Understanding the Relationships between the ǀAi-ǀAis Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (ARTP) and Local Communities of ǁGamaseb Conservancy in Namibia

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Introduction

Historically, the standard nature conservation approach used in most countries in southern Africa advocated for creating strict national parks and other protected areas, to protect and conserve biodiversity and 'natural resources' while disregarding local communities living within and adjacent to these areas.[1] However, like many parts of the world, southern Africa – and the continent at large – has undergone several reforms regarding wildlife conservation and nature-based tourism development. While these reforms are geared towards addressing the loss of biodiversity, they also aim to promote socio-economic development among the impoverished local communities surrounding protected areas.[2] Furthermore, these changes also prompted the global adoption of a more holistic and inclusive approach, designed to include local communities in the management of natural resources and to allow for their active participation in tourism interventions in the late 20th century.[3]

The reform in wildlife conservation approaches resulted in the adoption of the community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) programme, established to give local communities custodianship of and the right to use, benefit and manage natural resources in these spaces. In so doing, it aims to encourage better resources management outcomes, with the full participation of local communities in decision-making activities[4], subsequently achieving community empowerment.[5] The principle underlying CBNRM is that sustainable resource management is most likely to be achievable if local communities are given incentives to manage and derive benefits from natural re-

1 Hanks 2003; Roe et al. 2009; Chiutsi and Saarinen 2017.

2 Zunckel 2014

3 Sene-Harper et al. 2018

4 Armitage 2005 : p. 206

5 Roe et al. 2009; Moswete et al. 2020.

sources.[6] Through community-based conservation, local communities are increasingly recognised as the primary beneficiary of nature conservation programmes.

In addition to this, the creation of transfrontier conservation parks – initiatives implemented across national borders – were among the inclusive approaches recently embraced by several countries and gained momentum in the construction of 1990s borders.[7] The transfrontier park approach has multiple targets. It aims to both reconcile fragmented natural habitats limited by borders and promote alliances in natural resources management through multisectoral partnerships with different sectors – such as governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), communities, and the private sector. As such, these parks are implemented to and promoted as achieving objectives related to facilitating regional co-operation and biodiversity conservation, stimulating socio-economic development and sub-regional economic growth, and developing trans-border ecotourism.

The transfrontier parks approach and the CBNRM initiative are regarded as pivotal – fulfilling different nations' commitment to natural resources management, achieving economic growth, and contributing to rural development. Seeking to achieve similar objectives and having common goals, these institutions assert that incorporating different conservation approaches and land uses into one large landscape creates a high probability of achieving complementary opportunities for both conservation and the socio-economic development of local communities, through employment and economic opportunities. [8] This is said to consequently contribute to long-term goals of poverty reduction. [9] Therefore, to allow local communities to benefit from transfrontier parks, Namibia is integrating its renowned CBNRM programme into the transfrontier initiatives.[10]

While CBNRM programmes have supposedly contributed to community involvement and benefits in conservation, they are still plagued by weaknesses and challenges inhibiting their success and sustainability.[11] Difficulties relating to social issues, governance and equitable sharing are among the shortcomings facing CBNRM programmes. Equally, the transfrontier parks have become highly contested areas in the southern African region. Some scholars argue that, like the former strict national parks approach, transfrontier parks have resulted in the repeated marginalising of communities.[12] Therefore, in this chapter we seek to understand the interface between the transfrontier park and community-based natural resources management[13] approaches, mainly focusing on the ǀAi-ǀAis Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (ARTP), referred to as 'transfrontier park' and 'the park', and the ǁGamaseb Conservancy. We explore the institutional setup, legal frameworks and existing relations, while analysing challenges and opportunities

6 Ministry of Environment and Tourism 2013; Murphree 2009.

7 Zunckel 2014; Ramutsindela 2004.

8 Munthali 2007

9 Ibid.

10 MET/NACSO 2020

11 Mbaiwa 2015

12 Ferreira 2004; Büscher 2013.

13 The CBNRM programme has varying names. It is sometimes referred to as Community Trusts in Botswana, Conservancies in Namibia, in addition to Wildlife Management Associations, Community Forest Committees, and Fish Management Committees.

for working relationships between the two approaches, in the interest of the sustainable development of local communities. To understand how the park promotes effective community participation, we analyse the relationship between the park and local communities by examining how they are currently participating in the park and the benefits derived from this. We draw our data from qualitative and quantitative interviews with community members, ARTP management, government officials, NGOs and private sector representatives.[14]

Finding a 'community' for the |Ai-|Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park

The |Ai-|Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park covers a total area of more than 6,000 km², spanning the international borders of Namibia and South Africa. The park was established in 2001 through a formalised Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Namibian and South African governments. In 2003, the Namibian and South African governments formally signed a treaty to manage the park through a joint approach.[15] The signed treaty outlines various issues related to the park, including the objectives, the geographical areas and stakeholders involved in the park's management, and rights.

One of the |Ai-|Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park's objectives is to promote alliances in managing natural and cultural resources. It also aims to promote social and economic tourism benefits through responsible tourism and other partnerships between various stakeholders. For these benefits to be achieved, different tourism stakeholders – such as the Namibian and South African governments, local communities, NGOs, and the private sectors in both countries – need to work together.[16] Furthermore, decision-making in the affairs of the park is guided by a principle that promotes 'equitable and effective participation by local communities, where they play a central role and have substantial influence over decisions being made particularly when their communities are recognised as part of institutional structures of the transfrontier park'.[17] In the treaty, 'local communities' or 'communities' are defined as groups of people living in and adjacent to the area of the |Ai-|Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park, bound together by social and economic relations based on shared interests.[18]

14 We used a mixed-method approach of incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Quantitative data was collected through a survey of 180 households in the ǁGamaseb Conservancy, meanwhile, qualitative data through interviews was collected from 15 key informants from the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), tourism establishments, local community leaders and knowledgeable community members. The key informants were sources of information regarding community participation and beneficiation in the ARTP. Data was also derived from sources such as meeting minutes, MoU agreements, and government reports. This data was analysed through thematic content analysis, where similar responses emerging from the interviews were grouped into themes. The results and discussion of this study are based on the key informant interviews, with a few allusions to the household survey.

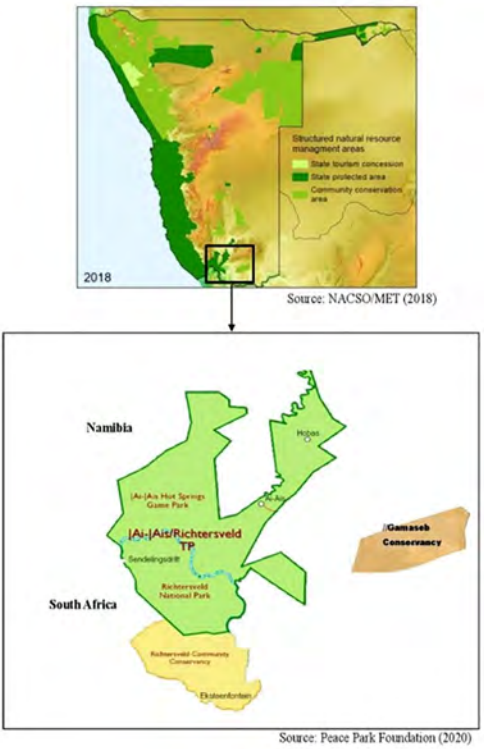
15 Suich et al. n.d; ARTP Treaty 2003.

16 ARTP Treaty 2001: p. 8

17 ARTP Treaty 2001: p. 8; Dawson et al. 2021.

18 Ibid.

Fig. 1: A map of ǀAi-ǀAis-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park (credit: NACSO/MET, 2018 and Peace Park Foundation, 2020).



There are communities living around the ǀAi-ǀAis-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park on both sides of the South Africa/Namibia border. On the Namibian side, land demarcated for the park comprises the ǀAi-ǀAis Hot Springs Game Park, including the Fish River Canyon. The ǀAi-ǀAis Hot Springs Game Park is surrounded by various land-use initiatives – including communal conservancies, such as the ǁGamaseb Conservancy; commercial land; and resettlement farms. It also includes a few urban areas like Karasburg, Rosh Pinah and the large, closed mining area of the Sperrgebiet. The Namibian government mainly (and particularly) involves communities located in communal land in natural resource management. Therefore, the people living closest to the park, living on townland like in Rosh Pinah; migrant workers such as those in Aussenkehr; and private farmers, do not fulfil the general idea or the criteria of a community to be engaged in the transfrontier park.

On the other hand, on the South African side, the ǀAi-ǀAis Richtersveld Transfrontier Park comprises the Richtersveld National Park. Some local people live next to the Richtersveld National Park in the Richtersveld Community Conservancy. The conservancy includes the four villages of Eksteenfontein, Lekkersing, Sanddrift, and Kuboes. While local communities on both sides of the ǀAi-ǀAis Richtersveld Transfrontier Park

in Namibia and South Africa were supposed to play a role in its establishment and management processes, in reality different scenarios exist in each country. Our study discovered that the local communities living on the Namibian side adjacent to the |Ai-|Ais Richtersveld Transfrontier Park were not awarded custodianship; neither was a formal agreement entered into with them in order to be recognised as a community – which is one of the key requirements of being considered as stakeholders in the park.

In contrast, we found out that an integrated development and management plan was created for the Richtersveld National Park on the South African side. This plan specified the transfrontier park's core areas, buffer zones, and land allocated for the Richtersveld Conservancy. The Richtersveld community accepted this management proposal in 2004 and elected a permanent management committee. In addition, it was also anticipated that the Richtersveld National Park would contribute to community-based tourism initiatives, such as the development of guesthouses and campsites in Kuboes and Eksteenfontein, and the support of activities such as hiking, 4x4 driving, and cultural tours.[19] However, we did not explore whether these community-based tourism initiatives materialised, as this was not the core area of our study.

The people in Richtersveld had the chance to actively participate in establishing the park and drafting the MoU. Early engagement and consultation with local communities is crucial for effective community involvement. This enables local people to raise their views and concerns and find ways to profit from conservation initiatives, as this is critical for obtaining benefits from tourism and wildlife-based developments.[20] Suich and co-authors note that enabling local communities' representation in governance structures leads to community participation, as more representation leads to more participation, coordinated planning, and the enhanced sustainability of working relations established between the park and local communities.[21] Thus, transfrontier conservation managers can foster collaboration with local communities through building inclusive governance and decision-making structures and processes through which stakeholders at various levels must commit to the actions agreed upon.[22]

Some scholars note that the question of who gets involved or recognised as a community in transfrontier conservation areas has become a site of global and political contestation in the conservation arena. However, transfrontier conservation managers and their proponents did not fully address the issues related to local community involvement in transfrontier conservation parks in our research. In many cases, jurisdictional zones and areas included or not included in the transfrontier conservations parks are not clarified or resolved. In addition, there are no clear guidelines about who decides what activities and territory can be included in a particular transfrontier conservation area and what cannot.[23]

Through the interviews conducted with our informants from different NGOs, parastatals and government officials, we found that during the park's initial development, the

19 Smuts et al. 2006
20 Muboko 2013
21 Suich et al. 2005
22 Dhliwayo et al. 2009
23 Suich et al. n.d

view of how to involve communities on the Namibian side was discussed. However, the implementation process to involve these communities faced some challenges. For instance, we found that most informants were dissatisfied with the implementation process. They indicated that the Namibian government played a significant role in formalising local community institutions to create opportunities for and allow better collaboration and inclusion in conservation and natural resource management initiatives, including transfrontier parks. As mentioned before, the inclusion of local communities in the transfrontier park is necessary in order to strengthen their economic and social development.[24] However, such opportunities were not capitalised on. For instance, an informant from an NGO – who previously worked in the southern region of Namibia – stressed that despite the local communities living adjacent to the park, most of the community members, particularly from the ǁGamaseb Conservancy, were not involved enough in and had little awareness about what the park entails. This is despite the fact that the ǁGamaseb Conservancy is one of the local community institutions targeted to benefit from the ǀAi-ǀAis-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park.

Our findings revealed that the ǀAi-ǀAis Richtersveld Transfrontier Park was mainly seen as a way to strengthen the relationship between Namibia and South Africa. Therefore, community involvement was not the priority for the Namibian government when the park was established. This view was expressed by many informants. They mentioned that at the inception of the park, the focus was on strengthening relationships between the two countries and issues of community participation were regarded as secondary. Some scholars argue that transfrontier conservation initiatives have underperformed in their plans to adequately involve communities because, from the start, the major driving force was biodiversity conservation. This ultimately minimised the focus on the local communities affected by establishing these transfrontier parks.[25] Thus while, in the case of ǀAi-ǀAis-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park, the memorandum of understanding signed by the Namibian and South African governments references the importance of the inclusion and beneficiation of local communities living in and adjacent the park, it did not define what 'a community' is.[26]

ǁGamaseb Conservancy – the ARTP's community?

The ǁGamaseb Conservancy is located on the Namibian side of the ǀAi-ǀAis-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park. It was gazetted by the government in 2003 and fell under the jurisdiction of the Bondelswarts Traditional Authority.[27] The ǁGamaseb Conservancy is the oldest communal conservancy in the ǁKaras region and is situated approximately 150km west of the ǀAi-ǀAis Hot Springs Game Park.[28] It covers an area of 1,748 km^2, occupying

24 Kavita and Saarinen 2016
25 Swatuk 2004
26 ARTP Treaty 2001
27 Nangulah 2003
28 Kotzé and Marauhn 2014

a semi-desert environment made up of sparse savannah and grasslands with an average annual rainfall of only 50–150 mm.[29]

Since the ǁGamaseb Conservancy is located on marginal farming land, farmers mainly practice small livestock farming with sheep and goats. The ǁGamaseb Conservancy exhibits a strong Nama culture, language and tradition, and retains very close cultural links with the Richtersveld Community Conservancy in South Africa.[30] Although the Nama-speaking population dominates the area, some Oshiwambo speakers and other groups are also found in the area.

Proponents of transfrontier conservation argue that local communities should be involved through representation in legal and management structures and participate in joint decision-making and benefit-sharing from transfrontier conservation areas.[31] However, our findings show that the ǁGamaseb Conservancy is not represented in the |Ai-|Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park. For instance, the joint management board of the |Ai-|Ais Richtersveld is comprised of only governmental institutions such as the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) and its public corporation Namibia Wildlife Resorts. The presence of institutions such as the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations (NACSO) would enable discussions on community participation and, subsequently, community development goals, as this is part of their mandate.

A former advisor to the Bondelswarts chief, who played a significant role in the initial establishment of the transfrontier park and represented the ǁGamaseb community at the Integrated Conservation and Development workshops in South Africa, stated that since some initial discussions about community involvement, there has hardly been any collaboration between the ǁGamaseb Conservancy and the park since 2008.

> The last meeting we had on the park was in, I think around 2008 in Kuboes, [some of] the community members [from the Conservancy] were involved. The late leader of our tribe [Mr. Joseph] tried to get the Conservancy involved in the park, but after he died, things stopped. His argument was that |Ai-|Ais and the Orange River belong to the Bondelswarts.[32]

Most of the people we interviewed in the ǁGamaseb Conservancy, particularly the elders, identified themselves as being of the same ancestral origin as the people on the South African side, divided only by the presence of the Orange River. Some elderly informants indicated that they used to cross the river to visit their relatives on the South African side. Some also recalled that certain areas of the park on the Namibian side were sacred sites that they used as a healing place:

29 MET/NACSO 2020

30 Govender-Van Wyk 2007

31 SADC Secretariat 2017; Zunckel 2014.

32 ǁGamaseb Conservancy key informant – former advisor to the chief, 06 December 2018, interview done by Mecthilde Pinto.

> The scalding water [ǀAi-ǀAis] spring used to be a healing place; when someone bathed in them, they got healed. [33]

This is in contrast with some government officials, who argue that the park's demarcated land belongs to the state, because no people live inside the park today. Other officials caution that rock engravings found within the park prove that people lived in the area even long before.[34]

Recent studies show that smooth communication between transfrontier parks and the surrounding communities is central to sharing benefits. In addition, local community awareness of the park's existence and their decision-making involvement is essential for effective management in a transfrontier conservation approach, particularly at the institutional framework level.[35]

Our household survey showed that most households in ǁGamaseb Conservancy knew of the ǀAi-ǀAis Park on the Namibian side. They mainly heard about it through word of mouth from neighbours and relatives, and only very few learned about it through the media, but all were not aware of its purposes concerning their livelihoods. About a quarter of the households visited the park – either for leisure, visiting friends and family, or work-related functions. Our findings also revealed that (26%) of respondents only knew of the name ǀAi-ǀAis, which means 'burning water' in the Nama local language, but not what it fully entails. Moreover, some heard of the Namibian part of the park ǀAi-ǀAis but not of the transfrontier park, as one respondent asked:

> I know of the name ǀAi-ǀAis Park, is Richtersveld Transfrontier a new thing?[36]

We also unearthed that some members of a few households participated in official meetings and consultations where issues related to the park were discussed. However, we argue that there was low level of official meetings and consultation to sensitise and inform the communities about the ǀAi-ǀAis Richtersveld Transfrontier Park. Therefore, this indicates that information dissemination and community consultation have been poor and were not correctly executed.

Despite the ǀAi-ǀAis Richtersveld Transfrontier park being in operation since 2003, the local communities in ǁGamaseb Conservancy have not benefited much from its tourism activities. They have only benefited through a few permanent jobs at the tourism resorts, voluntary work without any incentives, and the annual clean-up campaign where communities are rewarded in kind with T-shirts. While this in-kind reward may be viewed by some as a type of 'benefit', this does not equate to equitable nor effective participation by the local communities. An official from the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism confirmed that:

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33 ǁGamaseb Conservancy key informant – community member, 06 December 2018, interview done by Mecthilde Pinto, translation by Victoria Thirion.

34 NGO official, Windhoek, August 2019, an interview done by Mecthilde Pinto.

35 Muboko 2013

36 ǁGamaseb Conservancy key informant – community member, 06 December 2018, interview done by Mecthilde Pinto, translation by Victoria Thirion.

> Currently, no communities are benefiting directly [from the park], only occasionally when we have activities. Furthermore, when we are doing the clean-ups, we use the communities from those conservancies; ǁGamaseb Conservancy is also involved. At the end of the event, we give them t-shirts and other items.[37]

The official further mentioned that they organised clean-up campaigns by sending official letters to various community leaders and liaison officers to ask for help from the communities. This claim was contrary to what the ǁGamaseb Conservancy committee members mentioned to us. They claimed that they have never received any official communication from the government. Instead, they explained that those community members who had previously participated in these clean-up campaigns had done so independently. They might have been informed by their relatives employed at the park. The miscommunication between the park and conservancy committee shows that the lack of engaging and coordinating activities with local communities' structures hinders their successful implementation. Moreover, 'community participation' in the park should be more than simply consultation and instead implies some control over the outcome.

Our findings also show a low level of knowledge about and engagement in the clean-up campaign. Very few community members indicated that they knew of people who participated in it. In addition, some of the people who participated in the clean-up campaign said that they received no proper financial payment, apart from t-shirts and drinks. Therefore, a lack of payment for work makes participation unappealing. As a conservancy member rightfully states:

> We are volunteering without getting paid, and we have families to feed or take care of, so you cannot go there.[38]

Before the park, there were already limited economic opportunities for people living in the ǁGamaseb Conservancy. Their primary livelihood activity was livestock farming, which served as an important food security and income source – and remains so. This is supplemented by social grants from the government and other small informal businesses initiated by some members. In addition to these activities, the local community benefited from the Conservancy's wildlife hunting quota and meat distribution allocated by the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT). However, the wildlife hunting quota and meat distribution have been inconsistent over the past years. Additionally, governmental reports show that the number of springboks were low due to droughts.[39]

Because of the difficult economic situation, many people in the ǁGamaseb Conservancy looked for alternatives to complement their livelihoods. For example, some people were employed at the neighbouring private farms. However, community members were disappointed because their hopes and expectations of finding employment at the park were not fulfilled. Most of the people in the Conservancy said that none of their household members nor relatives have ever been employed in the park.

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37 MEFT official, Rosh Pinah, 03 December 2018, interview done by Mecthilde Pinto.

38 ǁGamaseb Conservancy community member, Karasburg, 19 August 2019, interview done by Mecthilde Pinto, translation by Erlich Nekongo.

39 NACSO 2019; NACSO 2021; MEFT/NACSO 2021.

Our findings also show that a few people employed by the park occupied low-paid positions, primarily as housekeepers, waiters and waitresses. The local people in ǁGamaseb Conservancy are expected to be considered first for employment opportunities in the park. The lack of employment opportunities by the park brought about negative attitudes towards it. The people employed in the park also stressed that its tourism activities are seasonal – therefore resorts and campsites found in the park do not operate throughout the year. During seasons with low tourist arrivals, they are sent to other lodges in Etosha or other parts of the country, which separates them from their families.

The promise of tourism concessions

For local communities to fully benefit from tourism, communal conservancies in Namibia are granted rights to use natural resources in state land through concessions. Concessions are pieces of land owned by the state and managed by a non-state entity. Communal conservancies or private tour operators may be given rights to manage tourism activities – such as owning lodges, campsites, trophy hunting, and other tourism activities – in a concession. Suppose a concession is awarded to a communal conservancy, the conservancy is then allowed to tender the management of the tourism facilities to a private tourism operator that might have the necessary resources and capacity to manage the facilities designated for a particular concession. Communal conservancies can therefore benefit by getting some of the income generated from the concession, while part of the income goes to the private tour operator and the government. Other tourism benefits derived by communal conservancies from concessions are employment opportunities created for the local people working its tourism facilities.[40]

Our findings indicate that although a tourism concession was granted to the ǁGamaseb Conservancy in 2015, there were various challenges that hindered the local communities from deriving benefits from it. For instance, a long delay was experienced in the process of implementing the concession. This delay was attributed to the MEFT failure to finalise the concession agreements and institute the directives on how the concession was to be utilised. At the time of writing, the concession has not materialised and only exists in writing. An informant from the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism stated:

> The problem is the concessions are awarded, but they are not signed, even though there are places within the park earmarked for tourism activities to benefit communities, but as I said, nothing is finalised yet.[41]

Our findings indicate that both government and the conservancy institutions' shortcomings have contributed to delays in the concession. The lack of collaboration between institutions affected the implementation of the concession and brought about the emergence of 'blame-games' between different stakeholders. It surfaced from our findings that the

40 NACSO 2019

41 MEFT official, Rosh Pinah, 03 December 2018, interview done by Mecthilde Pinto.

Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) and ǁGamaseb Conservancy did not fully agree on both the terms and building of collaborations.

Furthermore, MEFT stakeholders felt that leadership setbacks within the ǁGamaseb Conservancy mostly affected the implementation of this concession. The conservancy and the traditional authority were believed to not be fully functional. Particularly, the conservancy did not have an active committee for about three years, hence there was no structure to oversee the building of collaborations with the park. Furthermore, MEFT indicated that upon the finalisation of the concession contract, stakeholders from the conservancies were unavailable for its signing. This contributed to further contract delays. The interviews with informants from MEFT also revealed that there were limited community development interventions carried out through the park. One of the MEFT officials indicated that the absence of NACSO in the governance structure has resulted in incompatible planning and implementing of activities to involve local conservancies, particularly those activities aimed at bringing benefits for local communities:

> There is a disconnection between the CBNRM and the Parks; thus, there should be a link between [these two] so that we can successfully run this park. We can close that gap however there is no communication between CBNRM and the Parks. They do their things from the other side, and we clash regularly. For example, sometimes we discuss things on the park management committee related to local communities, then I tell them they have to refer back to the CBNRM office, while CBNRM [representative] was not even involved in those meetings, and that is the main problem.[42]

We also found that other challenges, such as a lack of capacity and skills among community leadership to enforce and ensure engagement in collaborative planning, and a lack of community interest in attending meetings also affected the ǁGamaseb Conservancy in terms of benefiting from tourism activities in the area. In addition, the conservancy management committee had inadequate knowledge regarding the concession awarded to the conservancy. The conservancy members argued that the lack of capacity, a gap in leadership successions and a lack of external institutional support from government ministries, traditional authorities and NGOs, were the reasons for the Conservancy not being able to build effective collaborative structures. In addition, some conservancy committee members mentioned that NGOs reduced their support of the ǁGamaseb Conservancy:

> This past one or two years, the Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations [NACSO] has been silent, but three years ago, they helped with training in financial management, and other aspects that I also attended was mapping using GPS. However, unfortunately, even at the last annual general meeting, I do not know why NACSO or any of its members were not present due to communications or other things.[43]

The newly elected conservancy leader also stressed that:

42 Ibid.

43 ǁGamaseb Conservancy secretary, Karasburg, 19 August 2019, interview done by Mecthilde Pinto.

> Namibia Development Trust withdrew their working relations; they are not involved in any issues of the Conservancy anymore. If I remember correctly, the [last time] they were involved was around 2004.[44]

The non-governmental stakeholder confirmed their withdrawal due to the financial constraints of the support organisations. They said that support organisations have suffered greatly in terms of finances over the past years as donors were not able to sufficiently support NGOs in Namibia due to it being ranked as a middle-income country. Stakeholder sentiments were also that community-based institutions such as conservancies should be strengthened to ensure working collaborations. A stakeholder from Namibia Development Trust asked:

> You know different business activities are happening in the Parks. For example, Namibia Wildlife Resorts [NWR] tourism establishments are doing business in the park, and these are government institutions. So why can't NWR have an agreement with the conservancies? Why can't communities have a shareholding arrangement in some of these tourism lodges?[45]

Furthermore, some community members recounted that there was a time when the government allowed them access to the park to perform their Nama cultural dances to tourists. These opportunities have ceased, and the dance group dissolved. Some respondents emphasised that they were involved in sewing shoes and clothing and making various souvenirs to be sold at different tourism establishments in the park. Such privileges were no longer available to the community. Community participation and economic benefits are the forms of empowerment that enhance community involvement in the transfrontier processes and structures. Hence the absence thereof in the ǀAi-ǀAis-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park shows that transfrontier conservation is yet to reach the potential to involve and empower local communities fully.[46]

Conclusion

The Namibian side of the ǀAi-ǀAis-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park reflects complexities in both relationship between stakeholders and its design, creating barriers that prevent the park from successfully integrating the neighbouring communities. This difficultly mainly stems from the boundary of the ARTP not incorporating the neighbouring communities – as e.g. in the case of the Kavango–Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA) in north-eastern Namibia. However, the ARTP treaty between South Africa and Namibia intends for this park to contribute to the socio-economic development of local communities. Thus, while the transfrontier conservation approach advocates for com-

44 ǁGamaseb Conservancy chairperson, Karasburg, 20 August 2019, interview done by Mecthilde Pinto.

45 Key informant from NWR staff, ǀAi-ǀAis Resort, 06 December 2018, interview done by Mecthilde Pinto.

46 Metcalfe 2003

munity participation in governance structures and empowering communities to derive benefits from the park, such promises appear to rather be rhetoric for ARTP.

Another point emerging from this chapter is the interface between the different people-centred and nature-based approaches considered as vehicles for promoting tourism and sustainable livelihoods – in this case, the transfrontier and the CBNRM. The policy framework of the Namibian government has provided an enabling environment for communities to benefit from neighbouring parks through the concession policy. However, limited institutional support and inconsistencies in the leadership structure of the ǁGamaseb Conservancy continue to hinder the operationalisation of the awarded concession agreement between this Conservancy and ARTP. If this conservancy succeeds in securing benefits from the ARTP, there is a need to provide vigorous empowerment programmes, capacity building, and institutional support. Many conservancies in Namibia have generated various benefits, including employment for the locals through the concession, with neighbouring communities – provided these conservancies have the necessary support and capacity. In addition, a working relationship between ARTP and the conservancy could develop the park's tourism potential, particularly the rich cultural heritage for ecotourism which will be vital for the sustainable livelihoods of local community members.

Therefore, the critical principle – as stated in the treaty – of promoting equitable and effective participation by local communities is yet to be realised. As there is no equitable nor effective participation by the local communities, they have only limited awareness of the park activities, and if they do, it is mostly about unpaid work for clean-up campaigns.[47] The process has thus resulted in a long period of contestation and a 'blame game' emerging between stakeholders, as local communities cannot participate in the park activities and influence decision-making. The case of ǁGamaseb Conservancy shows the desire of a community to benefit from the transfrontier conservation. However, since no foundation for collaboration and engagement was laid at the initial establishment of the park, implementing community involvement has proven to be challenging. Therefore, a well-defined framework and clear directives to facilitate the transfrontier park and the neighbouring communities is required and should be addressed.

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