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**New Partnerships for Sustainability (NEPSUS):  
Concepts, research design and methodologies**

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# **New Partnerships for Sustainability (NEPSUS): Concepts, research design and methodologies**

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## **Abstract**

New and more complex partnerships are emerging to address the sustainability of natural resource use in developing countries. These partnerships variously link donors, governments, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business, certification agencies and other intermediaries. High expectations and many resources have been invested in these initiatives. Yet, we still do not know whether more sophisticated organizational structures, more stakeholders involved, and more advanced participatory processes have delivered better sustainability outcomes, and if so, in what sectors and under what circumstances. To fill this knowledge gap and build capacity in this area, the NEPSUS research and capacity building project assembles a multidisciplinary team to analyze sustainability partnerships in three key natural resource sectors in Tanzania: forestry, wildlife and coastal resources. In each of these sectors, we assess whether co-management with local communities and private and civil society actors, and putatively more participatory processes in the governance of renewable resources, result in more equitable and sustainable livelihoods and environmental outcomes. We compare ‘more complex’ partnerships to relatively ‘simpler’, more traditional top-down and centralized management systems, and to instances where sustainability partnerships are not in place. This working paper tackles the main conceptual, methodological and research design issues arising in this effort.

## ***1. Introduction***

New and more complex partnerships are emerging to address the sustainability of natural resource use in developing countries. These partnerships variously link donors, governments, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), business, consultants, certification agencies and other intermediaries. High expectations and many resources have been invested in these initiatives. Yet, we still do not know whether more sophisticated organizational structures, more stakeholders involved, and more advanced participatory processes have delivered better sustainability outcomes, and if so, in what sectors and under what circumstances.

To fill this knowledge gap and build capacity in this area, the New Partnerships for Sustainability (NEPSUS) research and capacity building project assembles a multidisciplinary team to analyze sustainability partnerships in three key natural resource sectors in Tanzania: forestry, wildlife and coastal resources. In each of these sectors, NEPSUS assesses whether co-management with local communities and private and civil society actors, and putatively more participatory processes in the governance of renewable resources, result in more equitable and sustainable livelihoods and environmental outcomes. It compares these ‘more complex’ partnerships to relatively ‘simpler’, more traditional top-down and centralized management systems and to instances where sustainability partnerships are not in place. Within-sector comparisons allow a fine-tuned analysis that is cognizant of historical, location and resource-specific issues, which can be used as input to resource-specific policy and partnership design. Comparison across the three different sectors allows the identification of possible common experiences and lessons that can be applied to natural resource governance more broadly.

Tanzania is an ideal case to examine these issues because it has implemented several policy reforms involving new forms of partnerships in these sectors (Ramutsindela and Noe 2012, Rantala and Di Gregorio 2014). Tanzania is considered a model of decentralization and participatory approaches in forestry, wildlife and coastal resources. This is because, unlike other countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, Tanzania does not have the problem of defining what is a ‘community’ in community-based natural resource governance. The Local Governments Act (1982, Decentralization) provides a legal definition of a community: a village. Hence, decentralization goes all the way down to the village level, unlike in other countries where the meaning of a community remained contested for many years. Yet, the implementation of what is stipulated in the numerous policies and laws remains conflictual and contested in forestry (Nelson and Blomley 2010, Treue et al 2014, Wily and Dewees 2001), wildlife (Igoe and Croucher 2007, Nelson and Agrawal 2008, Noe 2010) and coastal resources (Cinner et al 2012, Nunan 2014). Natural resources remain a key component of rural livelihoods in Tanzania (Dokken and Angelsen 2015), and the role of these new partnerships is highly significant, particularly given the proliferation of initiatives related to REDD+ and the co-management of wildlife, coastal resources and forests – and their tourism-related sustainability components (Benjaminsen et al 2013, Blomley and Ramadhani 2006, Cinner et al 2012, Hara and Nielsen 2003, Lund et al 2017, Nelson and Blomley 2010, Sulle et al 2014).

In academic and policy networks seeking sustainable development there is a great deal of enthusiasm and energy invested in new and increasingly complex multi-stakeholder partnerships. In natural resource governance, new partnership configurations promise more equitable and sustainable outcomes, because they entail various combinations of participation

by donor agencies, national and local governments, community-based organizations, local and international NGOs, business, industry associations and certification agencies (Brockington 2002, 2009, Berkes 2007, Ramutsindela et al 2011, Van Wijk et al 2015). While partnerships between state and non-state actors are not particularly new, what is 'new' in these emerging partnerships is twofold: (1) they entail more complex networks of actors; and (2) they take more complex organizational forms to ensure 'best practice' in deliberation and in facilitating co-management with communities and formal participation of various stakeholders (Berkes, 2007; Bush et al 2013; Ponte 2014; Mshale 2016).

These sustainability partnerships are taking shape as contexts of, and narratives about, resource depletion are changing – bringing new international audiences, alliances and policies to bear on previously local and national issues. Linked to a growing sense of urgency, development agendas now call for innovative measures and transnational and cross-sectoral cooperation and investments (Borras et al 2011). Thus, wildlife resources now matter in the context of the severe increase in extinction rates due to human activities, wildlife crime and poaching; illegal fishing matters in the context of the global decline of capture fisheries; and forest cover in developing countries matters in the context of global climate change mitigation and adaptation. With a similar sense of urgency, experiences of nature's wilderness and pristine status are being promoted as compensatory, even emancipatory features, almost essential for balancing stressful busy lives of modern consumers (West et al 2006), leading to an intense commodification of nature and land into ecotourism products (Igoe and Brockington 2007, Wearing and Wearing 1999). While conventional narratives on resource depletion place the blame exclusively on actors and processes within the Global South, emerging narratives increasingly link local and global factors and actors (Duffy and Moore 2011, Kottak 1999, Moscardo 2011).

Political ecology approaches have shown that these relations are creating new kinds of values to previously existing resources and attracting more actors in competing for their access and utilization (see, i.e., Remis and Hardin 2009). New actors are appearing or becoming more prominent as old products and services (e.g. timber, fish, wildlife tourism) come under processes of sustainability certification or are more closely monitored. New products are being devised through new forms of commodification of nature (e.g. carbon credits and payments for ecosystem services), which require a similarly complex apparatus operating from local to global levels (Mshale 2016). Thus, in addition to a push towards more adaptive, participatory and collaborative management, new partnerships are arising in part to initiate or strengthen these commodification processes (Brockington and Duffy 2011, Duffy and Moore 2011, Igoe and Brockington 2007, Nelson and Agrawal 2008, Stone and Nyaupane 2016, Wearing and Wearing 1999). By inserting economic logics related to pricing, promotion and product volume into the conservation decision making, commodification distorts the scope and purpose of conservation partnerships from unbiased protection (West et al 2004) adding new layers of complexity to the understanding of partnership dynamics.

Much research on the governance of natural resources so far has focused on the institutional features, potential, construction and participatory elements of these partnerships at the local/national levels (e.g., Brockington 2007, Igoe and Croucher 2007, Levine 2002, Mshale 2008, Nelson and Agrawal 2008, Treue et al 2014, Van Wijk et al 2015) and transnationally (e.g., Cashore et al 2004, Duffy and Moore 2011, Gulbrandsen 2010, Pattberg 2007, Glasbergen et al 2007), and on ethnographies of conservation-development funding and of experts (e.g., Koch 2016, Lund et al 2017). The literature on *local* partnerships has shown that different configurations have resulted in both success and failure (e.g. Agrawal et al

2011; Blomley et al 2008, Budeanu 2013, Persha et al 2011, Sulle et al 2014, Van Wijk et al 2015). The presence of many partners and linkages has often been reported as a feature of successful community-based initiatives (see, e.g., Berkes 2007), but with little in-depth analysis of whether and how socio-ecological contexts shapes outcomes (McLain et al, 2017). The literature has also shown that the possible erosion of government authority opens up opportunities for entrepreneurial actors and alliances to take on the leadership of sustainability, but often without a specific mandate or clear guidelines.

An important dynamic of local partnerships has been a high degree of devolution and/or democratic decentralization (Lemos and Agrawal 2006). While devolution and decentralization do not always provide the financial resources anticipated, they can empower local communities to effectively negotiate their claims over natural resources (Larson and Soto 2008, Stone and Nyaupane 2016) and help building new organizations for channeling opposition against resource extraction and impositions from central government (Wright 2014). Yet, decentralization and devolution can also be appropriated by central governments, or unelected authorities, for their own purposes (Benjaminsen et al 2013, Nelson and Agrawal 2008, Ribot 2002, 2004, 2006, Sulle et al 2014). We still know little about whether these processes are creating platforms for effective multi-stakeholder negotiation for sustainable utilization and conservation of natural resources, given a long history of exclusive state control (see, e.g. Berkes 2007; Mshale 2016).

NEPSUS builds from these insights to expand our understanding of the features of multi-stakeholder complexity in sustainability partnerships and how they may shape sustainability outcomes. It combines approaches embedded in political economy, political ecology, natural resource governance and social network analysis to examine how partnerships emerge, which stakeholders are involved in different issue-areas, and what role variously-positioned brokers play in them. NEPSUS examines whether and how different configurations of partnerships complexity lead to successful and more equitable outcomes, or to increased conflict and failure.

This working paper serves to profile the NEPSUS project conceptually and methodologically. Future working papers will provide: in-depth literature reviews; background to the sectors and locations where the project will be carrying out fieldwork; results of research activities; and theoretical, methodological and policy-related reflections.

## ***2. Knowledge gaps***

### **2.1 Partnership complexity**

Sustainability partnerships are one of the tools of what is variously known as interactive, collaborative, hybrid or multistakeholder governance (we use these terms interchangeably in this paper), defined as a ‘governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets’ (Ansell and Gash 2007). The argument for the need of this form of governance is that no single institution alone is capable of addressing sustainability challenges effectively, equitably and efficiently, and thus the engagement of various stakeholders representing the state, business and civil society is essential, together with the involvement of local communities (Ansell and Gash 2007, Rana and Chhatre 2017). But the

functioning of these partnerships depends on how networks of actors and institutions are structured, how power and responsibility are shared and devolved, and what flows within them (see e.g. Rana and Chhatre 2017). Values, principles and goals are articulated and developed as public and/or private individuals and institutions, engage in social exchange, with goals that are not given but negotiated, and are not stable but vary according to the strength of participants who come and go (Chuenpagdee and Jentoft 2009). The transfer of sustainability challenges away from governmental regulatory powers and into arenas of private business interest validates the need for further explorations of the conditions that enable or hinder the ability of sustainability partnerships to function and thrive in global market places.

Participation of non-state actors in managing renewable natural resources (wildlife, forestry and coastal resources) dates back to the 1970s and 1980s. The increasing hegemony of broader tenets of the neoliberal orthodoxy, such as democratic decentralization, participation and market approaches (see Heynen et al 2007), provided the initial stimulus to the emergence of participatory approaches to natural resource governance. Other factors that necessitated the move from centralized to decentralized management systems included increasing pressure by international conservation organizations and clear failure by resource-constrained and newly-independent states (see Agrawal and Gibson 1999, Brockington 2005, Brosius et al 2005, Western and Wright 1994). The perceived need for collaboration and engagement in partnerships in natural resource governance have become particularly popular since the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (Mert 2014). They have emerged in the context of increasing willingness by public authority to delegate social and environmental regulation to business and civil society actors. At the transnational level, in the agro-food and natural resource sectors, many of these initiatives have taken the form of ‘stewardship councils’ and ‘sustainability roundtables’<sup>1</sup>.

These initiatives are increasingly built around a common set of ‘must have’ institutional features and procedural elements, which are used to establish a legitimate presence as a governance instrument, to fend off possible criticism, and to ‘sell’ sustainability certifications and labels to potential users (producers, traders, processors, retailers) (Ponte 2014). They usually include an executive board or a board of directors; an assembly or council, often with specific chambers that represent different stakeholder interests; technical advisory committees of appointed experts; and an executive director with support staff that handle the day-by-day operations. Procedural elements include a set of what are now considered ‘best practices’ in standard setting, certification and accreditation, and impact evaluation, which are built around the concepts of transparency, inclusiveness, consensus and accountability (Cheyns 2011). These best practices are inherited and adapted largely from the experience of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) model and have been subsequently codified by the International Social and Environmental Labeling Alliance (ISEAL).<sup>2</sup> ISEAL has developed

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<sup>1</sup> Multistakeholder schemes in the agro-food and forestry sectors that have ‘stewardship’ or ‘roundtable’ in their title include: the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC, established in 1993), the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC, 1999), the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO, 2004), the Roundtable on Responsible Soy (RTRS, 2006), the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB, 2009), the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC, 2010), and the Sustainable Beef Roundtable (SBR, under way). Other multistakeholder initiatives that take a ‘Better’ nomenclature and have similar institutional architectures are Bonsucro (formerly the Better Sugar Cane Initiative, 2008) and the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI, 2009). In addition to these, we find a host of other multistakeholder initiatives, including those that were developed in the coffee sector and then expanded to other commodities, such as Fairtrade (1989/1998), Rainforest Alliance (1993), Utz (2002), and 4C (2006).

<sup>2</sup> ISEAL is an association whose members are social and environmental standard-setting and accreditation organizations. It aims at developing guidance for and strengthening the effectiveness and impact of these standards. Its roots stem from a meeting held in 1999 by MSC, FSC, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and Fairtrade to discuss the possibility of closer collaboration among standard setting organizations.

three ‘Codes of Good Practice’ for setting, assessing, and assuring compliance with social and environmental standards.

The governance setup of these initiatives is meant to ensure (if not just signal) a degree of professionalization, meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders in key decision-making processes, and transparency. As a result, sustainability initiatives are becoming ever more complex in how they facilitate formal participation of relevant stakeholders, manage deliberation and use technologies/mechanisms that ensure *some* provision of input even from more marginalized actors. Yet, as Cheyns (2011) so vividly shows, there are serious gaps between being part of deliberation and being able to shape outcomes. Process consultants employed in multi-stakeholder initiatives and partnerships are often related to, or hosted by, conservation groups (Duffy and Moore 2011), and use the expedients of urgency, reaching consensus, and pragmatism to steer deliberation trajectories in specific directions, define categories of ‘stakeholder’ and frame acceptable formats of engagement (see also Mshale 2016).

Existing knowledge in this field suggests that institutionally complex and putatively more democratic and inclusive sustainability initiatives (such as FSC in forestry and RSB in biofuels) are challenged by competitor initiatives that are more top-down, less democratic, leaner, quicker, more commercially aggressive, and more tuned in with industry interests (such as PEFC in forestry and ISCC in biofuels) (Fransen 2012, Ponte 2014). Although business-led partnerships are considered more efficient in managing consultative processes and achieving desirable outcomes compared to government-led initiatives, successes tend to be economic in nature, while social and environmental aspects are given a low profile (Farmaki et al 2015). The ever more complex web of institutional and governance features, development and managerial systems, time- and resource-consuming meetings, and the enactment of procedures to meet ‘good practice’ has often improved governance systems in transnational sustainability initiatives and partnerships. However, it has also slowed down processes, added costs, and in the long run created stakeholder fatigue.

This uneven picture is also emerging in national and local partnerships for sustainability, especially in the field of conservation. These partnerships are diverse and vary by place and type of resource, with a large range of structures and functions (Moore and Koontz 2016). Some of the literature claims that involving multiple stakeholders through partnerships increases the governability of natural resources, that the diversity of participating actors enhances the capacity to respond to problems (Huxham et al 2000, Lasker et al. 2001), and that highly polycentric organizational structures yield higher environmental outputs than monocentric ones (Newig and Fritsch 2009). Existing research also suggests that partnerships are more likely to be successful when: there is synergy between actors in terms of resources, interests, power, language and culture (Huxham et al 2000, Lasker et al. 2001, Mitchell 2005, Vangen 2003); they are backed by a supportive external environment; all stakeholders can connect their own interests with the common objective of the partnership (Glasbergen et al 2007); and when relevant actors bring in not only specific resources and histories to the partnership, but also an appropriate mix of resources, knowledge and capabilities (Pattberg and Widerberg 2016).

Effectiveness of partnerships seems to be enhanced when actors are ready to negotiate alternative solutions and compromises (Newig and Fritsch 2009), when they can leverage existing social capital and networks, when stakeholders accept that partnerships evolve over time (Vangen 2003), and when they operate under a clear political mandate, political pressure

and/or political support (Kallis et al 2009, Pattberg and Widerberg 2016). Trust is a key aspect of success, both in relation to initiating a trust-building loop, and in sustaining it (Beierle and Konisky 2001, Schuett et al 2001, Stone 2015, Vangen 2003).

But other research highlights that these partnerships often fail to meet their stated goals due to lack of organizational capacity and resources, that they are characterized by low or unmeasured outcomes, and that they fail to foster inclusiveness of marginalized actors (Pattberg and Widerberg 2016). The critical literature suggests that variety of actors in partnerships does not per se lead to better outcomes, as each partner represents specific interests, may embody different world views, yields different degrees and kinds of power, and brings with it specific hopes, expectations and claims (Glasbergen et al 2007, Mitchell 2005, Olwig 2013, Stone 2015). In these situations, increasing the number of stakeholders and the complexity of procedures may actually inhibit rather than facilitate the governance of natural resources (Chuenpagdee and Jentoft 2009). Actors may indeed have irreconcilable interests, no matter how much participants agree on basic values and principles — leading to different perceptions of problems and their solutions (Jentoft and Chuenpagdee 2009). Different capabilities of actors often result into power imbalances. Smaller and weaker actors – especially those who do not have capacity, organizational skills, and resources to participate as equals in partnerships – are prone to marginalization in decision-making (Ansell and Gash 2007, Booher and Innes 2002). Some power imbalances also emerge as a result of lack of expert knowledge to engage into more technical discussions (Ansell and Gash 2007, Ponte and Cheyns 2013). Yet, others argue that while too much power imbalance is usually seen as a problem and often causes anxiety among participants, too much equality may actually hamper the establishment of initiatives or the development of leadership within them (Kooiman et al 2005). Furthermore, collaborative arrangements may indeed result in conflicts/tensions in the short run, but such short term undesired outcomes may result useful in the creation of more durable partnerships seeking longer-term social and environmental outcomes (Poteete et al 2010).

Networks are important factors in determining the effectiveness of partnerships in resource governance (Henriksen 2015). Actors use their networks to share their experiences, values, interests, knowledge and resources, but also to facilitate resource exchange (Booher and Innes 2002; Pattberg and Widerberg 2016) and handle possible tensions (Kooiman et al 2003). At the same time, for a network to survive, it needs the willingness, capabilities and resources of the most powerful and influential members of a partnership, thus possibly reinforcing existing power imbalances (Pattberg and Widerberg 2016).

Partnership *complexity* clearly affects the ability to deliver sustainability outcomes. Yet, the literature is mostly silent on this issue. A few contributions have focused on complexity in terms of the problems to be tackled (Imperial 2005, Kim 2015), highlighting the interconnectedness of the natural and social components within the systems that partnerships are targeting (Choi and Robertson 2014). As components are interdependent, dealing with one component affects another (Imperial 2005, Jentoft and Chuenpagdee 2009). At the same time, the complex nature of conservation problems enables powerful actors to pit policies against each other in order to elbow out groups that fight against the appropriation of natural resources for the benefit of political and business elites (Nelson 2012). This is the case, for example, when environmental laws are strategically used as reasons to displace and relocate local communities, in order to make land available for eco-tourism developments. Therefore, it is relevant to examine how different representations of complexity influence how partnerships work and to what end.

Another form of complexity that has been highlighted relates to the structure of partnerships – in terms of form of interaction between actors and type of organizational membership (Kooiman et al 2005). Some actors have daily interactions, while others are involved only in specific meetings. Actors are involved differently over time and at different levels of the partnership process. Some members are involved as individuals, others represent organizations. Actors come and go, and policies and strategies change over time (Huxham et al 2000).

What is missing in both the literatures on transnational and national/local sustainability partnerships is an understanding of complexity in its constituent elements – in terms of numbers of institutions and partners involved, their diverse background (for profit, social enterprise, not for profit, government, network), the multiple scales they operate at, and their different core interests. As indicated above, many contributions examine participation, transparency, accountability, power relations, resource flows – but we still lack a better understanding of the connections between these factors and how different kinds of complexity may affect actual sustainability outcomes. We also elaborate on the need to add a component of network complexity which locates partnerships in broader structures of ties that not only channel resources but also shape power asymmetries and outcomes. NEPSUS addresses these gaps by unpacking complexity in and around sustainability partnerships and by linking its constitutive elements to sustainability outcomes.

## **2.2. Processes**

Sustainability partnerships in governing natural resources bring together different state and non-state actors with often diverse and competing interests. Legitimacy, defined as the ‘process where partnerships gain recognition and become accepted as a relevant alternative or supplement to government policy on a particular issue’ (Glasbergen et al 2007), is crucial for sustainability partnerships to establish their authority in governing natural resources. Gaining legitimacy depends on interactive structures and processes in which partnerships operate. To establish and maintain legitimacy, these interventions have to pay attention to the needs, power and interests of different actors.

Recent research on sustainability partnerships has highlighted the importance of managing legitimacy with different audiences and stakeholders, given that these partnerships cannot lean exclusively on the sovereign authority of the state to govern natural resources. This literature shows that in order to be effective, partnerships need to achieve a balance of input legitimacy (inclusion, balance in stakeholder representation), process legitimacy (governance procedures, participatory mechanisms, accountability) and output legitimacy (immediate results achieved) (Bernstein and Cashore 2007, Fransen and Kolk 2007, Glasbergen et al 2007, Gulbrandsen 2010, 2014).

Input and process legitimacy deal with procedural fairness, where the focus is on the quality of the decision-making process in terms of deliberation, participation, transparency and accountability. In general, for partnerships to gain input and process legitimacy, there should be participation of all relevant actors and interests, and particularly of marginalized groups; and there should be clear accountability mechanisms and transparency (Bäckstrand 2006, Glasbergen et al 2007). Output legitimacy, on the other hand, is associated with a consequential logic, and relates to whether governance arrangements contribute to collective problem solving or to societal goals such as conservation, wellbeing of local communities,

and consciousness raising of ecotourists (Wearing and Wearing 1999). It is shaped by issue compliance, implementation and effectiveness. Compliance relates to whether members adhere to the agreed norms and rules; implementation is concerned with activities having been performed according to plan; and effectiveness is about whether outcomes are achieved (Bäckstrand 2006).

The literature has shown that the balance of different kinds of legitimacy varies in different resource fields and contexts. While some form of multi-stakeholder governance structure is becoming more common across the board, it is also clear that simpler (government- or business-driven) initiatives tend to shape governance systems through selective approaches, such as by only occasionally interacting with stakeholders, or by including stakeholders as representatives but in ways that limit their influence (Beaumont and Dredge 2010, Cheyns 2011, Franssen 2012, Ponte and Cheyns 2013, Ponte 2014, Ruhanen 2013).

Broadly speaking, the partnerships analyzed by NEPSUS belong to the ‘integrated conservation-development’ initiatives that aim at reconciling environmental/conservation objectives and livelihood/socio-economic outcomes. The history of conservation in developing countries from colonial times to recent years indicates that originally these initiatives were introduced primarily for the protection of natural resources to generate revenue for the state at the expense of local livelihoods. In Tanzania, the creation of protected areas of various kinds in forestry, coastal and wildlife environments often involved active and harsh exclusion of local residents. As a result, local communities frequently opted to challenge what they perceived as ‘coercive and ineffective state structures and policies for managing resources’ (Spaeder and Feit 2005: 149). Two antagonizing forces eventually came to bear: (1) communities attempting to enjoy their rights to control land and resources, vis a vis ‘outsiders’ trying to bar them from exploiting protected species and resources (Western and Wright 1994); and (2) governments starting to introduce policy and actual implementation of decentralized forms of governance that combine conservation and development objectives (Goble et al 2014), following concerns that the degree of community or resource user group involvement in conservation initiatives and programs had been previously minimal or absent.

One of the features of the adoption of more decentralized governance of natural resources in the past two decades or so, in Tanzania and elsewhere, has been its increasing use of partnerships involving communities, different layers of government, civil society groups and NGOs, and sometimes business. Some of the main preoccupations in the literature examining these partnerships have been the dynamics of community participation, the scale of operations, and the legitimacy of these partnerships as governance instruments (see i.a. Gustavson et al 2009, Levine 2002, Makoloweka and Shurcliff 1997, Tobey and Torell 2006, Wells et al 2010). These are important questions, but remained unanswered in the literature. How are communities represented in partnerships (and by whom)? What makes them important partners? What are the points of convergence/ divergence of interests? How do partnerships gain legitimacy and why do communities accept to participate? What is the importance of scale (of conservation) in assessing the impacts of partnerships? How are rights regulated and deregulated and by whom?

A large body of literature exists on community participation in the governance of natural resources. This literature has focused on processes and impacts of participatory approaches (Abbott 1995, Murphree 2009, Ribot 1999), the actual practices of different actors and their roles and interests in entering a partnership (Igoe 2010, Sachedina 2010, Saito-Jensen et al

2010), as well as the relations of power that determine the distribution of costs and benefits (Benjaminsen et al 2013, Dressler et al 2010, Moyo et al 2016). The literature highlights in particular that there is a systematic disjuncture between discourses and actual practices of donors and governments concerning participation, representation and inclusiveness of conservation laws and projects (Ribot et al forthcoming, Wearing and Wearing 1999). This work highlights how governance reforms have led to a narrowing of democracy, leading to mere counting of numbers of ‘participants’ and ‘group’ representation, rather than considering community values, needs and priorities.

The literature also critiques the practices, interests and roles of powerful actors in facilitating partnerships with local communities – showing that their actions have empowered some actors while disempowering those already marginalized by conservation schemes (Moscardo 2011, Wearing and Wearing 1999). Since the initial focus of partnerships has been around benefit sharing, rather than cost-benefit sharing (Brockington 2007), most schemes have often lead to crisis rather than hope for local communities, have increased community burdens, have reinforced state control over natural resources (Benjaminsen et al 2013, Dressler et al 2010), and have failed to achieve their ultimate goals – even though they successfully enrolled communities in participatory processes (Moscardo 2011, Noe and Kangalawe 2015, Stonich 1998).

Existing research, however, has not paid enough attention to how participatory schemes gain legitimacy, to the internal dynamics of power, and to the ways in which learning from (or ignoring) previous experiences may determine the outcomes of participation. Partnerships have dynamic elements that are constantly re-negotiated by individuals and institutions. They are shaped by social capital, which can enhance or inhibit local decision-making capabilities. It is therefore important that the assessment of legitimacy of participatory initiatives focuses not only on institutions and leaders, but also examines the networks that are woven around them, and the rules that govern participatory initiatives (Beaumont and Dredge 2010, Bramwell 2011, Ribot 1999). A fresh look is also needed on community contestation and on aspects of regulation and re-regulation of access and control in partnerships (Benjaminsen et al 2013).

Partnerships are part of larger processes that operate at the global level, and that they are embedded in local and national political economies that co-shape their trajectories and outcomes. The levels at which partnerships are initiated, and the way different actors converge to support these partnerships, are a function of the scale of conservation. The desire to initiate large landscapes of conservation requires mobilization of ‘grassroots’ efforts. Accordingly, partnerships need to be consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity, requiring establishment of links between conservation and local development objectives (Berkes 2007, Kottak 1999). Thus, community-based conservation becomes part of a broad approach to biodiversity protection (Young 2003). However, critiques of community participation in forestry, wildlife and coastal resources are often limited to local practices of different actors rather than the overall scaling process. Likewise, the assessment of costs and benefits of community participation does not consider changes in what is considered a desirable scale of conservation, and how its construction necessitates the collaboration of different actors (Kottak 1999, Legg 2009, Ramutsindela and Noe 2015).

Overall, there seems to be a systematic disjuncture between global discourses and local narratives on the process involved in sustainability partnerships (Berkes 2007, Ribot 2003, 2016), and participation appears to be symbolic rather than substantive (Ribot et al

forthcoming) – even leading to disempowerment (Brockington 2005; Noe and Kangalawe 2015, Ribot et al forthcoming). In line with calls for assessing different degrees of participation (Ribot et al. forthcoming), NEPSUS will contribute towards a better understanding of actual practices, norms and partner protocols and learning processes that may influence outcomes (both socio-economic and environmental), and of the reality of daily lives of communities, rather than only representational performance. NEPSUS will unpack participation by focusing on critical examination of factors that influence legitimacy, and examine whether the rhetoric supporting the presence of many actors in sustainability partnerships pans out in terms of results, given that actors may be of very different nature and pursue different objectives.

### **2.3 Sustainability outcomes**

Increasing complexity in terms of actors involved and the nature of institutional arrangements has entailed an expansion of the goals of these partnerships (Mshale 2016). To mobilize effective participation of non-state actors, governments have to respond to the needs and aspirations of local people, businesses, NGOs, the international community and other actors. Complex partnerships have to pay attention to both conservation and livelihoods outcomes. NEPSUS evaluates whether, how and to what extent they attain environmental and livelihood/socio-economic outcomes concurrently. It assesses partnership interventions in terms of attaining these outcomes (effectiveness), in relation to resources applied (efficiency), and in relation to the distribution of benefits, costs and losses among key partners (equity).

The existing literature on sustainability outcomes has several knowledge gaps when it comes to understanding whether and how partnerships achieve their intended objectives. It has analyzed socio-economic and environmental outcomes mostly in isolation from each other, while often these interventions are introduced to achieve both (Agrawal and Benson 2011). This is affected by disciplinary bias, whereby environmental scientists pay little attention to social outcomes, and social scientists pay little attention to environmental outcomes (Ojanen et al 2017). It is also affected by difficulties in undertaking multi-disciplinary studies, by infancy in the development of methods for jointly assessing socio-economic and environmental outcomes (Poteete and Ribot 2011), and by a poor understanding of the causal links between interventions and their outcomes (Agrawal 2001, McLain et al 2017, Ostrom 2007, 2009, Poteete and Ribot 2011). Moreover, in the existing literature, little attention is paid to contextual factors at the local, national and international levels (Agrawal 2001, McLain et al 2017).

NEPSUS attempts to fill some of these gaps by: (1) using both detailed qualitative description of the partnership types and configuration and mixed methods (qualitative and quantitative statistical analysis) to assess socio-economic and environmental outcomes (thus following Poteete et al's 2010 suggestions); (2) using detailed qualitative narratives of partnership types and configuration to strengthen causal links between interventions and their outcomes building on emerging literature (see e.g. Persha et al, 2010); (3) analyzing relationships of synergies and trade-offs between often competing livelihood and conservation outcomes through a careful selection of indicators that assess sustainability outcomes; and (4) systematically showing how different kinds of participation dynamics under different socio-ecological contexts lead to different sustainability outcomes (thus answering the call for understanding contextual factors, as in Agrawal 2001, McLain et al 2017).

### ***3. Research design, conceptual definitions and analytical approaches***

The main objective of NEPSUS is to assess comparatively whether and how forms of partnership characteristics and dynamics of governance affect sustainability outcomes across different renewable resource systems (forestry, wildlife and coastal resources). NEPSUS deploys mixed methods to link different forms of partnership complexity to socio-economic/livelihood and environmental outcomes via a set of process factors. In this section, we explain the overall design of NEPSUS, specify the relevant research questions, and define the related concepts and analytical strategy.

NEPSUS examines three natural resource systems (**wildlife, forestry and coastal resources**) that are key components of rural livelihood strategies in Tanzania (Benjaminsen et al 2013, Dokken and Angelsen 2015, Kalonga et al 2015, Ponte 2002, Snyder and Sulle 2011, Sulle et al. 2011, Tolbey and Torell 2006). All three have by now established traditions of: (1) centralized, ‘simpler’ and more top-down conservation initiatives (game reserves, forest reserves controlled by central or local governments, and marine parks); and (2) various forms of ‘more complex’ partnerships that are based on different degrees and forms of co-management and involve more stakeholders: Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs); combinations of Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) with timber certification and REDD+ initiatives; and Beach Management Units (BMUs) and related Collaborative Fisheries Management Areas (CFMAs). More complex configurations emerged on the basis of evidence that pure community-based, private sector, or state control alone cannot effectively, equitably and sustainably manage these resources (Ostrom 2007, Rana and Chhatre 2017). Since these resource systems feed into different value chains and are embedded in specific networks of actors, our comparative approach will enable an analysis of whether, how and to what extent context influences the formation and performance of partnerships.

Within each sector, the research design is built upon two layers of comparison: (1) between ‘**simpler partnerships**’ (SP), ‘**more complex partnerships**’ (CP), and ‘**control**’ (C) sites—selected in contiguous areas that are as agro-ecologically and socio-economically similar as possible; and (2) between ‘**early-mover**’ (EM) and ‘**latecomer**’ (L) sites. The logic of comparing EM and L sites is to assess whether the latter were able address some of the challenges (but also learn from successes) previously experienced in EM sites. Finally, where possible, secondary databases and results from previous and current research projects and community baseline surveys will be used to build ‘before-after’ comparisons. Attribution of sustainability outcomes will be modulated in relation to resource-type specificity and contextual and historical factors.

#### **3.1 Partnership complexity**

The first group of research questions that guide NEPSUS are related to partnership complexity.

##### *RQ1: Complexity*

- What factors account for different degrees of complexity in partnerships for natural resource governance?
- In what local, national and international contexts have these partnerships arisen?
- What kinds of social networks are woven around them?

NEPSUS defines a **partnership** as a configuration of actors, norms and institutions that mediates interactions and distribution of roles and rights for managing a specific renewable resource in an identified place. The different degree of overall **complexity** is determined in two steps. First, we examine four layers of complexity for the purpose of fieldwork site selection: (1) number of actors involved in the partnerships; (2) number of actor categories; (3) complexity of the decision making system; and (4) degree of sharing among different actor categories in access rights to the resource. The first two are part of *actor multiplicity* complexity; the second two are part of *institutional complexity*. This allows us to make a preliminary selection of partnerships that are ‘simpler’ and those that are ‘more complex’, and to identify control sites with similar agro-ecological and socio-economic features within each resource sector.

Given that there is limited variation in complexity factors within each case, a *second step* will be taken after fieldwork to fine-tune, substitute and/or add elements of complexity and how they interact with each other. *Network complexity* is a correlate of how institutional and actor traits interact, but these interactions must also be understood in a larger context of the social network within which they play out. Through interviews and document analysis, we map the organizations and individuals linked to the partnerships who then report on the nature and strength of their mutual ties, including technical support ties, funding flows, and legally binding contracts. Drawing on Social Network Analysis (SNA) we analyze this data to understand the structural variation in the network complexity of the partnerships. The aim of this analysis is not to assess *how complex* partnerships are but to get at *what complexities* they comprise. What relational complexities are linked to processes of collaboration, trust-building and learning as opposed to destructive power asymmetries and conflicts is an empirical question, and NEPSUS breaks new ground in investigating the association between network complexity and partnership processes and outcomes.

The second analytical step will also include in-depth contextual and historical analysis to assess the possible differential impact of specific complexity factors in shaping partnership processes and outcomes. A further factor of partnership complexity, normative complexity (complexity of the problem to be solved), is deemed to be relatively constant in all pairs of partnership comparison.

The following approaches will be followed to analyze the changing dynamics of partnership complexity in the second step:

- *Mapping, contextual and historical analysis* of partnership types through qualitative thematic analysis; we will code data for specific words and themes and examine them with qualitative data analysis software (NVivo10).
- *Social network analysis* (SNA) will provide an additional measure of partnership complexity; it will be used to map the inter-personal and inter-organizational networks to delineate: the structure of the network; network connectivity, density, centrality and clustering patterns; key organizations and individuals that are well-connected and central; delineate groups, coalitions and alliances; and map institutional interactions. SNA will also be used to identify ‘gaps’ in the network that may hold a potential for improved collaboration and information sharing. The R-based free software package ‘sna’ will be used to conduct network analysis. The sequence analytical package ‘TraMineR’ will be used to analyze career paths and skill sets, enabling inferences on connections between careers/skills and network characteristics.

## 3.2 Processes

Partnership complexity as defined above operates through processual factors as it impacts sustainability outcomes. NEPSUS focuses on legitimacy building and maintenance, and on learning processes, but through a political economy, rather than an institutionalist, approach. This involves a focus on equity, access and power relations, and on institutions as they operate in a political economy, rather than on ‘ideal’ institutional features. This entails a second group of research questions focused on processes.

### *RQ2: Processes*

- How do different kinds of partnerships develop, gain and manage legitimacy among different audiences and stakeholders?
- What kinds of legitimacy (input, process, output) do they seek and how? And which forms of legitimacy, if any, provide most power to local communities?
- How does the history of relations between state, local communities, private and international actors influence participatory processes and interactions and power relations among actors?
- What processes, if any, are successful in preventing powerful actors (public or private) from capturing the partnership process to suit their own interests?
- What learning processes (if any) are taking place that may allow late-comers to leverage positive lessons and/or avoid the pitfalls of previous experiences?

We will use qualitative thematic analysis, software-based qualitative data analysis, and survey data to examine three legitimacy categories that are commonly distinguished in the literature on sustainability initiatives:

- *Input* legitimacy: participation of various categories of actors and groups in the design and operation of relevant partnerships; balance in the type, origin and function of stakeholders;
- *Process* legitimacy: procedures allowing or limiting participation and democratic process; quality of governance procedures, system management, accountability, and transparency;
- *Output* legitimacy: assessment of directly attributable output and changes over time (e.g. number of villages involved, area under conservation, quantity of certified timber, number of participants, awareness of partnership in the communities) vis a vis expectations.

In each category of legitimacy, we will pay particular attention to levels of awareness,<sup>3</sup> participation and perceptions related to the partnership, different degrees of access and influence by communities, power struggles, politics, and dynamics of cooperation and conflict. We also examine how these partnerships are embedded internationally and nationally. Finally, we compare ‘**early-mover**’ (**EM**) and ‘**latecomer**’ (**L**) sites to assess processes and possible learning trajectories and differential outcomes. The logic of selection of these sites is tuned to the specificities of each resource sector, and will be detailed later in this paper.

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<sup>3</sup> Gustavson et al. (2009:83) have rightly noted that different communities will vary in their levels of awareness, and thus distinguished them into two types, namely those that command a strong knowledge of conservation issues and engagement processes (branded as ‘enhance communities’) and, those that have little to no experience with externally-initiated consultation (labelled as ‘greenfield communities’).

### 3.3 Attribution of sustainability outcomes

A third set of research questions have to do with attribution of sustainability outcomes:

#### *RQ3: Sustainability outcomes*

- What are the environmental, socio-economic/livelihood outcomes in partnerships with different configurations of complexity, and in different resource systems? How are these effects distributed among different groups of actors?
- What are the synergies and/or trade-offs between socio-economic and environmental outcomes? What features minimize trade-offs and maximize synergies between them?
- What instances of conflict and cooperation have emerged as a result of these partnerships? <sup>4</sup> In which cases have relations of domination between state administrations and local communities been transformed?

NEPSUS takes a comparative study approach along three key dimensions that involve sustainability outcomes:

- Comparison of sustainability outcomes between different configurations of partnership complexity, and between different temporal profiles of participation (early-mover and late-comer sites; see above).
- Comparison of sustainability outcomes between different resource types: forestry, wildlife and coastal resources; in this component we seek to understand whether specific attributes of the resource type/system and associated institutional arrangements affect/influence sustainability outcomes.
- Comparison of sustainability outcomes over time, when possible (before and after the introduction/implementation of a partnership).

Analysis will span from basic descriptive statistics to econometric analysis. Where possible, quasi-experimental econometric techniques such as matching or instrumental variables will be employed to credibly attribute household-level outcomes to partnerships. Appropriate statistical analysis will be performed to jointly assess multiple environmental and livelihood outcomes to contribute in filling existing gaps in the literature. This will include assessments of trade-offs and synergistic relations between environmental and socio-economic outcomes.

The NEPSUS case studies fall under the ‘multi-level governance’ approach whereby the interventions variously target individuals, households, villages and combination of villages. Our analytical approaches in terms of unit of analysis (individual, household, village, community of villages) will be aligned to the intervention type and supplied with sufficient description of how the intervention is implemented. Similarly, our units of analysis in assessing environmental outcomes will differ depending on the resource type.

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<sup>4</sup> More recently there has been an admission in the literature that natural resources have increasingly become sites of both conflict and cooperation. More importantly, some studies have moved further to propose analytical frameworks that do not conceptualize conflict and cooperation one-dimensionally, i.e. on a continuum along a single axis but rather a multi-dimensional approach that brings together three variables of conflict, cooperation and time (see, e.g., Martin et al 2011: 625-626) and eventually adopting scales of conflict (such as high-level conflict; medium-level conflict; low-level conflict and no-conflict), and scales of cooperation (for example, no cooperation; low-level cooperation; informal medium cooperation intensity; formal medium cooperation intensity, and high-level cooperation intensity).

#### 4. Data collection methods

NEPSUS employs a broad portfolio of data collection methods that the members of the research team have practiced over many years of work in Tanzania and elsewhere. Diversity of methods will enable critical reflection and triangulation of data.

*Key informant interviews (KII)* are the main method of data collection to address RQ1 (including the initial selection criteria for SNA) and RQ2. These semi-structured interviews will be recorded when allowed by interviewees. Interviewees will be offered a statement of confidentiality to ease the conversation in case particularly sensitive issues are discussed. In the interview situation, informants will also be asked to fill in a roster of their peer network within the partnerships, detailing the strength of their social ties and the frequency of their interaction. Questions about organizational collaboration will be included, allowing for mapping inter-organizational networks.

*Collection of secondary documents (SD)*: relevant texts, such as written agreements and MoUs, minutes of partnership meetings, reports generated by the partnership project and/or local government officials; secondary texts will be used mainly to address RQ1 and RQ2.

*Focus groups and participant observation (FG/PO)*: FGs are organized in local communities to gather data on perceptions of environmental and socio-economic change, and the history, dynamics, legitimacy and impact of partnerships. PO of partnership meetings and activities (when possible and allowed) will be carried out in areas of operation. These results will be used to address all three groups of RQs. This is feasible since the project involves three full-time PhDs who will spend significant amounts of time in the study sites.

*A questionnaire-based survey (SUR)* will be the main method to gather data for quantitative statistical analysis of socio-economic outcomes at the household and community levels (RQ3), perceptions of partnerships processes and functioning (RQ1 and RQ2), and perceptions of environmental outcomes (RQ3). In some areas, we will be able to carry out a longitudinal study by drawing from previous surveys.

Households will be selected through stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation under different strata (male and female-headed households; different poverty/wealth ranks; household location in the village between near and far households etc.). The questionnaires will contain the same modules across resource types in order to compare outcomes, but allowing for some adaptation to resource specificity.

Data on *environmental outcomes (EO)* will be collected for both spatial and (when possible) temporal comparison. Main indicators for EO analysis will include resource conditions (quantity and quality) (Olwig et al. 2007) and changes in anthropogenic threats to resources.

- *Forestry*: geo-spatial analytics of aerial images and remotely sensed images will be combined with on-the-ground data on forest conditions to assess and compare forest conditions over time and space; most of this data is readily available from MCDI, village natural resource committees, and UDSM (some of the team members have been involved in gathering these data in the past); collaboration with the University of Edinburgh and the University of East Anglia will allow access to previous databases and images, and a follow up assessment; these will be complemented by perception data from KII, SUR and FG.

- *Wildlife*: data on animal population and wildlife habitats conditions will be gathered from secondary sources: population count surveys available at TAWIRI and respective WMAs; specialized NGOs on wildlife research such as Southern Tanzania Elephant Project (STEP), and the World Elephant Center (WEC) and from primary sources (perception data from SUR and FG); disturbance transects will be conducted to assess presence/absence, severity and extent of various threats to wildlife habitats; perceptions and records of crop raiding and human-wildlife conflict will be used to examine how human and wildlife interactions are changing.
- *Coastal resources*: data on fish catch, volume, species and size are available at the district fishery office and/or the MBREMP office, but their reliability will have to be assessed and triangulated with data from KII and FG/PO; indirect indicators will also be used, such data on rules violation, gear confiscated and arrests, and recorded explosions from dynamite fishing; assessment of mangrove conditions will be carried out by comparing GIS images and carrying out selected ground trothing; status of coral resources will be assessed via secondary data from the MBREMP coral monitoring programme and other studies.

## 5. *Site selection*

The NEPSUS project seeks to compare cases of governance partnerships in managing forest, coastal resources and wildlife in Tanzania. Tanzania provides an ideal case because of existence of all three resource systems managed under different partnership arrangements. Using all cases from one country reduces variation in government contexts and frameworks. Moreover, all cases from the same country share a similar evolution from centralized to decentralized management approaches that emerged around the same time from the late 1990s.

While the case studies differ in specific resource types and particular actors involved, there are several similarities across sectors that allow for meaningful comparison, such as the normative complexity of the objectives of the partnerships (all cases seek to attain both environmental and livelihood outcomes, while improving natural resources governance at the local level). In each resource type, we also seek to minimize variability by selecting sites that are comparable in terms of socio-economic and agro-ecological factors. At the same time, we aim at collecting and analyzing data on context, processes, and legitimacy that will allow a nuanced connection between complexity and outcomes.

A preliminary complexity scoring to identify simple, more complex and control sites carried out at our inception workshop in Copenhagen in late 2016 later necessitated major adjustments – following preliminary fieldwork that took place in February and March 2017 in Rufiji, Kilwa and Mtwara (see Figure 1), and a validation exercise with the NEPSUS Stakeholder Advisory Board in April 2017. The scoring included in Table 1 is still preliminary and will include more precise measurements after a second period of fieldwork in late 2017. The overall logic of selection is common, but important differences arise between various sectors due to the specific characteristics of ‘simpler’ and ‘more complex’ partnerships and their historical backgrounds in different resource groups. More detailed information on the various sites are available in the NEPSUS background working papers dedicated to each sector.



## 5.1 Site selection in forestry

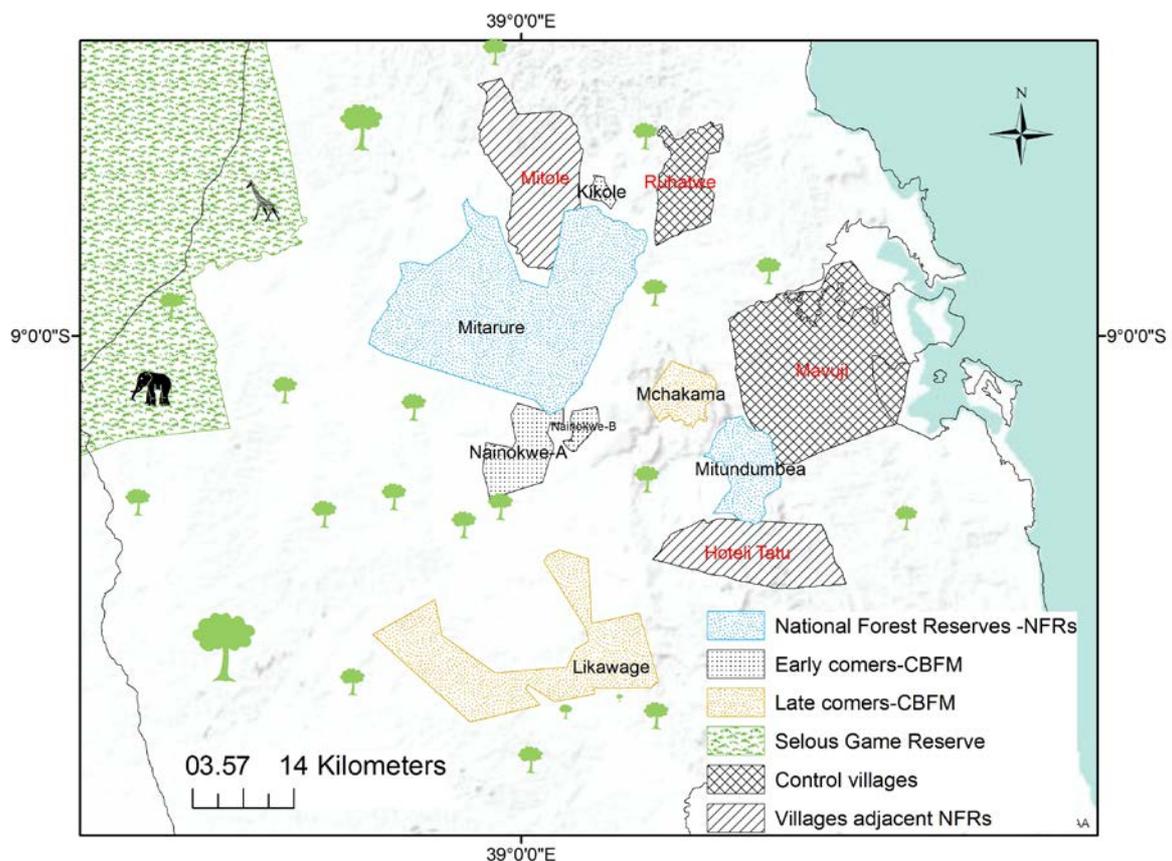
### 5.1.1 Simpler partnerships: National Forest Reserves in Kilwa

Kilwa District has a number of national forest reserves that are owned by the central government and managed through the Tanzania Forest Service Agency (TFS). The TFS in Kilwa manages the natural national forest reserves and regulates timber business in them. Village Land Forest Reserves (VLFR) instead are managed by the communities and other actors (including NGOs). With special arrangements, communities can be engaged in management of national forest reserves through Joint Forest Management (JFM), but none of the villages selected for the NEPSUS project (Mitole and Hoteli Tatu) are engaged in it (see Table 2).

Table 2: Forestry site selection

Simpler partnership (SP)	More complex partnership (CP)	Control site
Sites adjacent to National Forest Reserves	Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative (MCDI)	Non-CBFM sites
Mitole (Mitarure NFR), Hoteli Tatu (Mitundumbea NFR)	Kikole, Nainokwe (early-movers) Likawage, Mchakama (latecomers)	Ruhatwe, Mavuji
2	4	2

Figure 2: Map of forestry sites



### *5.1.2 More complex partnership: Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative (MCDI)*

Community-based Forest Management (CBFM) was first introduced in Kilwa District through the DANIDA supported project called UTUMI (Utunzaji Shirikishi wa Mimitu Tanzania) between 1998-2002. At the end of the UTUMI project, the Mpingo Conservation Program, MCP (now the Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative, MCDI) took over these activities with the aim of facilitating certified sustainable harvesting of blackwood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*, Mpingo in Kiswahili) and of enabling communities to benefit from forest conservation in their village lands.

Villages that have been managing their village land forests through CBFM and joined the MCDI FSC® Group Certificate Scheme for more than five years (Kikole and Nainokwe) are considered to be early movers (EM) (see Table 1). These villages were also involved in the UTUMI project that ended in 2002. Latecomer (L) sites include villages (Likawage and Mchakama) that have joined CBFM and the MCDI FSC® Group Certificate Scheme (GCS) within the last five years or less. These villages were not engaged in the UTUMI project, and established CBFM through MCDI only.

### *5.1.3 Control villages*

Mavuji and Ruhatwe villages do not have VLFRs that are managed through CBFM, nor are they part of the MCDI FSC® GCS. Due to a number of factors such as failures of large-scale land investments (Bioshape investment in Mavuji village) and land disputes/border issues (in Ruhatwe village), these two villages have failed to manage their VLFR through CBFM and to join the MCDI FSC® GCS. They are thus considered 'control' sites for the purposes of NEPSUS.

## **5.2 Case selection in wildlife**

### *5.2.1 'Simpler' partnership: Villages adjacent to the Selous Game Reserve in Kilwa district*

The Selous Game Reserve is an ecologically significant area – it is the largest game reserve in Africa (measuring 50,000 km<sup>2</sup>) and is the host of about 60% of Tanzania's elephant population (Baldus and Hahn 2004). It was first established as a hunting reserve in 1905, upgraded to a game reserve in 1922, and designated a World Heritage Site in 1982 in relation to UNESCO criteria ix and x (significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity) (World Conservation Union 1982). In terms of landscape, the reserve is embedded within a larger Selous ecosystem that covers 90,000 km<sup>2</sup> – including the Ruaha and Mikumi National Parks, several national forest reserves, nine Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) that surround the entire reserve, and several Open Areas (game controlled areas).

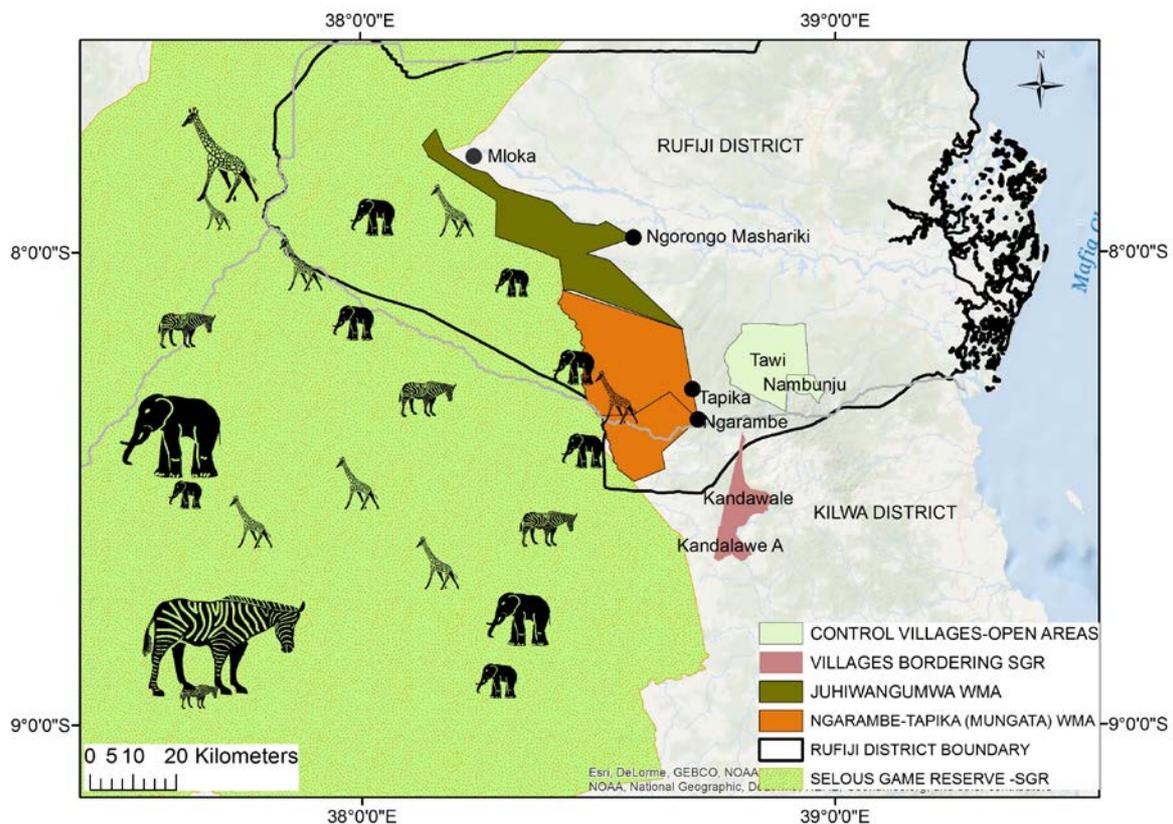
Two villages that border the Selous Game Reserve in Kilwa District (Kandawale, Kandawale A) have been selected to represent 'simpler partnerships' for the NEPSUS project (see Table 3). They are among nine villages that border the game reserve in the stretch between Liwale and Rufiji districts which were involved in community-based wildlife management activities of the Eastern Selous Conservation project. This project was phased out in 2000, when funding from the Belgium Technical Cooperation stopped. By that time, these villages had been involved in training of village committees and game scouts, sensitization seminars,

as well as land use plans. However, the partnership formalization in the form of a more complex WMA did not occur – due to lack of funds and a border conflict that emerged between the villages and the game reserve.

Table 3: Wildlife site selection

Simpler partnership (SP)	More complex partnership (CP)	Control site
Game Reserve	WMAs	Non-WMA
Selected adjacent to Selous Game Reserve in Kilwa	MUNGATA and JUHIWANGUMWA in Rufiji	Villages next to the Rufiji Open Area
Kandawale, Kandawale A	Ngarambe, Tapika (early-movers); Ngorongo, Mloka (latecomers)	Nambuju, Tawi
2	4	2

Figure 3: Map of wildlife sites



### 5.2.2 More complex partnership: Two WMAs in Rufiji District

MUNGATA – an early-mover partnership. This is a partnership of two villages (Ngarambe and Tapika, both selected for our study) that are located south of the Rufiji district at the northeast edge of the Selous Game Reserve. The two villages and the surrounding Kichi hill forest are home to a rich floral and faunal diversity of national and international conservation

importance. The area is a home to approximately 5,400 people whose lifestyles and livelihoods are intricately tied to the biological diversity and the functioning of this natural system. Land is an essential natural resource, both for the livelihoods of these people and for grazing of a variety of wildlife from the game reserve.

Beginning in the early 1990s, GTZ worked with the Rufiji District Council to initiate community-based wildlife management in these and other villages around the game reserve – through the Selous Conservation Program (SCP). Later, WWF provided support for the formalization of partnerships through the establishment of a WMA. Having been registered in 2006, MUNGATA is among the earliest WMAs in the country. It has been a model for other WMAs in the country in relation to successfully receiving wildlife user rights, attracting private hunting investors and building good relations with the neighboring Selous Zonal Station at Kingupira. However, this WMA has also experienced many kinds of conflicts emerging – including a court case with the hunting investor, increasing human-wildlife conflicts and internal leadership disagreements.

JUHIWANGUMWA – a latecomer partnership. This is WMA including 13 villages which was formalized in July 2016. We randomly selected two villages for in-depth investigation (Mloka and Ngorongo Mashariki). Although this is a relatively new WMA, the involved villages have been involved in community-based wildlife conservation since the early 1990s through the Eastern Selous Community program, which was financed by Belgium Technical Cooperation until early 2000. Through an extension of technical and financial support by BTC and the European Union, a second phase started in 2006 focusing on the establishment of this WMA, which was slowed down by border conflicts between the villages and the Selous game reserve. These were resolved recently in a court case, hence allowing the registration of the WMA in 2016. This WMA has potential to attract both hunting and photographic tourism investors as it includes the famous Lake Utunge in its area. Utunge is an important part of the Eastern Selous wildlife sector and the home of a variety of wildlife and fish species. The area is also linked with the Kichi coastal forest, which is an important wildlife corridor.

### *5.2.3 Control sites: Two villages adjacent to the Rufiji Open Area*

We consider villages adjacent to the Rufiji Open Area as control sites because they are in proximity of the Selous game reserve but have no form of partnership. Although wildlife utilization continues in village lands in which the district council issue resident hunting licenses, there is no formal partnership with villages in which hunting takes place. Open Areas are village lands, which happen to accommodate wildlife that overflow from protected areas. Wildlife is only marginally protected in these areas as villagers are not formally involved in conservation. Although the Open Area status allows District Councils to issue resident hunting licenses, the control of hunting in this arrangement presents significant challenges as illegal activities have increased rapidly in the recent years. Two villages from this area were selected randomly (Nambunju and Tawi). However, during preliminary fieldwork in early 2017, armed conflict between poachers, local community leaders and the police escalated, thus increasing the security risk faced by the research team. A decision on whether to return to these sites or select other sites that serve the same purpose will be taken during the second phase of fieldwork.

### 5.3 Site selection in coastal resources

#### 5.3.1 Simpler partnership: Mnazi Bay Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park (MBREMP)

Mnazi Bay and the Ruvuma Estuary were identified as priority areas for the conservation of global marine biodiversity in 1995. The Mnazi Bay Ruvuma Estuary Marine Park (MBREMP) was gazetted in 2000, the second marine park established in Tanzania after Mafia Island Marine Park (MIMP) (Government Notice No. 285, published on 4/8/2000). It began operations in 2002 with support by UNDP/GEF and the Fonds Francais Pour l'Environnement Mondial (FFEM). The park is located in Mtwara rural district, Mtwara region and stretches from the north in Msanga Mkuu Ras near the entrance of Mtwara port for 45 km south to the Ruvuma river on the border with Mozambique. The park includes 17 villages with 44,000 residents. It is characterized by three distinct agroecological zones (seafront, mangrove and riverine areas). The General Management Plan (GMP) of MBREMP defines four zones for conservation purposes, delineating to allocate particular uses: core or restricted use, specified use, and general use – plus a buffer zone around it.

The main official aim of the park is to combine conservation and sustainable development. The resources managed by the park include fish, mangrove, coral reef, seagrass beds and sandbanks. The main identified challenges are: overfishing, rapid population growth, emerging activities vis a vis exploration of natural gas and coastal development, dynamite fishing, collection of shell and sea cucumber, coral harvest, and coastal erosion. The current management plan recognizes the development of gas reserves in the area. The objectives of the park include protection and promotion of sustainable use of resources through zoning and (at least in theory) involvement of communities in its management. As shown in Table 4, we selected five sites within MBREMP to be able to cover all three main agro-ecological areas (seafront, interior and riverine), and to include experiences from villages that had joined the marine park early in its establishment (in 2002) and in a second wave of expansion (in 2005-07).

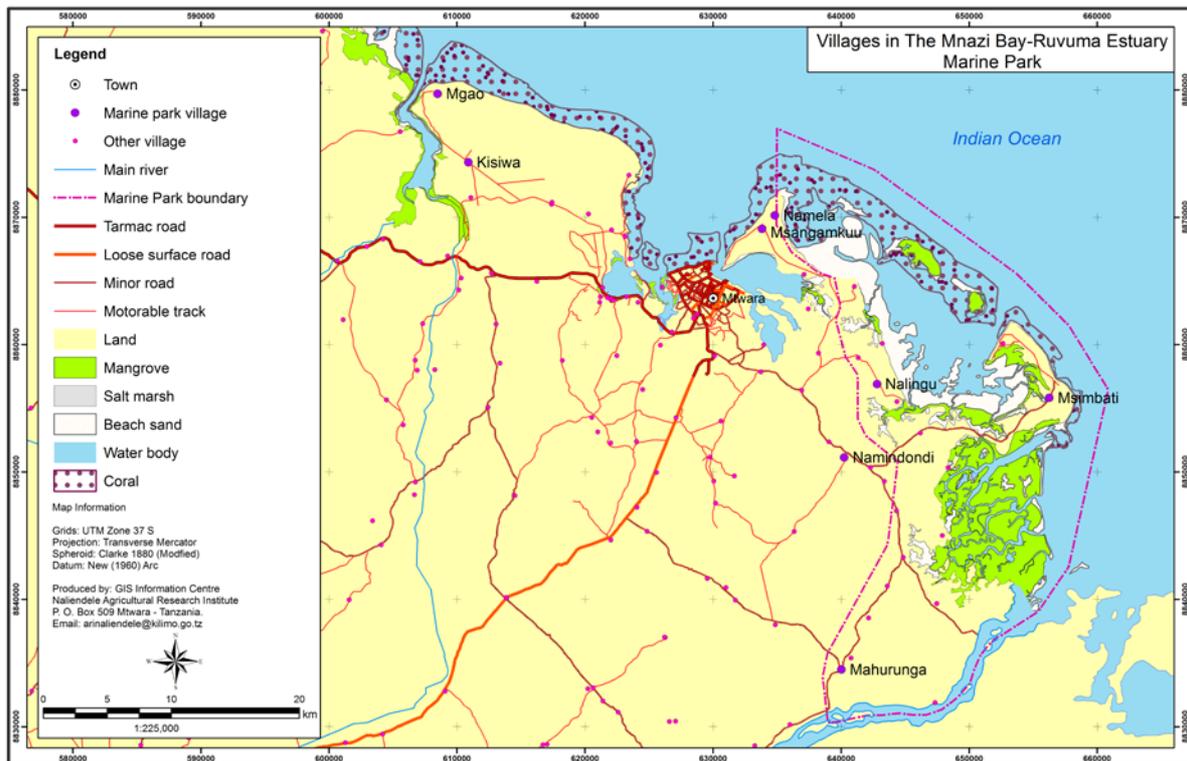
Table 4: Coastal resources site selection

Simpler partnership (SP)	More complex partnership (CP)	Control sites
MBREMP	2 BMUs and their CFMA	Non-BMU
Msimbati (coastal/early-mover) Nalingu (coastal/latecomer) Namidondi (mangrove) Mahuranga (riverine)	Namela, Msanga Mkuu (MNASI CFMA)	Kisiwa, Mgao
4	2	2

Villages located in MBREMP, in comparative perspective, are part of a more complex partnership than is the case for the two 'simpler' partnerships in forestry and wildlife. Furthermore, the difference in the degree of complexity of MBREMP compared to the BMU/CFMA setup is much smaller than for the other two resource sectors (see Table 1). Because MBREMP villages are actually located within the Marine Park (or in its buffer zone), rather than in contiguous areas (as is the case in forest reserves and wildlife reserves), we used a different selection criteria in terms of number of villages and comparative structure. We selected four villages for MBREMP to cover all three agro-ecological zones of the park, but also to distinguish (among coastal villages) between early-movers and

latecomers. For coastal resources, the comparison across SP, CP and control sites will be carried out only for the coastal villages, given that the other two MBREMP villages have significantly different livelihood portfolios and resource use patterns. These elements will need to be kept in consideration when the project reaches the phase of comparative analysis.

Figure 4: Map of coastal resources sites



Source: Harding (2005)

### 5.3.2 More complex partnership: Beach Management Units (BMUs) and Collaborative Fishery Management Areas (CFMAs)

BMUs are organizations that seek to facilitate community participation and collaboration in the management of coastal resources. BMUs bring together a group of stakeholders (government, community, NGOs, researchers, boat owners, fish traders, and money lenders) in a fishing community whose task is to manage, protect and conserve fisheries (Sobo 2012). In a BMU, the community is supposed to be a steward of its own resources. The Tanzania guidelines for BMUs lists the following tasks: enforce the fishing act, prepare by-laws, ensure sanitation and hygiene, collect fish data and information, educate fishers, prepare and implement livelihood projects, ensure the security of people and property. For the NEPSUS study, we selected two BMUs that are located near the marine park and that have similar agro-ecological conditions to the coastal villages within MBREMP: Msanga Mkuu and Namela. Together with a third BMU (Sinde), they constitute the MNASI Collaborative Fishery Management Area (CFMA). These villages established their BMUs more or less at the same time, thus we do not differentiate between early-movers and latecomers (we do so in relation to villages within MBREMP). However, we differentiate these two villages along

another aspect: Namela is currently a quite active and functional BMU, while Msanga Mkuu is inactive due to internal leadership conflicts.

CFMA activities include the carrying out of fish surveys, marking of fishing grounds, mapping the water area that belongs to the CFMA, help managing the fish camps, and facilitate patrols. There are three operating CFMAs (all set up with WWF support) in Mtwara Rural District, and MNASI is the one contiguous to MBREMP. As a matter of fact, part of the water area demarcated for MNASI is also part of the marine park, something that the two organizations will have to resolve, as the rules of fishery operation are quite different in the two institutional setups.

### *5.2.3 Control sites*

The two sites selected as control (Kisiwa and Mgao) are coastal villages which do not have and have never had an active BMU, and are located in areas of similar agro-ecological conditions to the two BMU sites and the two coastal villages within MBREMP.

## **6. Conclusion**

This working paper set out to provide a framework for analyzing complex partnerships for sustainability in natural resource governance. Proponents of multi-stakeholder partnerships have argued that bringing different actors to negotiate the use and management of renewable natural resources ensures that all interests, concerns and aspirations are considered, and hence that outcomes are more likely to be sustainable and fair for all. Some scholars have argued that partnerships involving non-traditional actors bring resources and technologies that can improve efficiency and effectiveness in natural resource governance. But others have highlighted the difficulties arising from bringing different stakeholders with often competing demands and interests to bear on natural resource management and use, which can lead to inequitable distribution of rights, roles and power.

The analytical framework presented in this working paper guides our research on configurations, processes and outcomes of evolving sustainability partnerships in view of different degrees and features of complexity. Although different forms of collaboration between state and non-state actors have been used in managing renewable natural resources for decades, broadly speaking we still know little on whether and how more complex organization structures, the involvement of more numerous stakeholders and more advanced participatory processes have delivered better sustainability outcomes, and if so in what sectors and under what circumstances.

NEPSUS contributes in filling these knowledge and information gaps on the basis of three observations. First, the contexts dictating the emergence, implementation processes and outcomes of these partnerships have changed. Current partnerships involve local to international actors from government, business, local communities, non-governmental organizations, consultants and certification agencies. This has resulted in expanded goals/objectives beyond conservation goals. For instance, forests are now managed not only for their conservation and timber value, but also for their contribution to local livelihoods and climate change mitigation/adaptation. Involvement of other actors has also ushered new power dynamics, resources and changes in the distribution and concentration of power between different actors. Second, we still know little about partnership processes, especially

regarding how partnerships seek and maintain legitimacy, and which types of legitimacy they opt for and why. Third, we do not know much about whether and how multi-stakeholder partnerships have delivered better combinations of livelihood and conservation outcomes. As a result, multi-stakeholder initiatives have tended to be skewed towards one set of outcomes at the expense of the other – resulting into tensions between stakeholders, poor outcomes and even the collapse of partnerships. NEPSUS seeks to combine detailed qualitative narratives of partnership interventions and quantitative statistical analysis of livelihood and conservation outcomes to strengthen arguments linking partnership characteristics and dynamics to their multiple outcomes.

This inaugural working paper will be followed by others reviewing the specific literatures on governance of forestry, wildlife and coastal resources, and providing background information on the selected sectors and sites.

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