The Actor-Interface Case of Development Intervention in the Conservation of Mount Cameroon National Park, Buea, Cameroon

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**ABSTRACT**

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Critics of Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) have argued that participatory approaches and trade-offs are key to effective development interventions for rural populations living adjacent to protected areas. Based on an actor-interface framework, this thesis explores among other things, the discontinuities and/or linkages between those formalized narratives surrounding the creation and management of Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP), and their actual implementation, where there are multiple actors with divergent rationalities and interests. Specifically, this thesis examines the experiences and perceptions of the Park’s rural populations vis-à-vis the participatory-driven socio-economic development of their rurality. Interview results show that while the socio-economic potentials of the Park’s conservation to the rural poor have been touted, the fragmented and ad hoc nature of these benefits seriously undermine their poverty-alleviating capacity for marginalized communities. Furthermore, this thesis shows that while participatory approaches may constitute a major technique for involving rural populations in decision-making processes that affect their lives, the benefits fall largely to influential local elites, and that community participation is sometimes sought only for less important decision-making activities. This thesis concludes that in order for ICDPs to contribute effectively to eliminating poverty traps for marginalized communities, development interventions must not only be the result of rural people’s expressed priorities, but development practitioners must also have the necessary training to understand poverty traps and development problems as nested issues that must be addressed in a comprehensive and holistic manner. The paper also suggests that ICDPs must develop rural people’s capacity in conservation activities such that they can benefit from ecotourism and other conservation-related employment, in meaningful ways.

Key words: Mount Cameroon National Park, Development Intervention, Actor-interface, Rural Communities, Experiences, Participation, Trade-Offs
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Dedication

To my daughter, C-P Nabila Tafon
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**CHAPTER 1**

**1.1 Introduction**

There are over 44,000 protected areas worldwide, covering over ten per cent of the world’s terrestrial surface. Approximately 42% (18,400 sites) of these are in developing countries, having some of the most biologically rich habitats of the world. It is largely argued that for most biological species, protected areas are not only the cornerstone of conservation, but they are the single most important way of ensuring their long term survival (MacKinnon, unpublished; Kramer et al. 1997). Conservation organizations have pointed to poverty, access rights and environmental degradation as a major challenge to conservation, especially in developing countries (Baral et al., 2007). It has been argued that wildlife conservation and protected areas in poorer countries are prone to failure unless local communities are integrated into conservation efforts from design to implementation, and unless they benefit economically from these efforts (Brown, 2004; Baral et al., 2007; MacKinnon, unpublished). The practice of enrolling local communities in large-scale protected area management began in the 1980s (Baral et al., 2007). Such initiatives have been termed Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) and are geared towards achieving globally agreed upon conservation goals, while promising to improve the socio-economic welfare of local communities at the same time (Saunders, 2011).

**1.1.1 Defining ICDPs**

The concept of ICDPs was first introduced by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in the mid-1980s in an attempt to address some of the problems of what was defined as the ‘fines and fences’ approaches to conservation in protected areas. However, ICDPs were viewed at the time as ‘radical divergence’ from ‘preservationist’ approaches to protected area management (Hughes and Flintan, 2001). According to Sayer (2009) conservation and development approaches were first motivated by the belief that the overriding threat to the preservation of tropical nature stemmed ultimately from poaching and traditional agricultural practices. He argues that this conventional wisdom drove conservation initiatives up until the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although there is no universal definition for ICDPs, the concept ranges from simply biodiversity conservation projects with rural development components; to include the so-called “Second

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1 The usage of Fines and fences is metaphorical, and alludes to enforcement that should result in impermeable borders.
Generation ICDPs” that consider Community-Based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) and Community Wildlife Management (CWM) projects (Hughes and Flintan, 2001). Other authors (e.g. Saunders, 2011) have considered the scope of ICDPs in the so-called ‘new generation’ ICDPs to link conservation efforts with moral, cultural and more recently, institutional dimensions of such projects. In this latter definition, local institutional change is seen as a vital link between attaining global conservation goals and delivering local socio-economic benefits.

Hughes and Flintan (2001) suggest that all ICDPs today are motivated by the following three assumptions:

- “Diversified local livelihood options will reduce human pressure on biodiversity, leading to its improved conservation” (pp. 5);
- “Local people and their livelihood practices, rather than ‘external factors’, comprise the most important threat to the biodiversity resources of the area in question” (pp. 5); and
- “ICDPs offer sustainable alternatives to traditional protectionist approaches to protected area management” (pp. 6).

ICDPs are generally linked to a protected area, usually, a national park. The main objective of ICDPs is to improve relationships between state-managed protected areas and the peripheral communities. Although biodiversity is the primary goal, there is a recognized need to address the socio-economic requirements of communities in order to prevent them from posing a threat to biodiversity and natural resources, in general. Even if sometimes implemented by government bodies, ICDPs are more often than not initiated by external conservation organizations and/or development agencies. Funding usually comes from external sources, usually, from bilateral or multilateral donors, and international conservation organizations (Hughes and Flintan, 2001). In less-developed countries external funding often comes through cooperation agreements between national governments and Western development agencies and global conservation organizations in the forms of technical and financial assistance. Examples include the activities of international development agencies such as the German Technical Cooperation (GIZ) in Cameroon and Zambia; the British Overseas Development Cooperation in Cameroon, Kenya, and South Africa; the Canadian International Development Agency in Cameroon, and Chad; or the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, just to name a few.
This thesis seeks to understand the processes of socio-ecological intervention between Park officials and the rural population of peripheries of the Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP), the creation and management of which brought about cooperation between the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, the Cameroonian Ministry of Forests and Wildlife, and WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature).

1.2 Research Problem

Rural poverty is a major concern in sub-Saharan African countries. The hope to curb the sources and effects of this socio-economic malaise has led to the establishment of several development cooperation initiatives between Western agencies and African governments. In many cases, such development projects are only secondary to conservation concerns, where the primary objective is the protection of natural habitats of the world’s precious fauna and flora. Often, these conservation initiatives are implicitly (sometimes even explicitly) *sine qua non* to local development. To ensure the compliance and cooperation of local communities around protected areas, conservation interventions have embraced a development approach simultaneously. Alongside these initiatives is a vast scientific literature documenting the effects and processes of development interventions (e.g. Chambers & Ghildyal, 1984; Chambers, 1999; Glennie, 2012, among others). Some authors have focused discussions on alternative approaches and methods of investigating, understanding and analyzing development interventions (e.g. Barrett, 2008; Long & Jinlong, 2009; Lund, 2010), while Chambers (1983, 1992, & 1995) has described extensively how development interventions ought to be conducted.

However, while a recent wave of academic interest has shown at broader macro (country) levels that such interventions are generally of less socio-economic benefit to the targeted group (marginalized communities), understanding the practice and processes of such interventions at micro (project or community) level has not been fully explored in research. I contend that not only is it useful to understand the processes in the practice of development intervention, but also, a micro-level case study is suitable for getting more detailed, case-specific understanding of the complex nuances and relationships between project owners and development recipients, as well as those probable allegiances and/or schisms that could arise between beneficiaries as a result of these relationships. Nor has research fully embraced the actor-interface tradition of analyzing the nature and processes of socio-political relations between project owners and recipients and how
these interfaces shape specific project outcomes. In addition, the social discontinuities and/or
linkages between those formalized narratives around specific projects – such as participation and
economic development – and the experiences of so-called ‘recipients’ of development
interventions are yet to be fully explored. This thesis fills this gap by examining issues of
development intervention within the context of ICDPs, with focus on MCNP in Buea, Cameroon
as a case. The case has been chosen partly because of the conservation-development approach
that the project adopts – a major characteristic of ICDPs. But also, the participatory approach and
economic benefit that the project is said to bring to the Park’s rural communities, makes the case
suitable for the study of interface relations as the product of ongoing negotiative processes and
social relations, contra neatly formalized and executed plans.

1.3 Aims of Study
This study explores the processes of conservation/development intervention by describing the
relationship that exists between project developers (so-called outsiders) and development
recipients (rural people) in the context of the MCNP. Focus here is on issues of power relations
between developers and recipients, and those values that inform the project and how they
manifest on the field. In addition, this study describes the experiences of the recipients, vis-à-vis
the project and how these shape their attitudes towards it. Finally, since the management of the
Park adopts an ICDP approach – conservation and development – this thesis describes the trade-offs that are made between conservation and development and how local communities living and
working on the fringes of the National Park perceive and appropriate these newly negotiated
realities into their daily lives.

1.4 Research Questions
In order to explore the relationships inherent in the intervention process, this paper attempts to
answer the following questions: 1) how do the project narratives fit with recipients’ experiences
and perceptions? (2) Through what means are the distinct goals of conservation and socio-
economic development reconciled in practice? And, (3) what socio-economic and institutional
benefits have accrued to communities living around MCNP?

1.5 Research Methods
The qualitative research type pursued here is a single instrumental case study: that of the Mount
Cameroon National Park. As Creswell (2007) defines it, case study research is a qualitative
approach in which the researcher explores a bounded system (a case) or a multiple bounded system (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case-based themes. In the single instrumental case, the researcher focuses on an issue, and then selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue (pp. 73-74). This thesis explores actor-interface processes – how actors interrelate during conservation-development interventions on MCNP and how this practice reflects the rhetoric of the project. Focus is on examining the socio-economic and institutional benefits that result from these interface relationships, against those formalized narratives and values around the creation and management of the National Park.

Data collection is done through semi-structured (both one-on-one and group) interviews, participant observations as well as informal individual and group discussions. Other methods include the study of Park documentation as well as audiovisual materials (videotapes) from interactive platform sessions between Park managers and community representatives. This technique of exploring an issue through videotapes is not new. Creswell (2007:129) argues that in recent years new forms of data have emerged, including “observing through examining videotapes.”

The study is informed primarily by explorative, open-ended, semi-structured interviews with two major groups: 1) conservation and development practitioners; and 2) the local human population of three clusters of the peripheral villages of the National Park – Bomboko cluster, Upper Boando village in the Buea cluster and Bavenga village in the Muyuka cluster. I also carried out a number of participant observations in two of the four clusters of the MCNP, namely the Bomboko and Muyuka clusters. The observations served as a medium to obtain prior knowledge of the characteristics of the project owner-recipient interplay and how these might shape feelings and perceptions. Here, I mainly observed the nature of interaction between project owners and the locals at project site. Participation also included another level of observation: one of the cluster platform meetings between Park staff members and cluster platform members\(^2\) of the four clusters of the Park. These observations were intended to complement meanings that would be made both from interviews with project developers and locals, as well as textual analysis of the project’s official document – the Management Plan of the Mount Cameroon.

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\(^2\) As shall be detailed in the analysis section, cluster platform members, in a managerial sense of it refer to the highest institutional hierarchy of local community Park management committee created for the purpose of overseeing Park matters in their respective clusters on behalf of both their clusters and the Park conservation team.
National Park – that contains the guidelines, values and norms surrounding the creation and management of the National Park. This served as a means to gain insights into the different management approaches and strategies.

Interview respondents comprising the locals targeted those who were directly connected to the project through participation as recipients of development projects but also as local conservation watchdogs. Interviews also included some villagers who for various reasons were not involved in development or conservation initiatives, but who were present on site during particular development interventions.

1.5.1 Selection of Research Site

It was much easier to talk with project beneficiaries on site since the Park Service, better equipped with personnel and funds than I, could easily disseminate information and regroup participants before our visits. Respondents were chosen from both the Muyuka and Buea clusters. Respondents from both clusters were interviewed separately on location. Selection of site was motivated by a number of considerations: the Muyuka cluster offered a unique opportunity both for a participant observation and an interview during a cassava farming (harvesting) development intervention process between Park officials and inhabitants of the Muyuka cluster. It also provided a unique opportunity for a participant observation on how development is integrated with conservation. This observation was unique in the sense that the cassava harvesting brought together in one place locals from three villages of the cluster, members of the MCNP staff as well as agricultural extension workers from both the Ministry of Agriculture (MINAGRI) and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA). This offered an opportunity for the collection of a variety of opinions and experiences on the issue of development and alternative livelihood measures.

The selection of the Buea cluster, on the other hand was motivated not by these advantages, but because of its proximity to the capital city of the South West Region, Buea – my place of residence during fieldwork. While the other three clusters are located far off in different administrative divisions necessitating the company and assistance of Park staff members, the Buea cluster is the only one that is within the Fako Division, of which Buea is the capital. Since I

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3 Known elsewhere in this text as conservation team, Park officials or Park Service team refers to employees of MININFO who work with conservation and development issues in the context of MCNP. For purposes of analysis and better understanding they are later divided into two categories and referred to as Conservator 1 and Conservators 2.
was not to be accompanied by Park staff members this time due to their busy schedule, I opted for a cluster that offered easier accessibility, and was closer to the city of Buea.

It should be noted that I also undertook a participant observation and a thirty-minute group interview with a limited number of locals in the Bomboko cluster – four. The relatively small number of respondents is due to the fact that the site visit was a prompt response to an alarm call made by some Village Management Committee Members concerning what they observed as an encroachment of farming activities into the National Park boundaries.

The form of interview was open-ended, face-to-face and individual, to ensue anonymity, and avoid the confiscation of discussions by influential participants. For instance, while on the field most of what the villagers said in the participant observation phase was basically a confirmation of what elites such as the chief or his wife had said. My subsequent deduction was that the local traditional chiefs and/or their wives in the villages studied had certain power privileges that come with their position, which could prevent their subjects from contradicting them or talking more or less freely.

The aim of interviews with locals was to elicit their experiences and engagement in proposed livelihood alternatives and how such an engagement might affect not only their livelihoods, but also their attitudes towards conservation in one way or the other. They were asked to describe their experiences with the project in connection to relationships that are established in the project owner/recipient interplay. I also elicited from the locals expressions of how these experiences shape their attitudes towards, and perceptions, of the management of MCNP (see appendix for interview questions).

In order to fully understand local respondents’ expressed experiences, it was necessary to understand through interviews, those formalized narratives that guide the establishment of the project, and how these reflect in the actual project implementation phase. This understanding was gained through interviews with respondents comprising the first group – conservation and development practitioners. Sample selection of this group was purposive (non-random). Respondents were restricted to representatives of MINOF – one of the officials at the conservation office (hereafter referred to as “Conservator 1” and other members of the conservation team (henceforth referred to as “Conservators 2” – for reasons outlined under the next heading below. This technique was complemented with a series of follow-up phone interviews and e-mail exchanges for purposes of clarity and validity during data interpretation.
Discussions with both Conservator 1 and Conservators 2 focused on such issues as their reflections on the goals, as well as the underlying assumptions behind the formation of the project, and how these are bridged or discontinued at intervention crossroads. I also sought to understand and describe their experiences not only with other project owners, but also in the interface with locals and how this might impact on elements of the conservation and development approach adopted by the project.

Before transcription of data part of it (those obtained from locals) were translated from Pidgin – commonly spoken form of English spoken among people sharing close affinities, but also among those with little or no formal education – into English. Since the interview process with project implementers was conducted entirely in English – given their relatively high level of education – the material warranted no translations. In the results and analysis part of this thesis the data is then studied for the identification of project-specific themes. These themes are then developed into overarching perspectives in the context of issues within ICDPs, and international aid and development cooperation debate where the interpretation of the broader meaning of the case is presented.

1.5.2 Choice of Semi-Structured Interviews

The time allocated for data collection was six weeks, from February 15th to March 30th 2013. Different research methods were chosen for various reasons, but specifically to complement different data and maximize responses.

Semi structured interviews were intended to give the respondents liberty to express their experiences and perceptions in as free a manner as possible, navigating between questions as the need arose. This was very useful, especially in a study like this that explores respondents’ views and experiences. Structured or closed interviews would have placed restrictions on the scope of interviewees’ reflections on their lived experiences. While the interview with Conservator 1 was individual and face-to-face, that with Conservators 2 was both individual with two different respondents, and general group discussions during a number of opportunistic sittings. Interviews with community members were conducted in group due to limited time allocated to me by Park officials on whom I relied for transportation back to the city centre of Buea. Another reason for a group interview was that I was not so much interested in individual subjective perceptions and experiences as I was in collective feelings – as demonstrated by the locals’ collective request for
pipe-borne water (chapter 4). However, it should be noted that in Bavenga community, interview with the local elites was conducted individually. This was intended to avoid the influence of discussions by powerful elites, if interviewed jointly with their subjects.

The entire interview exercise with all locals took approximately eight hours at the different local development sites. The selection method for local Bavenga respondents was snowballing. They were present at the local chief’s yard during my field visit of the cassava multiplication development project (see details in chapter 4). However, those who reported not involved in conservation-development work were separated from those who did. On the other hand, respondents from Upper Boando, Buea were chosen with the help of a local inhabitant together with whom I identified and assembled development project participants.

In all villages visited, a total of 120 villagers were interviewed. While respondents in Bavenga and its surrounding villages in the Muyuka cluster totaled 76, those of the Buea (Upper Boando village) and Bomboko clusters made up 40 and 4 inhabitants, respectively (details in chapter 4).

1.6 Methods Biases
In a study that hoped to describe the actor-interface process of development and conservation in MCNP from design to implementation, it is vital to elicit the views of all stakeholders involved in the process. However, due to the short time frame for the gathering of data for a Master’s thesis and more importantly, due to the wide range and number of actors involved, from different organizations and their very tight schedule, this thesis excludes inputs from important actors involved in MCNP. They include the German actors like the German Development Bank Group (KFW) and the German Technical Cooperation (GIZ) that provide financial and technical assistance to the MCNP project on behalf of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development. Another vital actor whose inputs are absent from this analysis is WWF that assists the project in technical conservation matters from design to the implementation phase. The regional director for this organization is not only located remotely in Limbe (approximately two hour’s drive from Buea), but obtaining permission to interview his representative in Buea, who is directly connected to MCNP office in Buea proved impossible. Therefore this analysis should not be understood as comprehensive or representative of all the stakeholders of the MCNP project, but as the experiences and views of those stakeholders that were available for data collection. In particular, the issue of interface analysis at the planning phase cannot be covered in this thesis. Reference to it shall derive mainly from observations and
experiences obtained from the team of conservation practitioners. The absence of the views of the other technical stakeholders in relation to interface relationships with one another is what results in an imbalanced analysis. This means that at the level of relationships between technical and management teams, what is expressed by the conservation team cannot be counterweighed with views from the agency – GIZ. This issue is important in this study, especially in understanding the challenges that the project faces in its conservation and development approach. Further studies will need to cover this area.

However, except for the absence of the views and experiences of other, equally important stakeholders of the project, the interface analysis between project owners and development recipients at the implementation phase is not greatly hampered by the absence of the voices of those other actors. This is because while MINFOF, GIZ, KWF and WWF might have slightly different policy methods and approaches, they are understood as having a common underlying goal – conservation of MCNP and the incorporation of development initiatives to ensure effective conservation, even if their means and priorities might slightly differ. Therefore it could be fairly argued that what the conservation practitioners bring to the implementation phase in interface processes with locals would largely reflect the outcome of a somewhat holistic idea and policy value of all the project owners concerned, including the other agencies not represented in this analysis. These ideas and policy values are decided upon not only at the initial design phase of the project, but in the course of managing the project, during a number of meetings and conferences with other technical partners of the project, as I observed on one occasion on the field.

In addition to these methods biases, I am fully aware of the asymmetrical relationship between me and the respondents, especially, the local community members. Being more educated, looking conspicuously more economically and socially well-off than my respondents might have affected the quality of the response expressed both positively and negatively. While some respondents clearly expressed their worries to me hoping for a positive change, others could not mask their feeling of distrust for me during the entire interview process. In addition, the monopoly that comes with controlling the entire process of interviewing, transcribing and analyzing the data are all factors that present a challenge beyond my control as a researcher. Furthermore, given the colonial history of Africa I may have pre-biased views about Global Northern initiated interventions o the continent. Although I may endeavour to keep subjective
feelings from the analysis as much as possible, I cannot say the same in relation to the inherent power I inhibit as a researcher *vis-à-vis* my less-educated, socio-economically marginalized respondents. Nor can my interpretation completely dissociate itself from my cultural, social, and perhaps, personal politics that I bring to the research.
CHAPTER 2

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This thesis is informed by the concept of actor-oriented interface analysis developed by anthropologist Norman Long (1984, 1989 & 1999). This analytical concept is suitable because it departs from normative discussions on predictive outcomes of research, to a focus on the crucial elements that characterize – the ‘how’ to conduct – development research. Its relevance lies in its aim to elucidate the types and sources of social discontinuity and linkage that underscore processes of development intervention. Such processes are often characterized by social difference, diversity and conflict, and intervention becomes oriented around problems of bridging, accommodating, segregating or contesting social, evaluative and cognitive standpoints.

An actor-oriented interface analysis sets to identify the organizational and cultural means of reproducing or transforming these social discontinuities and linkages. Long’s use of the word “interface” extends beyond the traditional dictionary definition of a two-sided interaction or face-to-face confrontation between two parties. Social interfaces, according to him are more complex and multiple in nature, comprising multiple interests, relationships and modes of rationality and knowledge/power. Actor-oriented analyses go beyond a focus on instances of confrontation and social difference, to include and situate these factors within broader institutional and power domains. The concept rests on a methodology that counterpoises the voices, experiences and practices of all relevant social actors involved, such as development practitioners, so-called beneficiaries, as well as policy practitioners and even researchers.

As an organized entity of interlocking relationships and intentionalities, interface analyses focus on the linkages and networks that develop between individuals or parties. Continued interaction enables “the development of boundaries and shared expectations that shape the interaction of the participants so that overtime the interface itself becomes an organized entity of interlocking relationships and intentionalities” (Long, 1999). Such relationships are often characterized by contestations between state, private and civic organizations and interests that aim to influence the negotiation and implementation process.

Interface arenas often provide the means by which individuals or groups define their own cultural or ideological positions vis-à-vis those typifying opposing views. Such views, Long (1999) argues, are not merely personal idiosyncrasies but are the product of differentials in patterns of socialization and professionalism, which often result in a clash of rationalities. A
researcher is required to identify the nature of contests (explicit or implicit) over the dominance of and legitimacy of particular socio-cultural paradigms or representations of modernity, which might be situation-specific, not constant across all social contexts. It then becomes useful to identify the conditions under which particular definitions of reality and visions of the future are upheld, to analyze the interplay of cultural and ideological oppositions, and to map out the way in which bridging or distancing actions and ideologies might reproduce or transform certain types of interface. It is important to underscore that this thesis does not focus on such interplays of ideological dominance amongst the different project owners, but rather on how such already defined ideologies and representations of the future – as defined and contained in the project’s policy documents – are discontinued and/or linked during everyday interface instances with so-called project beneficiaries in the actual field of action. This is to suggest that focus is more geared towards practice – i.e. the nature and processes of project owner/beneficiary interfaces. While acknowledging that negotiative contestations of visions among different project owners is an important issue for development analysis, the scope of this thesis does not permit such an endeavour.

Social interfaces equally analyze knowledge processes as a “cognitive and social construction that results from and is constantly shaped by the experiences, encounters and discontinuities that emerge at the points of intersection between different actors’ lifeworlds” Long 1999, p. 3). Knowledge is understood as multi-layered and is a product of interaction, dialogue, reflexivity, and contests of meaning, involving aspects of power, control and authority. Long (1999) argues that in intervention situations knowledge entails “the interplay or confrontation of ‘experts’ versus ‘lay’ forms of knowledge, beliefs and values, and struggles over their legitimation, segregation and communication” (p. 3). In the context of MCNP, exploring the rhetoric behind the project as well as in developer/beneficiary interface situations offers the possibility of identifying emerging knowledge frames and meanings and their discursive implications for the project. This knowledge, in social interfaces, implies power; an outcome of complex struggles over authority, status, reputation and resources. As Long argues, these struggles are the result of the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as capable of muddling through within particular situations and developing effective strategies for doing so, whether the authority or power they exhibit is front- or backstage, for snap moments or for longer periods. Long (1999) suggests that the task of interface analysis is to spell out
conceptually the knowledge and power implications of the blending or segregation of opposing discourses that occur in actors’ everyday lifeworlds.

Long’s central argument (1999) can be summed up in the following words: that interface analysis can be useful in understanding how processes of project-related interactions enter the lifeworlds of individuals and groups concerned, and come to form part of the resources or constraints of the social strategies they develop. Interface analysis thus enables the deconstruction of the concept of planned intervention so that it is seen for what it is – namely, an on-going, socially constructed and negotiated process, not simply the execution of already neatly laid down plans of action with expected outcomes. As such, interface analysis allows one to focus on intervention practices shaped by the interaction among various actors, rather than simply on the ideal, typical intervention models and constructions that planners, implementers or their clients have about the project. The act of observing intervention practices and processes allows the researcher to focus on forms of interaction, procedures, practical strategies and types of discourse and cultural categories, not as carefully planned but as they emerge in specific interface contexts. Such an observation would also permit one to fully capture the multiple realities – different meanings and interpretations of means and ends attributed by various actors – of development projects and the struggles inherent in these divergent perceptions and expectations. This therefore means that planned intervention is a “transformational process that is constantly reshaped by its own internal organizational, cultural and political dynamic and by the specific conditions it encounters or itself creates, including the responses and strategies of local groups who may struggle to define and defend their own social spaces, cultural boundaries and positions within the wider power field” (Long, 1999, pp 4-5).

With the above suggestions in mind, it would be erroneous to understand the interactions between government or outside agencies involved in implementing development programmes and so-called recipient populations through the use of generalized terminologies such as ‘state-citizen relations’ or by the resort to such normative concepts as ‘local populations’. Rather, this interaction is to be understood and analyzed as part of ongoing processes of negotiation, adaptation and transformation of meaning that takes place between specific actors, not the result of a carefully laid down plan. By analyzing the critical junctures involving differences of normative value and social interests, as well as the dynamics of cultural accommodation that
makes it possible for different worldviews to interact, one can understand the intended or unintended results of the planned MCNP development intervention.

Before Norman Long developed the concept of interface analysis some of its elements had been introduced and analyzed earlier by anthropologists such as Hjern and Porter in their article “Implementation Structures: A New Unit of Administrative Analysis” (1981). However, the concept of actor-interface sociology of development stretches back to Weber’s characterization of social action as implying meanings and practices. It has later been built upon symbolic interactionist and phenomenological perspectives of the 1990s, and the increasing criticisms of structural theories of social change and development promoted by so-called post-structuralists, or social constructivist writers of the mid-1980s onwards (Long, 2004 in Kontinen, 2004). Hjern and Porter (1981) had adapted the concept to what they termed implementation structures. They suggested ‘implementation structures’ as the core unit of analysis when describing and evaluating the implementation and administration of programmes. According to them, by analyzing the administrative imperatives of a programme one can identify its ‘organizational pool’, which itself reveals a great deal of cooperation between clusters of private and public organizations. The authors posit that programmes are better understood when the implementation structure is the core of analysis. Their argument that it is difficult to devise a set of rules that authoritatively direct the behavior of the clusters of relatively autonomous public and private actors seems to resonate with Long’s (1999) line of thinking that in analyzing programs, one should look beyond those well set out values and norms of the programme, to include an understanding of it as an ongoing process of negotiation, adaptation and transformation of meaning that is constantly shaped by interaction between the parties. However, what marks Long’s interface analysis is the focus on implementation ‘processes’ (or relationships) rather than ‘structures’ that are formed as a result of the everyday interaction between various actors. It is these interactive processes that shape, adapt and transform the nature and results of the particular project. In addition, while Hjern’s and Benny’s model limits focus on pools of organization (both public and private) involved in implementing a programme, interface analysis digs deep into such socio-political aspects like power struggles and differentials, as well as those social accommodations that often result in complex interactions between both public (government), private (outsider), civil society, and perhaps, more importantly, the so-called recipients, whose lives the said project is intended to change in one way or the other.
2.1.1 Limitations within Development Aid Literature

The reader should note that MCNP is understood as consisting of both ICDP and aid cooperation. This is because the cooperation modalities and funds put together by both governments – Germany and Cameroon – are expected to cater for conservation of the Park as well as the socio-economic development of its peripheral villages, even if this latter preoccupation is simply a means to the former. The aid literature is necessary here in as long as one of the major partners of the project is the German Federal Ministry of Economic and Development Cooperation, and Cameroon is a recipient of ODA funds. In this light, Germany’s contribution to MCNP could be fairly seen as partly consisting development aid.

With that clarification in mind, the following paragraphs discuss literature selected both because of their different approaches to the subject of development cooperation and aid, in general, and as a function of their theoretical and analytical relevance to the broader experience of ICDPs. Each author’s main arguments are first presented, followed by my own thoughts on those arguments. Glennie’s (2008) book is given considerable attention here more than any other author’s. This is not accidental. Rather, this approach reflects my anxiety at understanding and reviewing the author’s ambitious stance towards development aid. While most authors are divided by the pro-aid/anti-aid binary, Glennie (2008) takes both a very explorative and argumentative, yet somehow bold position, in favour of a reduction of financial and resources outflows from Africa and an equivalent reduction of ‘traditional aid’ spending.

Development projects are numerous in developing countries, especially sub-Saharan Africa, initiating a swarm of heated academic interest in the issue. For instance, Chambers (1983) takes an advocacy stands in his discussion on issues around rural development projects. He frowns at the fact that the links of modern scientific knowledge with wealth, power and prestige condition outsiders to despise and ignore rural people’s own knowledge. He posits that while priorities in crop, livestock and forestry research reflect biases against what matters to poor rural people, rural people’s knowledge and modern scientific knowledge are complementary in their strengths and weaknesses. “Combined they would achieve what neither would alone” (p. 75). His advocacy lies in his warning that for such rural development projects to work effectively, “outsider professionals have to step down off their pedestals, and sit down, listen and learn” (p. 75) better about local people’s knowledge, which according to Chambers, “refers to the whole system of knowledge, including concepts, beliefs and perceptions, the stock of knowledge, and
the processes whereby it is acquired, augmented, stored and transmitted” (p. 83). Chamber’s (1983) solution lies in what he terms ‘reversals’ in thinking through the distant but real effects on rural poor of technical and policy decisions and of outsider’s actions and non-actions; in increasing contact and learning from the rural poor and using methods of rapid rural appraisal; changes from authoritarian to participatory communication, and encouraging weak clients to make effective demands for services and for their rights, and putting the last first. While Chamber’s message may sound very appealing and might draw empathy for the rural poor, his idea of ‘putting the last first’ seems to carry the advocacy a little too far. Although one cannot gainsay the crucial fact that rural poor people possess a set of important knowledge through values, perceptions, and beliefs, the very claim by the author that “rural people’s knowledge is often superior to that of outsiders […]as seen in] mixed cropping, knowledge of the environment…” (p. 75) in itself seems to reject the whole rationale behind development aids. One might ask, if rural people’s knowledge of their environment and how to manage it were more superior to that of outsiders, then why is it that the situation today arguably begs for such interventions? Of course, as Chambers himself suggests, both rural people’s and outsiders’ knowledge are complementary and neither one can alone, achieve what both would. In addition, the author might be correct in suggesting that factors like power, professionalism, as well as language barriers, prestige, sheer prejudice and lack of contact often hinder outsiders from appreciating and learning from rural people’s knowledge. However, this assertion might have some credibility in the 1980s when Chambers published his book. This assertion lacks an appraisal of developments in the international community in refining and tuning aid models towards more effective results, of helping poor countries achieve their Millennium Development Goals, seeing the weaknesses of earlier models. Such international efforts as the 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2003 High Level Forum on Harmonization, the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action and the 2011 Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation are important examples of measures that have brought a new paradigm that treats international aid more as a partnership, than a linear, one-way relationship between donor and recipient, as Chambers understood it in the 80s. Research on development cooperation should not only take cognizance of such evolving paradigms but it should also be formulated accordingly to explore this kind of partner relationship between different forms of donors, clients and recipients alike.
While Chambers advocates total reversals by means of ‘putting the last [rural poor people] first’ other writers such as Nustad (2001) have adopted a more positive undertone towards development practitioners. He argues that post-development writers have been too concerned with describing development as a homogeneous field and have overlooked the way in which development interventions have been transformed and given new meaning by those whom they seek to help. The author’s stance is that this line of research, however, has shown how restrictions imposed on developers’ conception of their task sometimes undermine the entire development intervention process. Here he seems to portray development practitioners as passive actors who are often hampered by constraints imposed on them. However, the author seems to overlook the fact that in real intervention practices, developers form a vital part of those who actively shape, adapt and reformulate project outcomes. It is more through everyday interactions, negotiations and struggles between developers and recipients in the field that development projects often take form and meaning, and less at that early moment when developers transform their conceptions and imaginations into a project. In other words, developers are powerful, active participants both during the formulation stage of the project and during its execution. And as research has largely shown, the outcomes of a project are largely the end result of developers’ imagination, perception, and powerful influence as project owners, not passive victims on whom much pressure and constraint is brought to bear by entirely external factors, as Nustad (2001) would suggest.

In a more recent publication on aid and its effects on poor Africans, Glennie (2008) rejects both aid optimists and pessimists for their “simplistic” and selective use of evidence either to support or dismiss aid. He argues that since the impacts of aid are more complex – some good, some bad – the only way one can have real expectations of making sense of the impact of aid on human rights, development and poverty reduction in Africa is by adopting what he terms ‘aid realism’. According to him, aid realism revolves around the idea of “carefully analyzing the overall impact of aid on Africa, first to see how it can be improved and second, and more importantly given that improving aid will be a very hard job, questioning aid’s importance in relation to other policies and factors that influence development and poverty reduction in Africa” (pp 7). In an anti-neoliberal stance, he asserts that the recent wave of aid and its associated optimism is more of the function of political strategy or ‘policy-based evidence’ as he calls it, than of scientific evidence or ‘evidence-based policy’. Glennie’s central message can be
summarized in the following quote: “It is unlikely that aid increases to Africa will have a significant impact on poverty reduction and long-term development. On the contrary, aid has frequently damaged development prospects in Africa and further increases in aid could make the situation even worse. Rather, African leaders should again plot a course towards independence” (pp 123). According to him, the solution to aid dependency by sub-Saharan African governments lies in the following simple development finance equation:

**Net resources development = domestic resources + inflows – outflows.** According to the assumptions inherent within this equation, African leaders, donors, development professionals as well as civil society should pay less attention to inflows (i.e. money transferred from the North to the South) and focus more on the other two elements of the equation: minimizing outflows and maximizing domestic resources. Although the simplistic nature of this equation seems a little naïve of the complexity and realities in Africa, the author’s advocacy of remedial conditionalities – the stem ming of capital flight from Africa; the curbing of corrupt practices by both African and Western governments, including Western companies; the rechanneling by African central banks of large foreign exchange reserves in the form of low-yielding treasury bills in the West into investment opportunities in Africa; and the complete cancellation of African debts by the rich countries – although largely unachievable given their socio-political and economic complexities, at least offer an alternative way, a first step towards reducing Africa’s mega-dependence on foreign development aid.

Yet, the following suggested solutions need reconsideration. First, to think that the problem of capital flight from Africa as a result of underpriced exports from the continent and overpriced imports (illegally or not) could be stemmed seems to undermine the very economic nature of commercial firms and multinationals. These companies are profit-driven and would exploit any loopholes and inconsistencies within the global market in order to maximize profit. Second, the idea that corruption is not detrimental to the African economy if African governments encourage the spending of embezzled money on the continent, as was the case in 19th century England, is also problematic. Without emphasizing the already obvious fact that such a green light to evil practice seems to encourage what I consider a serious threat to some of the vital conditions necessary for development – such as democratic institutions, transparency and accountability etc – comparisons between England and Africa are impossible in almost every sense – politically, economically, and socially.
Furthermore, suggesting that African governments encourage, through regulations and property rights laws, the investment of stolen money by African nationals on the continent, is naïve of the fact that a large proportion of the money that is stolen from Africa and stored in Western banks is perpetrated by the same ruling elites, not private individuals. Therefore, even where private individuals are equally looting public funds it is inconceivable that a government that is deeply immersed in illicitly hemorrhaging a country’s valuable resources would succeed in leading an anti-corruption fight. Third, the author alludes to the returning of approximately five billion USD (money illicitly acquired and saved by Nigerian elites) by Swiss banks to Nigeria as a gesture that needs replicating. However, this leaves an essential question answered, namely: what happened to the returned money? In other words, what guarantees that such money was not used for personal gains, other than for the betterment of the country? In fact, suggesting that stemming the vast outflow of money and resources from Africa “would simply bolster state coffers and promote domestic investment” (pp 130) is undermining the seriousness of corruption in Africa, and the adverse effects this has on development and growth. In fact, according to a 2012 Transparency International index, not only is the world’s most corrupt country coming from Africa, but also for five consecutive years, from 2008 to 2012, nine African countries are among the world’s 20 most corrupt countries (Transparency International, 2012). It is hard to suggest that stemming economic and resource outflows from Africa could by any means offset the adverse effects of corruption on transparency and development. And most certainly, reducing ‘traditional aid’ in favour of spending on the development of new technologies, renewable and clean energy, and other global public goods would certainly not benefit the millions of poor Africans who live under $1 a day. Nor will spending on the development of life-saving drugs help them, as long as they are not made readily affordable to the poor.

This section has discussed arguments and approaches within the aid literature, outlining some of the inherent analytical and conceptual limitations. The main aim has been to show that arguing for increased recognition of local people’s voices, empowering aid developers or advocating reduction in aids, is inadequate and will hardly improve the lives of aid recipients as long as their voices on the matter is not heard. The ambition has been to demonstrate to the reader the necessity for a case study like MCNP in which the principal target group of development aid – rural communities – has the opportunity to give firsthand accounts of their perceptions and experiences of development interventions in their locality. They feel the
advantages and/or disadvantages of development interventions in their communities more than anyone else and as such must be the primary ones to voice this experience, if we are to get better insights into the usefulness and effects of aids.

2.2 Previous Research

As a number of the world’s flora and fauna resources are reportedly threatened largely by human encroachment, rich governments, private actors, the civil society as well as international, regional and local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and global environmental institutions like the United Nations Environmental Programme or the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have made it their official business to reduce this professed encroachment, by assisting poorer governments in the design, planning and management of parks and reserves. More often the conservation of these protected areas is carried out in tandem with poverty and socio-economic considerations, alongside institutional changes (Saunders, 2011). Hence, the so-called Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs), that are supposed to reduce threats to the world’s animal and plant species while ensuring that the socio-economic needs of local communities living in the peripheral zones of such project areas are met at the same time. As these projects are numerously spread worldwide, academic interests in the field have been similarly vast, as are the approaches. As Baral et al. (2006) point out analyses of ICDPs have not only shown varying results, but many critics have argued either specifically for or against ICDPs as an efficient conservation strategy.

For example, in Brown’s (2004) point of view, the design, planning and implementation processes of ICDPs need considerable rethinking – what she terms trade-off analysis – in order for the combined goals of conservation and development to be met more successfully. She argues that while there are winners and losers in ICDPs, experience in the last two decades has shown that there are few win-win solutions. Her solution to this is the abandonment by policymakers and practitioners, of old, ‘scientific’, ‘expert-centered’ and top-down approaches in favour of new ways of working and new means of evaluating and managing interventions. Her most important contribution to discussions on ICDPs is probably her development of the method introduced by Brown & Tompkins (2001) – trade-off analysis – in addition to other inclusionary approaches to describe the forest ICDPs and within the wider context of participatory and adaptive management strategies for the integration of ICDPs. According to her, such trade-off analyses and consensus building are necessary not only for the evaluation of the trade-offs
inherent in attempts to integrate conservation and development goals, but also for the facilitation of deliberations by, and the participation of, stakeholders in decision-making and management of ICDPs. Since stakeholders – ranging from local forest dwellers to national forest planners to international conservation organizations – she argues, have differentials of values, perspectives and priorities, their involvement in implementing ICDPs and in defining policy priorities is a prerequisite to a successful integration of conservation and development. The use of focus groups, Participatory Rural Appraisal, formal and informal surveys, and consensus building are among the methods used in trade-off analysis to engage stakeholders in identifying their visions and priorities of sustainable futures in the ecological, social and economic domains. Stakeholders shall not only be explicit about their priorities for management and decision-making, but through the evaluation of trade-offs they can also see the potential outcomes and impacts of their priorities, through being informed about the trade-offs inherent in decisions on resource management, conservation and development.

On another philosophical note, Saunders (2011) rather sees trade-off strategies in ICDPs in the form of creating economic benefits through tourism, as constituting not a grassroots movement motivated by local development concerns. Instead, he understands them as states acting strategically, politically and economically under the influence of structural adjustment liberalization exigencies to increase foreign revenue earnings and deliver broader development arenas within a competitive global market. He argues that tourism would need to overcome some of its present challenges – including, but not limited to, human capital and infrastructural deficiencies and structural exclusion by far-off based tourism companies that are in contract with government leading to huge local ‘leakages’ – if it were to become a significant and reliable source of income for peripheral communities in protected areas. But more significantly, the author suggests that trade-off strategies have failed to adequately consider important local political and customary realities of projects and have not sufficiently dealt with the complexity or totality of institutional change required to effectively implement conservation side-by-side development. The author therefore shifts focus on ICDPs from trade-off processes – while recognizing their great significance – to strategies that set up local governance structures to give communities shared responsibilities and authority in the management and control of the resources surrounding them. Focus is also on how different actors in the Jozani-Chwaka Bay Conservation Area interact with each other to shape possible and permissible localized political
outcomes in dealing with the management of wildlife and socio-economic development, including farming, tourism etc. His findings suggest that in such interactions, externally driven conservation projects must not only adapt to the local institutional realities in place, but must also find ways to make compromises with these complex, heterogeneous local political pathways.

In a similar vein, Sayer (2009) argues for a shift of focus from questions regarding whether or not ICDPs work, in favour of greater efforts at understanding and explaining why they have not been very successful, and how they can be improved in achieving both global conservation and local socio-economic goals. He takes a positive stance towards ICDPs, arguing that conservation and development are more important today than ever. The author holds that the lack of success in the past is due to the fact that attempts at achieving integration through externally imposed projects were constrained by extraneous procedures of external actors who funded them. This lack of success, according to him, also partly stems from the fact that although conservation and development agencies often professed the virtues of locally driven processes, these were hardly practised in reality. This observation by Sayer (2009) is very crucial in this thesis given that one of its goals is to understand how different stakeholders of the MCNP work together to achieve both ecological and development goals simultaneously.

The author also provides some principles for future ICDPs. Firstly, he suggests that operationalizing landscape principles at large-scale rather than at small, local scale would insure effective conservation and development efforts. He suggests that the advantage of macro-level changes in infrastructure and investment is that they would assure large-scale development, rather than incremental changes in subsistence livelihoods. His argument that “sacrificing some natural habitat for an agro-industrial plantation will do far more to alleviate poverty than marginal improvements in agro-forestry or non-timber forest product systems” (p. 9) is problematic when one considers the fact that the worst cases of poverty and social destitution, especially in developing countries are found in rural areas, as have been argued repeatedly by prominent development critics like Long & Jinlong (2009), Long (1984, 1989 & 1999) and Chambers (1983, 1992, & 1995). Sayer (2009) seems to forget that he himself has discussed that traditional rural agricultural practices and poaching have been argued severally as the main threat to the preservation of tropical nature. Surely, if this perceived threat comes from rural areas, then simple logic begs that conservation and development initiatives should be concentrated too, in
small, rural areas, in addition to large-scale efforts. In addition, the literature (e.g. Brown, 2004) has argued that well designed, planned and managed ICDPs that are undertaken with the participation of local communities with well defined trade-offs constitute one of the crucial ways of keeping locals off protected areas. Surely, large-scale agro-industrial projects are vital to alleviating poverty, but they are surely not more important than what Sayer (2009) terms “marginal agro-forestry or non-timber forest product systems” (pp 9). However, the author makes a salient argument that small-scale, community subsistence projects like improved agro-forestry, bee keeping or the benefits of non-timber forest products that often accompanied conservation efforts do not offer satisfactory livelihood alternatives to surrounding communities. In fact, as the author puts it, the rural poor were no longer “satisfied with simply sustaining their existing livelihoods; they wanted to escape from their subsistence ways of life. They wanted better education for their children; better health care; and jobs and incomes so that they could enjoy some of the benefits that they observed in the rich world” (p. 10). The author’s stance here is that such projects should make a difference between simply maintaining the economic status quo of rural communities, and actually improving economic opportunities for these marginalized people. In this thesis, one immediately becomes curious about questions like “are the development trajectories that the MCNP conservation lays down for the surrounding villages simply subsistence alternatives or are they of a comprehensive nature; the sort advocated by Sayer (2009)?” Or “What are the attitudes of the villagers in relation to the development initiatives?” Whatever the case, it goes without saying that such comprehensive development packages can significantly alleviate poverty, even in small, rural areas. The author suggests that eco-development projects should take into cognizance the underlying drivers of change and the potential routes out of poverty and that this can be best achieved at a landscape scale – i.e. a scale that includes a diversity of landscape elements such as natural habitats, agricultural and industrial areas. Although this proposal sounds particularly savvy in an eco-development sense, its realization is not readily feasible in the nearest future, especially in poor African countries where levels of industrialization are relatively low.

Unlike Sayer (2009) who shifts discussions from whether ICDPs work, to a focus why they have not been very successful, Wainwright and Wehrmeyer (1998) investigate whether the Luangwa Integrated Resource Development Project (LIRDP) as a Community Based-natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme, has been able to improve both the biological
diversity of the Lupande area, in Zambia as well as improve the standard of living of the entire local population. Their findings conclude that the project has not been very successful in improving the standards of living of the people. It is important to note already that this conclusion presents a crucial temporal problem. For example, the LIRDP was introduced in 1988, while the research was conducted in 1996 – approximately eight years after project introduction. Not only do the authors fail to define what they imply by an improvement of living standards – either short-term or long-term, or following Sayer’ (2009) dichotomy between mere livelihood or subsistence means, and large-scale and long-term development changes – but they equally seem to have overlooked the already established fact that the act of assessing ICDPs either as successful or failed after less than a decade of their running, constitute an unnecessarily hasty move. Baral et al. (2007), for example exemplified that it took about a decade for conservation and development goals in the Annapurna Conservation Area of Nepal to start realizing. They argue, based on their findings that “many prior analyses labelling ICDPs as failures may have been based upon unrealistic expectations of the time needed to change behaviours of an entire population” (pp 12).

In a similar vein, Sibanda (1995) found out that the Campfire conservation and development programme in the Omay area of Zimbabwe was rife with shortcomings owing to a low level of power devolution to the masses in decision-making processes. He also suggests that the issue of participation needs to be clearly defined and a clear and practical division made between institutional participation and popular participation. The author also argues that although the project was set to achieve both conservation and development goals, the type of participation put in place seems to be geared more towards income utilization and not so much towards conservation.

Evaluating the legacy of an ICDP around a tiger reserve in India, two years after its end, Gubbi et al. (2009) found out that the project has left relatively little lasting legacy in terms of improved attitudes towards conservation or useful infrastructure that should continue to assist communities in their development needs. They argue that although the project succeeded in addressing ICDP issues such as failure to adopt social equity, participatory approaches and gender empowerment, ICDPs in general should seek to build more effectively the capacity of local communities to maintain the community benefits they receive. Another salient lesson that the study brings is that ICDPs should be both continuously and independently evaluated to
ensure appropriate adaptive management of such projects. This is because in spite of their understanding of what constitutes the short-comings of this particular project, an initial, internal evaluation of the same project had characterized it as ‘successful’. Curiously, the authors also found out that although most respondents were aware of the objectives and expectations of the project, those who held positive views about it were mostly those directly employed by the project as tourist guides, while those who benefited by the granting of access rights held negative views. According to the authors, this strange turnout of events might be explained by the fact that the granting of access rights may have unrealistically raised community expectations of the benefits that they would receive. Yet evidence from ICDP literature suggests that where there are failures in such projects, the absence of effective power devolution and co-management approaches are always cited as a major reason (e.g. Baral et al., 2007; Sibanda, 1995 & Brown, 2004 etc.). However, Gubbi et al. (2009) do not provide a critical discussion of such issues, except in a single, generalized statement in which they mention that the project addressed such “concerns and issues raised previously by critics off ICDPs” (pp 336). A deeper inquiry into the extent of what Sibanda (1995) termed ‘popular’ participation in the decision making process and in selecting alternative livelihood measures, might provide an explanation as to why some community participants perceived the project negatively.

In their study of the transformation of rural hunters into conservationists for the management of wildlife conservation in Zambia, Gibson & Marks (1995) have confirmed the argument that power devolution and the adoption of effective participatory approaches constitute a key ingredient to the success of ICDPs. Particularly, following findings from the ADMADE conservation and development initiative, they challenge the idea that the provision of economic empowerment to locals through project-related employment benefits would tremendously reduce pressures on wildlife and other natural resources. ADMADE is a shift from the colonial command-and-control philosophy of management, to a community-based participatory approach for conserving wildlife based upon the sustainable off-take of wild animals, with the proceeds of these harvests shared with local communities. The programme had employed 300 village scouts by 1990 and had plans to enlist some 1700 more. Although the Wildlife Department had initially reported that illegal hunting had dropped by 90% in the programme’s pilot areas, the authors argued that this was not the case in the long run. Several reasons account for this. Not only were the chiefs given the position as chairpersons of the Wildlife Sub-Authority and the power to
appoint some of its members, but they also exercised exclusive power in selecting locals who were to be trained and employed as scouts. It was later realized that the chiefs were acting out of self-interest. Secondly, it turned out that the chiefs protested the Wildlife Authority’s ability to veto the Sub-Authority’s choices of for development projects and its time-consuming routines for project approval, as well as the Wildlife Department’s delay in delivering funds and lack of financial accountability. Thirdly, it is argued that only about 2% of the proceeds from sport hunting made it to the village communities. In addition, villagers resented the fact that it was mostly the chiefs’ relatives or friends who received jobs. Furthermore, the notion of local participation preached by the project was not realistic in the opinion of the local. Not only did the chiefs suppress the Sub-Authority’s voices – the major vehicle of local participation – but the institution also had very limited stipulated powers. Finally, while the programme allowed local communities through the Sub-Authority to administer aspects of local development projects, such as selecting workers and ordering materials, the programme gave no power to community members over the management of wildlife. By this logic therefore, although the programme brought economic benefits through employment and other development initiatives, it failed in its envisaged local participatory approach. This suggests that employment alone can hardly encourage communities to keep pressure off natural resources, especially as such employment is selective and benefits only a few who have close affinities to the chiefs.

On a more positive note, Baral et al. (2007) have investigated the possibility of conservation activities being overshadowed by such development packages. In their study of the Annapurna Conservation Area, Nepal, they concluded that the establishment of Conservation Management Committees and an effective devolution of power within this committee is one of the reasons for the success of these ICDPs. This power devolution, they suggest, led to effective participation at various levels of implementation. In addition, they found that while it took about a decade for conservation and development goals to start becoming visible, most analyses that had cast these ICDPs into the general ‘failure’ rhetoric had been unnecessarily hasty. Earlier analyses were based on unrealistic expectations of the time frame needed for the change of behaviours of an entire population, the authors contend. However, the authors also contend that although committee activities had contributed to improved conservation practices and environmental restoration, there are still instances of breaching the protected area’s rules and regulations. This situation is also supported by the laxness of committee members in meting out punishment on
violators. Perhaps, more importantly, the authors found out that conservation activities only began to outpace development initiatives after about a decade into the project. In fact, in younger projects, they found that economic development received greatest attention from conservation management committees, while mid-term projects tended to focus most energy upon institutional strengthening. On the other hand, long-term projects exhibited the highest percentage of focus on conservation efforts. As a result, the authors have hypothesized a typical evolution of participatory ICDPs in similar contexts – “that the life cycle of such ICDPs generally moves from a focus on economic development, through a period of institutional strengthening, toward a greater focus on conservation” (p. 13). This hypothesis is set within the assumption that all other best practices advocated in prior ICDP studies are followed, and that communities understand the link between conservation and development.

However idealized and ambitious the hypothesis may seem, it stems from a context where conservation and development goals are met simultaneously, though not at exactly the same levels or pace. Still, the assumption runs the risk of getting communities disinterested in the project at its latter stage where economic developments have already been met. This hypothesis alone might be seen as challenging the core concept of ‘new’ generation ICDPs: introducing social, economic, and institutional initiatives in a bid to engage and encourage local communities to actively participate in, and respect conservation efforts. If the encouragement is already exhausted to communities, then convincing them to actively participate at a later stage might prove difficult, as the conservators would then be left with little or no leverage. Where conservation and development goals are said to have registered successes, it has often been because development serves as conservators’ leverage.

In this section I have discussed various approaches and findings of ICDPs in relation to rural communities’ livelihoods and nature conservation outcomes. Of particular relevance to this thesis are discussions on such aspects as power, participation and local institutions that ICDPs bring to both conservation and development interventions, as well as their effectiveness in conserving nature and eliminating sources of rural poverty traps. Specifically, I examine the role of trade-offs, local participation and micro-institutions in the development of MCNP’s peripheral communities.
CHAPTER 3

3.1 Evolution of Cameroon’s Forestry Law leading to the Designation of MCNP

Cameroon’s objectives in relation to forest ecosystems is to promote sustainable management and exploitation of tropical dense forest and resources; to promote traditional knowledge of forest and biodiversity and its socio-economic importance; to ensure the adoption of better farming techniques by the population and; to provide alternatives to forest resources such as fuel wood and building materials so as to reduce pressure on forests for daily subsistence (MINFOF and WWF, 2006).

In 1994, the Cameroonian government replaced its old, 1973 and 1981 Forestry Laws with the new Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Law as part of its National Environment Management Plan (NEMP), in response to the regulations of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. The NEMP constitutes the framework of the Cameroon government’s general policy on the protection and management of the environment and biological diversity. Supporting NEMP and the Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries Law is the Framework Law on the Environment. Section 72 of this law lays down specific guidelines for participation. Although participation in environmental matters in the form of community forests could be seen as a positive contribution of the new Law, this participation is both unclear by definition and limited in practice. It states the following: “Populations shall be encouraged to participate in environmental management, especially through free access to environmental information, pending the imperatives of national defence and state security” (pp 119). Section 72, paragraph 2 of the Framework Law simply suggests that a consultative mechanism “take stock of the opinions and contributions of the populations in matters of the environment” (pp 119). By these provisions local participation in forest and environmental management is limited to the expression of their opinions as well as free access to environmental information. Participation, as it is suggested today where locals are supposed to be fully involved in the design, planning and management of their natural resources – like the type suggested in trade-off analysis (Brown, 2004) – is not ensured by these provisions, except in cases like Council Forests and Community Forests, where locals are suppose to be the sole planners and managers of the forest resources. Yet, in such situations it has been largely reported that powerful local elites – some living in villages, but most residing in cities – have usurped control over forest resources for their own gains. Such reports are not limited to Cameroon, but across developing countries.
However, global environmental and social movements have gained impetus since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, including international aid regimes like the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness or the Accra Action for Aid. These declarations, among other things have asserted the need for, and importance of, socio-economic developments alongside environmental protection, especially in less developed countries where it has become clear to international aid donors and environmental protection agencies that effective conservation can only be achieved through the active participation of local communities, alongside socio-economic development (Brown 2004, Saunders 2011, Kremen et al. 1994, Gubbi et al. 2009, Ferraro & Simpson 2002, & Ferraro 2001 etc.).

It is thus in connection to this paradigm shift in conservation efforts – the so-called ‘new generation’ ICDPs that the Government of Cameroon has been carrying out a number of bilateral cooperation activities with Western governments such as France, Germany, Britain, Canada, and other important development partners. One of such conservation and development agreement with Germany, for instance, is within the forest sector. In the South West Region of Cameroon in particular, Germany’s technical agency (GIZ, formerly GTZ) on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for International Cooperation initiated in 1994 through late 2003, the so-called Mount Cameroon Project – Integrated Nature Protection on Mount Cameroon (Project No. PN91.2248.2). The project aspired to improve local capacity to manage and generate revenue from forest resources while maintaining ecological equilibrium of the region simultaneously (Mambo, 2005). Immediately after the close of the project, both governments embarked on another project within the forest sector in the same administrative region – the so-called Sustainable Management of Natural Resources-South West (SMNR-SW) through a more consistent application of a Forest-Environment Sector Programme (FESP) – with an overall term of 13 years, from 2003 to 2016. The objective of this new programme is to ensure that the various actors in Cameroon’s forestry and nature protection sector contribute, at all levels to the sustainable management and appreciation of the value of forest resources of the Congo Basin. The programme provides expert and process consultancy to the Ministry of Forests and Wildlife, the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development, as well as to other government bodies in realizing the FESP. It helps these ministries through revising the 1994 Forestry Law and the drafting of political strategies and instruments. It also supports
municipalities and their partners (e.g. public and private companies) in the management of their municipal forests.

Since 2003, according to MINFOF officials, the programme through support from GIZ has led to a major increase in the areas permanently designated. It is suggested that protected areas in Cameroon have nearly doubled from 4.6 million hectares in 2003 to 9 million hectares in 2011 (GIZ, Cameroon).

It is thus with such high value-driven commitments by both German and Cameroonian governments to sustainable forest practices alongside socio-economic development, that the Government of Cameroon on December 18\textsuperscript{th} 2009 designated the Mount Cameroon National Park – the subject of this thesis.

### 3.2 Creation of the Mount Cameroon National Park

On December 18\textsuperscript{th} 2009, by Prime Ministerial Decree No. 2009/2272/PM, the Government of Cameroon designated the Mount Cameroon region as a National Park. MCNP was officially launched on February 17\textsuperscript{th} 2010 in the presence of traditional rulers from some 58 villages surrounding the park (Mbonwoh, 2010). Although the Park was created in 2009, its practical running began in 2010. However, official MINFOF sources say that before the designation of the area as a National Park, research work, boundary tracing as well as sensitization meetings with communities had already begun as early as 2006, in the first phase of the PSMNR that ended in 2011. The second phase of the programme that is expected to run through 2016 also marks the duration of MCNP, at least as originally planned. The Park that covers a total of 58,178 hectares and includes the 4,095-metre high Mount Cameroon is surrounded by a total of 41 villages in the South West Region. It lies on the coast, in the Gulf of Guinea, between 3°57’-4°27’N and 8°58’-9°24’E. It had been increasingly recognized that the forest mass of this valuable ecosystem was challenged by ever-increasing needs for forest products, farmland and nature protection. The creation of the park is therefore intended to reconcile these perceived conflicts by introducing inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary approaches to sustainable resource use and improved land-use planning (Management Plan, 2006). MCNP Park Management (MCNPM) has the following objectives:

- the protection of the remnant biodiversity of the fragile ecosystem of the area;
- enabling the reconstitution of the wildlife of the area;
- the promotion of non-consumptive use of the natural resources of the area and;
- the reduction of pressure on the use of the natural resources by introducing and promoting alternative sources of income to local populations

It is clear from these defined objectives that the conservation of both wildlife and tree resources is the primordial *raison d’être* for the designation of the area as a National Park. The creation of alternative income sources or development interventions to peripheral communities is only secondary to conservation goals, and is implemented in an effort to keep pressure off the Park’s natural resources, both floral and faunal.

About 300,000 people live around MCNP, which provides them with large amounts of non-timber forest products, agricultural land, protects their water supplies and shelters sacred sites for many of the communities. The park is also said to have a great potential for eco-tourism and the creation of the park is expected to increase this potential and provide the much needed economic development to locals of the area.

The creation of the new park is the result of efforts and collaborations since 2007 between MINFOF, WWF, and GIZ, with the financial support of KFW.

### 3.3 Historical Background of the Mount Cameroon Region

The MCNP covers the whole of the Mt Cameroon region. The region supports forests known to be of exceptional scientific, economic and social value, with its great variety of endemic and endangered fauna and flora species (MINFOF & WWF (2006). It supplies many commercial and subsistence forest products and provides valuable ecosystem services such as watershed protection. The mountain is isolated from the nearest similar highland on the Congo-Rwanda (Mt. Kivu) by 2,200 km. It is the second wettest place on earth and has a rich volcanic soil. It is the highest mountain (4,095 m) in West and Central Africa. The mountain is an active volcano that erupts nearly every two decades, with the last one occurring in 1999. The rich volcanic soils and the easy accessibility of the area by road and waterway have resulted in increased immigration into the area. It is inhabited by a population of about 300,000 villagers. Seventy-five percent of these inhabitants depend largely on the exploitation of land and forest resources for their livelihood needs. Agriculture is presently the most important economic activity in the area, employing about 95% of the population, while timber exploitation, hunting and petty trading are equally carried out by some inhabitants. Plantains, cocoyam and cassava constitute the most important agricultural products and contribute more than twice as much as cocoa and coffee to
daily livelihood, although cocoa remains the bulk income earner of the area (Management Plan, 2006).

The Mt. Cameroon is said to be a biodiversity hotspot, constituting the most diverse ecosystem in Cameroon. According to a 1994 IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) appraisal, the region is the 10th most conservable places in the world. It harbours the last near isolated and threatened population of the forest elephant.

According to MINFOF officials efforts to protect forests on Mt. Cameroon started in 1927, which resulted in 1939 in the creation of the Bomboko Native Authority Forest Reserve. Thereafter, several expeditions and research missions to the mountain have not only confirmed the uniqueness of the ecosystem in the region, but they have also recommended time and again the need for protection. However, as a result of diversity in opinion on what type and level of protection would optimally accommodate the socio-economic and cultural diversity of the region, efforts to protect the mountain had not yielded expected results. During Phase V of the “plan de Zonage” – or Land Use Plan – process, several types of protection units were suggested on Mt. Cameroon. For instance, while the wettest area with its unique plant species and wildlife habitat was proposed as an integral ecological reserve, another section of the mountain that includes the Etinde hills was proposed as a fauna sanctuary.

Although the MCNP was designated following the recommendation of “Plan de Zonage” Phase V, it differs contextually by constituting a homogeneous protection status for the entire montane ecosystem, as opposed to several forest units with different protection status in the same area. It is the result of all the proposals of “plan de Zonage” into a single management unit and legal status- National Park. This means that all the proposed protected areas in the mountain region shall now be managed as a single ecological unit. The Bomboko Forest Reserve, which was the sole protected area on the mountain, forms the basis on which the MCNP was created. Other unclassified forest areas, which were proposed for protection, according to Phase V of the “Plan de Zonage” have been added to the Bomboko Forest Reserve to become the National Park.

**3.4 Different Land Use Plans in the Mount Cameroon National Park: Conceptualizing Conservation and Socio-economic Development**

It is important to note that although the MCNP is already fully functional and its management leans on a Park Management Plan, this plan is still at a draft level. Although it has not been officially ratified, it is this plan that instructs and guides the management of the Park. This plan
that serves as the main management tool refers closely to the various governmental forest sector decrees and ministerial letters relating to the management of wildlife, forests and forest resources, but also on the core conservation and development values of the Park’s official donor partners.

Based principally on vegetation types, topography and degree of disturbance, the Draft Management Plan of the MCNP delimits the Park into four different land use systems. However, the zoning system has also taken into consideration previous resource use activities as well as research information on plant and animal distribution. The area comprises lowland tropical forests, savannah vegetation and bare rocky surfaces that result from volcanic lava metamorphosis. The land use plan is geared towards the facilitation of a more focused management in order to attain the set objectives of the National Park, while taking into consideration the specific ecological and socio-economic potentials and advantages of the different zones. The Park is carved out into the following major zones: core protection zone, limited access zones, rehabilitation zone, and peripheral zone.

3.4.1 Core Protection Zone: This comprises unbroken vegetation cover and includes forest areas and other vegetation types that are of exceptionally high biodiversity value and serve as habitat for the remnant forest elephant population of the area. This area is made of the afro-montane savannah vegetation, the sub-montane and montane forests and patches of the montane shrub vegetation, all situated at the higher altitudes of the mountain slopes. The core protection area has perennial springs that serve as drinking points for the region’s wildlife, especially in seasons when all other springs dry out. The high concentration of wildlife around these water points at known periods of the year makes wildlife poaching particularly easier; hence the need to increase protection measures in these areas. Here, authorized human activities include limited ecotourism; controlled extraction of Prunus Africana bark once every five years; limited infrastructure for surveillance purposes only (such as the establishment of observation towers, guard outposts and patrolling tracks); and biological monitoring and research, provided it does not manipulate, exploit or alter the environment.

3.4.2 Rehabilitation Zone: This zone is carved out for major forest rehabilitation activities. It comprises the encroached forest areas, mainly in the Bomboko Forest Reserve (approximately 6,000 ha), which are largely occupied by farms and fallow secondary vegetation at lower
altitudes (200-600m above sea-level). This area is singled out for rehabilitation because a substantial portion of it is both close to settlement and easily accessible through road networks established by timber exploiters, leaving it open to, and transformed into, farmland. During my participant observation trip to this area (the Bomboko Forest Reserve) it was discussed that rehabilitation, through withdrawal of farms to allow for stimulation of natural regeneration and other adapted techniques, is planned for June 2013. The destruction of these areas which largely make up the waterbed of the area, significantly contributed to the drying off of streams, leading to water shortages in the neighbouring settlements. The rehabilitation is intended to help eventually restore the water table and revamp the ecosystem functions of the area.

Ecotourism is permitted, while controlled collection of *Prunus Africana* bark is also allowed every five years, according to separate use protocols per site. Just like in core protection zones, only limited infrastructure for surveillance purposes is tolerated in rehabilitation areas. Biological monitoring is also allowed in these areas, while access to harvest non-timber forest products and access to visit shrines and other areas of cultural significance are limited. In addition, the collection of agricultural produce is permitted within a limited period of two years.

However, it should be noted that this deadline has not been respected and by the time of my field visit in the area, there was still evidence of farming on a large scale. If one were to add 2 years (the permitted timeframe for produce collection) to the date this Draft Park Management Plan was created (2006), then the year 2008 should have been the deadline for harvesting and withdrawal of farms, by this logic. Yet, in 2013, when fieldwork for this thesis was carried out, this withdrawal had not been fully executed.

**3.4.3 Peripheral Zone:** This is the spatial definition of all areas adjacent to the MCNP. This is generally where pressure on natural resources and the National Park is strongest. It is not physically demarcated on the ground. The zone is defined by an imaginary line extending on average 5 kilometres from the Park’s external boundary, comprising the following land use areas: communal forest areas, community forest areas, settlement areas, community farming areas, and industrial agro-plantation areas. Peripheral zone areas are intended for innovative development programmes that contribute to sustainable resource use, improved livelihoods of the peripheral zone communities and the protection of the National Park. This area is also carved out for the support of income generating activities, and support to the establishment of viable agro-
forestry systems. It also serves as a ground for sensitization and educational awareness packages on environmental issues. This is zone constitutes the site for this study.

3.4.4 Limited Access Zone: The main goal behind the creation of the MCNP has been to conserve the ecological integrity of the area so as to ensure its continued provision of needed environmental benefits to both present and future generations. Limited access zones are regarded as the central area for the promotion of collaborative management of Park’s resources with surrounding populations in order to establish the desired goal of a win-win situation, where sustainable use and conservation of resources will be attained simultaneously, in a participatory approach.

Here, together with local population the borders of the limited access zones are determined, the types of resources to be harvested, quantities and duration of access specified, as well as a joint monitoring and evaluation programme implemented. Farming, construction of settlements and harvesting of woody material are not allowed in this zone. These are promoted in the peripheral zone, within the context of the peripheral zone development measure.

3.5 Design Outline of the MCNP Management

The Park management is guided by laid down principles and goals in the Management Plan. Although this plan that was elaborated by the Park’s major partners as early as 2006 has not been officially approved by MINFOF, it serves together with the Forestry Law, as the main conceptual reference and legal document for the day-to-day management of the Park. The conservation team justifies the use of this unapproved Management Plan because it has been endorsed locally by stakeholders and because they hold the view that the Mt Cameroon area merits particular attention in the short run. That is, the implementation of the Plan cannot be retarded by administrative procedures.

MCNP is one of three National Parks created in the South West region alone. Its management which is slated for 2010-2016 involves a complex array of partners and stakeholders. The Park is jointly run by three major partners; MINFOF, GIZ, and WWF. The Cameroonian and German governments jointly provide funds for the running of the Park. The Park is directly under the jurisdiction of MINFOF’s Regional Delegate for the South West Region, who is assisted on the field by a Conservator appointed by the ministry. The Conservator is directly responsible for the day-to-day management of Park activities and personnel. In addition to the office of the Conservator, other MINFOF representatives for the South West
Region assist the Regional Delegate on specialized duties. They include the Regional Chief of Service for Wildlife – responsible for wildlife activities in all protected areas in the region – and the Regional Chief of Service for Brigade and Control – responsible for monitoring and controlling logging activities in the entire South West region. All these MINFOF officials, from the Regional Delegate to the Regional Chiefs are assisted at Divisional levels by Divisional Delegates and Divisional Chiefs, who in turn are assisted at Sub-Divisional levels by appointed officials, including chiefs of post, in their respective jurisdictions that cover different parts of protected areas.

GIZ, representing the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development is responsible for technical advice and assistance to the Park service, while KFW provides financial assistance on behalf of the German government. WWF, as a major conservation organization also provides technical assistance on conservation techniques. Its office in Limbe, in the South West Region provides the office of the Conservator in Buea with a technical expert.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Spatial Division of the Mount Cameroon National Park

For reasons of easy access and the need to facilitate its administration, MCNP is spatially divided into four so-called ‘cluster conservation zones of the Mount Cameroon National Park’. These clusters comprise the 41 villages and zones that make up the Park. They include the Buea cluster in the South and parts of the East, consisting of 13 villages from Upper Boando to Woteva; the Bomboko cluster in the North east and North west areas of the Park, consisting of 12 villages from Bomana to Bova Bomboko; the Muyuka cluster occupying the East and consisting of 9 villages from Ekona Lelu to Munyenge; and the West Coast cluster covering the areas to the West and consisting of 7 villages from Sanje to Lower Boando, as can be seen on figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Map of MCNP with its surrounding forty-one villages. Drawn by MINFOF (2006)

4.2 Local Development Interventions in Clusters Visited – Muyuka and Buea

The primary goal behind the designation of the Mt. Cameroon region as a National Park is to conserve the region’s wildlife and forest resources. In order to encourage local communities to respect conservation rules and regulations, the Park service team offers communities some
livelihood alternatives and small development projects, alongside some forms of local institutional formations. *Conservator 1* explained:

*The approach we adopt in this project is collaborative management approach. It is a bottom-up approach that ensures that the communities realize, appropriate this National Park and see it as their own resource, and help [towards it planned objectives]. That is why we signed a Conservation-development Agreement with the local communities, in which we specified clearly what our direct roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis the communities are, as far as conservation and development is concerned. And at the same time the communities come to an agreement with us in relation to their own responsibility to the management of the park vis-à-vis conservation and development...In fact, it would be stupid not to involve the communities in the management of their own resources. I can tell you that this approach is really working.*

The Park management approach adopted by the conservation team is said to be collaborative management, whereby communities identify and prioritize areas or sectors where the conservation team would provide development intervention. In the case of Muyuka cluster, the nature of local economic development has been the provision of a major food crop – cassava – in the area. Communities around this cluster have been farming cassava for ages before the area was gazetted for conservation; and the harvested tubers have been transformed by the villagers into various local food types – *garri, water-fufu, nkum-nkum* or simply the cassava tubers – for home consumption, or sold locally and sometimes exported to neighbouring countries for income generation. The novelty that comes with conservation and development of the area is the introduction of what is supposed to be disease-resistant and better yielding cassava cuttings for cultivation; as well as sensitization and training sessions on methods of farming cassava alongside other crops on the same farmland – known as produce diversification. Expert agricultural workers from both the Ministry of Agriculture and the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture are introduced as extension workers, who assist the community in cassava-related matters. The new varieties were each coded as “0057”, “0326”, “9/0023” and “96/1414” for analytical purposes. See figure 3 below. However, of the four new varieties introduced, only one yielded better than the local. One major criterion for deciding whether the new varieties were better than the local one was “taste” when cooked in its untransformed cassava state. Six criteria were used to determine taste likability, ranging from “does not cook”, to “cooks well”, “cooks very well”, “bitter”, “normal”, or “sweet”; with “sweet” and “cooks very well” being the best
taste and quality. A total of nine persons did the tasting experiment on site. Surprisingly, all eight tasters said the local variety tasted sweet and cooks very well. Only one of the new varieties came close to the same result. In fact, all nine persons said that this particular variety – marked as variety 0057 – cooks very well, but only six persons felt that it tastes sweet. All nine tasters also felt that one of the new varieties tasted bitter – variety 9/0023. See figures 2 and 3 below.

In Upper Boando village of the Buea cluster, the main development intervention has been the provision of the much needed pipe-borne water to the surrounding communities. Respondents were generally satisfied with the intervention. In addition, they lauded assistance of Park officials in establishing a Village Water Management Committee (VWMC) that assumes the management and up-keep of the water pipes.

*Figure 2* showing villagers in the cassava tasting exercise in Bavenga, Muyuka cluster, MCNP.
Figure 3 showing data for the cassava multiplication development project in Bavenga, Muyuka cluster of MCNP. It shows analytical codes for various cassava varieties and data assessing quality in taste, where CVW (cooks very well) and SWT (sweet) constitute good cassava quality. Note hundred percent preference for local variety as demonstrated by 9 ticks in columns CVW and SWT, corresponding to the choices of all 9 tasters in the exercise. Also note variety 9/0023 registering a hundred percent vote as bitter.

4.3 Local Participation and Responses

In all villages visited, a total of 120 villagers were interviewed. While respondents in Bavenga and its surrounding villages in the Muyuka cluster totaled 76, those of the Buea (Upper Boando village) and Bomboko clusters made up 40 and 4 inhabitants, respectively. Of these, a total of 80 respondents from all three clusters reported being involved in either conservation or development work in one way or the other, while the remaining 40 reported that they were not involved. To further break the numbers down by clusters, 50 of the 80 conservation/development participants were from the Muyuka cluster, while 26 and 4 came from the Buea and Bomboko clusters, respectively.
Of the 40 respondents who reported not taking part in either conservation or development intervention, 24 (hereafter referred to as “skeptics”) said they were still observing the directions that interventions would take and could consider joining if they felt it would be beneficiary to them. Another 6 (henceforth referred to as “engaged elsewhere”) said they were too busy with other things and did not see the possibility of participating in the nearest future, while the remaining 10 (hereafter categorized as “dissenters”) did not want anything to do with it at all, for feelings of dissent and distrust in government activities in and around their villages. Of the 24 skeptics, 13 and 11 came from the Muyuka and Buea clusters, respectively, while all 10 dissenters came from the Muyuka cluster alone. Of the six who were engaged elsewhere, 3 were from the Muyuka cluster while the remaining 3 were Buea cluster residents.

All respondents participating in the programme reported having a positive attitude towards conservation in relation to agricultural, poaching and logging practices. Even those who reported not taking part in conservation or development interventions all said they respected the rules and regulations of the Park service team. The Park service team held the same opinion in relation to local communities’ adherence to conservation rules and regulations. The conservation team said they are proud of the extraordinary assistance and role played by community members in enforcing Park activities in their surrounding villages. Conservator 1 said the following:

*Village Management Committee members now act as local conservation watchdogs and they call us every now-and-then and report any signs of illegal activity on the Park. I must also emphasize that we have made it known to the villagers that we have put in place a system of conservation bonus, as some of the advantages of conservation that accrue to them. If they tell you that they know what is required of them, I can tell you right here that it is true. Proof of this is the fact that as I am sitting here, there is hardly a day that I do not receive a call from the village chief or the president of the Village Forest Management Committee that they have seen some people with chainsaws who want to go and do some illegal felling, whether within the National Park or just around the Communal Forests. They report this so that the Park Service can take some action to forestall the situation. This is proof that they are actually coming in as veritable partners [of conservation].*

However, in the Muyuka cluster, none of the 50 respondents who are reportedly engaged in conservation/development work were satisfied with the development initiative implemented, although they all showed enthusiasm towards better results. One woman explained her disappointment in the development intervention:
I cannot hide the fact that I was hoping for a better result than what we just obtained here today. Frankly, our local variety tastes far better than the new ones. I am not yet sure whether I shall plant the new varieties. Even if I did, it would solely be for transformation into garri or water-fufu. But wait…let us first of all see how the new varieties would taste when transformed into garri, or water-fufu. If they do taste like they have tasted just now, then it is not worth the time and effort.

On the other hand, the development project implemented in the Buea cluster consisted of the establishment of the much needed pipe-borne water in the community. All respondents here said they were very pleased with the development project implemented in their Upper Boando village. While all 76 respondents from the Muyuka cluster expressed desire for a better, supplementary development alternative – in this case potable water – only 10 of the 40 respondents from the Buea cluster desired a supplementary development support intervention. In this case, the desired interventions were largely subjective and differed amongst respondents, and included the introduction of better quality and yielding agricultural crops such as cassava, cocoa, cocoyam and maize.

When asked about their experiences in the various encounters with Park service team, all 80 of the conservation/development participating villagers said their experiences were very good and interesting, and that they would like the team to visit them more often. They also wished for the conservation/development work to stay for as long as possible. In general, respondents would love to see the project exceed its initial end period of 2016. A major reason for this positive inclination was the hope that in the long run the project might respond to their most pressing needs. Of the non-participating villagers totalling 40 respondents, all reported having met the Park service team at least twice on the field. While four said they did not like their experience with the Park team, the rest were indifferent to the subject. All 40 of them were equally indifferent to the continuation of the project.

However, in relation to other intended development benefits of conservation that would accrue to local communities such as ecotourism-related employment and local development, the response was mixed. They are neither employed in tourism-related work, nor have they received any local benefits stemming from ecotourism. However, 10 respondents from the Buea cluster said they have received some form of remuneration on several occasions after being engaged as porters and tourist guides. But this activity, they reported, is short-term and opportunistic based
on if they were lucky to be around when the tourism management team is recruiting porters for a few days. Employment as porters generally lasted no longer than three to four days at a given time, and the peak period is during dry seasons with little rainfall. A member of *Conservators 2* said the following, confirming the locals’ claims:

*Yes, the creation of the Park has a development outlook as well for the surrounding local communities. One of such economic development potential is that tourism and ecotourism will generate employment for the locals and a percentage of revenue from tourism-related activities shall be channeled to the development of local communities around the Park. But this cannot be realized yet given that at the moment not up to 2000 tourists visit the Park a year. We can only hope that when and if and only if the World Bank keeps its promise of developing the sector, then can we truly help the villagers in this regard […] yes, for now, they can only be engaged as porters and tourist guides. That is the most we can offer them within tourism.*

### 4.4 Desire for Alternative Development Package

All Bavenga participants said that they would prefer the implementation of pipe-borne water as their development package. They argued that in their conservation-development agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) with the conservation team, they had earmarked potable water as their first priority need and are still waiting for the intervention. One respondent said the following:

*Development is a good thing for every human being. Without development, people cannot live. In an agreement with the Park Service team we begged them since two years ago that our main problem here is water. Water is our main target. You see all these dilapidating houses…they used to be occupied. But their owners moved long ago to Ikata village because of water problems. All the farmers will be very happy to have water in this village. Everyone would start coming back to live here in the village if we had water. We have stopped hunting and trapping in the mountain. Even all the little huts we had built up there…we have destroyed them at the behest of the Park Service team.*

A high-ranking village leader added:

*This water problem is really killing us, my son. We are merely coping here in the present situation. It is deploring… I cannot blame those who have migrated. I would, too, if I did not have responsibilities tying me down here. If I move like the others, then who would run things here? Then there would be no Bavenga village. We have kept our own side of the agreement by staying away from illegal Park activities. All we*
ask is that they [Park Service team] honour their own side of it. Cassava development is good, but it is nothing compared to the water ordeal we are facing here. And I think I speak for everyone here. Ask them, if you want. Look there at the Government penitentiary...it is very empty. All the prison guards have gone away to Ikata because of the water crisis and only come back in the evenings. It is only the Superintendent that has managed to stay behind, because he is like the Chief there.

On their part, the conservation team argued that due to financial constraints they could not offer the villagers the crucially-needed water project requested. *Conservator I* explained this in the following words:

*As I said, we can only work with what we have in hand [...]. So all our [development] interventions are tailored to the financial package we have available now. And as you know, man’s wants are insatiable and unlimited, but the resources are always limited. But with what we have in place financially we cannot assure that at a particular time we can be able to take care of all their needs or trade-offs for the restricted access that the management of the Park poses on them. So, that is a major challenge.*

A member of the conservation team added infrastructural constraints as one of the major reasons for their not following up on the water project promise made to the Bavenga residents. He argued that Bavenga was not connected to the national water grid from which they could connect water to the village. Including the village into this grid would increase pressure on the Park service team in terms of funds and infrastructure, he added.

However, since they were promised a free alternative livelihood benefit – disease-resistant and better yielding cassava cuttings – some village respondents said they might follow up and personally implement the introduced alternative development support. Apart from the reasons advanced above, respondents motivated probability of pursuing the development alternative with the fact that they wanted to diversify their cassava varieties as much as possible for different uses. But this multiplication would depend on other subjective, but crucial factors such as the taste quality of the new varieties.

In addition, Bavenga respondents suggested that if cassava multiplication was the only feasible project in the point of view of Park officials, this project should at least be implemented in conjunction with other complementary projects such as cassava mills for produce transformation. A cassava female farmer complained:
You see how deformed and numb these two fingers are? They are the result of injuries from cassava grating. Plus my back is almost bent over now because of hours of cassava grating. The irony is that the money I get from selling garri cannot even afford to cure the back pain I have incurred over the years in this garri business. A good alternative would be for them [Park Service] to offer us a cassava mill.
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS

This section employs the theoretical insights discussed in chapter 2 to describe the management process and form of MCNP. The aim is to explore the concept of actor-interface in the day-to-day management of the park. Here, following the theoretical framework discussed earlier, I present an analysis of the management of MCNP not as an ideal, planned intervention but as an on-going process of social negotiation between Park authorities and community members. The analysis comprises, on the one hand, a description of participatory approaches adopted in the management of MCNP and the perceptions of the villagers in relation to these techniques, and my infused interpretation of this, on the other hand.

5.1 Financial Incentives, Development of Local Linkages and Formation of Multi-scale Institutions within Collaborative Management

Interface analyses focus on the linkages and networks that develop between individuals or parties rather and their strategies. In the case of MCNP I was interested in exploring those networks and allegiances that arise in the conservation-development intervention of Park management. Field data revealed management mechanisms that largely account for the conservation success story expressed by both Park officials and local inhabitants. For instance, apart from development interventions, other measures have been put in place to ensure that villagers fully participate, with enthusiasm, in the daily conservation of the natural resources of the Park. Of particular importance is financial incentives given to village members in the form of conservation credits and conservation bonus as remuneration for ensuring that no endangered species like chimpanzees are reported shot, or no encroachment activities are reported taking place in their respective conservation clusters. A fixed amount is set aside annually as motivation. If these criteria are met by villagers, then they are awarded 50% of this amount, while the remaining 50% is set aside as motivation for reporting illegal activities. As explained by Park officials, this is a calculated strategy to ensure that villagers do not simply raise false alarms for the purpose of reaping the bonus package. This means that the absence of a report of an encroachment or illegal activity within a particular conservation zone entails the award of 50% of the money to the villagers. But to also minimize the risk of villagers “burying” information on illegal activities, the Park Service team performs frequent unannounced monitoring and survey visits to the sites. Any uncovered illegal activity that was not reported by the villagers, automatically disqualifies
them from that portion of the bonus. At the same time, every report of illegal activity is verified by Park officials through site visits, as is the case with the Bomboko visit we undertook. This technique of providing external payments and incentives to local Park resource users has increasingly been accepted in academia as an important means of achieving the dual objective of conservation and development. Ansink and Bouma (2013) came to a similar conclusion.

I also found out that the Park’s conservation service has put in place a form of local institutional management team that facilitates the day-to-day management of Park activities. The management approach adopted for conservation and development is said to be collaborative management. Respondents from the Park Service argued that in order to ensure the full participation and commitment of village community members in the management of their natural resources and thereby meet the set objectives of conservation, collaborative approach appeared as the best option. This approach gave fruit to local institutional transformations that are largely responsible for the conservation success story told by Park managers and locals of the surrounding villages.

These local institutions are similar in all four clusters and include the following:

5.1.1 The Position and Importance of Local Chiefs in achieving Conservation Goals:
According to the conservation team and local inhabitants, the position and role of the traditional chiefs is one of the main reasons why the degree of respect for Park regulations is very high in MCNP. The recognition of the role and importance of local chiefs in Cameroon goes beyond national legislation. The day-to-day management of villages is assumed by local chiefs who are recognized by the citizenry as the number one political decision maker in their community. The chiefs are assisted by the village traditional council, consisting of representatives of different family groups who ensure discipline and maintain law and order on behalf of the chief. The chiefs are also empowered by the Government through enacted laws, as they act as an auxiliary arm of Government at the village level. The occupation of local chieftaincy positions in most of Cameroon’s villages is through hereditary and succession along the paternal lineage. This means that once a chief is selected from a line of succession by Chief/King makers, the villagers give their full support to him in the form of obedience, assistance in some cases, manual chores such as community work on the chief’s farmland or his surrounding palace or house. His subjects also look up to him for spiritual/traditional advice. His direct contact with, and recognition by,
government authorities also means that he is better placed to advise his subjects on matters relating to Government work and exigencies. It is these existing local structures and values in these traditional societies that were invigorated and valourized by Park officials for the specific purpose of facilitating contact with the villagers as well as in disseminating information. The chiefs acted as the direct ‘eye’ of the conservation team in matters concerning both conservation and development in their respective areas of jurisdiction. As the traditional head of the village, the direct respect and reverence that he enjoys from his subjects was tapped as a valuable asset both in insisting that his subjects abide by conservation rules and in reminding them of the consequences of not doing so. The chief’s acceptance of, and respect for, conservation regulations partly meant that his faithful subjects would follow suit, even if this following would encroach on villagers’ access to the forest, faunal and land resources that they enjoyed prior to conservation intervention.

5.1.2 Cluster Facilitators: In order to reduce administrative cost and ensure effective collaboration at platform meetings, the Pak Service team put in place four cluster teams representing the four different management clusters of the Park in line with promoting collaboration from village communities. Village Management Committee members elect three of their members to act as cluster facilitators and represent them at platform meetings with the Park Service team. They meet twice a year to discuss and plan activities for the next six months. Together with the Park Service team, they discuss and find solutions to problems and challenges relating to forest matters in their cluster, as well as legal provisions in relation to legal matters. They play the role of so-called “village parliamentarians” as they are responsible for disseminating information and planned activities adopted at cluster meetings back to their community members. This is also the group from which members are selected to participate in the management and steering committee of the Park.

5.1.3 Village Management Committee Members: Cameroon’s Forestry Law clearly stipulates that each village that shares a boundary with a protected area must have a Village Forest Management Committee (VFMC). In MCNP there are a total of 41 of such committees, corresponding to the 41 peripheral villages of the Park. Each committee consists of 8 members. By law, the local chief is a member by default. Four members are elected into the committee each representing the village development committee, farmers’ group, internal elites, and external elites. By law two women representatives are elected into this committee to make a total
of eight members. VFMC serve as entry point into the village in relation to forest matters in the village. They participation in activities, like boundary tracing and other Park related activities such as monitoring and reporting signs of illegal activities to the Park Service. Besides VFMCs that are put in place in all 41 villages, some villages like Upper Boando have extra managerial set-ups such as the Village Water Management Committee (VWMC). This micro-political addition is responsible for the day-to-day management and upkeep of the pipe-borne water given to the village. This institution is also put in place to ensure the project’s long-term existence beyond the lifetime of the MCNP – 2016.

5.2 Challenges inherent in the management of MCNP: Failed Development?
The Draft Management Plan of MCNP details a set of management programmes and Park management interventions, including conservation-related initiatives such as protection and rehabilitation programmes; and socio-economic and institutional development initiatives that would benefit the human populations living adjacent to the Park, such as rural development programmes, institutional capacity development programmes, as well as ecotourism development. These development interventions, according to the Plan, are intended as incentives for the local population to be involved in local biodiversity conservation. It is supposed to address the priority development needs of the rural people, whose livelihood systems, the creation of the Park has destabilized. While fieldwork data obtained during interview sessions with both the Park Service team and local inhabitants pointed to satisfying achievements within conservation, the feelings of local community members were divided in relation to rural development programmes, partly depending on type of development received. For instance, while Bavenga community members were largely dissatisfied with the development project implemented in their community, the feeling of their Upper Boando counterparts was that of content. This is because the priority need of the latter community was attended to. However, the actor-interface experience in Bavenga uncovers several issues that raise concerns for the future of development in the area. In relation to institutional capacity development and its effects on development strategies, there were mixed feelings on the part of local inhabitants. Specifically, while the project might have been successful in maintaining some rural traditional society political systems such as the strategic role of the chief, as well as in creating external managerial links and networks such as VFMCs, the VWMC and Platform Facilitators in achieving
conservation-development goals – as described above – capacity training of locals in conservation activities still has a long way to go. These issues are described below.

5.2.1 Substituting Villagers’ Priorities for Budgetary Purposes
According to the ambitions of the Management Plan and in addition to interview data, the locals in the peripheral areas of the Park, within the framework of the local development agreement, identify their priority development needs within which the Park Service team should respond, as an incentive measure for ensuring local people’s collaboration in the conservation of the Park. Yet, field data from Bavenga where such development was carried out revealed that the said intervention was actually not the villagers’ first priority. The top priority need of the villagers of Bavenga and its neighbouring inhabitants – pipe-borne water – had been substituted by the Park Service team, leading to mixed feelings of frustration and betrayal amongst village respondents. According to Park officials this is an unfortunate turn of events resulting from their tight “economic space”. They explained that although the rural poor are invited to identify local priority needs for which the Park Service then provides technical assistance and funds, the priority area might not always be addressed depending on Park’s available financial resources.

What was said to be disease-resistant and better yielding cassava varieties had been introduced by agricultural extension workers as a measure for promoting better alternative livelihood systems of the villagers. According to the locals, most inhabitants of the village of Bavenga and its surrounding villages have resettled elsewhere in neighbouring villages such as Ikata because of lack of pipe-borne water in their own village. For those who did not migrate, the only means of dealing with the ordeal of water crisis was to contribute money once every week and pay a vehicle owner in neighbouring Ikata village who would transport portable water from Ikata to them in Bavenga. The situation has left the residents, who have largely committed to conservation efforts, with the feeling of abandonment by Park authorities, as expressed by their cry that the latter uphold their own part of the conservation-development agreement. This situation partly explains why Bavenga villagers, though disenchanted with their development package, would like to see the MCNP project exceed its proposed lifespan. Disenchantment and the hope that a longer tenure for the project might result in the provision of their much need potable water – and not a feeling of livelihood satisfaction or accomplishment – explains these marginalized people’s expressed desire for a continued MCNP project. As demonstrated in the Bavenga cassava development project, collaborative decision-making for development purposes
can only profit local populations in as much as their views and preferences are respected. When such preferences are substituted with what available financial resources can provide, then trade-offs and collaborative processes lose their meaning and purpose. But when such preferences form the basis on which conservation-development practitioners provide development interventions, the results are most likely to be socio-economically beneficial to the rural poor. Only in this way can trade-offs and collaborative processes be said to have a positive impact on eliminating the sources of rural poverty traps. The response and perceptions of the Upper Boando Buea recipients of pipe-borne water as their development package, is testimony of this argument.

In addition to the water crisis, the development alternative offered by the Park Service team was deemed to be insufficient by most respondents. Even if the locals were to settle for cassava multiplication as the only alternative to livelihood, the development pathway is still lagging in two main aspects: holism (from farm to market mechanisms) and quality (taste).

5.2.2 Quality Deficiency in Alternative Inputs

The villagers of the Muyuka cluster have been cultivating a local variety of cassava for ages. This local variety is appreciated locally for its good taste, especially when eaten in its cooked, but untransformed state as cassava. However, the agriculture extension workers conducting the experiment had largely focused their assessment criteria of suitability of new, alternative cassava varieties on yields and disease-resistance. Not until after on-farm lectures and harvest, little attention had been paid to a cassava assessment criterion which appeals very strongly to local farmers: taste. In fact, for villagers good cassava variety is that which not only produces high yield or is disease-resistant. To this repertoire taste is a very important characteristic of a good cassava variety. It must taste good when cooked and eaten as cassava in its untransformed state, but the same criterion applies in its various transformed states. This means that if their local variety were to be substituted with new ones, the latter would have to produce higher yields, but they must also taste better than the local variety. The development alternative of the Park management brought four new varieties that should be disease-resistant and higher in yields. However, of the four new varieties introduced, only one yielded better than the local variety and above all, only one tasted almost as good, with the local variety occupying the first and second places in relation to taste and yield, respectively. These results show that the villagers were not completely satisfied with the quality of the introduced varieties. Furthermore, other very
important factors deter villagers from appropriating this novelty into their daily livelihood practice. They include absence of potable water and cassava mills for easy processing.

Transforming cassava into garri or water-fufu is a lengthy process that takes about a week to get to the final product. Unfortunately, I was no longer there on site to find out the results of the garri and water-fufu exercise. So, this report cannot be conclusive about that exercise. But judging from the cooked cassava tasting experiment, the general feeling around the quality of the new varieties was not far from disappointment. The result of collaboration and interface interventions between Park officials and local communities has thus described the cassava multiplication project as not as fulfilling a strategy as its developers had imagined. While a series of sensitization and other collaborative techniques might have successfully dissuaded potential Park defaulters from encroachment practices, this finding casts serious questions about the likelihood of the Park Service team’s alternative development strategies to serve as actual alternatives and alleviate poverty, at least in the case of the Bavenga village and its surrounding communities.

5.2.3 Lack of Holism in Development Strategy
Another pertinent issue arising from the conservation-development interface between Park conservators and local inhabitants, especially in the Bavenga community is the interpretation and understanding of rural development needs as atomistic, rather than consisting of a set of holistic and nested trajectories. In the case of the Bavenga development project, the cassava multiplication project is understood and administered by the Park Service team as though cultivation by itself constitutes a single chain process where harvesting is considered the end process. Little or no attention is paid to other, very vital parts of the cassava chain process, such as transformation into garri and other meal varieties, and market mechanisms that have the potential of contributing to poverty alleviation. For instance, after cassava is harvested and brought back home, villagers go through the lengthy, painstaking and often risky process of grating the cassava into a paste on a local hand-made cassava grater. This paste is then tied into a bag and lodged between four specially made wooden sticks that act as compressor for several days, until the paste becomes dry enough for frying into garri. However, it is the grating process that presents a challenge. The rough grater with several tiny bore-holes for sieving through the paste usually traps the bare palms of the person grating the cassava, thereby leading to injuries
and health risks for the consumer, such as blood-related garri contamination when the palm rubs rigorously against the grater and causes bleeding.

Rural development and poverty alleviation for these poor farmers would entail that they are not only provided with better yielding cassava cuttings, but in addition they should be offered cassava mills whose maintenance and up-keep they can then assume in ways decided by them. The time spent on hand-grating about 30 kg of cassava by a single person is approximately 6 hours, while a cassava mill would do the same task in less than 1 hour. Such mills would reduce time for grating that could be spent on other chores. Injuries and health risks would equally be reduced with an electric powered mill.

In addition to the ordeal of grating cassava, the farmers face steep challenges when the final product is ready for sales. The main challenge is the lack of negotiative power for their merchandise. Usually, wholesalers drive into these interior villages and buy from the villagers at give-away rates. Not having the power to negotiate with these rich merchants, the farmers often return home realizing very limited gains from their sales. Some farmers argued that if they were assured of a reasonable price from potential buyers, they would consider cultivating cassava in larger quantities than they do today. Therefore, for development interventions to make meaningful changes in rural people’s livelihood systems, development practitioners must investigate from local populations the various trajectories of the very livelihood systems they intend to better. Such investigations would lead to a better and holistic understanding of livelihood trajectories as constituting nested strategies that must be addressed in a holistic manner.

5.3 Failed Potential of Ecotourism in Capacity Building and Income Generation

The Draft Management Plan of MCNP maintains that tourism and ecotourism activities with the Park shall constitute an important source of revenue for the Park and the surrounding peripheral zone villages. In addition, the Cameroonian Minister of Forestry and Wildlife in an official launching of MCNP enumerated the benefits of the Park to its surrounding human population, including tourism-related employment, revenue and rural development (Sumelong, 2007). At the same time within Germany’s ‘Decentralization, participatory development and government’ priority area, the support of a local economic and social development strategy is said to constitute a central part of Germany-Cameroon cooperation (German Embassy in Yaoundé). In
an informal discussion with one Park official, he highlighted the potentials of ecotourism in relation to employment and rural development for local communities.

Yet, while such employment has been very restricted in scope to just a few days of employment at a time as porters and tourist guides when the need arises, rural development resulting from ecotourism-generated revenue at the moment is still to be realized, and the situation is not expected to change in the nearest future under the present socio-economic climate. In fact, this Park official complained that it is beyond the Park’s budget to develop the tourism sector of the Mt. Cameroon region. He reported that negotiations are underway between MINFOF and the World Bank in relation to the latter’s assistance in developing the tourism sector of the Park. According to him, the planned economic benefits of tourism can only accrue to local communities around the Park if and when the deal between MINFOF and the World Bank is finalized.

However, apart from tourism-related employment and development deficits, a major challenge to local inhabitants’ appropriation of Park activities for the socio-economic development has been the sharp lack of capacity building. While the creation of the Park has been heralded for its employment potential in the region, findings from this study show that villagers living on the Park’s peripheral areas have not benefited from any sort of training that could make them competitive in the ecotourism job market in the area. One of such opportunities that villagers could tap is employment as eco-guards. Yet, with the creation of MCNP, recruitment of eco-guards is launched nationally and competitively, leaving the Park’s villagers with no training in ecotourism at a disadvantage. In fact, those who have largely benefitted economically from ecotourism with the creation of the Park are trained eco-guards from surrounding townships like Buea, and other cities of the country, with no affiliations with the peripheral villages of the Park. Actually, not a single villager from any of the 41 peripheral villages of MCNP is currently employed as eco-guard. Field study results show that the touted socio-economic potentials of ecotourism for rural development are clearly not manifesting into meaningful employment for rural populations.

### 5.4 Lack of capacity Building for Development Practitioners

Another challenge inherent within the conservation-development interface management of MCNP is the lack of professionalism for Park officials in development-related concerns. While Park officials are trained in conservation activities like monitoring, boundary tracing, wildlife
inventory and more, their skills in development intervention is informal, to say the least. The relevance of this to the socio-economic development of the rural communities is that the entire livelihood measures of a number of rural inhabitants are not only placed in the hands of unskilled development practitioners, but the latter are in charge of introducing and implementing new alternative development strategies that are supposed to alleviate poverty for these village inhabitants. This has tremendous negative effects on rural people’s livelihood means, as has been shown earlier is the introduction of alternatives that are not only at odds with villagers’ expressed priority development needs, but are equally short of functioning as real substitutes or alternatives to livelihood means. It became clear in the cassava experiment that Park officials, as a result of their lack of training in development concerns, lack understanding of development trajectories, as in their atomistic treatment of the cassava farming process. They have demonstrated little knowledge of local poverty traps, from farming, processing and marketing as a bounded system that needs to be addressed simultaneously and in its entirety if the rural populations around the Park are to escape from their poverty traps into real life-saving alternatives.

5.5 Restrictive Collaborative Management
A final challenge to conservation-development crossroads in MCNP is the restrictive definition of collaboration. Although the Park Service aims at, and argues for a collaborative approach as a means of getting locals of the Park’s peripheral villages to recognize the Park’s resources as theirs and thereby appropriate them into their daily lives through participation, this participation is largely restricted to development interventions. This is where the villagers are brought together to identify their most pressing development needs; and to take active part in the implementation of such projects. Even at this level, as has been shown in the Bavenga development intervention case, such collaboration may not always lead to the villagers’ voices and worries being the primordial condition for providing specific development interventions. More importantly, as is the case in MCNP, it is the Park’s financial ability to provide the requested intervention that matters most. In this case, the villagers, frustrated and hoping that their priority need be heeded can only rally around and participate in the development intervention that is given to them, however inadequate this may be.

In addition, collaboration in conservation is not in the form of communicative exchanges in the sense where all stakeholders share ideas, deliberate on them, adopt or reject some and
implement consensually agreed-upon solutions or plans. In this particular case, it is rather the Park Service team within the framework of the Conservation-development Agreement or the Memorandum of Understanding (between Park Service and locals) that makes the rules governing conservation. Locals, by the terms of these agreements are simply required to comply in order to benefit from specific development packages. Although locals are said to be invited to conservation decision-making exercises during Platform sessions, their sheer number of twelve local representatives at these meetings – i.e. 3 persons x 4 clusters = 12 local representatives – is not sufficiently representative of a total of approximately 72,000 inhabitants that make up the surrounding villages of the Park. Even during these platform meetings, as witnessed in a number of videotapes of Platform Sessions that hold twice a year, local representatives are usually more of mere attendants, than active participants. Their contribution to conservation discussions is very minimal and can hardly affect the decisions of the more powerful, sworn-in Government officials in charge of Park management.

In addition, as witnessed during a participant observation in Bavenga, local elites often play a dominant role during discussions and negotiative forums. The implication of this is the risk that what is expressed as local people’s concerns during platform meetings may actually represent the preoccupations of influential local elites and/or local platform representatives, and not the actual concerns of the local population.

Finally, although Park officials argue that local inhabitants of the peripheral zones of the Park are actually a vital part of the conservation team; their participation usually takes the form of those menial and less important decision-making activities such as boundary clearing, occasional patrols or duties like local Park watchdogs. Such duties are far detached from decision making processes on Park resources.
6: DISCUSSION

Among other things this thesis investigated the links between conservation and development as practiced on site in interface relationships between the Park Service team of MCNP and the local inhabitants of the Park’s peripheral areas. The literature on ICDPs has largely investigated this issue and has shown with several case studies that conservation values more often than not, outweigh development concerns. This thesis contributes to this debate by demonstrating with the case of MCNP that ICDPs – although implicitly conceptualized and defined as targeting nature conservation while at the same time responding to poverty and development needs – may not deal with both concerns in a balanced fashion. This case has documented the various innovative mechanisms – including collaborative management, trade-offs, socio-economic development and micro-institutional formations – that the Park has deployed to ensure effective nature protection, as well as villagers’ committed participation to this end. With the exception of the provision of pipe-borne water and the establishment of a Village Water Management Committee to ensure its management in Upper Boando, fieldwork evidence demonstrates that ICDPs deploy little human capacity building and financial resources for effective development outcomes. ICDPs and aid donors have devoted inadequate efforts to building capacity for specific projects’ development practitioners. While critics of ICDPs have often pointed to the lack of capacity building and training for poor rural communities (e.g. Flintan, 2003) evidence from MCNP points to the fact that such capacity building and training is equally important, but lacking for conservation-development practitioners. The results of this thesis shift from Sjöstedt’s (2012) argument that increased compartmentalization and sector specialization could result from the fact that some aid officers involved in “development sectors do not have sufficient competence and capacity to integrate environmental concerns in their operations” (pp 784). On the contrary, my findings suggest that ICDPs are sometimes typically designed to primarily engage in global environmental concerns. Financial and institutional focus, including professionalism and expertise are geared towards achieving international nature conservation goals. While a development perspective is added to this primary objective, it simply occupies a secondary position. Development in ICDPs is often encouraged and practiced to the extent that it serves as a means to the primary end – conservation. Even so, its scope of engagement is quite limited. Conservation-development practitioners are often not equipped with the necessary training and skills in understanding and implementing development pathways, as has been evident in the
Bavenga context. In fact, the situation can be compared to a lion, not a lioness given the task of breastfeeding its cub. Without the necessary training, expertise, and more importantly the right tools, it is almost impossible to understand the needs of the recipient, let alone knowing how to satisfy them. Certainly, as Chambers (1983) argued those professionals involved in ICDPs ought to adopt a ‘reversal’ of thinking, especially in favour of increasing contact and learning from the rural poor in matters related to their rural livelihoods. Even without proper training in development concerns, increased contact with the rural poor and efforts to understand development pathways and poverty traps would certainly go a long way to assisting Park Service officials within ICDPs to offer more effective development packages.

This finding also questions the devotedness of international development agencies and developing countries in trying to implement the priority objectives adopted at such international conventions as the Paris Declaration and its follow-up sessions. Of particular attention is the international resolve by Heads of multilateral and bilateral institutions meeting in Paris, 2005 to take far-reaching and monitorable actions to reform the ways they deliver and manage aid in connection with poverty alleviation objectives enshrined within the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In view of this, donor countries pledged to “strengthen partner countries’ national development strategies and associated operational frameworks” (OECD, 2005), while partner countries committed to integrate specific capacity strengthening objectives in national development strategies and pursue their implementation through country-led capacity development strategies where needed (pp 4). However, as this thesis has demonstrated, not only has development intervention been shoved into a secondary position, but capacity building in the delivery of development alternatives has clearly been neglected both by the Cameroonian government as well as its German aid counterpart. In addition, field results suggest that while it is justified to argue in favour of capacity building for local populations in order for them to maximize the benefits of collaboration, capacity building and training is not only important for this group. In order for the rural poor to make the best of ICDPs, conservation-development practitioners ought to be trained not only in conservation matters, but they should be equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills needed in understanding poverty traps and pathways. If they are to be trusted with handling the livelihood strategies of an entire Park resource-dependent population, then it is morally and philosophically incumbent that they are trained to understand poverty-development concerns not at atomistic levels, but as a continuum, and consisting of
nested issues that must be dealt with in a holistic manner. If, for instance, the rural poor are assisted in cultivation, then such assistance must stretch beyond farming methods to include farm to market mechanisms such as local produce processing and price guarantees for their produce. Poverty should not only be understood as a function of lack or shortage of food, but perhaps, more and more as a function of absence of food processing technology and price bargaining leverages at local levels. ICDP and aid practitioners and developers need to consider these issues seriously if the huge amounts of tax payers’ money sent to Africa are really meant to alleviate rural poverty alongside nature protection. The development of the 41 villages of the peripheral zones of MCNP is left entirely in the hands of a Park Service team that has little or no training in understanding the needs of poor rural people and to whom the knowledge of development pathways and trajectories is lacking. This worrisome finding seriously questions Africa’s ability to meet the MDG targets, especially given that serious efforts ought to be made in combating poverty and securing more food for a population that is expected to surpass 9 billion by 2050 (UN, 2009). Considering such projections and the problem of food shortage that the world, especially sub-Saharan Africa may face, one then questions such anti-neoliberalist positions taken by authors like Glennie (2008) in favour of reduction of aid volumes to African countries. The solution may not lie in aid reduction, but part of it may stem from efforts at building capacity in developing countries to understand and handle development concerns in more effective ways.

ICDP literature (e.g. Brown 2004) has suggested trade-offs as a crucial way of realizing the combined goals of conservation and development more effectively so that there is a win-win situation for all stakeholders. It is argued that trade-offs offer the possibility for all stakeholders to participate and deliberate on management options, as well as identify priorities for management by which they can see the potential outcomes and impacts of their priorities inherent in resource management, conservation and development. However, this thesis has shown that such trade-offs might not always lead to effective participation by all stakeholders. Degree of participation by some groups of stakeholders might differ from that of others. Trade-offs do not adequately address such issues like power differentials among different stakeholders involved in the participatory process, nor does it always lead to a win-win situation for all stakeholders. Participation in such trade-off negotiations might be designed purposely or inadvertently in ways that limit the negotiative powers of poor rural people in the face of more
powerful ICDP practitioners. In addition, as I have demonstrated earlier the identification of priorities during such trade-off negotiations does not necessarily entail their implementation. ICDP practitioners can only implement identified priorities to the extent of their understanding, knowledge and ability to do so. Where such understanding, and perhaps, more importantly, financial resources are lacking or insufficient to conservation-development practitioners, the priorities identified during trade-offs might sometimes be substituted with other, less pressing needs. Similar findings let Brown et al. (1998) to critique the technique by conservation planners of using trade-off as a means of selling or gaining acceptance of preconceived ideas, rather than as a genuine forum where a range of local actors could choose development preferences and priorities in more or less free and deliberative ways. In a similar study in the Jozani-Chwaka Bay National Park in Zanzibar, Saunders (2011) found that trade-offs alone do not adequately address the complexity or totality of institutional change required to effectively achieve the combined goals of conservation and development. He argues, based on his case study findings that this realization is one of the reasons why new generation ICDPs are increasingly adopting strategies that set up local governance structures and responsibilities. I have pursued a similar line of argument, with the examples of the role of the local chiefs, the VFMC and the Platform members that such multi-scale institutional formations are largely responsible for the successes registered so far in the conservation of MCNP. However, the same findings point to the fact that such micro-political establishments alone cannot adequately secure socio-economic benefits of conservation that should accrue to the rural poor living in and around protected areas, as demonstrated by the Bavenga case.

Yet, one cannot completely downplay the role of micro-political formations in rural development outcomes. The establishment of VWMC in the Upper Boando area is a laudable measure that does not only give the rural poor full responsibility for the management and upkeep of their own development output, but this local management also ensures a secure exit strategy for the villagers in the event of MCNP project termination. This finding seems to partly solve Gibson’s and Mark’s (1995) argument that the targeting of high value projects such as maize grinding mills, schools and clinics still failed to resolve the incentive problem of ADMADE. The authors based this claim on the ‘nonexcludability’ of public goods, i.e. the fact that their benefits are available to a group whether or not its members contribute to the provision of the said good. The provision of pipe-borne water or other public goods by ICDPs do not ‘mimic public goods’
just because their users are not regulated, as the Gibson and Marks would suggest. Given the Upper Boando example, there is some form of regulation when the villagers themselves are given the responsibility of making sure that the water is available to them on a long-term basis. Even if there is a possibility that those who did not contribute to its establishment – as assumed by the logic of their anti-conservation practices – the development objectives of ICDPs should not be forgotten, i.e. combating rural poverty in villages adjacent to protected areas. Nowhere in the ICDP literature or rhetoric does it say that development is intended uniquely for those who abide by conservation rules. Such a claim would strip ICDPs of their moral and philosophical standpoint.
7: CONCLUSION

I set out in this thesis to investigate the process of conservation and development interventions between Park officials and inhabitants of the peripheral villages of the Mount Cameroon National Park. Special emphasis has been placed on the experiences and perceptions of the rural poor in the interface of the development interventions in their community. I also sought to understand the linkages and/or discontinuities between formalized Park objectives, on the one hand, and their actual implementation, on the other hand. This thesis set out to answer the following three questions: 1) how do the project narratives fit with recipients’ experiences and perceptions? (2) Through what means are the distinct goals of conservation and socio-economic development reconciled in practice? And, (3) what socio-economic and institutional benefits have accrued to communities living around MCNP?

Particularly, through actor-interface analysis this thesis deconstructed those formalized narratives around the development of MCNP’s rural communities, thereby describing the intervention as an on-going process of everyday social negotiation between Park officials and rural communities, the outcome of which do not necessarily sit with predefined objectives and plans. Results from field data demonstrate that while in designing ICDPs, conservation-development practitioners and aid donors might tout the socio-economic potentials of nature conservation for rural development and livelihood strategies, the implementation strategies of such projects may not always result in the realization of those promises. In MCNP the proclaimed socio-economic benefits of ecotourism to rural communities in the form of employment and shared proceeds have largely benefitted other groups than the primary targets of this initiative. The capacity of rural communities has not been developed to benefit from meaningful ecotourism-related employment, such as eco-guards. Furthermore, their employment as tourist guides and porters is not only seasonal, during peak local tourism season – dry season with little rainfall – but such employment is only opportunistic and lasts a few days. This kind of ad hoc employment has only minimal poverty-alleviating effects on rural communities, whose livelihood strategies have been largely restricted by conservation initiatives.

In addition, although development practitioners, aid agencies and development critics alike, often conceptualize and portray trade-offs and collaborative management within ICDPs as constituting an important means of achieving the dual objective of effective nature conservation and socio-economic development of the rural poor living in and around protected areas, these
techniques are often more relevant and beneficial to conservation than development. This is not to suggest that trade-offs and collaborative management are detrimental to the rural poor. On the contrary, they have great beneficial potentials for this group. As the Park official and rural community interrelation has shown, it is the power differentials and imbalanced negotiative relations that give rural communities little or no leverage in the face of their more economically and politically powerful counterparts at the negotiation table.

Finally, evidence points to the fact that local micro-institutional set-ups play a vital role in both conservation and development initiatives. However, this is true development and poverty-reduction strategies only to the extent that power effective local representation and true democratic processes form the basis of all decision-making processes.
8. APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions with Conservation-Development Practitioners

1) What are the formal objectives behind the creation and management of MCNP? How are these objectives implemented?

2) Within the conservation/development agreement between the locals and the Park service team, (within the framework of the collaborative management approach) are local communities given the occasion to prioritize specific conservation types or approaches, as they do in the case of development where they prioritize and choose which development alternative they want? That is, is it the same with conservation?

3) In relation to development interventions, what criteria come into play when offering the locals their expressed development priorities? Could such expressed development needs be substituted for another, and why?

4) What are the impressions and attitudes of the local populations of Buea and Muyuka clusters in relation to their received development package?

5) The conservation of the Park is intended to bring about development of local communities through ecotourism. Ecotourism is also said to bring about employment for local communities. How does ecotourism bring about local development and employment for local communities? Also, who is responsible for tourism within the Park? Is it the Park service team or the Ministry of Tourism? How many tourists per year visit the Mt. Cameroon region? How much do you think is made per year through tourism? What sort of local development or employment has been implemented as a result of tourism earnings? And where?

6) Could you kindly describe the various hierarchy levels, and structures of MCNP within the framework of collaborative management? What is the number of persons per structure? What is the gender representation in each structure, i.e. how many men, or women? How is the structure formed? By election? What are the functions of each structure, and who do they represent? That is, do they represent the communities, or the park service, or both?

7) How is collaboration between Park authorities and the local populations organized and carried out? Why has MCNP opted for this approach? Is it working as intended?
8) Would you describe the management of MCNP as a success so far, and why?
9) How would you categorize the contribution of rural communities to conservation efforts?
10) Finally, are there any exit strategies put in place at local level to ensure that the communities are self-sustainable (self-sufficient) after the end period of the project? That is, in case the project ends in 2016, what are the measures put in place to ascertain that local communities can sustain their development alternatives and livelihoods, thereby not needing to break conservation rules and regulations?

**Interview Questions with Development Recipients in Buea and Muyuka Clusters**

1) Do you know why MCNP has been created, and what role you are expected to play in its management?
2) How often do you meet with Park officials, and what activities take place during such meetings?
3) What are your experiences of such meetings with Park officials?
4) What is your attitude towards your expected role in the management of the Park? Do you know the different Park conservation rules? Would you say that your actions are in tandem with Park regulations? Would you say the same for other villagers, in general?
5) In your meetings with Park officials, do you get the opportunity to express your opinions freely?
6) What priority development areas have you identified? And has the identified area been granted by Park Management?
7) How would you describe your impressions of the development project you received? Does it solve your priority problem?
8) Apart from the present development package, what other things would you like Park Management to do?
9) Would your actions towards conservation and collaboration change, given your relations with Park officials?
10) Would you wish that the conservation programme continues after its slated lifespan, and why?
9 LIST OF REFERENCES


