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Common Property Resource Management
Institutions in Communal Tenure Regimes

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Prepared for the workshop on: "Institutional Dynamics in Communal Grazing Regimes."
10 - 12 December, 1990.

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Abstract

A tenure system, viewed holistically, is in effect a dynamic resource system consisting of a diversity of resource processes and rules, regulations, rights and obligations that define the relationship between the resource users and the resources as well as between themselves. The resource system is essentially conditioned by the tenure regime that governs the resources that are utilised in the resource processes. In common property regimes, the development of common property management units is related to and determined by the patterns of resource use. As such, the locus of control over decisions affecting the exploitation of these resources should be expected to be as close as possible to those people actually involved in their exploitation. However, since the advent of colonialism in Africa, decisions affecting the exploitation of resources by small rural communities are increasingly made in bureaucratic institutions far removed from the consequences of their actions. Numerous evidence can however be adduced to demonstrate that the survival of biological resources is best managed at the local level. Moreover, and particularly in the case of Sub - Saharan Africa, resources have been exploited in the interests and according to the designs of the rich industrialised North, resulting in patently unsuitable land use systems and institutions. The cumulative negative effect of bureaucratic control and externally imposed land use systems is evidenced by an apparently inexorable trend towards resource degradation and depletion, diminished capacity to guarantee food security and the general destruction of common property resources in most of Sub - Saharan Africa. These processes are frequently attributed to the "tragedy of the commons" and the policy solution suggested in this paradigm is privatisation of the commons. This paper attempts to show that, on the contrary, the re - institution of appropriate local control and management of biological resources in common property regimes will be the decisive factor in reversing the trend of degradation. The primary focus will be on the management of wildlife resources under common property regimes.

Introduction

A system of tenure has been defined as "... simply a bundle of rights,..., rights to use land,trees and their products in certain ways and sometimes to exclude others" (Bruce and Fortmann, 1988:2). The system basically defines the rights and obligations of an individual or group regarding certain resources governed by that system. Three distinct tenure regimes, or property rights systems, have been distinguished as follows: "freehold", "leasehold" and "communal" or "traditional" tenure. Tenure systems are not necessarily mutually exclusive and sometimes coexist within the same production system. "...it is not at all unusual for a village to have a certain tenure over a piece of land, while an individual or family has tenure over part of the same land, and the state asserts a residual title in the same land" (Bruce and Fortmann, 1989:2). A fourth tenure regime, or rather the absence of any clear system of rights and obligations, open access, can also be identified as a distinct tenure system.

Private property refers to the individual's right to exclude others from a resource or resources. Common property refers to the individual's right not to be excluded from the group's resources. State property refers to the right of the state to exclude individuals or groups of individuals from some resource or resources.

A common property regime is thus based on some concept of equal access to a resource by all members of a clearly defined group. Group membership is strictly defined either in lineage or residence terms or by some other criteria that is understood and accepted by all group members and non members. Communal tenure thus defines a common property regime.

Communal tenure, indeed all tenure regimes, are dynamic institutions that are always changing in response to changes in their environments. Some of these changes are in response to external circumstances rather than to any internal dynamics within the system itself. It has been demonstrated for instance that the communal land tenure system existing in Zimbabwe today is more an artifact of colonial interventions than the result of internal dynamics within that system (Cheater,1990). It is also evident that the tenure system pertaining to most resources in Zimbabwe were politically determined to protect the interest of certain groups while at the same time depriving others of access to those resources. This paper will focus primarily on the tenure system regarding wildlife resources.

Communal tenure has been indicted for inevitably leading to resource degradation because of its inability to control the behaviour of individuals within that group regarding the utilization of the group's common resources. The chief architect of this position is Hardin who advanced the "Tragedy of the Commons" paradigm whose basic premise is that individuals will attempt to maximise their benefit from common properties at the

expense of the resources themselves and the group as a whole. The main critics of this position point out that it really defines an open access regime rather than common property. These critics, (Ciriacy-Wantrup and Bishop, 1975; Lawry, 1988,89; Ostrom, 1987;), note that any common property regime by implication also refers to the existence of some institutional arrangement to regulate both access to the commons and the rights and obligations of individuals within the group regarding the commons. It is also pointed out that due to the introduction of foreign norms regarding the utilisation of these resources, such institutional arrangements have everywhere atrophied through desuetude (Lawry, 1989; Marks, 1984; Berry, 1989; Scoones and Wilson, 1989).

The response of local people to the expropriation of hitherto common properties has inevitably been to exploit these on an individual basis, in other words the substitution of state property for common property has at the same time introduced the rationality of open access to local communities. In the case of wildlife, exploitation has tended to take the form of "stealing" the resource from the state by individuals whenever they can (Murphree, 1990). One can also speculate that a certain class of individuals specialising in poaching has come into existence and that these engage in various forms of exchange with other members of the group who do not have similar access or for various reasons can not engage in poaching.

Local responses to new definitions of common property have varied from attempts on the part of the rich peasantry to expropriate and privatise the commons, thus beginning a process of proletarianisation that is disguised by several factors, (Cheater, 1989; Ranger, 1989; Murombedzi, 1990) to attempts on the part of a section of the peasantry to expropriate private land through "squatting".

At the same time, a process of differentiation is occurring among the peasantry. This process dates back to colonial and pre-colonial times but has obviously been accelerated by independence and the introduction of increased access to markets, credit facilities and cash income remittances for some peasant households (Jackson and Collier, 1988; Amin, 1990; Scoones and Wilson, 1989; Cousins 1990). Such differentiation inevitably results in a redefinition of individuals' relationships with common properties.

All these processes thus point to the need to redefine individuals' and groups' rights to common properties if the current trend of degradation and decimation is to be halted and reversed. The search for solutions should be predicated upon the recognition that viewed in proper perspective, the problem of resource degradation is in essence the problem of the unnatural death of common property management institutions. To emphasize this point, I will briefly trace the historical origins and functions of common property institutions and how they served to regulate sustainable utilization of the resources. Next I will

show how colonialism destroyed these institutions and how resource degradation inevitably resulted. Finally, this should enable some conclusion that demonstrates the need for reintroducing appropriate local level common property resource management institutions in Zimbabwe's communal lands.

A fundamental assumption running through this paper is that the tenure system in the so called communal areas is still essentially "communal" and that there are no immediate plans to change this. I also assume that it is the intention of policy makers to increase the ability of this communal system of tenure to manage common property resources on a sustainable basis.

The role of common property resource management institutions in communal tenure regimes

While evidence exists to suggest that the tenure system prevailing in the "Communal Lands" (CLs) today is dynamic and undergoing numerous changes (Cheater 1990; Murombedzi 1990; Ranger 1989), it is not my purpose here to discuss the tenure system per se, suffice it to mention that the guiding assumption in this paper is that the system has elements of communal tenure regarding access to certain "key" resources such as grazing, water and woodland etc.

The tenure system that was encouraged by the colonisers was essentially "communal" although in effect the colonial state had taken over ownership of all "tribal land" Ranger (1985;1989). Other writers have also argued that the designation "communal" with reference to the tenure system existing in Zimbabwe's so called "Communal Lands" is not only inappropriate but also a result of the "ideologization of the land issue" by the colonial authorities which has been continued by the post independence administration because it serves the interests of the ruling class (vide e.g. Cheater 1989; 1990 for a fuller discussion of "communal tenure" in Zimbabwe).

The problems of resource degradation in the CLs today have been well documented (Moyana, 1984; Cliffe, 1988; Scoones, 1987; etc). A major cause of this degradation is the colonial system of concentrating people on marginal land to curtail their agricultural productivity and force them into wage labour. However, a political economy approach is not sufficient to explain the lack of local responses and solutions to resource degradation. A fuller explanation is to be found in the effect of the colonial system on local institutions' ability to regulate access to and utilization of common property resources. Wilson (1988) documents the extent of environmental knowledge among the peasantry of Mazvihwa in Zvishavane district and demonstrates how this knowledge was not applied in conservation because of the inability of government institutions and extension agencies to incorporate appropriate local technical knowledge into their programmes.

The problems of managing common properties under communal tenure regimes are familiar to students of the "Commons" debate Hardin (1968). In this thesis, Hardin maintains that all common properties will inevitably be degraded because of the failure of communal tenure regimes to ensure rational utilization. According to Hardin, the rational herdsman in a communal tenure regime will invest in more livestock at the expense of the rangelands and without regard to the actions of other herdsmen using the same commons. The benefits of the resultant degradation are greater to the individual herdsman than the costs which are borne by the whole group. Critics of the commons paradigm argue that Hardin is essentially writing about a situation of open access rather than a communal tenure regime that specifically limits access to the resource in question to a clearly defined group of persons, with clearly defined rights and obligations regarding their utilization of the resource.

Ostrom defines institutional arrangements as: "... the rules in use by a community to determine who has access to common pool resources, what use-units authorised participants can consume and at what times, and who will monitor and enforce these rules" (Ostrom, 1987: in McCay and Acheson (eds), 1987). Hence an institutional arrangement refers not only to a constituted body of persons but also to a prescribed constitution to guide its activities.

The policy solution suggested in the tragedy of the commons is the allocation of full private property rights to a set of individuals. Privatisation constitutes an institutional arrangement that allocates regulatory authority to the individual. Critics of the tragedy of the commons argue that privatisation will not necessarily solve the problems of common property resources, rather it will institute a different tenure regime.

Ciriacy - Wantrup and Bishop (1975) maintain that common property regimes do not necessarily imply the absence of control, rights or obligations. On the contrary, such regimes usually develop institutions that are specifically designed to regulate the utilization of the resources that fall under the jurisdiction of that regime. Such institutions also promise to be central to the solutions of today's pressing resource problems.

Berry (forthcoming) argues that the imposition of one economic system over another necessarily leads to the subjugation of all existing institutions and the creation of ones more suitable to serving the needs of the new economic system. Colonialism in Africa led to the institution of colonial economies that were designed to benefit the interests of the colonising classes. In the Zimbabwean context, local populations were relegated to increasingly smaller and congested reserves to make way for European agriculture and to create labour reserves for the nascent colonial industries (Arrighi, 1970; Bates, 1983; Beinart et al., 1986; Olson, 1985)

Thus the resources of the colonised nations and regions have been exploited primarily to satisfy the needs of the industrialised North, and the institutions that have been developed to facilitate and sustain this process are necessarily based on the experiences of the North. Marks (1984), referring to the effect of colonialism on wildlife utilization in Zambia, writes that:

"Many of the institutional forms and concepts developed in Northern Europe for the conservation of temperate fauna are inimical to the circumstances of the tropics and their different ecological, political, social and cultural constraints". (1984:xii).

For Marks wildlife conservation should be defined within the context of human ecological problems. The imposition of colonial institutions has however shifted the locus of control over resources from those communities whose survival depends on them, and are thus best placed to conserve them, to far removed institutions whose interests are not necessarily beneficial to the resource. As Marks puts it:

"... decisions affecting wildlife survival and the welfare of small - scale rural societies, often existing on the same terrain, are increasingly made in bureaucratic institutions far removed from the consequences of their actions. ... the survival of biological resources, such as wildlife, is best managed at the local level. In this view, the welfare of indigenous peoples and the management of their resources are linked directly." (1984;xiii).

Bromley and Cernea note that the dissolution of common property management institutions at the local level through the imposition of state ownership, rather than any inherent unsuitability of the communal system of tenure, is to be blamed for the degradation of most common property resources. In their words:

"Resource degradation in developing countries, while incorrectly attributed to "common property resources", actually originates in the dissolution of local institutional arrangements whose very purpose was to give rise to resource use patterns that were sustainable. The dissolution of local institutional arrangements arose from a combination of powerful rulers at some remove from the village, colonial administration, and the rise of the nation state. National governments have not replaced these former resource management regimes" (Bromley and Cernea, 1988)(emphasis added).

Lawry (1989) observes that the imposition of state ownership and control results in local institutions losing their legal rights to control local resource use. At the same time, the state, because of logistical limitations of staff and funding, is unable to put effective management systems in place. The emergence of local solutions to future resource management problems is also effectively forestalled in the process.

"... the state's principal objective in centralising control [is] to assert its political authority over local interests, not to impose new resource management regimes. States have concentrated their regulatory efforts on individual users, not on local user groups" (Lawry, 1989:5).

The need for a management regime that focuses on user groups rather than individual users is thus demonstrated. In the case of wildlife, the effect of state control has been the emergence of utilization forms based on individual ability to evade detection by the state agencies. The state's ability to regulate this form of utilisation has reached the limit of its capacity and the state is now forced to seek new and alternative forms of wildlife utilisation in the communal areas. In Marks' words:

"Once in place, protective laws and institutions obtained their own momentum and continue today to the point where, as a strategy, they have reached the limits of traditional skills and resources" (Marks, 1984;12).

✓ The CAMPFIRE programme is one such initiative that is based on a recognition of the need for group ownership and control as the most viable regulatory mechanism and one that can best ensure sustainable utilisation. It goes without saying that the success of Campfire will, in the final analysis, be determined by the extent to which the programme is able to create viable local management institutions.

Thus the policy solution to the current problems of common property resources lies in the development of an appropriate institutional framework through which clearly defined user groups can regulate resource utilization and exclude non users from the benefit of their common resources. As Lawry concludes: "... the devolution of greater management control to local user - groups is a broadly desirable policy goal" (1988:18).

Since the basic management problem identified here is the inherent unsuitability of western institutions and management style, the resource degradation problem is, therefore, also a crisis for the western management style and perception of sustainable utilization. Hence a change in western perceptions of local resources has to be an integral part of any solution to common property problems. Of particular importance in the present context is the need for local bureaucratic and technical staff to realign their perceptions of local capabilities to manage their own resources.

"At issue here is the survival of species, but also at stake is the survival of the Northern way of viewing wild animals and the survival of a way of life that seeks to create and exploit wealth rather than one that seeks to live within the confines of environmental limits." (Marks 1984;6: from Marnhem 1960).

Colonial institutions were superimposed on local institutions to service the needs of the new colonial economic system. The result was that local institutions that had worked so well to ensure rational utilization and equitable access to resources atrophied through desuetude since they were no longer relevant to the new system. The colonial institutions thus substituted did not however have the capacity to regulate access to and utilization of common properties and thus could not generate appropriate local level responses to the resource degradation problems triggered by the concentration of large numbers of people and livestock on marginal land and by new forms of allocation and access to resources.

Moreover, colonial policies and institutions were viewed by local populations as being designed to negate their own achievements and intentions and thus were resisted. This was particularly true of "traditional" institutions that were maintained by the British colonial administrations in their system of indirect rule (Berry, forthcoming). Consequently, the colonial authorities found it necessary to enforce and police their policies in the face of this local resistance. As Graham expresses it:

" Wildlife protection, like other imposed policies, has always carried with it the implications of force, of quasi-military operations, and of sanctions" (Graham, 1973).

Thus colonial regulation of access to and utilisation of resources was not consensual but rather coercive. Given such a situation, local regulatory institutions were rendered ineffective and in effect were deliberately demobilised and disbanded by the colonial system except where they served the interests of the system.

Thus while the structural inability of the communal lands to support the human and livestock populations were evident to the residents of the communal areas, local solutions were not forthcoming. This suggests that the problem was the inability of the new local institutions (created by the colonial government) to respond to the problem of resource degradation in a satisfactory way. This would also further suggest that the solution would be to create more appropriate institutions at the local level that ensure the participation of all concerned in the regulation of the utilization of common property resources. For a fuller discussion of the political economy of common property resource degradation in colonial Zimbabwe see Murombedzi (1990).

Local Level Common Property Institutions and the Problems of Popular Participation

A major problem to be faced in considering the creation of appropriate local level common property resource management institutions is of how to enhance the participation of all people who will be affected by the actions of such institutions in both the institution building process and in its subsequent functions.

Several recent studies suggest that there is an increasing amount of differentiation among the rural peasantry. Evidence indicates that, for instance, it is only a minority of communal farmers (about 10%) who have benefited most from the support measures for small scale agriculture and who are responsible for the much publicised increase in the peasant share of national marketed output (Jackson and Collier, 1988; Weiner, 1988; Cliffe 1988; Amin, 1990; Cousins 1990). This differentiation among the peasantry has not received much official recognition. As Brand puts it:

" Whereas the new Zimbabwean leadership has understandably been acutely aware of racial disparities and some of the associated rural/urban differences, it has shown little awareness of differentiation or inequalities within the communal areas themselves. ... While there might be sensitivity about the position or influence of large commercial farmers, there appears to be little about that of bigger peasant farmers or rural businessmen. Master farmers and successful cash farmers are held up instead as models to be emulated, without questions being asked, for example, about how some of them managed to gain access to more arable land than others in the community " (Brand, forthcoming).

Economic differentiation among households is a direct result of the integration of local and national economies and has important implications for local resource management. In most of rural Zimbabwe, differentiation among "peasant" households is the result of households responding differently to the opportunities offered by new markets for agricultural produce, wage labour opportunities in the urban areas, education, and the adoption of new technologies. Thus while some peasants continue practising essentially subsistence agriculture, some are increasingly becoming commercial operators. This stratification will suggest the development of different production rationales and management styles. Such production strategies and management styles also indicate different perceptions of and actions regarding the utilization of common properties (Lawry: 1988,53).

Efforts to develop local organizations for managing common resources in situations where interests of the commons users are becoming increasingly divided by different economic orientations are likely to be complicated by the tendency for commercialising groups to reduce, and not enhance, their obligation to smaller holders (Esman and Uphoff, 1984).

Lawry (1988) cites research on changes in communal grazing tenure in Botswana (Behnke, 1984; Peters,1983) to illustrate how large stock-holder commercial operators have attempted to restrict access of small holders to communal grazing through exercise of control over water rights.

"The commercially successful will attempt to reinforce their new superiority by acquiring private use rights to land that in theory is still communally owned" (Behnke, 1984: in

Lawry, 1988;56).

Scoones and Wilson (1989) suggest an economic cost-benefit analysis to explain arable expansion into grazing (i.e. into the commons) in the communal areas of Zimbabwe. They observe that such expansion has tended to be more rapid in the overpopulated high potential areas in natural regions ii and iii, and in the areas of spontaneous settlement in the North (mostly the Zambezi Valley). In these areas, returns on opening up of arable land will probably remain higher than the costs of reduced grazing (for both domestic stock and wildlife). Scoones and Wilson also observe that the enclosure of common grazing land is occurring on a mostly small scale around homesteads and sometimes around areas of old abandoned fields. They cite four principal ways in which the "invasion of the commons" is occurring:

1. The incorporation of lands adjacent to existing holdings, drainage and path lines in a continuation of madiro (an ideology of individual freedom to counter colonial technocratic control that came into existence during the liberation war). "This expansion is mainly done by resource rich farmers, for whom arable land is a severe production constraint".

2. The opening up of new fields in the grazing area, usually by young men who cannot wait for their inheritance of land or whose existing inheritances are too small, sometimes with the local authority's (sabhuku, chief, VIDCO chairperson, councillor etc) illegal authority.

3. Direct "squatting" by outsiders on grazing land with some local permission for which illegal payments are sometimes made (note for instance the recent Mayambara saga, The Herald: 26 November, 1989). "There may often be resentment by local people, but again it seems that the right to survive - even at common cost or cost to another community-is powerfully recognised".

4. A feature of sandy soil areas under population pressure is expansion into grazing land through homefields around the homestead. "Such homefields tend to be more productive than most "outfields", [because they enable the application of fertility inputs without transport problems and the benefits of homestead litter may also be considerable] and it is noticeable that most of the really productive farmers have managed to obtain homefields. ... Attempts to destroy homefields use, or to villagise people, will therefore have a negative effect on productivity" (Scoones and Wilson, 1989; 85-7).

Another dynamic that is likely to have a profound bearing on the viability of local resource management institutions is the existence of a diffuse system of land rights. With reference to local grazing management regimes, Scoones and Wilson observe that:

"Prior to instituting grazing regimes the issue of exclusive land rights has to be dealt with. Existing land rights involve a diffuse pattern of overlapping rights, including those of land spirits, chiefs, ward heads, village heads, local patrilineage heads and individual homesteads. Rights at any level never fully exclude rights at another level" (Scoones and Wilson, 1989;108).

The existence of this diffuse system of land rights has been shown to have precluded the emergence of any strong land management units, at least in nineteenth century Zimbabwe (Mukamuri, 1987; Scoones and Wilson, 1989). This evidence contradicts Holleman's (1959) assertion that "...wards (matunhu) were the basic units of land management among the Shona...". Scoones and Wilson warn that the fact that wards (matunhu) are considered by rural people, especially among chiefly lineages, to be administrative units of land, is not necessarily proof that they are resource management units.

Lawry (1988) argues that the diversification of income earning opportunities and strategies within households erodes the ability of "traditional" authorities to exercise authority in local resource management issues.

"Much of [traditional] authority was grounded in economic roles played by chiefs within the confines of the subsistence economy. But with the growth of labour migration and off farm sources of income the chiefs' bases of authority have in many places been much diminished" (Lawry, 1988;57).

This discussion raises some serious questions about the assumption that local communities can develop and enforce their own common property resource management institutions. As Lawry so aptly summarises the problems thus generated:

" In fact, the demise of local mechanisms for managing resources is for the most part attributable to the kinds of influences upon local communities - diversification of household economic strategies and economic differentiation - that make emergence of community rules to meet contemporary resource management problems increasingly problematic" (Lawry, 1988;58).

However, in spite of the problems of instituting local management of common property, it is my contention that the problems of managing common properties, particularly those faced by small holders whose livelihoods are most profoundly dependent on access to the commons, will not be solved by individualising common resource tenure. The case for a public interest in the improvement of the management of common property resources, particularly when they are of national concern as in the case of wildlife, cannot be overemphasised. But, as lawry argues, exercise of a public role should not be constrained by the ill

founded assumption that communities can easily provide collective management on their own.

In the Zimbabwean context, some serious doubts have also been raised about the extent to which the decentralisation of local government will enhance local participation. The common view is that the new local level structures of local government have been created only to serve as appropriate units for the mobilization of local resources for centrally planned projects rather than as local fora for the conceptualisation, mobilisation and implementation of development projects. Moreover, these new units have no legal status and at this early stage of their development, are in the throes of a crisis of legitimacy. The capacity of such institutions as resource management units thus has to be carefully assessed (Murombedzi, 1986; 90; Sibanda, 1986).

Brand (forthcoming) aptly states the position thus:

"VIDCOs and WADCOs are nonetheless probably here to stay. Like some early chiefs' or headmen's domains which were modified by population movements or violated through the ignorance or deliberate interference by colonial authorities, but which acquired a firm de facto status, they are likely to become increasingly institutionalised as time goes on. The important questions centre on the role they will play as foci of community power and collective action. Indications thus far are not encouraging. Much will depend on the responsibilities and room for autonomous action which they are given, beyond serving as conduits for the implementation of measures or projects conceived by the state or private development agencies, and their ability to serve as linkages with other local institutions."

Thus while devolution and participation are desirable goals, numerous problems exist which must be taken cognisance of at the outset before attempts are made to create new institutions for the local management of common properties.

Reshaping Internal Order: Some Considerations in the Establishment of Local Level Common Property Resource Management Institutions

The role of local institutional arrangements in solving common property resource problems in the communal areas, albeit this will encounter some serious implementation problems, has been demonstrated. As Ostrom states, "...it is possible for those involved in a commons dilemma to arrive at a set of rules that enables them to keep total use within the limits of sustainable yield" (1987:262). It is, however, imperative that such an arrangement be based on a system of property rights that would allow such institutions sufficient scope to make decisions regarding the utilization and distribution of the resources at their common collective disposal. This suggests that the devolution of management of common property resources necessarily

has to be predicated on some change in the tenure rules to facilitate a concurrent devolution of property rights.

Strong evidence exists to suggest that there is more than a single institutional way to solve the problems of common property resources. Ostrom (1987) argues that while the economic activities of an institution "determine", to some extent, the development of that institution, "[The] institutional rules used when changing other institutional rules may play ... a large role in affecting the direction of future changes..." (Ostrom, 1987:262).

Furthermore each community's peculiar ecological, economic and social conditions must be important considerations in the establishment of local institutions. As Murphree (1990) states with reference to the establishment of local wildlife management institutions in Zimbabwe's CLs:

"Given the particular nature of wildlife resources, viable management strategies for sustained exploitation often require a territorial base larger than that which wards have available. Furthermore, an ecologically sound determination of this territorial base may conflict with ward or even district boundaries. These considerations suggest a necessary compromise in many instances between social and ecological criteria, possibly including new structures of coalition between wards and between districts" (Murphree, 1990:21).

The element of the time needed to create new institutions and to learn how to create successful rule systems has also been emphasised (Lawry, 1988; Ostrom, 1987). It is argued that new systems of management are not created by a single sweeping administrative reform that sets up local councils in all communities. The power of local communities to regulate their own properties is the cumulative result of trial and error methods that are used as villagers become more aware of the consequences of current rules in a process of conflict with competitors for the resources. Such a dialectical process will clarify who has access to what resources at which times and for what purposes (Ostrom, 1987).

The capacity to monitor the results of devolution to local institutions at relatively low cost, the extent to which the local managers can directly observe how the rules they are using are affecting the commons, and the extent to which the rules in use are understood by all the participants are also major factors in the long run success of local management systems.

Another important consideration is that the institution must, over time, be able to acquire legitimacy in the view of those whose behaviour it seeks to regulate. Such legitimacy, in my view, obtains in the system of property rights that governs the individuals actions regarding their common properties. It is thus essential that the group view whatever institution that comes

into existence as the custodian of their resources in order for that institution to develop the capacity to enforce the agreed upon rules.

Lawry (1989:18) points out some three important considerations in instituting local management of common properties:

1. Common property management schemes must incorporate clear incentives for individual participation. The distribution of common property benefits in relation to individual labour and other contributions must be clear from the beginning.
2. Communities will welcome devolution of authority, particularly where it gives them preferential rights in relation to others.
3. The most effective management systems will emerge out of collaborative arrangements, where the state provides technical assistance and assists in the enforcement of rules agreed to by a credible institution.

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the first step needed in the establishment of appropriate local level common property resource management institutions is a process of participatory research designed to consult with local communities on existing resource use patterns, the desired changes in property rights, and the appropriate institutions to regulate these rights. Such a process must, in the final analysis, utilise local technical knowledge as far as possible rather than ignore its existence.

There is also a need for the institutions thus created to incorporate the diffuse rights systems existing within communities to enhance the institutions' capacity to regulate access and utilization and reduce potential conflict of interest.

Finally, the new institutions must be able to mutate and change to suit changing circumstances, technologies and respond to new challenges as they develop.

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