well be excluded from benefits that KAZA may bring, while becoming vulnerable to less than favourable partnerships with powerful players. Past experience furthermore leads to concerns that local residents may be excluded from parts of their land and barred from access to resources. In addition, KAZA residents fear that they will incur costs as a result of KAZA, for instance through destruction of crops by

[58] http://www.kavangozambezi.org/prefeasibility-study-vol-3.

wildlife, without being adequately compensated for damages. In short, they have little reason to believe that KAZA should be more successful at alleviating poverty than CBNRM before.

Not only the Zambezi Region, but all of the KAZA region is extremely poor, and livelihood strategies often include involvement in regional poaching networks. The presence of these networks presents the KAZA states with a serious security concern. In order to attract the numbers of tourists needed to fuel real socio-economic growth, the KAZA states must provide stability and safety. It means they must eradicate not only regional criminal networks, but also confront local complicity. Already the region is becoming increasingly militarised. Lamentably, local villages are being cast as havens for criminals and poachers, and incidents of police brutality have created distrust and fear.

While KAZA's peace-promoting mission may be challenged by disgruntled populations and transnational poaching networks, the potential for discord is increased exponentially through processes of exclusion. The KAZA enterprise, notwithstanding protestations of the importance of ownership and equal partnership with local stakeholders, has so far not lived up to its promises. Local communities are not consulted and their perception is that the initiative does not belong to them but to the government, who will brand them as 'rebels' if they resist. It is not hard to predict that this will lead to resentment instead of support for conservation.[59] As long as KAZA residents perceive that their concerns are not heard or taken seriously, local attitudes towards conservation, and specifically KAZA, are in real danger of hardening into opposition. Therefore, although relations between KAZA states may be growing closer, fresh grievances may emerge in the borderlands, and relations between KAZA residents and their governments may deteriorate in the process. The establishment of KAZA may thus inadvertently exacerbate discord and may act as a catalyst to precipitate alienation, not between states, but rather between states and their border populations.

[59] Cummings DHM, 'Constraints to Conservation', p.19; Katerere et al., 'A Critique', p.25.

Bibliography

Barnes, J. I. (2013). *Economic Analysis of Land Use Policies for Livestock, Wildlife and Disease Management in Caprivi, Namibia, with Potential Wider Implications for Regional Transfrontier Conservation Areas.* Technical Report to the Wildlife Conservation Society's AHEAD Program and the World Wildlife Fund. 84pp. Retrieved from http://www.wcs-ahead.org/kaza/ahead_wwf_caprivi_analysis_final_030613.pdf

Barrett, G. (2013). Markets of Exceptionalism: Peace Parks in Southern Africa. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 31(3), 457–480.

Büscher, B. (2013). *Transforming the Frontier. Peace Parks and the Politics of Neoliberal Conservation in Southern Africa.* Duke University Press.

Collomb, J.-G., Kanapaux, W., Mupeta, P., Barnes, G., Saqui, J., & Child, B. (2008). *Assessing the success of community-based natural resources management through the integration of governance, livelihood and conservation attitude indicators: case studies from Caprivi, Namibia*. In IASC (International Association of the Study of the Commons), Governing shared Resources: Connecting Local Experience to Global Challenges. 12th Biennial Conference of the IASC. Cheltenham, England (pp. 14–18). Retrieved from http://iasc2008.glos.ac.uk/conference%20papers/papers/C/Collomb_212501.pdf

Cumming, D. H. M. (2010). Linkages, wildlife corridors and shortfalls in the KAZA TFCA. In K. Ferguson & J. Hanks (Eds.), *Fencing Impacts: A review of the environmental, social and economic impacts of game and veterinary fencing in Africa with particular reference to the Great Limpopo and Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Areas* (pp. 144–150). University of Pretoria.

Cumming, D. H. M. (2011). *Constraints to Conservation and Development Success at the Wildlife-Livestock-Human Interface in Southern African Trans-frontier Conservation Areas: A Preliminary Review.* Report to the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

De Visser, L. A. (2011). Winning hearts and minds in the Namibian border war. Scientia Militaria: *South African Journal of Military Studies*, 39(1), 85–100.

Duffy, R. (2007). Peace Parks and Global Politics: The Paradoxes and Challenges of Global Governance. In S. H. Ali (Ed.), *Peace Parks. Conservation and Conflict Resolution* (pp. 55–68). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Ferguson, K., & Chase, M. (2010). Elephants and fencing conflicts in the GLTFCA and KAZA TFCA. In K. Ferguson & J. Hanks (Eds.), *Fencing Impacts: A review of the environmental, social and economic impacts of game and veterinary fencing in Africa with particular reference to the Great Limpopo and Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Areas* (pp. 173–180). Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Gruber, J. S. (2010). Key Principles of Community-Based Natural Resource Management: A Synthesis and Interpretation of Identified Effective Approaches for Managing the Commons. *Environmental Management*, 45(1), 52–66.

Hammill, A., & Besancon, C. (n.d.). Measuring Peace Park Performance: Definitions and Experiences. In S. H. Ali (Ed.), Peace Parks. *Conservation and Conflict Resolution* (pp. 23–40). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Harring, S. L., & Odendaal, W. (2012). *God stopped making land!* Retrieved from http://www.lac.org.na/projects/lead/Pdf/godstoppedmakingland.pdf

Henk, D. (2010). The Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA) Transfrontier Conservation Area Project. *African Environmental and Human Security in the 21st Century*, 213.

Katerere, Y., Hill, R., & Moyo, S. (2001). *A Critique of Transboundary Natural Resource Management in Southern Africa*. The IUCN - ROSA Series on Transboundary Natural Resources Management - Paper 1.

Lamb, G. (2002). Debasing Democracy: Security Forces and Human Rights Abuses in Post-Liberation Namibia and South Africa. In H. Melber (Ed.), *Measuring Democracy and Human Rights in Southern Africa* (pp. 30–49). Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

Matengu, K. K. (2001). *The Quest for Sustainable Community-Based Tourism in Salambala.* Retrieved from http://epublications.uef.fi/pub/URN_NBN_fi_joy-20070058/URN_NBN_fi_joy-20070058.pdf

Nathan, L. (2004). *The absence of common values and failure of common security in Southern Africa, 1992-2003*. Retrieved from http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/28208/

Nugent, P., & Asiwaju, A. I. (Eds.). (1996). *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities*. London: Pinter.

Ramutsindela, M. (2007). Scaling Peace and Peacemakers in Transboundary Parks: Understanding Glocalization. In S. H. Ali (Ed.), *Peace Parks. Conservation and Conflict Resolution* (pp. 69–82). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Ron, T. (2007). *Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Proposed Framework For Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) - Issues and Options Report*.

Söderbaum, F. (2004). Modes of regional governance in Africa: neoliberalism, sovereignty boosting, and shadow networks. *Global Governance,* 10(4), 419–436.

Spenceley, A., & Schoon, M. (2007). Peace Parks as Social Ecological Systems: Testing Environmental Resilience in Southern Africa. In S. H. Ali (Ed.), *Peace Parks. Conservation and Conflict Resolution* (pp. 83–104). Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

Spierenburg, M., Wells, H., Ferguson, K., & Hanks, J. (2010). Transfrontier conservation in southern Africa: Taking down the fences or returning to the barriers? In *Fencing Impacts: A review of the environmental, social and economic impacts of game and veterinary fencing in Africa with particular reference to the Great Limpopo and Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Areas* (pp. 26–35). Pretoria: University of Pretoria.

Suich, H., Busch, J., & Barbancho, N. (2005). *Economic impacts of transfrontier conservation areas: Baseline of tourism in the Kavango-Zambezi TFCA.* Conservation International South Africa. Paper 4.

Treaty of the South African Development Community (1992). Online available at http://www.sadc.int/documents-publications/sadc-treaty/.

Turnhout, E., Van Bommel, S., & Aarts, N. (2010). How participation creates citizens: participatory governance as performative practice. *Ecology and Society*, 15(4). Retrieved from http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol15/iss4/art26/

Wolmer, W. (2003a). Transboundary Conservation: The Politics of Ecological Integrity in the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 29(1), 261–278.

Wolmer, W. (2003b). *Transboundary Protected Area governance: Tensions and Paradoxes*. Prepared for the workshop on Transboundary Protected Areas in the Governance Stream of the 5th World Parks Congress, Durban, South Africa (pp. 12–13). Retrieved from http://www.tbpa.net/docs/WPCGovernance/WilliamWolmer.pdf