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MICRO- AND MESO-LEVEL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONAL INTERFACE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF SINYALA COMMUNITY FOREST RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN MALAWI

Research Paper for the Degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies

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July 2009

Declaration

I hereby declare that the text of this dissertation entitled: MICRO- AND MESO-LEVEL GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONAL INTERFACE IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: THE CASE OF SINYALA COMMUNITY FOREST RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN MALAWI is substantially my own work

_____

Full Legal Name

_____

Signature

_____

Date:

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Dedication

To Sara, Blessings, Fumbani, Rute and Michaela. Your love keeps me going.

Acknowledgements

I am highly indebted to my supervisor, Dr. Stephen Louw, for his diligent and encouraging supervision; Patnice Nkhonjera for assistance in data collection and insightful feedback on several drafts of this paper; Kingsley Chikaphupha for assistance in data collection; Mrs Mvula, Mr. B. Y. Mtsitsi, Mr. Gwedemula, Assoc. Prof. Blessings Chinsinga; Group Village Headman Sinyala, Village Headman Sinyala Joshua, Sinyala community members, and all research participants for providing valuable information that informed this paper.

Any error in this paper is however solely mine.

Abstract

The introduction of democracy in many sub-Saharan African countries in the early 1990s ushered in a new local governance perspective that is hinged on decentralization, emphasizing people-centred and participatory approaches within the Humanist development paradigm. At community level, the implementation of this development approach posed a challenge of synergizing enduring indigenous local governance institutions and the formal institutions.

Using the case of Sinyala community forest management in rural Malawi, the paper argues that the introduction of decentralized community based forest management in Sinyala was undermined seriously because it did not adequately engage with and incorporate indigenous community governance institutions and community members' expectations. As a result, there have been institutional incompatibilities and discontinuities hence disequilibrium between the formal and indigenous local institutions. The paper also shows that community development activities, including the community based forest management, are not properly synergized in Sinyala community because of disjointed initiatives by formal meso-level actors. Given the exogenous nature of the decentralized community based forest management regime, much as its introduction was participatory, the paper notes the increasing levels of dependency and need for incentives in participation among community members in community forest management and indeed many community development activities.

To improve community collective action and development within a decentralized framework therefore, this research paper argues that community development efforts need to engage with and build on existing indigenous institutions, provide relevant and appropriate incentives to boost community participation, build and strengthen cross-community governance institutions where a common property resource overlaps two or more communities, and implement a coherent community development policy that will synergize community development efforts from different actors at all levels of governance.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAG	Area Action Group
ADC	Area development committee
ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
AEC	Area executive committee
ANRMC	Area natural resources management committee
CBO	Community-based organization
COMPASS	Community Partnership for Sustainable Resource Management in Malawi
CPR	Common property resource / Common pool resource
DC	District Commissioner
DDC	District Development Committee
DFO	District forest officer
DPD	Director of planning and development
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FIDP	Farm Income Diversification Programme
FGD	Focus group discussion
FTA	Forest technical assistant
GVH	Group village headman
IDI	In-depth Interview

IRAD	Integrated Rural Agriculture Development
MALESA	Malawi Enterprise Zone Association
MPRSP	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
NGO	Non-Governmental organization
PD	Prisoners' dilemma
TA	Traditional Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDC	Village Development Committee
VFA	Village Forest Area
VH	Village headman
VNRMC	Village natural resources management committee

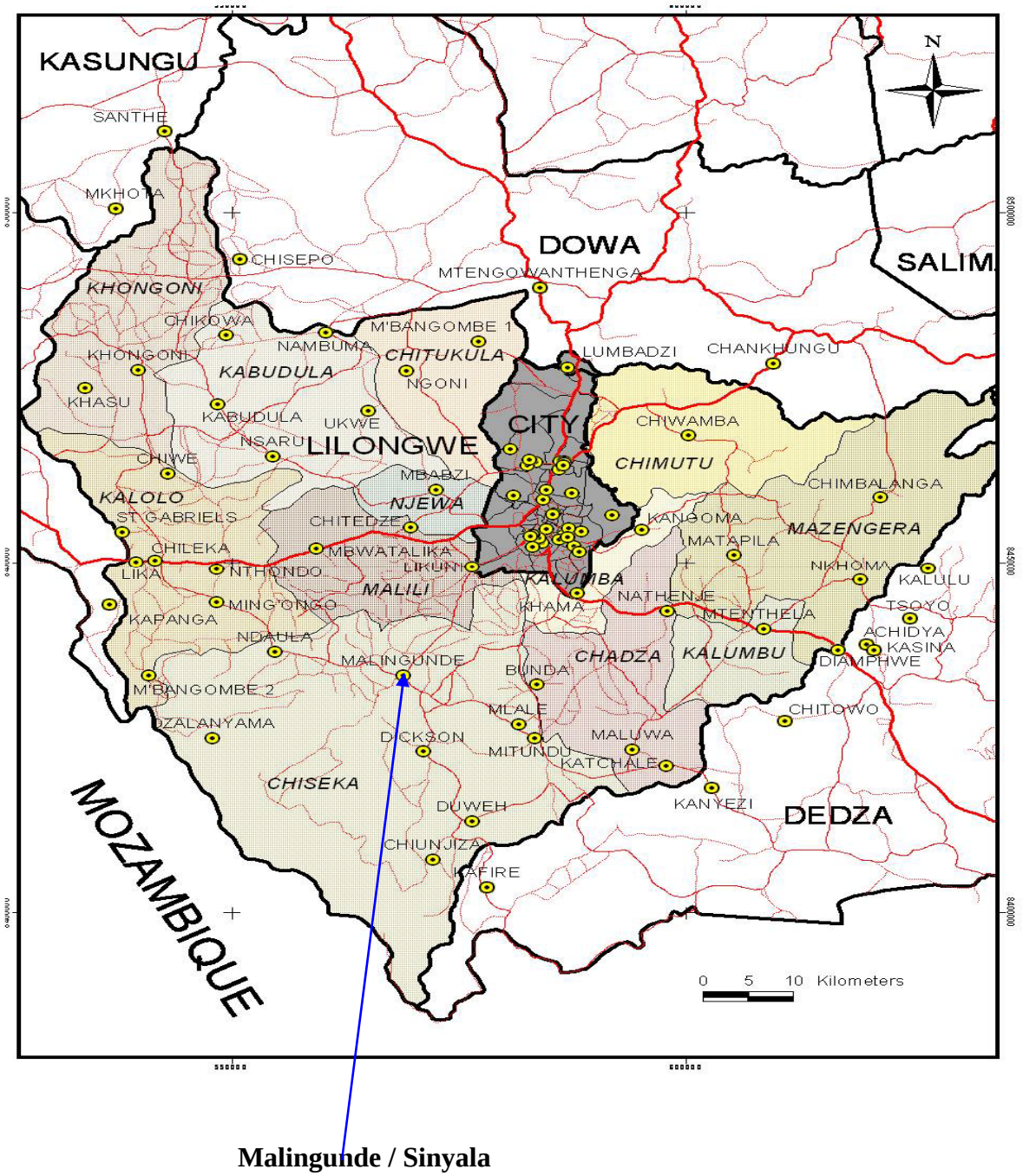
Map 1: Africa showing the location of Malawi

Source: http://www.pickatrail.com/jupiter/location/africa/malawi.html (website visited on 7 December 2008)

Map 2: Malawi showing the location of Lilongwe

Source: http://www.indexmundi.com/malawi/location.html (website visited 7 December 2008)

Map 3: Lilongwe showing the location of Sinyala[1]

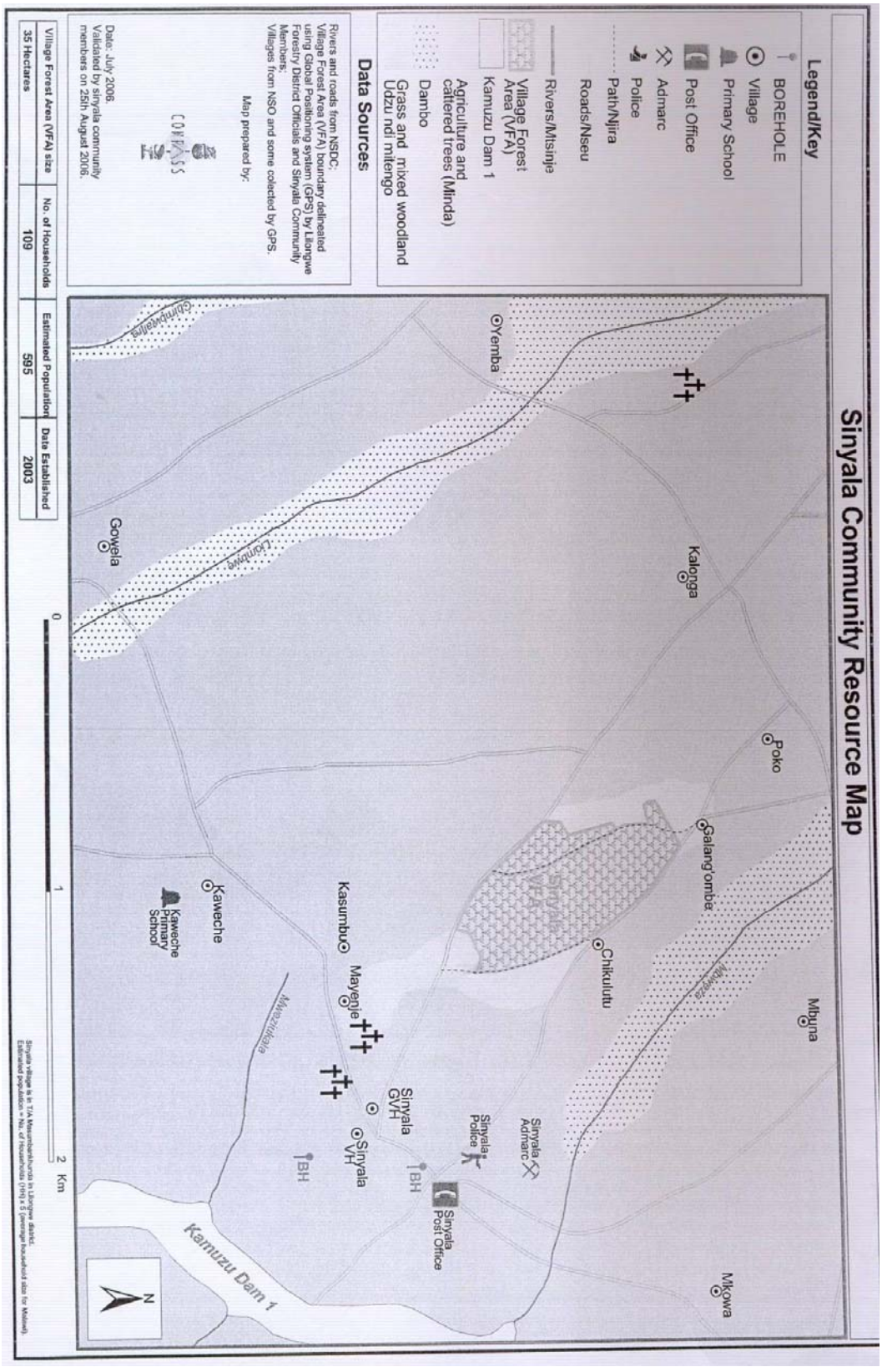


Malingunde / Sinyala

Source: Lilongwe City Assembly, Malawi

[1] Sinyala area is located in Malingunde

Map 4: Sinyala – The Study Site



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The democratization of most countries in sub-Saharan Africa in the early 1990s ushered in a new local governance perspective that is hinged on decentralization, emphasizing people-centred and participatory approaches within the Humanist development paradigm. This decentralized participatory approach has been applied in most development endeavours at all governance levels, from national or macro-level, meso-level, to community or micro-level governance institutions and processes.

The people-centred approach to development found empirical expression at community level where most development beneficiaries are. This development however happened in the context where people at community level have been managing their livelihoods irrespective of any State sponsored formal development paradigm. The introduction of the decentralized participatory development approach at community level, therefore, posed a challenge of blending community indigenous development institutions and processes on the one hand, and formal institutions and processes of decentralized governance on the other.

In a decentralized governance system, collective action at community level is embedded in a decentralized institutional framework with overlaps between micro- and meso-level institutions, and meso- and macro-level institutions. Community collective action, therefore, is often shaped by (and sometimes shape) the involvement of the meso-level institutions and actors in ways that are beneficial and/or deleterious[2].

One livelihood aspect at community level where community action and the State local governance apparatus interact is the management of common property resources (CPRs).

[2] N. Paudel *et al* "Contextualizing Common Property Systems: Action Research Insights on Forging Effective Links Between Forest Commons and 'Meso' Layer Governance" http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/archive/00001992/00/Paudel_NS.pdf , 2006, (Website Visited on 23rd May 2007)

The study of collective action in CPR management is however skewed towards the intricacies of endogenous collective action at the micro-level while paying little attention to the meso-level institutions that, in the context of decentralized governance paradigm, shape the CPR management options at the micro-level. Studies of collective action in CPR management are therefore inadequate in exploring the dynamics of the interface between meso-level decentralized governance institutions and micro-level (endogenous) governance institutions.

This research paper attempts to fill this gap by exploring the overlap between meso- and micro-level governance institutions in the management of Sinyala community forest in Malawi from 1996[3] to date.

Based upon the research findings, the paper argues that the introduction of decentralized community based forest management in Sinyala by Malawi government through the Department of Forestry was undermined seriously because it did not adequately engage with and incorporate indigenous community governance institutions and community members' expectations. As a result, there have been institutional incompatibilities and discontinuities hence disequilibrium between the formal and indigenous local institutions. The paper also shows that community development activities, including the community based forest management, are not properly synergized in Sinyala community because of disjointed initiatives by meso-level actors that even defy the set formal institutional framework. Given the exogenous nature of the decentralized community based forest management regime, much as its introduction was participatory, the paper notes the increasing levels of dependency and need for incentives in participation among community members in community forest management and indeed many community development activities.

To improve community collective action and development within a decentralized framework therefore, this research paper argues that community development efforts need to engage with and build on existing indigenous institutions, provide relevant and

[3] The year 1996 is chosen because that is when the National Forest Policy of Malawi under the rubric of decentralization governance paradigm was initiated (see Government of Malawi (1996) *National Forest Policy of Malawi* Lilongwe, Ministry of Natural Resources)

appropriate incentives to boost community participation, build and strengthen cross-community governance institutions where a CPR overlaps two or more communities, and implement a coherent community development policy that will synergize community development efforts from different actors at all levels of governance.

1.1 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND: COMMUNITY BASED (MICRO-LEVEL) DEVELOPMENT

This section sets the context of the study. Collective action within the decentralized governance system, which is the hub of this study, is here located in the broad context of community development. To elucidate this realm, we start by briefly tracing the evolution of development paradigms, before presenting community development as it unfolds in Malawian context, and the importance of forest resource management in Malawi's community development.

1.1.1 Evolution of Development Paradigms

Development is one of the elusive concepts especially that it encompasses the whole gamut of human life. Development entails improving human conditions such as capabilities and well-being; power relations and organization such as participation and empowerment; domains such as civil society and market; and values such as human rights and sustainability[4]. In simplistic terms therefore, development can be said to entail change in people's lives for the better.

How to facilitate this positive change in human lives has however been a critical yet elusive quest. The short overview of the development paradigms below highlights the evolution of development thinking that reflects efforts to pin down workable development strategy since the emergence of the Development field in 1940s.

[4] See Robert Chambers "Ideas for Development: Reflecting Forwards," *IDS Working Paper 238*, Institute of Development Studies, 2004

Modernization Paradigm

After the end of World War II, the Modernization development paradigm emerged from the articulation of different schools of thought from developed countries. The essence of this paradigm was however Rostow's stages of growth that presented the developed countries' growth path as progressing from traditional society; pre-conditions for take-off; take-off; drive to maturity; to age of high mass consumption[5]. To become developed, it was therefore conceived that developing countries should simply imitate the developed countries by following these five steps.

This development model however proved to be naïve and ineffective as its application in developing countries soon after independence showed that development is context specific and might not progress in linear fashion[6].

Dependency Paradigm

The Dependency paradigm arose as a response to the failure of the Modernization approach to address the underdevelopment of the Third World countries. The central argument in Dependency theories is that underdevelopment of Third World countries is a result of the countries' structural relationship with the capitalist North. The North exploits natural resources from the Third World thereby making the Third World economies dependent on the economies of the North[7]. The solution to underdevelopment therefore lies in the Third World countries cutting economic links with the North and becoming self-dependent.

[5] W. Rostow (1960) *The Stages of Economic Growth: A non-Communist Manifesto* London, Cambridge University Press
[6] Also see Francois Theron (Ed) (2008) *The Development Change Agent – A Micro-level Approach to Development* Pretoria, Van Schaik, p.6
[7] See for instance Andrew Webster (1990) *Introduction to the Sociology of Development* London, Macmillan Press Ltd

Just as with the Modernization paradigm, the Dependency paradigm has been criticised as prescriptive in nature and proposing oversimplified macro solutions to the development process of developing countries[8].

Humanist Paradigm

The failure of the above two paradigms led to the growing support for a new development strategy that was based on the recognition of people-centred approach, especially the micro-level development, that calls for active participation of people affected by any development initiative. This Humanist development paradigm that emerged in 1980s holds that "…development is more than just economics; it also represents institutional, cultural, political and psychological issues"[9]. Development strategy therefore needs an integrated holistic approach aimed at improving people's livelihoods.

One challenge facing the Humanist paradigm is that people's participation is often facilitated by (external) development agents who often are biased by their personal and institutional worldviews that may be conflicting with the outlook and needs of the target communities. This has resulted in some development initiatives failing to achieve the desired impact[10].

Despite this challenge, it is within this Humanist paradigm that this study locates the debate on collective action within the decentralized institutional matrix in community development. This is meaningful in the context of the people-centred approach and the micro-level emphasis of the Humanist model. The whole decentralization initiative in most sub-Saharan African countries that are in the process of democratization is also couched in this people-centred development model. It should also be noted that the development agents' biasness in development initiatives has been, and still is, an area

[8] Francois Theron (2008) Op. Cit.
[9] Ibid, p.7
[10] Ibid

where a lot of academics and development practitioners are putting effort to improve the approach[11].

1.1.2 Community Development in Malawi

The evolution of community development in Malawi is succinctly summarized by Chinsinga and Kayuni in their situational analysis study aimed at informing the formulation of community development policy in Malawi[12]. They analyze the evolution in three historical stages: the colonial period; the one-party era; and the multi-party democracy era. This paper uses the same approach.

The Colonial Period (1891-1963)

During the pre-colonial and colonial periods, community development in Malawi, then Nyasaland, can be conceptualized within the local community agrarian cooperation system called *Thangata*[13]. Traditionally, village chiefs would mobilize community members to help in the gardens of those community members who could not manage to work on their own. Apart from the legitimacy of the tradition chiefs in facilitating this system, the incentive was that this help would be reciprocated if those who assist find themselves in a similar situation[14].

After colonization of Nyasaland in 1891, the colonial government took advantage of this system by forcing community members, through chiefs, to work on government prescribed environmental and other community activities such as construction of storm drains and other soil-protection measures[15]. *Thangata,* in the form of the traditional reciprocal labour, and the colonial 'forced labour', can be said to be the origins of community development in Malawi. The colonial forced labour however lacked

[11] See for instance Damien Kingsbury "Community Development" in Damien Kingsbury *et al* (Eds) *Key Issues in Development* New York, Pelgrave Macmillan, 2004, pp. 221-242
[12] Blessings Chinsinga and Happy Kayuni "Community Development in Malawi: A Situation Analysis Report" *Report Submitted to Skills Development and Income Generation Project, Ministry of Women and Child Development* Lilongwe, February 2008
[13] *Thangata* literally means 'assist'.
[14] See J. Kandawire (1969) *District Community Development Programme: Final Report of Results of 1968/69 Internal Evaluation.* Department of Community Development Publications
[15] The worst form of *Thangata* was when European 'land lords' recruited Africans to work on their farms for a meagre pay. See Blessings Chinsinga and Happy Kayuni (2008) Op. Cit. p.6

legitimacy to the extent that its popular opposition constituted the fight for political independence during this period.

The One-Party Era (1964-1993)

After independence in 1964, community development was generally conceived to entail participation of community members in efforts to improve their livelihoods; and government provision of technical and financial support in ways that encourage community initiative, self-help and mutual help[16]. This conceptualization saw the establishment of the Department of Community Development in the Office of the President and Cabinet, focusing initially on social welfare provision, sports, community centres, women's clubs and youth development.

The institutional structure of community development was put in place in this period. In order to enhance community participation, the Malawi government in 1967 set up District Development Committees (DDCs) with structures extending to village levels. These structures were responsible for rural infrastructure development as well as coordinating, facilitating and promoting self-help spirit and culture. At village level, community development projects were supposed to be planned and implemented by Village Development Committee (VDC) chaired by the village head. The Area Action Group (AAG) chaired by the chief or Traditional Authority coordinated community development at area level[17].

The conceptualization of community development as articulated in at least government policy documents during the one-party era, shows, ironically, considerable appreciation for the value of people-centred participatory approaches to development. However, the practice of community development was over-shadowed by the highly centralized one-party system. This left the central government as the main driver of community development processes.

[16]Ibid

[17] 'Area' here is technically referring to the administrative domain encompassing a collection of several villages and institutionally located between the village and district levels. Ibid

The Multi-party Era (1993 to date)

When the one-party system was replaced with multi-party democracy in 1993, the paradigm of people-centred participatory governance was given new impetus. The 1996 Decentralization Policy and the subsequent 1998 Local Government Act provided for local community development institutions that were to be responsive to and driven by community needs. The involvement of communities in driving community development agenda and implementation was envisaged to empower the communities to take charge of issues affecting their lives[18].

Local development institutions aimed at promoting such democratic principles as accountability, transparency and participation of the people in development processes, were put in place from the national, meso-, to community levels[19].

It is within this decentralized community development framework that this research paper discusses community collective action using the case of Sinyala community forest management in Malawi.

The next section gives the context of forest resources in community development in Malawi.

1.1.3 Forest Resources, Poverty, and Community Development in Malawi

Malawi is one of the least developed countries with more than 60% of the population living below the US$1 per day poverty line[20]. The Malawi population is estimated to stand at 11.4 million with a population density of about 119 people per square kilometre[21]. The average population growth rate is 2% per year and the illiteracy rate stands at 37%[22].

[18] See for instance Malawi Government (2000) *National Decentralisation Policy*. Lilongwe, Decentralization Secretariat
[19] See figure 3 on page 54
[20] S. Kainja (2000) *Forestry Outlook Studies in Africa (FOSA): Malawi* FOSA
[21]Government of Malawi (2005) *Malawi Demographic and Health Survey 2004* Zomba, National Statistical Office
[22] Ibid

It is estimated that 94% of the Malawi population relies on wood fuel for household energy, up from 90% in 1996[23]. Rural communities who make up more than 90% of Malawi's population rely to a large extent on forest resources for their daily needs in the form of wood fuel, construction materials, agricultural tools, medicinal plants, and, in some instances, bush meat and other foods.

In her study in southern Malawi[24], Monica Fisher showed that there is a high level of dependence on forest resources, proxied by approximately 30% of household income. She further showed that access to forest income reduced income inequality at the study sites[25].

Even in urban areas where less than 10% of Malawi's population resides, the use of wood fuel for household energy (e.g. charcoal) is increasing as evidenced by the wood fuel consumption increase from 90% to 94% of the population from 1996 to early 2000s[26]. The pressure on forest resources is heightened by the high population growth rate of about 2% per annum. By 2009, Malawi government had not yet come up with any affordable alternative source of household energy[27].

The above evidence shows that a significant part of the livelihood of most Malawians depends on forest resources. Efforts to curb poverty in Malawi therefore should include sustainable forest management.

Deforestation however is continually increasing. For example, it is reported that, over a 20 year period from 1972 to 1992, Malawi's forest resources were reduced by more than half (57%) of their size, with an estimated annual deforestation rate of 2.8%. The

[23] Ibid; S. Kainja (2000) Op. Cit.
[24] Southern region of Malawi is the biggest (both in area and population) of the three administrative regions of Malawi.
[25] M. Fisher 'Household Welfare and Forest Dependence in Southern Malawi' *Environment and Development Economics* Vol. 9, 2004, Cambridge University Press, pp135-154
[26] Government of Malawi (2005) Op. Cit.; Kainja (2000) Op. Cit.
[27] Very few Malawians use electricity as the main source of household energy. See Malawi News Agency (Mana) 'Kaunda Challenges Communities to Protect Forests' in *The Nation* Newspaper, 27 January 2009.

deforestation rate between 1990 and 2000 was slightly lower (2.4%) which however is three times greater than Pan-African average[28].

This deforestation has happened due to, among other things, agricultural expansion, wood fuel gathering, commercial logging and large scale industrial wood fuel use for tobacco curing, lime burning, brick making, and the growing population coupled with lack of sustainable CPR management strategies[29].

Recognizing the salience of forestry in poverty reduction in Malawi, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) of 2002 includes forestry as a key element in the government poverty reduction strategy[30].

The indispensability of forest resources in the livelihoods of most Malawians, therefore, makes the study of forest management ideal in understanding community collective action especially considering that most forest resources are (perceived to be) communally owned[31]. It is in this context that this paper uses the case of Sinyala community forest management to explore the dynamics of collective action and community development within the decentralized institutional framework.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study set out to explore the interface between community self-organization and formal local government institutions in community forest resource management. As can be appreciated from section 1.1.3 above, forest resources are an indispensable part of Malawian livelihood. Prior to formalization of decentralization policy under the

[28] D. Slunge, *Malawi – Environment Policy Brief: Point of departure for a discussion of poverty and environmentally sustainable development (November, 2004)* http://www.hgu.gu.se/files/nationalekonomi/eeu/helpdesk/env%20policy%20brief%20malawi.pdf (website visited 1st May 2008)

[29] Government of Malawi (1996) *National Forest Policy of Malawi* Lilongwe, Ministry of Natural Resources

[30] See for instance Government of Malawi, *Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*, April, 2002; Government of Malawi, Ministry of Mines, Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Forestry, *Standards and Guidelines for Participatory Forestry in Malawi- Improving Forest Governance – Improving Rural Livelihoods*, Lilongwe, November 2005

[31] As will be appreciated in chapter 4, much as the Malawi government policy prior to 1996 stipulated that all forests belonged to government, some communities have been claiming ownership right to many community forests.

democratic dispensation in 1996, Malawian local communities had self-organization institutions to manage the forest resources albeit under the overall authority of government general rules on forest management. This arrangement produced mixed results - in some areas forest management was a failure while in others it was a success.

The decentralization drive after 1996 has seen community self-organization institutions in forest resource management being mainstreamed into the formal local governance system under the rubric of people-centred participatory development paradigm. Evidence however shows that most community forest resources are still deteriorating despite efforts to decentralize governance of the resources[32]. This is a paradox especially considering that the introduction of decentralized forest management was aimed at curbing deforestation[33]. To understand this irony, the research informing this paper therefore aimed to explore the dynamics of the interface between micro-level and meso-level governance institutions in forest resource management in the decentralized set-up. This was on the understanding that the meso-level institutions act as agents between national level policies and resources on the one hand, and community (micro-level) needs and feedback on the other. The research further analysed the implications of this institutional arrangement and explored optimal institutional set-up for sustainable community development.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question that this study set out to address was: how are indigenous community institutions and formal local governance institutions synergized in the decentralized community forest management? In trying to address this question, the research study also attempted to address the following sub-questions: what are the institutional objectives, *modus operandi*, and outcomes of indigenous community institutions and formal local governance institutions in forest resources management?

[32] See section 1.1.3 above citing deforestation evidence from D. Slunge 'Malawi – Environment Policy Brief: Point of departure for a discussion of poverty and environmentally sustainable development (November, 2004)'
http://www.hgu.gu.se/files/nationalekonomi/eeu/helpdesk/env%20policy%20brief%20malawi.pdf (website visited 1st May 2008))

[33] See for instance Government of Malawi (2003) *Community Based Forest Management: A Supplement to the National Forest Policy of Malawi, 1996* Zomba, Malawi Government Printers

And what is the optimal institutional synergy that can promote sustainable community forest management and livelihood specifically and community development in general?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The overall aim of the study was to explore the dynamics and implications of the interface between formal local governance and community self-organization institutions in community development. The community development issue under focus in this study was the management of forest resources in Sinyala community in central region of Malawi. Specifically, the study aimed at:

- Exploring the nature of the link between traditional/indigenous institutional structures and formal local governance institutions in forest resource management
- Assessing the effectiveness of the interface between indigenous and formal governance institutions in forest resource management
- Comparing and contrasting the pre-decentralization period (before 1996) and the post-decentralization period in terms of local governance institutions and effectiveness of forest resource management
- Exploring lessons for optimal institutional arrangement for effective forest resource management at community level

1.5 RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION

As indicated in section 1.4 above, this research study aimed to explore the interface, in forest resource management, between the micro-level institutions and the meso-level institutions that lie above the micro-level institutions but below the macro-level institutions.

There are theoretical, empirical and application rationales that justify this study.

At theoretical level, literature review shows that studies on collective action in CPR management is skewed towards community level institutions and behaviours while paying little attention to meso-level institutions and their influence on CPR

management[34]. The influence of meso-level institutions in CPR management becomes even critical in the context of decentralized governance system where the institutions simultaneously relay government policies and resources to the micro-level on the one hand, and channel community needs and feedback to the macro-level on the other. This development agent function therefore shapes the CPR management choice set at the micro-level[35]. In this context, studies on collective action in CPR management are inadequate in exploring the dynamics of the interface between meso-level decentralized governance institutions and micro-level (endogenous) governance institutions.

This research paper therefore attempts to fill this gap by exploring the interface and implications between meso- and micro-level governance institutions in the management of community forest resources in particular, and community development in general.

There is also empirical evidence that justifies the study of forest resource management in Malawi. As explained in section 1.1.3 above, forestry is one of the key factors contributing towards the livelihood of rural Malawians[36] who make up more than 90% of Malawi population, and more than 60% of which live below the US$1 per day poverty line[37]. During the colonial period from 1891 to 1963, almost all Malawians relied on forest resources for the better part of their livelihood, notably wood fuel energy and construction materials. This prompted the colonial government in 1926 to institute Village Forest Area (VFA) scheme that provided each village with an area of forest woodland[38]. During the one-party era from 1964 to 1993, forestry formed a significant unit of local government. This is because forestry not only provided a major source of

[34] See for example Mancur Olson (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Groups and the Theory of Groups*, Cambridge, MA, Havard University Press; Garret Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" *Science* Vol. 162, 1968, pp. 1234-48; Eleanor Ostrom (1990) *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action Cambridge*: Cambridge University Press; Eleanor Ostrom (2000) 'Reformulating the Commons' in *Swiss Political Science Review* Vol 6, No. 1, pp.29-52; Sara Gillinson "Why Cooperate? A Multi-Disciplinary Study of Collective Action" *Working Paper No. 234*, London, Overseas Development Institute, 2004

[35] See for instance N. Paudel et al "Contextualizing Common Property Systems: Action Research Insights on Forging Effective Links Between Forest Commons and 'Meso' Layer Governance" http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/archive/00001992/00/Paudel_NS.pdf , 2006, (Website Visited on 23rd May 2007)

[36] M. Fisher (2004) Op. Cit.; D. Slunge (2004) Op. Cit.; S. Kainja (2000) Op. Cit;

[37] S. Kainja (2000) Op. Cit; Government of Malawi (1996) Op. cit.

[38] See E. Kalipeni, and L. Zulu 'From Top-Down to Bottom-Up: The Difficult Case of the Bantyre City Fuelwood Project' *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 28, No. 1, Special Issue: Malawi, March 2002

energy to Malawians, but also provided revenue to local and central government[39]. By 2004, forestry had been shown to contribute about 30% of household incomes and that 94% of Malawians relied on forest wood energy with no affordable alternative in sight[40]. However, despite the introduction of decentralized community forest governance in 1996 aimed at decreasing deforestation and encouraging afforestation, deforestation has been steadily increasing threatening the very livelihoods of Malawians[41]. Analysis, lessons and conclusions drawn from the Sinyala community forest case study will therefore contribute towards efforts to find an optimal governance institutional arrangement and practice in community forest resource management and community development in Malawi. This will go a long way in improving the livelihood of the majority of Malawians.

At application level, this research study is justified because it uses a case study approach. This approach is deemed ideal because it facilitates an empirically deep and holistic contextual understanding of the topic under study. This will help to empirically test the theoretical perspectives on decentralized community forest resource management in terms of descriptive accuracy or general applicability[42]. The case study will also provide analytical insights on decentralized community development efforts, applicable not only in Malawi, but also in similar cases elsewhere, especially where indigenous community development institutions are being integrated in formal decentralized systems.

1.6 SCOPE OF RESEARCH

This research covered community development institutions at micro- and meso-levels in as far as they interact in the management of forest resources in Sinyala area in Lilongwe, Malawi. The collective action implication of this interaction was also explored among Sinyala community members. Macro-level institutions were only referred to in as far as

[39] Ibid
[40] See section 1.1.3 above.
[41] See section 1.1.3 above
[42] See J. Chima 'What's the Utility of Case Study Method for Social Science Research? A Response to critiques from the quantitative/statistical perspective.' *Paper presented to the Annual Congress of the American Political Science Association*, September 2005

they directly affected the operation of meso- and micro-levels institutions and community members.

1.7 METHODOLOGY

This study used a case study approach to explore the research question. As Peter Evans puts it, case studies take an 'eclectic messy center' approach to social science methodology[43]. This implies that, the case study uses the guiding theoretical perspective as lenses to identify what is interesting and significant about the case under study. At the same time, the study uses the case to test the applicability of the theoretical perspective. Thus, neither the theory nor the case is treated as sacrosanct. This approach therefore avoids both the positivist reduction that would reduce the case to natural sciences and discount hermeneutic dimension, and the humanist reduction that suppresses the scientific dimension of trying to find empirically verifiable general laws[44]. Discussion of findings from the case study therefore helps identify both strengths and deficiencies of the theoretical perspective in terms of descriptive accuracy or general applicability[45]. The discussion must therefore refer back and forth to the guiding theory and the case with the ultimate aim of gaining analytical insights that can be extrapolated to other similar cases.

Based upon this understanding, this study used the theoretical perspective on community self-organization and local governance in community development, as discussed in chapters 2 and 3, as a guide to what is interesting and significant about the Sinyala case. At the same time, the study used the Sinyala empirical case to test the applicability of the theoretical perspective.

The use of a case study approach in this study to explore issues of self-organization and local governance compares favourably with other similar studies in this field. For instance, Robert Wade uses a case study approach to study collective action in village communities in South India[46]. Most of Elinor Ostrom's studies on the commons and

[43] Peter Evans as quoted in Jugdep Chima (2005) Op. Cit. p6
[44] Michael Burawoy as paraphrased in Jugdep Chima (2005) Op. Cit.: 7
[45] Jugdep Chima (2005) Op. Cit.
[46] See Robert Wade (1994) *Village Republics: Economic Conditions for Collective Action in South India* San Francisco, ICS Press

community collective action, the theses of which are extensively used in chapters 2 and 3, are also based on case studies[47]. Arun Agrawal concluded that the task of generating a list of generic conditions under which users of common property resources self-organize is a difficult and futile attempt. He therefore proposed, among other things, that context specific case studies are ideal for studying the commons and community self-organization.

The fact that this study used a common research approach to other studies on the commons and community self-organization implies that we can confidently apply the conclusions drawn from this study to other similar circumstances in Africa and other Third World countries.

Within the case study approach, data collection triangulated different qualitative methods to gather data from different sources. Triangulation in social research entails the use of a mixture of different methods and/or data sources to explore a research question[48]. Triangulation strengthens a research design in that it enables a study to explore the study phenomena from different angles hence getting a better holistic multi-dimensional picture than in a uni-dimensional survey.

The research study used both methodological and data triangulation.

1.7.1 Data Collection

The following data collection methods were used:

Desk Research

Desk research of secondary data is one of the most convenient ways of collecting data as it does not necessarily demand that the investigator conducts interviews directly with research participants. One of the advantages is that a collection of relevant documents can

[47] See for instance Elinor Ostrom "Reformulating the Commons" in *Swiss Political Science Review*, Vol. 6 No. 1, 2000, pp. 29-52; Elinor Ostrom (1990) *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

[48] Michael Patton (1990) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* London, SAGE Publications, p. 187-9

ensure the availability of relevant information that was gathered using wide and comprehensive research studies that the investigator might not have been able to handle both cognitively and logistically.

The fact that research participants are not directly interviewed also minimizes biases emanating from research participants' reactivity[49].

One major weakness of desk research, unlike in other methods involving direct interviews and observation, is that the investigator has no control over the primary sources, responses and situations. This implies that data collection and analysis is restricted to what has been documented. Unrecorded events, for example, no matter how important they might be in the context of the guiding theory or otherwise, cannot be studied[50].

Based upon this understanding, the study employed desk research method to collect secondary data. Documents that included manuals, laws and policies on Malawi local governance were studied and analysed. Much as desk research was an on-going exercise, the findings informed some specific themes that were further explored in in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). The IDIs and the FGDs further helped to off-set the major weakness of desk research as highlighted above.

In-depth Interviews

IDIs are one-to-one qualitative interviews that offer flexibility to gain a depth understanding of the issue under study, while at the same time provide for a systematic, guided and structured interview by using a semi-structured interview guide[51]. This is an ideal data collection method for sensitive topics and other types of research where it would be difficult to observe the research participants or interview them in a group.

[49] See N.L. Neuman (2006) *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* Boston, Pearson International
[50] See S. Sarantakos (1998) *Social Research* London, MacMillan Press Ltd.
[51] See for example Michael Patton (1990) Op. Cit.

Typical of direct interviews, one major disadvantage of IDIs is the biased responses from the interviewees as they react to perceived expectations of the interviewer.

In this study, apart from the need to gain in-depth understanding of collective action and community development in a decentralized set-up, IDIs were used because some interviewees, like government officials, had restricted time and could not be brought in a group interview.

The potential biases due to reactivity of the interviewees were minimized by the interviewer's neutrality throughout the data collection process. For example, the interviewer was not judgmental when conducting the interviews.

IDIs were conducted with district assembly[52] officials, community leaders and gatekeepers most of whom are in positions of influence. The interviews sourced first hand information from local government officials and community leaders on the interaction between the local government and community institutions in community development in general and forest management in particular. This provided balanced information from both the government and the community perspectives.

To recruit IDI participants, purposeful sampling was used based on the position of a potential interviewee in line with the key institutions as per the study's conceptual framework[53]. Seven IDIs were conducted in total. Table 1 below summarizes the interviews conducted, including the IDIs.

Focus Group Interviews

FGD is one of the most effective qualitative data collection methods. This is because, during group interviews, as respondents talk to each other, the interviewer is able to get the social construction and context of the topic under investigation. The FGDs also

[52] A district assembly is a local government office/forum that coordinates local development at district level.
[53] See chapter 3

ensure valid and reliable data as group discussion provide some checks and balances that weed out extreme views[54].

As in IDIs, respondents' reactivity and subsequent biases are the major potential disadvantages. Again, the interviewer in this study maintained neutrality throughout the data collection process to minimize reactivity biases.

Convenient sampling of all research participants in each of the Sinyala two villages was used to recruit FGD participants. Four focus group interviews were conducted. Table 1 below summarizes the breakdown of interviews conducted during the study, including focus group interviews.

Each group consisted of about 9 to 12 people (men and women) from the age of 18 years. This age minimum was chosen considering that community members are often considered active citizens from the age of 18 years[55].

The in-depth and focus group interviews were guided by a discussion guide of themes and questions that were drafted in line with the theoretical and conceptual perspective and objectives of this study[56]. The interviews were however fluid to the extent that the facilitator was at liberty to probe and follow-up systematically on emerging issues within the context of forest management, community development, and interaction between local government and community institutions.

[54] Michael Patton (1990) Op. Cit. pp.335-7
[55] For instance, the voting minimum age in Malawi is 18years (Constitution of the Republic of Malawi (1999) Section 77 subsection 2(b))
[56] See appendix on page 116 ff.

Table 1: Interviews conducted

Level	**Interviewee(s)**	**Type of Interview**	**No. of Interviews**	**Remarks**
District (Meso-level)	Director of Planning and Development (DPD)	In-depth Interview	1	The DPD is an executive member of the District Assembly
”	District Forest Officer (DFO)	”	1	The DFO is also an executive member of the District Assembly
Area (Meso- and Micro-levels)	Forest Technical Assistant (FTA)	”	1	The FTA is also a member of Area Executive Committee (AEC) which is a sub-committee of Area Development Committee (ADC)
Community (Micro-level)	Group Village Headman (GVH)	”	1	The GVH is also an *ex-officio* member of the ADC and the Village Development Committee (VDC)
”	Village Headman (VH)	”	1	The VH is also an *ex-officio* member of VDC
”	Village Development Committee (VDC) Chairman	”	1	
”	Village Natural Resource Management Committee (VNRMC) Secretary	”	1	
”	Sinyala Group Village participants	Focus Group	2	
”	Sinyala Joshua Village participants	”	2	

Total number of In-depth Interviews	**7**	
Total number of Focus Group Interviews	**4**	**Each focus group interview consisted of about 9 – 12 participants. Thus, all FGDs had a minimum of 36 participants. Including IDIs, the research had about 43 participants**

1.7.2 Data Processing, Analysis and Reporting

All interviews (in-depth and group interviews) were recorded electronically. Since the interviews were conducted in the local language in which the interviewees were comfortable *(Chichewa),* the recorded interviews were translated into English and transcribed verbatim. This process ensured that the analysis captured the nuanced details of the responses and that the investigator's biases were minimized.

Using ATLAS ti computer software[57] and manual analysis, the transcripts were analysed thematically. Michael Patton refers to this type of analysis as content analysis; where responses are coded basing on meaning, and further grouped into themes emerging from the data, but within the theoretical framework and objectives of the study[58]. This type of analysis also gives room for emerging themes that might fall outside the theoretical framework but are deemed informative by the investigator.

Similarly, in analysing documents, facts, trends, themes and practices that reflect interaction between community structures and meso-level institutions in community development activities were extracted. This was guided by the theoretical perspective while at the same time being open to 'unexpected' findings.

The themes and emerging models from the IDIs, FGDs and documents were written up and the narratives were supported by specific facts and direct quotes where necessary.

[57] ATLAS ti is a computer software used to analyse qualitative data
[58] Michael Patton (1990) Op. Cit. p381

These findings are presented in chapter 4 and are discussed in chapter 5 guided by the theoretical and conceptual framework and the study objectives. This analytical approach illuminated theoretically salient findings from the case study. At the same time, the empirical findings put to test the applicability of the theoretical basis. The findings, discussion and lessons gained from this study, much as they may not be generalizable in all cases, will give analytical insights that can be extrapolated in other similar circumstances.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The basis of ethical considerations in social research is that the rights of research participants whose (private) domains are intruded by research investigators, who often are strangers, must be protected[59]. Informed by this understanding, the investigator sought ethical approval of the proposed research from the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical) of the University of the Witwatersrand and the approval to conduct this research was granted under protocol number H080712. The investigator further sought approval to conduct research from the district assembly officials in Lilongwe, Malawi, and from community traditional leaders at the study site.

During the process of the research, the following ethical principles were adhered to:

1.8.1 Informed Consent

Informed consent to participate in a research exercise is considered a fundamental ethical principle in social research[60]. The investigator in this study explained the overall aim of the study to all research participants. Their understanding of the research aim ensured that the research participants' permission given to the investigator to conduct the interviews was informed.

In terms of document research, the investigator explained the overall aim of the study to authors or custodians of the documents in cases where the documents were sourced

[59] N.L. Neuman (2006) Op. Cit.
[60] Ibid, p135

directly from the authors or custodians. In addition, relevant copyright protocols were strictly adhered to.

1.8.2 Confidentiality

In this research, data collected through individual and group interviews is not linked back directly to the personal details of the interviewees. This is in adherence to the ethical principles of privacy, anonymity and confidentiality[61]. The investigator's adherence to these principles was mentioned to all interviewees before interviews were conducted as part of information they needed to know before giving their consent to participate in the research exercise.

The ethical principles highlighted above did not only help solve the problem of reactivity (and subsequent response bias) of research participants that is often associated with direct data collection methods, but also ensured that respondents' rights to information, privacy and confidentiality were respected.

1.9 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the strengths of this research study is the data triangulation approach that was used. As indicated in section 1.7 above, this strengthened the validity and reliability of the data and subsequent analysis and conclusion in that the phenomenon under study was looked at from different dimensions.

One major limitation was that the investigator was working under tight deadlines to collect and analyse the data and produce a report within the 2008 academic year. This was compounded by the fact that the investigator was residing in Johannesburg, South Africa while the fieldwork was to be conducted in Lilongwe, Malawi. This posed logistical challenges and limited not only the time for collecting data, but also the number of interviews conducted.

Within these limitations however, every effort was made to maintain the quality of the research process.

[61] Ibid, p138

1.10 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The following chapters flow as follows: in chapter 2, I review the literature on collective action and community self-organization. In chapter 3, I review literature on local government and the link between contemporary community action and formal local governance. A conceptual framework is developed in the process that is used in presenting and discussing findings in chapters 4 and 5 respectively. Chapter 6 closes with a conclusion and recommendations drawn from this paper.

CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY SELF-ORGANIZATION AND COMMON PROPERTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

2.0 INTRODUCTION

It has been widely argued that, to ensure sustainable and effective common property resource management and community development, communities must have autonomy to manage the resources without undue external interference. This autonomous atmosphere, in the context of CPRs that are indispensable to community appropriators, will result in spontaneous emergence of order and cooperation in the management of the resources, the process of which by definition is community self-organization[62].

This chapter unpacks the concept of community self-organization in the context of CPR management. The literature reviewed in this chapter shows that, despite challenges of collective action, communities have the potential to self-organize and manage their resources, especially when their livelihoods depend on the resources in one way or the other. Analysis of the literature however shows that, much as some scholarly work acknowledges the presence and influence of formal governance institutions in community self-organization discourse, the literature rarely unpacks the dynamics of the interface between local community (self-organization) institutions and formal 'outside' institutions. The literature is heavily skewed towards community organization as almost an autonomous phenomenon. This is one gap that this research paper is attempting to fill.

2.1 COMMON PROPERTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Most literature on community self-organization is located in Common Property Resources and Collective Action discourse. Classical theories basically highlight a pessimistic perspective in collective action whereas most contemporary theories, while

[62] See for instance Elinor Ostrom "Reformulating the Commons" in *Swiss Political Science Review*, Vol. 6 No. 1, 2000, pp. 29-52; Louise Comfort, "Self-Organization in Complex Systems" *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 4 No. 3, 1994, pp. 393 - 410

acknowledging problems of collective action, paint an optimistic picture on community self-organization.

2.1.1 Classical Theories of Collective Action: The Problem of Collective Action

In his seminal work on the 'Tragedy of the Commons' in 1968, Garret Hardin argues that, when many people have access rights to the same resources whose benefits can be enjoyed exclusively, there is a high potential for each individual to overuse and under-invest in the management of the resource[63]. This comes about as the people scramble to maximize benefits while at the same time minimize management costs.

This problem of collective action applies to natural resource systems used by multiple individuals, conventionally referred to as common-pool or common property resources (CPRs). The natural resources must satisfy two basic attributes if they are to qualify to be CPRs: the first one is that consumption must be rivalrous; and the second one is that it must be costly to exclude other individuals from partaking in the benefits of the resource units[64]. The resource system should be commonly owned in a community, a good example being forest reserve – which is the resource the management of which we explore in our case study. As the CPRs have finite resource units, the scramble for consumption that is accompanied by non-willingness of appropriators to maintain the resources will eventually result in the depletion of the resources, hence the tragedy of the commons[65]. The tragedy of the commons becomes imminent as the users derive direct benefits from consumption while only suffers delayed costs from the deterioration of the commons[66].

Using such parables as the Prisoners' Dilemma (PD), classical models of collective action predict that in CPRs, there is bound to be little cooperation among users to manage the resources in a sustainable way. In the allegory of the PD, it is assumed that two

[63] Garret Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" *Science* Vol. 162, 1968, pp. 1234-48
[64] Elinor Ostrom, (2000), Op. Cit.
[65] Garret Hardin (1968) Op. Cit.
[66] Elinor Ostrom (1990) *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

prisoners are facing separate police interrogation. If prisoner A gives evidence against prisoner B and prisoner B remains silent, then B serves the maximum sentence and A is set free; the vice versa is true. This scenario represents non-cooperation between the prisoners. If both remain silent during the interrogation (i.e. if both cooperate), they both face a moderate sentence, while if they both confess, they face a higher sentence. In such a situation, the PD predicts that both would be selfish because they are not sure whether remaining silent (or not confessing) would be reciprocated by the other prisoner[67].

This parable signifies the inherent selfishness of people in CPR scenario that yield sub-optimal choices. People are not willing to cooperate, say cut less trees in a common woodlot, because they are not sure whether others will do the same. Again in CPRs, people are not willing to invest in management of the commons because there is a high potential for other people to free-ride on the efforts of others. This uncertainty regarding the behaviour of other users also hinges on lack of enough information especially regarding the behaviour of the other users. Given this uncertainty, the individually rational (but collectively sub-optimal) choice is to consume as much as possible and invest as little as possible – hence the tragedy of the commons.

Mancur Olson, in his book on the logic of collective action, also challenges the optimism expressed in group theory that individuals with common interests would voluntarily act so as to try to further those interests. The premise of Olson's argument is that if a person cannot be excluded from obtaining the benefits of a collective good, once the good is produced, he has little incentive to contribute voluntarily to the provision, let alone maintenance of that good – the only incentive being to free-ride on the efforts of others[68]. The question of size of the group having access to the CPR was also central to Olson's model. He indicated that "unless the number of individuals is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some other device to make individuals act in their common interest, *rational self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests.*"[69] Thus, the larger the group size, the more non-cooperative the individuals

[67] Also see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prisoner's_dilemma (Website visited June 2007)
[68] Mancur Olson (1965) *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Groups and the Theory of Groups,* Cambridge, MA, Havard University Press
[69] Mancur Olson as quoted in Elinor Ostrom (1990) Op. Cit. p. 6 (original emphasis)

will be. For intermediate groups, he indicated that cooperation will depend on how noticeable each person's actions are. Thus, the more noticeable each person's actions are, the more individuals will tend towards cooperation. This in a way starts to point towards social conformity and punishment as a silent force towards cooperation[70].

The imminent lack of cooperation among community members led to proposals that, as a solution to the tragedy of the commons, governments should sell the common properties to private owners to increase accountability and incentive to use and manage the resources prudently. Alternatively, governments could turn the CPRs into public property or introduce coercive laws to regulate usage through, for instance, auction system or any merit as determined from time to time[71]. The proposal to privatize the CPRs and/or introduce regulation, however, presupposes that regulators will act in the public interest and ecologically optimal way. In reality, this is not necessarily the case given information asymmetry. Again, if cases of, for instance, corruption is anything to go by, such proposed measures may not necessarily lead to optimal allocation and utilization of CPRs.

Classical theories of collective action therefore show that, given individual or self-centred calculation among CPR users, there is little to no incentive for cooperation or self-organization in the management of the commons at community level.

2.1.2 Contemporary Theories of Collective Action: Potential for Collective Cooperation

Informed mostly by case study approaches, contemporary theories of Collective Action highlight the potential for cooperation amongst community members in the management of CPRs. The studies show diverse conditions under which the propensity for community collective action in the management of CPRs is high.

Robert Wade, in his study of collective action in villages in South India, showed that communities are likely to organize around sustainable management of (irrigation) water

[70] This is expanded using contemporary theories of collective action as discussed in section 2.1.2 below
[71] See for instance Garret Hardin (1968) Op. Cit.

resources when lack of it will lead to loss of crops. Thus, community collective action regarding sustainable management of a CPR is likely when mismanagement of the CPR will have an adverse impact on people's livelihood. In this case, the likelihood of appropriators cooperating is even higher when the supply of the CPR is unreliable. Wade made this proposition after observing that communities located downstream and who, accordingly, had less reliable water supply were more likely to cooperate than communities located upstream where water supply was more reliable[72].

Consistent with Wade's propositions, Sarah Gillinson, in her multi-disciplinary study, also showed that if the survival of community members is dependent on the availability and efficient management of a particular CPR, then the chances of community members cooperating to sustain the CPR are high[73].

Other critical conditions for community cooperation and action in CPR management include the possibility and efficiency of communication among CPR appropriators, and their autonomy to make rules. Elinor Ostrom indicates that, if appropriators can engage in face-to-face bargaining and have autonomy to make and change their rules, a dimension missing in such parables as the PD, evidence shows that they may as well attempt to organize themselves to manage the CPR in a sustainable way[74]. Face-to-face bargaining ensures that appropriators have (enough) information about the conditions and likelihood of reciprocity by fellow users. This, in the context of community autonomy to devise its own management rules, gives some incentives to appropriators to cooperate in the management of CPRs.

Evidence also shows that CPR users with long-term communal ownership claims, and who can communicate amongst themselves, develop their own agreements, establish positions of monitors, and sanctions those who do not conform to their own rules[75]. The collective ownership rights give incentives to the appropriators to effectively exclude

[72] See Robert Wade (1994) *Village Republics: Economic Conditions for Collective Action in South India* San Francisco, ICS Press
[73] Sara Gillinson "Why Cooperate? A Multi-Disciplinary Study of Collective Action" *Working Paper No. 234*, 2004, London, Overseas Development Institute
[74] Elinor Ostrom (2000) Op. Cit.
[75] Ibid.

non-members and manage the CPR in a sustainable way. The self-organization arrangements in CPR management have proved to be even more effective than government imposed strategies[76].

There is a considerable consensus among CPR scholars that CPRs and their appropriators should have specific attributes conducive to an increased likelihood for the emergence of self-governing community. The resource system should not be at a point of deterioration such that little advantage results from organizing. Thus, the benefits accrued to a well managed CPR should surpass the cost of managing it. The calculation of this net benefit is however possible if the resource system has predictable flow of resource units whose indicators are reliable and valid, and can be generated at relatively low cost[77].

To effectively exclude non-members and efficiently manage the CPR, CPRs should be sufficiently small for easy knowledge of external boundaries and internal transactions. This facilitates less complex (face-to-face) bargaining than in CPRs that cover very big domains[78].

On the other hand, the appropriators should have a common understanding of how the resource system operates and should depend on the resource system for a major portion of their livelihood. This is in line with Gillinson's analysis that there are high chances of cooperation when appropriators depend on a specific resource for survival as indicated in this section above.

Ostrom also indicates that there should be a good measure of trust and reciprocity amongst the users. CPR users, who have been in a community for reasonably long period of time, and whose communities are small enough for members to personally know each other, have a high probability of developing trust and reciprocity. This also agrees with Gillinson's proposition that social capital is a critical condition for cooperation among

[76] Ibid
[77] Ibid: 34; also see Sara Gillinson (2004), Op. Cit.
[78] Ibid

CPR users. Social capital in a community is however effective if there is previous organizational experience and local leadership[79].

To facilitate effective self-organization in CPR management, some scholars have further argued for elements that blend community factors and those that lie above and outside the community.

Cristiana Seixas and Brian Davy identify key elements that contribute to self-organization process in community-based conservation. The elements include involvement and commitment of key players (such as community members and local government officials), funding, strong leadership, capacity building, partnership with supportive organizations and government economic incentives such as alternative livelihood options[80]. There is however a fundamental difference in the factors contributing to community self-organization as advanced by such analysts as Elinor Ostrom and Sara Gillinson, on the one hand, and Cristiana Seixas and Brian Davy, on the other. Ostrom and Gillinson basically advance endogenous factors to community self-organization, such as face-to-face bargaining and the CPR livelihood impact, while Seixas and Brian highlight more of exogenous than endogenous factors and sometimes a blend of the two. The implication is that, in the former, community self-organization emerges from the indigenous effort whereas in the latter the type of self-organization envisaged is tantamount to externally facilitated participatory social mobilization in community development. For the purposes of this paper, unless otherwise stated, self-organization is conceived from Ostrom's and Gillinson's perspective. Seixas and Davy's perspective will however be instructive when analyzing the interface between indigenous community self-organization and formal governance institutions.

Other studies have however shown that the task of generating a list of generic conditions under which users of CPR self-organize is a difficult and futile attempt. Arun Agrawal, for instance, indicates that this task is a flawed and impossibly costly research task. For a way out, he examines the merits of context specific, statistical, comparative and case

[79] Elinor Ostrom (2000) Op. Cit. pp. 34-35; Gillinson (2004), Op. Cit.
[80] Cristiana Seixas and Brian Davy, "Self-Organization in Integrated Conservation and Development Initiatives" *International Journal of the Commons* Vol. 2, No. 1, January 2008, p99

study approaches to studying the commons[81]. This is intelligible considering the magnitude of diverse experiences of different local users in different contexts. This justifies the need for case studies, such as the one informing this paper, to understand the dynamics of community self-organization in a specific context. The context-specific depth understanding in a case study will however also provide at least some analytical insights that can be applied in similar scenarios elsewhere.

2.1.3 Community Self-organization: Spontaneity and Legitimacy

Having analysed the ecologized theoretical context of community self-organization, this paper defines community self-organization as spontaneous emergence of order in a community in the management of people and resources aimed at sustaining the livelihood of the community members[82]. Francis Heylighen indicates that a complex system (where complexity is broadly defined as a continuum between order and disorder), tends towards self-organization, coordination and synergy to enhance predictability and sustainability[83]. In our context, in line with Ostrom and Gillinson's reasoning, the more a community's livelihood relies on CPR with finite units for survival, the more it tends towards coordination and self-organization to maintain and enhance the livelihood.

Louise Comfort however alerts us to the fact that the vital but elusive characteristic of self-organization is its spontaneity. In this paper, spontaneity can therefore be defined as the endogenous natural tendency by community members to respond to issues affecting their lives. Comfort indicates that, while influenced by the actions of other organizations or groups, spontaneity can neither be imposed nor suppressed by external regulation[84]. If community self-organization is effective or more effective than externally facilitated or imposed CPR management, and in the context of growing external influence to community self-organization, this raises a challenge of striking a meaningful balance

[81] Arun Agrawal "Common Property Institutions and Sustainable Governance of Resources" *World Development* Volume 29, No. 10, 2001, pp1649 - 1672
[82] This definition is adapted from Stuart Kauffman's generic definition of self-organization. See for instance Stuart Kauffman as cited in Louise Comfort, "Self-Organization in Complex Systems" *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 4 No. 3, 1994, pp. 393 - 410
[83] Francis Heylighen, "Complexity and Self-organization" in Marcia Bates and Niles Maack (Eds) *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, Brussels, Taylor & Francis, 2008
[84] Louise Comfort (1994) Op. Cit. p. 19

between the role of exogenous institutions such as government local governance institutions and endogenous institutions such as indigenous leadership in CPR management. This is the crux of this research paper.

The question that arises therefore is: how do we ensure community spontaneity in managing resources that have an impact on their livelihoods? This brings us to the concept of legitimacy. It is argued that community members spontaneously relate to a system and participate in its sustainability if the system is embedded in the culture and history of the community[85]. Thus, in CPR management, spontaneity, which is a *sine qua non* of self-organization, comes about if the CPR management system is compatible with and complementary to the history and culture of a specific community. This implies that, whether community self-organization is facilitated or influenced by outside change agents or it is endogenous, there is need for a measure of legitimacy or cultural embeddedness to achieve spontaneous community self-organization.

2.1.4 Community Self Organization: Governance Institutions

This paper, in discussing CPR management, concentrates on the interface between formal local governance institutions and community indigenous (self-organization) governance institutions[86]. 'Institutions' is understood here to mean a set of rules and structures that guide behaviour in any system[87]. Thus, in governing the commons at community level, this paper will analyse the role of community level indigenous rules and structures such as traditional leaders (chiefs), traditional village fora and traditional rules pertaining to management of CPRs, and assess their interface with formal local governance institutions such as by-laws, district assemblies and community development committees.

[85] See for instance Michael Schatzberg "Power, Legitimacy and 'Democratization' in Africa" *Journal of the International African Institute* Vol. 63, No. 4, 1993 pp 445-461; Michael Schatzberg (2001) *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food* Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Pierre Englebert "Solving the Mystery of the AFRICA Dummy" *World Development* Vol. 28, No. 10, 2000 pp. 1821 - 1835

[86] The formal local governance system is discussed at length in chapter 3

[87] See for instance Douglass North, "Institutions" *Journal of Economic Perspective* Vol. 5, No. 1, 1991, pp 97-112

2.1.5 Community Self-organization in the context of Formal Institutional Matrix

As can be appreciated from the above discussion, community organization does not happen in a vacuum. Almost all countries have national policies, laws and structures that govern such CPRs as forests, whether they are managed by community appropriators or not[88].

As can be deduced from Ostrom's conditions for effective self-organization in CPR management as presented in section 2.1.2, a legal framework that recognizes CPR appropriators' independence to make their own rules regarding the management of the CPR is fundamental to self-organization. Ostrom further indicates that supportive legal structures at the macro-level that authorizes users to take responsibility for self-organizing and crafting at least some of their own rules are necessary for the sprouting and sustainability of self-organization in CPR management[89]. This implies that, for effective community organization, the legal framework should not passively leave self-organizations to their own devices but should proactively facilitate and support their development.

It is further argued that national level institutions and community self-organization in CPR management work effectively if they are mediated by effective meso-level governance institutions in a decentralized set-up[90]. This therefore calls for some sort of CPR co-management between the meso-level governance and community self-organization institutions, with the former facilitating and the latter micro-managing. The nature and form of this co-management framework and practice that would result in optimal outcomes to the benefit of communities, however, remains elusive. This study

[88] This is true especially when we consider public policy broadly to mean government action or inaction on a phenomena of public interest (see Dye, T (1992) *Understanding Public Policy Analysis* Prentice Hall)
[89] Elinor Ostrom (2000) Op. Cit.
[90] See for example N. Paudel *et al* "Contextualizing Common Property Systems: Action Research Insights on Forging Effective Links Between Forest Commons and 'Meso' Layer Governance" http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/archive/00001992/00/Paudel_NS.pdf , 2006, (Website Visited on 23rd May 2007). This argument is fleshed out in chapter 3.

therefore attempts to explore and fill this lacuna using a case on forest resource management in Sinyala.

2.2 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the concept of community self-organization in the context of the theories of collective action. The chapter has shown that, much as there are problems of collective action in the management of CPRs, there is a huge potential for cooperation among CPR appropriators especially when the livelihood of the appropriators depend on the CPR, when there is relative independence for appropriators to make their own rules, and when the CPR governance institutions are culturally embedded in the community.

The next chapter discusses formal local governance system and how it interacts with the indigenous community self-organization governance in a decentralized set-up. This discussion is couched in the community development discourse.

CHAPTER 3

DECENTRALIZATION AND COMMUNITY SELF-ORGANIZATION

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Community institutions are often bound and affected by State institutions. As such, their activities and organization must conform to the institutional direction of the State. Paradoxically, the State policy direction that disregards community institutions is bound to be inappropriate and irrelevant to the needs of the communities. The synergy between institutions outside communities and the endogenous community institutions is therefore crucial to understanding community development in general and CPR management in particular.

This chapter locates community self-organization within the formal governance system. Specifically, the chapter reviews community self-organization within the decentralized institutional matrix. Having looked at the potential for community self-organization in chapter 2, this chapter analyses the potential for managing community resources within existing formal institutions that lie outside the community but are designed to govern the communities. Our emphasis is on meso-level governance institutions that conceptually are located in the space between the national level and community level governance institutions, especially in as far as the meso-level governance institutions interact with the community institutions.

This chapter also completes the conceptual framework of this paper that paints the scope of the study and sets the analytical framework.

3.1 MESO-LEVEL GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY SELF-ORGANIZATION IN A DECENTRALIZED SET-UP

This section starts by bridging chapters 2 and 3, that is, showing the link between community organization in CPR management and formal institutions in decentralized framework. The concept of meso-level governance institutions is key to this connection.

3.1.1 Meso-level governance

Meso-level governance is here conceptualized as that layer between local level and national (policy) level[91]. This layer occurs immediately 'outside' and 'above' the local level. This level of governance is said to constantly interact with users of CPRs and in the process shape the political, social and environmental outcomes of CPR management.

The meso-level consists of actors, institutions and processes that interact with each other and with users of the commons. They interpret and enforce policies and regulations, and can also reinterpret or misinterpret policies according to their own interests and agendas, with beneficial or deleterious effects on the actors and the commons[92]. As 'middle' agents, they mediate and channel policy feedback to the national level, and policy resources from the national level to the local level. The actors at meso-level include local government officials, government department officials such as forest officers, NGOs, and private organizations whose activities have a bearing on specific CPRs. The institutions include local government laws (by-laws), local regulations and local government structures outside and above community based organizations. The processes include the networks and fora facilitated by the actors and institutions. This study concentrates on the meso-level government institutions in a decentralized framework as they interact with community-based organisation in CPR management.

[91] N. Paudel *et al* "Contextualizing Common Property Systems: Action Research Insights on Forging Effective Links Between Forest Commons and 'Meso' Layer Governance" http://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/archive/00001992/00/Paudel_NS.pdf , 2006
[92] Ibid

As indicated in chapter 2, the literature on CPRs is heavily focused on understanding how users of the commons interact with each other regarding production, maintenance and appropriation of these resources, with little emphasis, if any, on meso-level governance. N. Paudel *et al* actually indicate that the concept of meso-level governance is missing from the current literature on CPR[93].

Analysis however shows that the concept of meso-layer governance is not totally missing from the current literature on CPRs. For instance, Francis Cleaver argues that public actions and interests cannot necessarily be separated from the private actions; formal manifestations of management from informal; and modern authority and institutional structures from traditional ones[94]. Cleaver further shows that the embeddedness of institutions in social relations does not imply solidity or fixedness in some mythical 'social reality'. Drawing from Giddens' Agency and Structure, and Douglous North's Institutions in shaping individual perceptions and action, Cleaver concludes that embeddedness of institutions in social relations involves evolving and negotiated relationships between socially, historically, and ecologically located people *who shape and are shaped* by a variety of institutions of varying degrees of formality and organization[95].

Ostrom also advances an evolutionist notion when she indicated that better institutions can be 'crafted' by CPR users and policy makers where culture and social structure, increasingly referred to as 'social capital', become raw materials to be built upon and improved[96].

The foregoing therefore shows that institutions, whether at micro-, meso- or macro-level, formal or informal, are an integral part of human relations. Contrary to Paudel *et al* therefore, what is missing in the current literature on CPRs is not necessarily the meso-level governance concept but rather its wider and deeper empirical analysis to elucidate the dynamics and outcomes of the interaction between the community endogenous

[93] Ibid.
[94] Francis Cleaver "Moral Ecological Rationality: Institutions and the Management of Common Property Resources" in *Development and Change* Vol. 31, No. 2, 2000, pp. 361 - 83
[95] Ibid: 362, my emphasis
[96] Ostrom as cited by Francis Cleaver (2000) Op. Cit.: 365

organization and the meso-level institutions. Francis Cleaver's analysis of institutions of varying degrees of formality in CPR management, for instance, sets the momentum for consideration of institutional interface in CPR management, but falls short of primary empirical substantiation. This paper therefore sets out to explore and fill this gap using a case study from Sinyala in Malawi.

Meso-level governance, especially in a decentralized framework, shows, as alluded to in chapter 2, that the formal institutional framework does not passively leave community self-organizations to their own devices but consciously and/or sub-consciously facilitate, support and shape their development and outcomes.

One subtle dichotomy that needs elaboration at this stage is the difference between self-organization and participatory management in CPR management. On the one extreme, as can be deduced from chapter 2, self-organization in CPR management is the highest degree of participatory management that entails CPR appropriators mobilizing themselves to use and maintain the commons in a sustainable way to improve their own livelihoods. Moving along the continuum, as meso-level institutions, processes and actors interact with CBOs and facilitate CPR management, the concept shifts from self-organization (in the aboriginal sense) to participatory management. Thus participatory management is a relative concept that shows the degree of CPR users' participation in managing the commons in the context of the meso-level (and national level) governance.

Much as community self-organization seems optimal, it presupposes autonomy from external authority in formulating and applying rules. However, in a legal set-up, all rules are subject to by-laws at local government level, and national laws at national level – in that order. For instance, the Malawi Constitution clearly stipulates that,

> "[a]ny Act of Government or any law that is inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution shall, to the extent of such inconsistency, be invalid"[97]

[97] Government of Malawi (1999) *The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi* Section 5.

This then implies that self-organization should be understood within the bounds of both local and national laws and policies. Thus, community self-organization that emerges with little to no influence from meso-level institutions should at the end of the day be within the laws the interpretation and application of which largely lies with the meso-level institutions. On the other hand, community organisations that emerge through the facilitation of meso-level institutions should also be consistent with the laws. Thus, the (local) government framework breeds a *de facto* and *de jure* co-management of CPRs between the meso- and the micro-level.

3.1.2 Meso-level Governance in a Decentralized Government System

Ironically, it has been claimed that studies on the commons that exposed huge potential for effective community self-organization have led to the drive for decentralization of CPR management by governments. For instance, the 1999 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) study on forestry policies indicated that, following evidence on community self-organization in CPRs, by 2001, over 50 countries claimed to be pursuing initiatives that would devolve some control over resources to local users[98]. Although it may be difficult to sustain this claim, research on the commons has surely informed how policy makers think about CPR management.

Decentralization refers to any act in which the central government formally cedes power, authority and resources to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political, administrative and territorial hierarchy[99]. Decentralization can be political or administrative. Administrative decentralization (sometimes called deconcentration) involves transfer of power to local branches of central government that are primarily responsible to the central government for carrying out centrally defined functions such as tax collection. On the other hand, political decentralization entails devolution of central government powers to political actors and institutions representative of local

[98] A. Agrawal 'Common Property Institutions and Sustainable Governance of Resources' in *World Development* Volume 29, No. 10, 2001, p. 1650

[99] Manwood as cited in Asiyati Chiweza 'Participation: Reality or Rhetoric in Rural Communities of Malawi?' *Tanzanet Journal* Volume 5, No. 1, 2005, pp. 1-8

populations[100]. Our emphasis is on political decentralization because since the 1990s most African countries have undergone democratic processes, one of whose indicators is the devolution of central government powers to local levels[101]. The decentralized local government institution has been considered as one of the most appropriate domain of autonomy in which communities can exercise their right to elect their representatives and hold them to account, and participate in decision making processes that affect their livelihood. In this set-up, since the government is closer to the people, public service delivery and feedback mechanism with the communities is efficient and effective as demand and supply for local public goods are easily matched[102].

The local government institutions therefore form a meso-layer that mediates the central government institutions and processes on the one hand, and the community institutions and processes on the other. This meso-layer also creates the necessary autonomous environment for community self-organization in CPR management subject only to the Law.

3.1.3 Local Governance and Community Development

The interface between meso-level and micro-level governance institutions brings into question the discourse on local governance and community development.

Damien Kingsbury draws our attention to the fact that, in as far as development is meant to be about improving the lives of people, it is logical that development should start with people[103]. Development should therefore guarantee community (direct) participation, and hence empowerment, that ensures people's control over issues that affect their own lives. This is said to bring about community development[104]. In this context, Edwards and Jones see community development as a process that "is especially directed by local

[100] Asiyati Chiweza (2005) Op. Cit.
[101] Asiyati Chiweza "Local Government" in N. Patel and L. Svasand (Eds) *Government and Politics in Malawi* Zomba, Kachere Books, 2007, pp. 142-143
[102] Ibid
[103] Damien Kingsbury "Community Development" in Damien Kingsbury *et al* (Eds) *Key Issues in Development* New York, Pelgrave Macmillan, 2004, p. 221
[104] Ibid

people towards objectives which they regard as beneficial to the community"[105]. Implicit in this understanding of participatory community development is the indispensable role of collective action to achieve community development. Thus, community (collective) self-organization gives practical expression to the idea of participation and hence community empowerment and development. This is particularly true if we consider that individuals, especially in rural areas where the majority of people in developing countries live, control few economic resources and have little political influence. They must therefore rely on group action to pool resources and exert pressure on development agents to achieve meaningful community development[106].

Scholars agree that the best institutional framework that can support efficient and effective community development is the decentralized political and administrative structure[107]. In a decentralized institutional matrix, efficient and effective community development is achieved through two major ways: firstly, as the central government devolve resources and authority to local government, the local institutions facilitate the collection of better and more reliable information about local conditions and this enables quick, appropriate and relevant government response to local needs[108]. Secondly, and probably more important, decentralization enables communities to actively and directly participate and make decisions on issues affecting their lives and this ensures the relevance and appropriateness of solutions, and self- and collective efficacy[109].

If community (collective) participation in issues affecting the community members' lives is the heart of community development, community self-organization discussed in chapter 2 can therefore be said to be the highest form of community development process. By extension, development institutional arrangement that creates an environment conducive for community self-organization can be said to be the desirable institutional set-up for community development. The case study in this paper therefore assesses the

[105] Edwards and Jones as quoted in Tsitso Monaheng "Community Development and Community Organization – the Role of the Change Agent" Francois Theron (Ed) *The Development Change Agent – A Micro-level Approach to Development* Pretoria, Van Schaik, 2008, pp. 125-126
[106] See for instance Tsitso Monaheng (2008) Op. Cit. p.128
[107] See for instance Francois Theron (Ed) (2008) Op. Cit.; Asiyati Chiweza (2007) Op. Cit.; Damien Kingsbury *et al* (Ed) (2004) Op. Cit.
[108] See for instance Tsitso Monaheng (2008) Op. Cit. p.133
[109] See for instance Asiyati Chiweza (2005) Op. Cit.

extent to which local governance institutional arrangement achieves this optimal institutional set-up for optimal community development.

3.1.4 Forest Resources and Community Development

The issue under study within which community organization and local governance will be explored is community forest resource management. Community forest resources provide an ideal CPR where theories of collective action and community development can be meaningfully tested. This is the case because in most rural areas, for instance in Malawi where the study is located, most families rely on wood fuel for their household energy use. Apart from energy, forest resources also provide building materials, medicine, game meat, wild fruits and vegetables to rural communities. Thus forest resources are part of rural communities' livelihood. In rural communities where people rely on forest resources as in the case under study, community development efforts would be incomplete if they ignored forest resource management. In this context, most studies on CPRs and collective action have also used forest resource management to unpack the dynamics of community collective action and community development[110].

As per FAO, community forestry is defined as any situation which intimately involves local people in a forestry activity. This locates community forestry within the larger participatory development paradigm. In such cases, issues of development sustainability, land use, community participation, capacity building empowerment, democratization and good governance are elaborated in the community forestry discourse and empirics.

In analyzing people-centred approaches towards community forestry, Cori Ham *et al* bring out salient issues namely: participation of community stakeholders; the legal and institutional framework for community forestry; local indigenous knowledge and social learning; and collaborative management[111]. Consistent with the literature analysed above, they indicate that forestry and other related problems can never be addressed without the

[110] See for instance Cori Ham *et al* "The Forester as a Change Agent – From Trees between the People to People between the Trees" in Francois Theron (ed) (2008) Op. Cit. pp. 173-201; A. Agrawal (2001) Op. Cit.
[111] Ibid

direct participation of rural people – the intended beneficiaries of the development activities. They also show that institutional and legal framework, such as Forestry Act, is indispensable in understanding and analysing community forestry and development[112]. This paper will specifically analyse the institutional framework as spelled out by decentralization and other relevant policies in as far as they interact with community (informal) institutions in community forest management and community development.

Cori Ham *et al* also show that understanding local indigenous knowledge is crucial in assessing planning partnership in local development. They indicate that development change agents should incorporate indigenous knowledge in all their development plans to make the plans relevant and effective. In this context, addressing development agents, Cori Ham *et al* emphasize collaborative forest management where the development agents and government continue to exercise broad regulatory role especially where there are significant environmental externalities, while the communities also assume management role on aspects such as maintenance especially where their livelihood is directly affected[113].

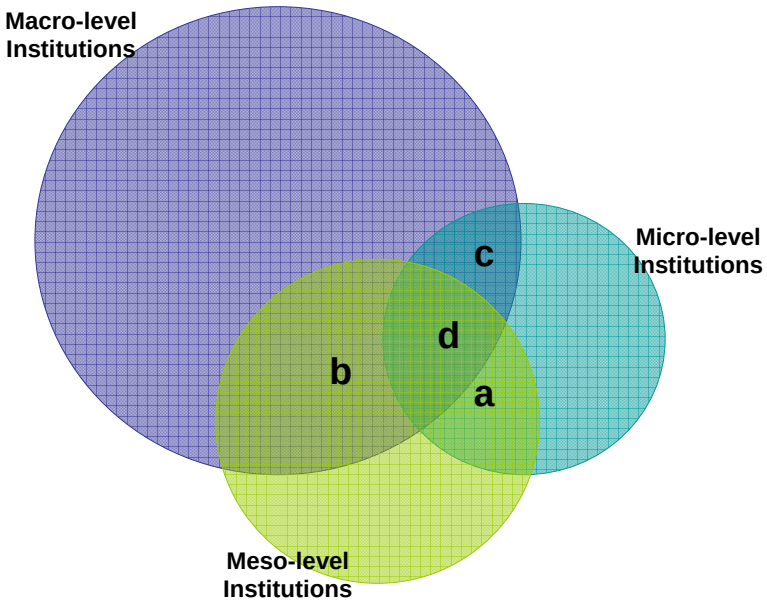
3.2 CONCEPTUALIZING DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE STRATA

Informed by chapter 2 and the discussion above in this chapter, this section aims at conceptualizing the layers of development governance institutions. The conceptual clarity is necessary to locate some concepts and issues identified in the literature pertaining to the interface between meso- and micro-level governance institutions. The following conceptual framework also defines the scope of our case study.

The institutional overlaps in development processes can be conceptualized as in the figure 1 below:

[112] Ibid
[113] Ibid, pp. 187-188

Figure 1. Development Institutional Interface



Interface ‘a’ represents development process interact between communities and meso-level institutions such as NGOs and local government structures. In this interface, meso-level institutions relay and interpret national laws, policies and resources to communities. This often happens in the context of the intermediary institutions’ development philosophy. Communities also present their needs to the meso-level institutions or to national level through the meso-level institutions.

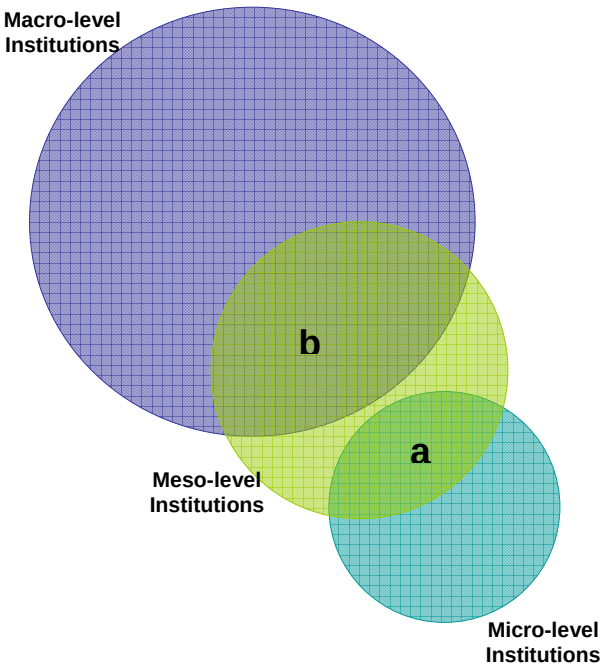
Interface ‘b’ represents the interaction between meso-level development institutions and national level institutions. This happens, for instance, when local government officials and NGOs represent their and communities’ demands to national level institutions, and when national level institutions relay policies and resources to communities through local government structures and NGOs.

Interface ‘c’ represent instances when national level institutions interact directly with communities, like when local community members give policy input directly to members of parliament or executive members.

Interface ‘d’ represents instances when communities, meso-level institutions and national level institutions interact. A typical instance is when members of the executive arm of government simultaneously consult local community members and NGOs on some proposed national policy.

As can be noted from interfaces ‘a’ to ‘d’, the development process can be complex and costly. The decentralization process however attempts to make this development process less complex and less costly. Figure 2 below illustrates this attempt:

Figure 2. Development interface in a decentralized institutional framework



As can be appreciated from figure 2 above, decentralization has the potential to minimize transaction costs in development processes. Much as in reality there are still some overlaps between national institutions, intermediary institutions and micro-level institutions, most of these overlaps are minimized with the institutionalization of local governance system. In simplistic terms, we remain with two main overlaps, 'a' (micro- and meso-level institutions) and 'b' (meso- and macro-level institutions). Our study will centre on interface 'a' with emphasis on the development interaction between local government structures and officials and community organization structures in forest resource management.

3.2.1 The Problematics of Micro- and Meso-level Governance Institutional Interface

Having conceptualized our analytical framework and research scope, this section attempts to highlight some issues that need special attention if we are to understand and prescribe the interaction between micro- and meso-level institutions in community development.

Bottom-up vs Top-down Development

There is scholarly consensus in community development that initiatives that emanate from macro- or meso-level institutions and processes and disregard micro-level ideas and involvement are bound to be irrelevant and inappropriate to local needs, and unsustainable in the long-run. It is therefore widely recognized that development initiatives ought to be bottom-up, i.e. development should be demand-driven and the beneficiaries of any development initiative must be involved right from the planning stage, implementation to evaluation stage. This will not only ensure cultural and societal relevance and appropriateness of the development initiatives, but will also respect the beneficiaries' right to participation – in line with the human rights approach to development[114].

[114] See for instance Damien Kingsbury (2004) Op. Cit.; Francois Theron (Ed) (2008) Op. Cit.

However, not all decisions taken at local level are appropriate. Some decisions emanate from people's desperation and often have a short-term horizon. Other decisions, due to information asymmetry and/or illiteracy, are based on limited understanding of opportunities or consequences of specific choices; while others are limited by idiosyncratic interests of local leaders that often might also be based on limited understanding of options or outcomes[115]. In this context, much as community development beneficiaries need to be involved in their development processes as a matter of priority, some top-down development strategies are not totally defunct. The top-down development initiatives can range from donor or government community development funding, technical assistance, to social mobilization for community development. Analysing democratic participation in Norway, Jacob Aars notes paradoxical top-down strategies for bottom-up involvement where political elites spearheaded efforts to mobilize local residents for political participation[116].

To analyze community development holistically therefore, there is a need to strike a meaningful balance between community (development beneficiary) involvement and external (development agent) involvement.

External Involvement: The Development Change Agent Phenomenon

There is hardly any community that has not been influenced by a development intervention from outside – to different levels of success. As Francois Theron puts it,

> "The fact that development should be endogamous – from within communities, and that it should be a spontaneous process, remains the ideal approach, but the outcome of development programmes/projects often shows that this seldom happens. The type of 'development' that the world has known, and which it will still imitate for many years, is the type introduced from the top, the outside, in a mechanistic manner by development institutions, governments and so forth, through a host of people whom we refer to as 'change agents' correlatively,

[115] Damien Kingsbury (2004) Op. Cit: p223
[116] Jacob Aars "Democratic Renewal in Local Government? Top Down Strategies for Bottom Up Involvement" *Paper Presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions 2003* Edinburgh, March 28th – April 2nd 2003, pp 1-24. http://www.paltin.ro/biblioteca/Aars.pdf (Website visited 28 May 2008)

> accepting the problematic nature of this concept… This is a reality we need to accept although this approach has direct correlation to why development often fails."[117]

This inherent top-down externally initiated development, and the need for contextually relevant and appropriate local development that entails direct involvement of the development beneficiaries, makes community development a complex topic. On the one extreme, a purely externally driven development is bound to be irrelevant and inappropriate to local needs; will lack legitimacy; and may promote dependency among the beneficiaries. On the other extreme, a purely independent endogenous community development is not feasible as communities exist within authoritative legal and institutional frameworks, and are required to align their existence in this matrix. To this extent, closing the gap between change agents (outside knowledge) and the beneficiaries of development (inside knowledge) should be explored[118]. There is therefore need for careful hybridization that will require some form of partnership and synergy among micro-, meso- and macro-level development agents and institutions. This paper therefore explores the possible best interface between micro- and meso-levels of development governance.

3.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has located community self-organization and development in the broader decentralized institutional framework. The study of community development is incomplete if decentralization is not taken into consideration. The chapter has shown that development, and community development in particular, is a complex process of interaction between macro-, meso- and micro-level institutions. This paper concentrates on the meso- and micro-levels interface. The next chapter therefore explores the dynamics of this overlap using a Malawian case of community forest resource management.

[117] Francois Theron (2008) Op. Cit. p.2
[118] Ibid

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS: COMMUNITY BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT IN SINYALA

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an analysis of data collected from Sinyala on community based forest management. In a typical case study approach, theoretical constructs and concepts developed in chapters 1 to 3 were used as analytical lens for the Sinyala case. At the same time, the analysis was open to findings that might challenge or buttress the theoretical constructs. Thus, the analysis took an eclectic approach[119].

The chapter shows the crucial role that decentralized meso-level institutions and actors play in community forest resource management in Sinyala and the enduring influence of indigenous micro-level institutions. The interface of the meso- and micro-level institutions plays out in such a way as to highlight the problematics and potentials for an optimal hybridization of the institutions.

The data informing this chapter were gathered from interviews with government officials involved in local government, community development, and forestry; traditional leaders; and community members from Lilongwe district. The interviews were spread across the meso- and micro-layers of governance in community development as outlined in table 1 in chapter 1. Government policy documents and relevant literature were also consulted.

The chapter starts with a presentation of the evolution of forest resource management and governance in Malawi. The chapter later narrows down to the case of Sinyala.

[119] See J. Chima (2005) Op. Cit.

4.1 EVOLUTION OF FOREST RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN MALAWI

Prior to British colonialism in Malawi, communities managed their own forest resources using indigenous knowledge embedded in practice, customs and culture passed on through generations[120].

In 1898, eight years after Malawi became a British protectorate, the Department of Forestry was formed. The primary aim was said to be environmental protection. This development saw the declaration of 48 forest reserves covering 673,400 hectares in the following four decades. The forest reserves largely covered catchment areas and river sources[121].

In 1926, the colonial government instituted the Village Forest Area (VFA) scheme with the aim of providing each village with an area of forest woodland for poles and firewood. The VFA rules enacted in 1931 under the Forest Ordinance gave traditional village headmen wide powers to control the VFAs even though the ultimate ownership right and responsibility rested with the colonial government[122].

When Malawi attained her political independence in 1964, management responsibility of indigenous woodlands on customary lands (that included forests beyond village areas) was transferred from central government to district councils. The management included revenue generation through selling of forest resources notably wood. The revenue realized from the selling of wood from 1964 to 1985 was significant in supplementing central government subvention of local government budgets in district councils. However, due to poor management that included embezzlement and overexploitation of

[120] Kalipeni, E. and Zulu, L. 'From Top-Down to Bottom-Up: The Difficult Case of the Bantyre City Fuelwood Project' *Journal of Southern African Studies* Vol. 28, No. 1, Special Issue: Malawi, March 2002 pp. 120-1
[121] Ibid
[122] Ibid

woodlands by the district councils, management responsibility reverted back to central government in 1985[123].

From 1985 to 1993, a revenue sharing mechanism was put in place where 80% of the proceeds were allocated to district councils and 20% to central government. From 1993, a Forestry Policy revision provided for the allocation of 25% of revenue generated from customary woodlands directly to District Development Committees (DDC) within the district councils[124].

At village level, forest resource management was however still coordinated by the village headmen. Communal cooperation in forest resource management at village level has been enhanced largely by the enduring authority of the traditional village headmen. However, the government still remained the ultimate ownership right holder of all customary land including the forests. The government would therefore intervene in the management of the forests especially if it deemed that forests were being overexploited. This created some ownership right ambivalence in customary (and community) forest resource management. The community self-organisation in forest resource management has therefore not been purely autonomous as the government remained the ultimate custodian of the communal forest rights[125].

This ownership right ambivalence has been said to have led to increased deforestation, threatening the very livelihoods of community members in Malawian villages most of whom rely on forest resources for energy, income and farming. For instance, Malawi government reported that open access to indigenous forest resources encouraged rapid depletion, and while this might have generated a short-term income for some families, it led to resource scarcity, catchment degradation, and deepening of rural poverty[126]. Another explanatory variable could be cooperation complications emanating from co-management dynamics. There is bound to be conflicts among neighbouring villages in forest resource management in cases where a forest overlaps more than one village. In

[123] Ibid
[124] Ibid
[125] Government of Malawi (2003) *Community Based Forest Management: A Supplement to the National Forest Policy of Malawi, 1996* Zomba: Malawi Government Printers
[126] Ibid

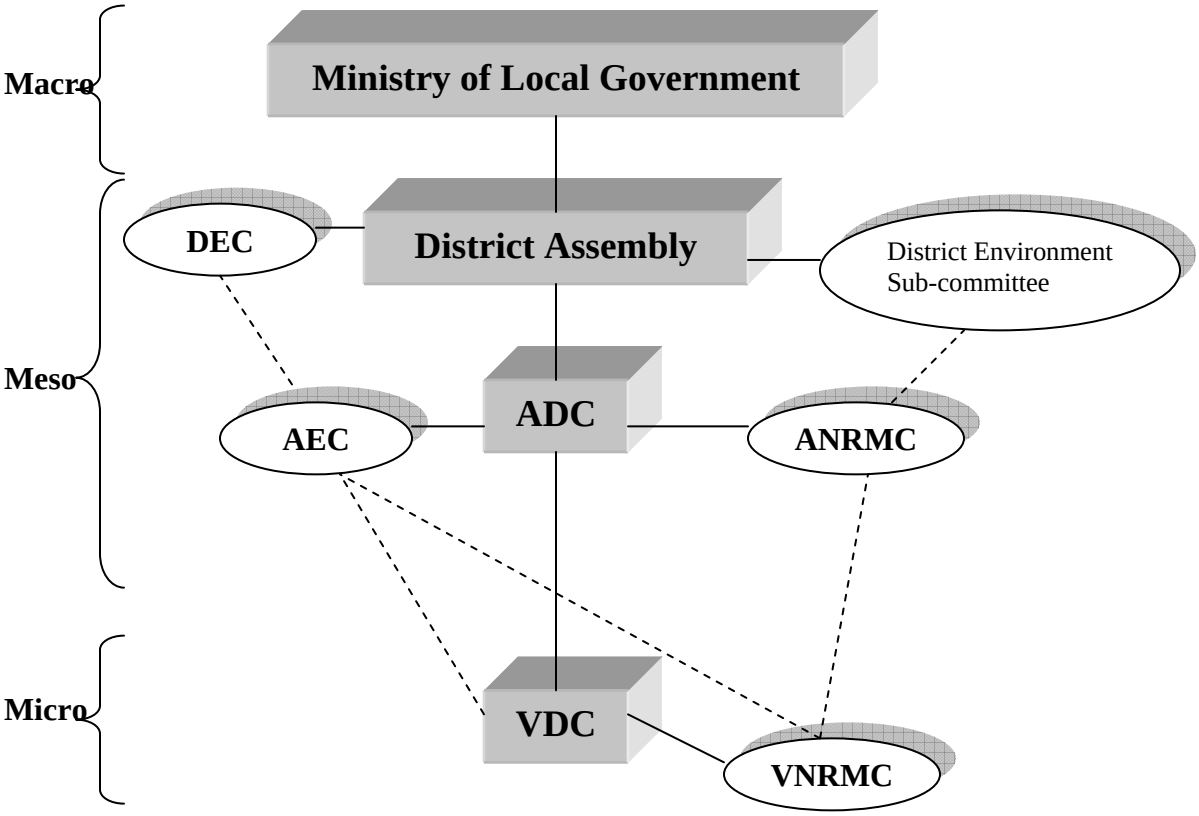
such instances, preservation of forest reserves is dependent on the cooperation of, not only one village community, but several village headmen and their subjects, a phenomenon that compounds collective action as issues of jurisdiction and boundaries complicates negotiation and cooperation dynamics. The Sinyala case in this paper explores this dimension as Sinyala forest area is used by two neighbouring villages.

Due to the increase in deforestation, cases of mismanagement, and difficulties to police government forest management rules to adequately protect indigenous forest and encourage afforestation[127], Malawi government formulated a National Forestry Policy in 1996. This policy, together with policies and laws like the Decentralization Policy of 1996, Environment Act of 1996, and the Local Government Act of 1998, formalized the devolution of natural resource management, including forest resource management, to the local level. District Assemblies, within the decentralized institutional framework, were to coordinate all local development including natural resource management. This institutional development marked a significant shift towards participatory forest management approach that would involve communities, and other meso-level stakeholders like government departments and officials, NGOs and the private sector[128].

Analysis of the institutional arrangement from government of Malawi policy documents and interviews with government officials and traditional leaders shows that the ideal decentralized local government institutional framework within which community based natural resource management should operate is as follows[129]:

[127] See Government of Malawi (2003) Op. Cit.
[128] Government of Malawi (1996) Op. Cit.
[129] See for instance Government of Malawi, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (2004) *Village Action Planning Handbook*, Lilongwe; Government of Malawi (2003) Op. Cit.

Figure 3: Natural Resource Management in Malawi: Local Government Institutional Framework



This formal devolution of natural resource management resulted in the formation of resource management committees that were connected in a hierarchy from village level to the District Assembly level. In figure 3 above, the gray rectangular blocks represent main bodies in local governance in Malawi. The oval shapes represent sub-committees. The solid lines represent direct interaction between the connected bodies/committees while the dotted lines represent occasional, indirect or task-specific interaction between connected (sub) committees.

As can be seen in figure 3, at the macro-level, the parent ministry of all local government development initiatives is the Ministry of Local Government. The ministry is responsible

for broad policy direction for local development and for channelling resources from central government to local government structures through the District Assembly.

Malawi has 28 districts and each has a District Assembly that coordinates and oversees all development activities in a district. The District Assembly is the hub of resource generation for development projects at district level, and making by-laws and policies for local development in a district. It is basically composed of elected ward councillors, elected members of parliament, traditional leaders who are non-voting *ex-officio* members, and five other representatives from civil society appointed by elected members of the Assembly[130]. In natural resource management such as forestry, the District Assembly has District Environment sub-committee that coordinates all natural resource management activities in a district. This sub-committee gets technical support from the District Executive Committee (DEC), another District Assembly sub-committee, that is composed of heads of government departments at district level such as the District Forest Officer (DFO).

Below the District Assembly is the Area Development Committee that oversees development activities in several villages that fall under a Traditional Authority (chief) – TA[131]. The TA seats as an *ex-officio* member of the ADC. In natural resource management, the ADC has a coordinating sub-committee called Area Natural Resource Management Committee (ANRMC). As at District level, this sub-committee gets technical support from another ADC sub-committee called the Area Executive Committee (AEC) composed of government front-line officials from different departments such as the Forest Technical Assistant from the Department of Forest.

At the micro-level, the District Assembly, through the ADC and the AEC, facilitates the election of a Village Natural Resources Management Committee (VNRMC) to manage a specific village forest area. In this committee, the village headman is a non-voting *ex-officio* member. The VNRMC is a sub-committee of the Village Development Committee

[130] See Asiyati Chiweza in N. Patel and L. Svasand (2007) Op. Cit.
[131] A Traditional Authority is an administrative unit under a traditional chief also called Traditional Authority (TA) whose jurisdiction covers several Group Village Headmen. A Group Village Headman is a traditional chief heading a group of villages – each village being headed by a Village headman.

(VDC) that coordinates and oversees development activities in several villages that fall under a Group Village Headman. At this level, the VDC and the VNRMC directly gets policy direction from the ADC but also get technical support from the AEC and some policy direction and harmonization from ANRMC.

There are public, private, and traditional customary land tenure systems in Malawi forestry land[132]. In our study, we will concentrate on customary land tenure system because that is where community forest reserves, normally managed by villages, are located. A village in Malawi is the smallest traditional administrative unit headed by a village head, whose members are homogeneous in that they are linked by tribe. The size of a village is often small enough for members to know each other personally hence a potential for cooperation[133]. The institution of the village head is traditionally instituted through royal lineage and is legally recognized by the Malawi (Traditional) Chiefs Act. The communal management, the exclusivity and rivalrous nature of forest resources benefits make the customary forests in Malawi villages a typical common property resource (CPR) thereby posing such cooperation challenges as free-riding[134].

4.2 SINYALA PROFILE

Sinyala is an area made up of two villages: Sinyala Group and Sinyala Joshua[135]. Sinyala is a community of the Chewa ethnic group. The ethnic group in Sinyala emigrated from Mozambique in search for fertile soils and water and settled at Sinyala in 1922[136].

Sinyala has a community forest area of about 35 hectares which is now preserved under the community based forest management programme within the decentralized forest policy of Malawi government[137]. Prior to the Forest policy of 1996, all forests, including

[132] Sikwese, (2006) Participatory Forestry under Decentralization Policies: The Case of Lilongwe Forestry Project, Malawi Forestry and Horticulture Department, Bunda College of Agriculture, Malawi
[133] See Olson, M in E. Ostrom (1990) Op. Cit.
[134] See chapter 2
[135] The names "Group" and "Joshua" are added to Sinyala to differentiate the part of Sinyala headed by a Group Village Headman, and the other headed by a Village Headman whose clan name in Joshua.
[136] B. Y. Mtsisi *Participatory Forest Management Plan for Sinyala Village Forest Area* Sinyala VNRMC, Malingunde, Lilongwe, June 2007
[137] In this paper, when referring to Sinyala, any use of the generic name 'village forest area (VFA)' will be referring to the Sinyala forest area that overlaps two villages (See map 4 on page xv)

Sinyala forest, were legally owned by the Malawi government. The community based forest management programme therefore aimed at transferring ownership of village forests to communities to improve sustainable management of the forests[138].

Sinyala falls under TA Masumbakhunda in Malingunde area. It lies about 35 kilometres South West of Lilongwe city, the capital of Malawi[139]. The Lilongwe river that supplies water to the Kamuzu dam, the main reservoir for piped water to Lilongwe city, borders Sinyala to the West, making Sinyala sustainable forest resource management a crucial issue to Lilongwe Water Board – the water authority for Lilongwe city[140].

According to the interviews with Sinyala traditional leaders, Sinyala has about 175 households with an average of 5 people per household[141]. The average land holding size per household is 2 to 3 acres. The people of Sinyala are predominantly subsistence farmers who grow rain-fed maize as a staple food. They also grow vegetables, groundnuts, soya beans, cassava and sweet potatoes as cash crops. Some people sell firewood bought from Katete and Dzalanyama government forests as a source of income. Some households keep live stock such as goats and chickens for subsistence[142].

Sinyala's main source of energy is wood fuel, making forestry a crucial aspect of their livelihood. At the time of fieldwork, community members reported getting their firewood from pruned branches of trees from the preserved Sinyala community forest, buying wood from Katete and Dzalanyama government forest reserves, and using trees naturally growing and grown in their household gardens.

Sinyala community members took the initiative to tap water from the Dzalanyama forest reserve through pipes to the Sinyala villages. During the field interviews however, Sinyala traditional leaders indicated that the pipes had since been damaged by some

[138] See Government of Malawi (2003) *Community Based Forest Management: A Supplement to the National Forest Policy of Malawi, 1996* Zomba: Malawi Government Printers
[139] See Maps 2 and 3 on pages xiii and xiv
[140] See Map 4 on page xv
[141] The Sinyala Participatory Forest Management Plan (see B.Y. Mtsitsi (2007) Op. Cit.) shows that Sinyala has 109 households. This discrepancy might be due to the time lag between the time of the participatory management process (2002/3) and the fieldwork for this paper (2008). This paper will therefore consider Sinyala as having 175 households.
[142] See B. Y. Mtsisi (2007) Op. Cit. p. 6

people in some villages through which the pipes passed, and the piped water system was no longer working. At the time of the fieldwork therefore, Sinyala relied on three boreholes drilled by government which research participants indicated are not enough.

Sinyala has Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC), a farm produce market, where people can sell and buy farm produce; a police station; and a post office. There is a government primary school, a Mission hospital and a trading centre about 2 kilometres from Sinyala[143].

Before 1994, the two villages were one as community members belong to the same Chewa ethnic grouping and related clans. The traditional chieftaincy (Village Headman) heading Sinyala was then alternating between two related royal families. In 1994 however, after succession squabbles, the two royal families and their relatives decided to split Sinyala into two villages, Sinyala Group and Sinyala Joshua. After the split, the bigger part of Sinyala forest area was geographically located in Sinyala Group village though Sinyala Joshua residents also used it. This development sparked ownership and management incentive issues that are unpacked in the sections below.

4.3 DEVELOPMENT PERCEPTION AND VISION

In as far as forest management impacts on people's livelihood in a significant way as highlighted in section 1.1.3 in chapter 1, the fieldwork set out to explore development perception and goals of development agents and beneficiaries. The aim was to locate community forest management within the broader context of development discourse and initiatives.

Analysis of field findings and documents reveals that development perception and goals varied as we move from the meso- to the micro-layers of development institutions, actors and beneficiaries. From the District Assembly to the 'area' levels[144], respondents, who constituted mainly government officials, indicated that they perceive development to entail that people should fully participate in all issues affecting their lives. People's

[143] See Map 4 on page xv
[144] See figure 3 on page 54

enjoyment of this freedom of participation and choice constituted the ultimate goal of development. For example, one government official had this to say about (community) development:

> "Our development vision is to achieve full participation of the people."[145]

On the other hand, as we move down the continuum from 'Area' institutions and actors to community level institutions, actors and beneficiaries, development perception assumes a more concrete form. Respondents spontaneously and overwhelmingly indicated that development means having enough food and clean drinking water. The food referred to here included maize, the staple food, and livestock such as chickens and pigs. In this context, respondents indicated that most people cannot afford to buy fertilizer for their food crops and they pleaded for government support in form of subsidized fertilizer. At the time of interviews, subsidized fertilizer was made available to targeted beneficiaries across the country through the distribution of coupons which the beneficiaries used to buy the subsidized fertilizer. This system however was criticised by research participants as flawed as in most instances the previous year, two households had to share one coupon hence fertilizer was not enough, as a result they did not harvest bumper and enough yield. The following quotation supports this finding:

> "You cannot talk of development if we have no food to eat. Food is scarce here and people don't have money to buy expensive fertilizer to grow their own food. So government should distribute enough (fertilizer) coupons to everyone – not that two people should share one coupon…"[146]

Some research participants suggested that government should support them with irrigation equipment so that they should not only rely on rain-fed farming.

Community members also prominently associated development to having disposable income. In this context, having small businesses was therefore a sign of development and

[145] Government official, IDI
[146] FGD participant, Sinyala Group village

participants wished that governments should support them with capital to start small businesses such as livestock farming cooperatives.

In this development discourse, community members mentioned community forest resources in as far as they provide energy to prepare food, cure tobacco (for those who grow this cash crop), poles for constructing buildings such as houses and animal stalls, selling for disposable income, traditional medicines, and wild food such as mushrooms, *maye* and *mato* fruits. Thus, forest was not an end in itself, but just a means to ends, such as good nutrition, decent houses, and disposable income.

When ranking development indicators therefore, community forest did not feature in the top five indicators. Analysis shows that community forest was just a means for survival and that given other alternatives such as small businesses and employment, community members would rather work for disposable income and buy forest resources elsewhere (e.g. Dzalanyama government forest reserve) than work in a community forest. As can be appreciated in section 4.6.1 below, this perception had an adverse impact on people's volunteerism in the community based forest management scheme especially that Sinyala community had to wait for five years before the community forest would be assessed for possible harvesting. This heightened the need for incentives if people were to participate in Sinyala community forest conservation.

Amongst traditional leaders however, much as they subscribed to community forest resources as means to ends, they also considered community forest as an end in itself to the extent that it preserves traditional medicines and fruits. In this context, traditional leaders equated community forest conservation to cultural preservation.

Other development indicators that were mentioned by community members were free schools, free clinics and hospitals, and good road infrastructure for easy communication.

> "We lack a government free hospital here. At the moment we only have Malingunde Mission hospital where we pay for the services"[147]

[147] FGD participant, Sinyala Joshua village

The above findings show a marked difference in development perception and goals between meso-level actors and community members, with the former aiming more at abstract political rights while the latter emphasizing concrete social and economic rights. The implication of this discrepancy is discussed in chapter 5. Suffice it to say however that the findings on community forest management presented below strikingly reflect in many instances the above different development paradigmatic perceptions.

4.4 COMMUNITY FOREST RESOURCE MANAGEMENT REGIMES IN SINYALA

Analysis of the interviews conducted and relevant documents show that the history of community forest management in Sinyala can analytically be deciphered in three main regimes:

1. Open Access Forest Resource Management (1922 – 1998)

From the time the Chewa settled at Sinyala in 1922 having emigrated from Mozambique in search of fertile soil and water, there has been open access to the use of Sinyala forest resources. Sinyala residents and other people from surrounding areas such as Mayenje, Kasumbu, Mkowa, Mbuna, Poko, and Kawe have been using the forest with little to no restriction[148]. Despite having finite forest resource units, this property right regime was presumably sustainable because there were enough, if not many, trees and very few appropriators.

> "Since time immemorial, anyone could just go in the forest and cut down trees depending on his needs. There was no problem because at that time there were very few people and the trees could not be easily depleted. The (village) chief did not control the use of the forest that much - except for graveyard trees"[149]

Having few appropriators and too many forest resources in a way created a perceived infinity of Sinyala forest resource units and therefore provided little to no incentive for

[148] IDIs with Sinyala traditional leaders and forest officials; Y.B. Mtsitsi (2007) Op. Cit.
[149] Sinyala traditional leader, IDI

sustainable management of the resource units by the appropriators. The only attractive common property resource management system with minimal transaction cost was therefore open access.

2. Endogenous Community (Self-organized) Forest Resource Management (1998 – 2002/3)

From around 1980s to 1998, there was rapid deforestation in Sinyala forest. In an open access system, people cut down trees to use for firewood, for curing tobacco, and poles for houses and tobacco shades. The rapid deforestation resulted in shortage of timber, firewood, soil erosion, and scarcity of medicinal plants[150]. This had an adverse impact on people's livelihood as 99% of Sinyala residents relied on forest for energy[151]. The imminent depletion of the forest resources and the impact this had on their livelihood gave community members incentive for endogenous collective action to manage the resources in a sustainable way.

In 1998 therefore, the Group Village Headman in Sinyala Group village (and later together with the Village Headman for Sinyala Joshua) appointed a group of young men to patrol Sinyala forest against encroachers from outside Sinyala villages, and to regulate the use of the resources among Sinyala users. People from outside Sinyala were therefore denied access to the forest while those from Sinyala were allowed limited and reasonable amount of trees per given time. Access criteria for Sinyala appropriators largely depended on the discretion of the forest patrol committee in consultation with the village headmen[152]. This step in defining Sinyala forest boundaries and setting up exclusionary rules to non-members effectively made Sinyala forest a CPR[153].

Much as the forest patrol committee was not elected by Sinyala community members, it enjoyed a wide legitimacy among the community members as the system was coordinated by the village headmen – an enduring legitimate cultural institution.

[150] See B.Y. Mtsitsi (2007) Op. Cit.
[151] IDI with forest official
[152] IDI with traditional leaders
[153] Well-defined boundaries of an excludable resource that are known to appropriating community is one prerequisite for a CPR (see Elinor Ostrom, 2000, Op. Cit.)

Research participants also gave an indication that this system was effective in curbing over-exploitation of forest resources hence achieving prudent use of the forest resources.

> "Before the current forest committee (VNRMC), the chief would mobilize youths from Sinyala to patrol the village forest, and this prevented other villagers from cutting down our trees. Some youths especially from Sinyala Joshua were also caught by the patrol team when they were cutting down trees without authorization"[154]

This finding shows that the imminent depletion of trees upon which the livelihoods of Sinyala community members rested prompted community cooperation among the members to manage the forest in a sustainable manner. This confirms Sara Gillinson's conclusion that the likelihood of community cooperation in common property resource management is high when the livelihood of the community members is at stake[155].

It is interesting to note however that the planning and implementation of government initiated community-based forest management within the decentralized forest management in Sinyala from 2002 failed to factor in the community self-organization regime that emerged between 1998 and 2002. For example, one forest official had this to say:

> "From the 1980s to 2002/3, there was open access to the forest in Sinyala area and deforestation was high due to people from Sinyala and surrounding areas fetching fire wood, ropes and poles for constructing different structures such as thatching houses"[156]

The open access regime referred to in the above quotation includes the period 1998 to 2003 in which evidence analysed above shows that Sinyala community initiated collective self-management of Sinyala forest that attempted to exclude non-members and regulate the use of Sinyala forest as a community property. The Sinyala Participatory

[154] FGD participant, Sinyala Group
[155] Sara Gillinson (2004) Op. Cit.
[156] Forest official, IDI

Forest Management Plan, a document articulating the community based forest management for Sinyala that was facilitated by a forest official, also makes no reference to the Sinyala self-organization initiative. The official Sinyala development discourse therefore conceptually and institutionally constructed Sinyala forest resource management as an open access system that needed the participatory community based forest management to avoid the tragedy of the commons. The implications of this official oversight of endogenous institutions of forest management are discussed in some detail in chapter 5.

3. Exogenous Community-based Forest Resource Management (2002/3 to date)

Legally, before 1996, all forests on customary (village) or public land belonged to government, specifically the Department of Forest. The implication was that people were supposed to seek permission from the Forest Department before they use the trees. This, according to forest officials interviewed, led to (illegal) deforestation especially in village forest areas because communities had no ownership of forests hence did not take responsibility. One forest official had this to say about Sinyala before 1996:

> "The problem with Sinyala forest was ownership right. Before 1996, essentially all forest was overseen by government. Community forest was under government though at village level the village headman was a custodian. The people therefore did not take responsibility to manage the forests in a sustainable way. But after 2003 when we introduced community based forest management, they took ownership and are responsible in managing the forest."[157]

Empirical evidence in Sinyala however shows that, despite the existence of laws prior to 1996 that gave ownership rights to the Department of Forest, community members claimed ownership of Sinyala forest. Analysis shows that this was the case because of community members' ignorance of the law in the context of lack of enforceability of the forest laws in Sinyala due to little or no presence of relevant State arms such as the forest

[157] Forest official, IDI

department and the police. In this context, the collective action of Sinyala in the forest management was determined by the *de facto* rather than the *de jure* ownership rights. The official assumption therefore, that Sinyala forest was being depleted due to lack of ownership and responsibility, was flawed. As explained above, the main factor behind Sinyala deforestation before 1998 was the perceived infinity of forest resource units. Later, Sinyala community, through village headmen, appointed forest patrol committee to exclude non-members and regulate the use of the forest after realizing the imminent depletion of the forest.

After the Malawi government Decentralization and Forestry Policies in 1996, and the subsequent Community Based Forest Management paradigm articulated in the Supplement to the National Forest policy produced in 2003, Malawi government embarked on a participatory forest management under the government decentralization institutional framework. Malawi government mainly through the Department of Forestry set out to reorient forestry front line staff and community members in all areas in Malawi, where there was a village forest, about this new paradigm. The rationale for the introduction of community based forest management was

> "…to solve two fundamental problems. The first was the failure of the previous policing style of forest management to adequately protect the indigenous forests or encourage afforestation. The second was the public perception of naturally growing trees and forests as ownerless, or belonging to no-one… the solution to both of these problems was found in a single course of action: to transfer the ownership of forests to those communities who agreed to protect them and use them wisely"[158]

As can be appreciated in this section (4.4) above, much as the ownership rationale might be applicable in other instances, it does not neatly fit the Sinyala case because Sinyala community members have been claiming ownership of Sinyala forest since they settled at Sinyala in 1922.

[158] Government of Malawi (2003) Op. Cit. p. 1

Following the new Decentralization and Forestry policies therefore, the Forestry officials consulted Sinyala village headmen and informed them of the advantages of forest conservation and the need to transfer government ownership of Sinyala forest to Sinyala community on condition that the community adopts the government community based forest management plan[159]. The government officials advised the village headmen to disband the forest patrol group appointed by the village headmen and replace it with VNRMC. The rationale was that the VNRMC would be democratically elected by community members and would be composed of literate people who would easily absorb modern ways of forest conservation as per forest officials' technical advice. The patrol group was said to be illiterate and not democratically elected (appointed by the Group Village Headman)[160]. Analysis of in-depth interviews with traditional leaders shows that they came to terms with this official 'condition' or 'directive' because government (forest) officials are experts and their advice is rarely ignored.

Interviews with VDC members however show dissatisfaction with the way the VNRMC was introduced. They indicated that VNRMC was set up without consulting the VDC – a committee that co-ordinates and oversees development activities at village level. The VDC was only informed at a later stage when the Area Development Committee (ADC) members sensitized them of the need for VNRMC. This reveals some top-down approach to community development where development plans that directly affect communities are hatched at higher levels of development institutions and are imposed on the communities without proper consultation. This development set a bad precedent as the Sinyala VNRMC now operates as an independent committee and its activities are not properly synergized within the broader development plan of Sinyala as will be appreciated below in section 4.5.2 when we analyse the activities of the VNRMC and the interface between the VNRMC and the VDC.

In 2002/3 therefore, with the involvement of VNRMC and Sinyala community members, and using such participatory tools as transect walk, stakeholder analysis and problem tree analysis, the forest technical assistant (FTA) facilitated a forest management plan for

[159] IDIs with traditional leaders, forest officials, VNRMC members, and FGDs with community members
[160] IDI with traditional leaders

Sinyala. The Participatory Forest Management Plan contains the general profile of Sinyala, stakeholder analysis of forest users outlining their roles and responsibilities, forest resource assessment (types of trees available and their usefulness), plan of action and timelines, rules regulating management of the forest, the VNRMC constitution, and endorsement from traditional leaders, forest official and VNRMC representatives. The plan was informed by forest resource assessment that revealed that Sinyala forest needs to be conserved for 5 years (from 2003 to 2008) before community members could start using it[161].

The forest conservation would among other things involve reafforestation, pruning existing trees, making fire-breaks and the VNRMC patrolling the forest to prevent encroachment. Community participation in the conservation is voluntary but the VNRMC maintains a register of those who participate. The dynamics and implications of this voluntary participation are expounded below in the section on volunteerism and incentives, and in chapter 5.

The Forest Department, especially through the FTA, provides technical support in conserving Sinyala forest in such areas as afforestation methods, pruning and making firebreaks. These conservation techniques were missing in the endogenous community (self-organized) forest resource management (1998-2002). The introduction of these methods therefore underpins the importance of development change agents in providing technical support that may be lacking at community level as articulated by such scholars as Kingsbury[162].

The Sinyala Participatory Plan also represents the official transfer of ownership of Sinyala forest from Malawi government to Sinyala community, and this is duly endorsed by the District Commissioner (DC), Director of Forestry, traditional leaders and VNRMC chairperson[163]. The Participatory Plan sets rules excluding other communities from using the forest and puts forth penalties in cases of violation[164]. These rules are in accordance

[161] See B. Y. Mtsitsi (2007) Op. Cit.
[162] Damien Kingsbury (2004) Op. Cit.
[163] B. Y. Mtsitsi (2007) Op. Cit.
[164] Ibid, pp. 19-20

with the Forest Policy and Act and are enforceable by the Police and the DC. This synergy among community and State institutions in community forest management signifies a deliberate concerted institutional co-management of community forest under the decentralized forest management. This has the potential of making community conservation effective because, since meso-level institutions have jurisdiction over and above communities, they can easily co-ordinate and enforce rules across communities. For example, there was a situation where members of another community encroached on Sinyala forest. Since Sinyala traditional leaders cannot impose their rules in another community, the fact that their forest conservation rules and sanctions are recognised by such meso-level institutions as the District Assembly and the Police made it possible for the encroachers to be prosecuted.

The overall aim of the Participatory Management Plan is therefore

> "…to fully empower the communities of Sinyala so that they are able to make their own informed and constructive decisions and take responsibilities and promote collective action for the protection, management and sustainable utilization of the forestry resources…"[165]

However, much as the participatory process used the Sinyala community language (Chichewa), the plan was compiled in English language despite the fact that most people in Sinyala cannot understand English[166]. The facilitator of the process and forest officials could not give reasons why the plan was in English but indicated that the plan would be translated to Chichewa. Interviews with VNRMC and community members revealed that the community did not have the compiled plan let alone any reference record of the plan. This is intriguing given that the process that started in 2002/3, and most of whose beneficiaries do not understand English, could be in English and that the communities, who are the intended beneficiaries, would not have any reference materials. The researcher sourced a copy of the plan from the Department of Forest offices, and the

[165] Ibid, p. 6
[166] Findings with research participants in Sinyala

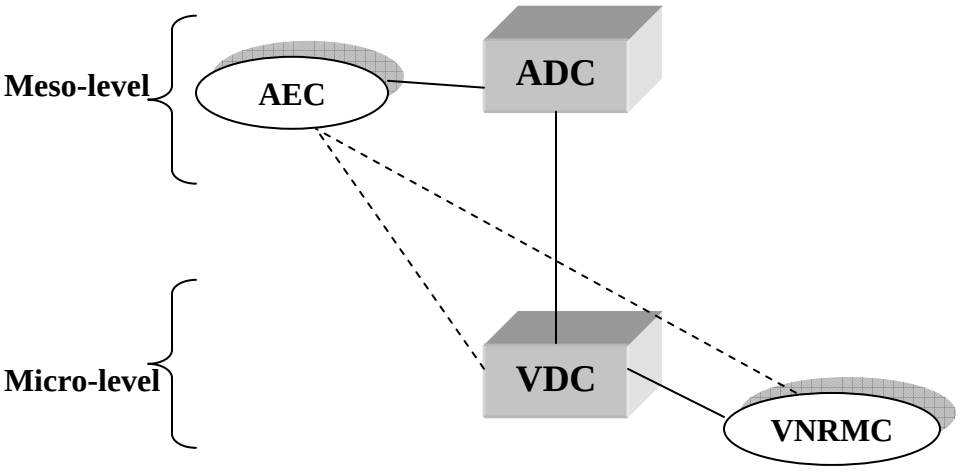
forest officials also indicated that the DC had a copy. The implications of this finding are discussed in some depth in the following chapter.

4.5 COMMUNITY BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

Analysis of the findings shows that the following institutional structures are crucial in the management of forest resources at Sinyala community: traditional village headmen, VNRMC and VDC at micro-level; and AEC and ADC at Meso-level[167]. The ANRMC, much as it is provided for in the formal institutional framework, is non-existent in the management of Sinyala forest. This was attributed to the fact that community based forest management is just in its infancy and more structures would be put in place in due course[168]. Our discussion will therefore focus on traditional leadership, VNRMC, VDC, AEC and ADC, with selected references to the District Assembly level where appropriate.

The following diagram illustrates our area of concentration.

Figure 4: Forest Resource Management Institutional Framework in Sinyala



[167] Refer to figure 3 regarding the levels.
[168] IDI with forest officials

4.5.1 Traditional Authorities

According to the local government structure under the 1996 Decentralization Policy, the 1996 Forest Policy, and the 2003 Community Based Forest Management policy, all traditional leaders at all levels of governance are supposed to be non-voting *ex-officio* members. Thus, TAs at District Assembly level, TAs and Group Village Headmen at ADC level, and Group Village Headmen and Village Headmen at VDC level, are only allowed to play an advisory role by virtue of their traditional leadership and not to make decisions[169]. In figure 4 above, the institution of traditional leaders is not shown as it is attached to all main development institutional structures at all levels.

In Sinyala, the Group Village Headman Sinyala and the Village Headman Sinyala Joshua are both non-voting *ex-officio* members of Sinyala VNRMC and Sinyala VDC. The Group Village Headman is also an *ex-officio* member of the ADC. However, findings show that traditional leaders especially at VDC level (and VNRMC as a sub-committee of VDC), play roles beyond advisory role to, oftentimes, include assent, veto and even overruling powers regarding VDC and VNRMC decisions. One forest official had this to say regarding traditional leaders' powers at village level:

> "In reality, most powers lie with the (traditional) chief, he can overrule VNRMC decisions sometimes since he is the custodian of all ownership. VNRMC is sort of the chief's delegation in management of forest resource"[170]

Research results show that VNRMC, VDC and community members acknowledge and in most cases accept this *de facto* powers and influence of traditional leaders thereby making them legitimate. The implication of this reality is discussed further in the following chapter.

[169] See for instance, Asiyati Chiweza in N. Patel and L. Svasand (Eds) (2007), Op. Cit.; Government of Malawi (2003) Op. Cit.
[170] Forest official, IDI

4.5.2 The VNRMC

Structurally, the VNRMC is a sub-committee of VDC[171]. As indicated elsewhere in this paper, it was set up to coordinate and oversee Sinyala forest management under the community based forest management system.

Elections

The Sinyala VNRMC was elected by community members from Sinyala Group and Sinyala Joshua in 2003 in order to replace the Sinyala forest patrol group appointed by the Group Village Headman. This was done on the advice of the forest officials to adopt community based forest management. One VNRMC was elected to represent the two villages. This was because the two villages share one forest area (and are historically related as explained in the profile of Sinyala in section 4.2 above). Literacy of potential VNRMC members was one of the criteria for the election. Thus, the VNRMC constitutes democratically elected literate representatives of Sinyala villages to manage the Sinyala forest. Being a committee representing two villages that use the same resources, the VNRMC provide an ideal forum for facilitating cooperation among the two villages.

Activities

The VNRMC basically co-ordinates and oversees all activities at Sinyala forest such as planting seedlings, making firebreaks, pruning trees, coordinating any forest assessment in liaison with the Forest Technical Assistant, patrolling the forest area, and referring any violation of the community forest rules to the village headman, the police or the DC.

To keep truck of volunteers who work at the forest, the VNRMC keeps a register. This they said would help when sharing forest trees or the proceeds from selling the forest trees once the Forest Technical Assistant advises that the trees are ready for harvesting[172]. The register also helps to allocate incentives to work in the forest, such as fertilizer, provided by external organizations that have an interest in forest conservation.

[171] See figures 3 and 4 on pages 54 and 69
[172] IDI with VNRMC member

The Forest Department organizes periodic trainings for the VNRMC members e.g. making firebreaks. The idea is that the VNRMC members should teach community members when they are back from such trainings.

Meetings and Decision making

The VNRMC meets on average twice a month where they discuss relevant issues on Sinyala forest management. As *ex-officio* members of VNRMC, the village headmen are supposed to attend these meetings but often attend at their discretion (depending on their workload).

The VNRMC often consults especially the Group Village Headman on most crucial decisions. As discussed above, in reality, the Group Village Headman can veto VNRMC decisions and is essentially the one who should assent to most decisions.

Evaluating the activities of Sinyala VNRMC, community members from Sinyala Group expressed satisfaction with the committee and indicated that they are updated on its activities and get trained in modern ways of forest conservation by the committee members. On the other hand, community members from Sinyala Joshua expressed dissatisfaction with VNRMC. They indicated that they are not consulted on most decisions and don't get any training from committee members. One Sinyala Joshua participant had this to say:

> "the committee don't consult us and most of us don't know what goes on in the committee and any plans regarding Sinyala forest. We are just told what to do – 'tomorrow let's go and work at the forest'. We want them to consult us and also teach us what they learn at the forest office (department)"[173]

The discrepancy between Sinyala Group and Sinyala Joshua's evaluation of VNRMC's role signify deep rooted animosity between the two villages that dates back to their leadership squabbles that led to the split of Sinyala in 1994[174]. This raises co-

[173] Sinyala Joshua research participant, FGD.
[174] See section 4.2 on Sinyala profile above.

management conflict between the two villages to the extent that reluctance of most Sinyala Joshua community members to participate is attributed to this feeling of being sidelined. Much as both villages are represented in the VNRMC, analysis of positions distribution also shows that key positions are held by Sinyala Group representatives as the table below shows:

Table 2: Distribution of positions in Sinyala VNRMC

Sinyala Group	**Sinyala Joshua**
Chairman	Vice Chairman
Secretary	Vice Secretary
	Treasurer
Committee members almost equally distributed	

If we factor in the fact that Group Village headman Sinyala, who is senior to Village Headman Sinyala Joshua, holds the *de facto* assent and veto powers within the VNRMC, and given past record of the Group Village Headman's favouritism in arbitrating disputes[175], a huge potential for Sinyala Joshua being sidelined becomes evident.

4.5.3 The VDC

The Village Development Committee (VDC) is the main committee at village level to coordinate and oversee all community development initiatives and activities. In this context, the VNRMC is a sub-committee of the VDC[176].

The Sinyala VDC coordinates and oversees development activities in 11 villages headed by the Group Village Headman Sinyala.

Elections

Sinyala VDC, analyzed at the time of the fieldwork, was elected in 2005. The VDC chairperson reported that the VDC was elected by all the 11 villages. Each village met and chose representatives who later competed for VDC positions at a meeting of the 11

[175] See for instance section 4.6.2 below
[176] See figure 3 on page 54

villages. This process was initiated by the Group Village Headman following the advice from the TA.

Activities

The activities of VDC can be divided in two main categories: coordinating and assisting externally initiated community development activities; and initiating and coordinating internally initiated community development activities.

Externally initiated development normally originates from development NGOs and central government. They include such projects as building of school blocks. The VDC then help to mobilize the community to assist in the implementation of such projects through, for example, moulding bricks. One VDC official had this to say about the role of VDC in such cases:

> "When development agents such as NGOs want to initiate some development in our area such as schools, they consult us (VDC) to oversee the project, for instance, making sure that building materials are kept well and are safe, that the community participates, and there is accountability"[177]

Internally initiated development normally originates through village feedback mechanisms such as village meetings called by village headmen where community members express their needs; and at VDC meetings where committee members articulate community needs based upon their experiences and contacts with the community.

The main problem to realize the community needs in demand driven development projects is funding and technical support. Within the local governance arrangement, the VDC channel their demands and apply for support from the District Development Fund (DDF) located at the District Assembly level. There are also some development organizations and agencies who, through the local government system, get the community proposals and provide funds.

[177] Sinyala VDC official, IDI

> "We (VDC) have so far initiated the construction of a road. The procedure demanded that we should get a proposal form from the TA or MP (member of parliament), fill it and submit to the DC or MALESA (Malawi Enterprise Zone Association)"

Despite this possibility of funding, enough funding remains elusive. The VDC also expressed dissatisfaction with the bureaucracy that delays the proposal development process such as getting the forms, articulating the demands according to the requirements of the forms, submitting the forms and waiting for a response. As a result most community demands such as more bore holes remain a dream.

Meetings and Decision Making

The VDC meet twice a month and sometimes more if there is an on-going project. As with other local government structures, Group Village Headman Sinyala is an *ex-officio* member of Sinyala VDC. Decisions are made by consensus and / or voting depending on the degree of controversy of an issue. The Group Village Headman is said to attend the meetings erratically and is also consulted on most decisions. However, much as he has some influence on some decisions especially the ones that will affect the community members directly such as community mobilization to participate in project implementation, his influence is not as strong as at VNRMC which oversees only two villages and hence is closer to the community members.

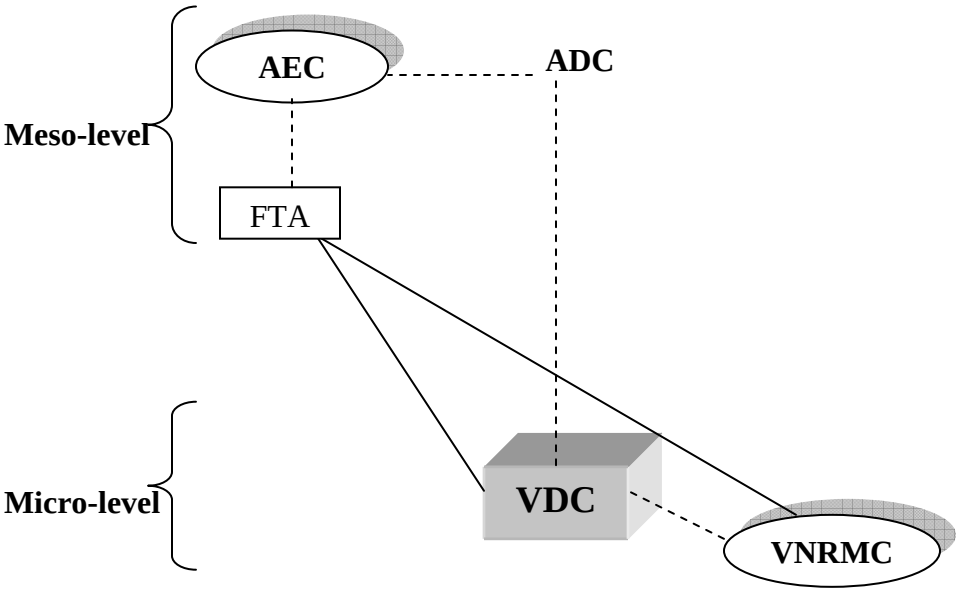
4.5.4 The ADC and AEC

The ADC and the AEC are treated at the same time in this section, not only because the AEC is a technical arm of the ADC, but because findings show that in Sinyala, the ADC is not active, and that it is the AEC members who assist the micro-level institutions directly, often representing their parent ministries. The research results show that the ADC is practically defunct. The AEC also does not exist as a coherent technical support and development coordinating sub-committee, but as a loose collection of independent government front line officers who represent their parent government ministries and interact with communities directly in their areas of specialty as part of their routine job.

These government front line officers include Health Surveillance Assistants, Agricultural Extension Workers and Forest technical Assistants (FTAs).

Forest officials who are supposed to be AEC members had little to say about the ADC and the AEC as coherent development coordinating bodies. They indicated that there is little link between ADC and AEC on the one hand, and VDC and VNRMC on the other. Given this finding, we reconstruct figure 4 to reflect a true institutional (loose) link on the ground.

Figure 5: Empirical Sinyala Forest Resource Management Institutional Framework



As figure 5 above shows, such government officers as the FTA work directly with the VDC and VNRMC (shown by solid lines) and there is a loose connection among the government experts, the AEC and the ADC (shown by dotted lines between the FTA and AEC, and between AEC and ADC). The block at ADC level has been removed to show the inactiveness of the ADC. The dotted lines between the ADC and the VDC, and between the VDC and the VNRMC show the loose communication among these institutions as per the findings. The implications of this reality are discussed in chapter 5.

4.6 CHALLENGES TO SINYALA COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT

The findings presented so far show that Sinyala community forest management encounters a lot of challenges. This section only presents the cross-cutting challenges. The challenges are articulated in three main categories namely: low spirit of volunteerism among community members, encroachment especially from surrounding villages, and lack of equipment for conserving the forest.

4.6.1 Low Spirit of Volunteerism and Need for Incentives

Research participants, from forest officials, traditional leaders to community members, prominently cited low spirit of volunteerism as one challenge facing the management of Sinyala forest. Some people do not render their services to conserve the forest such as planting seedlings and pruning. Of those who do, many do so erratically.

> "most people here are very reluctant to volunteer to work at the forest"[178]

And a forest official best articulates the reason for the low volunteerism:

> "Not everyone participate in say taking care of seedlings - like building fences around the seedlings. People always need incentives. I think this is because they don't have patience as forest conservation takes a lot of time say 5 years for the community to see the benefits."[179]

Interviews showed that since 2003, Sinyala forest conservation programme has led to shortage of firewood and income from wood, timber and charcoal sales, among community members. This is because the Forest Technical Assistant advised that the community should wait for 5 years before they can assess whether the forest is ready for harvesting. As a result, most people resorted to alternative sources of wood energy such as buying and/or stealing trees from Dzalanyama and Katete government forest reserves. Some people use natural or planted trees from their gardens or other areas that do not fall

[178] Traditional leader, Sinyala, IDI
[179] Forest official, Sinyala, IDI

under the conserved Sinyala community forest. These alternatives in turn act as disincentives for volunteering to work in a forest whose benefits will only be realised at least after 5 years.

To solve this problem, the VNRMC and the Forest Technical Assistant decided to allow those who volunteer to work at the forest to get pruned branches of trees and wood from cleared fire-breaks to use as firewood or sell for income. Much as this is not enough to cater for shortage of firewood, it gives incentives to most people who can not afford to buy firewood or don't have enough trees of their own to volunteer in conserving Sinyala forest.

Research also shows that those who do not volunteer face the feeling of shame and some social punishments such as ostracism. Such cultural incentives have also been responsible for most people opting to volunteer at least once in a while.

External organizations and institutions with an interest in natural resource conservation have also taken several initiatives to encourage community members to participate in Sinyala forest conservation. For example, the District Assembly pledged and distributed two bags of fertilizer to each household that participated in forest conservation. Farm Income Diversification Programme (FIDP), a programme under the Ministry of Agriculture, also donated bee hives for bee keeping as an incentive to those who participate in the forest conservation[180].

These incentives have resulted in increase in number of volunteers who work at the forest, at least during the time the incentives are administered. One traditional leader gave this testimony:

> "…one organization came here and offered fertilizer and seeds to people who volunteered to work at the forest. About 113 (out of 175) families volunteered – up from (about) 60 families who had been working before the pledge"[181]

[180] Ibid; IDI with traditional leaders; IDI with VNRMC member
[181] Traditional leader, Sinyala, IDI

However, these incentives also raise the problem of free-riding. Some people who do not work at the forest want to benefit from most of these incentives. The free-riding spirit gave rise to a pandemonium at one instance during distribution of the incentives to the extent that the police was called to contain the situation[182]. The VNRMC therefore maintains a register of those who work at the forest and they use this to determine beneficiaries of pruned tree branches, honey sales proceeds (from bee keeping in the forest), and incentives from external organizations. The VNRMC also indicated that the beneficiaries of the forest resources after harvesting will also be determined by the register[183].

4.6.2 Encroachment

There was reported encroachment at the forest by some members of surrounding villages and from Sinyala community. The VNRMC therefore patrols the forest to minimize this tendency. Once caught, the rules set up by the Sinyala community that were also circulated to surrounding villages and are endorsed by the police and the DC are invoked[184].

There are however reported incidences of favouritism when the encroachers are from Sinyala community and when the Group Village Headman is the arbiter. It was reported that offenders from Sinyala Joshua village have received stiff punishment while those from Sinyala Group have gone scot-free. Members of Sinyala Joshua and forest officials interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with this favouritism. As presented elsewhere in this paper, this unfair treatment dates back to leadership and forest ownership squabbles between Sinyala Group and Sinyala Joshua villages the co-management implications of which are discussed in chapter 5.

4.6.3 Lack of Equipment

Traditional leaders and community members interviewed also reported lack of proper equipment as a challenge to forest conservation. They indicated that they lack such

[182] IDI with traditional leader
[183] IDI with VNRMC member
[184] See B.Y. Mtsitsi (2007) Op. Cit. pp. 19-20

equipment as slashers and fire extinguishers. As a solution, most people use their household equipment such as hoes to work at the forest but indicated they needed more and appropriate equipment.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted the dynamics that play out in Sinyala community as the community based forest management under the decentralized governance system is being implemented. Key to the findings is the persistent compatibility and complimentarily wrestling between meso-level and micro-level institutions; and between indigenous (traditional) and exogenous (government-initiated) institutions. The following chapter discusses these findings by isolating some themes that have an implication on our depth understanding of these dynamics and enable us to recommend possible optimal institutional interface.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS: IMPLICATIONS OF MICRO- AND MESO-LAYERS GOVERNANCE INTERFACE IN SINYALA COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings presented in chapter 4. To assess and draw lessons from the findings presented in chapter 4, concepts, theories and general practice of collective action and local governance discussed in chapters 2 and 3 are used as yardsticks to measure the empirical evidence in chapter 4. At the same time, the empirical evidence provides insights regarding the applicability of the theoretical perspective[185]. The analysis also draws insights from comparing the evidence as it unfolds before and after the introduction of formal community based forest management within the decentralized framework.

The chapter shows striking implications of the micro- and meso-level institutional interface in community forest management in particular, and community development in general. In summary, this chapter argues that the introduction of community based forest management by the Malawian government in Sinyala did not engage sufficiently with the communities involved and did not take adequate account of long standing social, cultural and historical factors peculiar to Sinyala communities. This sparked a state of institutional and behavioural disequilibrium given the enduring indigenous community institutions and community members' development expectations. There is a mismatch between the rationale for and subsequent institution of community based forest management on the one hand, and indigenous institutions and people's expectations on the other.

[185] See analysing case studies in J. Chima 'What's the Utility of Case Study Method for Social Science Research? A Response to critiques from the quantitative/statistical perspective.' *Paper presented to the Annual Congress of the American Political Science Association,* 2005

Analyzing this from the perspective of a forest resource management system in transition, whose benefits are yet to be realized by community members, there are however prospects for an eventual equilibrium especially when the influence of indigenous institutions is acknowledged, community development expectations are taken into consideration and embedded in the community based forest management, and when meso- and micro-level institutional coordination is improved.

5.1 SELF-ORGANIZATION STINT IN SINYALA COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT (1998-2002)

The period from 1998 to 2002 stands out as significant in the history of Sinyala community forest management. This is because, after a long period of open access to Sinyala forest, and the community realization of the imminent depletion of forest resources upon which their livelihood depended, the community self-mobilized to manage the forest in a sustainable way. The forest patrol group that was formed commanded a reasonable level of legitimacy and managed to prevent further depletion of the forest. This type of self-organization that happened in the context of significant autonomy from external influence is what has been highlighted by such CPR scholars as Elinor Ostrom as an effective form of common property resource management as it is spontaneous and legitimate[186]. The Sinyala experience is also consistent with Sarah Gillinson's findings that where the livelihood of resource users is perceived to depend on the resources, chances of the user community self-organizing to manage the resources are high[187].

This finding implies that communities' propensity to adopt sustainable self-management of CPRs is (at least partly) dependent on the perceived negative effect on their livelihoods of not doing so. This presents a perfect opportunity for community development meso-level institutions and development change agents who are experts in specific CPRs, to mobilize community members to adopt sustainable ways of managing CPRs by merely

[186] See for example Elinor Ostrom (2000) Op. Cit. Also see the discussion on Self-Organization in chapter 2.
[187] Sara Gillinson (2004) Op. Cit.

sparking debate in communities on the livelihood risks of unsustainable use of CPRs. This approach is likely to result in spontaneous and legitimate response from the communities as they will have critically engaged with the potential risks and benefits vis-à-vis their livelihoods and would come up with an informed choice regarding the CPR management, either fully home-grown or in consultation with the development change agents. This approach is remarkably different from the top-down approach where experts from meso-level institutions dictate to communities on what to do, instead of sparking debate in the communities regarding the livelihood risks and benefits of specific choices on specific CPRs, and providing space for the communities to engage with that before making legitimate choices.

5.2 CONCEPTUALIZING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: MESO- VS MICRO-LEVELS PERSPECTIVES

One overarching factor that had an implication on the implementation of community based forest management in Sinyala was the marked difference in conceptualization of community development between meso-level development institutions and actors on the one hand, and micro-level development institutions, actors and beneficiaries on the other.

At the meso-level, community development indicators were succinctly articulated as people's freedom to participate in issues affecting their lives. This conceptualization is consistent with contemporary human development discourse such as Amartya Sen's 'development as freedom'[188], and is often used as one of the human development indicators by such international organizations as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

On the other hand, community members and micro-level institutions and actors conceived development to entail the satisfaction of more concrete social and economic rights such as food, water, disposable income, and clinics. This shows that communities and development agents have different (levels of) indicators upon which they plan and evaluate development initiatives. This was manifested by, for instance, the communities

[188] See Amartya Sen (1999) *Development as Freedom,* Oxford, Oxford University Press

largely expressing dissatisfaction with their development status because they did not have enough food, clean water, disposable income, and firewood. On the other hand, meso-level institutions and actors largely expressed satisfaction with community development processes in that structures such as the VNRMC were put in place to facilitate people's participation in issues affecting their lives. What was remaining therefore was to change people's mindset regarding taking ownership of the community forests and taking responsibility over the management of the forests[189].

A critical analysis however reveals that, in poverty stricken areas such as Sinyala, freedom to participate is more of a development strategy or development process indicator than a development outcome indicator. The needs that community members articulated represent the desired outcomes of development that will impact on the community members having long and healthy lives. This subtle distinction between development processes and outcomes in poor communities must be clarified in community development conception, planning and implementation at all levels of development. Development change agents should go beyond being satisfied with participation enabling institutions, and ensure that these institutions work efficiently and effectively to facilitate the satisfaction of people's needs. Thus, in the context of rampant poverty, freedom to participate is not enough as the mark of development success, but the satisfaction of people's concrete and social rights.

5.3 DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE: OFFICIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SINYALA AS AN OPEN ACCESS REGIME

Interviews with government forest officials indicate that the main reason for deforestation and hence the need for the introduction of community based forest management in Sinyala was lack of community member ownership and responsibility over the village forest. This is because the forest belonged to government and most community members considered it 'ownerless'[190].

[189] IDIs with forest officials
[190] See chapter 4

Empirical evidence however shows that Sinyala community members have been perceiving themselves as bona fide ownership right holders of Sinyala forest since they settled at Sinyala in 1922. To them, the main cause of deforestation was initially the perceived infinity of forest resource units that resulted in wasteful use of the forest resources[191]. The official baseline situation analysis of Sinyala to justify the initiation of community based forest management is therefore at best biased and at worst flawed. This is however intelligible in the context that ownership and responsibility were the general standard official reasons used by meso-level institutions and development agents to justify the introduction of community based forest management in Malawi[192]. In the case of Sinyala however, much as strengthening of ownership through institutionalization and enforcement of exclusionary rules vis-à-vis non-members seemed to improve conservation of Sinyala forest, empirical evidence shows that the momentum for sustainable collective forest management was already emerging when people realized the imminent depletion of forest resources and the risks this would have on their livelihoods. That is why in 1998, five years before the introduction of community forest management programme in Sinyala, the community set up a village forest patrol committee. This initiative is consistent with Ostrom's conclusion that CPR users with long-term communal ownership claims and who can communicate amongst themselves, develop their own agreements, establish positions of monitors, and sanctions those who do not conform to their own rules[193].

Research findings further show that the official analysis of forest resource management in Sinyala does not recognize the indigenous initiatives to manage the Sinyala forest between 1998 and 2002. They categorise this period, and indeed any period prior to the introduction of the community based forest management in 2003, as open access era with imminent, if not *fait accompli*, tragedy of the commons. This points to the manner in

[191] See chapter 4
[192] For instance, the preamble to 'Community Based Forest Management – a supplement to the National Forest Policy of Malawi, 1996', states that the Malawi National Forest Policy was aimed at solving the problem of "…the public perception of naturally growing trees and forests as ownerless" (Government of Malawi, 2003, Op. Cit. p. 1); During the interviews with forest officials, they also used the 'ownership' rationale to justify introduction of community based forest management in Sinyala in particular, and in village forest areas in general.
[193] Elinor Ostrom (2000) Op. Cit.

which official government discourse has failed to understand local historical and socio-cultural dynamics. Acknowledgement of the importance of earlier endogenous community-based attempts at forest management would have achieved far better results.

The official Sinyala development analysis and discourse before 2003 therefore constructed, both conceptually and institutionally, Sinyala forest resource management as an open access system that lacked communal ownership and that needed an (external) intervention to introduce community based forest management regime. The pre-determined community based forest resource management paradigm embedded in the Forest Policy and subsequent policy documents, therefore, resulted in selective and biased use of Sinyala empirical situation to justify the paradigm's implementation.

This biased development needs assessment, analysis and discourse by development change agents that is aimed at justifying implementation of pre-determined development concepts and strategies is not uncommon among development academics and practitioners. For instance, James Ferguson shows how the Thaba-Tseka rural development project in Lesotho in the 1980s reflected the pre-conceived development strategies of the World Bank (the project's funder) and the government of Lesotho, and ignored the empirical realities on the ground, hence its failure[194].

Thus, informed by the flawed assumptions and bias towards formally organised or institutionalised systems of management, the Forest Department facilitated the replacement of the indigenous Sinyala patrol group with the literate and democratically elected VNRMC. This is intelligible in the context that modern ways of managing forests

[194] For instance, James Ferguson shows that Lesotho poverty was compounded by low wages, political subjugation by South Africa, denial of political rights, corrupt bureaucratic elites, and structural unemployment due to South Africa influx control measures against potential labourers. He claimed by quoting authorities on Lesotho studies, like Ashton (1952) and Encyclopaedia Britannica (1910) that, impediment to "development" of Lesotho did not lie necessarily in lack of roads and markets, lack of training and education, lack of agricultural inputs, unfamiliarity with a money economy, and lack of credit as the World Bank alleged. He however indicated that this distortion of facts by the World Bank is not to be dismissed as a mistake but should be considered as meaningful in the context of the World Bank development discourse whose notion of development implied a progress towards modern capitalism (See James Ferguson (1990) *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press)

like growing and managing seedlings of different varieties need literate individuals[195]; and that in a democratic dispensation, structures that make decisions affecting people must have the mandate of the targeted people, and one way this can be achieved is through democratic elections. However, the disbandment of the Sinyala patrol group, that emerged through self-organization initiatives, in a way killed the spirit of volunteerism as Sinyala residents started looking up to the government as 'auntie-knows-best'. Participation of Sinyala residents in the introduced community based forest management therefore needed more incentives than ever before[196]. This shows the adverse effect of top-down invitation to bottom-up participation in community development that ignores indigenous institutions and initiatives hence lacks meaningful societal embeddedness, spontaneity and legitimacy[197].

Much as there was a lack of legal community ownership of Sinyala forest and some laxity in the indigenous forest patrol system in Sinyala, a successful introduction of community based forest management needed to engage with realities on the ground, such as the perceived infinity of forest resources and free-riding in the context of existing indigenous institutions. This would result in a different approach to community based forest management in Sinyala where, other than disbanding the indigenous forest patrol system, it could be improved through, for instance, reviewing recruitment criteria of the members of the patrol group, their representation, tenure of office; strengthening forest management rules to curb free-riding, and training the group in new forest management methods such as reafforestation techniques. This approach could build on home-grown solutions hence increasing legitimacy and effective sustainable management of the forest resources. At the time of the fieldwork, evidence showed that the VNRMC lacked meaningful legitimacy among some community members. For example, some community members from Sinyala Joshua village and members of the VDC expressed reservations regarding the institutionalization of the VNRMC and its activities in that they were not consulted and some felt sidelined in its decision making and activities.

[195] The field findings actually show that the forest management trainings that the VNRMC members attended needed some minimum levels of literacy
[196] Lack of volunteerism and need for incentives is discussed in some detail in section 5.7.2.
[197] For discussion on societal embeddedness, spontaneity and legitimacy, see chapter 2; Michael Schatzberg (2001) Op. Cit.; Louise Comfort (1994) Op. Cit.

It should be noted however that this paper is not categorically dismissing 'lack of ownership' as a justification for community based forest management, neither is it undermining the benefits of this facilitated participatory forest management regime. The argument however is that forest management interventions should be context specific. In areas where CPR depletion is due to people recognizing the value of CPR but not owning it, facilitating ownership is crucial. On the other hand, in areas where people already feel they own the CPR but previously they perceived the resource units as infinite and are now attempting some community management of the resources, as is the case with Sinyala, the development change agents should acknowledge this reality and ignite debate in the community on the cost of depletion of the resources and assist the people to strengthen their home-grown institutions.

5.4 DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE: THE PARTICIPATORY PLAN 'HOAX'?

Related to the development discourse discussed above is the participatory forest management plan for Sinyala, facilitated by forest officials. Using participatory methods, the forest officials facilitated the forest management plan and articulated it in a Participatory Management Plan document[198]. The participatory planning process was valuable in that it managed to mobilize community members to participate in the planning of the management of their forest.

However, the manner in which the plans were articulated, recorded, and used, leaves a lot to be desired. The plan whose process commenced in 2003 in the local language, Chichewa, was compiled in 2007 in English language despite the fact that most Sinyala community members cannot understand English. Forest officials interviewed, all of whom understood and spoke the Sinyala local language of Chichewa, which also happens to be the Malawi national language, could not give reasons for compiling the report in English, but indicated, as an after-thought, that the plan would be translated (back) to

[198] See chapter 4 and Appendices

Chichewa[199]. Besides, findings show that neither Sinyala VNRMC nor Sinyala traditional leaders, let alone community members interviewed, had the planning document, much as they remembered going through some planning process. This finding renders the planning process and document less useful because the intended beneficiaries neither have nor can they understand the final plan. They, therefore, continue looking up to the compilers of 'their' plan to 'decode' what is in the plan and tell them what to do. This perpetuates top-down development approach and community dependency on formal institutions and actors to satisfy their community needs. Low volunteerism and dependency among community members, discussed below, can therefore be reasonably attributed to this induced top-down community development approach.

To unpack this top-down community development approach manifesting itself in Sinyala community, the question we should probably ask is: who is the real target audience of the Sinyala forest management plan?

It can reasonably be speculated that development change agents in Sinyala were primarily concerned about impressing and satisfying the development logic of the initiators and funders of the community based forest management project. It is interesting to note that the technical and financial support of the community based forest management process in Sinyala was from the European Union (EU); United States aid agency (USAID) under the project entitled Community Partnership for Sustainable Resource Management in Malawi (COMPASS); and the Department of Forestry. COMPASS and the Department of Forestry are acknowledged on the front cover of the Sinyala Participatory Forest Management Plan document[200]. Analysis of other policy and strategic documents also shows that the EU and USAID provided technical support and funds for the formulation of standards and guidelines for participatory forestry in Malawi with the aim of improving forest governance and rural livelihoods[201]. Satisfying the project funders,

[199] It is interesting to note that copies of Participatory Forest Management Plan from other village forest areas like Sendwe, which the researcher found at the Forestry Office, were also all in English. This shows that the recording process in Sinyala was not a mistake but an institutionalized practice.
[200] See the cover of the Participatory Plan in the appendix
[201] See for instance Government of Malawi, Ministry of Mines, Natural Resources and Environment, Department of Forestry, *Standards and Guidelines for Participatory Forestry in Malawi- Improving Forest Governance – Improving Rural Livelihoods*, Lilongwe, November 2005

initiators, and their development logic is meaningful in that it is crucial to the continued support and hence life of the project. It also essentially constitutes the logic of existence of such departments as the Forestry Department. The Forest Department is itself judged by criteria that require them to support this institutionalized Weberian style of management, rather than to build on existing, usually informal, community systems with higher levels of legitimacy. That is why an English participatory plan was given priority over a Chichewa participatory plan, and was found in meso-level offices and not with micro-level actors who need it most. This vindicates the assertion that contemporary community development is paradoxically, at best, a top-down invitation to bottom-up participation within the agents' development paradigm[202]. Pure community self-organization (with autonomy from meso-level institutions) seems to be a rear phenomenon. Efforts should therefore be made to find a practical synergy between the meso- and micro-levels development concepts and practices.

5.5 INDIGENOUS AND EXOGENOUS INSTITUTIONS INTERFACE: OFFICIAL VS PRACTICAL ROLE OF TRADITIONAL LEADERS

The research findings show a stark difference between the *de jure* and the *de facto* roles of traditional leaders and their institutions in the management of Sinyala village forest area and community development activities in general. Government decentralization policy locates traditional leaders as non-voting *ex-officio* members of all development committees in the decentralized governance. Thus, traditional leaders are supposed to play an advisory role by virtue of their position in society. The elected members of such committees like the VNRMC are the ones who are supposed to make relevant community development decisions[203].

However, evidence shows that traditional leaders are very influential in most decisions made in community institutions to the extent that no decision is made without their knowledge. In some cases, they dictate, assent to, or veto crucial decisions. Evidence

[202] See for instance Jacob Aars (2003) Op. Cit.
[203] See chapter 4

further shows that this traditional authority is quite legitimate at the community level. This is evident in the local language terminology and connotations in reference to the village headman vis-à-vis community development. Community members refer to the village headman as *nkhalapakati* of development, which connotes a development overseer and arbiter having decision making powers. The village headman is also referred to as *mlangizi* which literally means 'advisor'. However, this sort of 'advising', in the local culture, connotes an elderly directing 'children' on what to do, implying that ignoring the chief's advice is tantamount to insubordination and can be socially punished, including losing the chief's favour in most traditional activities in the village. Almost no-one who traditionally is under the chief or the village headman, including VNRMC members, can risk this social punishment. Thus, practically, at least at community level, chiefs are not *ex-officio* members of development institutions; they are *de facto* leaders with assent and veto powers. This finding is consistent with Michael Schatzberg's analysis of African political legitimacy. He states that the moral matrix of legitimate governance in Africa is premised on portrayal of a ruler as a 'fatherchief', who has an obligation, on the one hand, to make decisions that will facilitate the nourishment and nurturing of his 'family', and on the other, to punish his 'children' when they do wrong and pardon them if they truly repent[204].

Further, much as meso-level actors expressed reservation with the unelected traditional leaders' *de facto* decision making powers and authority at community level, community members and micro-level development committee members seemed to accept this traditional authority. It came out quite prominently that community members look up to the village headman first for direction in many issues that affect them collectively and even individually. For instance, one research participant had this to say:

> "When we have a problem, we have nowhere to go for our grievances except to the chief"[205]

[204] See Michael Schatzberg (2001) *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food* Bloomington, Indiana University Press
[205] Research participant, Sinyala Joshua FGD

Thus, much as most of the indigenous institutions are 'non-democratic' in that they are not always elected by a popular vote, they are quite legitimate at the community level. As Michael Schatzberg puts it, legitimacy is the critical first step in the establishment of any accountable regime. He further indicates that democratic constitutions may be codified, elections may be free and fair, but they do not suffice; they are empty shells without the substance of legitimacy[206]. Any community development initiative should therefore be built on these legitimate institutions if it is to be meaningful among community members.

The exercise of decision making powers by the traditional leaders in spite of their knowledge of their non-voting *ex-officio* legal status in local governance, signify a clear resistance of traditional institutions to the dictates of exogenous institutions. The community based forest management approach should have therefore, instead of abruptly replacing the legitimate traditional institutions' decision making power with modern democratically elected institutions, explored ways of 'democratizing' the traditional institutions by improving accountability mechanism. Checks and balances mechanisms within the traditional leadership hierarchy and institution of chief's advisory committees could be explored in this regard. Such an approach could gradually lead to a more negotiated, legitimate, and democratic community development system than is the case now.

5.6 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTIONS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SYNERGY

Research findings reveal that, in most cases, formal community development institutions are working merely as a sum of independent institutions and not as a coherent whole. Going by the principle that a whole is more than the sum of its parts, we can reasonably speculate that the impact of the community development institutional matrix is not reaching its potential. As a result, this section is arguing for a coherent community development policy that will tie all the pieces together to heighten impact on communities.

[206] Michael Schatzberg (2001) Ibid

As can be seen in figure 5 on page 76, much as the VNRMC is supposed to be a sub-committee of VDC in community development, it works almost independent of VDC. For example, the VNRMC members interviewed indicated that the VDC had never invited them to any meeting since the VNRMC was set up in 2003. The VNRMC has also never invited the VDC to their meetings. On the other hand, VDC officials indicated that since 2003, they had invited the VNRMC members to VDC meetings twice, but no-one from VNRMC attended. Given the activeness of VNRMC in community development in Sinyala, and the fact that both committees meet twice a month and are supposed to work closely as one is a sub-committee of the other, the lack of meetings between the two committees signify poor feedback mechanism that may result in lack of synergy in Sinyala community development. This is crucial if we consider the fact that the VDC is the community development overseer and coordinating body at village level and is supposed to synergise all development work. Thus, much as the VNRMC and VDC are said to be effective in their activities[207], the lack of proper consultation and feedback between the two development committees has the potential of resulting in incoherent community development. In this case, we can argue that the institutions are not reaching their potential in coordinating and facilitating community development.

There is a similar disjoint at the meso-level and between the meso-level and the micro-level institutions. Evidence shows that the ADC, which is supposed to be the community development coordinating body and main development committee for ANRMC and AEC sub-committees, is non-functional in Sinyala at least in as far as community forest management is concerned. The ANRMC is non-existent, and members of the AEC work directly with communities as independent front line staff of specific ministries and government departments[208]. For example, the forest technical assistant works directly with the Sinyala VNRMC and reports to the Forestry Department; the health surveillance assistant works directly with the communities and reports to the Health Department; and agricultural extension workers work directly with community farmers and report to Agriculture Department. These supposedly AEC members do not work as coherent members of a technical sub-committee of the ADC as is envisaged in the local

[207] Interviews with VNRMC and VDC members and community members
[208] See figure 5 on page 76

development institutional framework[209]. This has sometimes led to duplication of activities and inefficient use of resources. For instance, the distribution of fertilizer in Sinyala as incentives to community members to participate in Sinyala forest management, that was coordinated by the forest technical assistant, could have also involved agricultural extension workers who could facilitate the effective use of the fertilizer in line with their programmes in the area. This could only happen if this was properly planned and coordinated at the AEC and ADC fora, and later at VDC forum. Thus, the inactiveness of the ADC, that is supposed to coordinate community development, has led to disjointed community development efforts that have a potential of being inefficient at the least.

Thus, some development institutions are inactive and for the ones that are active, they operate independent of each other, hence poorly coordinated and inefficient community development. There is poor consultation and feedback mechanism among institutions both at meso- and micro-level and between the two levels. This might be due to the lack of coordinated and coherent community development policy. At the time of the field work, the Malawi government was in the process of coming up with a community development policy so that development at community level should be coordinated[210]. The ratification and implementation of this policy will go a long way in ensuring coordinated community development.

5.7 BEHAVIORAL IMPLICATIONS IN SINYALA FOREST MANAGEMENT

This section discusses some behavioural implications of the institutional and process dynamics in community forest management in Sinyala. The main areas discussed in this section are co-management of Sinyala forest between the two villages, Sinyala Group and Sinyala Joshua; volunteerism and incentives; and the rising culture of political participation and accountability.

[209] See figure 3 on page 54
[210] See Chinsinga, B and Kayuni, H. 'Community Development in Malawi: A Situation Analysis Report' *Report Submitted to Skills Development and Income Generation Project, Ministry of Women and Child Development* Lilongwe, February 2008

5.7.1 Co-management as a Two-Level Collective Action Game

The fact that Sinyala forest is used and managed by two villages makes the problem of collective action a two-level game. The first level involves each village, with its own internal jurisdiction and institutions, striving to achieve cooperation among the village members to effectively manage the forest. The second level involves the two villages cooperating to effectively manage the forest. In Sinyala, this situation has brought to light some management issues that have their roots in Sinyala historical animosities between the two villages. These issues need to be unpacked if we are to understand co-management in Sinyala forest resources.

At village level, the issue of ownership plays a big role among village members in each village regarding level of involvement in Sinyala forest management. In Sinyala Group village, the village members believe that they are the true ownership right holders of Sinyala forest apparently because it is largely located within their village boundaries. The Sinyala Group villagers claim that they invited the Sinyala Joshua villagers to benefit and participate in conservation of Sinyala forest because they are relatives and because excluding them would encourage them to encroach in the forest. One Sinyala Group research participant had this to say:

> "We (Sinyala Group residents) incorporated them (Sinyala Joshua residents) as forest beneficiaries (and in forest management) because we knew if we excluded them they would sabotage our forest resource management programme. This is from past experience because in 2002 (before the VNRMC was set up) youths from Sinyala Joshua cut down our trees and loaded a lot of trees in pick ups (cars). We caught them"[211]

This spirit of ownership gives incentives to Sinyala Group village members to actively participate in Sinyala forest resource management.

[211] Sinyala Group research participant, FGD

> "People who work hard at the Sinyala forest is us, from Sinyala Group, I think people from Sinyala Joshua undermine us, but you know, what is yours remains yours and you cannot give up (in looking after it)"[212]

On the other hand, the feeling of being secondary owners of Sinyala forest, and that of being sidelined by the Group Village Headman and sometimes the VNRMC made some Sinyala Joshua village members not to be as enthusiastic in managing Sinyala forest as village members from Sinyala Group. Research findings also show that Sinyala Joshua village members were the major culprits of free-riding especially when they want to benefit from some incentives.

Given these micro-level collective action problems, the VNRMC has proved to be an ideal institution with representation from both villages that has managed in most instances to facilitate cooperation in co-managing Sinyala forest. Much as the VNRMC has been criticised for having skewed representation[213], and sometimes favouring Sinyala Group village members in forest management trainings, it represents the best institution so far that mobilize village members from both villages to cooperate in managing Sinyala forest. Stephan Kroll *et al* in their experimental investigation actually showed that it is easier to reach cooperation agreements in representative groups or committees than at individual level in micro-level setting[214]. The VNRMC therefore presents an ideal second level forum where representatives from the two villages, including the influential village headmen, meet, consult and share feedback. Given the manageable number of the representatives[215], it becomes easier to reach consensus and make decisions on how to cooperate in managing Sinyala forest. After such agreements, the representatives go back to their constituencies and, through the influential village headmen, mobilize village members to participate in managing Sinyala forest.

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[212] Sinyala Group research participant, FGD
[213] See table 2
[214] Stephan Kroll *et al* 'The Prisoner's Dilemma as a Two-Level Game: An Experimental Investigation' November 1, 2002, http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/mason/working.papers/PDTLGEI.pdf (website visited on 16 December 2008)
[215] The VNRMC is supposed to have 20 members but at the time of the fieldwork, it had 16 members.

5.7.2 Low Spirit of Volunteerism and Need for Incentives

The research findings show that there is low spirit of volunteerism in the management of Sinyala forest[216]. The dwindling spirit of volunteerism and rising culture of dependency were also identified by Blessings Chinsinga and Happy Kayuni in their situational analysis of community development in Malawi, as issues that need serious consideration when formulating Malawi's community development policy[217].

It can be said in other words that there is no spontaneity in community participation in Sinyala forest management. The theory on community self-organization, legitimacy and spontaneity can be instructive in offering an explanation for this phenomenon[218]. It can be reasonably argued that, because community based forest management is initiated from meso-level institutions, much as it is participatory, it is not endogenous to the micro-level societal cultural history and hence cannot at this stage (5 years after inception) command the necessary legitimacy to effect spontaneous volunteerism among community members. This is compounded by the lack of meaningful engagement with indigenous local institutions as discussed above. With time however, and necessary hybridization of indigenous and exogenous institutions, communities will be socialized to the ethos of community based forest management.

Need for Incentives

In the absence of (enough) spontaneous volunteerism, induced incentives become necessary to facilitate community participation in such community development activities as forest management. In the case of Sinyala forest management, there are two main types of incentives: internal and external incentives.

As presented in chapter 4, internal incentives include the forest management rules and regulations administered by the VNRMC such as the allocation of pruned tree branches

[216] For a comprehensive presentation of findings on this theme, see chapter 4.
[217] Chinsinga, B and Kayuni, H. (2008) Op. Cit. pp.18-19
[218] These concepts are presented in chapter 2 citing works from such scholars as Louise Comfort (1994) Op. Cit.; Francis Heylighen (2008) Op. Cit.; Michael Schatzberg (2001) Op. Cit. and Pierre Englebert (2000) Op. Cit.

to those who participate in maintaining the forest; and the pledge that only those who participate in the forest management will benefit when the forest will be harvested.

Another incentive that is embedded in Sinyala community culture that findings show facilitated most people's participation is the feeling of shame and possible ostracism in the community when one does not participate in communal activities.

The combined effect of the above internal incentives were said to encourage many people to participate in forest management. Analysis shows that these 'home-grown' measures have the potential of providing sustained incentives for community participation more than external incentives that have often been erratic.

It should however be noted that these internal incentives seemed to work better with adults than youths. Research participants from Sinyala Group for instance indicated that most youths from Sinyala Joshua hardly participate in maintaining Sinyala forest but often free-ride through stealing wood from the forest and benefiting from external incentives such as fertilizer[219]. Evidence also suggests that forestry is indisputably crucial to the livelihood of Sinyala residents (and indeed most Malawians) in as far as it provides the main source of energy[220]. However, community forest management was perceived to be a cheaper alternative to accessing (or at least hope to access) this forest energy in the context that most community members did not have reliable (source of) disposable income to buy wood fuel from other sources such as Dzalanyama forest reserve. As indicated in chapter 4, those who could afford to buy wood fuel elsewhere were less likely to participate in Sinyala forest management. That is why, apart from enough food and clean water, having disposable income through such means as small businesses was cited as one of the top development needs in Sinyala[221].

In Sinyala, as presented in chapter 4, external incentives included pledges and distribution of farm inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, and bee hives to those community members who volunteer to work at Sinyala forest. These were donated by such meso-

[219] Interview with Sinyala Group participants, FGD
[220] See chapter 1
[221] See chapter 4

level organizations as the District Assembly, Ministry of Agriculture programmes, Integrated Rural Agriculture Development (IRAD) NGO, and the Lilongwe Water Board. Findings show that these incentives contributed to the increase in the number of people who participated in the management of Sinyala forest[222].

On external incentives, several issues that contributed to the success of the incentives need to be highlighted. The most prominent is the need to synergise incentives with people's priority needs. As can be seen in chapter 4, the priority indicator of development among community members is enough food. The success of farm inputs incentives in Sinyala forest management can therefore be attributed to the fact that the incentives directly contributed to the community's priority need - food security. One community member had this to say:

> "If only there was another organization to give us fertilizer, we would have hope for enough food and *ndiyekuti angatitemere mangolomela*[223] to work at the forest"[224]

Thus, by solving their food concerns, fertilizer became an effective incentive in community participation in Sinyala forest management. The lesson here is that for (external) incentives to be effective, an analysis of community members' needs should be made so that the incentives should satisfy the needs priorities.

It is also interesting to note that external incentives in Sinyala forest management were constrained by the induced overlap between Sinyala community member's needs; the interests, logic and paradigms of the external organizations that made the pledges; and the interest in community forest management. For instance, The Lilongwe Water Board made pledges to Sinyala community because it had interest in the conservation of Lilongwe river and Kamuzu Dam of which Sinyala forest forms a catchment area. The District Assembly and forest officials facilitated the distribution of fertilizer as an

[222] See chapter 4.
[223] This Chichewa metaphor literally means "administering drugs that boost one's energy", and is used to connote any strong incentive. Here it is used to emphasize that fertilizer incentive will boost people's energy to participate in Sinyala forest management.
[224] Research participant, Sinyala Group FGD

incentive to Sinyala forest management because the whole idea of community based forest management was hatched within their institutional realm.

On the other hand, traditional leaders reported that CARE International, one of the leading humanitarian international organizations[225], donated one bore hole in Sinyala area. The Malawi government has also been running a targeted subsidized fertilizer programme. However, much as the borehole and the subsidized fertilizer addressed some of the community's top needs (food security and clean water), they did not necessarily act as (direct) incentives to community member's participation in Sinyala forest management, let alone any Sinyala community development activity. Much as the bore hole and subsidized fertilizer addressed their needs, they were not consciously meant to benefit those who participate in Sinyala forest management and to exclude those who do not, apparently because CARE International's and Malawi government's interests were not forest resource management, at least at the time of the drilling of the borehole and the distribution of the fertilizer. Thus, external initiatives that satisfy people's needs are not enough to act as incentives in community development activities. They only become incentives if the concerned external organization consciously links the 'donation' to a specific community development activity and manipulate the distribution of the 'donation' to act as carrots and sticks among concerned community members.

Analysis of external incentives in Sinyala also shows that they are constrained by the availability of external organizations and institutions that have an interest in forest management and have the resources to use as incentives. Evidence shows that most of the external incentives in Sinyala were once off and were only effective at the time of administration, after which participation diminished and people started asking for more incentives if they were to participate. This indicates that external incentives are not reliable as they are not sustainable and they breed the spirit of dependency among participating communities. External incentives can therefore only be supported as short term measures aimed at igniting the momentum for participation. But much emphasis should be put on home-grown internal incentives as they often result in inculcating the spirit of self-reliance and are legitimate.

[225] See http://www.care.org/ (web visited on 17 December 2008)

5.7.3 Prospects for Community Based Forest Management Consolidation: Emerging Culture of Participation and Accountability

One common theme that is running across most findings, especially when respondents were expressing dissatisfaction with how different institutions were operating, is the growing culture of political participation and demand for accountability among community members. For example, interviews with Sinyala Joshua village members showed that they were not satisfied with the VNRMC's feedback mechanism and demanded that they needed to be consulted and informed by the committee. The VDC officials also indicated they wish they could be consulted on the formation of the VNRMC.

This finding is a manifestation of a maturing participatory culture where people are demanding active participation and consultation in issues affecting their lives, and are demanding accountability from office holders and decision makers. Going by the philosophy of such scholars as Amartya Sen, political participation is one of the constitutive components of development. As indicated in chapter 4, meso-level institutions also conceptualized (community) development as people's participation in issues affecting their lives. At least at development process level therefore, it can be argued that people's demand for participation and accountability is the right direction towards legitimate development. Much as this growing participatory culture cannot confidently be attributed (only) to the democratic institutions set up under the local governance rubric, it holds the promise for the consolidation and legitimacy of these institutions in the near future.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed, and drawn insights from, the Sinyala case using the collective action and local governance theoretical framework. The chapter has shown that the introduction of community based forest management did not adequately engage with local indigenous institutions and that this caused some incompatibilities and discontinuities between the formal institutions and the indigenous local institutions. The

chapter has also shown that most community development institutions and actors are disjointed and this has led to community development that is not properly coordinated and synergized. Given the exogenous nature of community based forest management regime, much as it was participatory, it has also been argued that the need for incentives will remain an issue. However, internal home-grown incentives should be prioritised as they have long-term effects, breed self-reliance and are sustainable. Analysis also shows the emerging culture of political participation and accountability among community members that holds the promise for consolidation of democratic and legitimate institutions in community development.

As a matter of conclusion, the next chapter articulates these insights and lessons and highlight their implication for community collective action and decentralized community development.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE ACTION AND DEVELOPMENT IN A DECENTRALIZED REGIME

This chapter concludes this research paper by drawing insights and presenting them with the aim of highlighting some key implications for community collective action and development in a decentralized set-up.

This paper has shown that the introduction of community based forest management in Sinyala by the Malawi government through the Department of Forest did not adequately take into consideration the historical and socio-cultural institutional and behavioral factors of Sinyala community. For example, the institution of traditional leadership was accorded the status of non-voting *ex-officio* member when in reality traditional leaders legitimately make, assent to, and even veto decisions at community level regarding many community development issues, including the community based forest management. The introduction of the community based forest management system also replaced the indigenous and endogenous forest patrol committee with the exogenous VNRMC.

Much as the process of introducing community based forest management in Sinyala used some participatory methodologies, it was to a large extent implementation of a pre-determined project in line with the logic and paradigm of the meso-level institutions (and by extension, macro-level institutions) of the Malawi government and the project donors. The Malawi government, for instance, justified the introduction of community based forest management in Sinyala (and indeed all VFAs in Malawi) on the basis that community members perceived village forest as 'ownerless'. Transfer of ownership of village forest from Malawi government to Sinyala community and setting up community forest governance institutions within the local governance institutional framework (e.g. VNRMC) was therefore at the heart of community based forest management. Empirical evidence however shows that Sinyala community members have been claiming ownership of the forest since 1922 when they settled at Sinyala, and have attempted to set

up their own indigenous forest governance institutions – which the Malawi government ignored and replaced during the introduction of the community based forest management in 2003.

As a result, the Sinyala community development process, at least in as far as community forestry is concerned, was characterized by incompatibilities and discontinuities between the indigenous community governance institutions and community expectations on the one hand, and the formal micro- and meso-level governance institutions and logic on the other. For example, traditional leaders held the *de facto* assent and veto powers in many community development decisions (including in the VNRMC) despite the fact that the formal local governance institution accorded them a non-voting *ex-officio* status. Evidence also shows that, after the introduction of the community based forest management, Sinyala community members showed less spontaneous self-organization spirit and needed more (external) incentives to participate than before.

This community development institutional and behavioral disequilibrium is compounded by the fact that local governance institutions and development change agents are disjointed in spite of the seemingly coherent local governance institutional matrix. For instance, despite having the ADC as the coordinating forum, government front line staff from different departments operate at community level independent of each other and report directly to their respective departments without any coordination effort at the ADC. This has resulted in poorly coordinated community development, characterized by duplication of efforts and inconsistencies.

Thus, much as the introduction of community based forest management was said to be participatory, it remains starkly exogenous and lacking in legitimacy to the extent that it fails to adequately engage and in some instances replaces local enduring governance institutions. This in turn has resulted in increased need for external incentives to induce community members to participate in community forest management and many other community development activities. However, the external incentives have been erratic owing to the fact that there have been few organizations with enough resources whose interests in Sinyala community overlap with those of Sinyala community members within

the forest resource management realm. In addition, the Community Development and Forest Departments, whose logic of existence and funding partly depends on the sustainability of (Sinyala) community based forest management project, have few resources to sustain the inducements. This leaves home-grown system of punishment and rewards as the only long term credible and sustainable incentive. More importantly, it has been shown that home-grown incentive system in community development increases legitimacy, spontaneity, self-reliance and effectiveness of community development activities. This however does not mean that communities should be cut off from meso- or macro-level policies and agents, but that, community development efforts, be it catalyzed by external agents or purely self-organized, should aim at sparking organic processes by adequately building on existing community institutions and initiatives.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS: IMPROVING COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE ACTION AND DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE DECENTRALIZED FRAMEWORK

Based upon the findings of this research therefore, the following recommendations are made for decentralized local governance to improve collective action and development at community level. These recommendations should be considered as complementary, and not as independent strategies, if they are to have maximum impact:

6.1.1 Engage with and Build on existing Indigenous Institutions

In community development, especially in a decentralized framework where there is need to devolve most decision making powers on community development to local levels while at the same time harmonizing any development process and outcome at micro-level with macro- and meso-level strategic plans, it is imperative that any development initiative, be it catalyzed by external agents or demand driven, should engage with and build on existing indigenous institutions. As this research paper has shown, failure to acknowledge, and sensitively employ traditional (indigenous) institutions can lead to the

failure of decentralization and community development initiatives[226]. For instance, in the Sinyala case, the community based forest management approach should not have (abruptly) replaced traditional leaders' legitimate decision making status with modern democratically elected institutions. Instead, there was a need for a negotiated approach where, for instance, the formal and informal institutions would be allowed to explore ways of 'democratizing' the traditional institutions by improving home-grown accountability mechanisms. Checks and balances within the traditional leadership hierarchy and the institution of chief's advisory committees could be explored in this regard and possibly be supplemented with new democratic institutions.

Similarly, the Sinyala (indigenous) patrol committee would not have been disbanded and replaced with a more literate and democratically elected VNRMC. Instead, there was a need for exploring accountability mechanism of the indigenous committee, the recruitment process and how to build the capacity of the existing committee.

Such a negotiated approach could gradually lead to a more legitimate, democratic and effective community development system than was the case at the time of the field research.

6.1.2 Need for Relevant Internal Incentives

Evidence shows that there is a need for appropriate incentive system to increase participation of community members in such community development initiatives as the Sinyala community based forest management. The need for effective incentive system is high because such community development initiatives are externally influenced and often ignore similar organic initiatives. For incentives to be effective, they need to be synergized with internal community needs. This lesson is drawn from such instances in Sinyala as when farm input distribution acted as an effective incentive to community participation in forest management because the farm input addressed one of the community's top livelihood need – food security.

[226] See also Weitz as cited in Damien Kingsbury (2004) Op. Cit. p.223

The inconsistent external incentives in Sinyala however points to the fact that external incentives cannot reliably sustain community development. This, plus success stories from Sinyala endogenous efforts of managing their forest resources, point to the need for emphasizing on home-grown (endogenous) incentive mechanisms. Thus, once micro-level governance institutions are organically put in place, they need to devise relevant internal punishment and rewards mechanisms to incentivize community member participation. If community development is approached from the perspective of engagement and building on existing indigenous institutions[227], the task of institutionalizing relevant and appropriate incentive mechanism is likely to be easy. This is because the emerging governance structure can adapt such indigenous lock-in mechanisms as the spirit of reciprocity (embedded in the philosophy of *Umunthu* and manifested in such systems as *Thangata*[228]), the feeling of shame when one is not involved in communal obligations, ostracism, and traditional authority fines for those who break community rules.

In this context, external incentives can only be promoted as short term measures aimed at igniting the momentum for participation. Much emphasis should be put on home-grown endogenous incentives as they are often legitimate and can easily result in spontaneous self-organization and self-reliance.

6.1.3 Build and Strengthen Cross-Community Institutions Where CPRs Overlap At Least Two Communities

The Sinyala experience shows the problems that can arise when the CPR is shared by two or more communities. It further shows that this necessitates cross-community and/or meso-level institutions. In spite of all cooperation problems, many stemming from past animosities between the two Sinyala villages, the VNRMC, as a governance institution with representation from both villages, represent the best co-management forum so far where cooperation in micro-level development in such scenarios can be enhanced. As

[227] See section 6.1.1

[228] The philosophy of *Umunthu* or *Ubuntu* hinges on the belief that 'I am because we are' hence gives the feeling of obligation towards others and the community (see for instance Mogobe Ramose (1999) *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu*, Harare, Mond Books); For a brief explanation of the *Thangata* system, see section 1.1.2.

discussed in this paper, it is easier to reach cooperation agreements at a cross-community or meso-level forum with legitimate and democratic representation from micro-level communities than it is at the individual level in micro-level setting. This can easily be conceived if we analyze such co-management scenario as a two-level collective action game[229].

6.1.4 Need for implementation of Coherent Community Development Policy

There is a need for coordination of governance institutions between and within different levels of local governance from the community level to the meso-level, and, by extension, to the macro-level. For example, front line staff of different government departments working in the community development realm need to work under the rubric of the local governance institutions as coordinated at different levels of development governance such as the District Assembly, ADC and the VDC. It is therefore imperative to have a Community Development Policy that will give a coherent guidance to community development. This synergized approach to community development is likely to bring about better efficiency and effectiveness of community development initiatives than the disjointed and duplicated initiatives observed at the time of this research study.

6.2 CONCLUSION

This paper is far from being exhaustive. It has however shown that the introduction of Sinyala community based forest management took little consideration of existing indigenous institutions – a factor that resulted in problematic implementation dynamics especially due to incompatibilities and discontinuities between the indigenous and the exogenous institutions.

However, it should be noted that the community based forest management system was just five years old in Sinyala at the time of this research; that institutional evolution process can take a lot of time; and that some benefits of this community based management were yet to be fully realized by the community members. The findings also

[229] See section 5.7.1

show a growing culture of political participation and accountability among community members. These factors point to prospects for an eventual equilibrium especially when the influence of indigenous institutions is acknowledged, community members' development expectations are taken into consideration, and when the meso- and micro-level institutional coordination is improved.

To improve community collective action and development within a decentralized framework therefore, this research paper has argued for the need to engage with and build on existing indigenous institutions; provide relevant and appropriate incentives to boost community participation; build and strengthen cross-community governance institutions where a CPR overlaps two or more communities; and implement a coherent community development policy that will synergize community development efforts from different actors at all levels of governance. Much as these principles might not be generalizable in all instances of community development, they provide insights for improving community development in at least similar cases to Sinyala.

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview with Officials

- Development vision
  - What do you intend to achieve in community development?
  - What do you think are the critical aspects of this community development?
  - What do community members need to survive?
  - How do forest resources contribute to community development?
  - How do you rate forest resources in community development (ask them to rank)

- History of Sinyala Community Forest

  - Tell me the history of Sinyala Community forest?
  - How big is it?
  - How do communities benefit from the forest?
  - How many villages benefit from the forest?
  - What have been the threats to Sinyala community forest?
  - What was your department's role in the management of the forest prior to decentralization policy (1996)?

- What is your department's role in the management of Sinyala forest after 1996?

  - What does management of Sinyala community forest entail?
  - What structures are put in place to effectively manage the forest resources
  - (which structures are at district level and which ones at local level?)
  - How do the structures operate? (Explore interaction of structures at micro- and meso-levels)
  - Tell me how you plan this management
  - Who participate in planning the resource management? How?
  - How is the role of community members in management of these community resources?

- Assessing effectiveness of the interface between indigenous and formal governance institutions in forest resource management

  - How would you assess the effectiveness of the management system of Sinyala forest resource (both at local and district level)?
  - What are the challenges that you face in managing the forest resources if any?
  - How have you solved these challenges?

- What lessons would you draw from your involvement in managing the forest resources
- What would you suggest to improve forest resource management in Sinyala?
- How was the forest resources managed before the introduction of VDCs and ADCs?
- How do you compare forest management system before institution of VDCs and after?

Interview with Community Gatekeepers

- Development vision
    - What do you think is the goal of community development?
    - What do you think are the critical aspects of this community development?
    - What do community members need to survive?
    - How do forest resources contribute to community development?
    - How do you rate forest resources in community development (ask them to rank)

- History of Sinyala Community Forest

    - Tell me the history of your community.
    - Tell me the history of Sinyala community forest.
    - How big is it?
    - How do communities benefit from the forest?
    - How many villages benefit from the forest?
    - What have been the threats to Sinyala community forest?
    - What was your role in the management of the forest prior to decentralization policy (1996)?
    - What have been the challenges (if any) in managing the forest resources?
    - How have you resolved these challenges?

- What is your role in the management of Sinyala forest after 1996?

    - What structures are put in place in your community to effectively manage the forest resources
    - How are the structures constituted? (elections…etc)
    - How do the structures operate? (planning, implementation, evaluation…etc)

- Co-management

    - How do you coordinate with neighboring villages that use Sinyala forest resource?
    - Who participate in planning management of the forest resources? How?
    - What is your role in the co-management of the forest resources?
    - What is the role of the community members in the management of the forest resources?
    - What are the challenges in co-managing the forest resources with neighboring villages if any?
    - How do you overcome the challenges?
    - What would you suggest to be the best way of co-managing the forest resources with neighboring villages?

- How was the forest resources co-managed before the introduction of VNRMC, VDCs and ADCs?
- How do you compare forest co-management system before institution of VNRMC/VDCs/ADCs and after?

- Meso- and Micro-level institutional interface

  - Tell me about the relationship between VNRMC, the Village Development Committee (VDC) and the Area Development Committee (ADC)?
  - How was the VNRMC initiated?
  - How is the VNRMC constituted?
  - How is the VDC constituted?
  - How is the ADC constituted?
  - What is the role of VNRMC in forest resource management?
  - What is the role of the VDC in forest resource management?
  - What is the role of the ADC in forest resource management?
  - How does the NNRMC, the VDC and the ADC relate to District structures in forest resource management?
  - What are the challenges if any in the relationships between
    - VNRMC and VDC
    - VDC and ADC
    - ADC and District structures
  - How are these challenges resolved?
  - How was the forest resources managed before the introduction of VDCs and ADCs?
  - How do you compare forest management system before institution of VNRMC / VDCs and after institution of these structures?

- Assessing effectiveness of the interface between indigenous and formal governance institutions in forest resource management

  - How would you assess the effectiveness of the management system of the Sinyala forest resource (both at local and district level)
  - What are the challenges that you face in managing the forest resources if any?
  - How have you solved these challenges?
  - What lessons would you draw from your involvement in managing the forest resources

Interview with Community Members

- Development vision
    - What do you think is the goal of community development?
    - What do you think are the critical aspects of this community development?
    - What do (you) community members need to survive?
    - How do forest resources contribute to community development?
    - How do you rate forest resources in community development (ask them to rank)

- History of Sinyala Community Forest

    - Tell me the history of your community
    - Tell me the history of Sinyala community forest
    - How big is it?
    - How do communities benefit from the forest?
    - How many villages benefit from the forest?
    - What have been the threats to Sinyala community forest?
    - What was your role in the management of the forest prior to decentralization policy (1996)?
    - What have been the challenges (if any) in managing the forest resources?
    - How have you resolved these challenges?

- What is your role in the management of Sinyala forest after 1996?

    - What structures are put in place in your community to effectively manage the forest resources?
    - How are the structures constituted? (elections…etc)
    - How do the structures operate? (planning, implementation, evaluation…etc)

- Co-management

    - How do you coordinate with neighboring villages that use Sinyala forest resource?
    - Who participate in planning management of the forest resources? How?
    - What is your role in the co-management of the forest resources?
    - What are the challenges in co-managing the forest resources with neighboring villages if any?
    - How do you overcome the challenges?
    - What would you suggest to be the best way of co-managing the forest resources with neighboring villages?
    - How was the forest resources co-managed before the introduction of VNRMC, VDCs and ADCs?

- How do you compare forest resources co-management system before institution of VNRMC/VDCs/ADCs and after?

- Meso- and Micro-level institutional interface

  - Tell me about the relationship between the VNRMC, Village Development Committee (VDC) and the Area Development Committee (ADC)?
  - How is the VNRMC constituted?
  - How is the VDC constituted?
  - How is the ADC constituted?
  - What is the role of the VDC in forest resource management?
  - What is the role of the VDC in forest resource management?
  - What is the role of the ADC in forest resource management?
  - How does the VNRMC, the VDC and the ADC relate to District structures in forest resource management?
  - What are the challenges if any in the relationships between
    - VNRMC and VDC
    - VDC and ADC
    - ADC and District structures
  - How are these challenges resolved?
  - How was the forest resources managed before the introduction of VNRMC, VDCs and ADCs?
  - How do you compare forest management system before institution of VNRMC/VDCs and after?

- Assessing effectiveness of the interface between indigenous and formal governance institutions in forest resource management

  - How would you assess the effectiveness of the management system of the Sinyala forest resource (both at local and district level)
  - What are the challenges that you face in managing the forest resources if any?
  - How have you solved these challenges?
  - What lessons would you draw from your involvement in managing the forest resources

SINYALA PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN – DOCUMENT COVER

PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

FOR
SINYALA VILLAGE FOREST AREA
TA MASUMBANKHUNDA
IN
LILONGWE DISTRICT

PREPARED BY	VNRMCs Wider Community Village headman Group village headman
FACILITATED BY	B. Y. Mtsitsi N. W. Nefani D. F. Kapuwa M. Chiweza (Mrs)
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