

Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI)
Supporting Resilient Forest Livelihoods
through Local Representation

Effect of Institutional Choices on Representation in a Community Resource Management Area in Ghana



Manali Baruah

Effect of Institutional Choices on Representation in a Community
Resource Management Area in Ghana

Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) Research Programme

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is a research and training program, focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It is jointly managed by the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC). It is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). The RFGI activities are focused on 12 countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The initiative is also training young, in-country policy researchers in order to build an Africa-wide network of environmental governance analysts.

Nations worldwide have introduced decentralization reforms aspiring to make local government responsive and accountable to the needs and aspirations of citizens so as to improve equity, service delivery and resource management. Natural resources, especially forests, play an important role in these decentralizations since they provide local governments and local people with needed revenue, wealth, and subsistence. Responsive local governments can provide forest resource-dependent populations the flexibility they need to manage, adapt to and remain resilient in their changing environment. RFGI aims to enhance and help institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local wellbeing, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions.

REDD+ is a global Programme for disbursing funds, primarily to pay national governments of developing countries, to reduce forest carbon emission. REDD+ will require permanent local institutions that can integrate local needs with national and international objectives. The results from RFGI Africa research will be compared with results from collaborators in Asia and South America in order to enhance RFGI comparative scope, and to broaden its geographic policy relevance.

RFGI Working Paper Series Editors' Note

**James Murombedzi, Jesse Ribot
and Gretchen Walters**

Struggles for control over and access to nature and natural resources; struggles over land, forests, pastures and fisheries, are struggles for survival, self determination, and meaning. Natural resources are central to rural lives and livelihoods: they provide the material resources for survival, security, and freedom. To engage in the world requires assets that enable individuals, households, and communities to act in and on the world around them. The ability to accumulate assets and the ability to access government and market services depends partly on such resources along with the political-economic infrastructure – rights, recourse, representation, markets, and social services – that are the domain of government. Democracy, which both enables and requires the freedom to act, is predicated on these assets and infrastructures. Since the 1980s, African governments have been implementing local government decentralization reforms aimed at making local government more democratic by making them responsive and accountable to citizen needs and aspirations; in many places this has been done through a decentralisation of natural resource governance to local administrations. In order to be responsive to individual, household and community demands, local governments, too, need resources and decision-making powers. There must be a public domain – a set of public resources, such as forests or fisheries, which constitute this domain of democracy, the domain of decisions and services that citizens can demand of government. Natural resources, when decentralized into the domain of local authority, form an important part of the resources of individuals, households, communities and governments, making possible this move toward local democracy.

Natural resources provide local governments and people with wealth and subsistence. While nature is not the only source of rural income, the decentralization of natural resources governance is a core component of local government reform. However, governance reforms have been implemented in a context broadly

characterized by an enduring crisis of the Western economic and financial systems, which in turn has stimulated privatization and liberalization in every sphere of life, including nature. The process has deprived local governments of public resources – depriving individuals and communities of a reason to engage, as a powerless government is not worth trying to influence. Privatization is depriving forest-dependent peoples of their access to formerly ‘public’ or traditionally managed resources. National governments, as well as international bodies such as the United Nations programme, titled the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD), further this trend as they collaborate with private interests to promote the privatization of natural resources. The resulting enclosures threaten the wellbeing of resource-dependent populations and the viability of democratic reforms.

The specter of climate change is deepening the crisis of enclosure. A key response to climate change has been the attempt to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions through enhancing the capacity of forests in the developing world to store carbon, ostensibly for the benefit of the atmosphere as well as the communities who use these forests. UN REDD seeks to pay communities, through their national governments, to conserve their forests as carbon storage. A plus ‘+’ was added to REDD, forming REDD +, to call for improved ecosystems services, forest management, conservation, forest restoration and afforestation to enhance the capacity for carbon storage. Designed on the basis of similar payments for environmental services (PES) schemes, REDD+ has the potential to inject vast new sums of money into local resource use and governance. In the context of fragile local governments, nascent democracies and powerful private interests, such cash inflows result in the commercialization and privatization of forests and natural resources and the dispossession of local resource users. This financialization of natural resources grossly diminishes the scope for democratic natural resource governance schemes. To be sure, the implementation of REDD+ can also learn from and avoid the pitfalls experienced in these PES schemes, especially if they represent local interests in natural resource governance decision making.

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is an Africa-wide environmental-governance research and training program focusing on enabling responsive and accountable decentralization to strengthen the representation of forest-based rural people in local-government decision making. Since January 2012, the programme has carried out 33 case studies in 12 African countries, with comparative cases Nepal and Peru, to assess the conditions under which central authorities devolve forest management and use decisions to local government, and the conditions that enable local government to engage in sound, equitable

and pro-poor forest management. Aimed at enabling local government to play an integrative role in rural development and natural resource management, these case studies are now being finalized and published to elicit public discourse and debate on local government and local democracy. This Working Paper series will publish the RFGI case studies as well as other comparative studies of decentralized natural resources governance in Africa and elsewhere that focus on the intersection between local democracy and natural resource management schemes. Using the concepts of institutional choice and recognition, the cases deal with a comprehensive range of issues in decentralized forest management in the context of REDD+, including the institutional choices of intervening agencies; the effects of such choices on accountability and representation; and the relationships between local government and other local institutions. The series will also include syntheses discussing the main findings of the RFGI research programme.

Based at CODESRIA, and funded by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the RFGI is a three year collaborative initiative of CODESRIA, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). RFGI working papers and documents, including the background papers, the RFGI programme description, and the RFGI Methods Handbook, can be found on line at:

- <http://www.codesria.org/spip.php>,
- https://www.iucn.org/about/work/programmes/forest/fp_our_work/fp_our_work_thematic/locally_controlled_forests/lcf_projects_partnership/responsive_forest_governance_initiative__rfgi__/
- <https://sdep.earth.illinois.edu/programs/democracyenvironment.aspx>

RFGI Working Paper No. 22

RFGI Series Editors: James Murombedzi, Jesse Ribot and Gretchen Walters

Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI)

Supporting Resilient Forest Livelihoods
through Local Representation

**Effect of Institutional Choices on Representation
in a Community Resource Management
Area in Ghana**

Manali Baruah



© CODESRIA 2015

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa

Avenue Cheikh Anta Diop, Angle Canal IV

BP 3304 Dakar, CP 18524, Senegal

Website: www.codesria.org

ISBN: 978-2-86978-685-1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage or retrieval system without prior permission from CODESRIA.

Typesetting: Alpha Ousmane Dia

Cover image: With permission from Marc Ribot for his *Ceramic Dog: Your Turn*
(2012 Northern Spy Records/Yellowbird Records)

Cover design: Ibrahima Fofana

Distributed in Africa by CODESRIA

Distributed elsewhere by African Books Collective, Oxford, UK

Website: www.africanbookscollective.com

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is an independent organisation whose principal objectives are to facilitate research, promote research-based publishing and create multiple forums geared towards the exchange of views and information among African researchers. All these are aimed at reducing the fragmentation of research in the continent through the creation of thematic research networks that cut across linguistic and regional boundaries.

CODESRIA publishes *Africa Development*, the longest standing Africa based social science journal; *Afrika Zamani*, a journal of history; the *African Sociological Review*; the *African Journal of International Affairs*; *Africa Review of Books* and the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*. The Council also co-publishes the *Africa Media Review*; *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*; *The African Anthropologist* and the *Afro-Arab Selections for Social Sciences*. The results of its research and other activities are also disseminated through its Working Paper Series, Green Book Series, Monograph Series, Book Series, Policy Briefs and the CODESRIA Bulletin. Select CODESRIA publications are also accessible online at www.codesria.org.

CODESRIA would like to express its gratitude to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Ford Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY), the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), the Danish Agency for International Development (DANIDA), the French Ministry of Cooperation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Open Society Foundations (OSFs), TrustAfrica, UNESCO, UN Women, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) and the Government of Senegal for supporting its research, training and publication programmes.

Contents

<i>About the Author</i>	xi
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xiii
<i>Abstract</i>	xv
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Background	7
3. Methods.....	11
4. Institutional Choices for Establishing Community Resource Management Areas	13
CREMA as a feasible tool for resource control.....	13
5. Institutional Choices, Representation, and Accountability.....	15
Being Representative: Traditional Elites in CREMA.....	15
The New Elite Formation at the Bontori CREMA.....	19
6. The Crisis of Accountability?	21
7. Conclusion.....	25
<i>Notes</i>	27
<i>References</i>	31

About the Author

Manali Baruah is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Geography at the University of South Carolina, USA. She has a graduate degree in Geography from the University of Delhi. In between her graduate education, she spent five years working for non-governmental organizations on field-based projects in India on livelihoods and biodiversity conservation. Her research interests are livelihoods, natural resource governance and rural participation and representation in conservation and development practice. She is also trained in geospatial technologies and makes maps on a pro-bono basis for fun.

Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges all the comments and feedback received from RFGI colleagues and the two anonymous reviewers. Special thanks to Jesse Ribot, Gretchen Walters, James Murombedzi and Melis Ece for helping me fine-tune the narrative, refine my questions and define the complex terms precisely. Gratitude is also extended to the Ghana RFGI team and all the participants of the study who volunteered to share their knowledge with me. Triple thanks to the people at the CREMA site who hosted me and most importantly to my amazing interpreters, Dorcas Gyimah Owusu and Gifty Baffour Gyau. I gratefully acknowledge the research support and training that RFGI and CODESRIA provided for young researchers and scholars working in Africa. The learning process through RFGI has been an immensely gratifying and productive experience for me.

Abstract

In spite of their stated commitment towards more democratic and inclusive resource governance, the state of Ghana and international authorities take for granted the accountability of local NGOs and their ability to represent local interests in forestry. This paper examines the effects of institutional choices by intervening agents and the subsequent recognition of local institutions on local elite formation and capture, in the context of collaborative resource management initiatives in Ghana. Based on ethnographic research in Wassa Amenfi District, in a Community Resource Management Area (CREMA), this study explores, first, why the intervening agencies chose to establish community resource management areas and how these new arrangements affect decentralized forestry initiatives. The paper shows that the choice of establishing the CREMA is primarily influenced by divisional mandates, technical and managerial priorities without real focus on rural inclusion. Furthermore the case shows how the CREMA, supported by international donors and centralized government forestry agencies, side-lined local elected authorities and led to the formation of a new local elite who acted as agents of tree tenure privatization and to enclosing a community-driven process. The paper shows how these two issues can undermine the representation and accountability in decentralized community-based forestry initiatives.

Keywords: Community Resource Management Area, accountability, forestry, decentralization, privatization, elite, Ghana

Introduction

Natural resource management often entails collaboration between the state and NGOs, as part of the broader initiatives implemented under the guise of decentralization reforms in many developing countries (Chhatre 2008; Ribot et al., 2006; Ribot et al. 2008). In theory, decentralization is the transfer of powers to lower levels within the political-administrative hierarchy of the State to create avenues for representation and allow better integration of local needs and aspirations into public decisions. However, decentralization can be compromised when donors and state authorities choose to recognize institutions that are unaccountable to local people despite their ‘democratic’, ‘traditional’, ‘indigenous’ or ‘NGO’ designations (Crook and Manor 1998; Ribot 2003; Ribot et al. 2008). Indeed, decentralization is equated by many with the privatization and marketization of government functions (Bennett 1994; Litvack et al. 1998).

NGOs have become key agents in the privatization and marketization functions of the government and have been popularly perceived as representatives of democracy, a position which Kamat (2004) argues needs to be challenged. She also argues that NGOs should be made accountable at their specific sites of operation. Persha and Andersson (2014) have argued that the risk of elite capture of forest benefits is significantly moderated when external organizations such as international NGOs are involved. However, research in forestry decentralization indicates that recognition of local institutions other than elected authorities can exacerbate existing patterns of inequality or replicate them (Agrawal and Lemos 2007; Ribot et al. 2006; Li 2007). The collaboration between NGOs, interest-based local elites, and government bodies can become a means for appropriating common resources (Ito 2007; Platteau and Gaspart 2003). Furthermore, it is often overlooked that the local NGOs recognized by international donors and international NGOs can play a significant role in the emergence of new elites, who act as agents of privatization.

Divergent viewpoints exist on the relationship between formal private property rights and natural resource management. Economists have argued that privatization of natural resources promotes economic efficiency (Johnson 1972), and that private rights improve achievement of environmental goals and create incentives for stewardship (Grafton et al. 2006). But ownership may or may not promote stewardship as there are widely discussed examples of stewardship in the absence of private rights (Agrawal 2001; Berkes et al. 1989; Ostrom 1990). In fact, empirical work has shown that privatization does not lead to better forest conditions and that *de facto* institutions are much better for forest conservation than private owners with *de jure* property rights (Gibson et al. 2002).

This paper discusses the rationale behind the choices of the state to establish decentralized forestry initiatives and the effect of the choice and recognition of private actors (NGOs, traditional authorities) on local elite formation and capture in a decentralized forestry initiative. The choice of local NGOs and traditional authorities to establish a decentralized forestry initiative, known as the Community Resource Management Area (CREMA), is a case of privatization of state functions. The paper focuses on how this act of choosing a local NGO side-lined local elected authorities and instead the CREMA was driven by private interests that led to the formation of a new local elite and enclosed the CREMA process. The paper argues for strengthening the accountability and internal compliance of institutions involved in decentralized forestry initiatives and emphasizes the need for a central role for the local elected authorities in these forestry initiatives for a broad-based participation.

During the 1990s, the Ghanaian state initiated a series of policies and programs claiming to involve local populations in forest management and to give them a greater share of benefits accruing in the forestry sector. These measures are collectively known as Collaborative Resource Management Programs (CRMP).¹ The CREMA approach is a part of the Collaborative Resource Management Programs that was initially developed by the Wildlife Division (WD) of the Ghanaian Forestry Commission² (FC). It aimed to address wildlife management outside protected areas and forest reserves. Over time, the CREMA approach became a model for decentralized forest management in Ghana, where it was used to promote natural resource conservation and livelihood diversification outside of the protected areas. Through CREMAs, the Ghanaian government claims to ‘devolve’ authority to manage forest resources to local people and empower them to make decisions about these resources. At present, there are over thirty CREMAs in Ghana at various phases of establishment.³

The establishment of many CREMAs is funded by external donors and implemented by the state in collaboration with NGOs operating both nationally

and outside Ghana. The state authorities seek funds, technical support and assistance from NGOs and donor agencies⁴ to implement the CREMAs. Although the roles and accountability relationships of NGOs and civil society vis-a-vis CREMAs are not explicitly defined, policy documents proclaim with certainty that the Wildlife Division cannot establish CREMAs alone and that it requires the involvement of NGOs and civil society (Forestry Commission 2004; Forestry Commission 2008). Thus, local, national and international non-governmental organisations often act as implementing agencies, providing funds, technical support and assistance to CREMAs (Forestry Commission 2004:14).⁵ So far, multiple NGOs and donors have been involved in the establishment of CREMAs.⁶ Yet, the accountability of the NGOs involved in the creation of CREMAs towards local people is ill defined and often taken for granted.

Using the case of a CREMA in Western Ghana, this paper looks at collaborative associations of the government, NGOs, and communities in forest resource management. It analyses the case of Bontori CREMA, in Wassa Amenfi West District in the Western Region of Ghana. Bontori CREMA was established by an Accra-based NGO, the Agroforestry and Rural Development (ARD) in 2004, with a grant from the Small Grants Programme of the Global Environment Facility⁷ for three years. Securing tree tenure was one of the main objectives of the project. Though IUCN did not directly fund the CREMA establishment, it played a substantial role in its development and formalization and provided technical and financial support to the CREMA. IUCN's support for this CREMA aimed first at integrating some of its Livelihood and Landscape (LLS) project activities that were launched in early 2007, coinciding with the period when Global Environmental Fund (GEF) funding for the CREMA ended. IUCN later adopted CREMAs as an important component of its REDD+ pilot project development (Nyame et al. 2012). Since REDD+ largely relies on existing governance and institutional structures CREMAs may emerge as an appropriate institutional setting for REDD+ projects that effectively engage local people and facilitate equitable benefit sharing. Designating CREMAs as an 'institutional innovation' (Forestry Commission 2010:51), Ghana's REDD readiness preparation proposal looks at it as a pilot case for examining tree-tenure reforms (Forestry Commission 2010:48). The Forestry Commission, through the new Forest and Wildlife Policy (2012) and others (Asare et al. 2013) have endorsed the principle of using the CREMA mechanism for managing carbon landscape projects, as evidenced by Ghana's REDD readiness preparation proposal (R-PP), which explicitly cites the CREMA mechanism as a means for implementing REDD demonstration projects and pilots. However, CREMAs are yet to realize emission reduction revenue.

The case of Bontori shows how the Wildlife Division chose to establish the CREMA to fulfil their divisional mandate of addressing wildlife management

outside protected areas and forest reserves. In doing so, they took a technocratic and prescriptive approach towards local people's participation in resource governance. The engagement of the Wildlife Division and the NGO, the Agroforestry and Rural Development with the CREMA was based on the availability of funding, staff and resources. The case of Bontori CREMA shows that the traditional elites, belonging to the family of chiefs, are integrated into the administrative structure of the CREMA. This is partly conditioned by the state legal and administrative guidelines that frame the collaborative resource management programs, such as the CREMAs. Yet the donors continue to support and go along with these policies. At the same time, the local NGOs chosen to implement the CREMAs are also dependent on the approval of the traditional elites (the chiefs). The claims of autochthony and the inclusion of chiefs are important for local NGOs, which are eager to claim local legitimacy. Instead of benefitting all strata of the local population, this particular case shows that the educated, opportunistic and entrepreneurial people dominated, aligned and gained from their association with the CREMA.

Furthermore, as the case of Bontori CREMA, the international NGOs' and donors' choices of local NGOs to implement the CREMA can become a harbinger of the emergence of a new local elite. This new elite typically has good connections not only with the 'traditional' elite but also with state administrators and international organizations. Their connections with international organizations allow them to acquire international funding for projects, including the CREMA. An important implication of the emergence of this new elite is their role in promoting privatization. In Bontori CREMA, this goal is actively pursued and put in practice by the local NGO, which promotes to farmers the advantages of private ownership of trees on individual farms and the ownership of revenues derived from them. There are potential benefits of clarifying tenure rights, private property rights and access to natural resources. But whether ownership rights of planted trees and the associated financial incentives will create stewardship, encourage sustainable behaviour or advance public objectives of conservation and climate-change mitigation, is yet to be seen.

Research for this study was carried out in seven communities within the Bontori CREMA in the Wassa Amenfi district in Ghana's cocoa landscape in the high forest zone. The communities consist of both indigenous and migrant or stranger⁸ farmers. *Wassas* see themselves as autochthonous to the districts, whereas there is also a sizeable number of migrant farmers belonging to other ethnic groups such as Ewes, Akwapims, Krobos, and Brongs from other parts of Ghana engaged in cocoa and food crop farming. The Western region produces more than 50 per

cent of Ghana's cocoa. As of December 2012, there was no electricity, running water, health clinic or cell phone network in any of the settlements except one. Four settlements are remotely located with no paved roads. These settlements are all within an approximately 25 km radius of the district headquarters.

The first section provides the background and context of the empirical case of a collaborative resource management initiative and a general overview of decentralization in natural resource management in Ghana. The second section briefly describes the methods. Following the methods, the findings are discussed in each subsequent section. The third section discusses the rationale behind the establishment of CREMAs within collaborative forestry in Ghana, while highlighting the specific choices in the case of Bontori. The fourth section shows how, in spite of the devolved nature of CREMA, traditional leaders are representing the interests of the population within the newly formed CREMA structure. In addition, the second and third sub-sections here also discuss how the recognition of local NGOs has enabled the formation and strengthening of a new elite, who claimed to represent the interest of the population in the CREMA and how this led to issues of representation and crisis of accountability within the CREMA. The fifth and the final section summarizes the main insights drawn from this empirical case and how these findings may contribute to decentralized forestry initiatives in Ghana.

Background

In Ghana, the Forestry Commission has overall responsibility for the management and utilization of forestry resources. The Ghanaian FC is independent of the democratic local authorities in both legislative and operational terms (Amanor and Brown 2003). The FC⁹ is a centralized government institution, whose policy and approach reflects the tendency of post-Independent Governments, which prioritized reinforcing centralized authority over natural resources. At the time of Independence, the Ghanaian State, like many other African states, sought to consolidate the political authority needed to drive modernization processes, and to assure centralized state management of resources controlled by patronage networks (Austin 2005; Boone 2003).

Following the austerity measures imposed by Structural Adjustment Programs, and mounting pressures from the lenders (e.g. IMF and the World Bank), the Ghanaian government started to promote the decentralization agenda through political and administrative reforms in the name of 'good governance'. Ghana also suffered rapid loss of forest cover due to agricultural expansion and wood exports in the wake of structural adjustment (Benhin and Barbier 2004; Codjoe and Dzanku 2009; Owusu 1998). In 1992, Ghana adopted a new constitution emphasizing decentralization (The Constitution of Ghana 1992; Kpessa 2011). Subsequently, in 1993 a new Local Government Act (Act 462) was adopted. The Local Government Act recognized the District Assemblies (DAs)¹⁰ as decentralized authorities at the district level, with powers to adopt bylaws and to raise revenues through local taxes. The traditional authorities were also recognized. They have a consultative role in the appointment of thirty per cent of the members of the District Assemblies, and at the regional level, two chiefs from the Regional House of Chiefs are elected to regional councils (LGA 1993).

Decentralization reforms in the forestry sector in post-Independence Ghana were initiated through the 1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy.¹¹ The Act required all line agencies of the central government, including the deconcentrated District Forest Services (FSD) of the Forestry Commission (FC), to report to District Assemblies (DA). Yet the DAs were not given any management or utilization functions of forest reserves, which remained the exclusive domain of the FC (Kotey et al.1998). In off-reserve areas, while local farmers and chiefs are considered the ‘custodians’ of trees, the management and utilization rights of trees are vested in the state and carried out through the deconcentrated FSDs (Sasu 2004).

Simultaneously, during the 1990s, the Ghanaian government started to promote CREMAs as a collaborative form of natural resource governance. The CREMAs’ ultimate advantage was presented as incentivizing local communities to manage their natural resources while supporting three ideals: conservation, development, and democracy. The Wildlife Division argued that the establishment of CREMAs would result in poverty alleviation by diversifying income at the community and household levels (through reliance on self-sustaining, profitable markets for bush meat and non-timber forest products), while at the same time they would secure habitats, protect endangered species and enhance the security of Protected Areas.

Yet decentralization in the forestry sector in Ghana remained limited (Teye 2011). The central state administrative institutions, particularly the Forestry Commission, continued to be reluctant to devolve decisions in forestry due to important revenue generating potential of off-reserve forests (Sasu 2004; Amanor 2005). The Forestry Commission’s resistance to decentralization has also transformed the collaborative forest management programs into a ‘centralized’ form of forest governance. With CRMPs, the off-reserve areas and farms became the principal source of timber, and the adoption of CRMPs in Ghana was largely a response to the problem of regulating farmland timber (Amanor 2004; Amanor 2005). In fact, against the espoused decentralization process, the responsibility for off-reserve timber resource management was transferred from the District Assemblies back to the Forestry Department in 1996 (Sasu 2004). The District Assemblies lost their decision-making powers concerning the commercial use of the trees in farm areas outside the protected areas and forest reserves (Amanor 2004). Currently, the commercial exploitation of trees – particularly for timber – is controlled by the FC through the District FSDs.¹² FSDs monitor and regulate the harvesting of forest resources, especially timber, in reserve and off-reserve areas. The District Assemblies have no say in felling of trees on farms for timber without the consent of FSDs and the chief executive of the FC in Accra¹³ (Odom 2005).

Besides FSDs, the traditional leaders receive a substantial share of the revenues from the commercial exploitation of the trees in off-reserve areas. The chiefs had important powers over the management of forests since the colonial period, and the colonial government made the paramount chiefs responsible for the creation of forest reserves (Amanor 2004). The colonial forestry policies gave the chiefs, as the 'owners' of the land, rights to royalties from forest and land resources (Amanor 2005). After Independence, the government claimed the ownership of all economically valuable trees on farms and in secondary forests 'in trust for the stools'. However, the chiefs retained the authority to give approval for cutting of both natural and planted trees in off-reserve areas, but these powers are subject to the approval of the Forestry Commission. Traditional authorities were given a share of timber royalties¹⁴. Together with the traditional leaders, the District Assemblies also receive a substantial share of timber royalties from the commercial exploitation of the trees in off-reserve areas. Thus, both DAs and chiefs have considerable interests in proceeds from stumpage and other economic rents from forests. The timber-revenue potential of off-reserve areas is also important in the context of the movement towards privatization of tree tenure and the role of Collaborative Resource Management Programmes and CREMAs in the commercialization and privatization of trees in Ghana.

One of the important changes brought about by devolution in forestry was the attempt to clarify the ownership rights of planted trees. Although before the 1962 Concession Act farmers had rights to trees growing on their lands, the Concessions Act vested all trees in Ghana in the President to manage on behalf of the chiefs. Farmers in the Western Region are custodians but have no rights to naturally regenerated trees growing on their farms, and their management and utilization rights belong to the state, which assumes this role in trust for the chiefs. To be able to cut down or utilize the planted trees on their farms, the farmers have to obtain permits from FSDs, who have the sole discretionary power to determine whether the permission be granted.

Backed by the advocacy of international NGOs, the Ghanaian government took necessary steps towards the privatization of tree tenure by allowing the FC to issue a certificate to farmers to register the ownership rights of planted trees. Although still not backed by legislation, CREMAs, such as Bontori CREMA in Western Ghana, promise that farmers will obtain benefits through tree planting and private titles to the trees they planted.

Methods

The field research for this paper was conducted between April and December 2012, during which period I was a resident of Ghana, and of which four months were spent at the CREMA site. Data were collected during separate periods at the actual CREMA site in the Western Region and outside the case site in Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi, Damongo and Mole National Park interviewing policy makers, funders and implementers. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation and a review of project documents. Thirty-seven CREMA members were purposively selected¹⁵ and interviewed for this work. These respondents included seven traditional chiefs, one of which is the divisional chief of the stool. A semi-structured pattern for interviews (in Twi (Akan)/English) was followed using an interpreter at all times during the interviews. All CREMA members except three gave the interviews in Twi. Some respondents used a number of English phrases and words during their interviews in Twi. I used elicitation techniques such as vignettes and dilemmas to gather data on accountability of the leaders in the project. Interviews began with an open ended question on the respondent's personal history and occupation. It then moved on to their awareness, participation in the CREMA, the rationale for establishing the CREMA including questions on who they thought represented the community in the CREMA, ownership of forest resources, reasons behind their engagement and interest and their expectations from the CREMA.

Eighteen policy makers, funding agency, government and NGO were also interviewed. These included four senior officials of the FC involved in the conceptualization and implementation of CREMAs, five officials from three different NGOs¹⁶, three District Forest officials at the study site, two District Assembly officials, and four unit committee members were also interviewed. The

respondents from the government agencies and NGOs spoke fluent English and chose to be interviewed in English.

All the names of the respondents and places have been changed in this paper. Based on interviews with the policy makers, government officials and document analysis, the following section presents the rationale behind the establishment of CREMAs within collaborative forestry in Ghana, while highlighting the specific institutional choices in the case of Bontori.

Institutional Choices for Establishing Community Resource Management Areas

CREMA as a feasible tool for resource control

The Ghanaian government identifies CREMAs as an important ‘participatory model’ and claims that the CREMAs will create the ‘right conditions’ for democratic participation, opportunities and financial incentives for local communities to participate in forest conservation and management. Beyond this win-win discourse of conservation for development, there are also other underlying reasons for the Forestry Commission to push for the CREMA model. The Forestry Commission through its Wildlife Division, which is responsible for national parks and wildlife management, supports the CREMA model as it will ‘save money spent on patrol staff’ by improving the security of Protected Areas (Forestry Commission 2008:20). Ostensibly CREMAs are an intervention that gives incentives to local communities to manage their natural resources while serving as a feasible means to control the exploitation of off-reserve resources by the state.

CREMAs are recognized by the government for managing wildlife outside protected areas and reserves by incentivizing local communities. As mentioned in the introduction, actors from other intervening agencies associated with two other CREMAs in the northern part of Ghana were also interviewed for comparative purposes. A senior official of the Wildlife Division, overseeing the implementation of another CREMA in the Northern Region of Ghana said that, ‘Wildlife outside the protected areas is not abundant, and parks do not have buffers. So the CREMA is a strategy to serve as buffers because if there are CREMAs fringing the parks, the activities within the zone are regulated. So they offer protection, security,

even though they have their purpose'. (Senior Government Official 1, Wildlife Division, Damongo, Northern Region, Ghana, 20 November 2012).

Senior officials of the Wildlife Division involved in the design and subsequent implementation of CREMAs mentioned that the stringent forestry and wildlife laws alienated communities from their resources. They also mentioned that there was a lack of incentives for communities to protect forests or wildlife and that the environment and deforestation issues often are not part of national political issues but resource allocation is very much a political decision. The majority of the officials expressed a lack of political motivation to decentralize forest management. So, as this case illustrates, participatory processes were adopted as a middle ground seeking to maintain some level of central control over the key resources in the most cost-effective way.

In Bontori the key resource is trees in off-reserve areas on people's farms. District Forestry officials view CREMAs as an opportunity to promote commercial tree planting and to maintain the trees on farms in response to Ghana's dwindling timber resources and the international requirements of sustainably sourced timber (Teye 2011). For forestry officials timber production is the most important national target, which needs to be encouraged through individual ownership and tenure rights and 'effective' and 'sustainable' management of planted trees. Bontori, located in the high forested zone of South-Western Ghana, is ideal for growing many commercial tree species.

Trees are a key resource on people's farms at the Bontori CREMA site. For the farmers, clarifying tree tenure rights is important because, unlike the prevailing tree tenure conditions through the CREMA 'project', they can also claim ownership of the trees and the benefits derived from them. This was also an important argument that the local NGO, Agroforestry and Rural Development used to recruit farmers to create Bontori CREMA. As discussed before, besides the Forestry Department, the traditional leaders receive a significant share of the revenues from the commercial exploitation of naturally occurring trees in off-reserve areas, a legacy of colonial forestry policies. Traditional leaders and their family members continue to play leadership roles in the CREMA process as discussed in the following section.

Institutional Choices, Representation, and Accountability

Being Representative: Traditional Elites in CREMA

The Bontori CREMA Constitution states that all individuals residing within the area with land-based livelihood interests can become members. However, those who identified themselves as members did this based on their tree planting activities, active interest in the environment and attending ‘forestry’ related meetings. While the members are required to pay registration and membership fees, all the interviewees admitted they had never paid any fees. Interview respondents stated that the principal reasons for participating in the CREMA process was for potential additional income, investment for the future, and improving ecosystem services such as cleaner water and air, more NTFPs and restoring soil fertility.

In two of the seven CREMA communities, the majority of the inhabitants who were CREMA members were ‘ethnic outsiders’. The chiefs of these communities belonged to the founding family of the village and served as caretaker chiefs¹⁷. The Community Resource Management Committees (CMRC) members¹⁸ were also the active CREMA members in each community. Some CMRC members held executive positions while others were part of village-based committees. In spite of being described as community-based, the CRMCs could not surpass the cultural practices in decision making, where elderly influential males and traditional elites exercise control over the decision-making processes at a local level. The only residents in the villages aware of the CREMA were the members, relatives and friends. During the first few interactions with respondents, a couple of CREMA Executives insisted on being present, or would just stand around and interrupt to answer on behalf of the respondents. All the CREMA executives were well-versed in their rights and

duties, but only fifty per cent of the interviewed members could name the CREMA Chairman, and appeared ignorant of the existence of its Constitution. The Chairman explained this as a product of naivety and ignorance of the villagers, arguing that the project is still in an early stage and villagers were unable to comprehend its complex set-up.

Chiefs, through discussion with the council of elders¹⁹ and sometimes in the presence of actors from intervening agencies, nominated the members of the Community Resource Management Committees (CMRCs). The appointed representatives were the educated or traditional village elites. The Bontori CREMA Executive Committee consists of representatives from 20 communities, along with the Divisional Chief of the area. All the 10 Executive Committee members were chiefs, sub-chiefs or elders in their respective communities. No office holder followed the tenure term, which is three years. Although elections are provided in the constitution of CREMA, no elections have been held since the first term of the office expired a couple of years ago. The lack of resources and the unresolved financial dispute have been cited as the main reasons by the CREMA members and the intervening agents.

Forestry and NGO officials who were interview participants revealed that in an ideal situation they would prefer to have stakeholder representatives who are upwardly and downwardly accountable, but they also found the process of identifying such representatives time-consuming. Ensuring adequate democratic representation in institutions like CREMA, with multiple user groups and traditional authorities, was cited as resource-intensive and complex by the same interview participants. Therefore, the responsibility for selecting representatives was left to the discretion of communities or sometimes by invitation. The established practice of the forestry and NGO officials is to give a list of stakeholder category to community liaisons for representation in meetings and forums. However, traditional leaders receive invitation letters addressed to them. Though not indicative of the general attitude of all actors from intervening agencies, one person said,

We have to maintain continuity and ensure the same people attend to build up on existing knowledge they have. Good representation is important, but as organizers we are often concerned about whether the representatives have the capacity to participate in the dialogue, whether they can relay the messages to their communities. Representatives also bring their own biases, sometimes come without any preparation on the agendas they should bring to the discussion, so most often the process of stakeholder identification just becomes a formality [through stakeholder lists given to the community point persons]. It is too time consuming to follow procedure, we have to stick to deadlines and goals. (NGO Official 1, Wassa Amenfi West District, Ghana, 4 July 2012)

Another District Forestry official said something similar about the process of representation but emphasised the accountability and feedback. He said, 'We leave it to the community. Participants are either elected or nominated to represent their communities in their own way, but they also have the duty to report back to the people. There need to be checks and balances in place and institutionalized and regularized feedback mechanism, but there are costs related to keeping a check'. (Government Official 6, Forestry Services Division, Wassa Amenfi West District, Ghana, 6 July 2012).

On further inquiry the same NGO actor (NGO Official 1, 4 July 2012) said that regarding the 'continuity of existing representatives' and its implications for the few people monopolizing the process, there is not much perceived value among the population in attending meetings on forests or environment related issues, so it is the 'interested' ones who attend these meetings. Since many of the consultative meetings become an avenue for technical advice, the interviewee was more concerned about a '*receptive representative*' who was 'exposed' to the priorities and goals of the project and 'speaks' the language of the initiative. Whether they had the resources to respond to the needs of their constituents or they represented their constituents' interests was secondary.

Being accessible to the population is essential in improving downward accountability. When intervening agents are inaccessible and distant, it is difficult for citizens to demand accountability (Ribot et al. 2008). The Wildlife Division established a superficial and distant relationship with the CREMA communities and offered very ambiguous responses in terms of accountability relationships and what was happening on the ground. Although the CREMA can make its by-laws and administer those within its boundaries, government officials did point out that the CREMA is not above national wildlife and forestry laws.

The Wildlife Division shared a mutually beneficially relationship fulfilled with help from the local NGO along with the donor agency, the Global Environment Facility. They thereby achieved their divisional mandate through the local NGO and IUCN and managed to distance themselves from actual events, while at the same time choosing the local NGO to help establish the CREMA to help solidify the legitimacy of the NGO on their operational turf/project areas. Once the Certificate of Devolution was granted to the CREMA by the state, and funds exhausted, the communities were left entirely to their own devices.

Although the CREMA Executives were all aware of the existing intervening institutions and their functions, villagers widely demonstrated a lack of knowledge about the complex funding linkages, the funders, and the role of Forestry Services versus the Wildlife Division. They often referred to their community leaders as the ones who are knowledgeable about the intervention and specific roles of the involved

institutions. Accesses, availability, government recognition, tradition, custodians of the land and listening to people's needs were the key reasons participants pointed out as to why they considered chiefs to be their leaders. This attributed role of the villagers is further solidified when intervening agencies worked with chiefs and elders as the primary point of contact. The CREMA guidelines do not discriminate between its members. However in practice, chiefs and village elders were recognized as *de facto* 'representatives' of their communities. In all seven communities, the village chiefs were members of the CREMA Executive Committee. Actors from intervening agencies stated that they have to recognize traditional authorities and to respect cultural practices because they are the custodians of the customary land and that a project cannot proceed without their permission from the state of Ghana. Traditional leaders enjoy some constitutional provisions regarding the income generated from natural resources from customary lands. For instance, over the years they have been supported by successive sets of intervening agencies and political patronage but have surprisingly managed to avoid accountability, especially financial, to the communities they represent. According to one official, 'Chiefs think that the revenue is for them...they get money for stool maintenance...now what is stool maintenance...it all goes to their pockets'. (Official 5, District Assembly Office, Wassa Amenfi West District (13 October 2012)). Although there are some non-electoral sanctions for chiefs, voluntary forms are not enough for demanding accountability from these actors.

There have been no revenues generated through CREMA activities so far. However, the initial non-monetary benefits of the GEF grant might have been limited to the executives, their friends and relatives; only those associated with CREMA staff recalled receiving training, tree saplings, or small animals for rearing. They also received per diems, invitations to training workshops and access to high-level authorities such as the Director of the Wildlife Division, the National Coordinator of GEF Small Grants, and IUCN personnel supervising the project. Most project beneficiaries and material evidence of the initial GEF-funded project could not be traced. The CREMA leaders were always associated with meetings, training and later on with other projects or initiatives related to forestry in the district. At least four executives still work in leadership capacities in subsequent natural resource management and livelihood projects that are implemented by other NGOs and government research institutes. People consistently associated one of the CREMA executives as a representative of the District Forestry Office.

On the other hand, the role of the elected representatives, that is the District Assembly, is limited in the CREMA. In the case of the Bontori CREMA, the District Assembly needed financial support from the IUCN to help them establish the CREMA by-laws. CREMA members widely expressed dissatisfaction and had low expectations of

their elected representatives and the District Assembly and perceived them as unable to respond, unaccountable and untrustworthy. On being asked who they go to in matters related to forestry access, non-timber forest products collection or hunting permits, respondents mentioned the District Forest Services and the local Divisional Chief of the traditional area. They widely expressed the view that local elected officials are powerless in matters of forestry and all decision making powers are vested in the district forestry office.

The forestry officials interviewed pointed out the lack of technical capacity and expertise in the elected local government to represent people's needs regarding forest resources. The local elected government plays a tangential role in matters of forest resource management and the CREMA because of the limited powers entrusted to them. The district forestry office facilitated partnerships between the donors and local communities in executing the CREMA process. CREMA Executives, who were also traditional leaders and village chiefs, openly expressed the view that they look up to the forest department, the Wildlife Division or IUCN for assistance and advice.

The traditional elites continued to play their de facto leadership role in the CREMA. Furthermore, the lack of clarity in policy documents about the role of local NGOs in the CREMA process allowed new elites to emerge who claimed to represent people's interests and needs in the CREMA.

The New Elite Formation at the Bontori CREMA

In 2004 an Accra-based NGO, called the Agroforestry and Rural Development (ARD), received a grant of 33,770 USD from GEF for the establishment of the Bontori CREMA²⁰. The ARD is the CREMA Secretariat²¹. Due to the exhaustion of funds, the project ended in April 2007. Seven months later, the CREMA was granted the Certification of Devolution (COD) by the Ministry of Land and Forests. The COD, in principle, means that the authority for management and utilization of resources within the CREMA was transferred from the Wildlife Division to the people in the participating villages. The IUCN played a substantial role in the development and formalization of the CREMA²² (Nyame et. al. 2012) through technical and financial support and by integrating some of its Livelihood and Landscape (LLS) project activities with those of CREMA (*Interviews 2012 by the author and project document review*).

In an interview with Mr. Adom on 20 December 2012 in Accra and with his brother earlier on 5 December 2012 at Bontori, it was revealed that in the early forties, a migrant timber merchant from Cape Coast settled in Bontori village. He was Nzema²³, an ethnic outsider in a Wassa-dominated area. Planting timber trees in the area was not

widely practised since they take years to mature and due to lack of clarity on tree tenure over planted timber trees. Timber was sourced from forest reserves, off-reserve or from people's farms after obtaining access rights from chiefs and the Forest Department. The merchant's youngest child, Mr. Adom, grew up to be a traditional medicine expert in the Ministry of Health in the 1990s. He attended a World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) meeting in Kenya in 1991, where he was taught about the relation of trees to agriculture, poverty alleviation, and environmental protection. He claimed strong ties to his birth place, arguing that he was the only child of his parents born at Bontori²⁴. He reiterated he was a farmer, and that his background and ties to the place inspired him to work towards representing the needs of farmers. He said that he wanted to spread his knowledge to others in the area; he established an agroforestry demonstration plot on his family farm. He also registered an NGO called Agroforestry and Rural Development in 1995, became its Director and resigned from his government job in 2000. They grew teak, a non-native but valuable commercial species as part of a government plantation development project with assistance from the timber company operating in the area. Agro forestry activities, which mainly involved inter-planting timber species in cocoa farms, were incorporated later in 2000. He is widely credited by the community for establishing the CREMA. Members also agreed that his family are the pioneers in planting trees on a commercial basis. Mr. Adom is an absentee farmer; his elder brother looks after the farm at the study site.

The informal processes of recruiting individual farmers to join the CREMA started in the early 2000s with active campaigning about the benefits of growing trees led by Mr. Adom. The financial success of the agro-forestry farm encouraged many in the area. They managed to sell trees growing on their farms to timber companies. The Forestry Department and the timber companies also distributed free seedlings to farmers to intercrop with their cocoa, a practice to encourage shade-loving cocoa crops and increase productivity. Encouraged by the results of many plantation development programmes and project incentives such as the distribution of small farm tools, free seedling and per diems, many cocoa farmers in the area started planting trees on their farms. The CREMA approach, as the Constitution of the Bontori CREMA stated and many farmers stated in interviews, brought these individual farmers together to manage collectively their natural resources and diversify their livelihoods²⁵.

The ability of the Agroforestry and Rural Development to represent the local interests in matters of forestry authorities was taken for granted by the authorities. The next section shows how the Agroforestry and Rural Development, chosen by the higher-level authorities to represent local interests was embroiled in a crisis of accountability.

The Crisis of Accountability?

After the initial painting of glorious pictures of the CREMA's success, one of the major negative issues raised by respondents was misappropriation of project funding. Accusations of malfeasance focused on the Director of the NGO. Based on different accounts of the same incident²⁶, it seems the conflict started when the CREMA Executives, along with some members, refused to repay loans that were part of a revolving credit system. The Director reported them to the police, and many members were arrested. Members justified their behaviour by accusing the NGO Director, Mr. Adom, of corruption. IUCN, the FD and the Wildlife Division intervened, and so members were not put behind bars. When asked to give his side of the story, the Director of the NGO stated, 'Have you been to the CREMA Chairman's village? He used the money to build it. When other executive members could not repay the loans, they spread this story. The community leaders, therefore, should be chosen carefully; it is also a habit with the farmers of not repaying loans' (20 December 2012). He did not mention the police case. I asked him who chose the leaders, who they answer to, and why the leadership has not changed despite the allegations. During the same interview, on being asked about the role of the CREMA Secretariat concerning accountability²⁷, he said, "amongst ourselves we are accountable, and there are mechanisms in the Secretariat to make sure the CREMA constitution is followed. Even though it has been a couple of years since the incident, the challenge is I am not getting the money to run the secretariat. This NGO is very small, two volunteers and three active. We are operating from my residence here in Accra²⁸. You see how expensive it is when you are a small man in the village, and suddenly you have a national responsibility that does not even bring you money'.

The project liaison Program Manager of GEF Small Grants Ghana labeled the incident as miscommunication and misunderstanding between the implementers

and CREMA members. The community misunderstood what the different budget headings in the project documents meant and that they were under the impression that all the funds were for activities on the ground. He mentioned his visits to the project site to clear up the confusion and as far as the GEF was concerned the project was satisfactorily completed²⁹ (interview, Accra, 14 November 2012).

All government officials feigned ignorance of the actual events on account of being absent when the events occurred. There was a lack of clarity on what the exact role of the local NGO within the CREMA would be, one official expressed the idea that the Agroforestry and Rural Development being the Secretariat of the CREMA was a promising idea until they started receiving complaints about fund mismanagement. Government officials were reluctant to discuss the CREMA controversy related to CREMA fund mismanagement, as demonstrated by what a senior official of the Wildlife Division said, 'I am not sure I want to go there, for having worked there you probably know more than I do. All that I can say is that there is a conflict between an NGO that initiated this whole CREMA process and an agency (refers to IUCN here) that came back later used that platform to do certain things for the benefit of the people and other beneficiaries. It seems to me and it only seems to me (interviewees' word emphasis) that there is a feeling of side-lining some people somewhere, and that is creating those tensions, those frictions. I want to leave it at that' (laughs). (Senior Government Official 2, Wildlife Division, Accra, 14 November 2012)

As a key member of the community, Mr. Adom articulated his position (e.g. connections, national networks) as a leader and developed his constituency convincing them of the achievements that were possible through his leadership. What the community did not foresee was that he would develop his NGO into a 'sub-institution' within the CREMA itself. According to one IUCN official,

On numerous occasions, Mr. Adom has claimed that the CREMA is his and I have corrected him, the CREMA is for the people, and it does not belong to one person. That is what peeves the community members. Initially, the NGO played an important role in facilitating the CREMA process but because the Director has not been too transparent with the community that they are peeved. For us IUCN, whatever things we are doing here in this area, we will continue to involve them and support them in whatever they need, for instance in the pro-poor REDD project if it comes through because CREMA is the management unit that we have identified on the ground and is managing their resources in off-reserve areas.

(Senior IUCN Official, Wassa Amenfi West, Ghana, (6 November 2012)

According to one CREMA member, 'We do not hear from Mr. Adom anymore. He doesn't bring any form of support which any NGO or government passes through him and for now we do not have any business with him, although he initiated the CREMA, but we see it be ours now'. (CREMA member, male, Village 2, Wassa Amenfi West, Ghana, 28 September 2012).

The members harbour feelings of betrayal against the NGO Director. All respondents showed their dissent by condemning his behaviour and not welcoming him in the CREMA area, often gossiping about what he did and slandering his name. To further malign his character, they would also constantly mention that he used to be a Catholic priest but is now a 'traditionalist'³⁰. Echoing similar sentiments, as demonstrated by the remark above, the majority of the respondents allege that he has not visited the area³¹ since the conflict but continues making claims on behalf of the CREMA and secures funding for other projects based on the CREMA. As of March 2014, the CREMA continues to operate outside of the NGO, even though it is stated as the 'Secretariat' in the CREMA constitution.

Conclusion

The case study illustrates past and contemporary tensions in the CREMA process. It demonstrates how a broad-based decentralization process driven by the elite and private actors does not remain democratic while overstepping the local elected government. Funds, resources and discretionary powers over forestry resources were rarely transferred to the local government, and existing legal provisions limited the ability of the elected government to respond to people's needs in the forestry sector. The mere symbolic devolution of power to the CREMAs still renders the institution weak in exerting its discretionary power to overthrow the local NGO, the Agroforestry and Rural Development, from its executive committee. Although the specific circumstances and the means³² through which the NGO came to function as the Office of the CREMA Secretariat is obscured, it nonetheless points to the negligence of the State and the donor agency. The vague and opaque language in policy documents is often misleading in terms of the definite roles of the collaborating institutions, for instance, the NGO's role in the CREMA. Under the guise of running a community driven initiative, the NGO Director used it as a means to obtain funds and later charter his career. The case study illustrates that in CREMAs, the authorities that are chosen to manage 'community-based forestry' initiatives do not necessarily represent local interests and needs. Furthermore, when these authorities are not accountable to local people but to donors and the state, ensuring accountability can be a challenging pursuit.

On the other hand, rural populations recognize the Forestry Commission as an institution whose authority cannot be challenged – even in ostensibly decentralized programs. Although the Forestry Commission has administratively decentralized some of its functions through line offices and launched a number of collaborative

projects, it does not constitute democratic decentralization when it circumvents the local governments and instead recognizes non-democratic institutions where representation and accountability are desired but not mandatory. Although there are subtler forms of protests and informal modes of sanctions practiced at the site, people's explicit alignment with these unfavourable resource management policies begs further research.

While the empirical circumstances of this study are less likely to be wholly replicated, this paper adds to the existing literature that democratic decentralization rarely takes place in natural resource management (Ribot and Oyono 2006; Ribot et al. 2006). Albeit its presence in rhetoric, it is poorly understood and executed and most often distorted by unaccountable and non-representative actors and institutions. This study also makes the need for research to understand how local actors exercise strategic choices that can impact the implementation and attainment of democratic ideals even more pertinent – in this case, representation of local needs and accountability of the actors and institutions involved. Understanding decentralization in resource management in Ghana, a nation often applauded for its democratic reforms, with a long history of traditional political systems also offer insights into the development of natural resource governance, the role of the state and the implications this may have for democracy in a neoliberal era.

Notes

1. Other programs and policies included Modified Taungya System (MTS), Community Forest Committees and Social Responsibility Agreements (SRAs). The MTS is an agroforestry program introduced in 2002 with the aim of supporting rural livelihoods and addressing the deforestation problem in Ghana. Under the MTS, the FC provides farmers degraded lands to plant and maintain timber trees and grow food crops; while farmers are entitled to 100% of the food crop outputs, the revenue from timber is shared among the FC(40%), the farmers(40%), chiefs (10%) and forest adjacent community(10%). SRAs are legal arrangements between logging companies and communities that oblige companies to provide 5% of their annual revenues generated through commercial exploitation of timber to the communities in their operational area. This is in line with the equitable distribution of benefits espoused in Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy, 1994. However, operationalizing these measures to achieve their intended objectives have been a challenge.
2. Article 269(1) of the Ghanaian Constitution provides for the creation of the FC, established by the FC Act, 1999 (ACT 571). Under Act 571, amended by the Timber Resources Management (Amendment) Act, 2002 (Act 617).
3. Personal Communication and list of CREMAs from a senior government official, WD, FC Accra, 2012.
4. CREMA briefing document, 2004a (page 14), identifies technical support and funding as essential for the success of CREM and based on interviews with CREMA policy makers and implementers.
5. CREMA briefing document (2004a) and my interviews with CREMA policy makers and implementers indicate that the Ghanaian CREMA programme identifies technical support and funding as essential for its success.
6. These included UNDP Global Environment Fund - Small Grants Programme (SGP), supported by the French Government, the European Commission, the Dutch Government, Care International, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), A Rocha among others.
7. The GEF is a multilateral agency serving as the main financial mechanism for a number of international conventions including the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Through its Small Grants Programme (SGP) the GEF has made

more than 20,000 grants to civil society and community based organizations for a total of \$1 billion. Source: www.thegef.org, accessed GIVE DATE HERE.

8. Refers to non-autochthones from other regions of Ghana
9. The Forestry Commission consists of three divisions: the Forest Services Division (FSD), the Wildlife Division (WD) and the Timber Industry Development Division (TIDD). It also has two research and training centres.
10. Currently, the District Assemblies are made up of 67 percent elected representative from electoral areas and 33 percent government appointees. The Chief Executive of the District Assembly is appointed by the President and supported by a team of technocrats.
11. 1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy was revised in 2012
12. The FSD is under the supervision of District Forest Manager and the team made up of assistant managers, range supervisors, cartographers and customer service officers (not present in all districts).
13. With regard to the felling of more than five trees, the farmer is expected to apply to FC headquarters.
14. Section 267(Sub-section 6) of the constitution of the Republic of Ghana provides arrangement for revenue sharing from Stumpage/Rent among District Administrations (55%), stools (25%) and traditional councils (20%) after providing for FC's management fees (50%)to Forest Council and 10% to the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands (OASL).FC's share is 50% of the forest proceeds both from on-reserve and off-reserve areas.10% goes to OASL and the remaining 40% divided among DA, stools and Traditional Council according to the above formula. (OASL 2010a)
15. Preliminary interviews conducted in a few CREMA communities revealed that the concept is not as well-known as CREMA executives have suggested. So I instead started to focus on people who claimed an association with the CREMA through membership or knew about the CREMA and planted trees. These respondents therefore were purposively sampled from two settlement clusters with the CREMA area - one cluster consisting of native-born communities and the other cluster consisting of migrants, especially focusing on people who were knowledgeable about the project and were willing to participate
16. IUCN, Agroforestry and Rural Development and another Arocha Ghana involved in the implementation of CREMA in the Northern Region
17. Chiefs who are from migrant groups are referred to as caretaker chiefs, since they work on behalf of the traditional autochthon chief of the area
18. First, at the base-village level, a Community Resource Management Committee (CMRC) are elected by the villagers. The CMRCs handle the management of the CREMA in their community.
19. Consisting of men and women who are married, with children, influential and related to the founding family/ies of the village. For men, financial independence, property ownership etc. plays an important role in terms of who is considered an elder. For

women, it is also related to having independent sources of income, property, if she is the head of a household, presence of other younger adult women (daughter in law, daughters) who take care of household chores. They advise the chief on matters regarding village administration; there are no strict number requirement for people on the Council, depends on the village population

20. UNDP at https://www.sgp.undp.org/index.php?option=com_sgpprojects&view=projectdetail&id=7463&Itemid=205
21. The Bontori CREMA constitution states that the ARD is the CREMA Secretariat. The role of the Secretariat is to plan, monitor, implement and disseminate information and decisions, prepare data and reports, administrative and public relations work, design project proposals and seek funding on behalf of the Executive Committee
22. Interviews with stake holders
23. The Nzemas were regarded as prominent entrepreneurs also known as “Herculean logger kings” of early twentieth century Ghana; (Raymond E. Dumett, 2001)
24. This was known to his community and he asserted during the interview.
25. Stated Aim of the Bontori CREMA - Constitution of Bontori CREMA, page 1
26. CREMA members, FD, IUCN were more or less on the same page about this account.
27. The role of the Secretariat is to plan, monitor, implement and disseminate information and decisions, prepare data and reports, administrative and public relations work, design project proposals and seek funding on behalf of the EC
28. At the NGO Director’s behest, another, PhD student came to meet me looking for the local Office of the NGO at Bontori. Unable to locate it he got in touch with me to verify if the NGO had an office near the CREMA site
29. Report on the GEF website
30. ‘Traditionalist’, as against the dominant religions such as Christianity and Islam. Traditional religions have negative connotations often associated with witch craft and black magic.
31. He was representing Ghana in the World Bank’s FCPF dedicated grant mechanism for indigenous peoples and local communities and that it is a very slow process and hence he was not able to visit Bontori for the past few years; at the time of interview November 2012.
32. There are different accounts of what happened and how the NGO managed to make last minute changes in the version of the ‘Constitution’ send to the DA for approval;

References

- Agrawal, A. 2001, 'Common property institutions and sustainable governance of resources', *World Development*, Vol. 29, No. 10, pp.1649-1672.
- Agrawal, A. and Lemos, M.C., 2007, 'A Greener Revolution in the Making? Environmental Governance in the 21st Century', *Environ. Sci. Policy Sustain. Development*, Vol. 49, pp. 36–45.
- Amanor, K. and Brown, D., 2003, 'Making environmental management more responsive to local needs: Decentralisation and evidence-based policy in Ghana,' *ODI Forestry Briefing*, Vol. 3, pp. 1–4.
- Amanor, K., 2004, 'Natural and Cultural Assets and Participatory Forest Management in West Africa', Working Paper Series (75), Political Economy Research Institute, Amherst: University of Massachusetts. (http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1061&context=peri_workingpapers) October 2013.
- Amanor, K.S., 2005, 'Equity in forest benefit sharing and poverty reduction', in Nketiah, K.S., Ameyaw, J.A.S. and Owusu, B., eds., *Equity in forest benefit sharing: Stakeholder Views*, pp. 15-23. Tropenbos International–Ghana (2005). Workshop proceedings 3 October 29, 2004. Wageningen, the Netherlands: Tropenbos International. (www.tropenbos.org/file.php/217/benefitsharingsmall.pdf)
- Asare, R.A., Kyei, A. and Mason, J.J., 2013, 'The community resource management area mechanism: a strategy to manage African forest resources for REDD+', *Philos. Trans. R. Soc. B Biol. Sci.* Vol. 368, pp. 1-9.
- Austin, G., 2005, *Labour, Land, and Capital in Ghana: From Slavery to Free Labour in Asante, 1807-1956*: Boydell & Brewer.
- Benhin, J.K. and Barbier, E.B., 2004, 'Structural Adjustment Programme, deforestation and biodiversity loss in Ghana', *Environmental Resource Economics*, Vol. 27, pp. 337–366.
- Bennett, R.J., 1994, *Local Government and Market Decentralization: Experiences in Industrialized, Developing, and Former Eastern Bloc Countries*: United Nations University Press.
- Berkes, F., Feeny, D., McCay, B. J. and Acheson, J. M., 1989, 'The benefits of the commons', *Nature*, Vol. 340, pp.91-93.

- Boone, C., 2003, 'Decentralization as Political Strategy in West Africa', *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 36, pp. 355–380.
- Chhatre, A., 2008, 'Political Articulation and Accountability in Decentralisation: Theory and Evidence from India', *Conservation and Society*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp.12–23.
- Codjoe, S.N.A. and Dzanku, F. M., 2009, 'Long-term Determinants of Deforestation in Ghana: The Role of Structural Adjustment Policies', *African Development Review*, Vol. 21, pp.558–588.
- CREMA – Constitution of Bontori CREMA, 1–20. Unpublished Constitution of the CREMA.
- Crook, R.C. and J. Manor, 1998, *Democracy and Decentralisation in South Asia and West Africa: Participation, Accountability and Performance*: Cambridge University Press.
- Dumett, R.E., 2001, 'Tropical Forests and West African Enterprise: The Early History of the Ghana Timber Trade', *African Studies Program*, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Vol. 29, pp. 79 –116.
- Forestry Commission, 2004, 'A briefing document on CRM in Ghana', published manual prepared by Collaborative Resource Management Unit, Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission, Ghana, pp. 1–20.
- Forestry Commission, 2008, 'Training manual – Community Resource Management Areas Ghana', published manual prepared by Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission, Ghana, pp. 1–80.
- Forestry Commission, 2010, 'Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) Revised Readiness Preparation Proposal (RPP) Ghana', date submitted 23 December 2010, prepared by Climate Change Unit of the Forestry Commission, Ghana, pp. 1–127.
- Gibson, C.C., Lehoucq, F.E. and Williams, J.T., 2002, 'Does privatization protect natural resources? Property rights and forests in Guatemala', *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 83, No.1, pp. 206–225.
- Grafton, R. Q., Arnason, R., Bjørndal, T., Campbell, D., Campbell, H. F., Clark, C. W., ... & Weninger, Q. 2006. Incentive-based approaches to sustainable fisheries. *Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences*, Vol. 63 No. 3, pp. 699–710.
- Ito, T., 2007, 'Institutional Choices in the Shadow of History: Decentralisation in Indonesia. Representation, Equity and Environment', Working Paper Series, WP 34. World Resources Institute, Washington, DC, USA. (http://pdf.wri.org/wp34_tito.pdf)
- Johnson, O.E.G., 1972, 'Economic analysis, the legal framework and land tenure systems', *Journal of Law and Economics*, Vol. 15, No.1, pp.259–276.
- Kamat, S., 2004, 'The privatization of public interest: theorizing NGO discourse in a neoliberal era', *Review of International Political Economy*, Vol. 11, pp. 155–176.
- Kotey, E.N.A., Francois, J., Owusu, J.G.K., Yeboah, R., Amanor, K.S. and Antwi, L., 1998, 'Falling into Place: Policy that works for forests and people', International Institute for Environment and Development, London. (<http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/7536IIED.pdf>)
- Kpessa, M.W., 2011, 'The politics of public policy in Ghana: From closed circuit bureaucrats to citizenry engagement', *Journal of Developing Societies*, Vol. 1, pp. 29–56.

- Li, T. M., 2007, 'Practices of assemblage and community forest management', *Economy and Society*, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp. 263-293.
- LGA - Local Government Act, 1993, Act 462, Ghana, pp. 1-64. (<http://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/gha91927.pdf>), accessed January 2013.
- Litvack, J.I., Ahmad, J. and Bird, R.M., 1998, *Rethinking Decentralization in Developing Countries*: World Bank Publications. (<http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/decentralization/Rethinking%20Decentralization.pdf>)
- Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 1992, 'Ghana Forest & Wildlife Policy', (http://www.fcghana.org/library_info.php?doc=43&publication:Forest%20&%20Wildlife%20Policy&id=15), accessed September 2014.
- Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, 2012, 'Ghana Forest & Wildlife Policy', (<http://www.clientearth.org/external-resources/ghana/forests-and-wildlife/2012-Forest-and-wildlife-policy-GHANA.pdf>), accessed January 2015.
- Nyame, S.K., Okai, M., Adeleke, A. and Fisher, B., 2012, 'Small Changes for Big Impacts: Lessons for landscapes and livelihoods from the Wassa Amenfi West Landscape, Ghana', Gland, Switzerland: IUCN (<https://portals.iucn.org/library/efiles/documents/2012-027.pdf>), accessed January 2015.
- OASL, 2010, 'Stumpage and Rent Disbursement Report for 1st July 2010 - 31st December 2010', published report prepared by the Office of the Administrator of Stool Lands and Forestry Commission, Ghana, pp.1-31
- Odom, F.K., 2005, 'Chainsawing in the Natural Forests of Ghana: An assessment of the socio-economic impacts of this practice', Forest Harvesting Case-Study 21, Rome: Food And Agriculture Organization of The United Nations, (<http://www.fao.org/3/a-a0248e.pdf>), accessed January 2015.
- Ostrom, E., 1990, *Governing the commons: the evolution of institutions for collective action*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Owusu, J.H., 1998, 'Current Convenience, Desperate Deforestation: Ghana & the Structural Adjustment Program and the Forestry Sector', *Professional Geographer*, Vol. 50, pp. 418-436.
- Persha, L. and Andersson, K., 2014, 'Elite capture risk and mitigation in decentralized forest governance Regimes', *Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 24, pp. 265-276.
- Platteau, J.P. and Gaspart, F., 2003, 'The Risk of Resource Misappropriation in Community-Driven Development', *World Development*, Vol. 31, pp.1687-1703.
- Porter, G. and Young, E., 1998, 'Decentralized Environmental Management and Popular Participation in Coastal Ghana', *Journal of International Development*, Vol.10, pp. 515-526.
- Ribot, J.C., 2003, 'Democratic decentralisation of natural resources: institutional choice and discretionary power transfers in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Public Administration and Development*, Vol. 23, pp.53-65.
- Ribot, J. and Oyono, P.R., 2006, 'Introduction: decentralisation and livelihoods in Africa', *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, pp. 1-19.

- Ribot, J.C., Agrawal, A. and Larson, A.M., 2006, 'Recentralizing While Decentralizing: How National Governments Reappropriate Forest Resources', *World Development*, Vol. 34, pp. 1864–1886.
- Ribot, J.C., Chhatre, A. and Lankina, T., 2008, 'Introduction: institutional choice and recognition in the formation and consolidation of local democracy', *Conservation and Society*, Vol. 6, No.1, pp.1–11.
- Sasu, O., 2004, 'Decentralisation of federal systems in forests and national forestry programme: the case of Ghana', paper presented at the Interlaken workshop on decentralization, 27-30 April 2004, Interlaken, Switzerland. (<http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/cli/finalinterlakenreport.pdf>), accessed November 2013.
- Teye, J.K., 2011, 'Ambiguities of Forest Management Decentralization in Ghana', *Journal of Natural Resources Policy Research*, Vol. 3, pp. 355–369.
- The Constitution of Ghana, 1992, Government of Ghana, pp. 1-190. http://www.ghana.gov.gh/images/documents/constitution_ghana.pdf, Accessed on August 2012
- World Bank, 2011, 'Supply Chain Risk Assessment, Cocoa in Ghana', World Bank Report, (<https://www.agriskmanagementforum.org/sites/agriskmanagementforum.org/files/Documents/Ghana%20Cocoa%20SCRA%20Report%202011%20ARMT.pdf>), accessed September 2013.

RFGI WORKING PAPER SERIES

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is a research and training program, focusing on environmental governance in Africa. It is jointly managed by the Council for the Development of Social Sciences Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (UIUC). Natural resources, especially forests, are very important since they provide local governments and local people with needed revenue, wealth, and subsistence. Responsive local governments can provide forest resource-dependent populations the flexibility they need to manage, adapt to and remain resilient in their changing environment. RFGI aims to enhance and help institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local wellbeing, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of the Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions.

RFGI is a programme of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign.

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) is an independent pan-African research organisation primarily focusing on social sciences research. It was established to promote and facilitate research and knowledge production using a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach. The Council is committed to combating the fragmentation of knowledge production, and the African community of scholars along various disciplinary and linguistic/geographical lines.
<http://www.codesria.org>

International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is a leading authority on the environment and sustainable development focusing in part on ensuring effective and equitable governance of natural resource use. IUCN supports scientific research, manages field projects all over the world, and brings governments, NGOs, the UN and companies together to develop policy, laws and best practice. RFGI works with IUCN's Regional Offices for Central and West Africa (PACO) and Eastern and Southern Africa (ESARO) and the Headquarters in Switzerland.
<http://www.iucn.org>

University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign is a public research-intensive university in the U.S. state of Illinois. A land-grant university, it is the flagship campus of the University of Illinois system. At UIUC, RFGI activities are part of the Social Dimensions of Environmental Policy Initiative (SDEP) of the Department of Geography and Geographic Information Science and the Beckman Institute.
<http://sdep.beckman.illinois.edu>

ISBN : 978-2-86978-685-1



9 782869 786851

