

By Francesco Rubino and Marie-Lara Hubert Chartier

Introduction

In Sub Saharan Africa, and globally, there has been a shift in the realm of natural resource governance over the last decades that has brought to the rising of a more devolved scheme of management, come to be known under the name of **Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM)**¹. This system saw its boost in Africa in the 1980s, with the surge of “structural adjustment” programs fostered by institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The scheme appeared to fit well into the newly established donor-driven economic policies across the continent². Though finding its strongest advent in Africa through a number of programs related to wildlife governance and nature conservation (i.e. CAMPFIRE³), CBNRM has since then widened the scope of use to sectors and people involved in agriculture, land, forestry, fisheries, etc.⁴

This paper theorizes that in a global scenario in which there have been extended acknowledgments of the failures of state management and market-driven policies to, alone, ensure and drive towards a secure and productive land tenure regularization, the necessity to utilize the notion of **community**⁵ as more than a simple stakeholder-buzzword, has become imperative. The different stakeholders, i.e. State, community and private sector, have different starting and understanding points of what involvement and devolution truly mean.⁶ The necessity to find a shared framework that includes a more declared route towards people’s self-determination is essential⁷, in a model that foresees communities as the “*foundation*” and the “*end-focus*”.⁸ CBNRM and its promises of improved livelihood stem from secured land tenure rights. This is more than ever critical to many countries around the continent; both those that have already moved rapidly forward in the regularization process, and those that have recently started or brought back a “momentum” on the topic.

Theoretical background

The theoretical background of this work finds its reasoning in the fact that the future human impact (positive or negative) on the environment, especially in Africa⁹, lies deeply in the capability of countries and people to manage the asset “nature” in a productive and sustainable manner.

The importance of managing the environment in a more sustainable way has been largely discussed by the literature, with (more recent) well acclaimed scholars¹⁰ widely claiming the importance of new schemes of management that involve a more communal form of natural resource management¹¹. Nonetheless, the elaboration of discourses related to NRM have many previous examples¹² with variations in resource governance that have been analysed under a number of different lenses, with

¹ (Nelson & Sandbrook 2009)

² (Nelson & Sandbrook 2009)

³ Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE). Since this programme took place in Zimbabwe in the mid 1980s, attention to enhancing rural people’s participating in and benefits from various forms of nature conservation and management was increased. See:

< https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlc/bitstream/handle/10535/1313/Turner_Crisis_040508_Paper361.pdf?s >

⁴ (Shackleton et al. 2002; The South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2003; Turner, 2004)

⁵ (Agrawal 2003)

⁶ (Shackleton et al. 2002)

⁷ (Shackleton et al. 2002)

⁸ (Soeftestad & Gerrard 1998)

⁹ (UNEP 2006)

¹⁰ Such as Chambers (1983,1987), Berkes (1989), Ostrom (1990 etc.), Agrawal (2001)

¹¹ (Nelson & Sandbrook 2009)

¹² As explained by Agrawal & Chhatre (2006)

“literatures on common property¹³, political ecology¹⁴, rural sociology¹⁵, resource economics¹⁶, and environmental economics¹⁷”.

Community-led natural resource management has come a long way from Ostrom’s *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*¹⁸. It is here theorized that the time has come for CBNRM to fully graduate from being analysed simply as a strategy to cope with the struggle over common pool resources (CPRs)¹⁹, to fully expressing its potential as a management system that can, amongst others, contemporarily (i) empower rural communities and guarantee their rights over land, (ii) promote sustainable use of resources, (iii) strengthen local governance and institutions, (iv) guarantee government support and shift policy arrangements to favour the promotion of community-led initiatives, and (v) unfold the economic benefits, both internal and external, through which communities’ buy-in to CBNRM can be confirmed.

CBNRM and land tenure security

A significant starting point for consideration is that CBNRM is also not a “new” and unfamiliar concept, especially for rural communities. The notion of community management has existed for centuries, and rural populations have for centuries organized themselves naturally around traditional systems, religious beliefs, cultural norms, etc.²⁰ It was through the advent of disruptive occurrences such as colonialism, highly centralized government authorities, population growth, war, etc., that these pre-existing institutions were weakened²¹, leaving a great deal of distrust in collective action and community-driven initiatives. From post-colonial period, through to the first independent nations, and more structurally in the 90s, CBNRM became the “touchstone for much of rural development and sustainable natural resource management”²², and was largely promoted by the international funding institutions.

Communities have been (at times repeatedly) trained on the notions and structures of CBNRM, with the intent of moving them away from Hardin’s “tragedy of the commons”²³. They have been introduced to a system – that many already knew – in which each man is not conceived as an island for himself. Rather, each individual is ultimately pursuing what is in his best interest by actively participating in communal goals, benefitting from the “commons” that were indistinctly open to the usage of all people, and are now (ideally) managed responsibly by all. Wanting to borrow from the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes though, rural communities could still, and fairly so, be seen as “man in the state of nature”, a condition in which it is easier to seek your own benefit at all costs, challenging other humans in the usage of goods to achieve one’s own prosperity.²⁴ Hence, where benefits cannot be showcased (i.e. especially the economic terms), the buy-in to CBNRM will inherently be poor, and it should be understandable and foreseeable that communities will plunge back into a sort of “*bellum omnia contra omnes*” (war of all against all) over natural resources.

Therefore, it is important to approach natural resource management (and/or governance) with an eye that acknowledges it as a complex system, with a set of causal influences, from biophysical to

¹³ (Ostrom, 1990)

¹⁴ (Neumann, 1998)

¹⁵ (Goldman & Schurman, 2000)

¹⁶ (Lise, 2000)

¹⁷ (Gibson & Marks, 1995)

¹⁸ Reference.

¹⁹ (Ostrom 1990)

²⁰ (USAID, 2016)

²¹ (USAID, 2016)

²² (Blaikie, 2006)

²³ Hardin (1968)

²⁴ (Ostrom 1990)

demographic, from economic to institutional and in addition also socio-political²⁵, all of which weigh in on the effective and successful implementation of CBNRM schemes. Of the many above influences, this paper substantiates **land tenure security** as the key starting point for CBNRM, one without which the management scheme is flawed at its inception.

Land tenure security and/or “*gestion des territoires*” (land management), has different connotations based on socio-economic factors and bio-physical contexts. Moreover, the way in which people’s involvement is activated (i.e. more active or more passive), is highly based on their understanding of how land tenure security allows them to access the natural resource base in a secured manner, and how they are prepared and positioned to economically benefit from the aforementioned resource. It is key to state that rights, tenure and authority over land and its associated resources are topical to CBNRM. However, “power” is better exercised over valuable land²⁶ and through mechanisms that can guarantee a full devolution and decentralization of power, hence recognizing (through the State) the importance of previous customary land tenure systems. For example, the initiative Greening of the Sahel in Niger secured rights to the use and benefits from trees, previously owned by the state. It provided incentives to the farmers to take greater care of the soil and trees of their farms, leading to the revitalization of five million hectares of land.²⁷

Throughout the globe, smallholders are suffering from expanding challenges associated to competition over land and natural resources. A wide variety of factors are responsible for the generalized increased pressure on land, namely the rising world population, a higher energy demand through biofuels, urbanization, land degradation and desertification, climate change as well as the evermore increasing demand for land to invest. In this context, an increased tenure security contributes to committing to activities with a longer time frame. People are in general more likely to invest in their land and use environmentally sustainable agricultural methods. To the contrary, a lack of secure tenure often exacerbates poverty, while contributing to instability and sometimes conflicts.

Aiming to address those issues, a wide number of countries chose to perform national policy reforms in recent decades. Regional and global initiatives were strengthened with at their core, responsible land and natural governance.

In many countries, the national constitutions are still relatively young (i.e. Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, etc.), with some still undergoing a set of revisions in the recent past (i.e. Rwanda, etc.) (Wily, 2000). In some cases, events have had implications on the land law(s), land tenure regularization processes, and on the assignment of land rights to local communities. Together with this, a number of important land reforms and programs have been launched over the past decade, for example in Rwanda and Ethiopia, and also the more recent example of the *Terra Segura* (“Safe Land”) program launched in 2015 in Mozambique. Alongside these efforts, some countries are currently (or will be in the nearby future) updating their national land legislation (i.e. Botswana), and all these new arrangements may have direct implications on the strengthening and regularization of land rights in each individual country, thereby defining additional policies that could further support CBNRM initiatives.

Smallholder farmers and their critical role in the global food system through social-business inspired CBNRM

Smallholder agriculture is the foundation of food security in many regions of the world. In all countries, it is a central part of the socio-economic and ecological landscape. Still, small-scale food producers account for the majority of food and nutrition insecure. Of the nearly two billion people

²⁵ (Agrawal & Chhatre 2006)

²⁶ i.e. with access to water, fertile land, forest resources, infrastructure, etc.

²⁷ Stickler, M. Rights to trees and livelihoods in Niger, 2012. Retrieved from:
< www.focusonland.com/download/51c49667b7626/ >.

who suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition, about 70% are small farmers or agricultural workers.²⁸ Due to urbanization, integration and modernization of markets, smallholder agriculture is undergoing profound changes, often to the detriment of smallholders.²⁹ Hunger and malnutrition are not phenomena inferred by insufficient physical supply. Rather, they are the result of prevailing poverty and poor allocation of resources. They are the result of an access problem.

In light of the upcoming population growth, an FAO estimate suggests that an average net investment of \$83 billion per year would be needed to feed the world's population by 2050; this implies an increase in global agricultural production by 60%³⁰ in a world where 10 to 20% of the global land is already degraded³¹. Increased investment in agriculture is critical; however, it desperately needs to be responsible.

The active and central participation of the private sector, in particular that of farmers, is crucial for the evolution of debates related to the eradication of hunger and poverty. The policy environment of the various international fora on food and nutrition security issues is adjusting to take into account the increasing power of the private sector. Deeply integrated into the world food system, its role as well as its policy recommendations will be decisive in the evolution of the debates within the various bodies governing world food security.

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the necessary transformation of the existing industrial agricultural system is much deeper than just refining its current structure. Rather, it requires a better understanding of the “multifunctionality” of agriculture and its crucial importance to rural development for the poor and its important role in addressing resource scarcity.³² One can wonder whether the quested solution does not lie in profound structural changes at local, national and regional levels as well as in global governance.

Rural populations, and therefore community-led initiatives in rural areas, are mainly driven by smallholder producers and farmers and their innovative resilient approaches. This article pledges on the fact that while responsible agricultural investment can be provided by several types of investors, too little has yet been dedicated to the crucial investment provided by the small-scale farmers themselves. Indeed, although they are scattered throughout the world and are generally not a financial power when considered individually, smallholder farmers collectively form the group of the world's largest primary agricultural production.³³ As highlighted by the World Bank in its report on Responsible Investment Practices of 2014, the central role of smallholder investment in the overall strategy to promote agricultural development is widely recognized.³⁴ Thus, given their essential role in agricultural investment and food systems, it is essential to strengthen and secure their capacity to invest.³⁵ Why not do it through the mechanism of CBNRM.

²⁸ CNUCED, *Wake up before it is too late: Make agriculture truly sustainable now for food security in a changing climate*, Trade and Environment Review 2013, UNCTAD/DITC/TED/2012/3, p. iii.

²⁹ CFS, *Investing in smallholder agriculture for food security*, Report from the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition (June 2013), p. 11.

³⁰ CFS, « Principles for responsible agriculture and food investments are approved » (16 October 2014), online: CFS <<http://www.fao.org/news/story/fr/item/260755/icode/>>.

³¹ Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA). (2005). *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Synthesis*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

³² CNUCED, *Wake up before it is too late: Make agriculture truly sustainable now for food security in a changing climate*, Trade and Environment Review 2013, UNCTAD/DITC/TED/2012/3, p. i.

³³ CFS, « Principles for responsible agriculture and food investments are approved » (16 October 2014), online: CFS <<http://www.fao.org/news/story/fr/item/260755/icode/>>.

³⁴ World Bank, « The practice of responsible investment principles in larger-scale agricultural investments, Implications for corporate performance and impact on local communities », Agriculture and environmental services discussion Paper 08, World bank report number 86175-GLB (April 2014), p. 1

³⁵ CFS, *Report from the 41th session of the Committee on World Food Security*, Doc. UN C 2015/20 Rev. 1 (2014), p. 30.

Among the mosaic of production systems aimed at achieving responsible natural resources management as well as food and nutrition security, we outline an option merging the financial characteristics of private enterprises with the strength and skills of community lead actions. It is in this perspective of innovation, annexed to the urgency of responsible natural resources governance and the need for responsible and sustainable investment in agriculture and food systems, that we explore the viable and autonomous alternative. We hence lay out the concept of a CBNRM process inspired by the characteristics of the economic model developed by Muhammad Yunus, 2006 Nobel Peace Prize; the concept of “social-business”. Convinced that poverty is not the work of the poor but is rather created by the global economic system we have built, by the institutions we have created and by the concepts we have formulated³⁶, Professor Yunus has developed a new type of enterprise based on the achievement of collective benefits rather than the realization of private economic interests.

Agriculture is not an industry like any other; it is “multifunctional”. Its systems are more than their primary objective of producing food, fibre and fuel. They contribute to the protection (or the destruction) of biodiversity, the respect of the environment as well as community ownership and accountability. They are intrinsically embedded with all resources, being the forests, fisheries, water or rangelands.

We hence argue that CBNRM would benefit in following the guidelines of a social-business inspired entrepreneurial entity, offering sustainable and responsible investments, entrusted in the realm of private sector. A social-business type of CBNRM would be designed to meet social and environmental needs, whilst providing crucial attention to business-related aspects of this management scheme. It would, like an autonomous company, seek financial and economic balance – and it would be part of its core objectives. Its commercial activity would need to generate sufficient income to repay its initial investors and to cover its own operating costs. Thus, it would not be dependent from charitable donations or international aid. The economic activity of the CBNRM social-business should aspire to the realization of a financial surplus. This “surplus” would allow for an investment in the internal capacities of the CBNRM SB or in its expansion. An amount may also be retained to protect it against economic difficulties related to future uncertainties. Moreover, the CBNRM SB can decide to invest in itself through the creation of new projects of social-business or to give to its community. Finally, a responsible investment in the sustainability of its land could be instrumental to its prosperity through time. This business-oriented structure could offer a solution to the problematic illustrated by the Mozambique CBNRM programmes, exemplifying a clear failure in the income increase for smallholders.

Land being the main source of food, shelter and income, providing land tenure security improves the livelihoods of smallholders by offering social, economic and environmental benefits. The “chain of effect” through which security of tenure contributes to the eradication of poverty is widely agreed upon.³⁷ A landholder benefiting from secure tenure is more willing and able to invest in his land; the security residing in the confidence that the productive landscape under his control will less likely be seized by others. Trusting to gain from the investment on the long-term, it then leads to greater productivity in agricultural and natural production systems, both for intensive and extensive land uses. Conclusively, a greater productivity then leads to greater food and livelihood security. For example, a programme providing land certification to smallholders in Ethiopia has increased the landowners’ propensity to invest in soil and water conservation measures by 20 to 30%. Consecutively, these investments boosted the areas’ agricultural outputs, increasing landowners’ incomes.³⁸

³⁶ Muhammad Yunus, *Building Social Business – The New Kind of Capitalism that Serves Humanity’s Most Pressing Needs*, New York, Public Affairs, 2010 à la p. xii.

³⁷ UNCCD, Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Panel, *Land Rights for Sustainable Life on Land*, 2017.

³⁸ Byamugisha, Frank F. K., *Agricultural Land Redistribution and Land Administration in Sub-Saharan Africa: Case Studies and Recent Reforms*, Directions in Development: Agriculture and Rural Development, World Bank, 2013.

The CBNRM SB would have a very local scope whose role as a catalyst within communities would enable it to promote responsible tenure governance. Not only would it be designed to integrate harmoniously into the environment in which it is set up, but it would also promote access to local markets, provide adequate remuneration to workers through its commercial activities and improve the living conditions of small-scale agricultural workers. It would be designed to play a central role in achieving an agrarian structure that benefits smallholder farmers and poor food suppliers in order to contribute to their food and nutritional security.³⁹

Such a management scheme could provide concrete and substantial improvements in agricultural productivity in the neediest areas while providing an organized framework to support smallholder farmers in their subsistence activities. It would actively participate in the diversification of their income. Moreover, in addition to contributing to the food and nutritional security of a local population, the CBNRM SB would contribute to the economic development of complementary sectors, such as food marketing and processing. Coupled with the improvement of land management in the area of implementation, the CBNRM SB would provide lasting solutions to local food supply and production difficulties, while offering significant support mechanisms in times of food crisis. In doing so, the CBNRM SB's agricultural activities would strive to conserve local ecosystems and contribute to their rehabilitation if necessary. It is argued that community-based organizations can play critical roles in ecosystems restoration and local natural resource management, especially in developing countries.⁴⁰

The poor being the world's largest entrepreneurs, each day poised to innovate to survive, their precarious condition is sustained by our economic system. As a remedy, CBNRM inspired by social-business' mission would be based on the achievement of social and environmental objectives.⁴¹ In establishing businesses or commercial entities through CBNRM, communities would enhance their capacity in purchasing, leasing, or renting land, buildings, factories or any other assets when necessary, while undertaking forestry and plantation-related schemes. This structure would also ease their engagement with trading, export and import-based businesses, upgrading their methods (via processing and packaging) and selling their products locally⁴². It also ensures and facilitates the collection, supply and use of agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertilizers, as well as modern equipment, and access to efficient techniques for farming and production.

Of course, these social enterprises need institutional and policy support to thrive, as well as an initial outside investment.

Building on the concepts discussed above, the case of Mozambique illustrates the complexity and intricacies of CBNRM, embedded in a particularly interesting context, at a time of massive land reform, land policy change and important investments on land by investors.

The Mozambican case

In the case of Mozambique, the Government has in the past decade promoted a **delimitation** process that was thought of as a “participatory rapid rural appraisal approach”, meant to capture the rights of

³⁹ This characteristic of the CBNRM SB is in line with the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems (RAI), Principle 1: Contribute to food security and nutrition.

⁴⁰ A.K.M. Shahidullah and C. Emdad Haque, *Social Enterprise – Context-Dependent Dynamics in a Global Perspective*, Chapter 5, “Social Entrepreneurship by Community-Based Organizations: Innovations and Learning through Partnerships”, 2016.

⁴¹ Muhammad Yunus, *Building Social Business – The New Kind of Capitalism that Serves Humanity's Most Pressing Needs*, New York, Public Affairs, 2010, p. xviii.

⁴² Not only would poorest consumers have the opportunity to buy fresh, nutritious food locally, but according to the former Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Olivier De Schutter, strengthening local food systems would also improve the resilience of cities. Approximately 6.3 of the 9.3 billion people who will inhabit the Earth in 2050 will live in urban areas. (138)

local communities.⁴³ This process not only leaves space for the self-definition of boundaries in a country with multiple cultural diversities and geographical contexts, but is a tool that can be used for a variety of units ranging from chieftainships to extended families and groups.⁴⁴ The outcome of this exercise is the release of a legal certificate, the DUAT (*Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra*⁴⁵). It is through this exercise that CBNRM initiatives became more common in the country in the 90s⁴⁶, securing the rights of communities through the land delimitation process. This became particularly relevant for communities that are in strategic locations where there is a pressure for investment-prone land from the private sector (i.e. in the development corridors)⁴⁷. Furthermore, land tenure regularization has found a strong momentum in the country; first through the *Terra Segura* program, and subsequently through the mainstreaming of land tenure project and land regularization components in a number of donor-financed projects and programmes⁴⁸, but also through the initiatives of private sector companies interested in working with tenure secured and delimited communities (i.e. Portucell, Illovo⁴⁹, etc.).

The experience around the delimitation process in the country has so far shown mixed results. A number of challenges are related to the design and implementation of the associated land use plans, and a number of the cases have been reported to suffer from weak consultation processes^{50 51}. Moreover, given the, at times, rapid execution of the process, communities are oftentimes not fully aware of the land legislation and their associated rights. They are presented with land use plans and community development plans that are mostly descriptive in nature, and don't present specific indications and strategies of alternative livelihood generating activities and investment opportunities.⁵²

To date, there are few examples of successful CBNRM experiences in Mozambique. The existing ones are mostly showcasing benefits to the community in regard to clear boundary identification and titling through the delimitation process and increased ownership over local natural resources, but with little evidence of increased livelihoods from revenue payments or other activities.⁵³ It would be highly interesting to dig and research the root causes of such outcome deficiency. Could it be due to the recent implementation of the CBNRM projects? It is well known that some CBNRM programmes have been widely criticized, being largely driven by initiatives which were exogenous to local communities, promoting the agenda of external actors.⁵⁴ Indeed, for CBNRM to be valued as an important tool in improving environmental and ecological sustainability, while improving local smallholders' livelihoods, an increased attention must be paid to co-management driven programmes, seeking the participation of all community stakeholders. Promotion of social capital in the common

⁴³ (Norfolk, 2007)

⁴⁴ Refer to: Tanner (2002) and Norfolk (2007)

⁴⁵ A state-granted land right, assigned through (i) customary/ traditional systems, (ii) good faith occupation or (iii) award

⁴⁶ (De Wit & Norfolk, 2010)

⁴⁷ (De Wit & Norfolk, 2010)

⁴⁸ i.e. the IFAD-supported PROSUL project

(<https://operations.ifad.org/web/ifad/operations/country/home/tags/mozambique>), the World Bank-financed SUSTENTA project (<http://projects.worldbank.org/P149620?lang=en>), etc.

⁴⁹ <https://www.illovosugarafica.com/UserContent/documents/Announcements/2017/Update-on-Illovos-Land-Rights-Initiatives.pdf>

⁵⁰ (Norfolk, 2009; Monteiro et al., 2014)

⁵¹ N.B. investors (and/or any other entity) are obliged by law to seek written consent by the community that allows them to use the land; and in order to do so they have to go through a community consultations process (N.B. at least 2 meetings). (see Monteiro et al. 2014).

⁵² (Mate et al., 2017)

⁵³ (De Wit & Norfolk, 2010)

⁵⁴ Musavengane R. and D. Mulala Simatele, "Community-based natural resources management: The role of social capital in collaborative environmental management of tribal resources in KwaZulu-Natal", South Africa, Development Southern Africa, Volume 33, 2016 – Issue 6.

pool resources management allows for community to gain an appropriation of the economic benefits created from the resources they are managing.⁵⁵

In a country where forests cover 70% of the country, but 220,000 hectares of the latter are lost every year; where conservation areas absorb 23% of the land mass, but fauna and flora face increasing losses⁵⁶; and where there are circa 36 million hectares of arable land, and agriculture and fisheries are the principle livelihood activity for 81% of the in-country labour force⁵⁷, initiatives such as CBNRM are topical to guaranteeing that rural communities, mostly represented by smallholder farmers, manage to exit the poverty trap, whilst avoiding the further depletion of their natural resource base.

Mozambique is in fact a relevant example for a number of other sub-Saharan African countries⁵⁸, especially for those that have large portions of under-utilized lands, population dispersion, and/or vast and diverse natural resource base, combined with large pockets of rural poor.

Conclusions

The present paper argues that land tenure security and land regularization and mapping, coupled with a business-oriented elaboration of CBNRM schemes, could be a worthwhile solution to bringing back the lost hope in community-led initiatives⁵⁹. It considers the policy road map drawn by Nelson & Sandbrook (2009) as true and relevant to the current situation of sub-Saharan Africa, where most of the poorest countries in the world are still found. Above all, this paper corroborates the necessity to broaden the scope of CBNRM, shifting it away from the rather narrow “conservation only” rationale, repositioning the paradigm on a more business oriented path that seeks to look at communities as producers/farmers, and how they will be able to fully express their business potential. The latter whilst still honouring their recognition of the importance of sustainable environmental and natural resource management.

The paper conceptualizes a CBNRM where community members are stakeholders of their own internal system, in which they produce for themselves, reinvest in themselves. At the same time, they are also active participants in a medium-and-larger realm of business through which they also take part in a range of different activities within the community itself. The social-business management scheme developed for the CBNRM would also allow to ease equalitarian relations with potential outside investors, willing to (responsibly) engage in business agreements, prone to the equitable use of the community’s land and natural resources.

Such a partnership between community lead businesses and international corporations do exist; and the results can be fantastic. It was in Bangladesh that Muhammad Yunus initiated the creation of “social-business” enterprises. Some of them are now renowned because they have developed in the form of a joint venture between Grameen companies and world-class multinational companies.⁶⁰ For example, Grameen Danone, a partnership between Grameen and the French dairy company Danone, is the first of its kind. Established in 2005, it aims to reduce malnutrition among children in Bangladesh, offering nutritious and affordable products.⁶¹ CBNRM Social-Business could benefit from this form of partnership with a private sector entity willing to play by its rules.

⁵⁵ USAID, What is Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), Southern Africa CBNRM Policy Brief, http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JRV1.pdf.

⁵⁶ (Aquino, 2017)

⁵⁷ USDA Foreign Agricultural Service – Mozambique 2015 Agricultural Economic Fact Sheet

⁵⁸ (De Wit & Norfolk, 2010)

⁵⁹ See Dressler et al, 2010: “From hope to crisis and back again? A critical history of the global CBNRM narrative”

⁶⁰ To name a few: Grameen Veolia Water Company, BASF Grameen, Grameen Intel, Grameen Adidas and Otto Grameen.

⁶¹ Muhammad Yunus, *Building Social Business – The New Kind of Capitalism that Serves Humanity’s Most Pressing Needs*, New York, PublicAffairs, 2010, p. xix.

There is a compelling argument for strengthening community-led efforts that gaze willingly into a broader set of livelihood opportunities; from a starting position in which their tenure rights are formally guaranteed, and *ad-hoc* training and support has been agreed upon and planned for.

The many unsuccessful examples of CBNRM⁶² that have wanted to spotlight the “rhetoric more than substance” nature of CBNRM experiences in Africa, should not define the final outcome of these experiences in the continent. In fact, many authors, though presenting consistent arguments on the inefficiency of CBNRM schemes, are reluctant to conclude that CBNRM is in itself an obsolete methodology. Rather, as we conclude here, CBNRM should be seen as a management scheme that if tweaked to perfection (or close), and suited to fit context-specific realities, could well create the necessary space for communities to fully participate and benefit⁶³ from their CPRs.

In order to do so, it is crucial for CBNRM to establish significant economic incentives for managing and conserving resources, while promoting adequate and efficient revenue-sharing mechanisms⁶⁴.

CBNRM remains a huge potential for the African continent, that to date has not been fully realized.⁶⁵

- a) CBNRM schemes are not standalone and one-time start-up experiences. They require well informed and regular support from government, be this through the provision of extension services, and/or through the promotion of policies that assign adequate funding and legislative support to the truly “sustainable” operationalization of CBNRM efforts. There is in fact still a large amount of distrust between the actors involved, with communities identifying a large number of possible entities competing and challenging their rights to control the same resources.⁶⁶
- b) There is a necessity to strategize for livelihood generating activities at the inception of the management schemes. Activities related to the mapping of the natural resource base, with the individuation of areas for (internal/external) investment, community assets, promotion of traditional practices, can provide a more solid scoping for possible livelihood alternative, that are elaborated “with” the community, and “for” the community. Communities should be accustomed to seeing the value of the training and assistance they receive, and should be rapidly introduced to the world of business directly.⁶⁷
- c) CBNRM still faces a number of politico-legal challenges, that “if not hostile, are hardly nurturing”⁶⁸. Furthermore, land titling and land regularization is still experiencing very different realities across the African continent, with the necessity to approach CBNRM efforts in a country-specific manner. Many communities still lack, in virtue of a weak legislation in regard to “strong” ownership⁶⁹, solid rights to communal and individual land (N.B. especially in countries where land is still vested in the State).
- d) Decentralization and devolution of power are still major constraints. The establishment of decentralized entities is not in itself guarantee of a successful local management⁷⁰, and for this reason, support to these bodies must be guaranteed for the mid-to-long term, finding relevant local authorities and/or NGOs that can support CBNRM initiatives for a longer period of time.
- e) It is important to continue underlining that natural resources are the “foundation from which rural communities can overcome poverty”⁷¹, but also that communities are a multi-faceted

⁶² (Shackleton et al., 2010; Nelson & Sandbrook, 2009; Kellet et al., 2000; Dressler et al., 2010; Campbell, 2006; Barro et al., 2000; Agrawal & Gibson, 1999; Shackleton et al., 2002)

⁶³ (Shackleton et al., 2002)

⁶⁴ (DANIDA, 2007)

⁶⁵ (Campbell & Vainio-Mattila, 2003)

⁶⁶ (Campbell, 2006)

⁶⁷ (Gujadhur, 2000)

⁶⁸ (Murphree, 1995)

⁶⁹ (Murphree, 1995)

⁷⁰ (Campbell, 2006)

⁷¹ (IFAD, 2006)

- entity. One in which different multiple interests co-exist, and for which the inter-linkages between the different claims and interests (i.e. land use) must be managed, so that both the internal processes, and the relations with external actors, encompass the desires of the community as a whole.
- f) CBNRM is a lengthy process, and cannot be looked at through a 5-7-year cycle, as in the case of made donor-financed projects. In order to work, CBNRM needs rural communities with representative and accountable institutions that can lead the decision-making process on behalf of their members⁷², whilst managing the distribution of benefits in a fair and transparent manner. In order to develop the aforementioned local institutions, a broader public understanding must be delivered and re-confirmed regularly, and the delivery of the latter, together with the desired economic development and environmental conservation, is as Kellert⁷³ say, a “formidable challenge”.
 - g) There is a need for a wider consideration of investment in agriculture and access of small farmers to the market through the exploration of alternative economic models, such as the CBNRM social-business management scheme. However, in order for its effective deployment, it must be carefully adapted and shaped according to the specificities of the village, municipality or region where it is carried out in order to meet the local needs of the most vulnerable populations.
 - h) Enhanced market access is essential to improve the livelihoods of many smallholder farmers in developing countries.⁷⁴ However, this overarching challenge is often underestimated.⁷⁵ The CBNRM Social-Business would be contributing to the development by cities and towns of channels through which communities could obtain adequate food, including through the development of short food chains linking towns to their “local food granary”.
 - i) In addition to increasing food production, the CBNRM Social-Business would participate significantly in the fight against hunger and malnutrition by providing poor workers with higher incomes and improved livelihoods.
 - j) Catalysing land, human, material and financial resources, the CBNRM Social-Business would offer many benefits to its community members. Among other things, it could provide services to its workers, such as training programs for smallholders. In addition, it would allow an equitable distribution of the risks associated with farming.
 - k) The CBNRM Social-Business would hence strengthen the autonomy of the local population and improve its access to land and its related natural resources in a sustainable and responsible manner.
 - l) The clustering of small producers would significantly reduce the costs associated with transactions generally associated with small-scale agriculture. The CBNRM Social-Business could would hopefully result in lower prices for the purchase of inputs and higher prices for sale.
 - m) The CBNRM Social-Business should be designed in such a way as not only to respect and promote the cultural processes of local populations, but also to respect the environment in which it is integrated. It is therefore desirable that this investment should identify, with the help of local populations, agrarian production methods that will not exacerbate climate change by affecting soil fertility or favouring the depletion of water supplies.⁷⁶

⁷² (USAID, 2016)

⁷³ Kellert et. al. (2000)

⁷⁴ Olivier De Schutter, Interim report from the Special Rapporteur on the right to food: The right to food, 66^e sess., Doc. UN A/66/262 (2011), p. 2.

⁷⁵ Olivier De Schutter, Interim report from the Special Rapporteur on the right to food: The right to food, 66^e sess., Doc. UN A/66/262 (2011), p. 4.

⁷⁶ Olivier De Schutter, *Rapport du Rapporteur spécial sur le droit à l'alimentation : Acquisitions et locations de terres à grande échelle : ensemble de principes minimaux et de mesures pour relever le défi au regard des droits de l'Homme*, Doc. off. AG NU, 13^e sess., Doc. NU A/HRC/13/33/Add.2 (2009).

- n) Participatory land-use planning and community land management have proved to be effective mechanisms for promoting peoples' self-determination and ecological sustainability. As emphasized by the Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor, the traditionally communal ownership of natural resources such as pastures, forests, water, fishing areas and surface ores can be an effective means to grant control and property rights to individuals. However, in order to safeguard their rights, these systems must be recognized and fully protected from arbitrary seizures.⁷⁷ Indeed, according to a collaborative study between FAO, IFAD and the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), community land registration can be a powerful tool for protecting local land rights for smallholders, and vulnerable groups such as women, pastoralists and indigenous peoples.⁷⁸
- o) Guaranteeing tenure security through the recognition of rights of use rather than full ownership makes it possible to ensure sustainable livelihoods for the groups concerned. This mechanism limits the market for the sale of land effectively and thus protects smallholder farmers from obligations to sell or dispose of their land. Finally, this type of process protects user rights on communal land and preserves community forms of land management.⁷⁹
- p) The success of the CBNRM Social-Business would depend on the active participation of its community members, at the heart of a strong and dynamic civil society. The structure of the project must pay particular attention to the interests of the poorest and most marginalized members of society. The CBNRM Social-Business would contribute directly to the strengthening of the role of civil society in its advocacy and would participate in the development of mechanisms for interaction between civil society and the state.
- q) Based on specific knowledge and respect of local collective processes, the CBNRM Social-Business would allow for better risk management for the benefit of the entire community. A formal collective registration of land through the CBNRM Social-Business could ensure to its members that any change in use of their territory would be subject to their prior, free and informed consent. It would thus create an additional obstacle to any external attempt to sell or lease land that is essential for the livelihood of the most vulnerable.
- r) Rights and access to land and natural resources are markedly differentiated by the owner's gender, age, wealth, or other forms of social status. One of the most visible and significant forms of discrimination to the use of land and related natural resources is gender-related.⁸⁰ The CBNRM Social-Business could be used to empower women farmers, strengthen their land tenure rights and protect their right to work.⁸¹

Time has come for CBNRM to be more than just “a warm pull”⁸², with the objective of moving strategically away from the rhetoric-based notion, aiming to implement on-field the recommendations above, remodelling itself into substance-delivering approach⁸³.

⁷⁷ La Commission sur la démarginalisation des pauvres par le droit s'est réunie entre 2005 et 2008. Voir son rapport final : PNUD, « Pour une application équitable et universelle de la loi », Rapport final de la Commission pour la démarginalisation des pauvres par le droit, vol. 1, PNUD, New York (2008).

⁷⁸ Lorenzo Cotula, Sonja Vermeulen, Rebeca Leonard and James Keeley, *Land grab or development opportunity? Agricultural investment and international land deals in Africa*, FAO/IFAD/IIED, Londres/Rome (2009).

⁷⁹ Olivier De Schutter, *Rapport intermédiaire du Rapporteur spécial sur le droit à l'alimentation : Le droit à l'alimentation*, Doc. off. AG NU, 65e sess., Doc. NU. A/65/281 (2010).

⁸⁰ CSA, *Régime fonciers et investissements internationaux en agriculture*, Rapport du Groupe d'experts de Haut Niveau sur la sécurité alimentaire et la nutrition au Comité de la sécurité alimentaire mondiale (juillet 2011).

⁸¹ Olivier De Schutter, *Rapport intérimaire du Rapporteur spécial sur le droit à l'alimentation : Le droit à l'alimentation*, Doc. off. AG NU, 66e sess., Doc. NU A/66/262 (2011).

⁸² (Taylor, 2002)

⁸³ (Blaikie, 2006)