Development Southern Africa

Buzzing too far? The ideological echo of global governance concepts on the local level: the case of the Mafungautsi Forest in Zimbabwe

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Buzzing too far? The ideological echo of global governance concepts on the local level: the case of the Mafungautsi Forest in Zimbabwe

Bram E Büscher & Tendayi Mutimukuru*

This article critically examines the effects of global development buzzwords on the local level. Familiar examples are: empowerment, participation, capacity building, good governance and sustainable development. The article presents the findings of a highly exceptional but therefore very suitable case: a community-based forestry project in the Mafungautsi State Forest in Zimbabwe. This project used the same buzzwords throughout its two phases from 1994 to 1999 and from 1999 to 2003, but with remarkably different outcomes per phase. Only when the first donor left in 1999, owing to Zimbabwe becoming an international pariah, was there space for another donor to reconceptualise the same buzzwords on different premises, leading to more positive outcomes. The article concludes that, although rare in today's donor driven target culture, locally appropriate and critical operationalisation of buzzwords is possible even if, or perhaps when, it takes place under unthinkable circumstances.

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of buzzwords – policy vogue words or popular concepts – is nothing new (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Conceptual frameworks in terms of specific wordings are of all times and occur in all languages and societies. But since all such frameworks carry meaning and specific connotations, one has to be aware of their impact and effects, especially if they become truly global. This article critically examines the effects of global development paradigms on the local level. Familiar examples of these are: empowerment, participation, capacity building, good governance and sustainable development. From the literature, it is clear that policy concepts devised and operationalised in one part of the globe influence processes, institutions and developments in other parts (Peet & Watts, 1993; Reinicke, 1998), with often the developed countries at the originating and developing countries at the receiving end. What is not clear, however, is how far this influence goes and how the effects of specific global conceptual frameworks on local processes and institutions can be characterised, even though they are often regarded as negative (Reinicke, 1998). Yet, despite being aware of the possible negative impacts of buzzwords, Hicky & Mohan (2005: 257), in their study of participation, warn critics not to throw away the baby with the bathwater and so 'los[e] those elements of participation that retain the potential to catalyse and underpin genuine processes of transformation'. They recommend that 'the conditions within which participation can be transformative, and the forms of politics that underpin such an approach, need to be closely delineated and analyzed'. This article takes up their suggestion that we examine not only how discourse influences behaviour but also the

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complex interactions between discourse, institutions, leadership and other sources of change, using as an example the relationship between global development concepts and Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) in southern Africa.

This article is based on a case study of a CBFM project in the Mafungautsi State Forest in Zimbabwe. In 1994, a joint management pilot project was set up by the Zimbabwe Forestry Commission, with assistance from a donor, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), to generate lessons for scaling up such initiatives to other state forests in the country. Since the results were disappointing and the overall donor interest was decreasing as Zimbabwe became an international pariah, this project was prematurely terminated in 1999. It was soon thereafter resuscitated by a team of researchers from the Centre for International Forestry Research's (CIFOR's) Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) project, based in Zimbabwe. The ACM team used a different approach to forestry co-management, centred on enhancing social learning and collaboration among stakeholders. This provided space for stakeholders at the start of the project to come to grips with problems – and possible solutions – on their own terms. The two different starting points of the two phases of the project allow for an interesting comparison between what can be seen as more 'globalised' and more 'localised' conceptualisations of the problems at hand in Mafungautsi and what solutions can be developed to address them.

The article continues in Section 2 with a critical discussion of global governance buzzwords. Sections 3 and 4 provide the contextual background of forest policy development in Zimbabwe and our case study area. Sections 5 and 6 describe the two phases of the Mafungautsi project and Section 7 analyses these in the light of the buzzwords: ownership, good governance, capacity building, participation and sustainable development. The article concludes by answering the question whether neoliberal global governance concepts are 'buzzing too far' into local-level CBFM practices in Zimbabwe and outlines implications for development theory more generally.

2. GLOBAL GOVERNANCE BUZZWORDS

When we talk about 'global governance buzzwords', the three concepts global, governance and buzzword and their interrelations need to be discussed. We can be brief about global. The adjective global means 'encompassing the whole world', but this definition of course does not take us far. It still connotes different spheres of action and actual geographical reach. However, the purpose of this article is to delve into this very issue. With governance we find ourselves in more complex theoretical waters. Governance has been defined in so many ways that searching for an all-encompassing definition would be futile. Rather we outline what we think are important theoretical connotations the concept suggests, which are useful for the purpose of this article. We begin with the difference between government and governance.

According to Rosenau (2001: 1), both government and governance 'consist of rule systems, of steering mechanisms through which authority is exercised in order to enable the governed to preserve their coherence and move towards desired goals'. However, governance is a much broader concept than government, and distinguishes itself by its emphasis on 'any collectivity – private or public – that employs *informal as well as formal* steering mechanisms to make demands, frame goals, issue directives, pursue policies and generate compliance' (Rosenau, 2001: 1, emphasis added). Government focuses more on formal systems of rule or steering mechanisms, usually at either

local, regional, national or international levels. From the literature, it is evident that as a result of globalisation a shift can be discerned from formal state-centred government to more informal governance, encompassing a wide range of actors, with differing levels of power in constantly changing alliances (Rosenau, 1997, 2001).

The fact that more and more actors are involved in constructing, influencing and implementing (environmental) policy renders power in the policy process exceedingly diffuse and no longer a primacy of the state or bound to a specific locale (Biermann & Dingwerth, 2004). Increasingly, this has led to a situation where 'the activities of external intervening agents can deeply influence the relationship of local communities with the natural resources' (Dietz, 1996: 44). Global actors increasingly entitle themselves to intervene in and influence events at the local level, wherever this 'local' may be. In southern Africa, this can be seen happening, for instance, through the buying up of protected areas by wealthy Western wildlife patrons, who then often govern these parks on the basis of preservationist or protectionist principles (Büscher & Dietz, 2005).[1] Naturally, these are sensitive developments in a region beset by conflicts over land and resources, where a continuously expanding number of actors are already grappling with 'hot' governance issues, such as decentralisation of authority, changes in tenure and incentive structures and the link between conservation and development (Boyd, 2001).

Another feature of modern (global) governance is that structures are opaque and consist simultaneously of fragmentative and integrative forces (Rosenau, 1997). With so many different actors on the scene, all with their own agendas, backgrounds, visions and capabilities, contradictions are bound to be plentiful and one-dimensional frameworks hard to pursue. Still, this is not to say that structures do not exist at all. They are just not very tangible, often inconsistent and undoubtedly very complex. One identifiable form of structure lies in the construction of discursive configurations, together forming macro-ideological frameworks. This brings us to the last of the three concepts to be discussed.

Unlike governance, the term buzzword has not been defined often. Here we describe it as a term that is produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and widely used and accepted in many different contexts and through which meaning is transferred.[2] Global governance buzzwords are thus terms with strong ideological connotations, which are produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and used and accepted in many different global rule systems and steering mechanism contexts. Together, these buzzwords make up a substantive part of the so-called global governance agenda that guides the formal development parameters insisted on by the majority of donors and international development agencies. We have already mentioned a few of these buzzwords, but a more extensive, albeit not exhaustive, list could include: sustainable development, empowerment, participation, capacity building, institutionalisation, civil society, public–private partnerships and good governance.

It is fairly safe to state that the ideological interpretation and operationalisation of global governance concepts is predominantly derived from Western countries. After all, this is where 94 per cent of all indexed scientific knowledge originates and where capacity to promote this knowledge is available (Karlsson, 2002). Other evidence of the West's

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[1]Preservationism or protectionism is generally regarded as the strictest form of conservation, in which use of natural resources is not allowed and humans are expected to refrain as far as possible from intervening in natural processes and landscapes.
[2]Adapted from Hajer's (1997: 44) definition of policy discourse.

domination of discursive power is the fact that buzzwords often do not get translated when introduced into a non-English language (Ergun & Cali, 2002). While this may seem trivial, the consequences may be quite far-reaching. Buzzwords operationalised in one place and context may not necessarily be suitable in any other place or context. From the literature, we have distilled three reasons: 1) the ideological operationalisation of buzzwords, 2) the contradictory connotations of buzzwords, and 3) loss of meaning through the use of buzzwords for political legitimation.

The first, widely accepted, argument as to why one has to be wary of using global governance buzzwords on a global scale is that each has its own specific culture, history and (political-)ideological settings. Many writers refer specifically to the neoliberal discourse, with its emphasis on economic and financial logic, privatisation and liberalisation, as the basis on which influential global players, such as the IMF, the World Bank, the UN, the USA and the EU, devise and operationalise the global governance agenda (Peet & Watts, 1993; Adejumobi, 2000; Tsheola, 2002; Rosenau, 2003). Rosenau (2003: 16), for instance, states that sustainable development now connotes 'sustaining economies rather than nature, a semantic shift that has enabled a vast array of diverse actors to crowd under the umbrella of sustainability and to press their goals in the context of what they regard as unquestionable sets of values'. Global governance buzzwords in this sense thus directly denote neoliberal values, which are portrayed as unquestionable and universally applicable. That this move is very questionable or at least heavily contested can for example be demonstrated by the overwhelming criticism of the former structural adjustment policies of the IMF and the World Bank (Schatz, 1994).

The second argument for treating global governance buzzwords with care is that they are often capable of contradictory interpretations, or themselves contradict other buzzwords. Weiss (2000: 804), for example, explains that the World Bank's position on good governance is 'preoccupied with public sector management, the reduction of transactions costs and contract enforcement' and as such contrasts with governance approaches that support local participation and empowerment. Clearly, these two buzzwords are crucial in the theory and practice of CBFM. Jan Pronk, former Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation, recently argued that buzzwords such as good governance are operationalised on the basis of Western notions of development or progress, which contain contradictory elements that could be harmful or even outright negative for the development of the African continent (Pronk, 2004). According to Pronk, good governance is latently used in a (neoliberal) context of stability. Development, however, implies change, leading to a different allocation of resources and capital, which by definition involves a restructuring of the status quo. In Africa in particular, changes in the status quo often involve conflict or even violence, and thus call for policies aimed at conflict resolution. In contrast, the static conception of good governance in a context of stability focuses more on conflict control and as such contributes neither to the dynamic process of development nor to ownership of Africa's development by Africans themselves.

These two arguments feed into the last argument put forward here: that buzzwords are often included in management, policy or governance documents for the single purpose of political legitimation (Mosse, 2005). Many actors depending on donor support feel obliged to speak the donor language and to incorporate ownership, sustainable development, participation and other 'mobilising metaphors' (Mosse, 2005) into their texts. While we have already argued that we should be cautious of buzzwords because their meanings are predetermined or contradictory, they might also be hazardous because of having very little meaning at all. Clearly, when one uses a foreign word

one not only inevitably includes its foreign meaning, one also misses the chance of developing a more accurate concept in one's own language (Ergun & Cali, 2002; Eriksen, 2005). Hence, loss of meaning occurs, when it is essential in local development that local actors be able to describe or explain development in such a way that it has local meaning. After all, this is what the popular buzzword ownership means – or should mean.

In conclusion, it has to be noted that global governance buzzwords are not something that has arisen in a historical vacuum; on the contrary, they are arguably the latest episode in a long history of Western domination of Africa (Cooper, 2001). Hence, one needs be very sensitive to, and even critical of, the discursive side of development processes. We now turn to a case of local 'sustainable development' through CBFM in Zimbabwe to analyse the effects of global governance buzzwords in the light of the above discussion.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT OF FORESTRY POLICIES IN ZIMBABWE

As background to the Mafungautsi forest projects, this section outlines the development of forestry policies in Zimbabwe. The forestry policy-making process (in the then Rhodesia) was heavily influenced by the policies of the British Empire (now the Commonwealth) Forestry Association. According to Matose (2001: 53), the Association 'forms the knowledge centre through which peripheral places like the Rhodesia Forestry Commission had access to forest conservation arguments which influenced policy framing in order to command and control forests in their own boundaries and territories'. Because of limited staff, the officials from the Rhodesia Forestry Commission depended on information from institutions such as the Oxford Forestry Commission to formulate forestry policies, and it was only around the 1990s that results from local indigenous forest research began to filter into the policy-making process (Pearce & Gumbo, 1993).

The main biodiversity and watershed conservation debates earlier in the century centred on scientific arguments about the relationships between climate, deforestation and hydrology. According to Matose (2001: 70): 'hydrology and climate were highly topical within the empire debates up to the 1940s, but their significance in policy framing has diminished since then'. However, ideas about the role of forests in watershed conservation have persisted in forest policy formulation also in post-colonial Zimbabwe. Debates during the Commonwealth forestry conferences centred on the conviction that indigenous forests in most African countries lie on Kalahari sands that are fragile and susceptible to erosion and therefore need protection. This conviction also influenced forestry policy in Rhodesia, resulting in the demarcation of most forests as state forests to be managed in a top-down fashion by the Forestry Department. Moreover, because some of the forests in the Commonwealth countries were rich in commercial timber species, there were debates earlier in the century on how production from these forests could best be maintained and sustained in these countries. According to Matose (2001: 61), 'the sustained yield agenda was set in motion with the resolution on the forest technique at the Commonwealth Forestry conference of 1923 that spelt out the need for sound management. This entailed working plans for regulating yield, spelt-out objectives, the calculation and regulation of the yield to be obtained from each forest, and a spread of age classes of trees for future harvest'. At this conference, all governments were urged to come up with management plans that would ensure sustained yields of forest products.

The policies that were crafted in the early years of the 20th century were thus protectionist in nature. However, because of other international debates on the failure of the protectionist way of managing natural resources in the late 1980s (Adams & Hulme, 2001),

ideas on people-centred approaches began to filter into the policy-making process in Zimbabwe.[3] The Forestry Act began to allow experiments with such approaches, and this resulted in the pilot resource sharing project in Mafungautsi State Forest, where the Forestry Commission (FC) decided to bring communities on board to help manage the state forest. In this project, communities were now allowed to harvest a variety of minor resources, but not the high value commercial timber species. To some extent, the project went beyond the provisions of the Forestry Act, as this harvesting was illegal before the project started.

4. THE MAFUNGAUTSI FOREST, ZIMBABWE

Mafungautsi State Forest is located in Gokwe South District in Midlands Province, Zimbabwe (see Figure 1). It has a total area of 82 100 hectares, making up 17 per cent of the district. Communal areas in the district cover 73 per cent, while the remaining 10 per cent is covered by national parks and small-scale commercial farms.

Vegetation in Mafungautsi Forest is predominantly Miombo woodland and the dominant tree species are *Brachystaegia* and *Julbernadia* (Vermeulen, 2000). The dominant soils are Kalahari sands and only a few patches can be found with sodic and heavy clay soils. The forest is a catchment area for four major rivers in Zimbabwe: the Sengwa, Mbumbusi, Ngondoma and Lutope. Conservation of the watershed was one of the main reasons it was protected as a state forest in 1954. The forest is a source of several resources including pastures for grazing animals, thatching grass, broom grass, medicinal plants, honey, mushrooms, firewood, construction timber, game meat, Mopane worms,[4] and indigenous fruits and herbs. The majority of stakeholders around Mafungautsi belong to two ethnic groups: Ndebele and Shona, while a minority are Tonga, Kalanga, Chewa and Shangwe.

The initiation of a resource sharing project in 1994 brought some changes to forest management in Mafungautsi. In line with the global governance climate that was then taking hold, the main aim of the project was to give surrounding communities an active role in managing the forest resources, leading to participation and ownership. Fifteen Resource Management Committees (RMCs) were set up in various communities surrounding the forest whose main role was to monitor and control harvesting of the resources to which communities were now allowed access. The same aim of involving communities in joint management was central in the second phase of the project that started in 1999, but was based on totally different premises through the ACM approach, as the next two sections explain.

5. THE RESOURCE SHARING PROJECT: 1994–99

This section describes and analyses what transpired after the launch of the resource sharing project, which was driven mainly by donors, the most important being CIDA. The main activity after this launch was the FC's creation of RMCs in the communities surrounding the forest. The RMCs were supposed to act as a link between the FC and the communities. Their main tasks were administering permits for resource users to harvest the minor forest products, monitoring the harvesting, opening and keeping a

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[3]One must note here that after two decades in which community-based approaches to conservation dominated, the end of the 1990s saw more and more fundamental criticism of these approaches. Some have even argued that the debate is now reverting to protectionist thinking (see Brechin et al., 2002; Hutton et al., 2005).
[4]Mopane worms (*imbresia belina*) are edible and are used as a relish when dried.
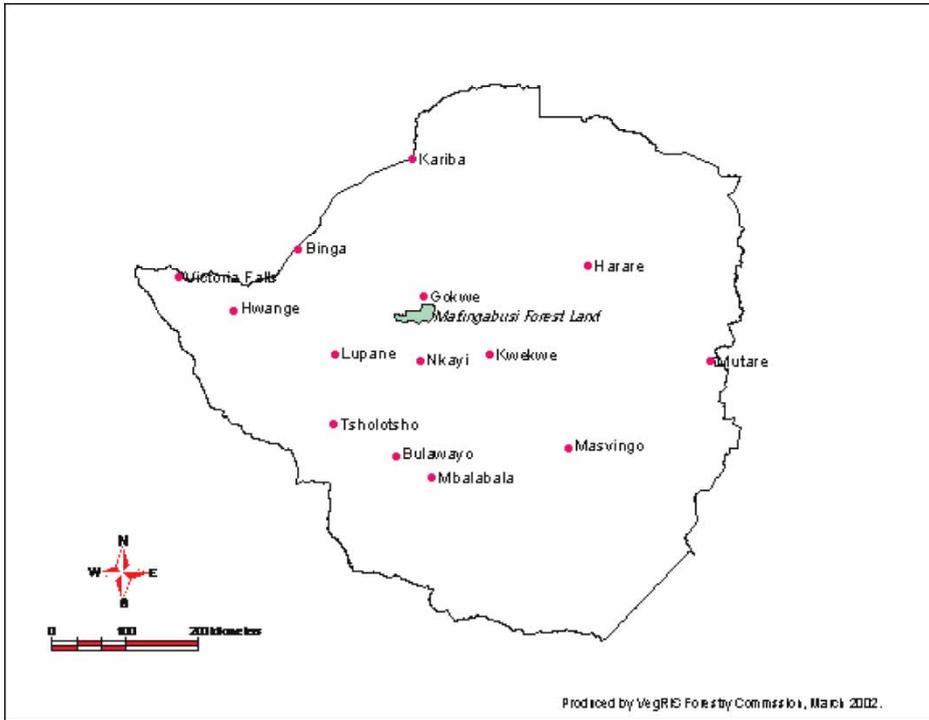
Figure 1: Map of Zimbabwe showing the location of Mafungautsi Forest
'Mafungautsi is the correct Shona name for a place where there is mist or smoke. Most documents and reports refer to Mafungautsi as Mafungabusi, which is a corrupted version used by the colonial administrators' (Mapedza & Mandondo, 2002).

community bank account where the moneys raised through the permit system were to be kept, and finally advising the community on how the funds could be spent. All this was designed to give the communities a sense of ownership which, so said the theory behind the project, was to lead to better community participation in sustainable forest management.

The creation of the RMCs was the FC's way of operationalising the concepts of ownership and participation. However, the communities around Mafungautsi were never consulted and it was not clear how the new committee would fit into the already complex institutional landscape (Mapedza & Mandondo, 2002). Most communities were not clear on what the role of the RMCs was and hence saw them as an extended arm of the FC. This later caused much tension. The RMCs themselves were accountable only to the FC and they did not pay due respect to the already existing traditional leadership structures. This in turn led to conflicts between traditional authorities and the RMC members. For instance, when the RMCs organised meetings, some village heads and their community members did not attend. Another problem was that the formation of the RMCs was mostly top-down. In one case, the FC officer just sent word that seven people from a community should come and see her. The people who came were then elected as the RMC committee. By now, it is generally accepted that the FC was not very genuine in its attempt to involve local people in managing the forest, but merely wanted to recruit cheap labour from a number of community people to boost the numbers of guards.

The RMCs were also told by the FC to open a bank account in which to deposit the money raised by issuing permits to resource harvesters in the forest. Although it was said to belong to the communities, a FC officer was a signatory to the account. That the communities could not withdraw money without the FC's approval demonstrated its paternalistic spirit. The setting up of the RMCs and the bank account were, according to FC rhetoric, meant to empower the local people to manage and really become owners of the resources, but in practice this was never the case. The FC remained reluctant to hand over power to the locals to make their own decisions on what were meant to be their own money and resources.

Later in the project, these various conflicts were to be solved through the introduction of good governance. However, the conflicts that continued to plague the project were never seriously addressed (Mutimukuru, 2004), suggesting that the FC judged the situation on the ground to be more stable than it actually was. No mechanisms were set up to really resolve the conflicts after the introduction of the resource sharing project. The FC's version of good governance (bearing out the argument made by Pronk in his 2004 lecture) was directed too much at short-term conflict control. The change in the institutional landscape in the form of the RMCs only aggravated the already existing tensions, when what was needed rather was an investment in longer-term conflict resolution. As a result, the chaotic relationship between the two major stakeholders never improved during the resource sharing project, and the forest continued to deteriorate as communities still accessed its resources beyond what was permitted by the project.

In the end, it took a third party to break the impasse. In 1999, when CIDA had left and CIFOR's ACM approach had been initiated in the resource sharing project, the ACM researchers could not go to the field in a FC vehicle, as any association with the FC would result in non-cooperation from the communities. The researchers had to meet with the two stakeholders separately at first to identify conflicts and problems. It took about a year for the relations between these stakeholders to improve. Today, thanks to the conflict solution mechanisms employed by the team, the communities no longer object if the researchers go to the field in a FC vehicle.

6. THE ADAPTIVE COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT (ACM) RESEARCH PROJECT 1999–2003

ACM is a value-adding approach whereby individuals or groups who use or manage a forest agree to act together and draw up plans for their forests. These plans are then implemented, with the recognition that they may not fulfil their intended objectives. In this process, it is important for people to learn collaboratively from the implementation, as changes in the plans are negotiated.

The lack of progress in the resource sharing project was the entry point for introducing CIFOR's ACM research project. The ACM approach was introduced to add value to the joint forest management scheme that was in place around Mafungautsi Forest between the FC (on behalf of the State) and local communities. The scheme, as explained above, had not improved collaboration between the State and local communities, as had been intended at the start in 1994. Thus the focus of this CIFOR initiative was on developing approaches that would enhance learning and improve the existing management systems.

The main thrust of this research was to reform management practices, institutional arrangements and policies in order to promote forest management systems that would

bring both human and ecological benefits. The project aimed at shifting away from blanket prescriptions for solving problems and moving towards locally based management that would be free to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances in accordance with sustainable forest management and meeting the needs of local communities. The specific purpose was to facilitate widespread use of self-improving and equitable forest resource management systems that would build on local capacity, enable 'vertical' and 'horizontal' stakeholder interactions, and respond positively to external pressures.

To kick off the research project, the ACM team conducted a baseline survey. One of the survey's major findings was that local people were passive and felt disempowered to participate in the management of the state forest. To break this passiveness, the research team put local communities through a Training for Transformation (T for T) workshop based on six principles developed by Paulo Freire: 1) no education is neutral as it can domesticate or liberate you; 2) education should be relevant; 3) education should promote dialogue; 4) education should encourage reflection and learning; 5) education should promote radical transformation; and 6) people should be critical when trying to solve problems and searching for solutions.

After the T for T workshop, communities were more confident and started to participate in the resource sharing project in a new way. Women and marginalised groups who had previously been left out of management began to take an active role in issues concerning the forest resources. Currently, communities have even taken over the running of the project as the FC takes a back seat. Moreover, community members have not only monitored the FC's activities in the forest, but have begun to actively monitor the functioning of the RMCs and to demand accountability. RMCs that were not performing according to the community members' requirements have been removed from power and new members elected. In one RMC, Batanai, subcommittees that were set up by the FC initiative in an effort to reduce the RMC members' workload were dissolved as they failed to meet the community's expectations.

These developments were, besides the T for T workshops, also sparked by efforts to build capacity, something that had also been tried in the previous project, but had yielded few results. New efforts in the ACM project to build the capacity of the communities around Mafungautsi included 'look and learn' tours (Box 1), feedback and training workshops, and several discussion and learning platforms that were created to enhance the sharing of experiences and learning among stakeholders.

The example in Box 1 makes it clear that capacity building was not only for local communities but also for the FC officers. Both stakeholders learnt about systems for sustainable harvesting and using timber resources. After the tour, FC officers tried to incorporate timber harvesting in the resource sharing project. Other efforts to build capacity for the stakeholders involved training workshops. The FC officers and community representatives also went through training on participatory approaches and their implications, and the officers also attended training workshops on the ACM approach, which gave them a clearer idea of participatory approaches in their extension work. Finally, in the various platforms that were organised, local potential was unlocked through sharing of experiences and learning among stakeholders at various levels, and this helped to 'build capacity' as well.

The combined efforts at capacity building by both the FC and the community members resulted in more meaningful participation in the management of the forest than had previously been thought possible (see Boxes 2 and 3).

Box 1: Example of 'look and learn' tour in the ACM project

Two FC officers for Gokwe North and South Districts and the Provincial Forest Extension Manager for Midlands province and representatives from five RMCs around Mafungautsi Forest visited the Nyagadza carpentry project in Chipinge where they learnt how the communities in Nyagadza were managing (harvesting and monitoring) their indigenous woodlot. This was a learning opportunity for both the FC and communities, as one of the most contentious forest issues is the harvesting of timber by local communities. Timber harvesting is still outside the resource sharing agreement, yet communities have continued to access this high value resource illegally. This trip was therefore a learning opportunity for the two major forest stakeholders on what systems could be implemented to resolve the conflict between them with regard to timber harvesting. Following this trip, the three FC officers administered a questionnaire to establish, among other things, the number of harvesters, their qualifications, skills and tools and the volume of timber they harvested in a given time. This survey, which is to be followed by another to find out the amount of timber available in the forest, aimed to establish the feasibility of allowing timber harvesting by communities in Mafungautsi along the Nyagadza model – so far, licences to harvest timber have occasionally been given to big outside timber logging companies. The FC officers hoped to use the findings of these surveys as a basis to argue for allowing communities to harvest timber from the forests with their top management. This is one step that could later influence the forest policy for the use of Mafungautsi or, better still, other state forests. (Mutimukuru et al., 2006)

Box 2: Example of participation in the management of firewood collection

In trying to regulate and generate information on firewood collection, the Batanai RMC came up with a new mechanism where ordinary exercise books were stamped to make receipts. These receipts were given to people strategically located along the forest boundary so that they could levy Zim$500 on all firewood collectors who collected firewood on days outside the designated collection days. The people issuing these receipts included kraalheads and RMC members. This initiative was primarily meant to regulate firewood collection and to a lesser extent to generate cash. The inclusion of traditional leaders (for instance the village heads) in this monitoring was commendable, as they had complained of being left out of the resource sharing programme.

Box 3: Example of renewed accountability of the RMCs and conflict resolution

Because of the serious problems they faced in their RMCs over unequal distribution of the broom grass resource, the Gababe RMC members developed a system that would ensure it was equitable. This involved dividing the grass vlei into a number of small plots so that many people could have access to the good grass, whereas previously only a few could access it. The new system worked well to reduce conflicts. It also provided an opportunity for closer collaboration between the RMC and the user group – for the first time the RMC was able to respond to users' concerns. Previously it had been concerned only with issuing permits and responding to demands from the FC and had showed very little concern for issues raised by users.

These cases show that local people have been taking a lead in actively participating in managing their resources. By coming up with new permit systems, stakeholders in

Batanai showed a keen interest in monitoring and sustaining their resources, as did those in Gababe, who in addition solved their equity problems. In both cases, local stakeholders sought local solutions to deal with their problems. Whereas previously their participation was tokenism, now real participation was emerging.

After the introduction of the ACM research project, considerable time was spent explaining what the project was all about and this greatly helped in creating ownership of the project by the local people. In the Chemwiro Masawi case (see Box 5), the local people were anxious to know the role of the RMC according to the constitution. This was the first time the constitution had been explained to them, and now they knew about it they were keen to start monitoring the performance of RMC members. Furthermore, communities became more proactive in assuring that the new RMCs were representative (see Box 4).

Box 4: Example 2 of communities demanding accountability

Of late, communities in some RMCs around Mafungautsi have actively monitored the performance of their RMCs by demanding that they become accountable to them also and not only to the FC. For instance, Chemwiro Masawi communities have organised meetings where they also invite the FC officer and the councillor so the RMC members can update them on their progress with finances, activities and problems. At one of these meetings the FC officer helped communities understand how the constitution binds the work of RMC members. After this meeting, the councillor (one of the local-level stakeholders) said happily: '*Nhasi zvataziva basa reRMC, chokwadi vatichagadza pazvigaro zveRMC vanenge vatogara papfumo remoto nekuti tinenge tichivaongorora kuti vari kuita basa ravo nemazvo here kana kuti kwete*' – 'Now that we know the work that the RMC members are supposed to do, the next people to be elected to the RMC positions will be sitting on a burning spear, as we will monitor and check if they are doing their work properly or not'. The FC officer attributed this development to the ongoing interactions between RMCs, which led communities to examine their performance compared with other RMCs. (Mutimukuru et al., 2006)

Box 5: Example 1 of communities demanding accountability

Cases of funds embezzlement by RMC members have been reported in a number of RMCs around the forest. Local politicians are said to have tried to access these funds for political activities. At Batanai RMC, committee members were threatened with physical harm or expulsion from the RMC if they did not hand over the money to the local ward councillor. But now knowing that RMC money is public money which cannot be used without the approval of the community, the RMC members remained resolute and refused to hand over the money to the ward councillor, who wanted to use it to sponsor a ruling party function that was scheduled to take place in their area. The RMC members insisted that it was important for them to organise a meeting with community members to find out if they wanted their money to be used in this way or not.

The case related in Box 4 clearly shows that the RMCs are no longer accountable only to the FC but also to the communities they represent, which is normally regarded as one element of good governance. This came about because the communities took an active role in monitoring their RMCs and dissolving those that did not perform well.

Another case where communities demanded downward accountability by their RMCs is presented in Box 5. Facilitation of the various processes by the ACM team in Zimbabwe ended in 2003. To ensure that learning and collaboration would continue even after the ACM researchers had withdrawn, a strategy was developed to equip the local FC officers and community partners with facilitation skills, and the FC officers were trained in the ACM approach. The community partners and FC officers thus remained actively involved in facilitating the learning processes. It is also important to highlight the fact that the researchers did not pull out all at once but gradually. At first they offered considerable back-up support to the two main facilitators, the community partners and the FC officers, but then lessened the support over time as the stakeholders became more confident in organising and facilitating the learning processes. The researchers have now become mere observers as learning continues with the help of the community partners and the FC officers.

7. ANALYSIS: BEYOND BUZZWORDS?

The two phases of the Mafungautsi Resource Sharing Project show clear differences in terms of success. The resource sharing project generally failed to meet any of the real goals of participation, ownership, good governance and capacity building and failed to stimulate sustainable forest management. On the other hand, the ACM project did manage to meet many of the goals set out by the resource sharing project, while empha-sising the same buzzwords, but taking an altogether different approach. In the following we analyse the key differences between the two projects in their use of these five buzz-words. (One can undoubtedly distinguish more common buzzwords, such as community and biodiversity, which we agree with an anonymous reviewer also deserve scrutiny, but space constraints prevent their inclusion here.)

Before the ACM team intervention in 1999, although the policy was flexible to allow for the resource sharing project to take place as an experiment, the intentions of the project were not translated into practice. The FC did not trust the communities to participate effectively in the project but, since the donors were funding this project, buzzwords such as capacity building, participation and community empowerment dominated most discussions about the resource sharing project even though there was incomplete understanding of what exactly these terms meant. For example, capacity building of communities, in order for them to participate effectively in the project, had been high on the agenda, but never materialised. Government and FC officials' ideas of what needed to be done in order to build capacity differed greatly from what is generally understood by the term, i.e. to increase the competence (intellectual, financial, economic, etc.) of the communities so they would become better equipped partners in the project. The FC continued to operate as it had done before the project, with policing being its main approach to good governance and management, which led to an increase in arrests of community members and the subsequent worsening of relations. The introduc-tion of capacity building therefore had no effect on the project, as those responsible for this capacity building saw the concept as void of any meaning other than political legit-imation. Capacity building is thus needed on multiple levels and it would have been better if the FC officials had had training in order to change their perceptions.

When the resource sharing project was introduced, communities were required to partici-pate actively in managing the forest and yet they were ill equipped to do so. They had come to believe that the government forest officials knew everything and they knew

nothing. Even during the initial stages of the ACM research project they refused to answer any questions and told the researchers that they did not know anything. The two major stakeholders, the FC and communities, were supposed to collaborate and manage the forest resources, but in fact the FC continued to dominate while communities carried on with their 'business as usual'. Participation by communities was therefore by tokenism and upon this realisation – further reinforced by Zimbabwe becoming an international pariah – the donor, CIDA, instead of trying to see how things could be changed, decided to pull out of the project and leave it in limbo.

Since the introduction of the ACM approach, a partnership has evolved between the two major stakeholders, the FC and communities, leading to better management strategies and the improvement of human lives. After the training in the ACM approach, the FC officers switched from being teachers to being learners and increasingly appreciated the local people's knowledge. These partners now learned from each other and the resource was managed better than it had been in the earlier phase when the FC claimed to know everything and regarded the local communities as ignorant. In recent developments, the partners have initiated joint learning processes, and community members participated in a 'look and learn' trip where they visited a carpentry project in Chipinge in the Manicaland province of Zimbabwe.

In the new project, deliberate effort was put into building the capacity of the local stakeholders. After realising that the local people suffered from inertia, the ACM team organised the T for T workshop to help boost their confidence and level the playing field, and also used other methods to try and break their passiveness. For instance, previously marginalised groups such as women were deliberately given platforms to express themselves and take the lead in issues that concerned them. This helped considerably to boost the women's confidence. Invitations for most of the workshops organised by the researchers were deliberately extended mainly to women, and other marginalised groups, and this also improved their participation in the processes and enhanced their confidence and self-belief.

After the ACM research project, community participation in resource management and decision making was enhanced and by making decisions the local stakeholders also commanded more genuine ownership of the project. Forest users now had a means of engaging with both the RMC and FC on their terms, and as they implemented their action plans their collaboration with the RMCs, the FC and other district-level stakeholders improved. As a result, communities' perceptions of the FC became more positive and they began to see it as more of an ally than a hindrance to resource access. All in all, the latest developments in Mafungautsi have instigated a more regulated and balanced approach to meeting the needs of the communities, while not over-harvesting the forest resources. Perhaps it is too soon to call this 'sustainable forestry development', but steps have surely been taken in the right direction. (And interestingly, after seeing the positive developments in the resource sharing project after the introduction of the CIFOR ACM research, CIDA came back to fund the upscaling of the ACM approach to two neighbouring communal areas, Jahana and Simchembu.)

8. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As is clear from the foregoing, it was not so much the specific wording that was used that made the two phases of the project different. Rather, the difference lies in who operationalises a buzzword like participation or ownership, and how. Of course, this in itself is nothing new, but what the Mafungautsi case clearly illustrates is that discursive pressure

involved in a donor-instigated project makes it much more susceptible to problems of unsuitable ideological operationalisation, contradictions and lack of meaning because of political legitimation. However, the case also shows that this conclusion is not inevitable. When the ACM researchers from CIFOR came with a different approach that focused on enhancing social learning and collaboration among stakeholders, local community members got an opportunity to come to grips with their problems and solve them on their own terms.

Donor money almost always comes with conditions. In the Mafungautsi case, the FC had to adopt the resource sharing approach that was directly influenced by the emerging global governance agenda where people had to move from top-down approaches to people-oriented approaches through buzzwords such as participation and empowerment of local people. Coming back to our three ways of how buzzwords often work out in reality, as noted in Section 2, it can be concluded that in the case of Mafungautsi State Forest the buzzwords were not clearly defined at that level and stayed just buzzwords with no local meaning and were mainly used by the FC to legitimate donor funding.

Moreover, it can be concluded that the various global governance buzzwords work out differently in different situations. The Mafungautsi case showed for example that the term capacity building was mostly used for purposes of political legitimation, and that while adhering to good governance the project nevertheless showed internal contradictions in the way conflicts ought to be managed. Above all, the buzzwords lacked meaning at the local level and subsequently made implementation complicated. The resource sharing project was immediately implemented by the FC without much consideration of other factors that were crucial if the project was to be successful in enhancing real effective participation of local people. Such factors could include levelling the playing field, building capacity not only for local communities but also for government workers (teaching them people-oriented approaches), changing the local people's perceptions of their own capabilities, and executing genuine good governance through conflict resolution mechanisms. These factors were apparent in the ACM project.

All of this leads to the bigger debate on the effectiveness and legitimacy of development cooperation through donors and international institutions. To find a case in Zimbabwe, now internationally under much pressure and stigmatised as being in a downwards spiral, where certain things are actually improving after a change of donors, at least points to the conclusion that buzzwords can indeed 'retain the potential to catalyse and underpin genuine processes of transformation' (Hicky & Mohan, 2005: 257). This is an important conclusion in a time when many donors and development practitioners seem to emphasise merely the correct project processes that contain all the 'right elements' (i.e. buzzwords), rather than how these elements are implemented so as to take into account local realities and power dynamics. The case described in this article proves that a critical rethinking of the development process is not all that is needed. Even more importantly, it confirms that donors and development practitioners should accept local recipients' criticism of aid that is characterised by global governance buzzwords and encourage their local and flexible interpretation.

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