

**OUT-SCALING OF HYBRID INSTITUTION FOR SOCIO-  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONSERVATION: THE CASE OF MBINGA DISTRICT  
TANZANIA**

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**Abstract**

I present a case study of institutional hybridization in Mbinga district within and across politically defined boundaries after the occurrence of a stress, which purist institutions (state institutions or customary institutions independently) fail to contain. Thus, based on the experiential learning and facilitation by non-local-based players, hybrid institution is designed in one spatial space at certain temporal point. This seems to be successful in addressing the stress. As such, other social players at another politically defined boundary adapt the hybrid institution based on their local context. Similarly, some actions governed by the hybrid institution at specific spaces of time and place out-scale across the politically defined boundaries to other spatial and temporal spaces. As a conclusion, the implications of out-scaling and hybridization are given with reference to socio-economic development and environmental conservation.

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## 1. Introduction

Institutions have multiple definitions: as organizations (Stinchcombe, 1997), as rules of the game (North, 1990; Nootboom, 1996), as set of rules used by a set of individuals to govern repetitive actions whose outcome not only affect those individuals but also others (Ostrom, 1992), as collective values and rules and practices aimed at enforcing those values (Peters, 1999), etc.

Institutions are thus important as enablers of or constraints to the human behaviors, practices or actions (North, 1993). Therefore, institutions can bring people together or keep them apart based on their institutional identities, their compatibilities, and/or their incompatibilities. This is why some say institutions structure relations among the people and even predict the way people will behave and act. Also, institutions structure the way people act vis-à-vis their livelihood systems (Anand, 2001), shedding light regarding who is entitled what, when and where, and who should be accountable and responsible to who and in what, and who is supposed to get specific benefits or a stream of benefits and at what moment, etc. Likewise, institutions show and determine the nature of linkages among the social systems and the ecological or environmental systems (Ostrom, 1990; Ostrom, 2005). Thus, institutions relate with people's livelihoods and environment on which these livelihoods can be acquired. In-fact they bridge interactions between human beings and their environments. And they can be used as foundations upon which to build in the restructuring of interactions between humankind and the environment surrounding humankind in a certain anticipated way.

In the real world situation, certain types of institutions govern in the field wherein other institutions exist along the same functional domain thus interacting in one way or another or multiple institutions may co-exist in the same field but undertake different roles and functions. In-fact in a single institutional field there is a complexity of institutions of different types, nature, scope of operation, area of operation and so forth. Therefore, there is a possibility for the institutions to interfuse and make what is referred to as hybrid institutions. These lose part of their original identities so that to form one institution which is a product of two or more types. The hybrid institution may have synergistic effect in terms of enhanced power of governing and enforcing the attainment of certain purposes than the individual ones in their original state. Such functions could be those related to integrated economic improvement and environmental conservation wherein the aim of transforming into hybrid form is to make a robust institution with diverse adaptive characteristics.

The phrase concept *hybrid institution* is related to the concept *hybridization*. Hybridization can be described as blending of two or more different things to make a new thing whose form is an intermediate of the different combined things. The outcome of hybridization is the birth of an offspring that is neither completely new nor does it remain with the origin form and nature. When hybridization involves two or more institutional categories it is termed as institutional hybridization. Institutional hybridization occurs when there is a stress which has attained a threshold at which individual institutional categories are incapable to resolve or even when they have the power to do so, the outcome of these individual institutional effects is less than the desired effect. In other words, a synergetic effect is produced that has high resultant outcome through blending of individual institutional categories.

Environmental conservation is the broader concept which can have different interpretations and entails a complexity of roles and functions. Among those roles include tree planting, conservation of water sources, conservation agriculture, etc. Because a human being lives on the environment, he/she interacts with the environment positively or negatively. Negative interactions result into compromising the services that could be supplied and supported by the environment by degrading the environment whereas positive interactions lead to improved productivity of the environment by ensuring that the areas with negative linkages are turned into productive connections. However, in this process, humankind needs incentives. As such, the integration of livelihoods and ecological interests is important.

The utilitarian role of hybridization can become manifested at various spaces of place, time, and culture. When the hybrid institution has successfully managed to contain or challenge a problematic issue that purist institutions (state-based or customary institutions) have not been able to contain using their independent powers, the usefulness thereof will be sensed and perhaps adapted at the diverse scales of place, time and culture. The act of hybrid institution being adapted from one scale of time, place and or culture to another scale of the similar variable(s) is called *out-scaling* of the hybrid institutions. Such out-scaling can occur to harmonize the integrity between environmental interests and livelihood needs.

While there is a broad knowledge on the importance and effects of formal and informal institutions in environmental conservation (Lingard et al, 2003; Pomeroy et al., 2001; Yasmi et al., 2007; Naugran, 2002), less is known on the interactions between and among hybrid institutions, environmental conservation and socio-economic development. This study therefore

focuses on such linkages to enhance an understanding on how hybrid institutions enable the attainment of livelihood and ecological outcomes and uses Mbinga district as the case study. The article provides a highlight on the emergence of hybrid institutions in Mbinga district, and the rationale and process of this development as well as out-scaling of these institutions spatially and temporally and implications of this out-scaling on livelihoods and environmental statuses. It also unveils changes of the hybrid institutions and their roles based on the contextual realities.

The paper is organized as follows: first a conceptual framework is presented, followed by description of the methodology employed to collect evidences for this paper. Then, the two cases of Kindimba and Kitanda villages are highlighted. These cases show the way institutional hybridization occurred within politically defined boundaries, and out-scaled from one village to another. Following the empirical experiences, conclusions and policy implications are drawn based on the cases on institutional hybridization and out-scaling, and recommendations are ultimately provided.

## **2. Institutional hybridization: A conceptual framework**

Institutional hybridization that occurs along spaces of culture, time and place has implications on socio-economic development and environmental conservation. However, this blending depends on the willingness of all players and pressure created therein to overcome barriers in terms of lack of readiness among the actors that perhaps have private interests (legitimate or illegitimate) which they perceive as will potentially be eliminated in the process of hybridization. Actors are generally not static, not confined to particular boundaries but interact amongst themselves and with other players internally and externally, and these interactions may create opportunities for access to other spaces of time, place and culture. Access to these spaces enables actors to acquaint with new experiences, opportunities, new resources, etc, which challenge their ways of thinking, views and perspectives as well as attitude at a particular space of place while reflecting on and creating mind maps of the status of spaces of place and culture at their points of origin. This mind transformative process makes social actors meditate on how the existing institutional resources at their original space of place can be blended in keeping with the feasibility of that space in combination with spaces of culture and time. Interactions amongst actors' willingness governed by certain institutions and compatibility of those institutions to hybridize, and the utility envisaged by actors to be acquired from hybridization, and the power existing in that

blending process to overcome counter forces by social players that oppose the change, because of the fear to lose personal or group interests in the hybridization process, will enable out-scaling of hybridization at various spaces of culture, time and place.

Pieterse (2001) views hybridization in terms of hybridity. In this thinking hybridity is conceived as the outcome of push of mobility, migration and multiculturalism. Also, the author views hybridity as stemming from transformation of historical and existing cultural and institutional arrangements, as well as the emerging tradition of modernity as influenced by the wake of technologies thus driving combination and re-combinations of existing and old values, knowledge and cultures. The scholar further underscores the implication of hybridity as problematising the boundaries and certain identities. In other words, for the hybridity implies the erosion of certain identities.

For the institutional hybridization to occur there should be incentives. These may take the form of carrot or stick inducements. It may occur as a carrot incentive when the decision towards hybridizing is a consent and willingness of the players to be involved in the hybridization. For some circumstances, nonetheless, creation of the hybrid institutions may not win blessings from all the potential actors, but though some may not be happy about such partnerships they find themselves in because their exclusion results in their denial of access to certain urgent utilities. This situation is thus described as stick-incentive driven hybridization regime (Frič, 2007). In the similar vein, Thelen (2003) can be implied as conceptualizing about incentivized institutional transformation and reconfiguration though this author did not use the direct incentive language. According to Thelen, institutional innovation is a sure and constant situation in the institutional domain because of the circumstantial drive in the setting wherein multiple institutions exist, layer and interact. As such, institutions do not exist in vacuum nor are they blocked and locked-in irreversibly by any historical pathways, but such the pathway(s) may lead to innovation towards institutional hybridization.

Coe and Lee (2013) uses their concept of strategic localization wherein partnering institutions and actors become transformed by adapting their identities through embodying values and characteristic of others in the blending process. Each of the hybridizing institutions has to adapt and be reconfigured to suit the resultant hybrid form. However, some (e.g. Young, 1995) have challenged this concept of hybridization for its simplicity on the issue of power relation and inequality. These argue the aspect of power and inequality cannot be swallowed by hybridity.

### 3. Methodology

We used participatory monitoring and case study and institutional analysis approaches to get data about institutional hybridization. Participatory monitoring enabled us to collect data at different times and from different spatial points while the institutional analysis enabled us, at these different times and places, to analyze institutions that emerged, the drive for their emergence, and the way they interacted. The methods used to collect the data included focus group discussion, documentation, observation and visitation. The use of diverse approaches and methods facilitated collection of a variety of information/data, to compare the collected data, to confirm them and revise as appropriate.

### 4. Presentation of the cases

Two cases are presented here on experience about hybrid institutions and the conservation of environment and livelihood management in the two villages wherein one of the villages (Kindimba) is the founder of the experience whereas another village (Kitanda) gets into this experience through institutional out-scaling that transcended the boundaries of the founder village.

#### 4.1 Hybrid institution, environmental management and livelihood improvement in Kindimba village

The emergence of hybrid institutions in Kindimba village had its base in the implementation of a project on sustainable rural development by various institutional stakeholders including government (village and district), Sokoine University of Agriculture, clan leaders, church and the village community. The coming together of these actors originated from the integrated urge of conserving the environment and improving their livelihoods whereby challenges that stemmed from planning meetings included stagnation and lagging behind of development activities in the past (experiential learning) because of the lack of effective representation of the community while the state institutions took a dominant and monopoly position. As such, the state actors benefitted themselves in, arguably, a deceptive way through the use of those institutions at the expense of the community. Instead of propagating the past and putting the new project to the risk, the community agreed to form an institution (a tool) which would have representation of the informal/customary institutions, formal/state institutions and other institutions in the area. An

informal institution called *Sengu*<sup>1</sup> was formed. However this was not a new name among the local people because this institution was the adaptation of a traditional institution that undertook mediatory, development and other various roles within the framework of customary domain. Its composition under the traditional arrangement entailed members of the clan that came together to ponder on various socio-economic, social cultural and development issues under that clan and it had a sort of top-down organisation whereby there was an elderly person serving as a clan leader. The adaptation of this institution occurred by transforming it to the different form in terms of its composition of various state-based, religious based, gender based, and clan based players but it also became a hybrid institution by putting together representatives from diverse village institutions. Also, the functions of the hybrid *sengu* became transformed from being confined to and operating within the boundaries of customary organization to becoming an institutionalized and legitimized organ operating across customary and state-based frameworks at the village level. In other words, the state-customary boundaries melted when the hybrid *sengu* institution was created. The power of hybrid *sengu* therefore fitted at the centre of customary (informal) and state (formal) institutions.

#### 4.2 Adaptation of *Sengu* in Kitanda village

Before describing the adaptation of *sengu* institution in Kitanda village, a short history of status quo at this village is worthy highlighting. In this village a development approach that was used to undertake livelihood and environmental conservation activities was that of farmers' groups. Nindi et al (forthcoming) provide a background on how, when and why farmers' groups approach emerged. In nutshell, the formation of these groups stemmed from the urge of the villagers to improve their livelihoods, and fish farming activities became a motivator that incentivized group formation. A myriad of groups were later formed and because of the intricate relationships between environmental sustenance and livelihood sustainability, the groups undertook integrated livelihood and environmental conservation activities including beekeeping, tree nursery management and tree planting, improved coffee production, etc. However, while the groups assisted one another in terms of supply of, among others, the knowledge and seed stocks, from 2002 when the first group was formed to 2008, farmers groups did not have any unified

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<sup>1</sup> *Sengu* is the word that comes from the *Matengo* tribe which means a clan-based committee whereby all members of specific clans frequently met and ate together while discussing important socio-economic issues of that clan under the leadership of an elderly person.

network organization. In the coming paragraphs, the emergence of a *sengu* institution in a form of farmers' network and the rationale for its emergence is described.

The adaptation of *sengu* institution in Kitanda village occurred as an out-scaling of *sengu* institution of Kindimba village. This adaptation had its original drive from Kitanda farmers' excursion trip to Kindimba village which was facilitated by a project on sustainable rural development, implemented from 2000 to 2004 by Sokoine University of Agriculture Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SCSRD) in Tanzania. Close to the end of this project, excursion visits were organized wherein farmers from Kindimba village visited Kitanda village and observed activities which were implemented by their farmers' counterparts in this village; then, farmers from Kitanda village visited Kindimba village for the same purpose. While at that time this visit would not appear to incite any potential change in the thinking of the villagers at Kitanda village, as the time passed after the end of the project, such a change emerged. When the project ended, farmers in the two villages went on carrying out their activities but there was a difference in the two villages whereby for the Kitanda village activities seemed to continue at a slow pace whereas at Kindimba village activities appeared to take place at the faster speed. Because the two villages were connected (residents of Kitanda village have relatives in Kindimba village) it was not impossible to learn what transpired in the either of the villages after the end of the project. When villagers from Kitanda village observed the developmental pace that was made by their counterparts in Kindimba village, they made another excursion at their own cost to this village and learned further an approach which they could use to boost their activities. To them it appeared that the *sengu* framework was a backbone for successful implementation of various development and environmental conserving activities in Kindimba village.

The trip to Kindimba village opened a new window in Kitanda village. Kitanda villagers who paid a visit to Kindimba village on their return summoned a meeting of all group members in their village. They then sold their views as to the suitability of *sengu* institution in their activities and for creating holistic development in their village. This meeting was also attended by the village government members. The status quo in terms of field realities in their village dictated the way they had to adapt the *sengu* institution in their village. Because Kitanda village implemented their activities through farmers groups, the resolution was achieved of forming a *sengu* as a network of farmers' groups. As such, each leader of the individual farmers' groups became a member to that *sengu* institution. Government and clan leaders were also represented.



The village executive officer became a member of that group as a government representative whereas one elderly person was selected from among the clan leaders on the basis of his accumulated spatially and temporally experiential capital as this was regarded as wisdom that could empower the elderly to serve as an advisor apart from representing the clans in the village. Also, women were represented.

Out-scaling of *sengu* institution did not end at its own but also some activities that motivated Kitanda villagers out-scaled from Kindimba to Kitanda village. Among the important activities that was adapted from Kindimba village to Kitanda village was hydro-milling. Whereas the formation of this project in Kindimba village was supported by SCSR project during its tenure in the area, Kitanda villagers organized and mobilized themselves to form a similar project in their village. Having seen how the hydromill plant in Kindimba village was used to generate electricity to the dispensary, schools, and teachers' houses, etc, the Kitanda villagers decided to start with testing a small model of the hydromill plant using locally available human and materials resources but also forged a linkage with external based stakeholders to assist with in their efforts as an important step towards the same purpose. Locally available mechanic technicians were used to provide the technical advice while, concurrently, villagers mobilized themselves to make bricks and collected physical resources such as aggregate, sand and stones as preparatory stages towards construction of the hydro-mill. Thus, out-scaling of experiences from Kindimba to Kitanda village occurred at both institutional (rule of the game) level and at practice/activity level.

### 5. Implications and conclusions

Institutional hybridization is imperative for out-scaling and adaptation of hybrid institutions but an outgrowth of out-scaling needs adequate time and harmonization of existing institutions as well as breakage of social players' mindset and attitudinal barriers. One way to break these barriers is through bringing together diverse social actors thus opening visual doors for them to observe the existing opportunities at given spatial space. While such interactive meetings may not seem to have any tangible utility at that temporal point of meeting, when the time is due, players in the institutional field (who seemed to be dormant during the initial meeting time) will take action to follow the rails which non-local-based players might have intended for them during the interactive meetings. As such, investment into farmer-to-farmer consultative meetings is imperative as a capital that could be invested to bring about long-term transformation in favour

of sustainable socio-economic development and environmental conservation. Therefore, the role of an external facilitator should be to assist with opening the eyes of local beneficiaries to see opportunities and obstacles towards their endogenous development for them to act by optimizing the opportunities and creating effective strategies to overcome the obstacles. It must be emphasized here that the role of the facilitator is not to bring the development because that cannot occur overnight, but instead the facilitator role should be that of capacity building and enhancing awareness for the local people themselves to see the need and urgency for change, and thus partake towards that transformation.

### 6. Recommendations

External development partners need to change their perspectives and attitude towards local community development by ensuring that they thoroughly understand the local community from experiential, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and ecological perspectives and linkages among these. In summary this is to say: external interventions planned to be operationalised at the local community should fit within the existing rails and frameworks of the local context for them to be acceptable, sustainable, and to have tangible impacts. Unless the local people establish a trust and confidence with externally imposed interventions, the chances are low for the interventions to attain their intended goals.

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