

The Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance in the Conflict Resolution Process in Protected Areas in Tanzania: A case of Mwambalizi Forest Reserve

Master's Thesis Report



Part of Mwambalizi Forest Reserve. Photo: Danford A. Meshili

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Master Thesis Report

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Abstract

Despite the biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation roles that Protected Areas (PAs) play on our Planet, in some areas, especially in Africa, their establishment and expansion have been associated with social injustices such as unlawful evictions of local communities. Social injustices contribute to conflicts, thereby threatening conservation goals. The application of collaborative governance in resolving conflicts in natural resources management has gained attention among social scientists, natural resource managers and policymakers. However, studies on conflict resolution processes in African protected areas are scanty, including Tanzania. This study aims to understand the conflict resolution processes in PAs by investigating the use of and effectiveness of collaborative governance in resolving conflicts at Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR) in Tanzania. The conceptual framework of collaborative governance was used to understand and analyse the conflict. Interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis were used to gather data. The findings show that conflict resolution was unsuccessful due to inadequacies in implementing collaborative governance. While most conservation officials are sceptical about collaborating due to reliance on other conflict management and resolution strategies, such as law enforcement and the creation of conservation awareness, local people are highly dependent on collaboration due to the fewer alternatives they have, expecting it to yield positive outcomes. This study concludes that it is not that collaborative governance did not help resolve the conflict at MFR, but rather, collaborative governance was not efficiently practised. Therefore, this study recommends effective implementation of collaboration governance when next opportunity for conflict resolution materialises.

Keywords: Qualitative research; conflict management & resolution; collaborative governance; protected areas; community governance

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Ahsanteni sana!

List of Abbreviations

CBFM	Community Based Forest Management
COP	Conference of Parties
DC	District Commissioner
DFC	District Forest Conservator
DFO	District Forest Officer
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
JFM	Joint Forest Management
JMA	Joint Management Agreements
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MFR	Mwambalizi Forest Reserve
MNRT	Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism
PAs	Protected Areas
PFM	Participatory Forest Management
RC	Regional Commissioner
REDD	Reducing Emission from Deforestation and forest Degradation
TFS	Tanzania Forest Services Agency
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
VECs	Village Environmental Committees

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Conflicts in protected areas

The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) defines a Protected Area (PA) as *"An area of land and/or sea especially dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means"* (Dudley & Stolton, 2008. p8). Protected areas are categorised based on the management objective. Six categories of protected areas in order of their importance include ia) strict nature reserve, ib) wilderness areas, ii) national parks, iii) natural monuments, iv) habitat/species management, v) protected landscape/seascape and vi) managed resource protected areas (Dudley & Stolton, 2008).

Protected areas are known for their ability to improve biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation through significant carbon sequestration (Coetzee et al., 2014). This is primarily due to their ability to reduce habitat loss and maintain species populations (UNEP-WCMC; IUCN & NGS, 2018). This ability is profoundly contributed to by their mechanisms to control activities such as deforestation compared to unprotected areas (UNEP, 2008). Given that planetary boundaries are being overreached, biological scientists emphasise effective management and expansion of more protected areas to foster a fight against climate change (Melillo et al., 2016). For example, in efforts to foster global action on protecting nature, the United Nations Biodiversity Conference (COP 15), in its meeting in Montreal in 2022, came up with global agreements to restore nature by 2030. The agreements on protecting nature were set to materialise by adopting the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity framework (GBP). The actions agreed on this framework upon by member states include protecting 30% of the degraded ecosystem and 30% of the planet through effective management and conservation of terrestrial and ecosystem marine ecosystems (UNEP, 2022).

It is emphasized that the extension of protected areas would contribute to the achievement of reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD), especially in developing countries where deforestation causes large emissions of greenhouse gases (UNEP, 2008). It is estimated that global release of carbon resulting from the change in land use, including deforestation, especially in the tropics, is 20% (UNEP, 2008). Given these benefits of protected areas, some conservationists advocate restricting local people from accessing

protected areas to overcome anthropogenic biodiversity loss, coupled with avoiding (over-)exploitation of natural resources (Curran et al., 2009).

However, since the establishment of the protected areas as a key conservation tool, in some cases, especially in the tropics, local people living in or adjacent to protected areas, notably in Africa, have failed to benefit, with substantial social injustices such as unlawful evictions and resettlement in order to create or maintain PAs (Schmidt-Soltau, 2003; Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau, 2006; Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017). These injustices have contributed to a flow of environmental refugees and the impoverishment of local communities (Schmidt-Soltau, 2003; Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau, 2006). Indeed, most policies in Africa have caused tensions with local people leading to conflicts and antagonism, thereby threatening conservation goals (Tessema et al., 2010). Soliku & Schraml (2018) highlight that the exclusionary approach to PAs management, among the colonial legacy in developing countries, including Africa, contributes to conflicts. Conflicts can also be caused due to poverty (Angelsen & Wunder, 2003) and high demand for natural resources by local people coupled with differing natural resources management objectives, contradicting interests, policy changes and disagreements on limited access to the natural resources (Castro & Nielsen, 2003; De Pourcq et al., 2015).

In East Africa, in Tanzania, apart from human-wildlife conflicts due to crop raiding, which are prevalent, other factors contribute to conflicts in PAs, such as boundary disputes, loss of land, and restrictions on access to forest resources and grazing areas (Kaswamila, 2009). In other parts of Africa, particularly South Africa, it has been reported that a lack of engagement with local people in the decision-making process in the management of protected areas is a critical factor that exacerbates conflicts, which causes poor relationships and tensions between agencies and local people (Watts & Faasen, 2009; Thondhlana et al., 2015; Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017).

Conflicts undermine participatory resource management and local livelihoods, posing challenges to the implementation of formal and informal institutions in managing the resources and the PAs, consequently contributing to environmental degradation and economic decline (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). For instance, antagonisms between local people and authorities have led to vandalic actions such as arson, destruction of park properties, murder of conservation employees (Hough, 1988), poaching, and illegal natural resource harvesting (Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017). De Pourcq et al. (2015) define conflict as “*a situation in which one actor, for example, the local people, perceive ‘impairment’ through the*

action or behaviour of another actor (the state authorities) due to their different perceptions, emotion, and interests” (De Pourcq et al., 2015; p.2).

1.2. Conflict management and resolution approaches

A distinction can be made between conflict management and conflict resolution. Conflict resolution means eradicating the conflict by solving the conflicting interests and aiming at ending violent actions, whereas conflict management refers to reducing the negative impacts of conflict (Redpath et al., 2013; Wallensteen, 2018). Another difference between the two is that conflict resolution always happens after the conflict, whereas conflict management could be executed before, during or after the conflict has happened (Soliku & Schraml, 2018).

Conflict resolution entails removing the cause of disagreement among conflicting actors, may be challenging to attain due to its complexity regarding its history and nature. Instead, conflict management, which focuses on managing the conflict by addressing the causes of the conflicts in long and short-term plans, might be ideal for nature conservation practices, including PAs (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). The crucial factor for conflict management or resolution is the willingness of the parties to engage in the conflict resolution process (Redpath et al., 2013).

Different approaches can be used to resolve or manage the conflict in natural resources. Using a particular technique depends largely on the nature and intention of conflict management. Further, the decision to use a specific type of conflict management and resolution approach may depend on the expertise of the available choices, support from potential stakeholders, financial resources capability and the relationship between the conflicting parties (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). Moreover, the use of type of conflict resolution and management strategy may also depend on whether the conflict is internal or external. Internal conflicts, for example, happen when there is a disagreement between the local people within the community. On the other hand, external conflict happens when the local people fight against external agents, such as government agencies, over natural resources (*ibid*). It has been shown that, generally, when the conflict is internal, communities tend to use informal or local approaches to resolve a particular conflict. Unless the conflict is so high that it cannot be resolved internally, the community will bring the matter under higher government institutions to resolve it (*ibid*).

A review by Soliku and Schraml (2018) on conflicts in PAs grouped conflict resolution strategies as legitimacy-enhancing strategies, which embrace “*increased participation*” and strive to enhance collaboration between stakeholders. These approaches include but are not limited to collaboration, negotiations and mediation. Conflict management strategies, on the other hand, include educating and raising awareness of the public via conservation, integrating traditional ecological knowledge in conservation, law enforcement, fencing and enhancing local community’s livelihoods through economic schemes (Soliku & Schraml, 2018). As highlighted by Castro and Nielsen (2003), other conflict management and resolution approaches include avoidance, coercion, arbitration, and adjudication.

Managing the conflicts through *avoidance*, conflicting parties intend not to resolve the conflict but rather keeping away the conflict from being publicly acknowledged. This may involve putting off the subject of discussion until later. In coercion, a group of people who feel their rights or needs are being denied try to impose threats or use force through means, for example, violence or protests. However, it should be noted that coercion tends to prolong conflicts rather than resolve them. Conversely, *negotiation* is a peaceful and voluntary process in conflict management in which opposing parties mutually agree to make satisfactory and collective decisions through consensus (Castro & Nielsen, 2003; Moore, 2014). However, Redpath et al. (2013) stress that reaching a consensus through negotiation is not always easy and possible, especially when the differences between parties are so great.

Mediation is the voluntary approach that involves the third party (mediators) to facilitate the negotiation process between conflicting parties in seeking to resolve the conflict through mutually acceptable agreements (Castro & Nielsen, 2003; Moore, 2014). Mediators help opposing actors transform and restore their attitudes towards peaceful relationships (Moore, 2014). In resolving a conflict through *arbitration*, opposing parties agree to submit the conflict to the mutually acceptable third party, who decides on their behalf (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). The decision rendered by the arbitrator could be either binding or non-binding, depending on the interests of the conflicting parties. In addition, the decision of the parties to comply with the provided resolution by an arbitrator among the opposing actors is voluntary and non-enforceable (Moore, 2014).

Adjudication is a conflict resolution in which a judge decides on a legal basis after hearing and reviewing the arguments rendered by lawyers of conflicting actors (Castro & Nielsen, 2003; Moore, 2014). The outcomes of adjudication are enforceable and binding (Moore, 2014). It has been observed that clear directives or clauses on conflict resolution in natural

resource laws influence people to opt for a legal approach to conflict resolution. It generally appears that, in most cases, parties decide to opt for the legal approaches when other processes, such as negotiations, have failed (Castro & Nielsen, 2003).

Table 1. A summary of conflict resolution and management strategies (Source: Castro & Nielsen, 2003; Soliku & Schraml, 2018).

S/n	Conflict resolution strategies (legitimacy enhancing strategies)	Conflict management strategies
	Engagement	Public education
	Negotiation	Incorporation of indigenous knowledge in natural resource management
	Mediation	Provision of economic incentives
	Collaboration	Fencing
		Employing guards
		Policing
		Avoidance
		Coercion
		Arbitration
		Adjudication

1.3. Collaborative governance in managing conflicts

Collaborative governance is regarded as an important strategy to resolve conflict whereby more than one stakeholder meets to make collective decisions (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). According to Ansell and Gash (2008), collaborative governance involves the engagement between state and non-state actors to make formal collective decisions to implement public policy, programs or assets. They stress that although public agencies play a central role in initiating collaborative governance, non-state stakeholders' participation is vital. Contrary to Ansell and Gash, Emerson et al. (2012) assert that collaborative governance involves engagement not only between the state and non-state actors but, rather, it may further involve a partnership among or between public agencies, private sectors, the community, civil societies and governments.

According to Ansell and Gash (2008), important variables within collaborative governance that play a central role in materialising collaborative governance include the starting conditions, facilitative leadership and institutional design. The starting conditions involve essential aspects such as power, resources, participation incentives and previous relationships, which would determine the success or failure of collaboration. Good starting conditions encourage collaboration among opposing stakeholders in resolving conflicts. Conversely, poor starting conditions may lead to unsuccessful collaboration processes (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Facilitative leadership refers to the leaders who guide or lead the collaborative process. Since facilitative leadership is crucial to facilitate conflict resolution throughout the collaboration process, leaders need to be neutral, empower weak stakeholders, and bridge the opposing parties. Indeed, good leadership helps build trust, encourage mutual agreements, and make collective decisions (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). The institutional design includes the rules, guidelines, principles, and other agreements on conducting the collaborative process. Ansell and Gash (2008) stress that within the institutional design, ground rules for collaborative governance are made and that they should be inclusive and transparent.

In managing natural resources, co-management entails advocating and promoting joint decision-making and power sharing between the local people and the state authorities. In this case, all parties (the state and local communities) should be able to negotiate, define and promote equal sharing of resource management responsibilities (De Pourcq et al., 2015). In Tanzania, for example, the local community participates in forest management through Joint Forest Management (JFM) or Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) (URT, Act No. 14 of 2002; URT, 2021). In the JFM approach, the government owns the forests and co-manages the forests with the local community by signing the Joint Management Agreements (JMA). Unlike the JFM, in CBFM, the local community has a full mandate to own and manage the forests (Blomley & Ramadhani, 2006; Blomley & Iddi 2009).

It has been shown that co-management of natural resources involving the local people is likely to reduce conflicts, especially when effective participation is practically implemented at the grassroots level (Castro & Nielsen, 2003; De Pourcq et al., 2015; Biddle, 2017; Fisher et al., 2020). However, power dynamics in managing resources have been reported to hinder collaboration, especially when the poor and marginalized groups have less power. This is because power dynamics maintain inequalities and social divisions, diminishing trust among

conflicting parties (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). Therefore, for the positive co-management outcomes in resolving conflict to be realised, it is emphasized that policymakers and resource managers ensure co-management is implemented in practice rather than advocating it on paper (De Pourcq et al., 2015).

In the process of resolving conflicts, collaboration is primarily intended to create shared outcomes, which might be difficult to implement individually (Emerson et al., 2012). Most importantly, collaboration is more likely to be initiated when stakeholders realise that they cannot solve the problems they face independently. Bryson et al. (2006) explain such a situation as the state or sector's failure. Hence one sector is forced to collaborate with others to solve the current public problem (Bryson et al., 2006). That being said, interconnectedness among stakeholders regarding existing problems, such as environmental issues, is a key driver for collaboration (Thomson & Perry, 2006). Apart from interdependence among stakeholders, a belief that collaboration is the best strategy to solve existing challenges is another driving factor for extensive use of collaboration (Bryson et al., 2006).

Conservationists have employed various strategies in Tanzania to resolve conflicts, including environmental awareness programs in PAs. Using environmental awareness programs alone has been reported to be ineffective because the programmes mostly focus on educating the local people on the values of wildlife instead of advocating the primary concerns such as breaking the mistrust between the local people and the conservation employee (Newmark et al., 1993). Engagement with stakeholders through a collaborative approach has been reported to be effective in resolving conflict in the natural resources arena (Ansell & Gash, 2008). For instance, a collaboration between the government, private stakeholders and local communities has positively contributed to conflict resolution in western Tanzania's PAs (Hausser et al., 2009). Kaswamila (2009) reported that active engagement of the local people in conservation activities had a significant impact on conflict resolution in northern Tanzania.

Despite the benefits of collaboration in resolving conflicts in natural resources, several scholars have criticised it by asserting that collaboration is a rather complex system with hidden agendas to empower states in the background (Carlsson & Berkes, 2005; Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Cundill et al., 2013; De Pourcq et al., 2015). Notably, most often, the states' goals have been extending PAs to meet global conservation obligations (Cundill et al., 2013). In that sense, it is difficult for governments to meet the local people's demands whilst seeking to implement national and international conservation goals (Cundill et al., 2013).

Furthermore, it is argued that, given the dynamics of natural and social systems, which cause environmental and policy changes, collaboration may instead cause new conflicts or escalate the previous conflicts because not all stakeholders will be happy with related changes (Castro & Nielsen, 2001).

1.4. Problem statement

Despite criticisms of the collaborative approach to conflict resolution, the collaboration between states and communities adjacent to or living in PAs has gained attention among social scientists, policymakers and natural resource managers. For example, despite the weaknesses revealed when implementing the collaborative process in resolving conflicts on natural resources in Zimbabwe (Rusitu valley area) and Uganda (Bwindi impenetrable and Mgahinga Gorilla NP), it was recommended that effective implementation of the collaborative approach would help manage the conflicts around the areas (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). Therefore, there is a need to investigate the effectiveness of collaboration in resolving conflicts in PAs to identify its compatibility on the actual ground. This is particularly relevant in African countries, such as Tanzania, where land conflicts are reported to cause grievances between the authorities and local people (Kaswamila, 2009).

Studies that focus on the results of a collaborative approach to resolving conflicts in Tanzania are scarce. Research on conflicts, in most cases, covers PAs such as game reserves, national parks and wildlife management areas. Only rarely has conflict research been conducted in the forest reserves (Newmark et al., 1993, 1994; Shemwetta & Kideghesho, 2000; Gillingham & Lee, 2003; Kaswamila, 2009; Vedeld et al., 2012). Most often, these studies rely on the investigation of types and drivers of the occurrence of conflicts (Newmark et al., 1994; Shemwetta & Kideghesho, 2000; Kaswamila, 2009; Vedeld et al., 2012) and the perceptions of local people on human-wildlife conflicts (Newmark et al., 1993; Gillingham & Lee, 2003).

The few studies on conflicts in forest reserves do not examine conflict resolution as an independent agenda but as a component within other issues, such as natural resource management (Kajembe et al., 2006; Meshack et al., 2006). In addition to that, these studies cover conflict issues at a local level, notably at the village government level (Kajembe et al., 2006; Meshack et al., 2006). However, according to village bylaws, village governments have no legal power to resolve conflicts related to PAs such as forest reserves owned by the central government (Kajembe et al., 2006). That means their decision-making power is limited to forest reserves owned by the villages. That being said, it is evident that studies on

the evaluation of the conflict resolution approach, especially in forest-protected areas, remain scanty. Therefore, examining the collaboration approach in conflict resolution in forest reserves is paramount.

1.5. Research objective and questions

Given the context of the problem described in 1.4. this research aims to understand conflict resolution process in PAs by investigating the use of and effectiveness of collaborative governance in resolving conflicts at Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR) in Tanzania. Given that I will return to Tanzania after my MFN study to work with Tanzania Forestry Service (TFS), the findings of this study are highly societally relevant and can contribute to resolving conflicts not only at MFR but also in other PAs in Tanzania. In order to achieve the objective of this study, the following research question was addressed:

How did collaborative governance influence the outcomes of conflict resolution at Mwambalizi forest reserve in Tanzania?

The main research question was further broken into the following sub-research questions.

- 1. What were the starting conditions for and outcomes of collaborative governance relevant to resolving conflicts concerning Mwambalizi forest reserve?*
- 2. How was facilitative leadership used to resolve conflicts concerning Mwambalizi forest reserve?*
- 3. To what extent were institutional design principles within collaborative governance used to resolve conflicts concerning Mwambalizi forest reserve?*
- 4. What other possible approaches could be used to resolve conflicts at Mwambalizi forest reserve?*

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Collaborative governance framework

In line with the earlier description of collaborative governance in section 1.3 above, the theoretical framework of this research was based on a collaborative governance model by Ansell and Gash (2008), in which they define collaborative governance as *“a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets”* (Ansell & Gash, 2008 p.544). Based on this definition, Ansell and Gash further explain ‘governance’ as laws and rules that apply to public goods. Governance is also related to collective decision-making involving public and private actors. The public agency is meant for public institutions, including executive branch agencies at a local or central level. Stakeholders or actors are referred to as both state and non-state stakeholders, where non-state stakeholders may include the participation of individual citizens or an organised group (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Ansell and Gash stress that collaborative governance should be a formal and two-way communication whereby stakeholders can talk to each other and influence decisions. Although Ansell and Gash insist on formal communication, it could be argued that, to some extent, informal communication among conflicting actors could also be integrated into collaborative governance. For example, evidence by Castro and Nielsen (2003) from Ethiopia has revealed that informal communications and institutions play a central role in collaborative governance, especially when resolving internal conflicts within the local community groups. Even though public agencies may have the ultimate authority to make final decisions, Ansell and Gash insist that the central goal of collaborative governance is achieving some consensus decision on public policies among stakeholders for public affairs. However, it could be argued that the primary goal of collaboration should explicitly be intended to achieve consensus decision-making rather than ‘some’ as highlighted by Ansell and Gash. Ansell and Gash assert that the explanation above makes collaborative governance different from other collaborations, such as adversarial and managerialism. They argue that unlike adversarial, which may embrace a “winner take all”, collaborative governance instead embraces a win-win problem-solving approach. They also differentiate collaborative governance from managerialism by asserting that, although the managerialism approach may consult stakeholders and consider their opinions for the final decisions,

conversely, in collaborative governance, stakeholders are not consulted but rather included in the decision-making process directly (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

2.2. Theoretical framework for analysis

Based on the theoretical framework of this research, the analysis of the relevance of collaborative governance in resolving land conflict at MFR was done based on some of the variables from the collaborative governance model by Ansell and Gash (2008). It should be noted that only some relevant variables that fit with this research's objectives and research questions have been adapted and applied in this research. Therefore, Figure 1 below highlights a visual representation of the relevant variables in this research, which are starting conditions, facilitative leadership, institutional design and collaborative process. When combined, these variables fit well to make strong and successful collaborative governance when efficiently practised. These variables are further divided into the smallest variables, which may influence the conditions for collaborative governance. In this model, the collaborative process variable is regarded as the central variable of the model in which the other three variables, namely starting conditions, facilitative leadership and institutional design, contribute to a collaborative process. To a large extent, the starting condition may influence trust among stakeholders, which is fundamental for collaboration. Facilitative leadership offers mediation and guidance for the collaboration. The institutional design forms the ground rules for collaboration. The collaborative process is non-linear, represented as a cycle that provides essential aspects for collaboration. These variables will be introduced and elaborated in the next sections. Moreover, it is essential to highlight that these variables were used as a critical basis to formulate the interview questions, topics for Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) and designing the codes for data analysis of the findings of this research.

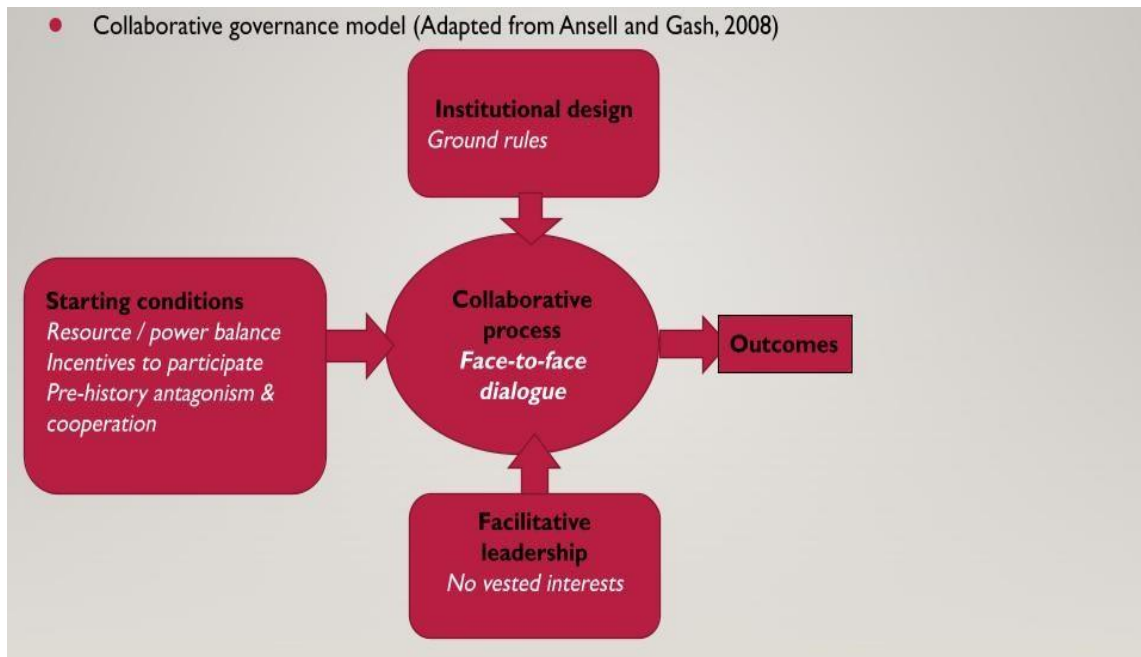


Figure 1. Collaborative governance model for analysis: Adapted from (Ansell & Gash, 2008 p. 550).

2.2.1. Starting conditions

The starting conditions refer to the very initial situation of the collaboration process. Good starting conditions make collaboration succeed, while poor starting conditions cause the collaboration process to be unsuccessful (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Based on Ansell and Gash (2008), the starting conditions are further divided into three sub-variables, which are: i) power/resources, ii) incentives to participate and iii) pre-history of antagonism and cooperation. These sub-variables are discussed below.

Power and resource imbalance

Scholars highlight that power imbalance is among the main threats that inhibit collaboration success, which has to be addressed at the outset of the collaboration process (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Bryson et al., 2006). The power imbalance is most likely to happen when stakeholders cannot reach a consensus on a shared purpose (Bryson et al., 2006). Ansell and Gash (2008) highlight that collaborative processes with an explicit power or resource imbalance between stakeholders are more likely to be unsuccessful. It should therefore be noted that resolving conflict in the presence of unequal power relationships among the parties is difficult (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). For example, experiences in Indonesia have

resulted in failed conflict resolution processes due to the limited negotiation power of weaker stakeholders and less access to information by the local communities (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). This mostly happens, especially when the key actors, such as the local people, recognise that they have little influence on decision-making, resulting in little incentive to participate in the conflict resolution process (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). Instead, strengthening the weaker stakeholders fosters the conflict resolution process due to strong relationships built from the beginning. Most importantly, it is crucial to identify all important stakeholders and allow them to present their views and interests (Castro & Nielsen, 2003).

Therefore, leaders must ensure that weaker stakeholders' interests are recognised (Bryson et al., 2006). Indeed, considering the interests of the less powerful stakeholders help deal with conflicts that may evolve during the collaboration. Attaining a common goal, it is essential to distribute the resources equally among the stakeholders. The resources include funds, administrative assistance, time, skills to analyse technical issues and other forms of expertise (Emerson et al., 2012). The fewer stakeholders' skills, the less motivation they get to follow the discussion (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Incentives to participate

Since the collaborative process is mostly voluntary, participation incentives are another essential aspect the stakeholders consider crucial. Emerson et al. (2012) describe incentives as an interest of the stakeholders to participate in the collaboration. Ansell and Gash (2008) found that financial incentives positively impacted collaborative governance. However, it should be noted that power imbalance may affect the stakeholders' incentives to participate in the collaboration. The incentive to participate will increase if stakeholders realise the presence of active engagement in which they expect positive outcomes from the collaboration process (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Pre-history antagonism and cooperation

The collaboration is more likely to succeed if stakeholders had been interacting positively in the previous moments (Bryson et al., 2006). Ansell and Gash (2008) stress that the prehistory of antagonism and cooperation among stakeholders would determine the success or failure of the collaborative process.

2.2.2. Facilitative leadership

Although stakeholders may reach a consensus through negotiations without assistance from a third party, it is recommended that having a neutral mediator or leader, especially when the conflict is so high, is key to a successful collaboration process (Ansell & Gash, 2008). An external mediator should have high integrity, long-term visions, and good analytical and social skills to facilitate conflict resolution. However, it should be clearly noted that an external mediator must be accepted by both parties (Bryson et al., 2006; Castro & Nielsen, 2003).

The role of a leader or neutral mediator may include, among other things, ensuring the common grounds for the dialogue, empowering the weaker stakeholders so that their voices can be heard, ensuring trust among stakeholders, promoting win-win gains and translating technical issues during the collaboration process (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). More importantly, a mediator should have no vested interests in the outcome of the negotiations. Collaborative processes with inefficient leadership coupled with non-trusted mediators are more likely to be unsuccessful (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

2.2.3. Institutional design

The institutional design comprises a set of a mixture of formal and informal rules such as procedures, agreements, regulations, and bylaws, essential to managing the collaboration process. This may also include common ground agreements on making decisions throughout the collaboration process (Emerson et al., 2012) and the description and number of stakeholders (Bryson et al., 2006). Moreover, the rules should elaborate on other aspects, such as the process of information sharing among stakeholders and the distribution of costs and benefits (Thomson & Perry, 2006). Leaders in collaboration should ensure that all affected, and any other volunteering members are included in the engagement. Emerson et al. (2012) highlight that members or stakeholders may represent themselves or a client needed for collaboration. Although the inclusion of high diversity of members is vital for developing robust decisions due to the consideration of multiple interests, it should be noted that high diversity of members may lead to conflict and hinder the intended outcomes (Emerson et al., 2012).

Since most stakeholders engage in discussion with a sceptical mindset due to concerns such as power imbalance and lack of equity, thus transparency and inclusiveness are the

critical aspects considered crucial in the collaboration to build trust and legitimacy. Any attempt to exclude, especially the key or troublesome stakeholders, may result in failures. When stakeholders feel that their concerns are not valued for reasons such as a lack of clear ground rules, a collaborative process is more likely to fail (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

It should be noted that the success of collective agreement on outset rules primarily depends on stakeholders' willingness and commitment to adhere to those rules. For the rules to become successful, Thomson and Perry (2006) stress that it is essential for stakeholders to agree on sanctioning each other in case of non-compliance to the agreed rules (Thomson & Perry, 2006). Generally, it appears that transparency, respecting other people's opinions, and power balance are critical for a successful collaboration when setting initial rules.

2.2.4. Collaborative process

In this variable, only one sub-variable, face-to-face dialogue, has been chosen specifically for this research because of its relevance to sub-research question four, which entails understanding other relevant approaches to resolving conflicts at Mwambalizi forest reserve.

Face-to-face dialogue

Face-to-face dialogue among stakeholders is a primary key to conflict resolution success because it helps create trust, mutual respect, commitment and shared understanding. Furthermore, face-to-face dialogue enables opportunities to attain a consensus-oriented decision of mutual gain through open discussions (Ansell & Gash, 2008). A free, open and democratic discussion that allows challenging and honest disagreements is essential for effective communication among stakeholders. It creates an avenue for other members to listen to opposing perspectives and then execute critical public judgement for the common goal (Emerson et al., 2012). Ansell and Gash (2008) insist that, in collaborative governance, two ways communication process between public agencies and stakeholders is vital.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study area and target population

3.1.1. Mwambalizi forest reserve

Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR) is a national reserve located in the Southern Highlands, in Mbeya region, Mbeya district. According to Tanzania Forest Act No. 14 of 2002, MFR is the national forest, which is the second highest rank of forest conservation in the country. The first highest forest conservation rank is a nature reserve (URT, Act No. 14 of 2002). Like many other national forests, MFR is protected for watershed management, soil conservation and wild plant, which are critical aspects of ecosystem services. Given the ecological, social and cultural potentials of the national reserves in the country, section 26 of the Tanzania Forest Act No.14 prohibits human activities in the forest reserves without prior permission of the forest manager (URT, Act No. 14 of 2002). MFR is owned by the central government and managed by the Tanzania Forest Services Agency (TFS) under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT). According to the TFS management structure, the District Forest Conservator (DFC), among other responsibilities, manage all national forests at the district level. This means that MFR is under direct supervision by the DFC (TFS, 2022).

On the other hand, the District Forest Officer (DFO) is not an employee of TFS. Rather, he works for the local government authority under the office of Mbeya District Council Director. His responsibilities are to oversee the daily activities of local government forests. Even though the DFO is not responsible for managing the national forests, he collaborates indirectly with the DFC to manage MFR. The contribution of the DFO in managing MFR may include, but is not limited to, offering conservation expertise and voluntary participation in other activities related to MFR conservation. Although the central government owns MFR, the local community participates in its conservation through Joint Forest Management Agreements (JFMA) thanks to the country's favourable policy and legal framework, which promote local community participation in forest conservation (URT, Act No. 14 of 2002; URT, 2021). This means that the adjacent local community to MFR co-manages a reserve through Villages Environmental Committees (VECs). The adjacent local community has been co-managing MFR since the 2000s, when Participatory Forest Management (PFM) was introduced in the country (Blomley & Iddi, 2009). Through PFM, the local community is entitled to conduct environmentally friendly activities such as beekeeping.

Mwambalizi forest reserve was demarcated and established in 1959 with an area of 4,650 hectares through Government Notice 2/2/1/1959, during colonialism, when Tanzania was under British colony by then Tanganyika. The reserve lies in the catchment areas that are essential for supplying water to the people, agriculture, industry, and hydroelectricity. Before colonialism, the reserve was managed by local people through formal and informal institutions led by local chiefs. During British colonial rule, in 1959, when MFR was established, its management was under the Forest Department in the Ministry of Natural Resources. When Tanganyika gained its Independence in 1961, the Forest Department was reformed into Forestry Division under the Ministry of Lands, Forest and Wildlife, which took over the management of national forests, including MFR. In 1985, a reserve was under the management of the Forestry and Beekeeping Division, which was transformed from the Forestry Division. The Forestry and Beekeeping Division continued to manage MFR until 2011 when the Division delegated the responsibilities of managing the national forests to TFS. This also means that TFS was established and took over the management of MFR in 2011. The primary objective of establishing TFS was to, among other things, strengthen the management of national forests in the country. By then, forest degradation and deforestation were increasing at an alarming rate (TFS, 2022).

The reserve is adjacent to five villages in Inyala ward (see Figure 2). The five villages (as shown in Figure 2) are nearest to Iringa – Mbeya highway and close to each other, in which the distance between one village to another range between 5 and 10 km. The closeness between the villages is predominantly beneficial since it makes the local community of the study population share similar cultural backgrounds and traditions on land use activities such as agriculture, which are essential factors for employing Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) approach for primary data collection (FAO, 1999). Since the villages are the nearest villages to MFR, the target population of this research was local people and leaders in all five villages adjacent to MFR. Also, the research involved government officials at a local level (district, regional and zonal officials) and government officials at the national level (Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) as well as Tanzania Forest Services Agency (TFS)). The government officials that participated in this research have been directly or indirectly managing MFR. Also, they were involved in managing and resolving the conflict in the study area. Moreover, selection of stakeholders for this study relied on their level of influence and interests regarding the conflict on Mwambalizi (TFS, 2022).

3.1.2. The conflict(s) around Mwambalizi forest reserve

The TFS report shows that a land conflict at Mwambalizi started mostly around 2008 - 2013 due to the local people's demand to access about 35% of 4,650 ha of MFR for agricultural and grazing activities due to factors, among others, high population increase (TFS, 2022). The locals who demand the forest land come from the five villages adjacent to MFR (see Figure 2). The TFS, responsible for managing the MFR, has been reacting by denying access to the reserve to local people because a reserve is legally protected for watershed management (TFS, 2022).

On the other hand, it appears that the locals have been using the land for decades and claiming that they inherited the land from their forefathers. Further, the locals were surprised when TFS started prohibiting them from accessing the forest land, which they claim they have used since they were young. Consequently, this contradictory situation has exacerbated the occurrence of conflicts at Mwambalizi (TFS, 2022).

Given an increased encroachment on the forest reserve for agricultural production by local people, the situation caused local people, leaders from the ruling political party (CCM), TFS and other government officials to initiate the collaboration process to resolve the conflict. The attempts to manage and resolve the conflict have been practised since 2013. To be specific, TFS conservation officials, other government officials, local people and their leaders around MFR have been cooperating to resolve the conflict for the past ten years (TFS, 2022).

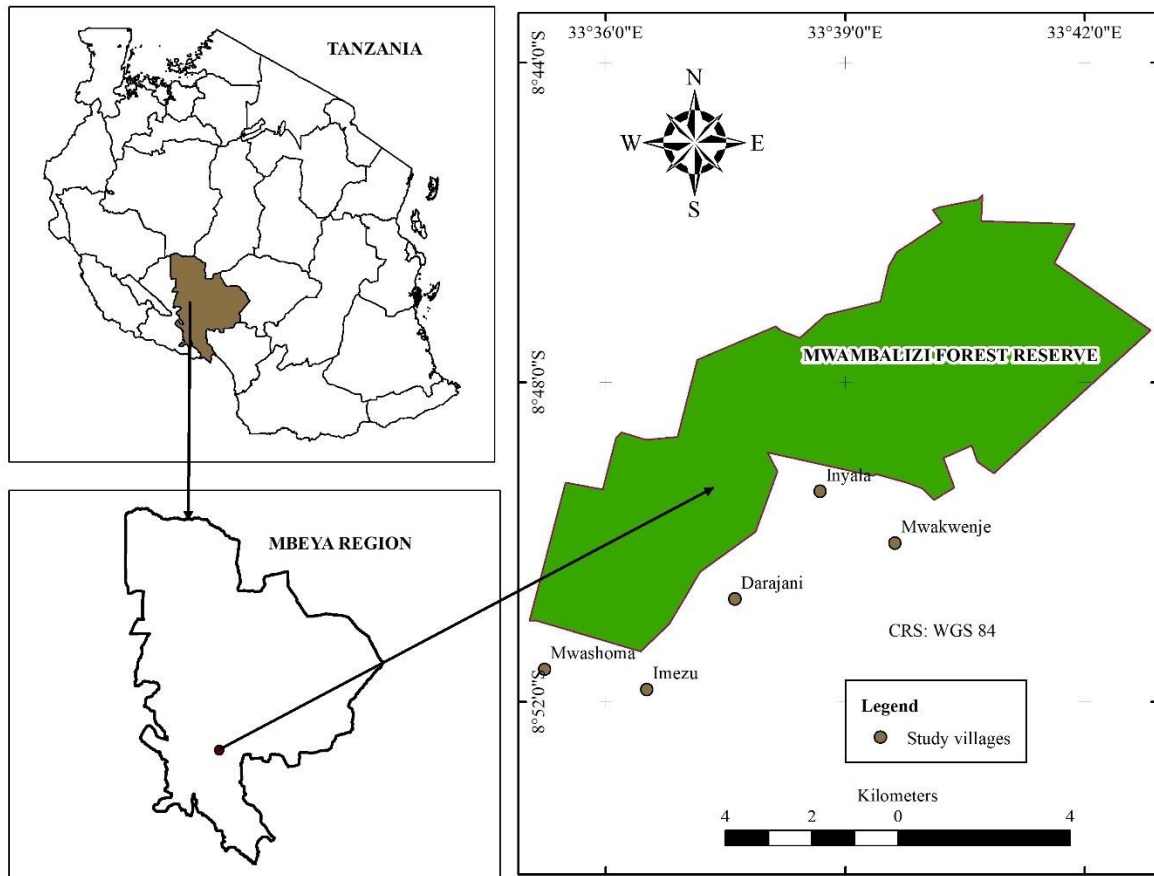


Figure 2: A map showing Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR), Southern Highlands, Mbeya District, Mbeya Region, Tanzania. Source: Author.

3.2. Data collection

3.2.1. Data source

The fieldwork for data collection for this study was conducted at different times between October and November 2022. The primary data sources for this research included semi-structured interviews with government officials from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), Tanzania Forest Services Agency (TFS), Mbeya region, Mbeya district council and village leaders to obtain the data. Other sources included the local people in the five villages adjacent to MFR (Figure 2), in which I organized focus group discussions to obtain the data. Moreover, to supplement the data collected from the interviews, I did document analysis to get data from TFS reports, forest legislation and other related documents on the conflict (approach/process and outcomes) at MFR. I provide further details of each data source in section 3.2.3.

3.2. 2. Sampling plan

Sampling frame and sampling method

At the national level, I used a purposive sampling strategy to obtain one participant from each institution (government official) who was directly or indirectly involved in conflict resolution at Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR) (see the description and number of participants in Table 2). At the village level, I asked the sampling frame from the village governments to get a list of local people living in each village. Although I guided the village leaders in helping me obtain the required participants for this study, relying on the village leaders' support may also have caused some bias in the participants. Consequently, this situation could be considered one of the limitations of this study. After obtaining the sampling frame, I used a purposive sampling strategy to get the participants involved in the conflicts at MFR to acquire the data for this research. In collaboration with village leaders, I selected the participants based on their influence and interest in the conflict at MFR. Being a TFS employee helped me link well with other government officials. Indeed, a good link with colleagues helped me obtain as much data, including written documents, as much as possible. The retrieved data collection methods are further explained in section 3.2.3 below.

3.2.3. Retrieved data and collection methods

According to Punch (2013), qualitative research offers a broad range of qualitative data useful for scrutinising issues. That being the case, in this research, I used formal interview method, particularly individual interviews and focus group discussions, to collect qualitative data to get insights into the conflict resolution process at MFR.

For the national and local government officials, I used semi-structured interviews to hear their perspectives on various matters related to the concepts described in the conceptual framework of this study in section 2.2 above for resolving the conflicts at MFR. Focus group discussions (FGDs) are very useful, especially when a researcher is aiming at data focusing on obtaining more details on content about how and why people feel about a particular thing (Benard, 2018). That being said, when I was interacting with local people in the villages, I used FGDs to hear their perspectives on collaborative governance for resolving the conflicts at MFR. Benard (2018) suggests that smaller groups of 7-8 people be suitable for the FGDs. In this research, however, each FGD in the villages was composed of 7 to 10 participants depending on their availability and interest in participating (see Table 3). All FGDs were dominated by men than women. Male dominance and absence of local people who had

interests in participating in the research but could not be able to meet could also be counted as among the factors for limitations of this study. Each village's chairperson was among the local people who participated in the FGDs. The initial plan was to conduct an independent interview with village leaders; however, when I was in the villages, the leaders recommended joining the FGDs. Even though the participants of the FGDs approved the requests of the village leaders to join the FGDs, this may have limited the freedom of some participants in the discussions. Therefore, the inclusion of the leaders in the FGDs could also be another part of limitations of this research.

One FGD, held in Mbeya Regional Commissioner's office composed of 5 participants. Initially, it was planned to conduct an individual interview with one respondent. However, four more participants voluntarily decided to participate in the research, which led to conducting an FGD instead of individual interviews. Whenever there were conflicting opinions in the focus groups, I, the moderator, guided the participants to undertake in-depth discussions to reach a consensus. Luckily, it was possible to have a consensus in all group discussions.

The minimum duration for an FGD was 43 minutes, while the maximum was 92 minutes. The average time for all FGDs was about 65 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Swahili language, which is well-spoken by both the researcher and all respondents of this study, including the local people. Communicating well in Swahili helped me build a strong rapport with respondents, especially the locals. Eventually, the locals considered the researcher a part of the community, which paved the way to increase trust and have good interaction about the topic being discussed through FGDs. I recorded 11 out of 13 interviews because two informants did not grant a consent for recording. In that case, I took a written summary during the specific interviews. The recording was done after asking the consent from the respondents. It was agreed that all respondents would remain anonymous, which means their identification would not be disclosed. Before visiting the local people, I applied for permission to the office of Mbeya district council to interview the locals.

Table 4 summarises data sources, retrieved data from each source and data collection method. Since MFR is owned and managed by the central government through TFS under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), therefore, to get a bigger picture of conflict resolution at the national level, I interviewed the respondent at the office of the Director of Forestry and Beekeeping Division. I also interviewed one participant, a representative of the TFS Conservation Commissioner at the Headquarters in Dar es Salaam.

The preliminary information from the TFS in Mbeya district showed that the office of the Regional Commissioner in Mbeya region was involved in resolving the conflicts of the reserve. Therefore, I did one FGD with officials at the regional office to hear their perspectives on conflict resolution at MFR. Also, since the District Commissioner oversees all administrative matters in the district, I interviewed one representative from the District Commissioner's office to get some insights into the conflict resolution process at MFR.

The Zonal Conservation Commander manages all matters of the TFS in the zonal jurisdiction where Mbeya district is located. In most cases, the District Forest Conservator seeks approval from the Zonal Conservation Commander for their daily responsibilities. Therefore, I interviewed two conservation officials to hear their perspectives on the collaborative governance approach in resolving conflicts at MFR.

As mentioned above, MFR is found in Mbeya district. According to the TFS administrative structure, the District Forest Conservator is responsible for managing all matters of TFS at the district level. Therefore, I interviewed the District Forest Conservator to get perspectives on all matters related to the collaborative process of resolving the conflict.

The District Forest Officer works for the district council and is not responsible for managing the central government forests. Their responsibilities are to manage the forest and bee resources under the local government authority. However, their responsibilities are closely linked with the TFS at the district level. That being the case, I interviewed the District Forest Officer to get some insights into aspects related to the use of collaborative governance for resolving conflicts at MFR. This was helpful for data triangulation to ensure high data validity.

Finally, to get more insights and additional data for my research, I applied document analysis technique to collect additional data relevant to this research. The documents that I used are Tanzanian forest legislation and policy, TFS reports and past research.

3.2.4. Sample size

This research involved 13 interviews with 56 participants (7 individual interviews and 6 focus group interviews). The focus group discussions involved 49 participants in 5 villages, and one was held in Mbeya Region Commissioner's office (see detailed description in Table 2 and 3 below). I conducted the FGDs with the assistance of three government officials in Mbeya. I, a researcher of this study, being an employee of TFS, might have affected the entire process of data collection and the analysis of the findings due to my positionality by

siding with TFS's interests in the conflicts around MFR. However, being aware of this situation, I overcame my positionality by trying to be neutral and objective as much as possible.

On the other hand, the sample size of this study could be small to represent the opinions of the entire local community around Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR) and the views of all conservation managers and other government officials related to the conservation of the reserve in Tanzania. To be specific, for example, the range of participants in the FGDs in the village was 8-10 individuals in each village. This sample number could be quite small to represent the entire Inyala ward community, which consists of the five visited villages in this research. According to the Mbeya regional and district profiles, the average population per village and total ward population in the 2012 census were 1,983 and 10,544 inhabitants, respectively (Mbeya DC, 2017; Mbeya Region, 2018).

Given these statistics, it might have been ideal if the FGDs were conducted at the sub-village level instead of the village level to have a good representation of the opinions of the entire Inyala ward community. That being the case, it is recommended that the findings of this study should be interpreted cautiously. Despite these limitations, however, it could be argued that this study has provided valuable insights into the conflict resolution process in PAs in Tanzania, specifically at MFR. That being said, the findings could be helpful as an underpinning basis to better perform conflict resolutions at MFR and in other PAs elsewhere in the country.

Table 2. List of research participants and number of interviews for each category

S/n	Participants	Organisation/Institution	Number of participants	Number of interviews
1	Director of Forestry and Beekeeping Division	Ministry of Natural Resource and Tourism	1	1
2	A representative of the Conservation Commissioner	Tanzania Forest Services Agency (TFS - National level)	1	1
3	Representatives of the Regional Commissioner	Mbeya Regional Commissioner office	5	1 FGD
4	A representative of the District Commissioner	Mbeya District Commissioner office	1	1
5	Representatives of the Zonal Conservation Commander	TFS - Southern Highlands Zone (Mbeya)	2	2

6	District Forest Conservator	TFS - Mbeya District	1	1
7	District Forest Officer	Mbeya District council	1	1
8	Local people	1 FGD in each village	44	5
	Total		56	13

Table 3. List of participants from the local community (local people) in each village

s/n	Village name	Number of participants
1	Mwashoma	8
2	Imezu	9
3	Inyala	10
4	Darajani	9
5	Mwakwenje	8
	Total	44

Table 4. Data sources, retrieved data from each data source and data collection method

Specific type of data source	Data retrieved from each source	Targeted research question	Sub-Data method	Data collection
Director of Forestry and Beekeeping Division	-Perspectives on the facilitative leadership for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the alternative method to resolve conflict at MFR	Sub-RQ 2 & 4		Individual interview
Regional Commissioner	-Perspectives on the starting conditions for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the facilitative leadership for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the institutional design for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the alternative method to resolve conflict at MFR	Sub-RQ 1, 2, 3 & 4	Focus Discussion	Group
District Commissioner	--Perspectives on the starting conditions for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the alternative method to resolve	Sub-RQ 1 & 4		Individual interview

conflict at MFR

Zonal Commander	Conservation	-Perspectives on the starting conditions for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the facilitative leadership for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the institutional design for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the alternative method to resolve conflict at MFR	Sub-RQ 1, 2, 3 & 4	Individual interview
District Conservator	Forest	-Perspectives on the starting conditions for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the facilitative leadership for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the institutional design for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the alternative method to resolve conflict at MFR	Sub-RQ 1, 2, 3 & 4	Individual interview
District Forest Officer		-Perspectives on the starting conditions for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the facilitative leadership for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the institutional design for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the alternative method to resolve conflict at MFR	Sub-RQ 1, 2, 3 & 4	Individual interview

Local people in each village	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Perspectives on the starting conditions for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the facilitative leadership for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the institutional design for a collaborative governance to resolve conflict at MFR -Perspectives on the alternative method to resolve conflict at MFR 	Sub-RQ 1, 2, 3 & 4	Focus Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Government reports -Policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Policy data on collaborative governance and conflict resolution -Conflict resolution reports 	Sub-RQ 1, 2, 3 & 4	Content analysis

3.3. Data analysis

Data collected from individual interviews and focus groups were transcribed, translated, coded and subjected to content analysis using Atlas.Ti software. In this research, both deductive and inductive codes were used to analyse the collected data. Data coding refers to changing the raw text by splitting a bunch of data into functional themes regarding research concerns (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). Deductive coding was used to analyse the data according to the conceptual framework elements described in this research. On the other hand, in order to get new insights on answering a sub-research question that aims to identify new ideas or alternative conflict resolution methods relevant to resolving the conflict at MFR, inductive coding was used in which the codes were formulated according to the description of the raw data from respondents.

The visualisation method was also used to organise the empirical findings by linking them with the concepts of the framework of this study. This method was done by identifying the data categories belonging to the specific themes by highlighting them using different colours. Each colour represented a specific code, which means raw texts were changed into functional themes according to the research questions and/or theoretical framework. The conflicting opinions among respondents during the focus group were taken care of as described in paragraph 2, section 3.2.3 above. However, the conflicting perspectives between different data sources for individual interviews were treated independently, and each data was coded into its specific theme. Data from different data sets were combined

and coded into relevant themes by identifying the relationships between the concepts between the data sets. Last, to facilitate the identification of each recorded interview, the interviews were numbered from interview number 1 to 11 as they were recorded. The sign (#) in Table 5 below represents the number. Therefore interview number one is represented as interview # 1 (Mwashoma village), and interview number two is represented as interview # 2 (Imezu village), etc. (table 5 below).

Table 5. List of recorded interviews as they were recorded

s/n	Respondent	Interview number (#)
1	Mwashoma village	1
2	Imezu village	2
3	Inyala village	3
4	Darajani village	4
5	Mwakwenje village	5
6	District Forest Conservator (DFC)	6
7	Informant at the District Forest Officer (DFO)	7
8	TFS official one at Zonal office	8
9	TFS official two at Zonal office	9
10	Representatives at Regional Commissioner's office	10
11	Informant at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT)	11

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Results

This section explores the findings of this research. The findings have been explained by following the order of sub-research questions. Before presenting the findings based on the research questions, the conflict resolution process is clearly elaborated. The second section of results answers the question regarding the starting conditions for the collaboration at Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR). In the starting conditions, core aspects such as relationships between the local people and conservation officials, distribution of power and resources, and the incentives to participate in the collaboration have been explored. More importantly, in starting conditions, the status of the conflict is well presented. The third section explains the answers regarding the influence of facilitative leadership in collaboration. The fourth section explains how the institutional design of the collaboration process was used. Finally, the fourth section covers the possible strategies that could be used to resolve the conflict at MFR.

4.1.1. Conflict resolution process

Table 6 below shows a timeline of the events of the conflict resolution process. The interviews and TFS reports in Mbeya revealed that the conflict resolution process started between 2008 and 2013. In 2008, when Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR) was under the management of the Forestry and Beekeeping Division, the conservation officials, in collaboration with the District Forest Officer in Mbeya, started to create conservation awareness among the locals at Inyala village. The conservation officials revealed that it was that time (around 2008) when the encroachment and deforestation of MFR were increasing at an alarming rate. On the other hand, though, the local people claimed that they inherited the land from their forefathers around the 1950s. So, they were not aware of the presence of the forest reserve around their villages. Following the conflicting perceptions of the local people, in line with the provision of conservation awareness programs to local people, the conservation officials started collaborating with local people to resolve the conflict in 2013.

The interviews further revealed that the local people were not satisfied with the engagements which were going on because the conservation officials insisted on their claims that the local people had encroached on the forest land while the locals perceived differently. This situation caused the locals to engage with the Mbeya Regional Commissioner in 2014, whereby the locals presented their claims of being evicted by TFS.

Though it was not specifically mentioned about the time, the conservation officials confessed that, at different times, they met the local people representatives at the Regional and District Commissioners' offices for the negotiations about the conflict. However, it was not clearly mentioned the reactions of the Regional Commissioner following the local people's concerns during that time. In the same year (2014), the Regional Forest Officer went to the villages to hear the locals' concerns about the conflict. The informants did not reveal the responses of the Regional Forest Officer following his visit to the villages. Since the conservation officials continued with the provision of conservation awareness by insisting the locals leave the encroached land, the locals then decided to bring the issue to the District Commissioner at different times between 2017 and 2018. The District Commissioner instructed the locals to meet the TFS Zonal Conservation Commander to see how they could solve the conflict. The locals reported that Zonal Conservation Commander informed them to go back to the village and promised them that he would engage the Conservation Commissioner about the issue and share the information with them on the responses. However, the locals reported that they did not get tangible feedback about the issue.

In 2017, the locals again engaged the Regional Commissioner, where they continued to present their complaints about the intention of the conservation officials to evict them from the forest land that they have been using for decades. However, the Regional Commissioner's reaction was not clearly mentioned. The following year (2018), in May, the Regional Commissioner visited the locals and convened a big meeting at Inyala village. This is the village where the Headquarters of the ward (center of the five villages) is located. This means other locals from four other villages joined the meeting at Inyala village (ward Headquarters). In this meeting, the Regional Commissioner had an opportunity to listen to the complaints from all locals in a bigger picture. The District Commissioner and conservation officials were also part of the Regional Commissioner delegation. Having listened to the local people's concerns, the Regional Commissioner decided to initiate the taskforce to investigate the issue in depth. The taskforce was composed of the District Land Officer, a Regional Natural Resource Officer, one TFS Official, a District Forest Officer, one Official from the Tanzania Intelligence Security Service, and the Planning Officer, who was the chairperson of the taskforce. The taskforce went to villages and spent 14 days (two weeks) exploring the underlying reasons for the conflict. The taskforce was expected to bring findings which could be used to solve the issue. However, the findings of the taskforce were not released to the public because the Regional Commissioner who initiated the taskforce was transferred before the dissemination of the taskforce's findings. Therefore, the conflict was not resolved, and the locals continued to complain about the issue.

Between 2018 and 2019, at different times, TFS in Mbeya district continued to offer conservation education to the locals attempting to manage the conflict. In one of the meetings during the conservation awareness creation in the villages, the District Commissioner was also involved. In this meeting, after hearing the complaints from the locals that they had sent a couple of letters to the TFS Conservation Commissioner with no responses, the District Commissioner decided to lift a ban on accessing the forest land for two years. Given this decision, the District Commissioner ordered TFS to follow up with the Conservation Commissioner about the local people's concerns.

In August 2021, TFS Mbeya district issued another ban on locals from accessing the forest reserve land. This ban was publicly announced in all five villages. Following the ban, eight representatives of the locals from Mwashoma village went to the TFS district office to engage the conservation officials about the issue. They presented the concern that they would like to continue farming in that season because they had already prepared the farms, including sowing the seeds. Following these concerns, TFS allowed the local people to farm that year and stop for the next year. The same year, the Deputy Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism visited the villages, and one big public meeting was convened at Inyala village, whereby the locals from other villages also participated in the meeting. Apart from the local people, the meeting was attended by some of the ruling political leaders (*Chama cha Mapinduzi* - CCM), the National Assembly representative of Mbeya rural constituency and conservation officials. The Deputy Permanent Secretary heard the locals' concerns, and the locals were promised to wait for the decision on the issue. According to the local people, no feedback was brought to the villages about the issue.

Since the ban from accessing the forest land was not permanently removed, the locals, through five ruling party leaders in Mbeya district, engaged the conservation officials about the issue in Jan 2022. In this engagement, TFS Zonal Conservation Commander, one other conservation official and Mbeya rural National Assembly representative attended the engagement meeting, which was held in Mbeya City at the district ruling party office. In this meeting, the ruling political leaders raised some concerns about the conflict, and the conservation officials responded to the concerns by giving explanations of issues which were raised. Among other things, the conservation officials were asked to lift the ban for a while so the locals could continue farming while waiting for the final decisions. It was not clearly mentioned about the reaction of the conservation officials following the concern of lifting the ban for a while.

Table 6. A summary of different approaches, which were employed to attempt resolving the conflict at MFR from 2008 to 2022

Date	Approach employed	Place	Actors involved	Remarks (Purpose, decisions etc.)
Jan 2008	Conservation awareness	Inyala village	Conservation officials, leaders, and local people	Awareness creation on conservation
May 2009	Conservation awareness	Inyala village	Conservation officials, leaders and local people	Awareness creation on conservation
July 2013	Conservation awareness	Five villages (Mwashoma, Imezu, Darajani, Inyala, Mwakwenje	Conservation officials, leaders (Local Chiefs, Ward Executive Officer, Village Executive officers, Village Chairpersons, Ward Counselor) and local people in five villages	Awareness creation on conservation
2013	Engagements (Collaboration)	Five villages (Mwashoma, Imezu, Darajani, Inyala, Mwakwenje	Conservation officials, leaders (Local Chiefs, Ward Executive Officer, Village Executive officers, Ward Counselor)	Negotiations on resolving the conflict
2014	Engagement (Collaboration)	Regional Commissioner office	Regional Commissioner, local people representatives	Local people brought complaints
2014	Engagement	Five villages	Regional Forest	Regional Forest Officer

	(Collaboration)	(Mwashoma, Imezu, Darajani, Inyala, Mwakwenje	Officer, Local people representatives	engaged the local people leaders to hear their concerns
2017/2018	Engagement (collaboration)	TFS Zonal office	TFS Zonal Conservation Commander, six local people's representatives from Mwashoma village	Local people presented their concerns. Locals were told to wait for the Zonal Conservation Commander to make some follow-ups about the issue
2017	Engagement (Collaboration)	Regional Commissioner office	Regional Commissioner, local people representatives	Local people brought complaints
May 2018	General public meetings	Five villages	Regional and District Commissioners, Conservation officials, Local people	Local people aired their concerns on TFS ban on accessing MFR
Mid - June, 2018	Managerialism	Five villages	Taskforce (Government officials)	Investigation of underlying causes for the conflict
2018 - 2019	Conservation awareness	Mwashoma village	District Commissioner, Conservation officials, leaders and local people in five villages	Awareness creation on conservation Prohibition on forest land encroachment District Commissioner lifted the ban for two years after hearing many

				complaints from the locals
August 2021	Public announcement	Five villages	TFS – Mbeya District	Ban on accessing the forest land
2021	Managerialism	Inyala village	Deputy Permanent Secretary for MNRT, Ruling party leaders, local people, National Assembly representative, Conservation officials	Deputy Permanent Secretary heard the local people’s concerns. Local people were promised the decisions would be made
2021	Engagements (Collaboration)	TFS – Mbeya District office	Eight local people representatives from Mwashoma and Imezu villages	Local people allowed farming for the 2021 farming season
Jan 2022	Engagements (Collaboration)	Ruling party (CCM) office – <i>Sabasaba</i> street	Conservation officials, National Assembly representative, Mbeya District ruling party leaders	National Assembly representatives brought a concern to send the issue to the National Assembly Ruling party leaders brought concerns about MFR issue. Conservation officers reacted to complaints by giving out explanations on the issue.

4.1.2. Starting conditions

Status of the conflict resolution process

The conflict was not resolved despite the engagements between local people and government officials. The factors which contributed to the failure of the conflict resolution process include, among other things, inadequate collaborative governance process, poor starting conditions and a lack of clear institutions for a collaborative process. The engagements were mainly done between local conservation officials (at district and zonal level) and local people's representatives, composed of men and women, local chiefs, village leaders (village chairpersons, village executive officers), ward executive officer, and ward counsellor. Meanwhile, the TFS conservation officials at the district and zonal levels have no power to make ultimate decisions. The power to make ultimate decisions, especially sensitive issues such as conflicts between the TFS and local people, is centralized to the Conservation Commissioner for TFS in the Headquarters. During the interview, even though the informant at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT) was unaware of the conflict issue at Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR), he explained that the Ministry delegates much of the decisions and responsibilities to TFS regarding the management of national forest reserves, but the local people or any other actors have rights to appeal to the Ministry in case of unsatisfactory decisions. A confession of the informant at the MNRT being unaware of MFR issue could be associated with communication gap between TFS and the MNRT. The informant at TFS Headquarters reported that the TFS could make many decisions regarding the national forest reserves but not all decisions. He insisted that the TFS communicate with the Minister at the MNRT in case of issues beyond their capacity to make decisions. However, it was unclear what decisions could be made by the TFS and what decisions needed the attention of the Minister. According to the Tanzanian forest legislation, the Minister has the ultimate power to make final decisions regarding the national forest affairs in the country (URT, Act No. 14 of 2002). Because of this, the local people insisted that when the next avenue for collaboration in resolving the conflict at MFR is possible, the Minister for MNRT should be included in the engagement process so it would be possible to attain the final decisions. One respondent among the local people stressed:

"We do recommend that because we have already engaged the leaders at a ground level, but it seems they are afraid of those at the top [...]". (Interview #4)

Relationships between local people and Conservation officials

The interviews revealed that TFS and local people had poor relationships before and during the conflict resolution process. According to the local people, poor relationships were profoundly contributed by the delayed responses from the TFS when the local people enquired about conflict resolution decisions. Other factors include the ban on agricultural production in reserve and conflicting perceptions. Poor relationships have caused anger among the local people, contributing to negative attitudes and perceptions towards TFS officials regarding the conservation of MFR. These aspects which have caused poor relationships will be discussed in the next paragraphs.

Conservation officials confessed during the interviews that the locals, especially at Mwashoma village, have negative perceptions, attitudes and anger toward the MFR and the conservation officials due to the ban on accessing the forest land, which conservation officials issued. One respondent reported that it reached a time when the anger of local people became devastating, especially when they attacked the TFS rangers while conducting patrols at MFR. Furthermore, the local people removed some beacons and signboards from the reserve boundaries. Another TFS official reported that the local people hate her personally and that the local people do not like her when she goes to the villages:

"[...]indeed, they hate us when we go there, like me, they hate me there, they say this lady is the one who defends this forest". (Interview # 6)

In addition, one interviewee at the regional office in Mbeya also reported that the local people hate conservation officials. She further explained how they faced difficulties interacting with the local people when they went to the villages to investigate the underlying reasons for the conflict. She was among six taskforce professionals who were sent to the villages by the Regional Commissioner following the complaints of the local people to the Commissioner about the MFR issue:

"[...] I remember when you introduced yourself as a conservation officer, you were provoked a lot. I remember I was with a TFS officer; when they heard that she was from TFS, the local people expressed their anger and told her that she was terrible and did not want her to talk". (Interview # 10)

Appendix 1 summarises written conversations between the local people and TFS. The local people, particularly from Mwashoma village, apparently sent a letter dated 19.07.2016 to

TFS Conservation Commissioner requesting access to MFR for crop cultivation. A letter reminded the Commissioner about the previous letter because the local people did not get any responses. The Conservation Commissioner replied to local people's concerns on 28.07.2016. He informed the local people to remain calm and patient while their issue was discussed between the TFS zonal office and Mbeya Regional Commissioner. While I was in Mbeya for fieldwork, I did not see a copy of the first letter that was claimed by local people at Mwashoma village sent to the Conservation Commissioner. However, during the interview, the local people confessed that they sent two letters in 2016, of which the second letter was a reminder of their concerns in their first letter. One interviewee stated:

"In 2016, we wrote a letter to request them to use the farms after seeing that we were being prohibited ..that letter was not answered ... after seeing that the letter was not answered, we wrote another letter." (Interview # 1)

This point of view shows a conflicting perception by local people of the conflict resolution process against the conservation officials, which has contributed to mistrust and poor relationships.

Perceptions between Local people and Conservation officials on Mwambalizi forest reserve issue

Contrasting perceptions between the conservation officials and local people have profoundly contributed to misunderstanding and poor relationships among the actors. The local people frame the issue at Mwambalizi forest reserve (MFR) from a completely different understanding from the conservation managers. During the interviews, local people from all five villages argued that they inherited their ancestors' lands within the *so-called MFR* and have used the land since they were young. Moreover, they reported that some were born in that land, where their ancestors were buried. The oldest person among the interviewees from the local community was born in 1954. They continued to explain that later in the 1970s, they were forced to leave the land and move to new areas for settlement during the implementation of the villagization policy (*Ujamaa*). Between 1967 and 1980, Tanzania's economy was governed by self-reliance policies. This newly adopted policy emphasized nationalism, ownership of assets by the state, control of prices and villagization (*Ujamaa*) (FAO, 2013). In implementing the villagization policy, local people were forced to move from their former settlements to newly established villages to facilitate provision of social services. This also caused the local people to leave the former land that they used to farm (FAO, 2013). Therefore, the local people linked the villagization policy and MFR issue by claiming

that they were living in the forest land with their parents until they were forced to leave the land around the 1970s because of the villagization policy. Despite the settlement relocation, local people claimed that they continued using the land for agricultural production. One elder explained:

“Everyone has inherited those areas. Our ancestors gave our parents that land. So that’s where we were born. Later in 1974, we moved here and left our settlements due to the villagization policy (Ujamaa) [...]. Now, sometime later, we are shocked that they say it is a reserve while we depend on those places for a living. [...] well, now they demand us to leave; where shall we go? We have nowhere to go. And I am now old; I have inherited my children. There are no jobs now. For those who graduate, we give them a piece of land for a living. Now we are wondering”. (Interview # 2)

Also, according to the interviews with the local people, it appears that they have been using the land within MFR for decades without any interruptions from the conservation managers. They continued to use the land until the 2000s when the conservation authorities started prohibiting and informing them that they had encroached on the forest reserve and, therefore, had to leave the reserve. During the interview, the respondent at the office of the Director of Forestry and Beekeeping Division commented that in the past years, the financial and human resources were inadequate to manage the forest resources all over the country. Given high deforestation, which was increasing at an alarming rate, in line with other associated factors, the government decided to establish the Tanzania Forest Services Agency (TFS) to strengthen the management of national forest and bee resources. He further explained that this could be one reason the management of MFR was not effectively implemented in the previous years, which contributed to the local people encroaching on the forest land for agricultural production.

Conversely, the local people framed the situation absolutely differently by arguing that neither their ancestors nor theirs have been involved in establishing the forest reserve. They further reported that they had been asking the conservation authorities some questions that had not been properly answered. One interviewee asserted:

“As I introduced myself, I was born in the same area in 1968, which now appears to be a reserved area. Now [...] everyone was farming their area. But by the 2000s, I remember one woman from the forest department came, and we sat under the mango tree. It is when she started reporting about a reserve. It is that time when she said that the area is a reserved land and is no longer allowed to be farmed. [...] I remember I asked when that area was set

as a reserve. Why have we lived in that area for a long time and not heard that report? [...] Why have we been farming that area until today, and you have not shared that information? And why didn't you engage us to know the boundaries of a reserve, so we understand where our farms start? We confronted each other so much, and we did not reach a consensus". (Interview # 1)

Contrasting perceptions regarding the issue at MFR were also revealed during the interviews with conservation officials in Mbeya. In fact, some of them appeared to be hesitant to frame the issue at MFR as a conflict. They believe that MFR has been encroached on by the local people for agricultural activities. Thus, the local people have committed an offence against the forest legislation, which prohibits human activities in a forest reserve. They insisted that the local people lack conservation awareness. Because of that, TFS will continue providing conservation awareness to change the local people's mindset.

Moreover, it appears that the conservation officials underrate the issue of MFR. This was revealed when the officials remarked that *"the narrative"* that they conflict with local people is like it does not exist. They argued that since the local people have been requesting the land for agricultural production, the locals understand that the land they have been using is part of the reserved land, so there is no conflict. One conservation informant remarked:

[...] Yeah, they have been saying they are requesting the areas because their population has increased, so the narrative that there is a conflict is like it does not exist". (Interview # 7)

Conservation officers further argued that MFR had been legally gazetted as a reserve since 1959 for watershed protection. Therefore, the fact that the local people tell stories of inheriting the land in the 1970s shows that the reserve was there before they were born. More importantly, they insisted that the local people could not justify the ownership of a particular land. Also, regarding the claims of the local people to inherit the land because of the presence of their ancestor's graves in the forest reserve, conservation officials argued that such claims are not true because there are no visible signs of their ancestral graves left in the forest reserve:

"[...] while giving them conservation awareness; their defense was that they do not possess knowledge about conservation. They claimed that the disputed land belonged to them and the land contained their ancestor's graves. However, it is a lie; you can't see any graves there. The efforts to tell them to leave have been going on since 2013 until now. Regardless of being ordered to vacate the reserve area, the locals have refused to obey". (Interview # 7)

Furthermore, conservation officials pointed out that the increased land value over the past decade has caused a high demand for land in the villages. Given the fact that the villages adjacent to MFR are close to Mbeya City, this has caused a high influx of outsiders who bought the land from the local people in previous years. Consequently, it has resulted in a scarcity of land in the villages, which drives the local people to encroach on the forest reserve for agriculture. One conservation officer reported:

“Now, with the increase in land values in recent years, [...] Urban people began to move to the villages to buy land. Because residents liked money, they continued to sell their lands. Now they began to depend on the forest, you see? And they have been doing that for a long time. From 2008-2013, we started to offer conservation education to the locals about the conservation of the encroached land on the forest reserve, so they should leave the forest”.
(Interview # 7)

Moreover, the conservation officers stressed the issue of enclaves as another factor which motivates the local people to demand land in the forest reserve. According to the conservation officials, when MFR was established and demarcated in 1959, the forest department under the colonial government set about 166 ha inside the forest for agricultural production. This land is inside the forest reserve but not part of the protected forest land. The land was excluded from a forest reserve because there were farmers who were using that land for agriculture. Conservation officials argued that having seen other people using that land inside the reserve, the local people get motivated to demand the encroached land:

“[...] and another issue is that there are things called enclaves in MFR. When the forest was demarcated, there were areas which were left for agriculture; those were the enclaves. So the challenge is coming now after the demand for land is higher than at that time, so now people are starting to encroach on unauthorized areas”. (Interview # 8)

Distribution of power and resources

The interviews revealed that funds to facilitate transportation from the villages to Mbeya City for the engagements with governmental officials on the conflicts were the main resource needed by local people. During the conflict resolution process, the local people contributed transportation funds for their representatives from the villages to Mbeya City. When the government officials met the local people in villages, TFS facilitated most of the funds. There were no clear agreements on who and what amount should be provided to facilitate financial

resources for the conflict resolution process. The local people showed interest to continue contributing the funds until the conflict gets resolved:

“[...] we are ready even to volunteer to contribute to finding a resolution so that people's lives can move on because the government can say it has no budget for that”. (Interview # 5)

While the conservation officials believe it will reach a time when the locals vacate the encroached land, the local people have positive expectations from the conflict resolutions when effective dialogues are possible. They expect they will regain their freedom of using the forest land they have been farming for decades. Therefore, since the conflict had not been resolved, when the locals were asked about their opinions on how the funds should be obtained and distributed when an opportunity for conflict resolution happens, they doubted if the government would fund the conflict resolution process. They argued that the government may not take the issue seriously. In addition, they stressed that they are the victims of the conflicts; therefore, it is very difficult for the government to fund the resolution process. One interviewee insisted:

“[...] because the government is the one that prohibits us, and then again, the government should support us financially to get the issue solved. That's what we fear. As a professional, you know we are victims, and most of the time, the victim seems powerless. Now you can't rely on the one with the power. Because he is not affected, he cannot say he'll support you”. (Interview # 2)

On the other hand, TFS officials expressed interest in providing funds to facilitate the conflict resolution process. One officer insisted that the local people would not be able to contribute the needed resources to support the conflict resolution process. Thus, TFS is willing to support the resolution process depending on the capacity of the available financial resources:

“Oh, it is mostly on the government's side; the local people cannot afford it. [...] the government can provide financial support, but only sometimes [...] it also depends on the available resources”. (Interview # 8)

The power to make decisions in the conflict resolution process was another predominant issue reported during the interviews, specifically by the local people. The interviews have revealed that despite the dialogues between the local people and government officials, including TFS, the engagements did not have the opportunity to make the final decisions on

the issue. The local people reported that each time they met government officials, it appeared that their concerns were collected, and they were promised to wait for the final decisions from those at the top. They further expressed their concern about being excluded from the decision-making process. One interviewee reported:

“As I told you, we provided our complaints to them so that they could work on them [...], but when they go to work on them, we are not there and do not get feedback. It becomes silent, and we continue to be oppressed”. (Interview # 1)

As pointed out earlier, according to TFS administrative structure, the District Forest Conservator, who is responsible for managing MFR, cannot make every decision; some issues need to be decided by the Zonal Conservation Commander at the zonal level while other critical issues need to be decided by the Conservation Commissioner in the Headquarters. Although the Minister for the MNRT has the ultimate power to make decisions regarding the affairs of the national forests, the individuals have the rights to appeal to the High court in case they are not satisfied by the decisions made by the Minister (URT, Act No. 14 of 2002). Regarding the issue at MFR, the District Forest Conservator insisted that she has no power to make final decisions on the issue; thus, she has nothing to do except exercise the legal power granted to her by the forest legislation. She pointed out:

[...] we spoke that I don't have the power to divide the reserve. I am just following the instructions of the government. As long as they have started to engage my bosses at the top, I'm ready to accept the orders if they instruct me to do otherwise. But I told them I had not been given any new orders on the table as we spoke, so that land is a forest reserve as of now”. (Interview # 6)

The incentives to participate in the collaboration process

Even though some of the TFS conservation officials have shown interest in continuing to participate in a collaborative process to resolve a conflict at MFR, the interviews have revealed that the TFS officials have low incentives to participate in the collaboration. Some factors that contribute to low incentives to participate in the collaboration for conflict resolution are as follows: First, the belief that the officials have alternative means to manage the conflict, notably the provision of conservation awareness and law enforcement. Second, the interviews have also revealed that some officials underrate the conflict at MFR because they perceive the local people as encroachers on the forest reserve. Therefore, they

consider the provision of conservation education and law enforcement are the best options to manage the conflict rather than participating in the engagement with the local people.

Conversely, the local people's incentive to participate in collaboration is high due to their interdependence with the TFS on the issue. The local people insisted that they highly depend on MFR for agricultural production due to agricultural land scarcity outside the forest reserve coupled with a high population increase in the villages. Given that the local people have fewer alternatives to a solution to the MFR issue, engagement with the TFS officials remains their primary approach to finding a solution. Moreover, because they have been using the land for decades, they strongly believe that their perception of the MFR issue will prevail when they engage in serious dialogues with conservation officials under the presence of the top leaders, such as the Conservation Commissioner and the Minister. Indeed, the local people insisted that the conservation officials at the district level need a deeper understanding of the issue at MFR. They believe that the officials will understand clearly about the issue when they enter into serious dialogues.

4.1.3. Facilitative leadership

The Regional and District Commissioners in Mbeya have been involved in the conflict resolution process to bring the actors to the table several times. They participated, especially when the local people approached them by complaining that their dialogues with TFS had taken longer without tangible decisions than they expected. Given the administrative powers of the Commissioners in the area, local people trusted them that they could help facilitate the dialogues. However, a resolution was yet to be reached despite their involvement in the issue.

The local people showed interest in having the leaders in the conflict resolution when they were asked about their opinions on involving leaders and experts to facilitate the next negotiation when it is put into practice. In addition, the local people pointed out that involving experts in the negotiation would help mediate the conflict resolution process, which may lead to mutual agreements on the issue. However, they insisted that leaders should show leadership integrity by being honest and standing on the truth instead of twisting the issues. They further expressed their concern about being flexible during the negotiation by agreeing on technical advice provided by experts, which might happen in the negotiation process:

“[...] even if we are demanding, they can give professional advice so that it does not negatively affect both parties. Having given professional advice, we will have to agree with them because it reaches a time it is not likely that you can deny the reality [...]”. (Interview # 5)

The involvement of mediators in resolving the conflict was perceived differently among the conservation officials. While some officials supported the issue of having neutral mediators, others were sceptical by arguing that a neutral mediator may cause problems instead of resolving the issue because of biases the mediators may choose to align with. One conservation official insisted that the mediators may decide to take a direction of win-win gains, which may cause some of the land in MFR to be released to the local people, something which would create conservation consequences:

“A controversial challenge for these mediators, my concern is, something they say is a win-win situation, you can find it at the end of the day, they say maybe we should divide the forest, perhaps a little bit here and a little bit there. [...] that's what I see, it might come to be like that. [...] because what is required is to sensitize local people to know why the earliest conservationists did that in the past. Because, at the moment, conservation is still needed more than in the past, so now you see, if we bring them in, it can take us in that direction”. (Interview # 7)

4.1.4. Institutional design

The interviews have revealed that the conflict resolution process was not efficiently administered. There were no clear ground rules, procedures or by-laws on how to conduct collaborative governance. In most cases, the local people have been engaging the authorities to solve the issue, specifically when TFS prohibited the local people from continuing with agricultural activities in the forest reserve. The Regional and District Commissioners have been trying to bring TFS and local people to the table for dialogues to resolve the issues, especially when the local people raised their concerns to the Commissioners. When reacting to the question on specific institutions to guide the conflict resolution process, one of the conservation officials argued that the issue at MFR is a small concern at a local level. Thus formal institutions would be needed when the issue is big, primarily when it draws the country's attention:

“Such things did not exist. You know, the conflicts differ. Such things could have been done if the conflict reached a terrible situation, at a very high position, such that it draws the

attention of many people, like what happened in Ngorongoro. Such things can be done if the conflict draws the country's attention. You know, this MFR conflict is still at a local scale level". (Interview # 8)

Regarding freedom of expression, the local people reported equal opportunity and freedom to express their opinions during engagements with government officials without intimidation. Furthermore, they had the privilege of choosing who could represent them during the engagement. In addition, there was transparency and freedom to choose the representatives for the dialogues with government officials. Their representatives were chosen through the village general assembly meetings. Moreover, interviews have revealed that even troublesome people were included and had opportunities to express their minds in conflict resolution. One interviewee commented:

"I remember when the Regional or District Commissioner came, we had enough freedom, and people were free to ask questions[...]" (Interview # 5)

Concerning the composition of actors to be involved in future collaboration, the local people recommended that it is essential for the representatives to come from among the victims at MFR. Also, they suggested other leaders such as the village chairperson, a ward councillor, local chiefs, religious leaders and their National Assembly representative. Furthermore, given its complexity, especially in making decisions, they insisted that the Minister for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism should be part of the engagement to solve the issue collectively. One interviewee at Mwashoma village insisted:

"It should not be interpreted that we don't trust these Regional and District leaders, except we were wondering why this issue is not resolved. Since this matter has reached the Ministry to the Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, we call upon even the Minister to come and get involved in resolving it [...]" (Interview # 1)

4.1.5. Approaches to resolve the conflict around Mwambalizi forest reserve

During the interview, respondents mentioned several strategies which were used to manage and resolve the conflict at MFR. Thus, it is reasonable to point out those strategies before explaining the approaches that could be useful to manage and resolve the conflict in the future. Knowing the approaches that have already been used is profoundly important

because it helps get insights into the approaches, which adds value to the decision of choice of the best strategy to use for the next conflict resolution when it happens to materialize.

Approaches already applied

First, TFS at Mbeya district revealed that the provision of conservation education to local people had been implemented since 2008. Despite the efforts to educate the local people on the importance of MFR and the necessity of banning human activities in the forest reserve, it appears that the local people continue accessing the reserve for agricultural activity and have been consistently requesting TFS to remove the ban on accessing the reserve. The District Forest Conservator reported:

“[...] even last year, we announced in the villages publicly that those who farm inside the reserve should leave; they should cultivate their lands. We are still doing patrols and public awareness, but they are still stubborn and continue growing the crops [...]”. (Interview # 6)

Second, as described in section 4.1.1 above, the managerialism approach was also used to resolve the issue at MFR, particularly when the Regional Commissioner initiated the task force to investigate the underlying causes of the conflict at MFR. According to the interviewees at the Regional Commissioner's office, the taskforce was expected to provide detailed findings that could provide helpful insights into the conflict for decisions making. The taskforce collected the opinions of various actors, including the local people.

Also, managerialism approach was employed when the Deputy Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, including the conservation professionals, visited the locals in 2021 to hear their concerns about the MFR issue. The conservation official who participated in the delegation confessed that the professionals in the Deputy Permanent Secretary delegation wrote a report that could help make decisions on the issue. However, according to the local people, no tangible solutions were provided.

Moreover, the local people pointed out that their issue was reported in one of the National Assembly meetings by their Parliament representative. Though they did not directly hear about the issue of MFR to be spoken in the Parliament, TFS officials in Mbeya confirmed to be aware of the issue to be reported to the National Assembly. According to a MEMO dated 29th Jan 2021, TFS Zonal Conservation Commander provided the answers to the Conservation Commissioner following a question which had to be asked by the Parliament representative from the local community in Mbeya in the National Assembly. The MEMO

explained, in brief, the issue of MFR by pointing out that the local people have been requesting access to a reserve for agricultural activities due to land scarcity caused by the high population in the adjacent villages and that a reserve is important for watershed protection. Therefore, TFS has been providing and will continue to provide conservation awareness to educate the local people about the importance of the conservation of MFR.

Third, boundary consolidation and law enforcement approaches have also been employed to manage the conflict around MFR. TFS, through Mbeya district office, has been trying to manage the boundaries of the forest and installing beacons and signposts to create awareness in the local community about the boundaries of the forests. Also, even though TFS has not yet used much force to evict the local people from the forest, they have been issuing several banning notices to the local community, which prohibit human activities. It was not clearly pointed out why TFS has not yet used much force to evict the local people from a reserve.

Proposed approaches but already tried

Despite all efforts that have been made to manage and resolve the conflict at MFR, the conflict was not successfully resolved and also the local people continue accessing the forest for agricultural production. Given that the conflict has not yet been resolved, this research's participants suggested different approaches that could be used. Generally, the local people strongly recommended the dialogues with TFS (collaborative governance) to be ideal for resolving the issue. On the other hand, most of the conservation officials' recommendations relied on the provision of conservation education and law enforcement as the best strategies to manage the issue. Neither TFS nor the local people considered the adjudication as the best strategy to resolve and manage the conflict. The local people feared that adjudication would make them lose the case in court because they were not skilled enough to handle judicial matters. One interviewee at Mwashoma village reacted:

“If we get a pro bono lawyer we can go to court, but that is not the way we would like to go [...] If we decide to go to the court, we might not win, [...] if we were educated, we could stand with them in court, but we are not educated enough to be able to stand with them in court.”
(Interview # 1)

Moreover, one interviewee at Imezu village insisted that bringing the issue to the court would definitely cause them to lose the land and that this is not an ideal strategy to be used by them:

"[...] So about this issue, the Regional leaders should try to look at it in a bigger picture rather than making decisions to go to court, and then we get defeated. It won't help us. We call upon the Regional leaders, including the TFS; may they be considerate; we have nowhere to go". (Interview # 2)

The respondents at the Regional Commissioner's office recommend that, given the complexity of many conflicts between the conservation agencies and the local people in Tanzania, it is difficult to use one approach in resolving the conflict. Therefore, the choice of a suitable approach would depend on the nature of the conflict:

"So, if you say that you should use only one method to resolve conflicts, it becomes problematic. In some situations, you must provide public awareness to educate people on conservation issues. There is another situation where you must create a Taskforce to investigate a problem. The Taskforce then brings answers for making decisions [...]". (Interview # 10)

As pointed out earlier, some of the conservation officials did not consider dialogues with local people through collaborative governance as the ideal strategy for resolving the conflict at MFR. To a large extent, they believed the issue would get solved if the local people had enough conservation awareness. So, in most cases, conservation officials insisted that conservation education should be prioritised to manage the conflict. They further stressed that given the biodiversity values MFR provides to the ecosystem, it reaches a point where law enforcement should prevail to protect MFR from continued deforestation by human activities. One officer insisted:

"[...] I think we should use these two approaches. First is to tell them the real situation [...]. To educate them that this is a forest land and its goals are one, two, and three. But since the destruction of the environment affects many people, [...] there are some moments when we must use powers, so we must go and give them awareness and instruct them, but after that, if it seems to have failed, if the goal was to protect the forest, then we must use powers". (Interview # 7)

On the other hand, some conservation officials insisted that collaborative governance would be the best approach to resolving the conflict at MFR. Other approaches, such as adjudication, could be used at last when the engagement has failed:

"[...] Often, I don't particularly appreciate going to court. It wastes time going to court. I don't like the court very much, especially in our conservation activities. I always like to engage with leaders, village, wards and even District leaders. You talk, and then you reach a consensus. That is the approach that I encourage the most. I think a win-win gain is better. For that reason, engagement should be given priority, and the rest of the approaches, for instance, the court, should be the last option". (Interview # 8)

The informant at the MNRT insisted that it is crucial to resolve the conflict over natural resources by using a friendly approach rather than force. He pointed out that using force could increase hostility between the conservation agencies and the local people. He insisted:

"The ways to resolve conflicts; first, a resolution should start at the ground level; when they jump to the top, it causes complications. Also, we need to resolve conflicts in a friendly manner; if we act as enemies, we cannot succeed". (Interview # 11)

New proposed approaches (not yet tried)

The conservation officials argued that the high demand for farmland in the village for the local people is not because there is not enough land for farming but because the locals sold their land to outsiders (urban people). This caused the local people to lose the farmland in the villages. Therefore, some informants recommended that the government should compensate the outsiders who bought the farmland in the village so the locals could get back their land. One conservation official stressed:

"[...] it doesn't belong to them. But if we want to help them, we could compensate those who bought and bring back the land to the locals. We can tell the owners that the local people made mistakes, so we're going to compensate you and leave the land for the locals". (Interview # 7)

Finally, some of the conservation officers mentioned supporting the local people by providing them with alternative income-generating activities as an ideal strategy for managing the conflict at MFR. It was stressed that the main issue the local people adjacent to MFR face is motivated by poverty. Therefore, it is crucial to facilitate the local people with alternative income-generating activities, such as beekeeping, to help them support their livelihoods. Moreover, it was recommended that agriculture experts should provide advanced agriculture techniques and awareness to the local people so they can use the small land in their areas

outside the reserve to enhance agricultural productivity: One conservation officer commented:

“[...] given the importance of that forest, the biggest issue is that the people need food. You may find many farmers there do not do extensive commercial agriculture. To a large extent, it is subsistence farming for a living. Suppose we could give them an alternative for a living, just supporting the community to have an alternative economic activity to generate income for their living. We could facilitate that, whether directly or indirectly”. (Interview # 9)

4.2. Discussion

This section explores the discussion of the findings presented in the previous section. The results are explained following the order of sub-research questions. First, the section discusses central issues regarding the starting conditions. Second, the influence of facilitative leadership in resolving the conflict at MFR is well discussed. Third, the section discusses essential aspects of institutional design as explored in the findings. Finally, the section provides a detailed analysis of the possible approaches that could be used to resolve the conflict at MFR.

4.2.1. Starting conditions

The findings revealed poor relationships between the actors before and during the conflict resolution process. Poor relationships are more likely to affect the perceptions and create a sense of distrust among the actors (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017). Regardless of the poor relationships, the findings of this study have revealed that the local people have high incentives to collaborate with conservation managers when the next opportunity for conflict resolution is set to materialize. This could be argued that the local people have high expectations that the dialogues may bring positive outcomes. In another way, high incentives to participate in the collaboration despite poor relationships could be motivated by the high dependence of the local people on the land for crop cultivation in a forest reserve.

High dependence on the forest land for agriculture in MFR by the local people was revealed, especially when the locals at Mwashoma village decided to write to the Conservation Commissioner to continue using the land in the forest reserve despite the ban which was initially provided by the TFS at Mbeya district (refer to conversation summary in Appendix 1). On the other hand, although it was not specifically mentioned in the interviews whatsoever,

TFS also depends on local community support to manage MFR in achieving long-term conservation goals. Altogether, this is what collaborative governance scholars call “*the interconnectedness of actors*”, which is among the motivating factors for the initiation of collaborative governance in resolving the conflicts in the natural resources management arena (Bryson et al., 2006; Thomson & Perry, 2006; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012).

This study has found that there was a low level of communication between the locals and the TFS. The local people at Mwashoma village complained that they had to send a second letter because the first letter that was sent to the Conservation Commissioner was not answered. Even though it was not proved by TFS in Mbeya if the local people wrote the first letter to the Conservation Commissioner (Appendix 1), the complaints of the local people indicate ineffective communications between TFS and local people. The ineffective communication has created low trust and hence poor relationships. These findings on ineffective communication corroborate those by Mutanga et al. (2016), who reported that the ineffective communication between the PAs officials and local residents in Zimbabwe negatively influenced their relationships.

It should be clearly understood that this research's objective was not to examine the underlying causes of conflict around MFR but to determine how the conflict resolution process was carried on, specifically the use of collaborative governance in resolving a land conflict at MFR. That being said, some insights into underlying causes for the conflicts at MFR stipulated in this research are meant to show the influence of conflicting perceptions among the actors in resolving the conflict. More specifically, how contrasting views regarding the issue at MFR between TFS and local people have shaped the conflict resolution process in collaborative governance. This is predominantly important because different views have been noted to cause poor relationships and escalate conflicts between the local community and conservation managers (Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017).

This study's findings on different perceptions between the conservation managers and local people align with the findings of other scholars in other African countries, namely Zimbabwe and South Africa (Mutanga et al., 2016; Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017). Their studies found that the conservation officials perceived no conflict with local people, while the locals perceived otherwise. Considering the different views of the MFR issue the actors have, it is reasonable to suggest that any attempt to ignore or avoid the conflict resolution may not be healthier for a long and sustainable conservation of MFR. This is because managing

protected areas requires joint efforts between local people and conservation agencies to achieve sustainable conservation goals (Ciocănea et al., 2016; Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017).

Since local people and TFS officials have shown conflicting views regarding the MFR issue, leaders for collaborative governance are essential to guide the actors to attain a common understanding among conflicting parties (Ansell & Gash, 2008). Given the negative perceptions towards TFS officials that local people have, it is evident that the trust between local people and TFS is very low. Therefore, leaders are predominantly needed to restore the trust between the actors before future dialogues are put in place.

The results have revealed that local people contributed funds to facilitate their representatives in a conflict resolution process. Moreover, local people are willing to continue contributing until the issue gets resolved. This could be interpreted as local people having high incentives to participate in the collaboration for conflict resolution. Although both actors have shown interest in contributing funds to facilitate the collaboration, this study suggests that there should be formal agreements between the actors on securing some funds for collaboration when the next opportunity for collaboration is possible. This is predominantly important because the engagement may take longer and needs more funds to facilitate the conflict resolution process.

The findings have revealed that the collaboration did not succeed in making collective decisions. The local people felt excluded and powerless in making decisions during the conflict resolution process. This could be interpreted as an indication of power imbalance in the collaboration such that despite the engagements, the final decisions had to be made by those at the top. This also indicates that the local people had less power to influence the final decisions, thus posing constraints for the collaboration to attain positive outcomes. This study's findings on power dynamics whereby stakeholders on the ground were excluded from making final decisions concur with a study by Thondhlana et al. (2015), who found that the local community was excluded in making decisions in collaborative governance in South Africa. Thondhlana et al. (2015), further argue that the inclusiveness of all stakeholders in making decisions is central to achieving successful collaboration governance.

Furthermore, it was not possible to make decisions on MFR conflict issue through collaboration because the conservation officials involved in the engagement with the local people were from the local level of the TFS management. The local conservation officials had no power to make ultimate decisions. This means that most critical decisions, such as conflict issues, have been centralized at TFS Headquarters. Consequently, it poses

challenges to resolving the conflicts at the local level because the local officials have no ultimate power to make critical decisions. This suggests the necessity for the Conservation Commissioner to be involved in the dialogues at MFR with the local people to facilitate the decision-making process.

Nonetheless, given the decisions, which were provided in writings to the local people at Mwashoma village by the Conservation Commissioner (Appendix 1), it poses some doubts about the possibility of TFS Conservation Commissioner being flexible and in favour of win-win gains through collaboration even if the Conservation Commissioner would be involved in the conflict resolution process. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that the Minister for MNRT should also be involved in the process since the Minister has the ultimate power to make decisions regarding the national forest resources affairs in the country. Win-win gains, in this case, may involve, for example, the decision that would favour the interests of the local people to have some land for farming while agreeing to set aside and protect some of the forest's land with the highest biodiversity value. Indeed, making collective decisions and embracing win-win gains are among the core aspects of collaborative governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008). The same findings on the bureaucratic system of managing the protected areas in which, to a large extent, the powers to make decisions have been centralized were also observed in South Africa (Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017).

4.2.2. Facilitative leadership

The results have shown that Regional and District Commissioners were trying to bring stakeholders to the table for the dialogues. Despite their efforts to lead the collaboration, the conflict resolution was unsuccessful. Since MFR is a national forest reserve, the Regional and District Commissioners can help advise the national institutions and leaders. However, according to Tanzanian forest legislation, the Regional and District Commissioners have no direct power to make final decisions on natural resources, particularly forests owned by the central government (URT, Act No. 14 of 2002). Because of this, it is reasonable to explain why the final decisions were not reached despite their involvement in leading the dialogues between local people and TFS.

Given the highly contrasting views the stakeholders have regarding the situation at MFR, leaders' involvement in the negotiation is crucial. Besides, due to a sharp contrast of views of the actors, as supported by other collaborative governance proponents (e.g. Ansel and Gash, 2008), it is reasonable to suggest the possibility of having neutral mediators to guide the stakeholders to attain some consensus in the next negotiations. Indeed, neutral

mediators are essential so the local people can trust the negotiation process. More importantly, the neutral mediators would help empower the weaker group, notably the local people who, in most cases, feel oppressed and enter the negotiation chambers with sceptical minds of being marginalized and powerless to affect the decisions (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

In addition, the involvement of neutral mediators in resolving the MFR conflict is crucial because it appears that some conservation officials were sceptical about embracing win-win gains. Ansell and Gash (2008) insist that win-win gain dialogues are vital in collaborative governance. In other ways, the leaders (neutral mediators) would help the negotiation process by bringing the actors to the table and guiding them to a common understanding of the MFR issue. Moreover, the involvement of leaders is essential to set some initiatives to bring the stakeholders to the table for dialogue, given that one of the stakeholders, notably the TFS, has low incentives to participate in the dialogue due to reliance on other alternative means to manage the conflict.

Suppose the Minister for the MNRT gets involved in the negotiation process as the stakeholder; this would position the negotiations of the MFR issue to have a national perspective. In reality, though, considering much power and influence the Minister for the MNRT has regarding the affairs of the national forest, he may be probably considered a good fit to lead the negotiation process between TFS and the local people. Even though Ansell and Gash (2008) clearly point out that a leader to guide the collaboration may be an insider coming from within the stakeholders of the negotiation. However, given the sharp contrasting perceptions of stakeholders, it is a matter of considerable concern to suggest that a leader should come outside the conflicting stakeholders. This is crucial to avoid the collaborative governance proponents call "*vested interests*" (Castro & Nielsen, 2003; Bryson et al., 2006; Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012) that the Minister may have. As such, this study suggests that neutral leader(s) from other reputable national or private institutions would preferably be fit to guide the collaboration process at MFR. That also means that Regional and District Commissioners may not be a good choice for guiding the collaboration process because their administrative powers are localized in their local areas.

4.2.3. Institutional design

The findings have revealed that the collaboration was not adequately administered because there were neither formal nor informal rules, procedures or agreements on how to conduct the conflict resolution process. This could probably be caused by the fact that the

collaboration had been predominantly initiated by local people from the ground and lacked professional support. This suggests that professional and technical support from TFS and other actors is of utmost concern in successfully collaborating to resolve the conflict at MFR.

On the other hand, though, given the fact that there is mounting evidence that shows that the primary motives of the conservation agencies in collaborative governance have always been to secure and win their conservation interests (Castro & Nielsen, 2001; Carlsson & Berkes, 2005; Cundill et al., 2013; De Pourcq et al., 2015; Thondhlana et al., 2015; Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017), thus it is crucial for the leaders of the engagement at MFR to ensure power balance among the actors when the conservation officials decide to offer technical support in the collaboration. Otherwise, if inadequately addressed early from the inception, the power imbalance may escalate the conflict when the powerful actors fully exercise their powers to win their interest, thereby constraining collaborative governance in resolving the conflict at MFR.

The fact that some conservation officials did not see the necessity of using formal institutions to resolve the conflict at MFR because they believed the conflict was still small; explains that the conservation officials underrate it. Castro and Nielsen (2003) highlight that most of the conflicts in natural resources management become critical and devastating due to the negligence of the conservation agencies. Considering the contrasting perceptions local people have on the MFR issue, local people may not actively participate in the conservation of MFR. Consequently, any delay or negligence in resolving the conflict caused by conservation officials may pose conservation challenges at MFR. This is likely to be true because it is argued that local people's support in the management of PAs is essential for achieving conservation goals; therefore, local people's absence in managing the natural resources in their surroundings would not lead to positive conservation outcomes (Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017).

The findings have also revealed that the absence of other key stakeholders, such as the Minister, contributed to a lack of collective decisions. Hence, the collaboration was not successful in resolving the conflict at MFR. This could be interpreted as another indication of inadequate administering of a collaborative process. If the proper collaborative process could have been done, the actors would have been able to identify the essential stakeholders to be included in the process. Therefore, this study suggests that when the next opportunity for collaboration is available, a proper and official collaboration process is paramount. Indeed, formal and proper institutions, such as clear ground rules, including

agreements on decision-making, make the stakeholders feel confident that the negotiations are genuine and equitable (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

4.2.4. Strategies to resolve the conflict around Mwambalizi forest reserve

The fact that the actors have tried different strategies to manage and resolve the conflict at MFR for about a decade suggests that the issue must be efficiently addressed. The results have revealed that local people have consistently tried to ask the TFS to remove the ban on accessing the reserve for crop cultivation. Even though the ban has yet to be removed, local people continue using the land for agricultural production. This suggests that the issue at MFR needs close attention with ideal conflict management and resolution strategies. As pointed out earlier, any attempt to ignore, delay or underrate the conflict at MFR may cause cascading conservation consequences. Moreover, it will not be helpful for the long-term sustainable conservation of MFR whatsoever. The strategies to manage and resolve the conflict at MFR, as suggested by the participants in this research, are scrutinized hereunder.

First, regarding conservation education provision, as the results have revealed, this strategy has been implemented to manage the conflict since 2008. While considering that it has been about a decade since this strategy was used, the conflict has not been resolved. This could be attributed to the fact that, during conflict management, most environmental awareness programs focus on educating the local people about the values of protected areas instead of addressing the mistrust between the protected areas managers and local people (Newmark et al., 1993). Breaking the mistrust between the conservation agencies and local people requires active engagement, which embraces the collaboration between stakeholders (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). It should be clearly understood that this does not mean that provision of conservation education to local people has no positive impact on conflict management and the conservation of protected areas. Nevertheless, the provision of conservation education alone cannot be a remedy for the conflicts in protected areas, including MFR, because those affected, the local people, have different perceptions regarding a conflicting resource, from which it needs active communication through engagement to tackle it.

Second, the managerialism approach, employed by the Regional Commissioner in Mbeya and Deputy Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (MNRT), seeks to find a solution by consulting the stakeholders' opinions. Although some of the stakeholder's opinions may be used in the final decision, this approach does not render an opportunity for the stakeholders to make collective decisions (Ansell & Gash, 2008).

Considering the complexity of the issue at MFR, it is reasonable to doubt if this strategy would provide tangible solutions. This is particularly evident especially when local people continued to demand the land despite the ban on access to the forest by the District Forest Conservator and Conservation Commissioner at different times (refer to a summary of written conversation, Appendix 1). Having continued to demand and use the land in a forest reserve, whatsoever, it is reasonable to argue that local people have always not been satisfied with decisions rendered to them whenever they have yet to be engaged fully and participate in making such decisions.

Third, using force through law enforcement, as some conservation officials recommended, may help manage the issue by evicting local people from the forest reserve in the short term. However, in the long run, given the fact that local people have been using the land for decades, using force would rather continue to escalate the conflict. In most cases, using force to evict the locals has been reported to exacerbate hostility between local people and conservation agencies (Tessema et al., 2010). Consequently, this may result in cascading conservation effects (Castro & Nielsen, 2003). Further, evicting local people creates ongoing conflicts, which may result in vandalism to the forests by local people, thereby threatening conservation goals (Hough, 1988). That being said, using force to evict local people may not be ideal for MFR's sustainability and long-term conservation.

Fourth, compensating the outsiders who bought the farmland in the village and providing alternative income-generating activities to support the local community around MFR financially may help manage the conflict when practically implemented. These approaches may, however, be ideal when combined with a collaborative approach where local people would have the opportunity to be part of collective decision-making. On the other hand, given the many priorities the conservation agencies always have, it is reasonable to suggest that this strategy may take longer to materialize due to financial issues. This is because, in most cases, it has been shown that most of the promises of the conservation agencies to support the local community adjacent to protected areas have been practically inadequate to materialize (Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017).

The findings have shown that collaborative governance was not efficiently administered. And that, in most cases, local people initiated the engagement with government officials. It should be explicitly understood that it is not that the collaboration approach did not help render successful conflict resolution, but rather, the failure to resolve the conflict was attributed to the inadequate and improper administering of collaboration. As suggested by some of the respondents in this study, including the informant at the MNRT and considering many

concerns by local people on the necessity of having dialogues regarding the issue at MFR, it makes sense to suggest that collaborative governance would help resolve the conflict when appropriately implemented. Indeed, resolving conflicts peacefully and collaboratively help foster the best positive achievements of natural resource management (Castro & Nielsen, 2003).

Active dialogues between the stakeholders, as profoundly embraced in a collaborative approach, allow actors to express their opinions and concerns, which pave the way for actors to have a sense of ownership of the decisions (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012). In addition, sincere and open communications motivate the actors to ask hard questions and express their interests, thereby striving to achieve a common understanding of the conflicting resource between the stakeholders in a collaboration (Ansell & Gash, 2008; Emerson et al., 2012; Thondhlana & Cundill, 2017). In that case, it is reasonable to cement that the local people at MFR highly demanded a collaborative approach in resolving the conflict so they would get an avenue to air their interests, believing that the engagement would render positive results.

Since collaborative governance offers an opportunity to make collective decisions, any means to manage or resolve the conflict agreed upon during the engagement would possibly be mutually accepted. Nonetheless, it should be explicitly understood that it is not true that participatory approaches may be sufficient to address the conflicts in every context (Soliku & Schraml, 2018). Also, given the actors' contrasting perceptions and different interests, collaborative governance may sound appealing theoretically but very challenging to practice on the ground. In spite of that, given the situation at MFR as pointed out in this study, and the sense that local people will have the opportunity to engage with opposing parties efficiently to air their perceptions sincerely, it is reasonable to suggest that this strategy would help resolve the conflict at MFR.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has provided insights into the conflict resolution process in protected areas, specifically, how the collaborative governance approach was used to resolve the conflict at MFR in Mbeya, Tanzania. Many valuable insights into collaborative governance have been pointed out. Based on the findings of this study, generally, it is reasonable to cement that it is not that collaborative governance did not help resolve the conflict at MFR, but the collaboratives governance was not efficiently administered.

To respond to the first sub-research question, the study has explored how the starting conditions of collaborative governance have influenced the conflict resolution process. Even though there were poor relationships among the stakeholders, notably TFS and the local people, the latter have high incentives to continue participating in the collaboration process when the next opportunity for collaboration is set to materialize. The study has also pointed out how the conflicting perceptions among the stakeholders have shaped the conflict resolution process and that leaders must guide the stakeholders to ensure a common understanding of the issue. Attaining a common understanding between the actors is a central aspect of collaboration because it fosters the possibility of achieving consensus over conflicting resources.

To answer the second sub-research question, the study has shown how facilitative leadership played a role in collaborative governance at MFR. While both actors were fine with the involvement of Regional and District Commissioners guiding the engagement as mediators, the Commissioners did not successfully lead the dialogues to the final decisions. The complexity of forest governance in the country was not in favour of the Commissioners to help the dialogues reach final decisions. As such, this has paved the way for the necessity of the involvement of essential stakeholders in the dialogues, notably the TFS Conservation Commissioner and the Minister for MNRT, to enable the negotiation to reach the final decisions. Given the sharp perceptions contrast the stakeholders have at MFR, the study suggests the possibility of having neutral mediators who have no vested interests to guide the collaboration so the actors, especially the local people, can have much trust in the negotiation process.

Reacting to the third sub-research question, conflict resolution was unsuccessful not because of the failure of the collaborative process to resolve the conflict but rather an inefficient administration of the collaborative governance process. At different times since 2013, the actors have been initiating collaboration without having formal institutions and

agreements on how to conduct the collaboration. It means there needed to be a formal agreement between actors to initiate the collaboration process from the inception. Therefore, this study recommends that essential aspects of collaborative governance should be properly addressed. This includes, but is not limited to, formal and informal rules, by-laws, procedures and other agreements on how to conduct the collaboration process. It may also include the agreements on making decisions and the type and number of essential actors to be included in the collaboration. Altogether, if properly implemented, it may help achieve the outcomes of the collaboration.

Exploring the fourth sub-research question, it should be noted that “*resolving*” a conflict on natural resources may be complex due to different interests and perspectives of multiple actors. Instead, “*conflict management*” might be the best option when finding solutions to conflicts in natural resources. Also, given the complexity of the conflicts over natural resources, no single solution can be used as the remedy for all problems. Therefore, a mix of approaches would be ideal for dealing with conflicts. More importantly, the choice of strategy may depend on the nature of the conflict in a particular area. In spite of that, however, regarding the conflict at MFR, as it has been clearly delineated in this research, it is reasonable to suggest that collaborative governance is the best strategy to manage and resolve the conflict around MFR. More importantly, given the sharp contrasting perceptions among the stakeholders regarding the issue at MFR, it is not ideal and healthier for the authorities to underrate or attempt to avoid conflict resolution around MFR.

Last but not least in its importance, as clearly pointed out in section 3.2.4 of this study, qualitative research, as it involves a few numbers of participants; the opinions of the respondents of this study may neither be representative of the entire local community around MFR nor the conservation officials related to the management of the reserve in Tanzania. It is also reasonable to point out that this study's time and financial resources might be inadequate to provide detailed ethnographic findings compared to other ethnographic studies in social sciences. Thus, when these factors are combined, they could be considered as possible limitations for the findings of this study. However, I believe this study has opened up the eyes and ears of conservation managers and other government officials regarding the issue at MFR. Moreover, the insights provided in this study could open up the possibility of conducting more research at MFR to dig deeper into understanding the truth about the conflict narrative. To be specific, future researchers may consider finding out and exploring the underlying causes of the conflict in detail and coming up with more possible solutions to resolve the conflict.

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7. APPENDICES

Appendix 1. A summary of a written conversation between TFS and Local people at Mwashoma village

Letter #	Date	Originated from	Addressed to	Summary of letter content
1	19.07.2016	Mwashoma village	TFS HQ	A request to access MFR for agricultural activities
2	28.07.2016	TFS HQ	Mwashoma village	Acknowledgement of receipt of a letter dated 19.07.2016 Asked local people to remain calm and patient while their issue was being discussed between TFS Zonal offices and Regional Commissioner Secretariat.
3	12.09.2017	TFS - Mbeya District	5 villages (Mwashoma, Imezu, Darajani, Inyala & Mwakwenje)	Provision of conservation awareness Prohibition of accessing MFR for any human activities
4	19.10.2017	Mwashoma village	TFS Mbeya	A request to continue using the land within MFR while waiting for the final decision of getting a permanent solution
5	24.10.2017	TFS - Mbeya District	Mwashoma village	Deny access of local people to MFR for human activities
6	14.11.2017	TFS - HQ	Mwashoma village	A reply to Mwashoma village for a letter dated 18.09.2017 Deny access to MFR for human activities

Appendix 2. List of codes used for data analysis

S/n	Code name
1	Power
2	Cooperation
3	Resources
4	Funds
5	Transportation
6	Relation
7	Relationship
8	Leaders
9	Leadership
10	Facilitate
11	Institutions
12	Rules
13	Agreements
14	By laws
15	Procedures
16	Approaches
17	Short history
18	Villagization
19	Prohibit
20	Meetings
21	Freedom
22	Perceive
23	Ask questions
24	Village meetings
25	Make decisions

Appendix 3. List Semi-structured questionnaires

1. Starting conditions

1.1 *Power and resource balance*

- i. First, I would like to hear about how the conflict regarding MFR started.
- ii. Who was responsible for making decisions during the conflict resolution process?
- iii. Did you have an opportunity to participate in making decisions?
- iv. Was there an equal opportunity to make decisions during the conflict resolution process? How?
- v. Did you feel comfortable with power distribution during the conflict resolution process?
- vi. Did you feel any intimidation or ignored during the conflict resolution process? If Yes, how?
- vii. What kinds of resources were considered important during the conflict resolution process?
- viii. Were these resources available and easily accessible?
- ix. Where did these resources come from?
- x. How were the resources such as administrative assistance, funds, and skills to analyze technical issues distributed among stakeholders?
- xi. Did you feel comfortable accessing information regarding the conflict resolution process?
- xii. What were the outcomes of the collaborative process? Was the conflict resolved?
- xiii. Generally, how did power and resource influence the outcomes of the collaborative process for conflict resolution at MFR?
- xiv. Do you have any other opinions regarding power and resource balance for conflict resolution?

1.2 *Incentives to participate*

- i. What did you consider important as an incentive to engage in collaborative governance for resolving conflict at MFR?
- ii. Do you think financial resources are important incentives which could drive your motive for a collaborative process in resolving conflict at MFR?

- iii. If YES, how did financial resources play a part in the conflict resolution process at MFR?
- iv. Do you have any other opinions regarding the incentives for conflict resolution?

1.3 Pre-history antagonism and cooperation

- i. How was your past relationship with your opponent before the conflict resolution process started?
- ii. How did past relationships shape your interests/play a part in resolving conflict at MFR?
- iii. Do you think that past relationships, for instance, cooperation or antagonism is an important factor for the success or failure of collaborative governance in resolving conflict at MFR?
- iv. Do you have any other opinions regarding the pre-history and cooperation for conflict resolution?

2. Facilitative leadership

- i. Were there leaders during the conflict resolution at MFR? If YES, who were the leaders?
- ii. If YES, do you consider the leaders involved in mediating the conflict resolution neutral and fair?
- iii. Did you trust the leaders/mediators involved in resolving the conflict at MFR?
- iv. Did leaders ensure a win-win situation during the conflict resolution process?
- v. Do you think the leaders showed leadership aspects such as high integrity, long-term vision and good analytical skills?
- vi. If there were no leaders, do you think having a leader is important when resolving the conflict?
- vii. What quality of leadership would you recommend the leaders to have?
- viii. Generally, how did facilitative leadership influence the outcomes of the collaborative process for conflict resolution at MFR?
- ix. Do you have any other opinions regarding facilitative leadership for conflict resolution?

3. Institutional design

- i. Were there any procedures, rules, bylaws or any form of agreement during the conflict resolution process?
- ii. How did you make decisions during the conflict resolution process?
- iii. If NO, do you think that procedure, rules, bylaws or any form of agreement on how to make decisions during the conflict resolution process are so important?
- iv. If YES, how did you create procedures, bylaws, or other rules to guide the collaborative process for resolving conflict at MFR?
- v. How was the distribution of a number of stakeholders during the conflict resolution process?
- vi. Could you remember who decided the type of stakeholders to be involved in a conflict resolution process?
- vii. Did the conflict resolution process involve all affected stakeholders? If YES/NO, how was it?
- viii. Did the conflict resolution involve other members who were willing and voluntarily to participate in conflict resolution?
- ix. If YES, how were they obtained?
- x. Did actors such as troublesome stakeholders involved in a conflict resolution process?
- xi. How was the information concerning the conflict resolution shared among stakeholders during the conflict resolution process?
- xii. In your opinion, do you think that the conflict resolution process was transparent and inclusive? How?
- xiii. In your opinion, do you think that all stakeholders were committed and willing to participate in the conflict resolution? How and why?
- xiv. Were there any sanctions on non-responsible stakeholders?
- xv. Generally, how did institutional design influence the outcomes of the collaborative process for conflict resolution at MFR?
- xvi. Do you have any other opinions regarding the institutions for conflict resolution?

4. Approaches for a conflict resolution

- i. Do you think there should be another approach to resolving the conflict at MFR apart from collaborative governance?
- ii. If YES, which approach would you like to recommend?

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Name of Researcher

I-----freely agree to participate in the research project entitled

Name of Participant

The Effectiveness of Collaborative Governance Approach in the Conflict Resolution Process in Protected Areas in Tanzania: A case of Mwambalizi Forest Reserve.

My participation is voluntary. The research has been satisfactorily explained to me and all my questions have been satisfactorily answered.

Signature of Participant

Date