

Forestry and Democratic Decentralization in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Rough Review

Jesse C. Ribot

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is the accountability of leaders to their people. Different institutions in the local arena are accountable to local people in different ways. Which institutions, authorities or categories of person represent – are accountable and responsive to – ‘local’ people in forestry? Who is receiving authority or powers to manage forests under a given reform or project? The choice of local institutional interlocutors by intervening agencies – central governments, donors, large non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or international development agents – is important. Working through different kinds of local institutions – private, public, representative, administrative, civic – might have different kinds of equity, efficiency and democracy outcomes (Woolcock and Prichett, 2005; Ribot, 2006; Ribot et al, 2008).

The choice of local actors by intervening agents reflects something about what these agents are trying to accomplish – e.g. democratic processes, thickening of civil society or privatization. Some aim to strengthen public institutions (line ministries or elected local governments), others root for so-called civil society (NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs) and some indigenous authorities), and yet others champion private institutions (corporations or individuals, and some indigenous authorities). They may be motivated by an anti-government neo-liberal stance with a polar view of bad corrupt government and good civil society/private sector. Their choices may reflect a general uninformed conformity to the trends of development concerning good governance, bad government, let’s go private, let’s downsize the state and build up the third sector, let’s try local government via decentralization. The choices by intervening agencies may also just reflect expedience in implementing forest management interventions – practitioners or development agents may choose the quickest or cheapest interlocutor for establishing a management plan, a

participatory process, a forest plantation, a protected area or some other measurable success to bring home to their parent agency. Together the mix of drivers and the institutional choices being made bring us to the confused amalgam of the present plurality of local institutions.

Decentralization (see Box 2.1) is a particular type of institutional choice. It is a set of legal reforms that result in the transfer of powers from central government to lower levels of *government* – that is, to local administrative offices or to local elected government. Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) is a form of intervention that usually engages communities in projects through participatory processes, committees, user groups, chiefs, NGOs, private corporations or private individuals. These are not formally decentralization since most of these local bodies are not within government or are usually not receiving rights and powers in CBNRM processes. CBNRM is a big topic in itself – it is a means of intervention that, despite all of its shortcomings, remains very popular (Blaikie, 2006). This chapter is dedicated to examining one form of intervention that most African governments claim to be undertaking and that forestry services claim to be involved with – *democratic decentralization*, or transfers of powers to elected local governments. While a transfer to a local line ministry is a form of decentralization (called de-concentration), few CBNRM advocates would consider it CBNRM. Yet, democratic decentralization, where local representative authorities receive powers in the name of local citizens, can be counted among the many manifestations of CBNRM. This is the form of CBNRM at the focus of this chapter.

The distinction between CBNRM and democratic decentralization of natural resource management (NRM) is that the latter is specifically about including whole populations – all citizens – in NRM decision-making based on representative authority (see Alden Wily, undated; Ribot, 2002). Like the World Bank's community-driven development (CDD) interventions, however, CBNRM practitioners define community for each intervention – the user group, the 'stakeholders', the people near the forest, the fishers. Furthermore, they define the mode of representation of that 'community' as their project is implemented – through appointed committees, elected committees, stakeholder fora, participatory processes, 'customary' chiefs, project personnel, etc. Often, CBNRM bodies represent only a subsection of a population. Democratic decentralization, however, involves transfers to ostensibly representative elected local government under whose authority 'community' is defined as 'the citizens' – those who live in the jurisdiction. This breadth of representation matters, as theory tells us, because broad-based citizen inclusion in decision-making can increase efficiency and equity as well as natural resource management outcomes (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999). Being representative of a whole population ostensibly makes a decision-making process more likely to achieve more *equitable* and *effective* implementation. Local government as a form of institution is also both *scalable* to cover whole national territories and is *sustainable* in so far as it is a permanently legislated form of local governance. These latter advantages also make local government a solid infrastructure for sustainable and widespread participation, distinct from CBNRM because, as part of government, it does not collapse when project funding runs out.

Box 2.1 Definitions

Decentralization is any act by which a central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy. Decentralization is typically divided into *democratic decentralization* and *deconcentration*.

Democratic decentralization (often also called *political decentralization* or *devolution*) occurs when powers and resources are transferred to authorities – typically, elected local governments – that are representative of, and accountable to, local populations. Democratic decentralization aims to increase public participation in local decision-making. Democratic decentralization is an institutionalized form of the participatory approach. Of the two primary forms of decentralization, democratic decentralization is considered the stronger and the one from which theory indicates that the greatest benefits can be derived.

Deconcentration (also known as *administrative decentralization*) concerns transfers of power to local branches of the central state, such as prefectures, administrations or local technical line ministries. These upwardly accountable local bodies are appointed administrative extensions of the central state. While some downward accountability may be built into their functions, their primary responsibility is to central government. Deconcentration is considered the weaker form of decentralization because downward accountability is not as well established as it is in the democratic or political form of decentralization.

Institutional choice is the identification by intervening agencies of the locus of decentralized authority, the local partner with whom intervening agencies work, and therefore to whom they transfer powers or provide support.

Recognition is the acknowledgement of another person, culture or institution. The choice of local authorities or organizations by the government or by international agencies is a form of acknowledgement or recognition. Local institutions are recognized through the transfer of powers, partnering in projects, engagement by contracts or via participation in dialogue and decision-making. As an analytic concept, recognition helps us to focus on the effects of the transfer of powers to, and backing of, select local institutions.

Democratic representation occurs when a leader is responsive to the needs and aspirations of her or his population. When the population can sanction the leader so as to hold the leader accountable, then the representation can be considered democratic.

Citizenship is the ability to be politically engaged and shape the fate of the polity in which one is involved. Citizenship in a liberal democracy is often associated with entitlement to certain civil, social and political rights, irrespective of one's identity and interests.

Public domain consists of the resources and decisions under public control that are the basis for public decision-making. The public domain is a domain of powers that citizens may be able to influence. It defines the space of representative democracy.

Subsidiarity is the idea that the best level for policy and procedural decisions is the most local possible level at which decisions are not likely to produce negative effects for higher scales of economic, social or political-administrative organization.

Articulation is the functional joining of two parts so that they can work together in a mutually supportive manner. An example of political articulation is when local and national governments become interdependent so that they must work together due to shared interests – as when local government can garner votes for central actors and central actors can provide resources for local government.

Source: Føllesdal (1998); Rocher and Rouillard (1998); Isin and Turner (2002); Sparke (2004); Ribot (2004, 2007); Chhatre (2008)

Democratic decentralization is predicated on the transfer of forestry management and use decisions to broadly representative local bodies. Forest sector democratic decentralizations are predicated on the existence of broadly representative local government; hence, they must take place in the context of larger efforts to build local government (Alden Wily, undated). One of the first obstacles to democratic decentralization in forestry, as in any other sector, is the failure of central governments to establish local governments that are empowered and accountable to the local population. A second is the failure of line ministries to work with local governments even when they are established and accountable. But decentralized as well as community-based forestry have faced many other obstacles and disappointments. Case studies and comparative research indicate that democratic decentralization and CBNRM do little for conservation and that conservation may not be good for local livelihoods (Blaikie, 2006; Tacconi et al, 2006).

During the last decade a body of research on forestry and decentralization – the forms that it is taking and its effects – has emerged. The first line of research concerns the conditions under which forestry decentralization takes place. Why has it taken place? Why does it usually not take place: what are the reasons and means for resistance and recentralization? A second line of research has addressed the conditions under which forestry decentralization affects the quality of forest management. When does it lead to degradation or deforestation? When does it lead to conservation? A third area of research concerns the conditions under which forestry decentralization results in improved livelihoods. When does decentralization increase local income or improve access to subsistence goods? When does deforestation or conservation (under decentralized management) lead to improved livelihoods? Another area that is not addressed directly in the literature, and which is taken up in this chapter, is the relation between decentralization in forestry and the formation of local democracy. When do local forestry interventions support local democracy?

Despite obstacles and limitations, there are at least three sets of values that decentralization theorists and practitioners believe that democratic decentralization can promote: better use and conservation of environmental services; improved rural livelihoods; and local enfranchisement. These values are shared with CBNRM and will be explored in this chapter. Some theorists and many practitioners of CBNRM believe that the three are interlinked; but as of yet, these inter-linkages remain

hypothetical – or at least highly contingent on yet-to-be-understood conditions. Nevertheless, all three values are worth pursuing – and there will be trade-offs and positive reinforcements among them. This chapter explores what we know about these relations and then tries to disaggregate these three objectives in order to explore some minimum requirements for achieving each separately and/or together. The chapter explores some of the problems and outcomes associated with reforms that have been called ‘decentralization’ in the forest sector, and outlines some possible ways forward.

FORESTRY DECENTRALIZATION IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The history of local government across Africa is one of territorial management, control and integration (Buell, 1928; Mamdani, 1996). Introduction of local government has long roots in the management of subjects and the extraction of wealth under colonial rule. Colonial powers ventured to transfer the administrative management of the rural world to ‘customary’ authorities under what the British called ‘indirect rule’ and French called ‘association’. The Portuguese followed similar policies. Colonizers used local customary authorities as administrators for the central state in what was a locally rooted de-concentration. At independence during the middle of the last century, Africa’s fledgling new nations chose to recentralize control in order to consolidate power and only later re-launched decentralization in the 1970s. While there were rumblings about local democracy during the colonial period, it was not until the 1980s that decentralization discourse adopted the widespread enfranchising language of democracy. Rather than managing subjects, decentralization took a turn towards the production of democracy and the consequent transformation of subjects into citizens.

This shift in discourse has been followed in many nations through new laws introducing or strengthening elected local authorities. In parallel to these political-administrative reforms, forestry services and forestry practitioners have also shifted both their language and practice first towards greater participation and then towards ‘decentralization’. Like the general administration of colonial Africa, forestry services also had a long history of subjugating rural Africans. Foresters were the vanguard of rural colonization between 1910 and 1916,¹ being the first to accompany the colonial military into Africa’s interior. Foresters have always followed the discourse and the administrative conventions of their times. They also followed the practices of their times – which was usually to continue to control and manage the rural world for extractive purposes² even when the discourse turned to participation and later enfranchisement at the end of the 20th century.³

Decentralization reforms across Africa reached the new century with a mix of hope and frustration. Like the promise of democratization stirred by the fall of the Berlin Wall, at the dawn of the new century local empowerment and enfranchisement are incipient at best. Many reforms had been put in place, but little substantive change

was visible on the ground (see Kulipossa, 2004; Ribot, 2004; Ribot and Oyono, 2005). In addition, new monkey wrenches began jumping into the gears of change. Customary chiefs began to reemerge and challenge democratic decentralization with great force (van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal et al, 1999; Geschiere and Boone, 2003; Ntsebeza, 2002, 2005). While donors pushed ever harder for decentralization, central governments began to master the art of recentralizing while decentralizing – making everyone happy in the political sphere of state and donors while delivering few new benefits to local governments or local people (Ribot et al, 2006).

Dubois (1997) identifies three phases in forestry management in Africa: a technocratic colonial-style era; a ‘participatory’ period beginning in the 1980s; and a negotiation-based ‘stakeholder’ era introduced during the late 1990s. The latter two eras overlap with the onset of decentralization reforms across the continent. In recent decades, Dubois observed a move from an ability to participate in others’ projects to an ability to negotiate with some significant leverage. While the negotiated interventions may be neither democratic nor decentralized, they are a move towards greater community control. By 2000, Alden Wily (undated) describes forestry programmes in Africa as evolving from a set of revenue- or benefit-sharing efforts towards real power-sharing. This is a shift where villages go from having access to forests for use or are allowed to share some income to a situation where local communities become resource managers themselves. This shift changes the relation between communities and forest services. In the latter case the forest service gives up some of its authority and transfers it to the community.

Alden Wily (undated) describes an evolution within the transfer of management from the forest service to communities, where at first transfers are to user groups – interested parties in forestry – and later to multipurpose elected governments. She cites the case of Tanzania as the vanguard in this truly democratic and decentralized form of forest management. In this context ‘community-level managers may operate and also be held accountable to their constituencies’ (Alden Wily, undated, p17). In Tanzania, this is made possible by the existence of democratic local government structures. She concludes by observing that ‘Where devolved governance is poorly developed, empowerment of local forest management in new legislation is demonstrably constrained’ (Alden Wily, undated, p18).

As Alden Wily (undated) observes, for there to be decentralized forestry, there needs to be decentralized government institutions. Forestry law and practice reflects a microcosm of the broader political-administrative reforms in which it is located – although the sector often resists those reforms, it at least takes on the discourse. While line ministries, such as environment, health, education or agriculture, can de-concentrate on their own, they cannot engage in democratic decentralization if the broader democratic decentralization has not been undertaken by the nation. Democratic decentralization of forestry requires the prior establishment of elected local authorities. We arrive at the end of the first decade of the new century with a clear discourse on democratic decentralization and embracing this discourse in forestry. But we find the new century as fraught as the old with the failure to translate progressive discourse into law and law into practice. In the next section we examine some of the recurring obstacles in the path of decentralization as practice.

OBSTACLES TO DECENTRALIZATION IMPLEMENTATION

New local elected governments popping up across Africa face many constraints. Organic and electoral laws make elected officials upwardly accountable to parties and budget arrangements make them accountable to line ministries and the legislature. They are given little discretion and can hardly be said to be representative institutions. Further, most development agencies and forestry line ministries choose, *even where there are elected local authorities*, to work through participatory, stakeholder or CBNRM approaches.

Forestry line ministries in many decentralization efforts have created or strengthened their local offices; but forestry, by and large, has not gone through a democratic decentralization. Lund and Wardell (2006, p1896) observe a move towards user groups rather than representative authorities in Ghana. Mozambique's 1999 Forest and Wildlife Law creates 'fragile' elected committees at the local level despite there being elected local governments (Salomão and Matose, 2007). In most cases, where local governments were involved, their main role was to sign off on management plans laid down by forest services or to carry out prescribed forest management activities – a kind of new era *corvée*. Only in a few cases were there significant decision-making powers or revenues devolved to elected local authorities as in Uganda, Senegal and Tanzania (Ribot, 2003; Oyono, 2004a; Brockington, 2007; Alden Wily, undated).

Dozens of studies conducted on forestry and other natural resource decentralization reforms in Africa by the World Resources Institute (WRI) from 2000 to 2007 show progress in implementation and outcomes as well as retrenching through recentralization of powers over environmental services (further developed in the section on 'Factors influencing decentralization, forestry decentralization and its outcomes').⁴ The most striking finding is that, even in the cases declared great successes, democratic decentralization of forest and other natural resource management either transfer too little power to be meaningful or transfer those powers to non-representative local authorities (Ribot, 2004; Ribot et al, 2007). Neither powers without representation nor representation without powers constitute decentralization. We do not expect improved equity, efficiency or democracy from either of these configurations. In short, democratic decentralization of natural resources of any sort is rare, making it very difficult to study. Nevertheless, there is progress in forestry decentralization despite the pulling back of each advance.

For example, under Mali's, Senegal's, Tanzania's and Uganda's progressive decentralizations, democratically elected local governments have been established as recipients of decentralized powers (Ribot, 2008; Alden Wily, undated). In Mali, however, the Forestry Department refuses to transfer powers to elected local government despite requirements of the new forestry laws.⁵ Similarly, in Uganda, powers transferred to local institutions are limited by required restrictive management plans and by limiting which forests are considered 'local' (Namara, 2001; Bazaara, 2006; Muhereza, 2006). Uganda's 2001 Forestry law does not specify guidelines for selecting powers that will be

transferred, nor the levels of local government that will receive them (ROU, 2001).⁶ In Senegal, the 1998 Forestry Code gives rural councils powers to decide if and when their forests will be cut and the right to make and execute management plans; but the Forest Service has not allowed them to exercise any of the rights that they were given in law (Larson and Ribot, 2007). In these cases the laws give local authorities the right to manage natural resources; but they are subject to restrictive requirements imposed by central forestry agencies. Further, in Mali and Uganda many forests previously in the public domain are being privatized in the name of decentralization (Ribot, 1999; Muhereza, 2001). Privatization is taking public resources away from democratic institutions and transferring them to customary (which are self-regulating, self-serving or often non-sanctionable) and other private bodies, a move that neither supports nor follows the logic of democratic decentralization.

Management plans seem to be the most common means for forest departments to recentralize any autonomy that might be implied by the transfer of rights to manage. The participatory and current 'decentralized' forestry periods have both been accompanied by a proliferation of micro-management plans. Forest services, with the help of donors, required village, user or project committees or their elected rural authorities to elaborate complex management plans before they would have the right to break even one small branch. These plans have tended to be overly complex and highly expensive to elaborate. The trend in the past four or five years has been to speak of 'simplified' management plans. But the practice has changed little. Management plans are one of the main factors enabling continued line-ministry control, and preventing rural populations from using the resources around them unless they agree to labours of forest management (Ribot, 1995, 2004; Etoungou, 2001; Graziani and Burnham, 2002; Latif, 2002, p67; Oyono, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Wardell and Lund, 2006, p1894; Salomão and Matose, 2007, p15). Like participatory approaches in forestry, many management planning requirements were introduced much earlier in the colonial period and just reworked with each new forestry era. Indeed, local participation in the elaboration of management plans in some places has been less frequent during recent years than during colonial times (Wardell and Lund, 2006, pp1894–1896).⁷ Licensing and permitting are also frequently used to exclude local people from commercially valuable resources (Salomão and Matose, 2007, pp14–15; Ribot, 2008).

Leaving important decisions over the allocation of valuable resources to ministerial decrees or administrative order is one of the many techniques for recentralizing environmental legislation. This means is used in Mali, Cameroon, Senegal, Guinea, Burkina Faso, South Africa, Zimbabwe and elsewhere. In Mali, for example, decentralization is called for by the constitution, while decentralization of powers over natural resources is called for in environmental legislation, such as the Forestry Code. But, within the 1996 Forestry Code, the powers to be devolved are left to be specified by decree of the minister responsible for forests. The procedures to resolve disputes over forestry matters will be specified by order of the state-appointed governor of each region. Hence, decentralization in the environmental sector is ultimately reserved as a discretionary matter for the ministry responsible for forests and its administrative staff. In this manner, what appears to be a constitutional guarantee is transformed into executive branch discretion (Ribot, 2004). Similarly, in Senegal, decentralization laws transfer forest management powers to elected rural

councils and the forestry laws then reiterate this transfer; but, in practice, the Forest Service does not allow elected councils to make decisions (Ribot, 2008). The organization of forestry production is left to ministerial decrees (RdS, 1998).

There are many other means that foresters use to recapture control of 'decentralized' forestry (see Ribot and Oyono, 2005; Ribot et al, 2006). Rent-seeking by foresters is common. The systems of control and management lend themselves to negotiation of access (Oyono, 2005; Blundo, 2006; Wardell and Lund, 2006, p1898). Selective implementation and non-implementation are also used as a means of central control and of rent-seeking for officials and front-line agents (Wardell and Lund, 2006; Larson and Ribot, 2007). Conditional transfers of funds or powers by higher-level agencies make recipients upwardly accountable – since they can lose the transfers if they do not do as they are told (Conyers, 2003).

Obfuscation is another problem blocking democratic decentralization in forestry. One of the confusing factors in current forestry discourse is that everything is being called 'decentralization'. So, without careful reading it is difficult to distinguish participatory approaches from co-management from democratic decentralization. The confusion adds to an institutional amalgam, an analytic nightmare in which no policy or project called 'decentralized' can be taken at face value, but must be analysed according to its substantive elements – its transfer of discretionary powers and empowerment of local actors downwardly accountable to the population (see Agrawal and Ribot, 1999).

In recent years, privatization seems to be gaining on decentralization. The discourse on decentralized forestry and natural resource management has been moving away from enfranchisement (giving citizens representation and control) and towards incorporation (engagement of 'forest-dependent' people with markets). Most forestry projects today emphasize helping local people to produce for the market. The emphasis is on building 'community-based enterprises'. 'Decentralized' forest management is less about producing citizenship and enfranchising people. Such attempts to get Africans to produce for the market are also not at all new (Mamdani, 1996). Colonial foresters were preoccupied with getting Africans to produce for the market (Geschiere, 1993, p154; Ribot, 1999) – to supply the goods, not to reap the profits. Today, villagers are being harnessed to markets as suppliers of primary or specialty forest products – usually remunerated with subsistence incomes.

In most instances where CBNRM or decentralized forestry programmes allow rural people to produce for the market, economic activity is restricted to non-timber forest products (NTFPs) or some stumpage fees on timber (e.g. Delnooz, 1999; Oyono, 2004b; Salomão and Matose, 2007). I am not aware of any instances where timber concessions – that are not already cut over – are transferred to local government. This is of note since timber concessions are widespread and there are almost always people living in the areas being cut. But forestry services and projects seem unlikely to ever allow local people to become major operators or shareholders in timber concessions or traders further upstream. Usually, they have to make do with marketing marginal (e.g. non-lucrative) NTFPs. When will rural populations be able to engage in production, transformation, marketing and export, or will they always be limited to primary production? Will development agencies give them the loans they need to buy equipment and rent trucks to sell in the cities, or will they be stuck selling raw materials to the next merchant who comes along? What will this new market era

look like? What will the role of environmentalists and other development professionals be in enabling (or disabling) local people to enter and profit from the lucrative trade in timber and wildlife?

The sections below examine some of the data available on the relation between decentralization and environment, livelihoods and democracy outcomes.

DECENTRALIZATION AND OUTCOMES

Even under constrained circumstances of incomplete decentralization, successful outcomes have been observed in forestry decentralizations (see Ribot, 2004). In Uganda, Muhereza (2006) observed in Rakai District that the Forest Department gave the district council the right to auction off impounded illegal timber and keep 40 per cent of the revenues. This increase in income reflected the increased power of decentralized bodies. In Cameroon, revenues have increased for rural communities in community forestry zones (Oyono and Efoua, 2006; Oyono and Nzuzi, 2006). Increased revenues can result in positive outcomes when invested in local well-being (Ribot, 2003, 2004; Oyono, 2004a; Brockington, 2007; Alden Wily, undated). The links, however, between forestry decentralization, ecological sustainability, livelihoods and local democratization are more complex. While theories give us some indications of why we should expect some institutional arrangements to lead to positive outcomes, the ensemble of contradictory assumptions and experiences indicate that while theory is needed to guide interventions, so is iterative context-based observation. This section outlines some of the findings of recent research on:

- measured effects of CBNRM, which indicate some effects that local or decentralized management may have;
- outcomes of decentralization discourse and laws – that is, whether decentralization is being established in practice;
- links between decentralization, where established, and improved forest management; and
- links between decentralization and livelihood outcomes.

This section is entitled decentralization *and* outcomes since most case studies fail to establish a causal link between the two.

Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) insights for decentralization

CBNRM is much broader than decentralization. It can include decentralization as one of the forms that it takes. But, as a form of local resource management, CBNRM can provide decentralization advocates and theorists with insights about important variables for successfully working locally. In an analysis of 69 case studies of forestry CBNRM (17 per cent of which are from Africa), Pagdee et al (2006, p40) found that

40 cases were classified as successes and 29 as failures. As measures for success the cases used efficiency (90 per cent), ecological sustainability (87 per cent) and equity (65 per cent). The study finds that secure forest tenure followed by clear boundaries were the most frequently cited variables explaining success. The other high-ranking variables are effective institutional arrangements and community interests or incentives (Pagdee et al, 2006, p49). They found that tenure security was closely associated with the transfer of authority (which they define as reallocation budgets) to local communities (Pagdee et al, 2006, pp42, 48). They conclude that central governments' transfer of responsibilities is insufficient to generate success if they remain reluctant to transfer 'management authority' to local institutions (Pagdee et al, 2006, p48). They find that 'Clear ownership is positively associated with both local responsibility and authority. However, tenure security shows an association only with local authority. If decentralization involves only local responsibility, user tenure can remain insecure' (Pagdee et al, 2006, p51).

In short, the CBNRM experience indicates that decentralizing will be more effective for NRM where substantive management authority is transferred, tenure is secure due to the establishment of significant local authority, and incentives to manage forests sustainably are in place. The link that they show between authority and tenure security is important. It tells us what we already know – that without enforcement (via some authority), tenure is not an effective right and is therefore not secure. The remainder of this section examines research on decentralization writ large and decentralization in the forest sector concerning the link between decentralization and outcomes. First we need to understand the degree to which decentralization is being implemented and then what, when implemented, its forest management and livelihood outcomes are.

Decentralization: Is it being established?

Andersson and Gibson (2004, p3) argue that most studies:

- fail to assess the specific powers transferred to local authorities that would be critical for determining outcomes;
- ignore other policies affecting the local arena that may swamp the conservation effects of decentralization; and
- do not establish the causal links between institutional arrangements and forest outcomes.

Ribot (2003, 2004) observes that most forestry decentralization reforms that have been studied do not result in the conditions that theorists would call 'decentralization' – hence, there is little reason to believe that they would result in the positive outcomes that theory predicts. The fact that decentralizations are not really being implemented indicates that it would be difficult to establish any causal links between decentralization and outcomes.⁸ Similar observations leads Tacconi et al (2006, p15) to ask whether local democratic governance is possible. Non-implementation of CBNRM and forestry decentralization is widespread (Nemarundwe, 2004, p285).

Decentralization: Does it lead to improved forest management?

Existing research indicates that decentralized forest management, where it has ostensibly taken place, is not clearly better than central forest management for improving the quality or sustainability of forest management. Indeed, Andersson and Gibson (2004, p20) find no relation between local governance in any form and total deforestation. They show that 'decentralized forest governance is not inherently superior to centralized governance systems'. But it can work. They argue that outcomes are determined by many factors and 'performance of any system depends on how human institutions at multiple levels interact with a myriad of exogenous factors' (Andersson and Gibson, 2004, p20). Tacconi et al (2006, p2) agree that 'it is impossible to state *a priori* whether decentralization will lead to sustainable forest management... In fact, under certain conditions, decentralization might contribute to deforestation, or at least might not reduce it.' They attribute the assumption of improvement to a literature that 'pays little attention to the economic and financial benefits that may drive public and private sector decisions'.⁹

It is often assumed that when people profit from forests, they will conserve them. French West African forester Aubréville (1939, pp487–488) wrote: 'The day ... that all African forest formations will have an immediately realizable economic value, I am convinced that all of the difficulties that we encounter in ensuring their protection will straighten out. This is why I believe that the future and even the existence of African forests are inseparable from the possibilities for their exploitation.' He goes on: 'Also am I – a bit paradoxically in the eyes of some – obliged to stand up against the opinion of all who to safeguard the forest do not want to use its wood (here at least, where it still exists, is quite vast).' While this is an old assumption and is often repeated, Tacconi et al (2006) argue that it is difficult to support the assumption that engaging local people in forest commerce is of benefit on the grounds that engagement in profit from forests will result in better conservation and less deforestation.¹⁰

Decentralization: Does it improve local livelihoods?

The direct consequences of decentralized management of forests on local livelihoods are evident in some studies. Where local people gain access to forest products, to tax revenues or to commercial forestry opportunities, as in Uganda's, Tanzania's, Senegal's and Cameroon's forest-sector decentralizations, income may go up and local people can benefit (Ribot, 2003; Oyono, 2004a; Brockington, 2007; Alden Wily, undated).

There are some theories that say decentralization is good for forests and that improved forest management can improve local livelihoods. But we do not know under what circumstances maintaining forests is good for local livelihoods. Tacconi et al (2006, p2) present data indicating that alternative land uses (e.g. for agriculture) can produce greater income. Certainly, without allowing rural people access to the most lucrative aspects of forestry (timber and wildlife), it is unlikely that the forests will compete against other land uses. Forests are usually less able to support livelihoods than are alternative land uses – such as agriculture – and it makes sense that agricultural conversion is the leading cause of tropical deforestation (Tacconi et al, 2006, p5). Tacconi et al's arguments indicate that we need to delink livelihood arguments from forestry arguments, recognizing that forests are not always good for local livelihoods.

FACTORS INFLUENCING DECENTRALIZATION, FORESTRY DECENTRALIZATION AND ITS OUTCOMES

This section examines some contextual factors that influence decentralization and decentralized forestry outcomes more generally. The relation between decentralized forestry and environmental or livelihood outcomes is shaped by a multilayered political economy. The vertical division of powers between central and local shapes the degrees of freedom of local institutions (see Mawhood, 1983; Føllesdal, 1998; Rocher and Rouillard, 1998; Manor, 1999). The horizontal distribution of functions and powers among different kinds of institutions in the local arena is also usually influenced by higher-level intervening agencies and can shape local decisions and outcomes (Ribot et al, 2008). The degree to which local populations can influence these higher-level authorities reflects the degree to which the society is democratic. This ‘articulation’ (or interdependence) between lower- and higher-level institutions and local populations also shapes how higher authorities choose local institutions and the vertical and horizontal distribution of powers that they hold (see Chhatre, 2007, on the concept of ‘articulation’). The choices made by central actors, in turn, influence the degree to which elected local authorities are empowered and the degree to which the public space of discretion is kept open so that there is a space for democratic interaction. These choices also shape the degree to which powers are transferred to private bodies or customary authorities, enclosing the public domain through privatization and de-sectorization of public powers. Intervening agencies in forestry often choose non-democratic local authorities as their partners (Ribot et al, 2008). Forest services also typically choose to devolve select powers: they hold onto lucrative opportunities while devolving subsistence values and the burdens of management (Ribot, 2004). Blaikie (2006, p1950) modulates up another level arguing that CBNRM is shaped by ‘interfaces involving national politics between administrations, policy elites, and IFIs [international financial institutions] and bilateral aid agencies’ (see also Ferguson, 1996).

Further, these higher-level institutions shape the accountability of local institutions. By the laws that they put in place (structuring elections or establishing accessible courts) or by the implementation or lack of implementation of those very policies, they can enhance accountability of local government to the local population, to the central state or to nobody. Furthermore, these higher-level institutions can shape citizen engagement with local government or with central government via civic education, telling people they have rights and how to exercise them (if, indeed, there are any rights) and instructing leaders on their roles and responsibilities. In addition, they shape the rules of forest and land use that determine economic incentives for management. For example, if conversion to agriculture is forbidden as a precondition for local control of the forests, incentives may re-link forests and livelihoods – if the management requirements do not swamp the benefits. The result is very different from devolving total discretion. Rules of use matter. The market or use value of forests cannot save forests from destruction – and the fickle nature of markets may mean that today forests are safe, but tomorrow prices go up and cutting begins. Standards and rules set at a higher level are needed (see Ribot, 2004). There is no inherent reason to believe that local people will not sell off or convert forests if those are the most

lucrative options. There are, however, good reasons to believe that collective local decisions can differ from individual local decisions or outsider decisions – in so far as collective decisions are more likely to internalize externalities and produce broader community support.¹¹

Some case studies also suggest that local governments will perform well in some domains only if forced to by central government. Crook and Sverrisson (2001) have argued that local government will serve the poor if mandated to do so by central authorities. If not, they are not likely to serve the interests of poor and marginal populations. Bandiaky (2008a) has shown that interventions in local government from above or interventions by local government are likely to exacerbate local gender inequalities if not mandated to take affirmative actions to ensure greater gender representation – making certain that women are present in decision-making processes and ensuring that there are mechanisms by which women's issues are better represented in decisions. As Goetz and Hassim (2003, pp20–21, cited in Bandiaky, 2008b, p22) argue, it is simplistic and misleading to think that the transfer of power to local actors will solve gender inequality problems. Hence, there are many roles that central authorities can and should play in ensuring that even local democratic institutions address the needs and aspirations of all local people.

The form of decentralization is also reshaped in implementation. In Zimbabwe, Nemarundwe (2004) describes how existing social stratifications influence who participates in committees and decision-making, and how local people use the ambiguous relation between customary and formal authorities to bring their own problems to those authorities who likely to be more accommodating. This is very much a case of what von Benda Beckmann (1981) calls 'forum shopping'. Bandiaky (2007) shows how decentralized forestry follows the contours of existing inequalities of local social hierarchies, transforming the intended equity outcomes into reinforced inequalities (see also Mandondo and Kozanayi, 2006; Bazaara, 2006; Feyissa, 2006, who come to similar conclusions in Zimbabwe, Uganda and Ethiopia). Assembe Mvondo (2006, pp687–668) also notes that decentralization to multi-ethnic villages resulted in reproduction or reinforcement of existing social stratifications, with the Baka minority having little access to justice. But in a community made up solely of Baka, access to the benefits of decentralization is more equitable. He concludes that 'the decentralization of forest resources management does not bring actual horizontal equity to all local populations'. Furthermore, local people maintain access to resources in numerous ways. They continue to manipulate the authorities around them and negotiate continued access either through reciprocal relations or payments (Nemarundwe, 2004; Blaikie, 2006). Such negotiated access, as Nemarundwe (2004, p289) points out, is 'influenced by factors such as descent, social stratification, character of the person involved, and longevity of residence in the area', among many other factors (see Ribot and Peluso, 2003).

Differences between those wishing for conservation and those bearing the costs also reshape motives for implementation. Higher-level institutions may want conservation for higher-level values, such as biodiversity, carbon storage or watershed regulation; yet the costs of all of these are usually born at the local level. Devolving responsibility for values that do not accrue to local people who bear the cost of conservation measures is not likely to lead to success unless complemented by a

transfer of funds so that local people have incentive to provide these services (Tacconi et al, 2006, p6). Conservation is often viewed as something that local people will do for the returns they will gain.¹² But those returns are public, while the efforts of local people are private. There is no more reason to believe that a village should pay for a bridge so that a national highway can cross a river near them than to believe that they should pay for forest management in support of national or global benefits from conservation. Work in natural resources seems to be viewed by higher-level actors as if it were not labour and does not need remuneration, while work on a highway would never be expected without pay – except during the times of *corvée* labour under colonial regimes. Again, a set of higher-level perceptions and assumptions are shaping incentives for forest conservation. The assumption that rural people will work free for a public good – with some notion of long-term payoffs – justifies a tax in labour that is part of what keeps rural people poor.

One other way that higher-level institutions have consistently shaped the scope of local institutions is through the maintenance of central control over ‘decentralized’ authorities. Many mechanisms have been used (and some recent examples discussed earlier in this chapter). These include the dependence upon central government for funds (earmarked or conditionally transferred), staff and administrative controls, forms of oversight and *tutelle*; executive personnel deployed locally; imposition of ‘expert’ advice; discourses of lack of local capacity; transfers of burdens with retained central control of benefits, etc. (Nemarundwe, 2004, pp287–288; Ribot and Oyono, 2005; Ribot et al, 2006; Wardell and Lund, 2006, p1894).¹³ As Wardell and Lund (2006) show, ‘contemporary decentralization is accompanied by increasing central government and line ministerial control, hollowing out local people’s participation and control’. The strengthening of central government and line ministries ‘has provided the Forest Department [in Ghana] with the means of off-setting local people’s ability to enjoy the rights with which they have been enfranchised’ (Wardell and Lund, 2006, p1899). ‘Access should not be prevented, but kept illegal in order for various rents to be extracted’ (Wardell and Lund, 2006, p1900).

Assembe Mvondo (2006, p687) observes within Cameroon’s autocratic national context that ‘decentralization of forests in Cameroon brought about a kind of reproduction, or transposition, of hegemonic political behaviour from the national to the local level’. He partly attributes this to a decentralization law (1994) that does not clearly specify how different social groups should be represented in local forestry institutions or give guidance on the sharing of forest benefits. Larson and Ribot (2007) and Ribot and Oyono (2005) show the multiple ways in which decentralization reforms are resisted by central actors threatened by their own loss of powers, embedded in their own cultures and beliefs about the forms and necessities of environmental management, faced with lucrative rent-seeking opportunities, under pressure to keep up production, etc. Governments are not giving much up. They have used decentralization as a strategy to shed burdens and responsibilities without devolving real powers or lucrative opportunities to the local arena (e.g. Nemarundwe, 2004, p287).

Lastly, history matters deeply. In Mozambique, local people are reluctant to engage with authorities or with rules given the long history of authoritarian rule. They believe that personalized relationships and informal rules matter more than codified rules or formal processes (Salomão and Matose, 2007, p16). This is also found in Latin America.

In Brazil, due to a history of patron–client relations, local people elect local mayors and councils dominated by elite landowners who mostly belong to opposition parties (Toni, 2007). In Guatemala, the state has engaged in a long history of integrationist policies, depriving indigenous peoples of their rights. The history of integrationist nation-building in Guatemala is today an obstacle to indigenous people’s participation in forestry management with democratic local government. That history has fostered a healthy mistrust of government, which has, in turn, affected their ability to take advantage of new local government institutions (Larson, 2007). Salomão and Matose (2007, p17) argue that trust is a key element for implementation of land and resource legislation. But, of course, that trust must be merited.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

Based on the studies reviewed, we can theorize or at least make some general statements about the democracy, livelihoods and ecological outcomes of decentralized forestry. First, ecological, livelihood and democracy objectives are not always mutually reinforcing – under some circumstances they may be at odds. Second, ecological improvements for local people (linked to local livelihoods) may look very different from ecological improvements for a more distant or higher-scale aggregate of populations (linked to watershed, biodiversity or global change). The use of the landscape for livelihoods by the poor may also be at odds with the profit and revenue interests of local elites, national commercial interests and national governments. Each set of objectives must be taken separately and the relation among them must be negotiated in a specific context.

There are several questions that need to be asked if we are to balance these competing and converging objectives in a way that supports sustainability, rural livelihoods and democratization. What are the minimum requirements for guaranteeing ecological sustainability (in whatever form the environment may take), local livelihoods and local democracy? This section goes over each briefly to point out some areas that we still need to think through and some contradictions that immediately emerge:

- *Ecology.* What is needed to optimize (conserve or transform) the ecology for local values and for higher-scale values? We already know that to produce different values from a landscape, rules are essential and enforcement is essential. When local people agree to the rules, enforcement is easier. When local people are involved with enforcement they are more likely to engage in the objectives that the rules were designed to achieve (Agrawal, 2005). In the rare instances where central government is willing to enforce the rules, elites will get away with fewer abuses.

It appears that some higher-scale agreement is needed on the environmental values that must be protected to benefit society at large and to fulfil higher-scale social needs. Additionally, some negotiation at the local level is needed to simultaneously protect local values or compensate local people for limits that higher-scale needs place on local-level values. Any solutions must attend to the fact

that most burdens of conservation are born at the local level while the benefits are manifest at higher scales. Conservation or even use for higher-scale or distant actors must reflect basic needs, such as health, welfare or subsistence, of distant and local societies – mere profit or economic growth do not always justify extraction. Is carbon storage a necessity? Is watershed regulation a necessity? Is timber extraction for national use a necessity? Is timber extraction for export and foreign exchange necessary? If so, what must be given back to make it palatable to local people? Are rural livelihoods needed (people could be moved to cities)? What is the social and political-economic cost of any of these decisions?

- *Livelihoods*. What must be done to guarantee livelihoods for local people or for higher-scale economic and use values from forests? Similarly to ecology, guarantees for what are perceived to be necessary aspects of production and reproduction of individuals, households, communities and nations must be assessed. What is more important: revenue from the timber trade or subsistence values of local people? When should forest use for poor people be supported, and when should alternative income activities be sought? These questions are not easy to answer. Should elites get rich or forest villagers get rich when there is wealth in the forests? Clearly, most national governments value timber more than subsistence values and elite wealth over enriching those who are currently politically, economically and socially marginal. Clearly, the market and policy processes that produce marginality while enriching others are not processes that governments or elites want to halt. Clearly, deep structural changes will be needed if the rural poor and forest dependent populations are to be safe from the vagaries of markets and of elite-driven policy processes. These changes would be painful to the rich and powerful and to the liberal free-trade, free-market profiteers. They are not likely to happen.
- *Local and legislative democracy*. What are the conditions necessary to promote democratization in and for the local arena? To guarantee local democracy, the criteria are a bit easier. Local democracy is about accountability of leaders to their people. Local leaders in democracy are representative – which means *responsive* to local needs and *downwardly accountable* (Manin et al, 1999). To be responsive they must have discretionary *powers* that are relevant and significant to the problems faced by the people they ostensibly represent. To be accountable there must be multiple mechanisms of accountability (means of positively and negatively sanctioning leaders) – among which elections (with open candidature and universal suffrage) are one important, but insufficient, means. Democratization may broaden the political base so that the majority, at least, is better cared for. But, like any political system, it needs the multiple pressures from social movements and organized civil society to keep from veering off into elite self-service. Hence, procedural rights that enable people to organize, protest, march, engage in civil disobedience and to generally voice their grievances and aspirations while sanctioning their leaders are also essential.

The just and sustainable balancing of ecological and livelihoods aspirations of local and higher levels of social organization requires some means to seriously negotiate between central and local values – and among an array of local values. Local

representative authority is one node of negotiation – such representatives could speak on behalf of local needs and aspirations to higher-scale actors. They can mediate the relation between the local population and outside interests. Local representation, however, is not enough. The laws that define the powers of local representative authorities are hammered out in national legislatures and in line ministries – forestry departments and environmental ministries in the case of forestry. Rural representation in legislatures across Africa is weak. Deputies and members of parliaments rarely introduce legislation on behalf of the rural poor or in protection of their rights to natural resources (Veit, 2008). Strong legislative representation would be necessary to establish powers in decentralized venues to make local government a viable locus for such negotiation. The power of local government representatives, however, is also still wildly insufficient to engage in negotiations to leverage greater power from above.

We know from previous studies that there are many ecological and livelihood decisions in forestry that can be devolved to local authorities without negative ecological or livelihood consequences – hence, there is plenty of room in forestry to support local democracy. For example, once it is determined at a higher scale that a certain forest can be cut for timber and the necessary techniques for cutting have been specified, the decision as to whether it should be cut, how much should be cut, when it should be cut, who should have the right to cut and who should profit from the cutting can all be decisions made at the local level. These latter allocation decisions cannot be said to threaten the ecology (at least not more than allowing outsiders to cut the same amount of timber already deemed exploitable by outside agents). Bazaara (2006) notes that forest services often devolve burdens of management without devolving lucrative opportunities. He argues that they do so by conflating technical decisions of management and use (which should often be taken at a higher scale) with political decisions of allocation (which can be devolved). Hence, we know that forestry could be more supportive of the construction of local democratic authorities without negative trade-offs on the ecological front. The trade-offs here are on the political front between national elites, local elites and democratic processes.

Clearly, context matters. Olivier de Sardan (2004, p3) outlines three contextual factors that will shape the outcomes of democratic decentralization. Socio-political aspects will include the role of local aristocracies who claim legitimacy from the pre-colonial era, lineage-based societies and heterogeneous villages. Differences will be expected among different socio-economic contexts, such as agro-pastoral, intensive agricultural and livestock economies. Furthermore, these different contexts will have different fiscal potentials. Some will easily generate revenues while others will have no sources. Differences will also be expected between different socio-cultural contexts that may be homogenous or heterogeneous and which may exhibit different degrees of internal conflict or cohesion. Olivier de Sardan (2004) is setting up a research observatory to examine how uniform policies can adapt – officially or unofficially – to these diverse situations. But his approach to enhancing implementation through research on the match between policy and context is still awaiting the implementation of decentralization in Niger. Constant research and feedback are needed to inform the negotiation processes and deliberations among local people and between local people, local elites and national elites.

Raik and Decker (2007) argue that decentralized forestry falls short in so far as it is too narrowly focused on the forest sector.¹⁴ Forests are usually neither people's dominant economic nor cultural base. People spend their time worrying about farming, business, health, education, welfare, infrastructure, social cohesion, family, etc. In an evaluation of World Bank community-driven development projects, Ribot (2005) found that when communities were given a menu of options to invest in, natural resource management was rarely a top priority. The irony of Raik and Decker's (2007) observation is that the development trend of 30 years ago – integrated rural development (IRD) – was all about the need to integrate across all household needs. IRD ran into problems because it was top down and too complex. Ribot (2001) has argued that well-structured decentralization is the new form of integrated rural development, but this time integrated through representative authority rather than through planners or sectoral imperatives. Democratic decentralization is one means of reintegrating priorities, allowing local representative authorities to place forests and NRM among other needs and aspirations of their communities.

CONCLUSIONS: FORESTRY CAN SHAPE LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Because there are few reasons¹⁵ to trust that local people, local representative authorities or central commercial interests will not want to transform forests into agricultural fields or use them one way or another to produce cash, there is a need for rules that protect some agreed-upon ecological values. A minimum standards approach (see Ribot, 2004) to forestry is consistent with maximizing local public discretionary power. If truly *minimum* rules of use can be set that are aimed at protecting essential ecological functions (for all scales) and protecting livelihood and economic values (for all scales), then the remainder of decisions over forest management and use should be at the discretion of local representatives. Of course, protecting ecological and income values must also be considered in the light of protecting other values – such as democracy and human rights (Petrasek, et al, 2002; Kulipossa, 2004). Balancing these objectives is not an easy constrained optimization.

To arrive at minimum technical standards first requires sophisticated representative engagement from the rural world. It will also require sophisticated engagement by experts who are able to stand up to 'forestry' experts and other 'environmental' experts so as to prevent them from using science-based arguments to impose rules and regulations that are not merited by ecological necessity. It will also require a significant presence of voices for human rights and local democracy to ensure that local values are protected from the unequal leverage of higher-scale decision makers and commercial interests. Most critically, it will require that the costs of protecting extra-local values are borne by external actors – not those who depend upon the resources and have been systematically and continuously pushed to the margins of the broader economy that they are located in but do not benefit from. If local people are expected to engage in any way in conservation or carbon storage

activities, they should be paid a living wage (not a subsistence wage) sufficient to motivate them to engage in these external projects and to give them the means to pursue alternative livelihoods for themselves and their children.

The hammering out of a minimum set of rules of forest management and use does not resolve the contradictions among different kinds and scales of objectives. Resolving these tensions is a political process. Where do these different objectives converge or conflict? When does decentralization of forest management strengthen or weaken livelihoods, democracy or human rights? Clearly, from the above discussions, we do not yet know. But setting priorities and determining which values take precedence is a decision that can be engaged in – politically. When are different parties willing to give up democracy for conservation or livelihoods? When are different actors willing to give up livelihoods for conservation or democracy? When is society willing to give up conservation for livelihoods or democracy?

Whatever political decisions are made, foresters have two opportunities to contribute to local democracy. First, by helping to define a realm of local discretion over forests and forest products, they help to define the local public domain – the set of powers over which democratic decision-making is exercised. Foresters can help to establish this domain by transferring sufficient and meaningful discretionary powers to local democratic institutions. Second, by choosing to locate these public powers with democratic authorities, forestry agencies, professionals, donors and NGOs are choosing democracy. In the process, foresters will help to produce a public domain in which local people can engage and develop as citizens. Forestry and the great material wealth that it represents have the power to support fledgling democratic institutions across Africa.

Discretion and representation are the infrastructure of democratic environmental governance. Environmentalists, foresters and democracy advocates need to collaborate to execute ‘environmental governance infrastructure assessments’ to ensure that these elements are in place. They need to begin looking to see whether powers that can be devolved to local authorities are being devolved and whether they are being devolved to local authorities who, in the long run, are likely to support just, equitable, representative social processes in the local arena. Such assessments could be used to evaluate the basic infrastructure of local representation – that is, the responsiveness and accountability of local government and forestry institutions.

NOTES

- 1 Foresters were often the first professionals to accompany the military into Africa’s interior during the early colonial period.
- 2 In the colonial period it was one of management. Today it is one of participation and is moving towards representation. Stating the goal of France’s mission, French forester Bertin (1919, p305) writes: ‘We engage ourselves, in effect, to know *all* the exploitable species, neglected to the present, and that should have been used for the profit of industry’ (italics in original). Bertin also wants to train the ‘natives’ (using the term *dressage*) in order to get the most from their labour. Bertin (1919, p308) states:

The final goal toward which we must move is to cede to the natives for the most part forestry work, and the organization of small interested local businesses where collectives and black villages monitor by themselves their work and automatically augment their efficiency. But one must at least teach the blacks to use tools and engines, quite rustic without doubt, but allowing nonetheless to improve the yield of human labor.

- 3 Senegal instituted a 'participatory' forestry code in 1993; Ghana in the late 1980s (Ribot, 1995; Wardell and Lund, 2006, p1894). Participatory forestry laws swept the continent by the mid 1990s. Many were then later revised as participation gave way to decentralization.
- 4 See WRI working papers at <http://www.wri.org/publications/2284>.
- 5 Pers comm, Yaya Tamboura, National Director, Direction Nationale de la Conservation de la Nature, Bamako, Mali, November 2000, and meetings with forestry officials in Mali in March 2002.
- 6 I do not have an update of the final law. I resigned in 2001 from a forestry bill review board when my request to remove forced labour from the law was ignored.
- 7 In 1919 the Minister of Colonies established 'Councils of Notables' to give 'natives' in the rural areas an opportunity to participate in or be consulted concerning administration. According to the minister, the aim was the 'formulation of an *élite* which will later be able to cooperate more closely and in a more personal manner in the economic and financial life of the colony' (cited in Buell, 1928, p999). From 1936 the colonial French West African government required that the people be consulted through the medium of village chiefs about the choice of a canton chief. Proposed canton chiefs then had to be approved and appointed by the administration (Cowan, 1958, p177). Indeed, Indirect Rule was described as a form of enfranchising participation:

The basic aim of Indirect Rule is the development of an African society able to participate in the life of the modern world as a community in its own right. In territories where it is followed government does not accept the encouragement of European enterprises as a duty, but judges its value in the light of the contribution which it can make to African development. The other aspect of Indirect Rule – the preservation of African institutions where the needs of the Africans themselves do not call for their modification – is almost a natural corollary of this attitude towards European penetration. (liberal anthropologist Lucy Mair, 1936, p12–14)

- 8 See also Wily (2003, pi) who observes a lack of implementation in land administration decentralizations.
- 9 Misconceptions in analyses are multiple. Tacconi et al (2006, p3) argue that studies fail to question the core assumptions of decentralization advocates that:
 - democratic decentralization is an institutionalized and scaled-up form of CBNRM;
 - people will engage in conservation due to the benefits that will follow (Hailey, 1938, pp985–987, who also observed that 'conservation' forests are not advancing because they are insufficiently remunerative and Africans do not understand their value); and
 - benefit-driven conservation will lead to less deforestation.

The first failure they observe, however, is definitional. No amount of research will resolve it. It is not an assumption – rather an ‘if-then’ statement: *if* there is institutionalized representation in the form of democratic decentralization and the representative authorities hold management responsibilities over natural resources, *then* it is an institutionalized form of CBNRM. As for the latter two assumptions, the authors show that these hold only under certain circumstances due to the presence of multiple intervening variables. Agrawal and Chhatre (2005, p164) add, based on an analysis of 90 cases in India: ‘variations in how the same factors operate and should be operationalized in different micro-contexts should make us pessimistic about the possibility of a universal theory of the commons’.

- 10 The is it logical to economists. If the growth rate of a forest is lower than returns elsewhere, why not cut down the total forest stock now and invest the capital in a fund that has a return greater than the forest growth rate? Why not cut it down and invest in hotels?
- 11 There is reason to believe that incentives do differ under collective management due to the internalization of externalities in decisions such that those who might want to cut the trees down may be challenged by those who want to continuously use the bark, leaves and fruits or others who see them as aesthetically pleasing or as having functions for soil conservation or for wind protection. But if the price of the timber is high enough, we still do not have any reason to believe that the other actors in the collective decision cannot be paid off for the loss of these ongoing functions of the tree.
- 12 As Wily (undated, p5) describes the trend during the late 1990s: ‘Local populations have been presented as being legitimate forest users, whose cooperation may be secured in exchange for their subsistence needs being considered, an approach greatly encouraged by the current donor-led focus upon sustainable rural livelihoods.’
- 13 ‘The trend towards decentralization and devolution of forest management responsibilities to the local governments could not be effective due to low capacity of the sector at all levels’, cited in the *Country Report – Ethiopia* (Bekele, 2001).
- 14 Note, however, that ‘decentralized’ forestry in Madagascar described by Raik and Decker (2007) is not decentralized – rather, it is a contractual relation between the Forest Service and a registered local NGO. This is more closely akin to co-management approaches.
- 15 The idea of internalizing externalities in decisions does imply that local collective decisions will differ from individual or commercial decisions taken without community input. But if the values are high enough, there is plenty of reason to believe a community will act just like a corporation in transforming a forest into other kinds of uses or values. There is also reason to believe that deriving more subsistence value from a forest may change the relation of a population to the forest. But when commercial values are high, when alternative income-generating opportunities are abundant, or during very hard times, there is little to prevent even those who use the forest for subsistence or income from damaging it.

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