CHAPTER SIX

UJAMAA-POLICIES, OPEN-ACCESS AND DIFFERENTIAL COLLECTIVE ACTION: COMMON-POOL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND CONFLICTS IN THE RUFIIJ FLOODPLAIN (TANZANIA)

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the management of fisheries, wildlife and pastures in the Rufiji Floodplain area in Tanzania. It presents the changes in institutions governing these common-pool resources among the different ethnic groups, known as the Rufiji peoples, and the impacts of the new state institutions on resource use and management. The paper argues that due to the erosion of local institutions during colonial and post-colonial periods, especially the village restructuring Ujamaa Programme, the commons of the Rufiji Floodplain became open-access, due to the state's lack of enforcement, affecting the resource base and the livelihoods of local people and also affecting the option to act collectively to draft new institutions. Since liberalisation and privatisation in the 1990s the common-pool resources have remained open-access, despite changes in legislation to return power to the local level, in relation to outside users. However, differentiations have to be made. While fisheries, wildlife and pasture have still an open-access character due to the lack of support by the state in co-management systems, engagements of environmental NGOs and government organisations regarding conservation in the Selous Game Reserve so far have been successful since the 1990s in boosting financial means to conserve wildlife in the Reserve. But this policy is not based on

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local actions, because despite formal laws that incorporate village level control and a more participatory approach, local interest groups are de facto excluded from ownership and management decisions, while facing high costs and management. De facto looks more like fortress conservation to harness income from tourism than participatory management. In addition, NGOs like IUCN have made attempts to create a new institutional environment, yet without addressing the complexity of local management systems and of the political constellations. However, differentiations have to be made with regard to collective action on the local level. It depends on how changes of relative prices for common-pool resources affect a local context and how close to commercial centres of trade networks these locations are. The paper therefore compares two village settings, trying to address this question of special differentiation.

1. Introduction

In the past the Rufiji Floodplain in the southeast of today’s Tanzania has been important for different ethno-professional user groups for many centuries because the floodplain and its lakes are resource-rich areas in an otherwise semi-arid environment. They made possible successful livelihood strategies such as hunting, fishing, gathering and flood-recession agriculture in depressions. The different Rufiji groups had established institutions governing common-pool resources in pre-independence times, which were based on the use of separated livelihood strategies and areas, defining membership and access to the specific resources and on internal rules and regulations embedded in local religious animistic belief systems. These institutions have been changed by colonial (German and English) and post-colonial rule, especially by the socialist Ujamaa policy. Today, under the neo-liberal tendencies of Tanzanian economic state strategies, different stakeholders are involved in the governance of the commons: the state, local and immigrant fishermen, cattle herders, conservationists, etc. This makes Rufiji a target for different resource users, locals and outsiders alike.

However, the paper also presents important differentiations, depending on specific interests of local and foreign groups using the common-pool resources. The research focused on two specific villages. One, Ikwiriri, is closer to a regional town, and also to the City of Dar es Salaam and its lake attracts outside fishermen. Local people are therefore unable to act collectively and cope with problems related to the