Knowledge Integration in Co-management

A Study on the People of the Mount Cameroon National Park

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To my Mum and Dad, Suzanne Ayonghe and Samuel Ayonghe

Declaration

Unless otherwise indicated, this is original work by the author of the thesis.

Ayonghe Akonwi Nebasifu, March 2022

Abstract in English

This thesis illustrates the agency of indigenous residents and the persistence of their ways of knowing the land in a national park. It explores the relations between officials and local people in the co-management of the Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP) and its adjacent communities, relations characterised by unequal power. Previous literature in the critical studies of co-management shows that the decision-making agenda in resource management, typically based on top-down procedures, rarely respects local knowledge. Rather, management schemes reproduce practices of exclusion from the land. Beyond this criticism, we know little about the transformative ways in which people respond to inequalities in the system. The present work contributes to co-management theory by revealing simultaneous compliance with and opposition to various relations of power in which people use official and unofficial strategies to attain their needs within a system of resource management. Following the creation of the MCNP in 2009, the state introduced a co-management plan to promote the sustainable management of natural resources on Mount Cameroon. Through membership in village forest management committees (VFMC), the locals living adjacent to the MCNP provide feedback for revising the plan every five years. There are, however, mixed opinions about the degree to which this system incorporates local needs in decision making. For example, although the concept of co-management should imply that there is a partnership among equals, previous studies have shown that some parties to co-management may be powerful and some powerless.

While the literature questions the effectiveness of co-management, not an ample of studies have been done that address how people working under the shadow of inequality develop alternative means for their livelihoods to thrive. Where previous studies have often identified resource management initiatives that fail to empower local people, not enough attention is given to how people affected by these initiatives make space for achieving their needs. In an effort to address this gap, this thesis draws on a theoretical framework informed by insights into the interplay between power, hierarchy and egalitarianism. This is then applied to analyse power relations in the MCNP and how such relations trigger practices that serve to sustain a society's culture. Using an ethnographic inquiry, the study draws on empirical evidence from officials of state agencies, non-governmental organisations, sub-divisional councils as well as locals from village groups involved in the co-management of the MCNP. The results suggest that even when co-management does not provide space for

the proper integration of local knowledge, people can preserve their culture and livelihoods through acts of cultural resilience, and agency and the use of traditional knowledge. As agents, people can concurrently follow and circumvent a system to cope with changes in the local environment. For example, through conservation development agreements (CDA), the park regime provides incentives to boost agricultural activities among the locals in exchange for their limiting their reliance on biodiversity in state-protected areas. While some individuals welcome this approach for the income benefits it affords, others resist the system when it hinders their freedom to exercise customary rights on the land. This being the case, people engage in a twofold set of practices that allow cultural continuity in the context of co-management.

Abstract in Finnish

Tässä tutkielmassa tuodaan esiin, miten alkuperäiskansaan kuuluvien paikallisten asukkaitten toiminta ja periksiantamattomuus tulevat esiin kansallispuiston alueella toimittaessa. Tutkimuksen kohteena on viranomaisten ja paikallisten yhteistoiminta Kamerunin kansallispuistossa ja millaisena epätasa-arvoiset valtasuhteet näkyvät rinnakkainelossa. Aiempi yhteisjohtajuutta koskeva kriittinen kirjallisuus tuo esiin, että resurssien käytöstä päätettäessä annetut ohjeet ovat usein ylhäältä alas ruohonjuuritasolle annettuja. Päätöksenteossa harvoin otetaan huomioon paikallisten asukkaitten asiantuntijuus. Sitä vastoin vahvistuu käsitys, että alkuperäiskansan suhtautumista maan omistajuuteen ei oteta huomioon. Kritiikkiä kohdistuu myös siihen, että emme tunne tarpeeksi keinoja, miten ihmiset saadaan tunnistamaan kohtaamaansa epätasa-arvo ja toimimaan sellaista järjestelmää vastaan. Kaiken kaikkiaan tämän opinnäytteen tarkoitus on tuoda esiin yhteisjohtamisen teorian kautta sitä, millaisina epätasa-arvoiset valtasuhteet näyttäytyvät ja millaisia virallisia ja epävirallisia tapoja on käytössä, kun osapuolet haluavat saada omat tarpeensa tyydytetyksi. Kun Kamerun-vuoren luonnonpuistoaluetta oltiin luomassa vuonna 2009, esitteli Kamerunin valtio suunnitelman alueen yhteisjohtamisesta. Tavoitteena oli saada alueen luonnonvarat säilymään kestävällä pohjalla. Ne, jotka asuvat lähellä kansallispuistoa ja kuuluvat kylien metsänhoidollisten komiteoiden (VFMC) jäsenyyteen, saavat antaa palautetta suunnitelmasta joka viides vuosi. Tästä vaikuttamisen mahdollisuudesta huolimatta on olemassa eri käsityksiä siitä, miten paikallisten asukkaitten tarpeet tulevat huomioiduksi. Esimerkiksi vaikka yhteisjohtamisen perusmalliin kuuluu oleellisesti se, että kaikilla osapuolilla on tasaveroiset mahdollisuudet vaikuttaa päätöksentekoon, ovat viimeisimmät havainnot osoittaneet, että yhteisjohtamisessa toisilla on valtaa enemmän kuin toisilla.

Tämä selvitys kyseenalaistaa yhteisjohtamisen vaikuttavuuden. Tähän mennessä julkaistu kirjallisuus yhteisjohtajuudesta ei osoita tarpeeksi, että epätasa-arvoisessa asemassa olevat ihmiset kehittävät vaihtoehtoisia tapoja tulla toimeen selviytyäkseen elämässään. Aiemmat tutkimukset ovat usein tuoneet esiin sen, että resurssijohtamisen keinoin ei paikallisia ihmisiä saada voimaantumaan. Tässäkään opinnäytteessä ei tule esiin, että ihmisten oma-aloitteisuus lisääntyisi tai ihmisten tarpeet tulisivat tyydytetyksi. Jotta voitaisiin vastata tähän haasteeseen, tässä tutkimus analysoi valtasuhteiden, hierarkian ja egelatarianismin yhteenkietoutumia, kuvaten laajempaa teoreettista katsantoa, jossa tutkitaan Kamerunin kansallispuiston alueella ilmeneviä valtasuhteita ja miten ne käytännössä vaikuttavat alueen kulttuurin säilymiseen

kestävänä. Käyttämällä etnografista kyselytapaa, opinnäyte tuo esiin valtionhallinnon viranhaltijoitten, vapaaehtoisjärjestöjen, alueellisten komiteoiden ja kylien paikallisyhteisöjen mukanaolon Kamerunin kansallispuiston yhteisjohtamisessa. Tulokset osoittavat, että vaikka yhteisjohtamisen mallilla ei   paikallistuntemusta saada tuoduksi täysin esiin, voivat paikalliset asukkaat jatkamalla sinnikkäästi toimintaa ja ammentamalla tietoa omasta kulttuuriperinnöstään käsin, saada oma kulttuuri ja asuinseutunsa säilymään. Ihmisten tulee keskeytymättä ja kiertelemättä jatkaa toimia kohdata paikalliseen ympäristöön kohdistuvia muutoksia. Esimerkiksi ympäristösuojeluohjelmien (CDA) avulla voivat kansallispuistojen hallintoviranomaiset tarjota paikallisille mahdollisuuksia maatalouden kehittämiseen lisäämällä tietoisuutta monimuotoisuuden säilyttämisestä valtion suojelualueilla. Kun saadaan muutamat yksittäiset ihmiset ottamaan suojeluohjelma käyttöön ja huomaamaan sen tuomat taloudelliset hyödyt, voivat toiset vastustavat tapaa, kun se on vastoin heidän vapauttaan ja käsitystään maasta. Ihmiset voivat sekä säilyttää vahvan kulttuurisen asemansa että osallistua yhteisjohtajuuteen.

Asiasanat: yhteisjohtajuus, Kamerun-vuoren kansallispuisto, kulttuurinen jatkuvuus, kulttuurinen periksiantamattomuus, toimijuus, monimuotoisuuden säilyminen, perinnetietoisuus, maankäyttö, voimasuhteet, pyrkimys tasa-arvoon, hierarkian.

Abstract in French

La présente thèse illustre l'agence des résidents autochtones et la persistance de leurs modes de connaissance de la terre dans un parc national. Elle explore les relations entre les autorités et les populations locales dans la cogestion du Parc national du Mont Cameroun (PNMC) et de ses communautés adjacentes, relations caractérisées par un pouvoir inégal. La littérature antérieure dans les études critiques de la cogestion montre que la gestion des ressources, typiquement basée sur des procédures descendantes, respecte rarement les connaissances locales des populations dans la prise des décisions. Au contraire, les schémas de gestion des ressources reproduisent les pratiques d'exclusion de la terre. Au-delà de cette critique, nous savons peu de choses sur les moyens de transformation par lesquels les gens répondent aux inégalités du système. Dans l'ensemble, le présent travail contribue à la théorie de la cogestion en révélant la conformité et l'opposition simultanées à diverses relations de pouvoir dans lesquelles les gens utilisent des stratégies officielles et non officielles pour atteindre leurs besoins dans un système de gestion des ressources. Après la création du PNMC en 2009, l'État a mis en place un plan de cogestion pour promouvoir la gestion durable des ressources naturelles du Mont Cameroun. Par le biais de l'adhésion aux comités villageois de gestion forestière (CVGF), les habitants des zones adjacentes au PNMC fournissent des informations pour la révision du plan tous les cinq ans. Cependant, les avis sont partagés quant à la mesure dans laquelle ce système intègre les besoins locaux dans la prise de décisions. Par exemple, bien que le concept de cogestion implique un partenariat entre égaux, des études antérieures ont montré que certaines parties à la cogestion peuvent être puissantes et d'autres faibles.

Alors que l'explication ci-dessus remet en question l'efficacité de la cogestion, pas assez de la littérature existante traite de la façon dont les personnes travaillant dans l'ombre de l'inégalité développent des moyens alternatifs pour faire prospérer leurs moyens de subsistance. Les études précédentes ont souvent identifié des initiatives de gestion des ressources qui ne parviennent pas à donner du pouvoir aux populations locales; pourtant, ces recherches ne montrent pas comment les personnes affectées par ces initiatives font pour satisfaire leurs besoins. Dans un effort visant à combler cette lacune, le présent travail de recherche puise dans le lien entre le pouvoir, la hiérarchie et l'égalitarisme, en tant qu'approche théorique globale plus grand pour examiner le cas des relations de pouvoir dans le PNMC et voir comment ces relations déclenchent des pratiques pour soutenir la culture d'une société. En utilisant une enquête ethnographique, l'étude s'appuie sur des preuves empiriques provenant de

responsables d'agences d'État, d'organisations non gouvernementales, de communes d'arrondissements ainsi que de populations autochtones de groupes de villages impliqués dans la cogestion du PNMC. Les résultats suggèrent que même lorsque la cogestion n'offre pas d'espace pour l'intégration adéquate des connaissances locales, les gens peuvent préserver leur culture et leurs moyens de subsistance par des actes de résilience culturelle, d'agence et d'utilisation des connaissances traditionnelles. En tant qu'agents, les gens peuvent à la fois suivre et contourner un système pour faire face aux changements de l'environnement local. Par exemple, par le biais d'accords de développement de la conservation (ADC), le régime des parcs fournit des incitations pour stimuler les activités agricoles des habitants en échange de la limitation de leur dépendance à la biodiversité dans les zones protégées par l'État. Si certains individus accueillent favorablement cette approche pour les avantages en termes de revenus qu'elle procure, d'autres résistent au système lorsqu'il entrave leur liberté d'exercer leurs droits coutumiers sur la terre. Dans ce cas, les gens s'engagent dans un double ensemble de pratiques qui permettent la continuité culturelle dans le contexte de la cogestion.

Mots clés: cogestion, parc national du Mont Cameroun, continuité culturelle, résilience culturelle, agence, conservation de la biodiversité, connaissances traditionnelles, utilisation des terres, relations de pouvoir, égalitarisme, la hiérarchie.

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List of Collaborative Partners

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- Bakweri Community Groups
- Graduate School, University of Lapland, Finland
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- Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP) Service
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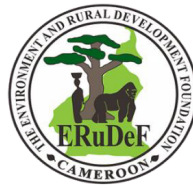
List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASEA	Agro-Socio-Economic Assessment
BLC	Bakweri Land Committee
CBC	Convention on Biological Diversity
CDA	Conservation Development Agreements
CDC	Cameroon Development Cooperation
CFA	*Communauté financière d'Afrique*
ERUDEF	Environment and Rural Development Foundation
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GIZ	*Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit*
ICDP	Integrated Conservation Development Projects
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
LWC	Limbe Wildlife Centre
MCNP	Mount Cameroon National Park
MINEPAT	*Ministère de l'Economie, de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du Territoire*
MINFOF	*Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune*
MOCAP	Mount Cameroon Prunus Management Common Initiative Group
Mt. CEO	Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation
NGT	Nominal Group Technique
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PNDP	*Programme Nationale pour le Développement Participatif*
RRSSC	Ruby Range Sheep Steering Committee
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SODEFOR	*Société de Développement Forestier*
SOWEDA	*South West Development Authority*
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge
TENK	Finnish National Board on Research Integrity
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
VFMC	Village Forest Management Committee
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

List of Thesis Articles

This thesis is based on the following four articles, which are attached to this thesis and have been reprinted with permission from the publishers:

i.   Nebasifu, A.A., Atong, N.M. 2019. Rethinking Institutional Knowledge for Community Participation in Co-management. **Sustainability**, 11(20): 01-19.

ii. Nebasifu, A.A., Atong, N.M. 2020a. Expressing Agency in Antagonistic Policy Environments. **Environmental Sociology**, 06(02): 154-165.

iii. Nebasifu, A.A., Atong, N.M. 2020b. Discourses of Cultural Continuity among the Bakweri of Mount Cameroon National Park. **Culture & Local Governance**, 06(02): 103-121.

iv. Nebasifu, A.A., Atong, N.M. 2020c. Land Use and Access in Protected Areas: A Hunter's view of Flexibility. **Forests**, 11(4): 01-15.

Author Contributions

Ayonghe Akonwi Nebasifu is the lead author for this thesis and its four articles. He has conducted the fieldwork, data collection and data analysis, is responsible for the thesis conceptualisation and methodology and has written the entire work, including drafts, alone. The articles were planned and written for this thesis and have been published in order to contribute new insights to the integration of different knowledges.

Ngoindong Majory Atong acted as research assistant to the lead author. She facilitated the data collection process as a note taker and photographer during fieldwork. She contributed to the articles by fact checking the texts to ensure that they accurately reflected the raw data gathered in the field.

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List of Figures and Tables

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Collaborative management (co-management), or the joint administration of natural resources, has been a valued approach adopted for community-based as well as state- and local-level resource management (Berkes et al. 1991). Co-management procedures, which entail power sharing between local resource users and state authorities, are never particularly simple. Due to the diverse nature of actors and opinions involved, as well as the dynamics of socio-ecological systems, there is always a need for novel ideas about how local communities can navigate the intricacies of co-management. Drawing on the example of the Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP) in sub-Saharan West Africa, this thesis draws on a theoretical framework informed by insights into the interplay between power, hierarchy and egalitarianism. This is then applied to analyse power relations between a co-management regime and persons living adjacent to the resource; of particular interest are the agency people exercise to call forth resilience during crises and the connection between local knowledge and the conservation of biodiversity. The term 'resource' has varied definitions according to the context in which it is used. In this thesis, I refer to two contexts in particular: (a) the neoliberal, in which resources, as the materials and assets of a community, are subject to co-opting through dispossession processes in an attempt to create new market forms (Ganti 2014) and (b) the cultural, in which resources encompass intangible elements such as spirituality (Ferguson and Jeffrey 2015; Patzold 2017). The latter sense was borne out by my observations that spirituality figured significantly as part of the cultural life in the communities I worked with. To the locals, knowledge and a connection to the spirits are also resources. Because the term resource is what decision-makers understand, people appropriate knowledge for their own needs, which brings about their agency. Knowledge brings people power. The interplay of knowledge and power is taken up by Foucault (1980) in his essay on 'power and knowledge', which examines power as an outcome of knowledge. Germane to the concept of spirituality is Ferguson's and Jeffrey's (2015) hypothesis about natural amenities (landscape, good weather) as spiritual resources that people use to connect with the sacred. I will return to this observation with examples in the Results and Discussion sections.

Power relations, from the anthropological standpoint, refer to the "differential capacities and strategies to make society, in a range of mutually constituting scales and contexts" (Victoria 2016, p. 256). Forms of power can include exploitation, politics, domination, everyday struggle and differentiation that produce society in various spaces. Other forms of power may be seen in the practices of individuals

creating environments that are personally viable and meaningful to them in pursuit of their own life-projects (Rapport 2003). In this light, the MCNP offers an opportunity to determine if people's ways of knowing their land could become useful for a park regime's co-management process. The following section reviews both the local (Cameroonian) and foreign literature on co-management, cultural resilience, agency and traditional knowledge. Previous studies on co-management by Cameroonian scholars suggest that resource managers are not always willing to participate in meaningful co-management practices. This hampers different actors in harmonising their conflicting interests in pursuit of effective resource governance.

The ramifications of the above situation in the case of the MCNP are numerous: one shortcoming is the marginal recognition of people's spiritual needs in the decision-making process of the park (Monono et al. 2016); a second can be seen in the park regime granting the community access to cluster platforms (meetings connected to the MCNP), although the members of the clusters have no say in decisions regarding the park (Awung and Marchant 2018); a third involves local people being deprived of access to essential livelihoods in the name of conservation (Schmidt-Soltau 2004). A salient example of yet another failing is the case of the Baka Pygmies in south-eastern Cameroon, who have become victims of park regimes promising collaboration but not appropriately including the knowledge of the Baka in their institutional system for managing protected areas (Pemunta 2013). They live at the fringes of the Boumba Bek National Park, having been displaced from nomadic forest camps and moved to roadside settlements, and are engaged in an endless struggle to preserve their traditions on the land (Carson et al. 2018; Pyhälä et al. 2016). In another instance, the people of the Korup National Park in the southwest region of Cameroon continue to have mistrust in the regime's co-management process as a result of its changing the legal status of their villages to render the residents illegal occupants of the park (Kimengsi et al. 2019). In an additional case, from Cote d'Ivoire, the Forest Development Corporation (*Société de Développement Forestier, or Forest Development Corporation* (SODEFOR)) established a co-management plan in 1994 to involve farmers' forest committees in making decisions on land use and management of state-owned forest, a strategy that proved unproductive due to lack of government commitment. Most of the local-level planning required the approval of national meetings held in the capital area, an arrangement which prevented committee members from attending (Roe et al. 2009).

Observations similar to the above examples are equally noted in the foreign literature; these range from domesticating nature to displacing people and are accompanied by accounts of the impoverished circumstances that follow (Brockington & Wilkie 2015; Ingold 2011; West et al. 2006). As local people living in and around protected areas remain targets of resource management regimes, there is a need to investigate whether and how communities deal with

lapses in co-management such as those exemplified above. According to scholars of co-management, adaptive strategies, successive rounds of social networking and a group's capacity to be self-regulatory can improve joint efforts geared to natural resource management (Berkes and Armitage 2010; Berkes 2009; Berkes et al. 1991; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Nadasdy 2007). These insights suggest a need to continue a constructive dialogue on co-management, one that enables a shift from the nature-culture divide to a focus on understanding the meaningfulness of people's contributions to dynamic resource management systems. To do so, I explore acts reflecting cultural resilience, agency and traditional knowledge and how the resources captured by these three concepts interact to contribute to the perseverance of a culture. This investigation further reveals the original contribution of my thesis: I use concepts that have been applied by scholars in regional studies elsewhere to better understand the MCNP. Crucially, these concepts make it possible to put forward alternative conditions through which communities can become included in co-management processes. Among the contributions local people – potential agents – bring to co-management are the diverse forms of knowledge that they possess, a resource that they have developed and transmitted over many generations and that has helped them to adapt to systemic changes.

1.1. Mount Cameroon: the people, culture and land

Mount Cameroon is one of the ecological sites that shaped a considerable part of my childhood views about people and the land in the southwest region of Cameroon. There are geographical features specific to peripheral zones of Mount Cameroon. The mountain extends from the coastal town of Limbe in the southeast to Muyuka in the north, crossed by a 130-kilometre road with forested lands, streams, valleys and residential areas. Upon first arriving in the area, a person sees a gigantic formation rising to 4,070 metres above sea level and encompassing a rich variety of vegetation ranging from tropical rainforests and mangroves in the lowlands to montane, savannah grasslands and rocky surfaces at higher altitudes. On the western flank (West Coast) of Mount Cameroon, the mountain rises from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and is home to villages such as Lower Boando, Batoke, Bakingili, Njonje, Bibunde and Sanje, which enjoy ready access to the sea. Despite state involvement in governing the land, there is no doubt that the mountain continues to be of traditional importance to the Bakweri, a people who have lived there for many generations and whose livelihood and culture are predicated on hunting, gathering forest products and preserving ritual contact with ancestral spirits on the land.

Mount Cameroon is of political interest to the state, this being reflected in the considerable amount of time conservation agencies are spending on surveying and outlining threats to biodiversity following the government's commitment to

the 1992 United Nations Convention on Biodiversity. The state supports many locals through agricultural practices that provide them with an alternative means of livelihood to limit the overuse of forests, which threatens biodiversity on Mount Cameroon. Indeed, it is this policy that inspired my thoughts of carrying out research there. Having spent most of my primary, secondary and undergraduate education in Buea, a district on the south-western flank of the mountain, I heard many narratives in the classroom that raised questions and piqued my curiosity about the secrets of the forests. From a folkloric perspective, I often heard of 'mystical sites' on the mountain, access to which was restricted for fear of what might occur if visitors trespassed on them.

At times, there were stories about individuals who went to Mount Cameroon and never returned. Accounts of this kind often referred to a spiritual being, Efassa moto, which the Bakweri worship. It is said to have a body that locals see as 'partly stone and partly flesh' and resides on the mountain. Bakweri cosmology, based on the duality of being, that is, the living and the dead, influences how the Bakweri people worship and the belief that they have a duty as custodians of the land and its resources to sustain good relations with the dead. Practices of worship and belief do not manifest themselves only in general daily human-environment interaction among the Bakweri as part of their activity on the land; rather, they are the main activity in sacred societies, where spirituality is crucial to existence, and in secret societies, which conceal certain ritual activities from the general public. For instance, activities of the *Maale* society can be both sacred and secret, in various instances, to symbolise its strength and capabilities to defend the Bakweri against external aggressors. This cosmological influence has been vital for understanding why and how, as one of the early groups to settle on the mountain, the Bakweri continue an endless struggle in negotiating their rights to use the land. The case of Mount Cameroon, its national park, and mechanisms for co-management cannot be examined without an understanding of Bakweri culture, which is crucial to the management of natural resources on the mountain, for example, sites, locations, habitats, and natural formations.

The link between culture and biodiversity is important for the livelihood of people living in and around Mount Cameroon. The Bakweri, for example, live among the 41 peripheral villages of Mount Cameroon, comprising somewhat less than 30 per cent of the estimated 100,000 persons living in rural parts of the region. They are one among the numerous groups in the Mount Cameroon region, other being the Bakossi, Bomboko, Balong and Isubu, to name a few, and have mixed accounts about their origin. However, according to Neh (1989), the Bakweri might have come from areas around the Congo and the Nile around 400 BC, at which time they split into several settlements in southern Africa, eastern Africa and coastal areas of Cameroon. In the case of Cameroon, studies describe the Bakweri as having cultural links to one of the seven Bantu-speaking tribes (which include the Bamboko,

Mongo, Balong, Isubu, Wovea and Bakolle) on the coast based on similarities in the languages they speak (Ardener 1996, p. 227). Other scholarly accounts describe the Bakweri as descendants of the Bomboko, a group that came from lands inhabited by the Bomboko northwest of Mount Cameroon, noted in Neh's (1989) use of the word *vakpeli* (to mean 'those who have settled') in the Bakweri language Mokpwe. A Bakweri ancestor, Eye Njie, appears to be the one who led this group from Bomboko to settle in present-day Buea, the name of the district being a Mokpwe word derived from his name and meaning 'sons of Eye Njie'.

Consistent with the above narrative, the Bakweri live in scattered settlements with groups isolated in sites around the Mungo, Limbe, Bomboko, Buea and Douala districts. The British anthropologist Edwin Ardener documented his experience of living with the Bakweri in a settlement on Mount Cameroon in the 1880s, several years prior to the Bakweri war against the German colonialists (Ardener 1996, p. 25-27). He made mention of huts having grass roofs in the middle structure of the huts in lowland forests of the mountain. These were shelters, heated with fire, from which Bakweri had to walk, hiding behind rocks, to hunt antelopes at higher altitudes, where there were grassy plains. Hunting expeditions might last as long as a week, with some persons losing their lives due to cold weather. At this time, they had beliefs about a spiritual being called Loba (with characteristics similar to the present-day Efassa moto), said to have been living above the peak of the mountain, that could trigger the death of persons who failed to worship it. The belief further held that Loba had control over thunder, the sun and the moon and could move everywhere on the mountain faster than men without anybody seeing it. Loba had two sons, Mokasse, who tortured the wicked, and Ovasse, who brought forth good deeds on the land.

An earlier text by Ardener (1970, p. 140-144) recounting the period between 1850 and 1890 made mention of Bakweri patrilineal relatives and families living in clusters of bark-walled huts on Mount Cameroon's lower slopes. The Bakweri used the lower slopes of the mountain to cultivate bananas and tubers and to graze livestock, while utilising the upper slopes for hunting game and trapping elephants in pits. In their settlements, the Bakweri erected fences around their huts to keep livestock and cultivate cocoyam (a tropical root crop). These clusters covered approximately 50 square miles and were grouped into political units of about 100 persons. At the time, Bakweri lineage elders, with the assistance of male regulatory bodies, controlled leadership and decision making on the land.

It was not until 1894 that the German colonialists defeated the Bakweri warriors, who were led by a prominent chief, Kuva Likenye, highly respected for his leadership at war. This conquest led to the displacement of the Bakweri from their land, which saw them forced to move into densely packed settlements in the peripheries of Mount Cameroon. The colonialists proceeded to establish plantations on the lower slopes of the mountain, where they produced tobacco, cocoa, bananas, rubber, as well as

oil palms. These plantations have come to be one of the challenges to biodiversity on Mount Cameroon. Such displacement explains the present-day settlements of the Bakweri in semi-urban areas, including the districts of Muyuka and Tiko, where many of them have adopted forms of skilled labour in the educational and trade sectors. Those in rural areas continue to use the forest as hunters and gatherers; others benefit from the rich volcanic soils on Mount Cameroon through farming, growing crops for both subsistence and commercial purposes, examples being corn, plantains, cassava, cocoyam and palm nuts.

Today, the socio-political organisation of the Bakweri is such that they are grouped into villages within which they live in family units comprising a father, his wife (wives), children and relatives. The father exercises leadership over the family but at times consults with the family lineage when making important decisions. Kinship among the Bakweri is patrilineal. Upon the death of the father, the eldest son inherits his belongings. Human behaviour plays an important role in this process of kinship. For example, if the eldest son is arrogant, his brother can inherit the father's possessions. In other situations, a family member who is trustworthy can do so. Villages are led by a chief, who acts with the assistance of a council of elders. The acquisition of land often occurs by means of inheritance, although in some cases land can be sold to individuals from elsewhere with the approval of a traditional council (a council of elders established and recognised by customary law) that presides over matters of resolving land disputes in villages.

An important part of the Bakweri culture is a belief system that connects people to the land. Accordingly, the forest and its resources are believed to possess a spiritual power which certain individuals use to influence events in everyday life. In a familiar element in narratives about Loba, it is believed that certain individuals possess witchcraft powers (known in Mokpwe as *nyongo*), which give them the ability to cause death. Moreover, the forest serves as a place for ancestral spirits that inhabit plants and animals, which are the source of a supernatural force that carries out people's wishes, examples being rescuing individuals from danger, bringing rainfall during periods of drought and punishing those who cause disturbances in the forest. Sacred societies have an important role in this process of fulfilling people's wishes. An example is the *Maale* cult, which mainly comprises men who use the African forest elephant *(*Njoku*)* as a spiritual figure to symbolise strength against foreign aggressors. Members of *Maale* perform rituals annually to request that spirits intervene during times of crises. In doing so, the locals expect both misfortunes and good deeds in their communities (Ofege 2007). Other sacred societies, such as *Nganya* and *Mbwaya,* act as customary institutions working according to Bakweri norms and values with the aim of unifying the Bakweri, looking after the land and settling land disputes.

Another facet of this belief system pertains to Efassa moto, a spiritual being believed to live on Mount Cameroon, from where it visits misfortune on persons who exploit

forest resources on the mountain in an uncontrolled manner. This misuse can be acts of trespassing and excessive gathering of plants and other products. In 1999 and 2000, when Mount Cameroon erupted and lava flows damaged farmlands in the Bakingili community on the west flank of the mountain, many people considered this incident a punishment by Efassa moto. Following this disaster, many locals at the time argued that it was necessary to perform rituals soliciting the gods for peace and stability on the land. Nowadays, such beliefs correlate with forestry and wildlife conservation, as some of the locals associate the loss of biodiversity with failures to respect traditional taboos and customs (Ajonina et al. 2017). This belief is one of the reasons why the inhabitants around Mount Cameroon refer to the mountain as 'the chariot of the gods'.

It is narratives such as the above that prompt the Bakweri to put forward a claim to recognise customary rights to use the land, given that for many generations Mount Cameroon has been a source of spiritual help, food, refuge and peace. Accordingly, it is of great interest in this thesis to examine how aspirations of the Bakweri with regard to land use and ownership can be recognised following the introduction of protected area management. Any such analysis of how practices of land use and access can be properly managed between local people and unfavourable co-management regimes must bear in mind the historical developments: displacement of people following the German conquests of the 1890s, the subsequent introduction of plantation agriculture and the enactment of state laws such as the 1974 Land Tenure Decree, the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Act and the 2009 Presidential Decree creating the Mount Cameroon National Park. Additional considerations are the arrival of groups during the last three decades from other regions of Cameroon, such as Bafut, Bamileke, Bali, Bakossi, and of Igbo traders from Nigeria. All in all, questions persist as to whether state arrangements for resource management support the growing human population around the MCNP without undermining the conservation of biodiversity.

It is therefore crucial to understand the relation between local knowledge and the preservation of biodiversity. The concept 'local knowledge' is broadly conceived in several disciplines, with closely related terms such as 'indigenous knowledge' and 'traditional knowledge' also used (Berkes 2008; Huntington 2000; Markkula et al. 2019; Nadasdy 1999). Consistent with these scholars, I use 'local knowledge' to describe ways of knowing the land among the Bakweri. This knowledge is embedded in community practices, institutions, rituals and relationships that change over time (Food and Agricultural Organisation 2019). It can consist in people's experiences, passed down from generation to generation and adapted to the local culture, environment and resource management practices.

1.2. Historical developments in Cameroon

This section describes two aspects of the historical context essential to understanding the present study: land use around Mount Cameroon in the pre-colonial period and the imposition in colonial times of a leadership system to an indigenous social structure. The latter included components of the nation-state and park administration such as the Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) and reforms for forestry and wildlife that influenced power relations in Cameroon. These circumstances partly shaped events prior to the establishment of the MCNP and the introduction of a co-management plan. In pre-colonial times, Bakweri society was neither centralised nor did it have any chiefs as rulers. The Bakweri had a land tenure system based on communal relations (Njoh 2011). They used the land for cultivating crops, building homes and rearing animals. The rest of the land was used as hunting grounds and for collecting medicinal products from the forest such as tree bark, leaves and roots. The people thus combined hunting and gathering and agriculture. Practices of this kind are not new to sub-Saharan and central Africa. Studies have identified agricultural technologies in present-day western Cameroon and southeast Nigeria that date back some 5000 years (Patin et al. 2014). Early evidence of Bantu-speaking farming communities is related to their movement into the rainforests of Central Africa, where they had economic exchange with local hunter-gatherers, contact evidenced by the appearance of shared oral traditions and common languages (Patin et al. 2014). This historical observation might be an explanation for the Bakweri practice of combining hunting, gathering and agriculture, especially in light of possible tribal links between the Bakweri and the Bantu-speaking tribes (Ardener 1996, p. 227).

Another explanation, based on the anthropological view, might be that the co-existence of hunting and gathering and agriculture in a society is attributable to kinship ties, cultural similarities (language and ritual) and hereditary trade partnerships between ethnic groups, clans and people that eventually coalesce into a single social order (Crowther et al. 2018; Ellen 2018, 1988; Spielmann and James 1994). For instance, the Baka in sub-Saharan Africa link their hunting and gathering patriline with a clan or an agricultural village through participation in ritual activity; between the Okiek and Maasai in Tanzania, males of the same age set and clan share trade partnerships; and among the Efé people in Congo, men from farming villages marry hunter-gatherer women (Spielmann and James 1994). One of the ways in which anthropologists examine these different ethnic relations in combined practices of hunting, gathering and agriculture is to look at how the relations influence a group's identity. For instance, kinship organisation and marriage patterns between clans among the Nuaulu in eastern Indonesia enable a strong and independent Nuaulu identity by increasing the size of the population, which in turn enhances their resilience against incoming ethnic groups and the rising pressure on resources (Ellen 2018).

The Bakweri used rivers and other water bodies for therapeutic needs and rituals to support the stability of their mental, physical and spiritual health. Water bodies were also a source of food through fishing. Bakweri extended families looked after the land. This cultural practice did not suggest ownership of any kind. Bakweri custom did not allow individuals to alienate or transfer land, but gave them the privilege to use the land. In this manner, the Bakweri share notions of egalitarian social organisation, in which people have a cultural ethos of sharing, cooperating and refraining from property accumulation and authoritarianism (Townsend 2018); the ethos was predicated on equalities of wealth, power and rank that, with few exceptions, are deliberately sought and genuinely attained (Woodburn 1982). In an earlier categorisation of societies, Lewis Henry Morgan likens this egalitarian social organisation to that found in 'primitive societies' and sees it as representing 'savagery', a stage of evolution characterised by the absence of individual property, with no class, no inequality and no differential status among people (Morgan 1877). Robert Lowie criticised this view, however, arguing that primitive societies varied far more than earlier theories presumed, which can be attributed to practices of diffusion in which societies borrow cultural traits from other cultures, for example, as a result of migration (Lowie 1921). Land among the Bakweri was not seen as a commodity and so could not be sold. All persons living on the land viewed themselves as custodians of the land with a responsibility to guard and protect it for the unborn. In the Bakweri egalitarian social organisation, the non-human elements, such as land and objects, were a source of spiritual support to humans, whose responsibilities were to take care of the land to ensure its various yields.

The coming of colonial authorities in the nineteenth century imposed hierarchies on the existing egalitarian system. One might assert that any leadership added to an egalitarian society will be alien to the worldview of people belonging to that society—unless they internalise the alien system. Colonialism therefore added a new dimension to power relations. For example, it created 'chieftaincies', positions occupied by a class of leaders whose powers came from local forms of organisation but were dependent on the state. They were auxiliaries and administrative subordinates, what Geschiere (1993) called *chefs coutumiers*, whom the colonial authorities used to further modern projects. Among the chieftaincies one can distinguish a number having a strong tradition that comprised great authority over land and in some situations could protect forest resources against intruders with support from the local community. According to Cameroonian history, between the years 1800 and 1890, wealthy chiefs like Kuva Likenye (ruler of Buea) and William I and II (rulers of the coastal town Bimbia) had significant entitlements to land use (Ardener 1996). Their leadership over Buea and Bimbia spanned a number of constituent villages.

Chiefs were fundamental in the negotiation of deals with European explorers, signing treaties for land ownership and leading wars to safeguard resources in the hinterlands from colonial control. In 1894, when the Germans defeated the

Bakweri, there were changes in customary structures for governing Bakweri lands. For instance, in 1955, section 27 (1) of Southern Cameroon's High Court Law recognised and enforced customary law, justice, equity and compatibility with the existing culture and beliefs of the Bakweri, which had often been handed down across generations (Kiye 2015, p. 80). Later on, the Land Tenure Decree (74/1 of 6 July 1974) transferred the ownership of village lands to the state. Although this decree was modified in 1977 (Decree No 77/245), it designated chiefs as auxiliaries of the government assigned to collect taxes on land rents and land sales and to oversee the resolution of land disputes (Nuesiri 2014). This change allegedly diminished the leadership role of chiefs in decision making and set the stage for land disputes in the Mount Cameroon area.

The period following the Second World War in 1945 was crucial in advancing claims of the Bakweri over land. With the creation of the Bakweri Land Committee in 1946, the Bakweri strongly campaigned for compensation and restitution of their native lands initially expropriated by the German colonists. However, this only prompted the state to hand over native lands (mostly plantations) to a parastatal unit known as the Cameroon Development Cooperation. With the independence of the Republic of Cameroon in the 1960s during the administration of President Ahmadou Ahidjo, governmental interest focussed on widening international trade and investments. However, this came with a price; local communities around forested landscapes were transformed as more lands became plantations, and the Bakweri found themselves confronting new problems.

Between 1987 and 1999, the government of Cameroon initiated a Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Tchoungui et al. 1995). This policy launched a series of economic programmes to combat the decline in the export prices of fuel and cocoa that had resulted in an increased national debt. The policy was contradictory in that it infringed conditions of the 1992 United Nations Convention on Biodiversity, which were used to emphasise Cameroon's role in the rationalisation of both the forestry and agricultural sectors in the country. In 1994, the government enacted the Forestry and Wildlife Act, which placed about 30 per cent of the country's territory under state protection and introduced procedures that limited the freedom of local people living around forestlands in rural areas to use forests that for many years had been a source of livelihood (Tchoungui et al. 1995).

1.3. Initiating collaboration between actors

In 2014, the MCNP regime introduced a co-management plan, in keeping with a ministerial decision (No. 0385/MINFOF/SG/DFAP) on 12 August 2014 (Charlotte 2014). This plan formalised participation between MCNP Service (the

park management agency) authorities, partner organisations and the inhabitants of peripheral villages. It also enhanced the involvement in the management of the MCNP of stakeholders from divisional, sub-divisional, regional and national levels of society as well as the park's resource users. Although the plan was designed to serve ecosystems and local communities, it was questionable for several reasons. For the locals, the plan emphasised conditions that support them only when they act to serve the needs of the park regime. Moreover, there are other critical issues to resolve in the study area. Many of the locals still request compensation for land displacements that took place in the colonial period (Vitalis 2010) as well as the loss of land following the demarcation of the state boundaries of the MCNP. In other cases, some of the locals are dissatisfied with the state for failing to effectively recognise customary rights in decisions about use regarding the land (Nebasifu & Atong 2020a, 2019a).

To examine the nature of the above impacts, this thesis adopts two lines of thinking. On the one hand, it uses critical views about co-management to study how contradictory processes of governance have developed through state-initiated schemes for resource management on Mount Cameroon. It explains these contradictions using related studies of resource management (Berkes et al. 1991; Berkes 2009; Brockington & Wilkie 2015; Brockington et al. 2008; Holmes 2014; Nadasdy 2007, 2005, 2003, 1999; Pyhälä et al. 2016; West et al. 2006). Drawing on literature about cultural resilience (Angell 2000; Clauss-Ehlers 2010; Davies and Moore 2016; Daskon 2010), agency (Chirozva 2015; Harvey 2002; Karp 1986; Newman and Dale 2006), and traditional knowledge (Berkes 2008; Huntington 2000; Markkula et al. 2019; Nadasdy 1999), I put forward arguments indicating why enhancing the role of shared knowledge between state and local authorities would bring mutual benefits and improve the co-management of the MCNP.

On the other hand, there are gaps in related anthropological studies of resource management (Brockington & Wilkie 2015; Brockington & Duffy 2010; Brockington et al. 2008; Dressler et al. 2010; West et al. 2006; Nadasdy 2005, 2003) that need to be addressed to better incorporate local interests and opinions in a state's agenda for co-management. While these studies have identified initiatives that hinder traditional processes for resource management rather than empowering local people, we still need to understand better how people affected by such initiatives can create space for themselves to pursue their livelihoods. The present research addresses this gap with a contribution on cultural continuity amid a complex system of co-management. It connects scholarly views on the relations of power, hierarchy and egalitarianism, to the concepts of traditional knowledge, agency and cultural resilience in an attempt to reveal how people respond to challenges in co-management systems. The existing co-management literature does not adequately address the question of how these theories and concepts might be moulded into a comprehensive theoretical framework that would aid in assessment of co-management practices.

To rectify this gap in the literature, I (a) explore the nature of power relations between the co-management regime of the MCNP and its adjacent local communities; (b) investigate what agency people express to boost their resilience when crises arise within the co-management system; and (c) go on to examine the relationship between local knowledge and biodiversity conservation. In this thesis, I use co-management as a concept that subsumes community-based and participatory models of development/conservation (Nadasdy 2005, p. 216). I will use the word 'regime' to encompass various authorities, such as park conservation specialists, state establishments and partner institutions involved both directly and indirectly in the management of the MCNP. The terms 'locals' and 'local people' refer to persons of Bakweri and other ethnic origin residing in villages adjacent to the MCNP. However, I will occasionally refer specifically to the Bakweri culture due to its significance as the most prominent culture in the MCNP community, their being one of the earliest known groups to have settled on Mount Cameroon. Another consideration here is that other groups that have migrated to the Mount Cameroon area have tended to adopt Bakweri ways of living on the land. This being the case, I will use the Mokpwe language in empirical examples with quotations from the Bakweri who are a prominent group in the Mount Cameroon region. Some quotations will exemplify the terminologies used by state agencies, which reflects the nature of co-managing the MCNP. In other examples, I use Pidgin English, a language the Bakweri tend to use in their interactions with traders and newcomers from other regions.

2.   Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This study taps the interplay between power, hierarchy and egalitarianism as an overarching theoretical framework, and unpacks the concepts of traditional knowledge, agency and cultural resilience which are embedded in this framework. I also use sub-concepts directly related to the framework in an empirical sense, examples being institutional bricolage, convivial conservation and community resilience. In invoking these, I critique the conventional nature of conservation in the post-colonial context and highlight the potentials and abilities of local people to care for and live in balance with nature. A framework such as that elaborated here enabled disciplined inquiry in complex environments of resource governance. This combination in applying concepts serves as a framework to guide me as a researcher in conducting a disciplined inquiry in complex environments of resource governance.

As noted, the term 'co-management' implies a partnership of equals. In the present case, however, analysing actions as if the park officials and the locals were equals would distort my results. They are not, and thus we need a framework incorporating conceptual tools powerful enough to bring to light unequal power relations. Specifically, employing the theoretical concepts cultural resilience, agency and traditional knowledge, I demonstrate the meanings locals make socially of the inequality in the management system. The analytical power of the concepts reveals the extent to which local people, as human agents, can create and activate resilience under varying circumstances when engaged in resource management. I have earlier noted in the introduction that although the term 'resource' often aligns with the material in neoliberal practices (Ganti 2014), it also refers to intangible assets (Ferguson and Jeffrey 2015; Patzold 2017). Along this scholarly line of thinking, in my thesis, I will like to go beyond the material or neoliberal to promote an understanding of resource that also includes this intangible stage, such as spiritual beings, the dead, and the relations people have with the intangible in order to get their power. Taken together, these concepts bring to the fore the role of cultural continuity in co-management, a salient focus pursued in this thesis. Table 1 below sets out the relevance of each concept to this aim.

Table 1: Relations between the theoretical concepts applied

Concept	Description	Expectations of cultural continuity
Convivial conservation	Adapting prevailing conservation and development schemes towards structural transformation, environmental justice, and radical equity using certain principles of governance (Büscher and Fletcher 2019).	People develop other alternative ways of engaging and living in balance with biodiversity.
Institutional bricolage	In less transparent environments, institutions construct and reshape their way of working in response to unstable institutional systems, which impacts the local practices in society (De Koning 2011).	In response to challenges in a resource management system, people draw on existing ways of thinking, social norms, social roles and relationships to cope with system changes.
Community resilience	Identifying and developing community strengths to foster resilience through agency and practices of self-organisation (Berkes and Ross 2013).	People have a potential to create some space for action and expression by capitalising on their strengths to continue their traditions of living using their environment sustainably in the face of inequalities in the system.
Traditional knowledge	Human experiences acquired and passed down from generation to generation. It is embedded in community practices, institutions, and relationships, and changes over time (FAO 2019; Markkula et al. 2019; Nadasdy 1999).	Traditional knowledge will enhance people's local culture and enable them to cope with the day-to-day operation of co-management. Traditional knowledge will provide security for cultural groups in times of crises within a co-management system.
Agency	The capacity to act and bring about change (Chirozva 2015; Harvey 2002; Newman and Dale 2006).	As agents, people can opt to follow, undermine or circumvent a co-management system for the general benefit of a group.
Cultural resilience	Adaptive pathways with several attributes (knowledges, resources, values, behaviours) interconnected across institutions, social networks, generations and time. They operate through subsistence, rituals, beliefs and knowledge transmission to help communities deal with crises (Clauss-Ehlers 2010; Davies and Moore 2016).	People can improvise in response to changes brought by resource managers. Cultural resilience provides the means to adapt, take new actions and acquire new environmental knowledge.

Source: Author's field data (2017)

2.1. Power relations, hierarchy, and egalitarianism

Perspectives on power (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Fabinyi et al. 2014; Foucault 1991; Nadasdy 1999; Nantongo et al. 2019; Parsons 1967; Rapport 2003; Victoria 2016), hierarchy (Flanagan 1989; Iteanu 2009; van Kleef and Morgan 1877) and egalitarianism (Cheng 2020; Flanagan 1989; Woodburn 2005) are not new to anthropology, sociology, and related fields of the social sciences that address practices of governance in society, people, and their relation to the land. From Max Weber to Thomas Hobbes, Talcott Parsons, Michel Foucault, and others, power has been rigorously analysed albeit variations in meaning. Common to this scholarship is an emphasis on practices that involve exercising one's will over others, which in many ways shapes relations among people, social groups, governments, and institutions. For instance, in his *Economy and Society* (1968, p.212), Weber presents power an overarching concept, supporting it with a wide range of examples connected to dominance and obedience that give meaning to how we see the world. Stefano Guzzini (2021, p.101) explains Weber's concept of power as follows:

> More specifically, power is part of a long definitional move which starts from conceptualising (1) social action as human relation, then (2) the origins of patterned social actions (customs, habit, convention, and norms), (3) the inevitable struggle (*Kampf*) and hierarchical differentiation in the competition for life chances in social relations, (4) the emergence of society versus community (*Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*) within which (5) power and domination/rule are crucial for defining the specifically political moment: (6) in a modern state, politics is defined by its relationship to physical constraint or violence as ultima ratio, a violence which, to the extent it is consented to (is legitimate), has become increasingly monopolised by the rationally legitimised political system... (Guzzini 2017, p. 101).

Borrowing from the Weber's conception of power, Foucault's perspective on 'knowledge and power' (Foucault 1991) helps us understand knowledge as a resource that can be created by the influence of power as well as one that can shape power in many ways. In my understanding of the MCNP case, power emerging through intangible resources such as local knowledge of the spiritual has the potential to impart agency and resilience in people. In keeping with this hypothesis, the thesis examines how this power manifests itself in the relations people share with the dead and the implications of this instance for our broader understanding of hierarchy and egalitarianism.

Power has been defined as "having to do with the capacity of persons or collectivities to get things done effectively, in particular when their goals are obstructed by some kind of human resistance or opposition." (Parsons 1967, p.232); Hobbes' *Leviathan*

examines power as the means "to obtain some future apparent good" (Hobbes 1968, p.35), which can be natural (virtues) or external (ways of acquiring more goods) and consists in command over others. Foucault's writing 'Power/Knowledge' likens power to the authority being exercised in governance, institutional practices, and the management of individuals, where various forms of knowledge emerge and give rise to power relations (Foucault 1980, p.245-247). However, anthropological studies on power in the collaborative context of resource management and its social-ecological dimension suggest that power can be a tool for understanding participatory processes that involve sharing responsibilities, negotiation, collective understanding and action between communities and social actors (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Nantongo et al. 2019). Through relations of power, people engage in transformative ways of being in the world, enabling them to have control over their own lives (Rapport 2003). The existing studies also offer a critique of power in the setting of knowledge integration where power is perceived in terms of abstractions that are manipulated in systems of information exchange. These have the tendency to negate local knowledge, concentrating power in the hands of scientific resource managers rather than empowering local people (Nadasdy 1999, p.12). Relations of this kind can be triggered by market and capitalist networks that shape how people relate to the natural environment (Fabinyi et al. 2014). In this thesis, I situate my analysis of power relations along the above line of studying power in situations of resource management. This enables better understanding of the practices individuals adopt to create environments that are meaningful to people who are pursuing life projects in a complex system of co-management.

Hierarchy, for its part, is a basic element of social life that defines day-to-day realities influencing organisations, groups and individuals. Hierarchy consists in differentials of power—status and the capacity to control resources —based upon respect from others, which can be favourable and also detrimental to the accumulation of wealth (van Kleef and Morgan 1877, p. 1-5). In the anthropological literature, hierarchy has been defined as a kind of structured relation consisting of elements that are subordinate to others and may be ranked according to certain factors (Crumley 1995). Thus, hierarchy defines the relations of order among elements within a structure. Crumley distinguishes two types: control and scalar hierarchies. In a control hierarchy "decisions at higher levels affect the operation of lower levels"; in a scalar hierarchy, any level of order can affect other levels, (1995, p.2). In Crumley's view, in systems of governing human societies, an analysis of hierarchy could provide clues as to how shifts in power occur and what conditions in various forms of power trigger changes of environmental stability and instability. Hierarchy further manifests itself in the ranking and re-ranking of values according to their importance by individuals, groups and organisations when societal change occurs. The values can be contested or embraced at different spatial scales of society. This way of understanding the nature of hierarchy and its place in relations of power

makes it possible to devise new approaches to agency, conflict, and cooperation (Crumley 1995, p.4). I explore this theoretical dimension of hierarchy using the case of the MCNP in order to understand whether and how people exercise their agency in circumstances of conflict and to contribute insights from this example adds to understanding the connection between hierarchy and power relations. In practice, hierarchical structures limit agency; positions in a hierarchy are expressions of power; and those with the lowest rank in a hierarchy tend to have less power. However, I show in this thesis that those with a relatively low rank can acquire agency through their spiritual relations to the land.

Flanagan (1989) exemplifies hierarchy in the context of egalitarianism – a condition of humanity in societies typically observed as not having centralized authority, where in, distinctions by status or rank are of little significance. Flanagan was particularly critical of previous contributions in political anthropology that attribute egalitarianism to equality in societies without a proper account of what type of qualities individuals in these societies have and how they come to possess the qualities that shape socio-cultural relationships. Flanagan goes on suggesting a need for egalitarianism to be culturally and contextually defined, with distinctions between egalitarian ideologies and practice. By egalitarian ideologies, systems perceived as egalitarian may at the same time have hierarchical features with inequalities that mask in interpersonal relations of achieving desired ends such as access to material resources and power, which rest on the different abilities in individuals and the kind of opportunities that exist in societies (1989, p. 248). Woodburn's (1982) work on assertive egalitarianism presents examples that can be likened to Flanagan's egalitarian ideologies, when we think of hunting and gathering societies with immediate-return systems of wealth accumulation and distribution, such as the Hadza in Tanzania. In these systems, members of the group strive for equality. For instance, with free access for all to wild food, water, and other resources, all men have access to lethal weapons, freedom for all members of the group to move from a family camp to another without facing resistances, and so on. Yet, inequalities may exist (unintended) with some persons living in more wealthy camps than others, individuals in possession of more weapons than others, and variabilities in hunting and gathering skills between individuals, all of which indirectly risk fuelling claims of wealth, power, and prestige, even if not intended. In linking the MCNP example to the above scholarly views, the 17 villages in my sample study do have certain differences with some being more hierarchical or egalitarian than others, which can be attributed to disparities in the distribution of biodiversity across cluster conservation zones of the park. Hence, the desired ends achieved among village residents, in terms of access to resources and power, differs between individuals as well as villages. This thesis bears in mind such differences to reveal what alternatives people adopt in difficult situations of co-management.

Unlike 'co-management' suggests, previous studies have shown that the arrangement is not a partnership among equals working together; it may well involve

relations between the empowered and the powerless. Within this hierarchical context, spaces for participation are of the powerful parties' own making (Williams 2004). Victoria (2016) adds another understanding whereby power relations involve various strategies that make a society; his conception goes beyond state power and inequalities to encompass other modes of command and control over things, space and time and how they are constructed in places and moments. Victoria proposes a shift from the narrow state-centric politics of the mid-twentieth century, or an 'anthropology of politics', to an ethnographic focus on wide-ranging power relationships and processes that produce society, an 'anthropology of power', which entails continuous negotiation and struggle that transform society.

In analysing relations of power, it is worth looking into the way individuals act, decide and see their destinies within collective forms of life (Rapport 2003) as well as examining what values people uphold in shaping hierarchical settings of power. A value can be understood as a relation that is inseparable from practices (Iteanu 2009). In anthropology, values are important for understanding the link between power and hierarchy, because they reveal the choices individuals impute to a particular status in a hierarchical system. My data suggest that studies of co-management need a better analysis of the power relations that produce or transform society and that connecting power, hierarchy and egalitarianism together as a larger theoretical framework, is valuable for revealing these power relations. This orientation between theoretical concepts is a useful tool for assessing the implementation of a co-management regime.

2.2. Convivial conservation, institutional bricolage, and community resilience

In the above paragraphs, I have presented an overview of some of the relevant theoretical perspectives on power, hierarchy and egalitarianism. The existing literature has shown that these considerations are very much interconnected culturally and contextually, shaping, influencing and constructing the ways people relate to their environments, as in systems that rely on resource accumulation and distribution. However, few scholars have explored how these concepts may be connected to create a larger theoretical framework applicable to understanding complex systems of co-management. Three analytical frameworks used in political ecology offer some insights about this complexity and how it can be addressed: (a) convivial conservation (Büscher and Fletcher 2019); (b) institutional bricolage (Cleaver 2012; De Koning 2011); and (c) community resilience (Berkes and Ross 2013, Brown 2016, Wilson 2012). Firstly, Büscher and Fletcher (2019) point out that conservation remains crucial for environmental policy and yet has failed in many ways when we think of the colonial legacy of conservation. They note that the

activities of conservation regimes that do not adequately not counteract capitalism but continue re-creating notions of separation from nature by categorising humans as a destructive force. What Büscher and Fletcher (2019) propose as a solution is 'convivial conservation' as a set of governance principles that serve to adapt existing conservation and development schemes towards structural transformation, environmental justice and radical equity. This form of governance entails humans preserving biodiversity and developing appropriate alternative ways to engage with nonhumans. Specifically, Büscher and Fletcher put forward a vision for convivial conservation comprising five transitions: "from protected areas to promoted areas; from touristic voyeurism to engaged visitation; from natural capital to embedded values; from privatized expert technocracy to common democratic engagement; and from spectacular to everyday environmentalisms" (2019, p.286-288).

The second framework from political ecology, institutional bricolage, "implies that institutional construction and reshaping happen in an environment that is less transparent and therefore challenging to investigate" (De Koning 2011, p.28). While institutional bricolage acknowledges the unsuitable exchanges between formal and informal institutions and the disputed processes through which these institutions are formed, it argues that "people consciously and non-consciously draw on existing social formulae (styles of thinking, models of cause and effect, social norms and sanctioned social roles and relationships) to patch or piece together institutions in response to changing situations" (Cleaver 2012: 45). Scholars of institutional bricolage suggest that in complex environments of resource governance, a bricolage happens—institutions reshape and construct the meaning and nature of existing norms, rules, beliefs, and values at the interface of unstable institutional systems, resulting in impacts on local practices that then become challenging to explore. Insights provided by the notions of convivial conservation and institutional bricolage will be useful for revealing how relations of power in the everyday business of institutions impact the local traditions of people in the MCNP. Examining these relations is particularly salient in the light of the colonial influence on today's nature of conservation, the influx of neoliberalism in resource management, and the gradual increase in the heterogeneity of the local population, which together have made the MCNP and its surrounding villages even more complex to examine.

The third framework I would like to take up is community resilience, which is a component of both ecology and the social sciences. In anthropology, resilience describes the qualities and capacities that enable communities to recover from catastrophic events, and this form of resilience has several implications regarding practices that enable people to cope with changes in their environments (Barrios 2016). Advocates of community resilience identify complexities of resource management as being the high number of uncertainties, globalization and the rising disparities that leave actors with limited choices, examples being the dilemmas of forest management and rural-urban poverty in developing nations (Brown 2015).

Fikret Berkes and others contend that community resilience is relatively new to the social sciences, having emerged in the psychology of mental health and personal development in recent decades, where it focuses on the individual level in dealing with issues that enable communities respond to adversity (Berkes and Ross 2013, p. 6).

With a focus on the relations between people and places, social networks, collaborative systems of governance, and economic diversification, scholars of community resilience endeavour to identify and build community strengths and bring about resilience through agency and practices of self-organization (Berkes and Ross 2013, Brown 2015). In the case of the MCNP, I apply this view of resilience to analyse how people react to difficulties in co-management and to identify what kinds of strengths develop among the locals in their response to the difficulties. Although community resilience recognizes some of the potential of local people to look after their natural environment, I go further to situate my investigation of this resilience within the broader scope of cultural resilience. This concept, which I will discuss later in the thesis, encompasses not only a community as a geographical entity but also as individuals who have recovered with respect to customs, beliefs and values, in adaptive networks (Clauss-Ehlers 2010; Davies and Moore 2016). It will also be beneficial for disclosing new directions in anthropological research that reveal suitable alternatives for productive engagement and the co-production of knowledge between different actors in a co-management system.

Below, I present an overview of the other insights which I have incorporated into the broad theoretical framework applied here. The pertain to (a) the critical context of co-management, (b) the interconnection between cultural resilience and agency and its implications for a community, and (c) the role of traditional knowledge in the lives of people. I show how combining insights above and considerations here contributes to shaping the relationship between a co-management regime and the knowledge of people who endeavour to continue to practice their culture.

2.3. Critical views about co-management

Co-management—the partnership between local communities, government and other actors—is used in the scholarly literature to describe governance, power-sharing, cooperation and knowledge integration. It is used with particular reference to inclusive management of natural resources, which is characterised by community-based and participatory models of development and conservation (Berkes 2009; Berkes et al. 1991; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Nadasdy 2007, 2005, 2003). In Africa, the joint management of natural resources is not new. Local groups, including farmers, hunter-gatherers and pastoralists, have for many generations managed the land they live on and the natural resources around them. The Pygmy

groups, sometimes assumed to be the original inhabitants of the tropical rainforests in central and western Africa, have foraged on wild products in the rainforests, making these their home in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Uganda and Guinea. The Hadza, who live near Lake Eyasi in northern Tanzania, have maintained a lifestyle herding livestock in remote parts of the bush. Similarly, the San people lived their lives as autonomous hunter-gatherers in the Namib and Kalahari Deserts in southern Africa in the past millennium, (Lee and Hitchcock 2001). Collective approaches in resource management continue to be vital to sustaining the livelihoods of many people in Africa (Roe et al. 2009). However, the coming of colonial authorities to Africa brought a new perspective on resource management, one that incorporates the role of the state, state institutions, and formal policy. These components, embedded as they were in colonial systems, came to exclude local communities from decision-making regarding land management (Diver 2016).

The literature has generally portrayed co-management as a response to the emergence of colonial powers, nation-states and their authority over natural resources in Africa and elsewhere during the colonial and post-colonial era. Yet, this aim notwithstanding, co-management has been seen as weakening local systems of land use for many local economies (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2007). Borrini-Feyerabend et al. note that powerful influence on local systems has been responsible for losses in local knowledge, widespread mistrust and recurrent confrontations between local communities and agents of the state. Particularly striking in the co-management literature are the accounts of the centralised nature of governance adopted by many developing countries, a form of authority that historically was often structured around power differentials and repressive forms of resource management. Two salient examples, among the many, are the 1930 text on Madagascar forests and the colonial order of 4 July 1935 in former French West Africa (*Afrique Occidentale Française*), both of which not only restricted the rights of Indigenous people to exploit resources of forest reserves but ignored the input of rural people in drafting procedures for forest protection (Ballet et al. 2009). The 1960s, a full 15 years following the Second World War, saw the independence of several countries focused on rebuilding their economies following colonial rule; this number included Guinea, Cameroon, Senegal, Mali, Togo and Madagascar, which were under French administration. Interestingly, some of the newly independent states continued their centralised modes of natural resource governance until the 1980s and 1990s, which saw the emergence of participatory agreements for environmental action (Ballet et al. 2009; MacKinnon et al. 1986).

One such agreement is the World Conservation Strategy of 1981, which was ratified in Washington DC by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO). The

Strategy urged nations to ensure the sustainability of human usage of ecosystems that supports rural people and to promote opportunities for rural development and the rational utilisation of marginal lands. In 1992, the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted, among other principles, the fair and equitable distribution of benefits from using genetic resources. Both legal instruments have been significant in introducing participatory models of resource management in sub-Sharan Africa, where by the 1990s most of the local population began to be involved in environmental policy decisions (Ballet et al. 2009). Cameroon is a signatory to the CBD and has since incorporated provisions of the Convention into the co-management of national parks with the aim of meeting the needs of indigenous people residing in and around protected areas (Nebasifu & Atong 2020b).

As the diverse interests relating to conservation and development in participatory processes driven by formal agreements often overlap, co-management is described in turns in the resource management literature as a tool with the potential to question centralised bureaucracies, to share power between local people and government agencies and to facilitate the incorporation of local knowledge in environmental governance (Diver 2016; Nadasdy 2003). Some regard it as useful to enhance the adaptability and sustainability of protected areas while connecting people with landscapes of cultural importance (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004). Berkes (2009) adds another view to these aspirations, describing some processes of co-management as sharing power during land claims, building institutions where there are inadequate policies, solving problems in ways that generate alternative management actions and applying co-governance such that it advocates for equity and empowerment among people.

Despite their potential, not all co-management initiatives enable meaningful power sharing, because indigenous worldviews are often excluded from dominant knowledge systems (Nadasdy 2007). What is more, it is extremely difficult to implement successful initiatives, as approving formal agreements requires sufficient capacity for conflict resolution, acquiring funding support and lawful accountability, all of which are hard to attain (Diver 2016). Berkes et al. (1991, pp. 4-5) state the need for caution in elaborating definitions of co-management, as it can refer to different approaches to integration in natural resource management systems. They cite two examples in this regard. The first is centralised, or top-down, management, as observed in the case of Canada, where the federal government uses laws and regulations to enforce rules. The second is decentralised management based on customary practices and traditions that regulate the system. Consistent with the above views, while it is often claimed that local communities are in the proper position to make use of their natural resources (Berkes et al. 1991), this does not mean that they will always be successful as managers of resource management systems. Neither does it imply central governments should be excluded from such management. Rather, co-management involves a range of actors, with local

communities or central governments being only a subset of the players involved. Without mutual understanding and enthusiasm among all actors to jointly support each other in sharing responsibilities, participation tends to have unintended consequences.

Consider the example of the Ruby Range Sheep Steering Committee (RRSSC), a co-management body in the Yukon, Canada, that was tasked with integrating local knowledge on managing sheep into activities of the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board (Nadasdy 2003). With diverse parties and opinions in the committee, whose members comprised biologists, local big game outfitters, First Nation Kluane people, persons represented representing the federal and territorial government as well as environmental organisations, it proved difficult to develop any kind of balanced plan. Adding to the difficulties was the territorial government's failure to implement most of the ideas provided by the Kluane people. Despite promises of First Nation empowerment in the co-management project, the process of cooperation, in effect, increased the power of Yukon government biologists and their control over sheep management because their participation in the RRSSC enabled them to adopt 'codified' forms of Kluane elders' and hunters' knowledge taken out of context. This being the case, the biologists did not see the need to include First Nation elders and hunters in their plans to incorporate traditional knowledge into the management process (Nadasdy 2003, p.379). In northern Cameroon, the WWF introduced Integrated Conservation Development Projects, applications of an instrument used in co-management systems, with promises of recognising indigenous people as equal partners in the conservation of the Korup National Park (Schmidt-Soltau 2004). The outcome of this approach was the protection of nature to the detriment of the local population, as the project led to the prohibition of hunting, gathering and fishing on traditional lands that the locals had relied on for their livelihood.

One shortcoming of co-management stems from the difficulty of configuring complex indigenous knowledge systems into policy frameworks for protected areas. This arises because the process of translating indigenous ontologies to categories and fitting them into pre-defined bureaucratic structures entails the risk of having incomplete representations or being misrepresented (Forbes and Stammler 2009; Nadasdy 2003). West et al. (2006) examined the social, economic and political effects of conservation projects in protected areas. One of the pertinent issues discussed in their study was the IUCN's attempt to create a global system fitting various protected lands into categories that separate people from their surroundings (p. 256). This has had various ramifications for native communities. Indeed, in promoting biodiversity some conservation organisations have indirectly precipitated circumstances that change the land use rights of native people, displacing them from lands of ancestral importance and leading to conflicts between land users. For example, the establishment in the Dominican Republic of a protected area, Ebano

Verde Scientific Reserve, in 1989, led to conflicts between agents of the state and the locals of El Arroyazo and La Sal, who had long relied on the Ebano Verde forest for subsistence (Holmes 2014). Not only did the locals lose their entitlement to subsistence on the land, which they used for crabbing, harvesting wood and burning stubble in fields, but they were never compensated for the land they lost to the state. Many of them began to develop resentment against the state.

Another criticism of co-management regimes is reflected in the idea that in societies with post-colonial land claims, the regimes perpetuate increased control over lands and local people do not always get what they want even if there is participation (McGrath 2018). In West Africa, co-management initiatives often hark back to colonialism, when English and French colonial authorities administered economies using centralised forms of governance. These gave the state authority over unregistered lands, a power that has remained centralised for many economies since independence (Roe et al. 2009). The region relies a great deal on land tenure, with many people living on valuable forest and agricultural products that have potential for social and economic development. Yet, where these products exist, they usually become state property using state laws that prohibit or restrict their use by the community. It is largely state laws that allow the state to retain control over natural resources even when participatory measures are implemented. Many countries— Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Cameroon, among others— have moved to adopt formal decentralised modes of resource management that often require land registration and support from donors like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, non-governmental organisations and EU governments (Roe et al. 2009).

The above criticisms of co-management and related practices present an analytical instrument for understanding people's relationship with protected areas and the institutions that administer such areas. However, while critics have shared vital information about the unintended consequences of co-management, a paradigm seems to have emerged in recent decades providing alternative ways of coping with challenges in co-management. Scholars of adaptive management (Berkes and Armitage 2010; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2007; Nadasdy 2007) maintain that social-environmental systems change and, accordingly, management regimes must be flexible enough to adapt to changes. Resource managers and institutions must learn by doing to respond properly to complex circumstances. My analysis will continue this thinking with an emphasis on the flexibility mustered by local users of the MCNP. I will investigate whether such flexibility is a facet of people's resilience to the park regime.

2.4. Cultural Resilience and Agency

Resilience generally means the ability to recover from difficulties. The concept has foundations in many fields and in related concepts in the environmental sciences, where it describes processes of change that vary from thinking about the balance of nature to the relationship between exploitation and collapse (Fabinyi et al. 2014). Is only in the last thirty years that scholars have begun conceptualising resilience for use as a theory (Smyntyna 2016). In the context of co-managing with local communities, culture plays a fundamental role in shaping people's ability to recover from many problems. In this regard, there is a difference between the resilience of ecosystems and resilience afforded people by their culture. While the former involves the ability of a geographically defined area to deal with stressors and efficiently recover (Ganji et al. 2019), the latter promotes recovery through the reliance individuals and communities have on customs, beliefs, values, resources and knowledge when facing obstacles. The interconnection between these attributes and how they operate in adaptive networks is what Clauss-Ehlers (2010) and Davies and Moore (2016) refer to as 'cultural resilience'. Another form of cultural resilience can be seen in the protective mechanisms that people develop to remedy the impact of events that put the society at risk (Angell 2000).

Agency comprises the enabling mechanisms by which people act (Chirozva 2015; Harvey 2002; Newman and Dale 2006). For sociological thinkers like Anthony Giddens, such action is usually intentional and a product of knowledgeable actors who are influenced by 'structure', that is, the grounds for and the outcome of a given action (Giddens 1984, p. 14-17; Karp 1986, p. 135). Both agency and resilience are relevant for people and their local environments. In this thesis, the importance of cultural resilience as an analytical concept is its applicability to understanding the safety nets by which people nurture complex adaptive strategies to safeguard their means of livelihood under a co-management system. This is why cultural resilience is crucial for the continuity of livelihoods. It is important to note that culture is not static but a continuous process of change; different forces come into play that might jeopardise livelihoods, which is a constant problem for local communities around the world. This change occurs in nonlinear ways and has variable implications for how people understand and interact with the environment in social-ecological systems (Nebasifu & Atong 2019a).

The link between cultural resilience and agency has not been discussed to any significant extent in the co-management literature. Each could be a product of the other, coming as they do from practices specifically enacted by individuals and communities that afford adaptation. To Daskon (2010), people as agents of change can bring in new ways of doing things. Cultural values, which are a part of cultural resilience, enhance people's capacity to question and challenge practices. The values can increase a culture's capacity to improvise and thereby strengthen its resilience

(Table 1). For instance, Kandyan communities in Sri Lanka had the capacity to conserve their ancient craft traditions despite facing colonisation from Portuguese authorities between the 15th and 18th century. They succeeded by dint of a caste system that splits society into hereditary groups which have strong family relations and connections with Kandyan ancestors and within which families cooperate. Among the Kandy people, fathers sustain inherited crafts such as wood carving, ivory carving, painting and carpentry by training their sons, thus transmitting the knowledge from generation to generation as well as by marrying their daughters into families who have mastered the same craft (Daskon 2010). In keeping with its analytical framework, the thesis will discuss the significance of cultural resilience and agency in the perseverance of people's culture and livelihoods. One focal question will be: Have the Bakweri, much like the Kandyans, succeeded in resisting the changes that co-management initiatives urge upon them in their everyday lives, or have they adapted to the changes?

2.5. Traditional knowledge

I define traditional knowledge essentially as the term 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)' is used in the works of Fikret Berkes and colleagues. Berkes (2008) has illustrated the role of indigenous people in the reasonable management of natural resources, suggesting four levels of knowledge that enable groups to deal with dynamic socio-ecological systems: (a) understanding various species, (b) incorporating knowledge of local people with practice, (c) providing codes of behaviour, and (d) making sense of observations defined by belief systems. Traditional knowledge is relevant in promoting sources of support for locals as well as in preserving various species of plants and animals. Consider the case of communities occupied by the Igbo, Isoko and Ijaw people in Nigeria's Delta State (Rim-Rukeh et al. 2013). Their traditional beliefs support the conservation of natural resources while preserving cultural practices. In the Orhoakpor community, residents believe in the spirit Aziza, a being of the woods that controls the Okpagha tree, protecting farmers' crops and fields from enemies. Lands with groves of Okpagha trees are sacred. Humans avoid touching animals, trees, insects, water bodies and fruits found around the tree out of fear of Aziza (Rim-Rukeh et al. 2013, p. 429).

The Luhya people in Kenya collectively manage the Kakamega ecosystem based on spiritual connection to animals, including a belief that pythons bring better harvests and the green bush viper looks after the sacred forest (Gumo et al. 2012). The people believe that the spirits of the living dead reside in pythons and give snakes food and drink when they come into homes. The people then create an opening in the wall of their homes allowing snakes to go through the wall in peace, and recite incantations as it does so. In this example, the Luhya have reciprocal relationships

with animals. They indirectly engage in protecting snakes and their natural habitats, and in return experience bountiful crop harvests, which they perceive as a blessing from the spirits of the living dead. These examples show how traditional knowledge can be a tool for livelihood resilience.

In studies related to co-management, traditional knowledge is contested epistemologically as a concept brought in by Western conservationists to manage and put traditions into a 'box', with people's traditional needs then being less explicitly recognised in decision making (Nadasdy 2005, 1999). Both Markkula et al. (2019) and McGrath (2018) have shown how resource management regime formalities (laws and regulations) that should safeguard the rights of indigenous people do not properly elicit their knowledge in management decisions. This being the case, there is need for the beliefs that people hold intimately in their lives to be given thorough consideration in the governance of protected areas. Using the theoretical concepts of cultural resilience, agency and traditional knowledge as a framework, I will proceed in the next chapter to address questions of how these capacities strengthen people's resilience and what they imply for biodiversity conservation. I use 'local knowledge' in subsequent parts of this thesis as a broad term to describe the opinions of local people regarding the co-management system for the MCNP, the people's knowledge of forest use, ritual beliefs and the relevance of these beliefs for cultural continuity. This knowledge is not static but is processual in nature (Forbes and Stammler 2009; Ingold 2000).

3. Research Questions

This thesis investigates relations between officials and local people in the co-management of a protected area using the case of the MCNP and its adjacent communities in sub-Saharan West Africa. It does so by addressing three main questions:

a) **What is the nature of power relations between park authorities and local communities involved in the co-management of the MCNP?**
 – What are the park regime's resource management procedures for the MCNP, that is, the priorities of the ruling elites and the approach to decision-making?
 – What kind of mechanisms does the park regime put in place for the participation of local communities in its co-management agenda?

b) **What agency do people display to boost their resilience?**
 – How has the introduction of co-management influenced local attitudes? Has it convinced people that they can thrive within the system?
 – Have communities around the MCNP maintained their cultural connection to the land following the introduction of co-management?

c) **What is the relation between local knowledge and biodiversity?**
 – What opinions do park managers and local people have about the value of local knowledge in conservation?
 – How does local knowledge influence practices of biodiversity conservation?

With these questions in mind, I set out to explore changes in the relationships between people and the natural environment through various events in the history and current situation of the MCNP. The outcome of this inquiry is a set of options for improving the integration of local knowledge in co-management practices, the particular focus being the contemporary context of the MCNP and its adjacent communities.

4.   Materials and Methods

In 2015, I made a preliminary visit to the Mount Cameroon region, where I met with various conservation specialists at the Limbe Wildlife Centre and at the Botanical and Zoological Garden in Limbe. During that visit, I gathered data with a view to future research in the study area. I also obtained useful information about the conservation of biodiversity in the MCNP and the involvement of the local population in this effort. After the visit, I wrote up a brief account of my observations, which was a follow-up to earlier research conducted in 2011 as part of my bachelor's degree in sociology and anthropology at the University of Buea in Cameroon. In the latter, I discussed the theme of protected area management and the role of rural communities in the Mount Cameroon region (Nebasifu 2012). The areas included in the study were the Bimbia Bonadikombo Community Forest, the Bakingili Community Forest, the Limbe Wildlife Centre, the Limbe Botanical and Zoological Garden and the MCNP. The report also documented narratives about illegal hunting, the gradual extinction of mandrills and various plant species, as well as allegations about local people losing entitlements to their land in protected areas. These findings convinced me there was more to the topic and motivated me to delve deeper into the case of the MCNP. I had an opportunity to continue this line of inquiry in 2017 when doing an internship at the Environment and Rural Development Foundation (ERUDEF) in collaboration with MCNP Service. The following sections present the range of materials collected and methods used in the thesis. This account encompasses (a) a description of the study area, the livelihoods of the local population and co-management procedures; (b) the research methods; and (c) the research ethics.

4.1. Materials: Description of the Study Area

The MCNP is located between latitude 3°13' to 4°13' N and longitude 8°58' to 9°10' E. It is bounded in the west by the Atlantic Ocean. The park was established by a decree of the prime minister (No.2009/2272) on 18 December 2009 (Charlotte 2014). MCNP represents an IUCN category II protected area and includes some of the biodiversity hotspots in the Gulf of Guinea Forests in West Africa. At the time of its creation, park officials set aside approximately 58,178 hectares (ha) of land, divided into four conservation zones, or clusters: the west coast, which comprises a long Atlantic seashore stretching approximately 50 km; Buea in the southeast;

Muyuka in the northeast; and Bomboko in the northwest. The MCNP is the site of Mount Cameroon, the highest mountain in West and Central Africa, rising to above 4,000 m on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean in the Gulf of Guinea. The park, a biodiversity hotspot, hosts over 2000 plant species and some 46 plant species that are endemic to the mountain. It is also host to many wildlife species, such as antelopes, drills, forest elephants, Preuss's monkey, bats, chimpanzees and several species of birds. The presence of a wet season (June to October), bringing between 2,000 to 10,000 millimetres of rain annually, and a dry season (January to April), bringing sunshine, as well as temperatures ranging from 4°C to 32°C over the course of the year, provides a conducive climate for rich vegetation.

The Bakweri people are indigenous to the mountain and reside among other groups, who have come from elsewhere in Cameroon. Group examples such as the Bali, Bafut, Wum, Kom, Essimbi and Bamileke. How integrated these groups are culturally and their role in forest preservation can be explained using the Bakweri word *wajili*. This is a Mokpwe expression referring to foreign settlers who have no blood ties to Bakweri ancestors but have adopted traditional Bakweri customs and ways of using the land to the extent that they can be accepted as members of the Bakweri community. In many of the villages I visited, the residents preferred to be observed as one family, a behaviour I saw as characterising people living with a sense of unity and happily sharing their tradition with outsiders who aspire to live like the Bakweri. Quite often, a Bakweri will give the name *Mola* (a respectful equivalent of 'Mister') to an outsider who has gained significant knowledge about Bakweri culture.

It is rather difficult to differentiate the 41 villages around the MCNP (Fig. 1 and 2) on a socio-cultural basis due to the many similarities that they share. One approach is to reflect on the policy level of their operation, an overview of the demography, their proximity to towns and markets, and their classification in terms of the MCNP's conservation zones. Figure 2 shows the park's four conservation zones and their component villages. In each of these zones, villages have socio-cultural similarities, but differences in their proximity to towns and markets. For instance, Bomboko falls under the Mbonge sub-division; Buea is part of the Buea sub-division; the West Coast is administered under the Idenau sub-division; and Muyuka is a unit within the Muyuka sub-division. I do not want to pretend that these groups are not diverse, nor do I want to create the impression that they are all the same. My primary interest was the villages' relations to the MCNP regime, and in the course of this investigation I discovered a great deal of similarities between the people in the communities. Accordingly, I focus more on the similarities than on the diversities.

The population of in these villages ranges from fewer than 500 to more than 2000 persons. Farming and fishing are major livelihoods on the West Coast due to favourable volcanic soils and a nearby coastline of the Atlantic Ocean (Fig. 1). For

villages on the West Coast, it access is less than an hour's drive to a major market town Limbe, where they can sell their crops. Bomboko, a major cocoa-producing area, has some of the most remote villages, the town of Muyuka being at least a three-hour journey by car. The Buea and Muyuka conservation zones comprise semi-urban areas, with villages located closer to major markets than in other zones. One finds many of the inhabitants of trading in food crops brought in from other regions of Cameroon. One similarity I found among the villages was their patrilineal system of kinship in which property is generally inherited by male kin. Moreover, in many case, the women look after the home while the men seek sources of income elsewhere. In terms of power relations, each village is led by a chief, who presides over land disputes as well as peace negotiations and purchases of land and is usually aided by a traditional council. Chiefs might also make decisions on matters concerning the general wellbeing of the village in consultation with village committees and groups. In past years, scholars have criticised the role of chiefs in relations of power; they function as subordinates of the government through activities such as collecting taxes and promoting plans of the state, which weakens their power to make reasonable decisions compatible with Bakweri customs (Geschiere 1993; Nuesiri 2014).

Following a history of land conflicts and being granted land rights, the Bakweri continue to maintain various forms of land use and traditional belief systems, although both are at risk of disappearing under pressures from state laws, Christianity and the influx of tribal groups from elsewhere (Nebasifu and Atong 2020a, 2019b). Article 3 of the thesis, summarised in a later chapter, identifies some of the anthropogenic threats to biodiversity on Mount Cameroon, examples being logging, illegal hunting, an increase in plantation agriculture and bush fires; these are what prompted the state to introduce measures for protected area management in 2009 through the creation of the MCNP. Another salient consideration is the 1974 Land Tenure Act, still applicable in villages around the MCNP, which provides the Cameroon government may declare lands that are not visibly cultivated or registered with a land certificate to be national lands and placed under state ownership.

Figure 1. *Location of the MCNP on the map of Africa (Field data 2017)*
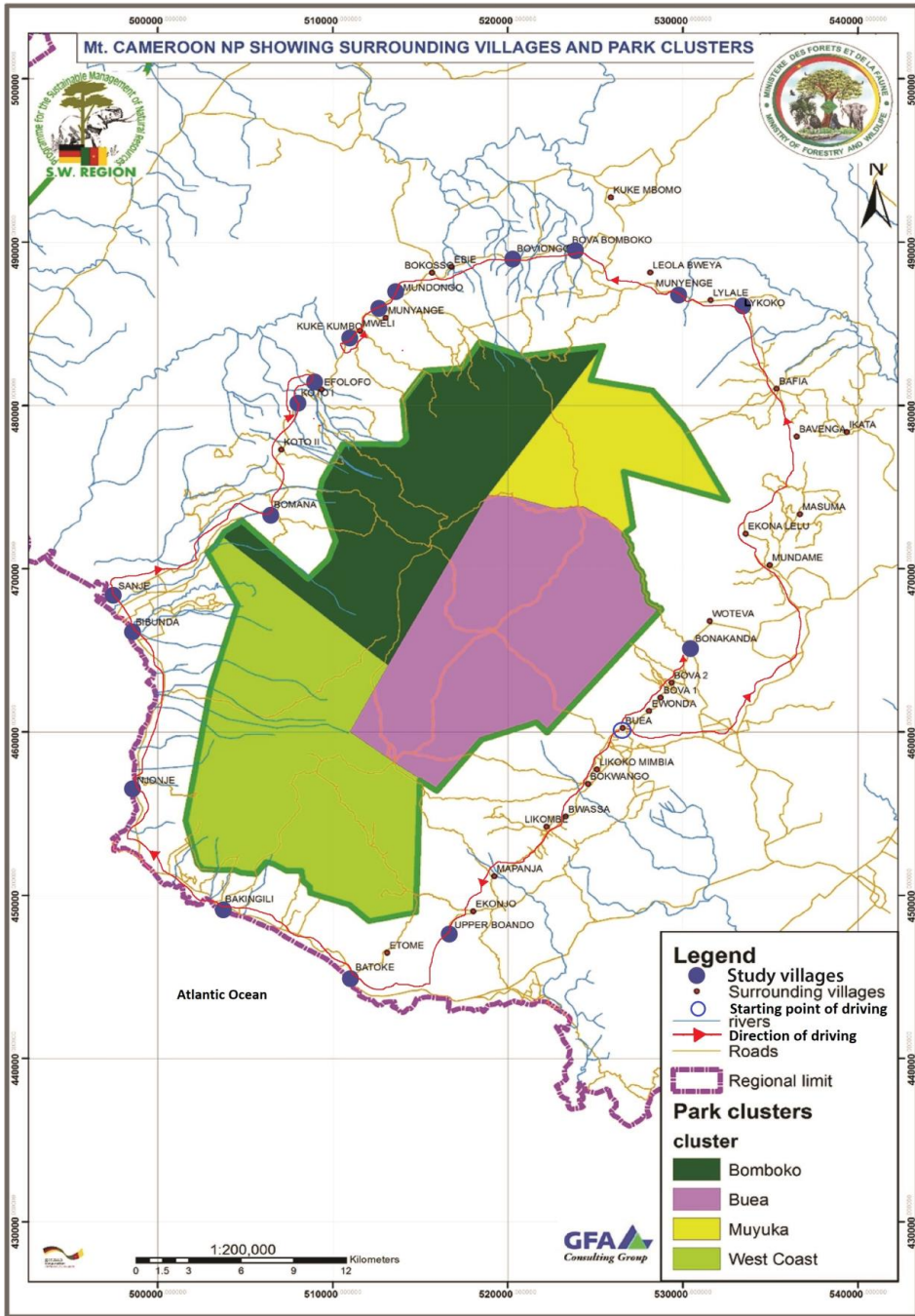
Figure 2. *Map of the research site, the MCNP. Adapted from MCNP Service (2017)*

4.1.1. Livelihoods

The livelihood activities of people living around the MCNP range from hunting, farming, fishing and pit sawing to timber harvesting, which directly and indirectly affect management of the park. On the west coast for instance, fishing is a prominent activity. In Bomboko and Muyuka, locals cultivate cocoa. The population of villages in the area ranges from 500 to 2000 inhabitants. Muyuka, Buea, and the west coast include semi-urban areas. Figure 3 below shows a visit to Batoke on the west coast during my fieldwork in 2017. Here, many of the locals are engaged in trading food crops. In contrast, Bomboko, located on the northwest flank of the mountain, is rural in nature and relatively more 'remote' than the other villages (Nebasifu and Atong 2020b). Most of the locals in this zone practice subsistence farming featuring the cultivation of fruits such as bananas and pawpaw and crops such as cocoyam, cassava and plantains (Fig. 4). The locals are also cultivating cash crops for commercial use, cocoa being the premier example. Some families graze cows, goats and pigs as well as trapping game, harvesting firewood and gathering herbs for traditional healing. Over recent decades, the introduction of commercial agriculture through the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) on the fringes of the MCNP has become a source of employment for village residents, who work on plantations on the west coast and in the Buea district.

Figure 3. *Visit to Batoke village, West Coast (Field data 2017)*

Figure 4. *A remote farm in Bomboko (Field data 2017)*

4.1.2. Co-management Procedures

In 2014, the Cameroon Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife created a co-management plan, through Ministerial Decision No. 0385/MINFOF/SG/DFAP of 12 August 2014, to facilitate joint participation between MCNP Service, partner organisations and local communities in the management of the MCNP (Charlotte 2014). This original plan covered a five-year period (2014-2019) and was applicable when I completed the fieldwork described here. It was designed to be renewable following constructive adjustments and revisions. It promotes the involvement of administrative and natural resource management specialists from divisional, sub-divisional, regional and national levels of Cameroon agencies in the management of the MCNP. The ministerial decision of 2014 established a technical committee to elaborate the first, prototypical management plan. Among many objectives, the plan aims at promoting ecotourism and using co-management approaches to sustain ecosystems and meet the needs of local communities. Since the year 2014, the co-management plan has incorporated the following six management programmes: Sustainable finance mechanism; Park protection and surveillance; Administration and finance; Ecotourism development; Research and monitoring; and Collaborative management and local development (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b). The programmes pursue the main objectives of the plan, set out indicated in four thematic pillars as shown in Figure 5 below.
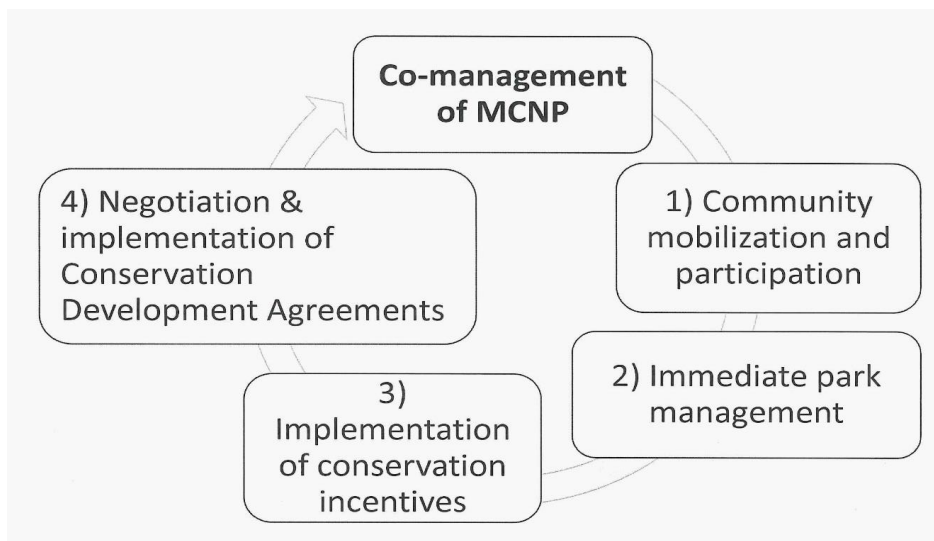
Figure 5. *Pillars of the MCNP co-management plan. Adapted from MCNP Service (2017)*

The first pillar (Community Mobilisation and Participation) recognises the role of the 41 village forest management committees around Mount Cameroon; these were created between 2008 and 2010 by MCNP Service in collaboration with village inhabitants. The related programme places village chiefs at the head of the committees. The committees ensure that local people carry out joint patrols in communities with park officials and meet every six months with park officials to discuss, negotiate, agree and implement new strategies geared towards biodiversity conservation and community development. At the core of this pillar is the appointment of cluster facilitators (park officials) instructed to ensure the effective flow of information between MCNP Service and adjacent villages in each of the four conservation zones. These facilitators are crucial in following up on co-management activities for each cluster and in updating MCNP Service on the implementation and progress of conservation development agreements (CDA). They also moderate cluster platform discussions and negotiations, assist in village forest management committees, contribute to data collection for ecological monitoring and research, and participate in resource management by working closely with conservation partners.

Through community mobilisation, park officials issue guidelines (user rights) on the cultivation and exploitation of various timber species. Cluster facilitators also help in educating locals on how to apply user rights in areas outside of park boundaries. The guidelines stipulate that when locals cultivate trees on private farmland, they must write a letter to the nearest forestry administrative office indicating the number and type of tree species as well as their location. A forest administrator then

registers the letter at the forestry service and issues a user-right document legalising the locals' ownership of the tree(s) indicated. This pillar of the co-management plan also approves the participation of partner institutions from across different levels of society, such as state organs, non-governmental organisations and regional councils.

The second pillar (Immediate Park Management) comprises activities relating to surveillance and patrols in protected areas. In this case, local people join park officials in tracking down poachers. The locals also work as tour operators ('potters') in ecotourism activities. Under a state-initiated scheme, locals gain employment as harvesters of the bark of *Prunus africana* trees (a medicinal plant used to treat cancer); this work is overseen by the Mount Cameroon Prunus Management Common Initiative Group (MOCAP).

As part of the third pillar (Implementation of Conservation Incentives), villages receive conservation credits and bonuses from MCNP Service. These are designed as a source of encouragement and financial assistance based on communities' level of compliance with state laws and other codes of conduct related to the CDA. Through these incentives, residents of villages receive cash transfers, which they use to maintain their livelihood; for the most part this means improving agricultural practices. Decisions on costs arise during cluster platform meetings, at which park officials, together with locals, evaluate the rates of compliance with co-management regulations among locals. Park officials use Agro-Socio-Economic Assessment (ASEA) reports to decide on the types of projects to fund in a village using the payments from credits and bonuses. Funded projects usually range from the creation of nurseries for mixed agro-forestry systems in the production of palm oil and cocoa to improvements in the quality of food crops produced in Integrated Conservation Development Projects (ICDP).

The fourth pillar (Negotiation and Implementation of Conservation Development Agreements) concerns the implementation of measures agreed between park officials and the local people, such as plans for infrastructural development and income-generating activities. In order to make decisions on funding community projects, the park officials evaluate the needs of the local people based on the extent to which local people have complied with the CDA.

What appears to be a limitation in these pillars of co-management is a failure to recognise the importance of Bakweri local knowledge concerning Bakweri ritual practices and their place in protected area management. Moreover, the legal provisions of co-management appear to address local needs mainly where such needs conform to the wishes of the park regime, these being set out in conservation development agreements. With this shortcoming, there is a risk of overlooking crucial contributions of local knowledge that are essential for harmony, transparency and accountability among the social actors in co-management. It also raises questions as to whether state plans incorporate local opinions in managing natural resources in and around local communities. Significantly, asking and answering questions on

divergent views on the value of local knowledge has informed the recommendations I present for improving cooperation between conservation specialists and the local community.

In order for locals to benefit from incentives, the MCNP co-management plan sets out expectations whereby local people will act in conformity with the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Act. While section 72 of the law authorises locals to participate in environmental management and gives them free access to environmental information, it restricts the exploitation of various animal species. The restriction divides animals into three classes. Class A comprises animals strictly whose killing is strictly prohibited within and outside of the MCNP, such as Preuss's monkeys and elephants. Class B consists of animals that may not be hunted in the MCNP but may be outside of the park boundaries after obtaining authorised licenses and making tax payments; examples of animals in this class are the tortoise and crown monkey. Class C covers animals that can be hunted for consumption outside of the MCNP using traditional traps, such as pitfalls, these species including porcupine, bush cat and the African civet, to name a few (Nebasifu and Atong 2020a, 2019b).

Furthermore, the law prohibits the use of den guns (a type of long-barreled gun) and imposes fines for unauthorised trespassing in the park and illegal activities. The fine for those violating the law ranges between 5000 and 50,000 CFA (approximately 7 to 76 euros) or imprisonment of up to 10 days. In addition, an individual caught in possession of Class A animals in areas that forbid hunting will be fined between 3 and 10 million CFA (between 4 and 15 thousand euros) and sentenced to imprisonment of 1 to 3 years (Republic of Cameroon 1994). To enhance application of the law, the co-management plan appoints cluster facilitators (park officials) tasked with ensuring the flow of information between MCNP Service and adjacent communities. These facilitators report directly to the co-management department of MCNP Service on all matters concerning relations between the park and villages. In addition, as part of the creation of village forest management committees between 2008 and 2010 by MCNP Service in all 41 villages, park officials were obligated to hold meetings with local people every six months to discuss and implement new ideas for biodiversity conservation and community development (Charlotte 2014).

4.2. Research Methods

This thesis is located within the critical context of co-management, and takes up related themes in four articles. In Article 1, the research focuses on 'institutional knowledge and the paradox of co-management' (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b), while Article 2 examines the notion of 'collective/local agency' in the face of antagonistic policy (Nebasifu and Atong 2020a). In Article 3, I discuss the issue of 'cultural continuity' from the perspective of traditional beliefs and other forms of

subsistence on the land (Nebasifu and Atong 2020b). Article 4 explores a hunter's knowledge of flexibility in the use of protected areas that are disputed between the park management regime and local people (Nebasifu and Atong 2020c). This range of topics stems from the research design, which includes two major study groups—conservation specialists and local people—who at times have contrasting views and interests where the use of natural resources is concerned.

The viewpoints I elicited from a native Bakweri hunter were useful in advancing existing lines of argument raised by scholars in anthropological studies involving people and their use of natural resources (Nebasifu and Atong 2020c). This experience was important for the development of this thesis and, more broadly, as a contribution informing the anthropological interest in linking local knowledge of land use with co-management practices, which may prove applicable to both the Global South as well as the Global North.

As regards its scope of research methods, this thesis is based on an ethnographic inquiry developed with the aid of a multimethod approach, detailed in Table 2. Ethnography is a qualitative and in-depth form of anthropological inquiry, used in several disciplines, through which the researcher gathers comprehensive knowledge about a cultural setting during comparatively long periods. As ethnography is a qualitative method, the researcher focuses on political agendas, research projects and transformative processes (Jennings 2009). There are, however, limitations to the use of ethnography in that it too often fails to capture the material and moral conditions through which local events are brought to life or into existence in an increasingly globalised world (Shore 2006). Shore's analysis of the patron-client relation has shown that in ethnography empirical data alone, such as people's perceptions, cannot be sufficient as an explanatory factor for human behaviour; rather, we need to gather historical, social, material and politically grounded perspectives to determine the conditions in which people live. In the case of the MCNP, I embarked on a study of the park's people and their social circumstances, spending six months of the year 2017 for the related fieldwork in the park and neighbouring communities. Much of my interest and engagement in the present study stems from the fact that I attended school in the region at the primary and higher levels; this familiarity made it easy for me to interact with and move among the locals during fieldwork.

Table 2: Multimethod approach as applied in the thesis (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c)

Data collection	Explanation	Data analysis	Explanation
Purposive sample	Selecting villages that have livelihoods related to the MCNP.	Thematic analysis using open coding	Identifying dominant themes/ideas that emerge in the data by reading through field notes, interview transcripts and listening to voice recordings of interviewee responses. Consistent with the research questions, the researcher elicits multiple opinions from field data, looks at various assumptions, patterns and explanations, and integrates them into the results.
Focus group discussion	Identifying persons who are well aware of co-management and share common values where their community is concerned.	Nominal Group Technique (NGT)	A ranking process where the researcher weighs an item in a focus group discussion against other items and orders them on a scale according to importance or priority. This process was mapped out to reflect the people involved and their defined list of needs.
Field observations	Observing important attributes by taking photos during visits in villages and listening to people share their experiences of co-management.	Discourse analysis	Understanding the use of language – keeping a record of Mokpwe (language of the Bakweri) words about rituals and beliefs on the land, names of sacred sites and, cults, and raising questions about the shared use of the land among the people.
Expert sampling	Targeting conservation specialists involved in promoting the state's agenda for resource management.	Descriptive analysis	Using interview data to make meaning of the world in order to improve our understanding of the individual and external influences that affect human behaviour and opinions.
Face-to-face interviews	The researcher engages verbally with an informant, asking questions, observing body language relevant to the question being ask.	Narrative analysis	Focusing on what the hunter says, how the hunter tells the story, the dialogue between the researcher and the hunter and the activities of the hunter.

Source: Author's field data (2017)

Table 2 illustrates the components of the multimethod approach adopted in the present inquiry. In what follows, I will define each component, its benefits and limitations, and return to how they were applied in the subsequent section. What is a multimethod approach and why use such a configuration? To answer this question, we need to understand the improvising required of a researcher during fieldwork. It has been the tradition for researchers to have a prepared plan prior to doing fieldwork 'to remind them' of what method(s) they intend to use. Without a plan, they might use methods at the study site other than those which they originally intended to. These scenarios are not mutually exclusive.

Ayonghe Akonwi Nebasifu: Knowledge Integration in Co-management

In many situations during ethnographic field work, new methods are incorporated into the prepared research plan in response to unexpected conditions encountered at the study site. In one such instance in the present case, my plan had called for travelling by car but I had to swap this for a motor bike due to muddy roads. This had the unanticipated benefit of giving me a great deal of time to take photos while moving through bushy valleys and swamps in the tropical rain forest of Mount Cameroon. A similar case was my visit at the head office of the MCNP in the year 2017 to obtain a research permit for data collection. I was given access to policy briefings about the villages to be studied that fell under the park regime's co-management system. I was then struck by the realisation that these villages differ hugely in that not all of them make use of the park for a living, prompting me to use purposive sampling to select those localities closely linked to the MCNP through the subsistence use of forest. The selection of conservation specialists (expert sampling) called for similar improvisation and resourcefulness, as we will see later, given that the names of institutions that actively promote the state's resource management agenda, and the experts affiliated with them, are hard to come by.

Coming back to the initial question, by definition a multimethod approach seeks to put together a diverse and open set of cross-disciplinary research relationships while engaging with new questions and brainstorming new avenues for interdisciplinary work. A multimethod design offers the researcher a flexibility to address complex analytical and interpretative topics when bringing in varied ways of thinking and different kinds of data in search of answers to multifaceted questions (Hesse-Biber 2015). Multimethod approaches in anthropological studies are not new. Hall and Preissle (2015) assert that within the discipline of sociocultural anthropology methods that served to describe human communities and develop sociocultural theories to understand human behaviour were multi-designed to accommodate the broader philosophy of interpretive ethnography. The scholars maintain that this process came about under the predominant framework of ethnographic fieldwork within which, starting in the nineteenth century, anthropologists observed behavioural patterns in the natural settings where people carried on with their daily lives. Thus, collecting, surveying and analysing materials gathered through multimethod approaches has been fundamental to practices of ethnography such as observing people, participating in people's lifeways and having conversations with the people studied.

Anthropologists do not customarily use design recipes, but rather conducting research informally, although this might differ for interdisciplinary areas like medical anthropology, where clinical studies are commonly used. Even when they anticipate using interviews and observations, anthropologists make decisions about the data selection and the nature of its collection at the field site. One example can be seen in the remarks about research methods based on the instructions from Franz Boas to his collector George Hunt and how Hunt ultimately used a multimethod

approach to study cultural traits (noted in Hall and Preissle 2015, p. 363). In this example, research being conducted in the early twentieth century, Boas outlined questions for Hunt when they were on a journey to collect grammatical information from *Kwakwaka'wakw* (*Kwakiutl)* communities to explain a text needed for the American Museum of Natural History in 1897. As it happened, they ultimately applied a range of methods, gathering specimens, explanations of the specimens, connected texts that mentioned the specimens, abstract things about people, and grammatical information. Boas then made these materials meaningful by applying numerical summaries and other analyses, rendering them into laws and stories. A detailed account of this journey and text collection can be found in the works of Boas and Hunt (1905) and Briggs and Richard (1999).

By the first half of the twentieth century, anthropologists used multimethod designs in their fieldwork based on how well the methods could scientifically represent behavioural patterns the researchers observed in people. In contemporary research, multimethod approaches have increasingly been crucial for understanding informant responses across different cultures as well as their complexities and similarities. There are some challenges in using multimethodology in anthropological research. Significantly, there can be an increase in the time needed to design and execute a research project and it can be costly recruiting a diverse team of researchers who are experts in several methodologies (Davis et al. 2011). This heterogeneity in method may also present difficulties in preparing proper analyses and interpretations of different data types gathered with diverse methods.

In this thesis, my multimethod design combines the approaches of purposive sampling, focus group discussion, field observations, expert sampling and face-to-face interviews (see Table 2). One motive for using purposive sampling derives from the assumption that certain groups or individuals in the study population may have important views that differ with regard to addressing the research questions, making it crucial that they be included the sample. To improve the credibility of the data and results, the sample was guided by the objectives of the research. According to Campbell et al. (2020), purposive samples stand in contrast to random means of sampling and target informants who are most likely to provide useful information for the study. Purposive sampling could suffer from researcher bias when compared to other techniques, which seek to reduce bias. Bias may arise where a researcher's judgement on selecting units of study is not based on a clear or accepted criterion, making it difficult to achieve a logical generalisation (Sharma 2017).

Focus group discussions are in-depth group interviews that ideally involve carefully planned discussions and informal discussions and are designed to gather views on specific topics and environments from selected individuals or groups (Smithson 2000). According to Smithson, the focus group discussion has its origin in the discipline of sociology, where it comprises presentations and accounts on topics that are jointly produced by participants in situations that are socially organised. Often, participants

and moderators in the discussion share the assumption that persons in the group will reveal opinions to the moderator through various forms of conversation. One useful facet of the focus group discussion is that it can produce information that participants find relevant, which can be applied in the design of larger studies, and also may elicit views on issues from individuals and groups with a culturally diverse background. Settlements around Mount Cameroon are in many cases heterogenous, with persons coming from cultural groups elsewhere in Cameroon, such as the Bali, Mankon, and Bamileke, who after living in the Mount Cameroon area for a long time have adopted Bakweri ways of living on the land. A focus group was therefore well suited for data collection with this mixed population. Among the limitations on the focus group discussion is the tendency for certain opinions and participants in the group to dominate the procedure to the extent that the contribution of a single individual seems to be only opinion expressed during the discussion. Questions also arise at the level of data analysis as to whether dominant opinions are representative of the group or only of a particular individual within the group (Smithson 2000, p. 4).

Field observation, sometimes known as field research, is rooted in anthropology and ethnography, and includes several procedures of qualitative inquiry dealing with human subjects and natural settings while monitoring and taking note of various conditions that exist in the field (Lashley 2017, p. 1113). The research environments are often unstructured, in contrast to those used with experimental research designs. Field observation has the benefit of gaining first-hand information about people, events and practices in more detail than can be had with other methods. It also enables the researcher to uncover people's experiences and to discern less evident processes, although this usually requires an extended period of time. Among the limitations of field observation is the challenge of documenting for field researchers who work alone; taking notes and observing every detail can be taxing. Even when taking field notes after observation, the researcher might not recall entirely what took place. To overcome this problem, I travelled with a local resident who acted as my research assistant, facilitating the data collection process and taking notes and photographs where possible. The assistant had knowledge of the study group and their ways of knowing the land. Her role was particularly useful as a source of support enabling me to document more details of people and places in the field than I could have otherwise.

In this thesis, my particular target groups are the conservation specialists, state establishments and partner institutions that are actors in the co-management of the MCNP and its adjacent villages. No database exists for identifying these authorities. However, a careful look at the past management plans for the MCNP, as well as unpublished reports about conservation development agreements and assessments for issuing conservation credits at the MCNP head office in Buea, revealed which authorities were engaged more actively in the co-management process. Because actors involved in this setting deal with various issues in resource management,

I applied expert sampling (or judgemental sampling), among experts in the field who have useful opinions about the study area. Expert sampling is judgemental in the sense that the researcher selects interviewees by relying on those who have knowledge of the matter being studied (Perla and LIoyd 2012). This form of data collection is beneficial in that the researcher can conduct interviews in less time with a sample selected that is based on particular criteria and is thus highly relevant to the study population. However, since the researcher's judgement determines the sample, there is room to question the validity of the study. Face-to-face interviews are one of the oldest forms of interview used in survey research; the direct human contact the interviews entail benefits the researcher, who motivates the informant by meeting, seeing, talking and listening to him or her. According to Neuman (2012), face-to-face interviews have one of the highest response rates and produce rich data. Informants also find it harder to turn down an interviewer waiting at their doorway than to hang up a phone, throw out a questionnaire or click to another computer screen. One limitation of using face-to-face interviews is that they usually require several attempts by the researcher to get in contact with potential interviewees, making the method potentially costly and time consuming.

Data analysis is a complex phase in qualitative research and requires researchers to make sense of the data by explaining clearly why and how they analyse them. The present thesis is an article-based work, comprising the four articles mentioned in the section 'List of Articles for this Thesis' as well as this synthesis. In each of the studies, I adopted different methods of analysis in order to produce results that have provide diverse insights into the topic chosen. These methods included thematic analysis, Nominal Group Technique (NGT), discourse analysis, descriptive analysis and narrative analysis. Depending on how broad the research questions are, using a multimethod approach for data analysis produces better research and helps to obtain findings that would remain obscured were only a single method used. This combination of several approaches to data analysis afforded me a variety of perspectives on co-management practices, which would have remained untapped had I used only a single method. The multimethod approach enabled me to make sense of what people said, but also of what they did not say.

Thematic analysis is used for identifying themes in a data set and organising, describing and reporting the themes (Nowell et al. 2017). Themes can be important points, typically short and concise, that indicate patterns in a data set. Themes are identified and systematically tabulated in the coding process. Thematic analysis has the advantage of being flexible when compared to other methods as it can be easily modified to meet the needs of different studies. It is useful for examining and comparing the views of different informants, often yielding unanticipated insights in the process. However, its flexibility can lead to inconsistency and confusion when trying to identify themes (Nowell et al. 2017). To avoid this shortcoming, I identified salient themes for field work deductively, guided by the research questions.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) was introduced in the early 1970s as a tool to help deprived citizens in community settings (Van de Den and Delbecq 1971). NGT is a structured method of gathering data from informants through a focus group discussion, voting phase and weighting of responses to reveal meaningful and interpersonal information among the participants (Dang 2015, p.15). NGT has the potential to generate more creative ideas and a greater number of them when compared to other methods. One limitation of the technique is the lack of anonymity, which makes participants reluctant to express their opinions. In order to circumvent this drawback, I weighted participants' responses according to their listed items, which made it unnecessary for them to disclose their identities.

Since the 1980s, discourse analysis has become an established method of empirical analysis, one shaped by the works of constructivist scholars who sought to augment the range of methods for testing hypotheses, clarifying and justifying text and developing analytical tools to guide research (Aydın-Düzgit and Rumelili 2018). Discourse analysis is often applied as an interpretive approach in combination with other methods. In doing discourse analysis, social life is interpreted by extensively analysing language transmitted through face-to-face talk, images, documents, symbols and non-verbal interaction. Discourse analysis has the power to uncover attitudes and perceptions that are deeply held and cannot be revealed by other methods. However, as discourse analysis focuses mainly on language, it overlooks other aspects of the participants' engagement. Accordingly, it is best complemented by a range of other methods to ensure sounder interpretations. Mindful of this, I opted to use field observations, especially in the research for Article 3, a decision which proved very useful.

Descriptive analysis seeks to transform or describe past and present data such that it can be easily understood and interpreted. The data are rearranged and processed by means such as tabulation, visualisation, and graphics. Descriptive analysis is a useful tool for filtering out irrelevant data, disclosing patterns in large data sets and informing decision making (Loeb et al. 2017). It provides researchers the opportunity to detect participants' behavioural trends in the data. For instance, their reluctance or willingness to participate in a co-management programme. However, descriptive analysis has a shortcoming in that it is difficult to use the analysed data to create an accurate representation of the study group, especially when generalising to other groups. I overcame this limitation by using narrative analysis, which enabled me to make sense of various descriptive ideas in a hunter's narrative. The two methods—descriptive and narrative analysis—complemented each other such that none of the weaknesses associated with either can be seen as fatally undermining the study. This methodological decision was particularly useful in Article 4.

Narrative analysis has its roots in literary theory, but is closely related to cultural and media studies as well as the social sciences in undertaking to understand the

social world and in producing qualitative data (Earthy and Ann 2008). Narrative analysis explores various ways in which qualitative data can be produced, analysed and made meaningful through people's engagement in story-telling that produces accounts of their lives. A benefit of this technique is that the researcher can examine the interplay of different aspects of a person's beliefs, values and morals to produce a wider assessment of the person's life. Because an opportunity to explore people's life stories usually hinges on mutual respect and close connection between the researcher and informant at a personal level, concerns might arise about ownership of the data (Cowger and Julie 2019, p. 2). I addressed this problem by complying with the ethical principle of informed consent where proper treatment of research data was concerned.

4.2.1. Data Collection and Experiences during Fieldwork

Speculations about how long a researcher should engage in fieldwork and its potential to produce in-depth perspectives about people and their culture are hardly new in anthropology. Time is indeed an important factor in ethnographic research; it has been argued that the length of anthropological fieldwork is crucial for gathering first-hand experience about the focal phenomenon (Ingold 2007). Performing long-term research provides the researcher with rich data for analysis. As Lutherová and Miroslava (2019, pp. 392) put it, time in ethnographic research is essential for the researcher to become part of the observed society, identify social relations, immerse him- or herself in the culture and understand how to act accordingly. In doing so, the interaction between the researcher and his or her informant(s) deepens and eventually improves the quality of the data. However, my research shows that events taking place in the community being studied can have various impacts on the duration of a researcher's stay. Moreover, the degree to which a researcher may immerse him- or herself into a given culture may depend on the researcher's own previous experiences on the land. To illustrate these observations, in the paragraphs below I will first share an account of the experiences I had during data collection and then proceed to show how I made use of several methods.

My contact on the ground as it were with people in the communities specific to the thesis took place between July and December 2017, when I undertook a journey around Mount Cameroon. Figure 2 illustrates my drive to the study villages and back. I will return to this journey in another paragraph. However, my initial interaction with the locals in the Mount Cameroon area goes back to the period between 1998 and 2011, in my days as a primary school student and, later, an undergraduate university student of sociology and anthropology. This period gave me a great deal of exposure to songs, folkloric tales, dances and festivals of the Bakweri through lessons in the classroom as well as membership in cultural dance and musical groups at school. Course assignments also offered opportunities to meet the locals, through which I got to meet several future informants and learn about their ways of living on

the land. Some of my previous observations about the study site were published in 2012 (Nebasifu 2012).

Using return or repeated visits to a study community in long-term fieldwork has been recognised in anthropology as essential for producing new understandings about people's experiences of social change and how they negotiate this change (Talle 2012). Coming back to Mount Cameroon in the years 2015 and 2017 was an opportunity for me to continue research with people I had known over past years. Since then, between 2018 and 2020, I have become acquainted with some of the locals both by telephone and email. These were years which I spent analysing research data, checking the validity of data and writing and publishing articles. Considering the above experiences in combination gives a different understanding about how much time anthropologists using ethnography might need when learning about the focal culture. Other factors come into play and do not exclude each other, such as the researcher's judgement as to when he or she feels immersed in a given culture and the researcher's past informal interactions with the study group as a child or youth. In addition, the process of keeping in contact with informants at the study site while analysing data and putting the results into writing adds to this broader picture of knowing a culture. Indeed, writing is a practice in which the researcher reflects on accounts of the group studied, as well as his or her own thoughts, doubts and challenges, and produces text which will be open to scrutiny (Lutherová and Miroslava 2019, p. 391). These considerations are all relevant to the question of how much time should be spent in studying people and their culture.

To return to my journey, Mount Cameroon and its localities are at the front lines in the ongoing Ambazonian war in southwest Cameroon. This conflict started in September 2017 when separatists in anglophone districts of the northwest and southwest regions began a war against the Government of Cameroon in a quest for the independence of southern Cameroon. Several villages gradually fell under the control of separatists but the pace of these takeovers picked up rapidly by the year 2018. I settled in the district of Buea, where I had accommodation, access to office space and a double-cab Toyota Hilux 1992, which was very useful in getting to remote villages. The driving distance around Mount Cameroon is 130 kilometres, but the rigorous terrain, which spans lowlands, hilltops, rocky valleys and thick rainforest, as well as old bridges and narrow paths crossed by streams, makes the journey much longer than this figure would suggest.

On one of the mornings, I had briefings from park officials about the risk of staying the night in a village due to the war. I was also informed I should have in hand all documents in preparation for military and police barricades on major roads to villages. One important document was a letter from the Cameroon Minister of Forestry and Wildlife (the authority managing state-protected areas) authorising me to collect data. I must admit that at times I have struggled to remain value-neutral as a researcher when encountering acts of oppression at a field site. Here, it is worth

mentioning questions regarding cultural relativism and morality in the ethics of anthropology (Brightman and Grotti 2020, p. 817-834). When collecting the data, I have often reflected on questions such as the following: In what circumstances should anthropologists condemn or encourage people's way of being? Should anthropologists make moral judgments or refrain from doing so in the case of cultural practices? Some mornings before setting out in the car, I saw low-flying armed military helicopters as they roared over the district of Buea. Hearing their whirring rotors almost every day, and noting their intensifying presence, brought a sense of anxiety, especially knowing this was something quite frightening to the locals. There was also a sense of confusion as to what source of news might be trustworthy. In villages, many of the residents rely on word-of-mouth communication for information that is useful to the wider public, such as public 'holidays' declared by either the military or separatists; these days are also known as 'ghost towns', with a 24-hour curfew and schools and businesses forced to stay closed. Persons who violate these prohibitions risk being victimised. In towns, regional radio stations are more common, but the two sources—word of mouth and radio—sometimes differ in the information they provide, which can be misleading.

Being well informed about events at the field site before travelling turned out to be crucial not only for my research but also for my survival. This context of uncertainty also explains my choice of using the multimethod design, which proved rather flexible during events resulting from the conflict. At the time, there were rumours about kidnappings with demands for huge ransoms and the arrest of people on criminal charges. This compelled me to make sudden decisions to drive from Buea to organise meetings in distant villages and drive back home that night to ensure my own safety and that of persons around me. In other cases, I was advised to tape over the state flag painted on the front bumper of my vehicle in order not to be mistaken for a state official and to avoid confrontations with the locals upon entry to villages that have grievances against the park regime.

Vehicles like the one I drove are useful in such research when we think of how robust they are: their shock absorbers and power allow them to go through mountainous areas without much difficulty. Apart from their mechanical features, they also have cultural meanings in fieldwork. In some of the study villages, researchers are welcomed with admiration and joy when they come by car in contrast to those who come by other means of transport, such as a motorbike. One possible explanation for this behaviour is that the use of cars in remote location on Mount Cameroon is quite rare. Among other reasons for this, the bush-lined roads are not suited for driving. Having very few vehicles and with farming being a major source of livelihood, the locals tend to walk very long distances when cultivating crops and gathering the harvest. One advantage associated with having a car or van is that the locals benefit from jumping onto the back of it to get home or to their farms quickly. For example, a Hilux offers enough extra space for several farmers

to easily transport their harvest rather than carrying heavy bags and walking long distances. Giving free rides is a practice I sometimes interpreted as a reciprocal act of goodwill to informants, who in return were more open to assist and become involved in the research process.

Another cultural consideration is that some of the locals interpret the researcher's use of a vehicle as a sign of wealth. In one of the villages, I remember meeting locals gazing at the vehicle, with some of them requesting gifts of any kind. Other villagers seem to give another meaning to vehicles and their users, such as when a vehicle's appearance is similar to that of park officials who have visited the village in the past to investigate a park boundary encroachment. In such instances, I was not warmly welcomed judging from the expressions of some faces. For instance, an elderly person in Kuke Kumbo who thought I was a park official requested that I leave the village, expressing his frustrations with the park regime for seizing his farmland with claims that he had encroached on park land. I overcame situations of this kind by using a greeting gesture – putting my hands together, bowing my head and saying in Pidgin English "I salut oh sah", which the locals understand as humbly saying "I come with greetings of respect". Further, sharing an account of my early days as a primary school student on their land helped me gain their approval. Although the Bakweri speak Mokpwe as their mother tongue, they tend to use Pidgin English when trading with ethnic groups from other regions of Cameroon. This use of another language is also justified by the heterogenous nature of the human population in the Mount Cameroon area, which includes people from elsewhere who have adopted, or are in the process of adopting, the Bakweri culture. All things considered, I found it expedient to communicate in Pidgin English.

To be sure, in other instances of fieldwork, I have ultimately reached a village by motorbike and hiking after a car engine failure. In such cases, my arrival might have gone unnoticed if it had not been for how I was dressed and my accent in Pidgin English. Having lived most of the last six years in Europe doing my doctoral studies, I realised just how much my accent had changed, which the locals quickly noted as they keenly listened to what I had to say. Despite varied interpretations about the researcher's identity with a vehicle, I appreciate how the locals in general welcomed me as a member of their community. Such was the case at Bonakanda village in the Buea cluster, where I was invited to join a group of farmers early in the morning to drink palm wine. This turned out to be a forum where the farmers found out not only about my research objectives, but my background as a university student in Cameroon and Finland. It was also an opportunity to learn about their cultural connection to Mount Cameroon, which some of them go to in search of traditional medicinal plants.

Buea cluster is where I started collecting data during my first month of fieldwork. I then moved on to the west coast in the second and third month, Muyuka in the fourth, and Bomboko in the fifth and sixth. Many factors figured in my following

this particular order. For example, some of the villages were accessible only in specific weeks of the months. Some of the locals were willing to receive visitors on other days of the month. Moreover, I was collecting data during the rainy season, which comes with torrential rains that cause landslides and flooded valleys, making certain roads in the study area impassable. For example, at one point between Efolofo and Kuke Kumbo (Figure 2) I had to make a U-turn and could only get to the remaining villages several weeks later by driving northwards from Buea through Muyuka to Bomboko. In other instances, I had to leave the car and walk due to engine failure. This is similar to the experience I had one day driving from Muyuka to Buea with a rusted and broken driveshaft: the car came to abrupt halt in the middle of a highway often used by timber lorries known to cause accidents by speeding. Then again, such an unstructured pattern in the collection of data affords a researcher time to take photographs and make field notes in between travelling. In my experience, staying away from the study villages for a couple of days made it possible for me to process some of the data gathered during fieldwork, such as recordings from focus group discussions, while preparing for future journeys.

How was the multimethod design applied in the study area? One more reason for combining several methods is that the research objectives and questions are designed to probe the complex views of the two major groups involved in co-management, conservation specialists and local people. In order to make sense of these groups, I put together a purposive sample of villages located in close proximity (1-12 km) to the MCNP (Table 3). Using unpublished data about Agro-Socio-Economic Assessments (ASEA) and monitoring reports for the period 2014-2016 from the MCNP office in Buea, I was able to select villages that shared livelihoods—hunting, farming and timber harvesting—that might involve a degree of contact with protected areas. In this case, I consulted with park officials in order to decide on the most expedient and suitable approach for data collection.

At the local community level, with the assistance of MCNP officials, I opted for a purposive sample comprising a total of 270 persons interviewed in 17 villages around the MCNP (Nebasifu and Atong 2020a). The choice to conduct an equal number of focus groups in each village followed from an initial study and identification of fundamental groups and committees existing in every village. I developed a sample in collaboration with cluster facilitators and village chiefs who were Bakweri natives with many years of experience as mediators between village inhabitants and outsiders. The facilitators were useful as sources of information and recommendations about the importance of organizing focus group discussions attended by two representatives from each village group and committee, that is, persons who have good knowledge of the land and its traditions. I found similarities between the groups and committees in the study villages with the exception of Bibunde, which had no group of persons qualified as a security force or village guards (vigilante). Although this way of sampling can be susceptible to errors in judgemental by the researcher, I have found

it to be suitable for the study of complex systems concerning the joint management of resources. Confining the choice to villages within 12 km of the park boundary made it more likely that the informants would be in contact with protected areas. According to Etikan et al. (2016), purposive sampling is a qualitative approach used in which the researcher identifies information-rich cases by consulting groups of individuals who are well informed about a phenomenon. This sample enabled me to understand the local people's perceptions about interacting with the natural environment in and around the MCNP. With the assistance of park officials, the village chiefs were naturally given the task of designating groups of people for the interviews, given that chiefs have a better knowledge of their communities than the researcher does.

The assistance of park officials and village chiefs facilitated the organisation of focus group discussions in villages that were part of the co-management system and that have livelihoods related both directly and indirectly to the MCNP (Fig. 6). Focus group discussions explore the views of individual participants on different topics (Wibeck et al. 2019). The focus groups included persons who were aware of co-management plans in their community and had both shared and differing values regarding their community. During the discussions, I held several meetings, with one session per village, accompanied by cluster facilitators, who assisted in the translation and interpretation of research questions. I personally moderated these discussions and employed a research assistant to take notes during the sessions (Nebasifu and Atong 2020a, 2020b, 2019b). The duration of each of these discussions was between two and three hours and took place during the year 2017.

Figure 6. *Meeting with locals at Bova Bomboko village (Field data 2017)*

The focus groups studied comprised local residents who look after various activities on the land through their membership in village groups (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b). The groups were located in the 17 villages studied around Mount Cameroon (Table 2). These groups included:

a) Village forest management committees: bodies created by park officials in collaboration with local communities to discuss and implement ideas on matters of conservation and development;

b) Village development groups: groups created by locals to manage the wellbeing of villagers;

c) Vigilantes: groups created by locals for maintaining security in villages;

d) Traditional councils: bodies aimed at advising village chiefs on matters of land use and distribution;

e) Health committees: bodies providing health care to village inhabitants;

f) Hunters: groups engage in hunting and planning of various meetings for hunters;

g) District heads: persons managing administrative matters in the component residential districts of villages;

h) Farmers: members work together in distributing seeds, equipment, and farm produce; they also plan the sale of farm produce and share income from it.

Table 3: Study villages

MCNP cluster conservation zone	Village	Distance from park boundary (km)	Estimated population	Number of people interviewed using focus groups
Buea	Bonakanda	1-6	1000-1500	16
West Coast	Lower Boando	6-12	Less than 500	16
	Batoke	1-6	Above 2000	16
	Bakingili	1-6	Above 2000	16
	Njonje	1-6	500-1000	16
	Bibunde	6-12	Above 2000	14
	Sanje	6-12	500-1000	16
Muyuka	Lykoko	12	Above 2000	16
	Munyenge	6-12	Above 2000	16
Bomboko	Bomana	1-6	1000-1500	16
	Big Koto I	1-6	1000-1500	16
	Efolofo	6-12	500-1000	16
	Kuke Kumbo	1-6	1000-1500	16
	Munyange	6-12	-	16
	Mundongo	6-12	500-1000	16
	Bova Bomboko	6-12	Above 2000	16
	Boviongo	6-12	Less than 500	16

Source: Author's field data (2017)

Another method in the range of methods applied was the transect walk. I had the opportunity to spend time with a hunter on one during a visit to the MCNP combined with participant observation and site mapping. In studies of land use, a transect walk is an effective tool for coping with difficulties in interactive forums and for bringing forward different viewpoints about a given area (Valencia et al. 2019). Using this method, I sought to gain an understanding of stories told by the hunter about his use of the land in the MCNP as well as to identify other sites of land use by local people on Mount Cameroon. In the course of this activity, I used a camera, field notes, Global Positioning System (GPS) equipment and a voice recorder. The focus was on the territories between the montane forests and savannah grasslands within the Buea and West Coast cluster zones of the MCNP. Here, inspired by Garcez's (1997, p. 187) micro-ethnography, an approach for describing interactions that are socially and culturally organised in particular situational settings, I tracked the hunter's movements and the meanings of the stories he told about using sites on Mount Cameroon. I paid attention to the hunter's mood, his knowledge of medicinal plants and valuable sites and his impression of the state's managing of the park (see Article 4).

During my internship at ERUDEF in collaboration with MCNP Service, I attended public meetings on the tourism sector for the MCNP, as well as court hearings involving cases of persons arrested for illegal activities in the park. For instance, during September and October 2017, I sat in on the court proceedings in a case, one that had allegedly dragged on for over four months, involving an individual who had injured an African forest elephant. As part of my field observations, I accompanied park officials during their tours to villages where we met with local farmers and hunters and visited farmlands. This method provided important footing for shared experiences among locals and being able to ask questions on critical issues concerning co-management. In addition to making field observations, I found that it was important to bring to light the views between local people and agents of the state regarding the question of decision-making and the recognition of local needs in co-management. I used this approach to find common ground within the knowledge of the respective study groups.

This study also targeted institutions that have an active role in the implementation of co-management initiatives in the southwest region of Cameroon, that is, municipal councils, NGOs and state organisations (Table 4). Inspired by expert sampling, I focused on the institutions in the region that work in partnership with MCNP Service under the co-management system. This sampling method is a form of purposive sampling in which the researcher focuses on experts in a particular field of interest and chooses those who are willing to provide information (Etikan et al. 2016). Several institutions are involved in this partnership process as conservation specialists. For this reason, it was important to narrow the selection and focus only

on those institutions that gave their consent to my interviewing officials affiliated with them. I focused on three criteria for narrowing the selection:

– Those institutions whose head offices are permanently stationed in the southwest region of Cameroon;
– Officials whose everyday duties pertain to co-management at the local community level; and
– Officials who consented to interviews following phone calls and visits to offices.

I conducted face-to-face interviews of between 45 and 50 minutes in length. According to Rahman et al. (2019), face-to-face interviews are advantageous in that the researcher can observe facial expressions and body language, both of which are sources of extra information to reflect on. In the interviews, I used semi-structured questions focusing on the organisational expertise of the participants' institutions and their specific roles in addressing the development needs of local people. Using the data collected from these interviews, I analysed how a park management regime reinforces laws and regulations allowing the state to intervene in decision making on the use of forest resources as well as in the practices of sustainable development in local communities (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b).

Another important aspect of the research process was reviewing secondary sources of data. These allowed me to familiarise myself with arguments and critical questions raised by scholars in the critical discourse on co-management and related practices and to identify gaps in the existing literature. By reviewing various published materials, I investigated factors that explain the capacity for people to continue certain patterns of land use despite the presence of systems previously observed to separate culture from natural environments (Nebasifu and Atong 2020b, 2020c).

Table 4: Institutions in the co-management of the MCNP

Sub-Divisional Councils	Interviewees	State organisations	Interviewees	NGOs	Interviewee
Buea	Deputy Mayor	*Programme Nationale pour le Developpement Participatif (PNDP)*	Senior staff	*Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)*	Project manager
Limbe II	Mayor	*Ministère des Forêts et de la Faune (MINFOF)*	Senior staff	Environment and Rural Development Foundation (ERUDEF)	Manager for tree conservation on Mt Cameroon
Mbonge	Deputy Mayor	*Ministère de l'Economie, de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (MINEPAT)*	Chief of Service for Planning	World Wildlife Fund (WWF)	Educator on sustainable development & capacity building
Muyuka	Deputy Mayor	South West Development Authority (SOWEDA)	Technical Director	Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation (Mt. CEO)	manager
Idenau	Deputy Mayor	Limbe Wildlife Centre (LWC)	Conservator	-	-
-	-	Limbe Botanical and Zoological Garden	-	-	-
-	-	Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP) Service	Interim Conservator	-	-

Source: Author's field data (2017)

4.2.2. Data Analysis

In keeping with my multimethod design, the procedures used to analyse the data for the thesis vary from article to article. In Article 1, I used the Nominal Group Technique (NGT) and descriptive analysis; in Article 2, I made use of thematic analysis; Article 3 was based on discourse analysis; and Article 4 included the application of descriptive concepts in narrative analysis (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). Each of the above methods was adopted to illuminate particular research questions, as I will demonstrate in the subsequent paragraphs. The account to follow builds on my inductively identifying various thematic categories from informants' perceptions about phenomena using open coding inspired by Miles et al.'s (2013) three modes of coding: descriptive, interpretive and pattern. In coding, the researcher identifies

dominant themes (ideas) in the data by reading through field notes and interview transcripts and by listening to voice recordings. In the process, he or she identifies concepts in interviewee responses that are descriptive of a study phenomenon and its significance for the overall study, guided by the research questions. The coding process as applied in the thesis is illustrated in the table below (Table 5).

Table 5: Open coding

Guidance	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
See chapter 3, Research questions	Categories	Concepts	Properties	Dimensions
Question (a)	Fundamentals of co-management	• Land reforms • Structural adjustments • Forestry & wildlife laws • Community development agreements • Conservation credits & bonuses	• Restricting local felling of trees • Reducing hunting of animals • Cooperating with people • Punishing violators of the laws • Promoting community development	• Encouraging a practice • Discouraging a practice
Question (b)	Local opinions about co-management	• Satisfaction	• Person benefits much from Integrated Community Development Projects (ICDPs)	• Local requests for State inter-vention/support
		• Dissatisfied	• Feeling that the park regime ignores livelihood needs	• Local requests for compensa-tion • Less support for State action
Question (b) & (c)	Resilience among local people	• Local agency • Undercover/ unnoticed practices • Sacred sites	• Self-organised milieus for income generation • Keeping mutual relations with ancestors & spiritual beings • Criticising acts of land expropriation • Uses co-management incentives to achieve needs not backed by the park regime • Keeps knowledge about the location of sacred sites in forest away from 'outsiders'	• Local awareness about difficulties in the system of co-management • Local attempts to retain land rights/entitle-ments • Focuses on preserving local traditions

Source: Author's field data (2017)

Pursuing the question of power relations between park authorities (Research question 1) and local communities, Article 1 examines how local people can become inclusive participants in decision making. In addition, because institutions are actors in the co-management system and have their areas of expertise in work life, NGT was useful in identifying community development needs of individuals in focus groups, prioritising their needs and matching these needs with the expertise of institutions. Through NGT, participants are able to determine issues that merit further inquiry (Olsen 2019, p.2), such as matters that are of value to a community. NGT also consists of group input, information exchange and recommending ideas for strengthening communication between actors (American Society for Quality 2009). In line with Srivastava et al. (2019), NGT was applied by asking participants during group discussions to outline topics important for their wellbeing using various tasks moderated by the researcher. A typical session might proceed as follows: (a) The concept of community participation and its meaning in the co-management system are explained to informants and they are asked for their opinions about participation in the system; (b) The group then discusses these opinions and lists on paper development needs which they think must be addressed under the co-management system; participants define the list of needs to choose from themselves. (c) Using rank ordering, the researcher identifies the needs with the highest tally, indicating how many persons in a focus group mention a corresponding need of importance to their village. Table 4 in Article 1, entitled 'Prioritizing development needs through NGT' (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b, p. 11), summarises the outcome of the NGT; the procedure brought forward concerns such as health care and youth employment, access to a water supply, building community halls and telecommunication networks, organising workshops, supplying farm equipment to local farmers, supporting fishing activities, providing farm tools and keeping farmlands away from park boundaries.

Article 1 uses a descriptive analysis examining the views of institutional representatives to address the question of power relations between park authorities and local communities. According to Loeb et al. (2017), descriptive analysis is a method that uses interview data to make meaning of the world in ways that improve our understanding of social phenomena. It also enables one to answer the question 'Why?' with regard to a social phenomenon by explaining the conditions and context determining whether an intervention worked as well as by identifying possible benefits of interventions (Loeb et al. 2017, p.4). Along these lines, I analysed how institutions can better support locals in attaining development needs. Specifically, this consisted of (a) finding a phenomenon in the research questions such as problems of local participation in co-management; (b) looking for key constructs in interviews, for instance the objectives institutions have in developmental projects for communities; and (c) measuring the constructs intuitively by selecting quotations from interviews that address concerns about local participation in co-management.

Table 4 shows the institutional representatives interviewed, whose inputs provided the data analysed.

Article 2 was based on a thematic analysis and targeted the research question of the agency local people display in boosting their resilience under the system. Thematic analysis probes themes identified when examining the views of different participants in a study and pinpoints similarities and differences in the data set (Nowell et al. 2017, p.2). Themes featuring as the subject, topic, or main idea in a discussion are important for revealing the agency people express in different situations. I applied thematic analysis inductively, querying multiple viewpoints about the spiritual use of land in the MCNP, observing lines of thinking about the benefits and shortcomings of the resource management system for the MCNP and incorporating them into the results within the frame of the research questions. Furthermore, I read field notes, listened to interview recordings, identified themes in the data and articulated them. Through open coding, I developed questions from focus group discussions and integrated the responses into the results. For example, in the open code 'traditional practices' and the theme 'activities of spiritual value', I raised questions of whether these activities continue to occur on the land, how often they do, under what circumstances and why. See Table 2 of Article 2 (Nebasifu and Atong 2020a, p.159) for an additional illustration of this thematic analysis.

Pursuing its defined aim of finding the connection between local knowledge and biodiversity, Article 3 applied discourse analysis, drawing on Doody et al.'s (2012) six-step procedure to gain insights into explanatory texts about people's use of the land (Nebasifu and Atong 2020b). In addition, I borrowed ideas from Anthony et al. (2009) that illustrate the importance of discourse analysis in rhetorical organisation as a method to select various components of a language used by a focus group in making pertinent assertions about social actions. According to Tannen et al. (2015), the term 'discourses' focuses on a conglomeration of "linguistic and non-linguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that construct and reinforce power..." (p.1). Because discourse concerns language, a complex phenomenon, scholars distinguish three elements—meaning, communication and context—to broach the complexity. I adhered to this approach by using selected phrases in focus groups. These phrases contained terms in Mokpwe, the language of the Bakweri. It was crucial for me to understand how societal issues, experiences and events are taken up in focus group discussions. By putting focus group quotations into the perspective put forward by Anthony et al. (2009) and the analytical context offered by Doody et al. (2012), I was able to determine whether people's narratives about land use confirmed or contradicted existing theories in the people-park discourse.

In my fourth research article, I employed Riessman's (2005, p. 2-5) descriptive concepts in narrative analysis to investigate the relation between biodiversity and local knowledge, focusing on relevant themes that emerge in a hunter's story (Nebasifu and Atong 2020c). According to Riessman (2005), a researcher does a

thorough analysis of narratives by paying attention to the content, the way the story is told, the level of dialogue between the researcher and the narrator, and how the narrator performs in this process. By adhering to these guidelines, I made sense of those local needs that were necessary for negotiating the use of the MCNP between local people and authorities of the park regime.

Due to the heterogeneous character of my research design and methodology, this study features the ethnographic elements of conservation research that serve to generate suitable ideas for designing conservation initiatives (Drury et al. 2011). Ethnographic description serves as a solid base of knowledge about human cultures and societies. On this basis, it opens new possibilities for understanding the world. One aim of mine in this research is to advance the general use of ethnography by using a multimethod design. I argue that the heterogeneity this entails has both advantages and disadvantages. The approaches I have chosen are almost exclusively qualitative but this reflects my goal, which was to understand *how* people, governed by co-management regimes, relate to the natural environment and what *meanings* underlie their attachment to the environment. Moreover, this study was limited in the length of time spent on fieldwork, a constraint preventing the researcher from putting forward definite answers to the questions posed. Had I had longer periods of interaction with the communities, I might have achieved such answers. On balance, this study provides a valuable treatment of the problem using diverse perspectives presented in the four research articles.

4.3. Research ethics

The credibility of anthropological research and results requires compliance with good scientific practice and attention to the principles that apply to consent, data protection and ownership, and treatment of the research findings (Brightman and Grotti 2020). At the beginning of my research, I obtained informed consent using forms drafted in keeping with the guidelines of the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK), which in turn adhere to the Personal Data Act (523/1999). The specific issues considered here were to ensure that (a) informants provide consent to their data to being stored at the University of Lapland repository; (b) the informants permit the use of their data for publications elsewhere, for presentation at conferences and workshops, both locally and internationally; and (c) anonymity is guaranteed by not disclosing informants' identifiers, such as names, unless informants permit such use.

Doing fieldwork in Cameroon, I was usually considered by the locals and officials as a 'son of the soil', implying that I belonged to the community. As a result, I had support and assistance from the community during fieldwork. This enabled me to plan for fieldwork that lasted six months and a year to spend on data analysis,

during which I had the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of an 'insider'. I found this to be an ethically correct practice because the relationship between the researcher and informant was that of partners, not one where the latter was no more than a source of information for the former. I must say, however, even with the degree of friendly reception I received from local communities, some of the locals saw me as an outsider. One explanation for this was my appearance and general presentation: driving into a remote village in a car that could well be a government car and dressed in a shirt raised eyebrows and scepticism among some as to whether I was a state official or more than just a university researcher. Mindful of this, as a matter of ethics, I introduced myself more clearly and justified my visit to the community. In all, with the understanding and personal engagement I had with the locals, I believe I succeeded in completing my fieldwork without causing harm to the Bakweri people or other ethnic groups.

5.   Summaries of the Research Articles

The previous section has detailed the materials used in the course of my research focusing on the study area, livelihood activities and co-management procedures. It has also described the research methods applied in data collection and analysis, with this presentation augmented by accounts of experiences I had during fieldwork. In what follows, I outline the overarching approach to research methods and data analysis in the four research articles which form the substance of this thesis. Each article has a focus on one particular research question. For instance, Article 1 explores the power relations between local people and park authorities in a co-management system. Article 2 examines the agency people display in boosting their resilience. Articles 3 and 4 investigate the link between local knowledge and biodiversity.

Each article features a specific content, combination of methods and form, which have been refined through peer reviews and journal requirements. The interconnectedness of the articles lies in their contribution to co-management theory: research from the perspective of power relations between co-management authorities and local people governed under the system (Article 1); scenarios where people comply with and resist the co-management system (Article 2); accounts of how cultural continuity based on people's traditional link to the nature adds to their agency and resilience under the co-management system (Articles 3 and 4). I argue that a study of power relations cannot be conducted using exclusively empirical data, but must be equally grounded in the historical events leading to community involvement in state-led schemes encouraging participation.

I embarked on the research in Article 1 with a look at the post-colonial period following Cameroon's independence in 1960. In the article, I explore neoliberal processes of the nation-state, which included the introduction of a park administration compelled to implement structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in an attempt to reduce the national debt. As we have seen, the SAPs included reforms which entailed the participation of local people in the management of forest resources. However, the SAPs were counter-productive in rural areas: people were displaced from their lands to create protected areas, and many of them had no influence on the decision making. Article 1 examines this chain of events to determine whether and how small institutions involved in the co-management of the MCNP can give local communities space for proper participation in resource management. Article 2 continues this debate, investigating how people who do not whole-heartedly participate in the system tend to resist it or comply with it and, through agency, find other ways of making their livelihoods work better. Articles

3 and 4 adduce evidence of cultural continuity, in which people's traditional and reciprocal relation to the nature around them boosts their resilience. A reading of all four articles reveals the co-existence of compliance with and opposition to various forms of power relations within the system. Below, I summarise the articles in their order of publication, highlight the common ideas running through them and underscore the insights gained in the course of the research.

5.1. Article 1: Summary

The first article, entitled "Rethinking Institutional Knowledge for Community Participation in Co-management", was published in the journal *Sustainability* (2019). In this article, I combined analyses of literature on participation theory (Cooke and Kothari 2001), development (Reed 2009; Reinsberg et al. 2018; Tchoungui et al. 1995) and power (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Nantongo et al. 2019) with an empirical investigation of the historical events leading to the implementation of co-management in localities around the MCNP. The publication investigates early forms of leadership in the post-colonial era seen through the lens of neoliberal developments in Cameroon as well as reforms for rationalising the forest and agricultural sectors. These took place under the umbrella of structural adjustments, which were predominantly designed to produce revenue and reduce the nation's debt (the 1980s and 1990s). Thematically, this investigation was important for the other articles because it reveals the basis for community participation, a critical facet of state practices in managing the park. In the 1980s, the Cameroonian government negotiated structural adjustment plans with the World Bank and IMF which comprised reforms designed to promote economic recovery. In 1993, for instance, the World Bank recommended rationalising the forest sector in the direction of adopting sustainable ways of managing natural resources. It is this recommendation that was the impetus for the Forestry and Wildlife Act of 1994, which mandated multiple use of forests for pasture, farming and timber harvesting and established protected areas, called 'permanent forests', which accounted for 30 per cent of the nation's territory.

The 1994 law also specifies that local people, who have often been users of the land, are to be involved in the planning of protected areas through participatory schemes. However, despite the state's use of such schemes, the present research indicates that local people were not necessarily included in making decisions about managing protected areas. Within the agricultural sector, state schemes for local participation focused on providing alternative means of livelihood to communities through loan-based initiatives aimed at increasing agricultural productivity and reducing people's reliance on forests for a living. Although some of these loans were useful for community development projects, there were a number of shortcomings,

such as the destruction of forestland in order to extend the cultivation of cocoa. What is more, the law prohibited people hunting in what became state-protected forests, a practice which the people had engaged in for many generations. Along these lines, the co-management system introduced in 2014 for administering the MCNP and its adjacent communities can be criticised for using a participatory model that endorses the involvement of local people mainly if their interests coincide with the state's agenda for co-management. Consequently, the local people both resist and embrace this relation of unequal power depending on whether they benefit from it or not.

Using interviews from small institutions and focus groups in 17 villages, the article identifies the paradoxes of co-management and the requirements imposed on local people with the introduction of the scheme. The conclusion suggests that while institutions operating under the influence of the state often tend to be less effective in meeting the development needs of local people, they are crucial to promoting community participation in decision making where there is open dialogue that is explicitly accountable and transparent. Some of the locals continue to gain interest in small institutions at the local level to which they find it much easier to communicate their needs when compared to institutions at the regional or central level of park administration.

5.2. Article 2: Summary

Article 2, 'Expressing Agency in Antagonistic Policy Environments', was published in the journal *Environmental Sociology* (2020). It expands the analysis in Article 1 using data from my research materials to show evidence of an antagonistic policy environment in the co-management of the MCNP. This antagonism is a product of the top-down management of natural resources, where management institutions demand that locals comply with state practices instead of allowing them to rely on the beliefs and values of the community. In this environment, there are conflicts between the state's political interests and the locals' cultural ideologies. The former tend to prevail, with natural resource management then reflecting priorities of the powerful parties rather than those of the local people. With reference to descriptions of the antagonistic side of co-management, Article 2 examines how local people carve out space allowing themselves to thriving in an unfavourable policy environment. To this end, it taps literature on challenges posed by resource management regimes (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Markkula et al. 2019; Ramcilovic-Suominen 2019; Sloan et al. 2019) and on processes of agency in related conservation/resource management literature (Cole et al. 2019; Honig et al. 2015).

In the article, I carefully define agency, inspired by the work of Anthony Giddens, which focuses on contingent relations between action and structure and how this

affects cultural formation. Structure in this sense describes the various arrangements in society that limit or augment the choices and opportunities we encounter in shaping human behaviour (Karp 1989). I add to this definition that collective agency can take forms other than overt action, that is, active community engagement, to include practices that represent alternative behaviour among local people. Using the narratives of local people residing in villages around the MCNP, the article brings forward, on the one hand, the complexity of the resource management system for the MCNP and, on the other, the mechanisms enabling people to articulate their agency; the latter are ways the people have of acting independently and making their own choices when it comes to the practice of livelihoods despite obstacles posed by the state's system of co-management.

One manifestation of this collective agency is showing dissatisfaction with an unfavourable management system using passive means such as expressing frustration with and making complaints against it. One source of frustration is the park authorities changing the park boundaries without consulting the locals and the new boundaries causing the park to encroach on private farmlands. It is also frustrating when animals from the park intrude on farmlands and cause damage to crops; the locals are left in anger, particularly because the animals concerned are those prohibited by law from being hunted. Article 2 also shows that even if people become victims of the management system, they can exert an agency by finding ways to circumvent the system to meet their needs. For example, in response to economic incentives, some of the locals cooperate with the park regime, learning methods of crop cultivation, that is, skills they use in growing their own crops, which they then sell to generate income. The article also presents evidence of people holding on to their religious traditions and beliefs, such as membership in the *Maale* and *Liengu* societies, both of which are crucial to influencing decisions on preserving cultural heritage. In concluding this summary, I would point out that even when faced with problems brought by antagonistic resource management policies, local people are capable of engaging more collectively than one might think in meeting their needs. They have the capacity to do so by dint of three resources: local mechanisms for agency embedded in their awareness of difficulties in the system, the active role of traditional societies in preserving the local culture, and a flexibility in prioritising their needs.

5.3. Article 3: Summary

The third article, entitled 'Discourses of Cultural Continuity among the Bakweri of Mount Cameroon National Park', was published in the journal *Culture and Local Governance* (2020). It is linked to the second article thematically in its investigating why and how people safeguard their traditional attachment to the land in and

around the MCNP despite the state controlling administration of the park and its adjacent communities. Using the theoretical contributions in people-park relations (Ajonina et al. 2017; West et al. 2006), the article puts forward arguments about cultural continuity in the face of state laws for resource management. The particular focus is traditional land use and reverence for the land as the site of rituals and as sacred land in their belief systems. My research establishes that people's prolonged attachment to the natural environment has fundamentally sprung from a system of traditional practices that are driven by reciprocal relations between people and their ancestors and spiritual beings. This engagement has a collective character aiming at continuous access to resources of the land, a sense of cultural belonging and efforts to maintain the remoteness (unique identity) of the community.

In the article, I continue the focus on the Bakweri people, who for many generations have used the mountain for subsistence, collecting plants of medicinal value, hunting and securing food and water. The Bakweri also share beliefs averring allegiance to the mountain; this is an ancestral heritage maintaining that a supreme being (Efassa moto) lives on the mountain, from where it can bring either fortune or misfortune to the land depending on how the mountain is used and the frequency of rituals. The Bakweri also have the belief that forest resources like rocks, animals, water and trees possess a spiritual power which individuals can use to influence events in the world of the living. This supernatural power also resides in totems (sacred objects with symbolic value to a group of people), through which human wishes can be realised in the living world. Mindful of the fact that state laws and measures for protected areas encumber certain traditions of the Bakweri, the article investigates whether the people's cultural practices and beliefs have persisted under the park regime's co-management framework.

Some of the elders we interviewed revealed that where they cannot satisfy their needs within the framework provided by the park regime, they go beyond the constraints and turn to their ancestral spirits. This reaction takes the form of rituals that invite ancestral spirits to intervene in healing the sick, prevent the destruction of crops from natural disasters and guard villages from external hostilities. One example is the Liengu-la-mwanja (goddess of the sea) ritual of the Liengu cult that invokes water spirits, upon consultation with the sea goddess, to protect men and women from complex diseases. Community forests (reserved for communal purposes) with water catchments at the fringes of the MCNP are used for this purpose. Another example is the Liwangi bakundu (river ritual), which enhances a woman's fertility through spiritual mediation. For areas within the park, some of the interviewees indicated that the Maale, a prominent ritual of the Maale cult among the Bakweri, requires that members of the cult visit shrines and caves in remote parts of the park during certain months of the year. The Maale ritual is particularly significant for the overall wellbeing of the Bakweri people, although it embraces other needs as well, such as wishes for good fortune and the protection of villages against misfortune.

In addition to ritual attachments to the land, the locals continue their subsistence use of the land both within protected areas and in peripheral forests of the MCNP. One of the informants spoke of having ties to the park for gathering wild honey, *njangsa*, fruits and mushrooms for food. Other products the locals may collect include non-timber forest products (i.e., products the park regime approves for local use in its co-management agenda) such as bush pepper, palm oil, bush onions, all of which are commonly used for household consumption, as well as charcoal, which is a source of domestic fuel. I conclude this summary with the assertion that where state prohibitions for protected areas hinder the customary use of land, people find ways of continuing to practice their culture, especially when they have needs that the park regime cannot meet. Article 3 shows evidence of this continuity in a context where people act in dual guise, which allows them to engage in rituals and use the land for subsistence.

5.4. Article 4: Summary

The fourth article, entitled "Land Use and Access in Protected Areas: A Hunter's view of Flexibility", was published in the journal *Forests* (2020). Drawing on the testimonies of a Bakweri hunter, the article advances the analysis in Article 3 on how people's culture—specifically land use practices— persevere in different circumstances under a state-run system of co-management. Inspired by criticisms of exclusionary systems for protected areas (Pemunta 2013; Schmidt-Soltau 2004), the article analyses a hunter's testimony about the MCNP. It uses theoretical contributions about flexibility and related processes of territoriality (Casimir 1992; Ingold 2011; Mazzullo 2009; Plueckhahn 2019; Stammler 2005) to examine the park, where two contrasting arrangements define the land: (a) a state property with strict rules for biodiversity conservation; and (b) land which the Bakweri claim as their heritage. Article 4 was one of my most interesting pieces of research particularly because of the time I spent with the informant, a hunter, who prefers to be called Mola Njie, during a journey to the park in October 2017.

Entry to the park requires a certain amount of planning, which I could not have managed without the help of my informant. I had to familiarise myself with leaflets and maps about the mountain, its protected territories, its biodiversity, hiking routes, sites for shelter and weather conditions. It was important for me to attend meetings at the MCNP head office in Buea to obtain authorisation for the trip as well as equipment for data collection. This included a voice recorder, a video camera and a GPS device, which were useful for the transect walk I undertook. Mola Njie, had first-hand knowledge of the park, being a Bakweri and having lived more than 25 years of his life in the town of Buea, which is on the southern slopes of Mount Cameroon a few kilometres from park boundary. In his forties and having

a family with two children, he is well known in the broader public as a tour guide leader and for serving in committees that deal with matters of ecotourism and park management. Belonging to a family that has hunted for generations, he talked about his hunting on the mountain for many years since his childhood, a site that became subject to restrictions with the creation of the MCNP. He has, however, engaged in other livelihoods—he is a driver by profession and works as an educator in tourism—and has also served on the Buea Council for 15 years.

What seems to have motivated him in working with us during our visit to the MCNP are the cultural values which the Bakweri continue to impute to the mountain and which affect their everyday lives. There is a prejudiced space for which the Bakweri continue to struggle, invoking their rights of cultural heritage and rights to the customary use of the mountain. As one of the well-known early settlers on the slopes of Mount Cameroon before the coming of colonial authorities in the 1880s, the Bakweri people have used the mountain for hunting and gathering. This continued until 1891, when they faced a war against the German military, which ended in 1894 with expropriation of their land. Since then, there has been a continuous conflict between the Bakweri and the state over land ownership (see Kofele-Kale 2007 for more on the Bakweri land problem). The current system of co-management provides some regulations allowing the locals to use Mount Cameroon's forests and its protected territories. However, the regulations do not provide a stated policy that would empower the locals to invoke their customary rights in the use of the MCNP.

The inconsistent nature of state power drives a sense of flexibility in land use and access among the locals, who in many ways adapt to state control without abandoning their customary practices. An example from the hunter's testimony supporting this insight is that there are mutually beneficial relations within the park whereby the park regime employs locals in ecotourism activities and harvesting the bark of *Prunus Africana*. Both are sources of income for the regime and for the as well. Park authorities cooperate with the locals by welcoming traditions such as the dancing stone (Lyen la ngomo'o) ritual that are beneficial to the park regime, making employees feel secure by having activities in the park that provide them with income. At the same time, the locals can resist state power by trespassing covertly into areas prohibited by state law, where they collect plants for ceremonial and medicinal needs.

The dancing stone ritual is performed for the safety of persons visiting the park. In the ritual, people who come to the park are expected to take with them a bottle of wine and harvest the leaves of a fern plant. The stone, located at the boundary between the montane forest and savannah grassland on Mount Cameroon, is believed to be a spiritual symbol worshipped for many generations by the Bakweri. Here, a visitor performs libation by pouring the wine onto the stone while holding fern leaves and dancing. In the hunter's account, the ritual invites Efassa moto to

intervene in preventing any misfortunes from happening in the park. Together with other testimonies of the hunter, my argument for purposes of this summary is that land use and access in protected areas can be more flexibly negotiated; that is, parklands need not have only good or only bad outcomes for local livelihoods. Rather, people tend to cooperate with the park regime where there are benefits to be had and practice covert forms of resistance as well, for example, when they trespass where the regime prohibits access.

6.   Results

This section goes on to present answers to the research questions set out in section 3. Accordingly, I will discuss the place of local knowledge in a co-management system from three perspectives: (i) power relations between the local community and officials of the co-management regime; (ii) the meaning in people's everyday lives of agency and cultural resilience and the correlation between these concepts; and (iii) the forms of attachment to the land people share. The findings, which draw on the interviews as empirical evidence, are considered from a critical perspective with a focus on the regime's procedures for community participation in co-management and the opinions local people have about these procedures. The results indicate that even when a co-management system seems complex to a community, people can adhere to the system yet sidestep it as well through displays of resilience and agency to satisfy local needs. Behaviour in which people circumvent the system is substantiated by narratives of traditional knowledge about land use in and around protected areas. In the case of the MCNP, the combination of adherence and circumvention contributes to the perseverance of a culture. In what follows, I present evidence for this conclusion using examples from my observations.

6.1. Power relations between resource managers and local people

In principle, co-management of natural resources should be an equal and fair partnership in the sharing of power, responsibilities and knowledge between various actors in the management of the resources (Ballet et al. 2009; Berkes and Armitage 2010; Berkes 2009; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2007, 2004; Diver 2016). While the co-management scheme for the MCNP is designed as such, in reality it can be seen as a 'partnership' between the powerful and the powerless (Rapport 2003; Williams 2004). Within this relationship, there is a 'making of power institutions' (Victoria 2016, 256) through a complex assemblage of state laws that together are designed to meet the objectives of the state. These institutions introduce initiatives for collaboration, mainly to realise visions of the state in the co-management system, with few chances for local people to influence decision-making. This relation of power can best be understood by setting out to explore the laws that shape the work of institutions in the co-management system, how these institutions function and how their operation affects the locals.

As previous scholars have noted, many developing countries continue with forms of resource governance rooted in the colonial era (Ballet et al. 2009; Roe et al. 2009),

and Cameroon is no exception, as it has continued to apply centralised procedures of governance adopted from its colonial masters. It was not until the passing of laws in the 1990s and 2000s that the idea of decentralisation in resource governance began to take hold. In 1999, through Law No. 99/014 of 22 December 1999, Cameroon's Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation authorised NGOs to engage in projects of general interest, including environmental protection (Ngang 2014). Also crucial to decentralisation were the Act on the orientation of decentralisation (Law No. 2004/017) and the law (Law No 2004/018) laying down rules applicable to councils (Republic of Cameroon 2004a, 2004b). Both laws have been instrumental in forging principles for transferring state power to local authorities at the divisional and sub-divisional levels.

These developments illustrate why, in the case of the MCNP, the expertise of sub-divisional councils, state organisations and NGOs should have been instrumental in facilitating community participation in the co-management system. But a number of shortcomings, particularly in effectiveness, have come to light in putting such laws into practice at the local level. To better understand the relations of power, I interviewed representatives of institutions involved in co-management. One of the issues cited was that, through a *memorandum of understanding* (an agreement on collaboration), several agencies collaborate with MCNP Service to achieve state objectives in co-management. Interviews with state officials from the five municipal councils in the Southwest Region showed that councils have members who act as intermediaries and to whom matters related to villages are reported. According to one of the council officials I spoke to,

> ... MCNP Service performs a central role in implementing co-management plans in the villages. This was endorsed in the 2014 forestry decision relating to the management of the MCNP. As a result, any proposals at the level of the villages are made known to authorities of MCNP Service in order for community needs to be recognised. There are mechanisms in place to facilitate this way of working. Since the creation of the park in 2009, MCNP Service has concluded memoranda of understanding with the five municipal councils in the Southwest Region of Cameroon. This has helped establish the position of councillor, people who act as the voice of the locals. It is they who communicate matters concerning the villages and their development needs through MCNP Service to municipal councils for evaluation and implementation, as each council's budget permits (Field data 2017).

In return, when it comes to issues relating to co-management, the councils provide funds for village development in agreement with MCNP Service. The 2004 decentralisation laws require councils to assess local needs and request financial assistance from the *Programme Nationale pour le Developpement Participatif*

(PNDP) and other external bodies. In Article 1, evidence from interviews with a PNDP official showed that the PNDP applies to several sectors such as security, mining, agriculture, administration and water. Through these sectors, the Programme collaborates with regional councils to implement plans for community development. Regional councils have information on the projects or priority needs of villages. This information is passed on to the PNDP for approval, which then provides funds to councils for executing community projects and engages directly with villages through feasibility studies and micro-project designs.

Two interview responses from council authorities indicated that councils' capacity to respond to community needs determines the extent to which the local knowledge of people can be acknowledged in the co-management system. For instance, an official in the Mbonge Council stressed that cooperation with local communities during the past years was often centralised. Many of the decentralisation laws had only been implemented in recent years, which is why the Council's role in the co-management system—collaborating with local communities—seemed rather new to many of the members. According to the official, the Mbonge Council is doing everything to work out a common goal with the locals while complying with the decentralisation laws; one issue in particular in the area of natural resource management was forestlands, which continue to be an important source of livelihood to the locals through hunting and the harvesting of timber. The Mbonge Council is trying to reconcile the uses of forestlands by the locals with the state's needs. Much has to be done in creating awareness at community level about the traditional use of forests and its limits when we think of sustaining biodiversity. Other visions of the Mbonge Council are to work better with local communities and agencies involved in biodiversity conservation and develop the resources of the MCNP such that there can be support for the wellbeing of the human population around the park and the construction of village roads. The interviewee added that many financial challenges still exist in carrying out these plans, because the council continues to receive very little in the way of funds for implementing its day-to-day activities.

According to another interviewee, an official in the Idenau Council, when the MCNP was established, a memorandum of understanding was concluded between Idenau villages and park authorities. The locals also signed several documents authorising the Council to perform its daily activities along with park authorities and the local communities. At the community level, the Council works with forest management committees, which inform locals of the importance of preserving certain tree and animal species. When I visited the Buea council, an official shared these thoughts about his council:

> Buea council is responsible for administering the affairs of villages located in the Buea cluster conservation zone of the MCNP. Our council is also working with the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection and the Ministry

of Forestry and Wildlife. The council is aware that the locals of this area have traditionally hunted and harvested forest products; these are practices and sources of food which the locals found difficult to give up when their overuse of the forest was deemed unsustainable. A lot of our funds go to regenerate the forest and encourage the growth of non-timber forest products so that the villagers can have alternative sources of income. The villagers have also been encouraged to domesticate animals, such as cane rats, practice snail farming (Field data 2017).

However, the official noted that the MCNP had altered the people's traditions, because a requirement was imposed on them to obtain state permission for entry to the park, the location of many heritage sites they could visit freely before its creation. The Idenau Council has the objective of promoting alternative sources of income for the locals and making them financially self-reliant, typical sources including the use of non-timber forest products, managing beehives and providing social amenities. Here, based on the above official's response, and placing this within the frame of power relations, one could argue that cultural diversity between the study villages is quickly fading, which triggers a kind of hegemony by the state inasmuch as the villages are all governed by agents of the state (sub-divisional Councils and MCNP officials). Again, I did not want to find out whether the villages are culturally the same or different, but it is becoming hard to observe the differences, because the state (and its agents) have altered the people's traditions and way of life. If the study villages had different cultures, one would expect the locals to react differently to the system.

In terms of negotiating power relations, the above interviews show that Council officials do have plans for getting people involved in practices for sustaining biodiversity while introducing income-based avenues for people to be involved in developing their communities. However, the officials face the struggle of striking a balance between restricting the free entry of local people visiting ritual sites in the park and limiting the exploitation of forest resources. Although there are decentralisation laws in place to enable councils to assist communities in the sustainable management of natural resources, not many of the authorities have familiarised themselves fully with the new legislation. During my visit in some of the villages, there were persons representing the local communities, who in some cases act as mediators between the park regime and the locals and in others voice their opinions through membership in village forest management committees. Within a committee, representatives of the local communities may well put forward ideas and needs relating to co-management but, as some of the locals noted, without having any influence on the decisions made.

In the case of state organisations, the results showed that within the co-management system, MCNP Service is at the core of responding to the needs of people living around the park. However, the effectiveness of its role relies

on a memoranda of understanding with state partners, such as the *Ministère de l'Economie, de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du Territoire* (MINEPAT) and the *Programme Nationale pour le Developpement Participatif* (PNDP). Both are tasked with facilitating the decentralisation process to enable agencies to better function within the co-management framework for the MCNP.

In the view of a MINEPAT official, because the people living around Mount Cameroon now have a park close to them, it is important to regulate their use of forests. This should be done such that the locals are not left out of any decisions to be made; the difficulties they may face should be considered in whatever plans are being made. MINEPAT ensures this inclusion of the local population in matters of park management by coordinating various stakeholders in the Southwest Region of Cameroon using a 'common mapping platform tool'. The tool makes it easier for villages and agencies to access information about the park. It also enables actors within the co-management system to gain a better understanding of village development needs and deal with them from a shared and unanimous stance, with everyone having an equal role in decision-making. Realising this vision also requires active participation on the part of and collaboration between council officials and village chiefs. Without the above mechanisms for participation, it becomes hard to carry out certain projects in villages which are essential for the co-management process.

Consistent with partnerships and memoranda of understanding, there are undertakings by non-governmental organisations. Another official contributed the following remark:

> Depending on what needs have been identified in the villages by MCNP Service, NGOs may be called upon to assist in specific duties such as consultation, technical advising, participatory monitoring, reports, evaluation, and the implementation of projects at the level of local communities (Field data 2017).

For instance, the *Environment and Rural Development Foundation (ERUDEF)* assists in sustaining ecosystems in rural communities around the MCNP by planting trees in collaboration with village inhabitants. In addition, state organs such as the *South West Development Authority (SOWEDA)* implements integrated community development projects (ICDPs) in rural communities focusing on needs such as the supply of drinkable water, farm equipment and the construction of roads. According to an official of a local unit for the *World Wildlife Fund (WWF)*, his unit promotes co-management objectives through technical support to MCNP Service as well as the sensitisation (through educational programmes) of locals to factors affecting the sustainable management and conservation of forest resources. One concern he cited was poaching, the illegal hunting of animals which state law has declared to be endangered species.

Some of the educational programmes have been incorporated into the curriculum for basic education in the Southwest Region. The aim here is for students to become familiar with ways in which they can act more responsibly in nature without causing harm. One example is the work of the WWF to curb poaching, which a WWF official noted in an interview as severely hindering the preservation of biodiversity on the MCNP. In order to cut down on poaching and other illegal activities in the park, the WWF's capacity-building unit set itself the goal of creating awareness among the locals of the conservation of wildlife. In the official's own words, which are worth quoting here from Article 1: 'You can sell an elephant a thousand times when you use a camera and not a bullet' (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b, p.17). According to the official, the WWF intends to focus on the basic education sector in the Southwest Region, where new courses on biodiversity conservation can be introduced into the curricula.

There are efforts to improve capacity building in communities that gives the local population space to get involved in activities relating to the MCNP. To promote ecotourism, the Mount Cameroon Ecotourism Organisation (Mt. CEO) offers locals who have good knowledge of the land employment as porters and tour guides. The *Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)*, one of the co-founders of the MCNP, focuses on developing monitorable measures enabling locals to use the park. Although these institutional measures, seem sound in intent, they reinforce a patron-client power inequality. Shore (2006) describes such a relation as a contractual one with unequal power in which there are reciprocal obligations, with the patron granting favours on the one hand, and the client pledging loyalty on the other.

An interview I had with a GIZ project manager illustrates (precisely) such patron-client inequality. In the session, he affirmed that in his capacity as a project manager, and a contributor to co-management, he had always regarded the locals as partners in decision making on the use of natural resources. However, because several foreign agencies visit the area with predetermined ideas, the locals find it hard to embrace the resource management proposals of these agencies. He insisted that because some locals harbour the misconception that biodiversity will not decline even if they use forest resources, it becomes hard for GIZ to achieve some of its aims in sustaining forests. To dispel people's misconception, GIZ will continue to explore the opinions local people have about using the MCNP and natural resources in general, and ensure that the locals may continue their culture of using traditional and medicinal plants from the forest. In an example of what GIZ is doing to address some of the local needs, the official talks about introducing access cards, a practice he believes will encourage the locals to better participate in using the MCNP sustainably in a regulated manner. He adds that holders of an access card will have a specified quantity of forest products they can collect at a time, bearing in mind the preservation of biodiversity. In other words, the very idea of access cards actually

cements the power relations that the co-management regime is supposed to make more equal. It is outside actors who have the power and mete out access cards and permits—a practice that marginalises the locals.

Despite the level of networking between conservation specialists of the MCNP regime, the interviews showed that many promises of development in co-management were hard to fulfil. Among the causes of this unequal partnership was the fact that some officials did not have adequate funds for completing community projects while others did. Certain decisions directly involving the interests of local people were hard to implement. For example, an official at SOWEDA explained that the Muyuka to Munyenge earth road, which extends into the Bomboko area, had twice been improved by SOWEDA, but insufficient funding hindered its maintenance (Fig. 7). Interestingly, this following shows how such failings impact other aims. Co-management provides incentives to increase agricultural productivity in villages through the supply of finances and farm equipment to promote farming as a livelihood and curb the use of protected areas. Yet increased production requires good farm-to-market roads, which are lacking in remote villages of Bomboko. Indeed, interviews show that sub-divisional councils often do not have the financial capacity to provide suitable farm-to-market roads.

Figure 7. *A continuation of the Muyuka-Munyenge earth road, in the Bomboko area (Field data 2017)*

One unintended consequence of this approach is the local demand for community development assistance. Some informants in Boviongo, Efolofo, and Bova-Bomboko stated that they had difficulties transporting agricultural produce to markets due to

the lack of good roads and the inadequate supply of water for irrigating their crops. For instance, a farmer in the village of Boviongo spoke about how it was hard for farmers to move their cocoa produce to the market due to the remoteness of his village. What bothered him most was the lengthy wait in hope that traders from far away would come to the village. I asked what he wished could be done in response to this situation. He replied that he hopes the park regime would improve the road conditions (see Figure 7 above), which would open the way for traders to come by car, benefitting the farmers. In his view, upgrading the roads in Bomboko would also open up job opportunities for many unemployed village youths if the regime hired them.

Villages such as Boviongo, Efolofo and Bova-Bomboko, among others, are located in remote areas of the Bomboko cluster conservation zone, which is hard to reach in comparison to other zones in the MCNP. In this instance, while the co-management regime advocates for local participation, it in fact acts precisely like a neoliberal development agency. This orientation eventually perpetuates demands for better roads, which many officials find difficult to provide.

Another local farmer expressed his unhappiness about the absence of drinkable water in his village, in addition to the shortage of water for farms. The introduction of co-management in 2014 came with several projects that the farmer believed started well at the beginning, but often ended poorly. What explains this perception is that the regime outlines action plans for community development but from time to time these are postponed. As we will see in the course of the discussion below, this delay in implementing plans not only makes the locals dissatisfied, but also creates a status quo where they tend to have continuous expectations from the regime.

Another shortcoming in the system is the lack of 'common initiatives' for community development among various actors in co-management. Many local needs were hard to fulfil, because decision making mainly developed under the narrow view of conservation development agreements (CDA). From the perspective of power theory, this example reveals the unequal nature of power relations in the co-management regime. As unequal partners, the locals follow neoliberal community development agreements without having their own needs considered. Without the park regime acknowledging aspects of agreements other than the institutional context of CDA, there is a risk that decision makers will ignore local input in amending the type of development requested by local people. Yet there is also a manifestation of neoliberal power in this example: promises from park administrators cause the locals to have continuous expectations of benevolence. The nature of this inequality is reflected in the reservations the local people have regarding the co-management system.

An individual informant voiced his opinions of how slowly park authorities have acted upon various requests from the local population. An example is the felling of

trees on the land. Through co-management, MCNP Service promotes conservation with the introduction of user-right documents, issued by a state administrative office for forestry following a application by a local who intends to harvest timber. A user-right document serves as an approval of an individual's ownership of the tree he or she intends to cut down. However, many of the locals find this requirement in conflict with their own traditions and customs regarding land use. As one of the farmers in the group discussions remarked,

> Since the creation for the MCNP, several villagers living adjacent to the park have complained about the fear they have when it comes to growing various species of timber tree on their land. The locals feel that they do not have customary rights to own timber trees without the park authorities getting involved. Because of this situation, the villagers are not sure when or how they can cut down such a tree, especially when it has grown close to a public road or residential house (Field data 2017).

The farmer went on to argue that the authorities have contributed little or nothing to development in his community, having made many promises without fulfilling most of them. When it comes to support for the locals, little help is given, leaving funding for village projects insufficient. The locals do not have full knowledge of the content and dynamics of the CDAs which lie at the heart of the co-management system. Even when it comes to influencing decisions on the terms for creating the CDA, there is very little local input. Thus, a clear sense of hierarchy can be observed in the management system. But being at lower end of the formal hierarchy does not mean the locals are powerless. Rather, their marginalized position enables community resilience and agency: they locals tend to recast their frustrations at the state's failure to meet its promises of development through hope that they will cope or find other options of living amid situations of conflict.

The above example suggests that the locals want to be active, but do not know what they are allowed to do under the CDA; as a result, they become passive, able to do little more than voice their dissatisfaction with the regime. Another example is the issue of compensation for expropriated land. Not all the informants considered this need a priority. Many of the informants in focus groups made mention of their native lands being taken away by the management regime without fair compensation. For instance, one of the informants I spoke to mentioned that since the creation of the co-management system, local people have always been needed in activities to protect wildlife in the MCNP and locals have always been willing to contribute. However, he accuses the regime of taking away portions of his relatives' farmlands located near the park boundary without any prior consultation with the locals. The locals argue where the park regime expects them to comply with state laws on forestry, they are will to do so only on the condition that the officials improve the locals' wellbeing in

return. The impetus for this condition lies in the park regime's failure to compensate communities for land entitlements lost years ago.

There were also concerns about employment in the ecotourism sector within the MCNP. The informants at Bonakanda and Batoke noted that the village youths needed jobs, and did not understand why park officials were giving such jobs to foreigners who had no knowledge of the land. What was more evident in Munyenge was the dissatisfaction among locals, who complained of confrontations with park officials accusing them of encroachment, that is, farming land lying in the park. Some locals indicated that official adjustments and modifications of park boundaries took place without their knowledge. For more about these concerns, see Articles 1 and 2 (Nebasifu and Atong 2020a, 2019b).

My conclusion here on the nature of power relations is that there are conservation specialists in place, with mechanisms for collaboration that are designed to meet state objectives in the co-management system yet give almost no space for incorporating the local knowledge of people in decision-making. This is evident in the above complaints of the locals. There are, however, a few cases of locals who tend to embrace power of this nature motivated by how much they have to gain from development in the system. In the villages of Bomana, Mundongo and Kuke Kumbu, participants in the focus groups talked about the benefits of engaging in training workshops to acquire new skills in farming and of receiving equipment from the state that would help them increase their harvests. This was similar to the account heard among many of the locals on the west coast who spoke of gaining skills through co-management for the cultivation of crops they were able to sell to an animal rehabilitation centre in Limbe. Although the system provides for the development needs of communities, the power relations may result in a travesty in that they keep people out of the parklands they formerly used for ritual purposes by letting them do something else, such as cultivate crops elsewhere.

In concluding this section, two observations can be made in analysing the power in unequal partnerships between state officials and local people within systems of co-management; these observations, I would argue, do not point to mutually exclusive behaviours. The first is that the locals can praise the system when they profit from it. State incentives may keep locals away from the forest, but may also provide them with income. An illustrative example is the case of a farmer I interviewed who repairs motorbikes in Bomboko (Fig. 8).

Figure 8. *Meeting a motor bike repairer at Bomboko (Field data 2017)*

He reminded me of how much his business had grown using income obtained from conservation credits and bonuses, which he praises the regime for. As the powerful, officials can act in ways that prompt both praise and criticism from the locals. Criticism is manifested especially where the regime makes decision that are not in line with long-standing local traditions. In most cases, the locals do not have control or influence over the content of such decisions. This mismatch explains why the locals are critical of the system. Yet, in unequal resource management partnerships, local people are not always powerless: indeed, they can choose to abandon their traditional ways of using the forest without it necessarily being the regime's doing if they find it somewhat reasonable to do so.

According to an informant we met at Bonakanda, even with access to the forest, he spends much of his time working as a construction worker and as a taxi driver, which brings more income to his family than if he relied solely on the forest for a living. Visiting the park, he notes, is something he does occasionally as a cultural activity and a subsidiary source of livelihood. On balance, the above results evidence relations of unequal power in what was promoted as a partnership between officials of a co-management regime and local people. The relations are unequal, but the locals are not victims, because they have agency and search for niches where they still have freedom of choice, as I will go on to show in the next section.

6.2. Agency, Community resilience, and Cultural Resilience

People react to the power relations discussed in the previous sections in different ways depending on how they affect the community. In this section, I will examine these reactions and determine what form they take on the part of the people in enhancing both community and cultural resilience. As noted in earlier sections, the co-management system in the MCNP lacks proper consideration of the knowledge and values of the local people. Yet this shortcoming does not completely hinder people from continuing their traditions, an observation which I analyse in Articles 2, 3 and 4. Agency is the capacity for people to act and make free choices. Cultural resilience involves pathways of adaptation – actions or behaviours - to overcome the changes and obstacles people face in their communities and in society at large (Angell 2000; Clauss-Ehlers 2010; Davies and Moore 2016). My data indicate that what enables people to act such that they become culturally resilient can be referred to as agency.

Here, it is important to quote a finding pertinent to the MCNP, set out in Article 2: 'Agency is not always overt action or active community engagement to change something, but, includes practices of alternative behaviour on the part of local people ... behaviour is not only due to discontent against an undesirable management system, but also, how economic benefits and religious tradition justify the behavior of local people...' (2020a, p.2). I will explain this conception of agency using three patterns of behaviours: indications of frustration and grievance, use of economic incentives for promoting one's livelihood, and expressions of religious beliefs. I show how these elements strengthen the cultural resilience of the people through acts that are anonymous yet, being spiritual in nature, encourage the community psychologically and support the people in the face of obstacles as well as acts of covert and subtler resistance against exclusionary measures of the park regime. In anonymous acts, the identity of the agent is unknown, such as when a local trespass in the park without mentioning of his or her names or village of residence to park officials. Covert acts are ones undertaken secretly to influence the course of an event, for example, when a local goes to harvest various resources in the park without letting anyone know his or her whereabouts.

The co-management mechanisms for the MCNP restrict the practice of certain subsistence activities in protected areas, such as hunting, fishing and animal trapping, which were traditions of the locals for many decades before the creation of the MCNP. Despite the enactment of conservation development agreements (CDA) and the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Law, which are pivotal to co-management, neither instrument has an equitably negotiated basis setting out how local people are to exercise their customary rights to use protected areas. This has led to grievances and frustration among locals, who feel that the park regime often encroaches on their

farmland without any consultation. During a focus group meeting at Munyenge, a participant shared the following comment:

> Since the coming of co-management and restrictions in the park, it has been difficult for us to harvest bush meat, an important source of food to us. Many of us have been forced away from our farmlands, which are now within the park boundary. The authorities have promised us compensation, but we do not know how much we will be paid or when… (Field data 2017).

One of my informants noted that over the past years she always had ownership of her farmland, where she often went to cultivate or harvest crops—until recently, when this came to a halt. She feels upset that she cannot return to her farm, claiming that park authorities have been hostile towards the locals and accused them of farming on park boundaries. She argued that even though village residents have always cooperated with park authorities over the past years, the regime has always acted with the state's interests in minds, not those of the local population.

Another local stated that he continues to harvest very little from his farm because the park authorities are often there to prevent him from accessing it, claiming that it is on the park boundary. He highlighted the need for the park regime to turn to the village chiefs and consult with them before making decisions about adjusting park boundaries.

A farmer I interviewed felt dissatisfied about the destruction of his crops by animals from the park; the regime protects them and imposes huge fines on people who injure them. He complained of the lack of clear procedures on the part of park officials that would explain how people can better respond in such instances. One of the worries he expressed concerned elephants that occasionally come from the park and feed on crops at his farm, leaving behind little to harvest. Monkeys from the park also regularly feed on farm crops. The locals would like to be able to hunt the monkeys, but the regime imposes prohibitively large fines and imprisonment on persons caught endangering protected wildlife species. The locals are left with little idea how to prevent monkeys from invading farmlands.

The above cases relate particularly to land encroachment, a major source of conflict in the Mount Cameroon area. It tends to takes on two forms: the regime changes a protected area boundary without consulting traditional authorities and the new boundary overlaps with farms the locals own, and wildlife from a protected area trespasses onto farms on village land, causing crop damage. Compromises would seem hard to find in either case. In response, people become concerned and increasingly engage in safeguarding their land. In return for complying with provisions of the state forestry laws, they seek compensation for lands they have lost to the regime, demand specific development projects in their communities and call for an increase in wages under the *Prunus africana* management scheme.

Although the regime's approach to co-management does not address the needs of every community, there are exceptional cases which can be cited as evidence of community resilience. In these cases, resilient behaviour can be attributed to adverse conditions, marked by uncertainties and disparities linked to the limited choices people have been left with (Berkes and Ross 2013; Brown 2015). These have prompted them to look into other options they can benefit from to earn a better living. One can cite a number of informants in Muyuka and Buea who go along with the system by accepting economic incentives such as funds and equipment, which improve their livelihoods. According to an interview with a member of a village forest management committee, by cooperating with park authorities the locals are learning new skills for cultivating bush mango and cassava and for harvesting honey. The locals sell what they harvest by themselves and generate income through their membership in cooperatives. This level of working together with park authorities has been an opportunity for locals to acquire new information about ways of preserving nature, such as propagation of nurse plants and planting tress of importance to the land. In Bova Bomkoko, some of the residents comply with the system for this reason, as a farmer related during a group discussion:

> Our livelihoods have become more and more oriented towards cash-generating activities in co-management as many of the villagers have become cocoa and food crop farmers. Our sales from cocoa contribute to approximately 50% of the income in the villages. The other crops we grow, such as cocoyam, cassava, and plantains, make up to 40% of the income. With our kids in school, we need a better standard of living. We have to pay school fees and buy medicines, kerosene (for household use) and basic food items; we need sources of income for all this (Field data 2017)

In the above example, the locals complying with the system have household needs which they can meet when they engage in income-generating activities. This being the case find the system of co-management to be an alternative allowing them to get what they want if they do not receive adequate income from other practices on the land. An informant in the Health Committee, recounting the benefits village residents enjoy from a village market built by park authorities, also noted that some groups have succeeded. The groups, which include some that I have studied—the Batoke, Njonje, Lykoko, Lower Boando and Sanje—have succeeded in using conservation bonuses (state funds) to acquire basic needs such as drinkable water, chairs for hall meetings, and community halls. Since the construction of the market, there has been hope among the locals. The villages now have access to drinkable water and have received (from the state) donations of canopies and community halls, which they use for organising public meetings.

In other cases, people make use of alternative and semi-formalised means to cope with the system. In Buea and Muyuka, some locals earn income by working for the Mount Cameroon Prunus Management company as harvesters, a state-endorsed body harvesting *Prunus Africana* bark, which is exported as medicine for cancer treatment. The money they earn they have used to establish *Prunus* harvesters' unions, which help members to raise money to purchase basic needs that the regime does not provide. The health committee member made the following: 'Unions help the villagers to work together and jointly plan finances earned from harvesting *Prunus* for purchasing healthcare services and to pay for education for their children.' (Nebasifu and Atong 2020a, p.8).

Religious expression is an integral part of traditional knowledge, one that is embedded in institutions, community practices, rituals, personal and family relationships and even the experiences of people. Such knowledge can be dynamic over time; it can be acquired and passed down from generations to generation; and it can also be adapted to the local environment. The case of the MCNP shows that traditional councils and sacred societies remain fundamental institutions for safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Bakweri. However, the power and vitality of these institutions is gradually declining due to the increasing reliance on forest management committees by the co-management regime. The dominant sacred societies include *Maale* and *Liengu,* both of which have played an integral role in enabling village inhabitants to satisfy their local spiritual needs.

Several stories exist about the origin of *Maale*, but one commonly known in folklore is that shared by the Bakweri. During fieldwork, a local hunter had some words to say about this legend. The story tells of a hunter who came from the village of Womboko, not far from Mount Cameroon, to hunt in a nearby forest. He was later declared dead because he had not returned from the hunt. Later, after his unexpected return to the village, alive, the hunter began to tell his elders of the contact he had had with ancestral spirits, from whom he learned how to transform himself into an elephant and who taught him secrets about the forest. Understandably having some doubts about the hunter's encounter with spirits, the village elders decided to verify the truthfulness of the story by consulting ancestral spirits, who later confirmed the narrative to be true. Since then, village elders and hunters have had themselves initiated into the society, usually by using the forest to sacrifice animals, worship, pray and pour libation. In the *Maale* society, the initiation rite is exclusively performed by men.

Maale is a vehicle of religious expression by which the Bakweri justify their need to use and protect the forest for the purpose of worshipping a spiritual being, Efassa moto, whom locals believe has the powers to trigger natural disasters should park officials fail to promote ritual activities in the park. Over the past decade, previous eruptions of Mount Cameroon, long periods of drought, the destruction of farm crops by lava flows and the loss of biodiversity, have all been attributed to the wrath

of Efassa moto. Thus, *Maale* represents a space in which the locals can exercise a certain agency. In order for members of the *Maale* society to appease Efassa moto, certain sites of ritual use within the forest are kept secret; knowledge of their location is not disclosed to the general public. A local who leads his neighbourhood on matters of protecting his village from external aggressors insisted that anyone who seeks knowledge about sites in the park of cultural value to the Bakweri must consult a village chief, as some of the sites are known only to the native people. On other occasions, persons planning to visit these sites also need to consult with the gods of the land. It is an act of disrespect to the Bakweri culture and village authority if any individual attempts to visit these sites without doing to.

A local in the traditional council told me that the *Maale* ritual takes place in two complementary phases: the spiritual (a performance for the spirits) and the physical (a performance for the public). For the spiritual ceremony, members of the society go into the park, where they perform the traditional *Njoku* ceremony, in which the participants worship the elephant as a symbol of the *Maale*. It is believed that the elephant carries spirits of the dead. The belief also holds that during this ritual, members of *Maale* transcend into the elephant's body as the dancing goes on. The other, physical ritual, is a version of the *Maale* ritual that takes place in the village, away from the forest. Here, members of the society dress in ways that mimic the appearance of an elephant and make their dance open to the public. Common to both rituals is that they serve to worship Njoku, who intercedes on behalf of the people, linking the physical world with the spiritual and serving to bring prosperity to and protection for the land.

The above examples show agency in that the locals possess the knowledge allowing them to conceal their ritual practices and thus to continue their culture on the land. Several informants' accounts of this behaviour show that cultural activities tend to persevere hidden by anonymity from the ordinary channels for interacting with the park. This continuity can be in the form of rituals, which the locals mention infrequently, as described in two interviews. The first interviewee was a member of a group of hunters. As a village elder, he emphasised that going into the park to contact the gods is crucial in times of community problems such as when rivers and streams run dry and when many people die on the land. The second interviewee, a member of the village development group, referred to two ritual sites on the mountain, the Isuma cave and 'Red Hill'. During the *Maale* ritual, members of the society use both sites for animal sacrifices and for the pouring of libation. Again, the actual location of these sites is only made known to a few individuals in the *Maale* society.

Njoku also refers to the African forest elephant, which is a spiritual figure to the *Maale* society. By belief, those who belong to *Maale* possess the power to control elephants at night. Once they have control of an elephant, they can do things to shape the course of events in the physical world. One of the informants shared some of the stories people relate regarding persons active in *Maale*. They possess

spiritual powers from ancestors enabling them get into an elephant's body at night and intervene in a life event. For instance, the elephant may then be made to chase intruders from farmland.

The agency through which local people make use of protected areas is expressed within religious practices and beliefs that are often anonymous; that is, the identity of persons involved in the act are unknown. In this way, the locals are able to circumvent certain provisions of the co-management system such as those prohibiting unauthorised use of the park. The people do so to meet needs such as appealing for spiritual intervention to bring rain in times of lengthy droughts, protect the land from natural disasters or keep intruders away from their farmland, as noted above in the accounts of the interviewees. This behaviour shows a measure of cultural resilience among the people and how agency promotes this resilience.

The *Liengu* sacred society also represents a source of agency enabling the Bakweri to become culturally resilient. This society upholds the principle of locals being custodians of the sea, which is host to a sea goddess known as Liengu-la-mwanja. Although the regime's co-management procedures do not properly recognise the customary rights of people to use the land and sea, the locals maintain ritual practices, as they see *Liengu* as important for preserving the solidarity of their communities in situations of crises. According to an informant acting as head of his neighbourhood, the origins of the *Liengu* cult are traced back to a folkloric narrative among the Bakweri describing the life of a woman named Liengu who competed against a man called Moto. The contest was to see who could make the biggest fireplace on the land. Moto's victory in the competition prompted the villagers to forcefully remove Liengu from the village. Liengu escaped and never returned to the village. It is believed she ended up going into a body of water without returning, which is why the word *Liengu* relates to a water goddess. This practice evokes the cultural heritage of the ancestors of the Bakweri before they moved inland from the coast.

The interviews indicate that people would choose to talk to the spirit of Liengu for medical needs, particularly when a medical practitioner at a hospital or health centre cannot detect and diagnose the type of ailment. During the *Liengu* ritual, a woman with an unknown infection that is hard to identify is taken to a fireplace by other women. She is dressed with the roots of an *iroko* tree, after which, upon the invitation of drummers, a traditional doctor, or *gahga yowo,* offers medicine to the woman, which she then vomits to symbolise the curing process. The society keeps secret the knowledge of what ingredients from plants are used as medicine. To the Bakweri, rituals of this kind continue to support people in moments of rare illness, a level of support which the locals do not get from the regime.

As regards covert and subtler forms of resistance, the results have identified several accounts of people being culturally resilient through the subsistence use of protected areas and portions of land close to the park boundary. This mode of using the land was often employed in response to the exclusionary arrangement of the park regime.

The transect walk I undertook with a native Bakweri hunter in the MCNP in the year 2017 showed that locals welcome the park regime's approach of involving people in income-based activities within the park yet at the same time defy state prohibitions against unauthorised entry by secretly trespassing on the land. In this situation, the hunter referred to a number of plants gathered for medicinal and ceremonial use: *Ewula vaco,* a grass, used for wound treatment; *Wulule,* for ceremonies like *Yoya'a etumba* ('family event') and the *Maale* festival; and *Monda dwani,* which provides the body strength when consumed. He also made mention of elephant dung, which some of the locals collect in areas close to the park boundary, where elephants often migrate. Dung is boiled and the water consumed as a treatment for a stomach ache. In addition to the hunter's testimony, data from focus group discussions evidence similar forms of cultural resilience. For example, an individual in the vigilante group said:

There are some plants obtained from the park and on village land which are important to the local people for medicinal and spiritual use. We use the *Nkeng* plant to make peace in the event of land disputes, *Nasamba* and *Wokaka* to treat stomach pain, and *Quini* sticks to cure malaria. The Gahga yowo uses the *Seke-seke* and *Akom* to inflict fever on persons who violate Bakweri taboos on the land (Nebasifu and Atong 2020b, p.16).

During group discussions at Efolofo, one of the informants noted that for many years the locals have had close ties to the park, from which they gather different forest products that are sources of vital nutrients, such as wild honey, *ngongo* leaf, *njangsa*, fruits and mushrooms. People also collect wood for building houses (*karabots*) (Fig. 9) and for cooking.

Figure 9. *A karabot house spotted at Big Koto 1 village (Field data 2017)*

Karabot houses are particularly advantageous to the locals for many reasons. The wood (timber) needed comes from tree species like whitewood, mahogany and *iroko*, which are readily available. Some of these trees grow on village land, although they are gradually being subject to conservation measures aimed at preventing overuse. For instance, according to interviews with a park official, the locals have user rights, meaning that an individual who intends to cut down a tree belonging to one of the above species on his or her land for timber has to go to a local administrative office of the Forestry and Wildlife Department or its regional delegation. The officials carry out an assessment of the tree, the land on which it is growing and the purpose for which it is being cut down before issuing or denying permission to fell the tree. *Karabots* are made of timber, which provides good insulation. The natural elasticity of the wood makes the walls strong to withstand cold weather. Moreover, it does not require much painting or staining to prevent rot compared to other building materials. Among their disadvantages, *karabots* are vulnerable to termites and wood ants, which the locals complain damage the wood if it is not maintained properly. Natural factors like water, sun and fire can also damage the wood, making the walls of the *karabot* either shrink or swell.

Other products gathered in the park include palm oil, bush pepper, wild vegetables and bush onion, which are important food sources to the locals. Overall, the results indicate that subsistence activities within protected areas are instances of covert behaviour, with little knowledge of the sites divulged by those involved. This example shows people exercising agency to enhance resilience, enabling them to meet their needs given that the co-management system does not give them space to use protected areas for subsistence.

All in all, this section adds a new understanding of the connection between agency and cultural resilience. Agency is often exercised when something triggers people to act and that action produces some kind of effect. As agents of change in a system of co-management, people have a variety of ways of sidestepping official changes in the system. To create an impact, people tend to be more active in their behaviour. However, the examples examined above have shown that this agency may take the form of passive behaviour in which people seek change by expressions of grievance, not necessarily overt action. In the present case, where the desired changes have not been forthcoming, people turned to their secret use of the land, not revealing their identity to anyone. A particular instance of this is the locals keeping secret the location of sites in the forests that people use for rituals. This also explains why both concepts, agency and cultural resilience, coalesce when studying how people behave in response to inequalities of power in a co-management system. These findings show that people can become culturally resilient when a regime does not respond to their needs. The agency they exercise to effect change may consist in acting passively against the regime or making way for alternatives to achieve what they want.

6.3. Relations between Local Knowledge and Biodiversity

'Local knowledge', a term sometimes referred as being synonymous with 'indigenous' or 'traditional knowledge' describes the thoughts or ideas local people have, acquire or experience as part of their interaction with the natural environment and local culture. In studies of co-management and resource management, the term 'local knowledge' is often used as a tool for planning the effective integration of knowledge within resource management systems and the proper use of natural resources among actors (Berkes 2009; Markkula et al. 2019; Nadasdy 1999). Without an understanding of what this knowledge is, regimes risk overlooking the benefits of making local people influential actors with a contribution to make to biodiversity conservation in their co-management agenda.

The results in the present case, the MCNP, indicate that biodiversity remains a key factor in influencing lifestyles of the Bakweri, who perceive the land as a place offering relief from concerns and sustenance to cover food, as mentioned in the next paragraph, both spiritual and physical. In the former, people can have contact with the spiritual world and request all kinds of good fortune. In the latter, people see the land as a place of abundant resources which they need for their everyday life. From the regime's perspective, if it does not regulate the exploitation of forestry and wildlife, the ideas local people hold about the land will continue to conflict with efforts to preserve biodiversity; this clash of interests explain why co-management has come to be an unequal partnership.

This does not mean that the knowledge of local people cannot be valuable in pursuing the agenda for conserving biodiversity in the MCNP and its surroundings. In this section, I use evidence from my visit to Mount Cameroon in 2017 (Fig. 10) to clarify why there needs to be a place for local knowledge in biodiversity conservation. I show how, within the system, partnerships can also be flexible due to reciprocal benefits, even when Bakweri perceptions of biodiversity and the need for conservation differ from those of the park regime. I will then illustrate the use of forest resources that shape local traditions among the people of the MCNP, with these examples including Bakweri insights about hunting practices.

Figure 10. *A visit to the MCNP (Field data 2017)*

The situation in the MCNP shows that locals' perception of the place and environment differs markedly from that of the park regime. On the one hand, the locals see the mountain as their ancestral land inhabited by a spiritual being they call Efassa moto, who plays a central role in the occurrence of good deeds in local communities. The MCNP is very much a spiritual site to the locals, who, my interviews indicate, contend that the park regime should formally recognise certain ritual practices in the park. On the other hand, the state took control of the park in 2009 as a 'state property' with strict rules designed to promote the conservation of biodiversity. Interviews with a native Bakweri hunter, whom I have written about in Article 4, show that, within the MCNP, the state's priorities include generating income through ecotourism and *Prunus* harvesting and that these are the activities affording locals the most space to be involved in park operations.

Amid these contrasting perceptions of place, there are flexible relations of partnership. This flexibility can take the form of people's compliance with the regime based on reciprocal benefit and, at the same time, their defiance of it in an effort to preserve their culture. In reciprocal compliance, the park regime provides needed income to local people by giving them work as *Prunus* bark harvesters and tour operators, which the locals welcome. In return, the locals can continue their stone ritual (*Lyen la ngomo'o*), performed at a huge rock on Mount Cameroon that has been worshipped by the Bakweri for several generations to ensure the safety of persons visiting the mountain (Nebasifu and Atong 2020c). Upon arrival to the site, the visitor is expected to pour libation using wine and then perform a dance in the name of the stone. After harvesting the leaves of a fern plant, the visitor performs a dance with the song '*Lyen la ngomo'o iye iye*' in order to invite ancestral spirits for the

109

protection of people. Park officials embrace this ritual in conservation activities to ensure the safety of persons doing conservation-, income-, or tourism-related work in the MCNP.

The second reaction on the part of the locals, defiance, takes place when the regime does not meet the people's customary needs. There is little space for the locals to assert their rights, and so, they go to protected areas in defiance of state prohibitions against unauthorised access to the park. An interview with a Bakweri hunter described the extensive knowledge locals have of the MCNP terrain and its biodiversity (Nebasifu and Atong 2020c), in situations of anonymity. One example is his experience with a *njoku*, the African forest elephant, in the protected wildlife forest of the MCNP. In this habitat, the hunter talked about the spiritual value of elephants to the Bakweri, who consider them links between the living and the dead. This enabled him to refrain from any hostile act against an elephant, which in turn promotes the conservation of biodiversity. He further explained that locals are aware that elephants come to farms on village lands near park boundaries, giving people an opportunity to collect dung, which is used for traditional medicine. An interesting part of his account was his knowledge of the size, appearance and state of a dung deposit, which gave him an idea of the elephants' location in the park and their size. Larger dung sizes mean adult elephants. He then uses this knowledge to walk in the forest without confronting an elephant. This is an example of how an individual's local knowledge contributes to improving biodiversity conservation.

What the above examples suggest is that local knowledge is crucial for sustaining biodiversity. However, for this knowledge to be effectively tapped, reciprocity is required between locals, on the one hand, who have a good knowledge of the land and its biodiversity and, on the other, park officials, who need to understand the place of this knowledge on their conservation agenda. Where such relations of reciprocity are created, they tend to be advantageous for preserving both biodiversity and people's culture.

An awareness of biodiversity is reflected in local knowledge when we examine how products of the forest contribute to people's ways of living. Mount Cameroon contains a wealth of forest resources which the locals use for household and medicinal needs (Fig. 11). For example, snails form a substantial part of the Bakweri diet. In terms of nutritive value, a mature snail has about 15 per cent protein, 80 per cent water, and 2.4 per cent fat. It comprises vitamins like A, B12, E, and K, as well as calcium, magnesium, iron and fatty acids. In the Mount Cameroon area, snails can be spotted in humid parts of the forest in damp places under trees, stones and leaves. The locals traditionally gather snails in the rainy season when they reproduce more favourably. The slime of the snail is believed to have medicinal value in stopping bleeding from wounds on the human body, reducing the variola virus infection in smallpox disease and treating eye problems. Some farmers are introducing snail farming to generate income and make snails available during the dry season. This is

a means of livelihood that entails little labour and low costs. The giant African snail (*Achatina marginata*) takes approximately one year to mature, although some can grow faster with suitable temperature and humidity.

In order to analyse people's relation and the importance of biodiversity, I went to identify various plants on Mount Cameroon because of their medicinal and ceremonial importance to the locals. They include 'king grass', used for healing wounds on the human body; *Afro-Momo,* also known locally as *Tondo*, which bears a pink fruit with seeds that provide energy; *Blood stick* (*Wutolongo*), a source of wood used for building homes and bridges; *Ngwela vako*, believed to grow only on the mountain and used traditionally to scare away bad spirits from the land; *Ngonyi,* a medicinal plant used more spiritually in ritual events as an antidote to rid persons of rare infections. On my walk with the hunter, I also came across a forest covered by bamboo, which has many uses to the locals. When eaten with honey, the sprouts or shoots of the bamboo are believed to cure respiratory disorders. Other plants I identified during field observations in the village of Munyange included the *Bobenga* tree, which increases blood in the human body; the *Nasamba* plant, used for treating chronic stomach pains; the *Epipiliki*, for the treatment of waist pain; *quinine* stick, for malaria; and *king grass*, which cleanses the body.

Bamboo forest, West Coast MCNP

King grass, MCNP

Ngwela Vako plant, MCNP

Afro-Momo, MCNP

Blood stick, MCNP

Ngonyi plant, MCNP

Figure 11. *Plants for domestic and medicinal use, Mount Cameroon (Field data 2017)*

One particularly interesting observation was the use of stones and the husks of *njangsa* seeds from the forest in building the base for urinary toilets (Figures 12 and 13). Unlike the modern urinary toilets one finds in cities, the traditional toilet shown in figure 11 can be built using only natural materials; that is, no manufactured components are needed. Both of the elements needed, stone and *njangsa*, are readily available in the wild throughout the year. It takes one to two days' work to transport them from the forest and build the toilet floor, although this depends on how far into the forest a person has to walk to collect the products and what means of transportation he or she uses. A toilet requires some six to eight buckets of stones, and five to seven buckets of *njangsa* seed husks. The husks become available after the seed has been extracted.

Figure 12. A stone-built urinary toilet in Munyange (Field data 2017)

Figure 13. Urinary toilet using njangsa seed husks, Boviongo (Field data 2017)

For villagers who cannot afford having modern urinary toilets in their homes, these traditional toilets are advantageous because they are less costly to build and are easy to maintain; they can be used for more than a year before needing any major maintenance. Stones and *njangsa* seed husks also have a high permeability. As the toilet is in contact with the ground, this helps in reducing unpleasant smells. In addition, seasonal sunshine and rainfall keep the toilet floor maintenance-free for long periods. One of the residents at Boviongo I spoke with said that *njangsa* grows commonly in sub-Saharan Africa; it is considered a food ingredient and is traded in several markets. In the Mount Cameroon area, *njangsa* grows naturally in the forest, which is why the regime categorises it as a non-timber forest product, one which the locals may harvest from nature, and not as an endangered species.

The raffia bamboo plant which grows on Mount Cameroon provides a material the locals use for roofing homes and for producing drumsticks, flutes and whistles,

used for Bakweri traditional dance festivals like *Eilulo Ekulo*, *Nyankpe* and *Obasinju*. Bamboo stems are also a valuable resource for making animal traps and pointed sticks for hunting. In October 2017, I had the opportunity to meet Mola Ndumbe, a Bakweri informant in Buea well known in his neighbourhood as a poet, actor and promoter of culture over the past 20 years. I personally knew him as my primary school teacher in 1998; he taught literature and his teaching included folklore about Bakweri beliefs. According to Mola Ndumbe,

> Most of the indigenous practices of worship have gradually been disappearing as the older generations of people pass away. However, a few practices can still be cited when it comes to hunting. Animals like bats, cane rats, porcupines and bush pigs are hunted and eaten as staples. The four modes of traditional hunting among the Bakweri are the trail hunting, hunting by sticks, *Movawu* and *Makolokoto* (Field data 2017).

Biodiversity continues to be critical for the Bakweri hunting culture. Most of the hunt takes place in communal forests and various sites in the village, both of which lie outside the park. The Bakweri use four principal methods: trail hunting, hunting by sticks, hunting using dogs (*movawu*) and hunting at night (*makolokoto*). Figure 14 shows my illustrations of these methods.

In trail hunting, the hunter uses traps built according to the size and type of the intended quarry while keeping in mind the hunting regulations of the regime (See also Nebasifu and Atong 2020a, p. 156 on section 7 of the 1994 Forestry and Wildlife Law). Trapping occurs such that one end of a stick made of bamboo is inserted into the ground and the other is bent over and attached using rope or metallic material to a second stick in the ground, leaving a loose point of contact and circular passage for the animal's head to pass through (Fig. 14 A). How big or small this space is determined based on the size of the targeted animal. Placing some food within the rope loop attracts the animal to walk through and get trapped.

In hunting using sticks, the hunter uses pointed sticks made of bamboo, inserting them onto the ground to form a square-shaped surface and cage with food of some kind placed in the cage (Fig. 14 B). A passage is then created in between the sticks such that the animal can pass through. Using a rope, the food is then wrapped and attached to a fixed stick placed at the front of the passage. This stick also supports the cage's lid, keeping it open such that whenever the animal touches the rope, the lid of the cage lid falls down, trapping the animal inside. In the *movawu* method, the owner of the dog places a strap round the dog's neck *(maiwo)* with a bell fitted onto it. As the dog moves with the hunter in the forest, the jingling of the bell scares the animal, pushing it in the direction of the hunter's trap. *Movawu* hunting is useful with the jingling sound, as it enables the hunter to know quite precisely the direction in which the animal is heading. It also saves time by speeding up the hunt as the

hunter does not have to wait several days before a catch. *Makolokoto* is a Bakweri word used to describe practice of night hunting, which can involve using any suitable method, but specifically targets animals known to be nocturnal.
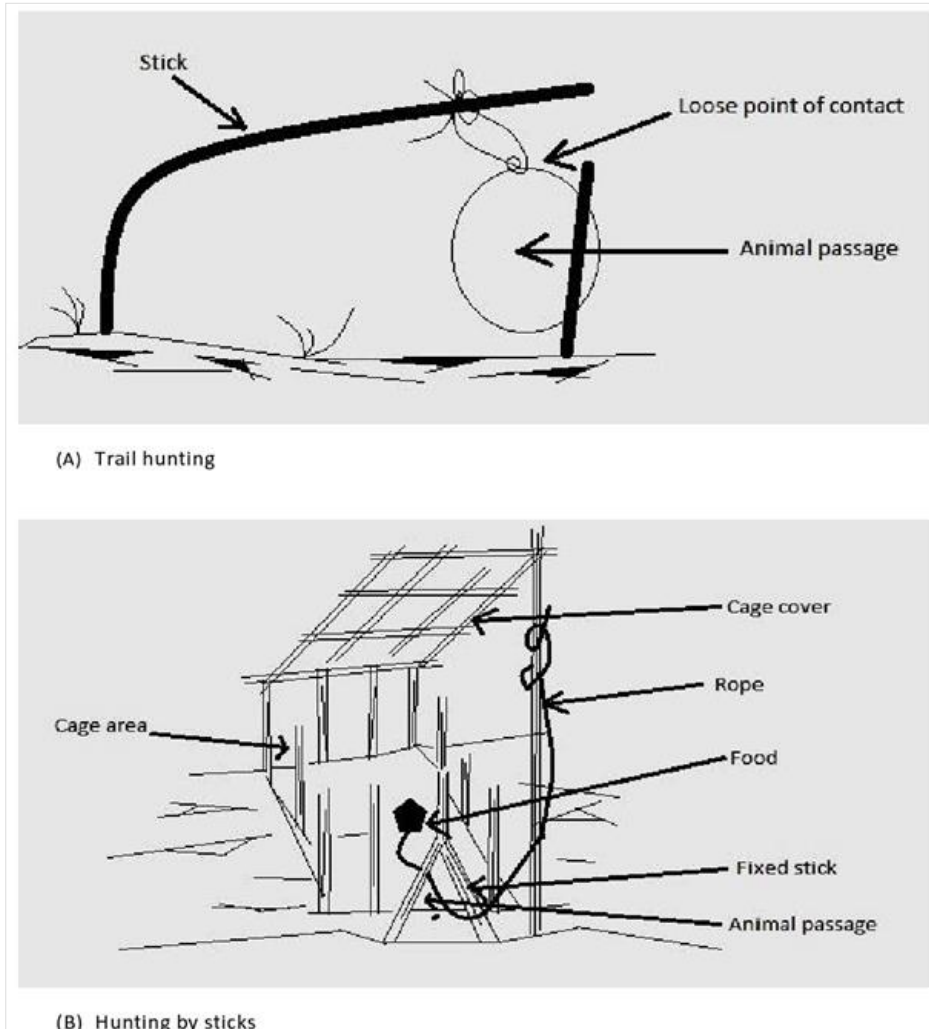
Figure 14. Bakweri hunting methods (Author's illustrations based on field data 2017)

For many decades the locals have used sites of biodiversity for camping when walking long distances for subsistence, hunting and gathering on the land. Results show that this practice has continued within the co-management system. In the MCNP, state-employed persons engaged in tourism and *Prunus africana* harvesting make use of camping sites with the support of the regime. A *Prunus* worker I met

during fieldwork talked about a French pharmaceutical company (Plantecam) that had operated starting in the 1980s processing the bark of the *Prunus africana* plant. Many of the locals employed by the company would go harvesting up the mountain for several days and on their way back stop for shelter at a camping site (called 'Plantecam camp', after the French company) in the montane forest. Most of the workers lived in this camp for much longer periods before returning to the village. Since 2009, following the suspension of Plantecam, and the coming of the Mount Cameroon Prunus Management Common Initiative Group (MOCAP) as the new *Prunus africana* contractor, the camp has continued to serve as a resting place for workers. They also use another camping site *(drink-garri camp) in the* montane forest, the camp being named after a common practice where persons returning from work will stop to eat garri (Cassava flakes) prepared using water from a nearby spring. The camp provided more than just shelter, for many people would camp there to discuss various topics about working life and village matters.

Based on the above accounts of people's knowledge and their relation to biodiversity, the locals are very much aware of the importance of biodiversity and why it should be preserved. This is not a new phenomenon among the Bakweri. To judge from Bakweri we interviewed, the people have for many generations known which forest resources are (or are not) in danger of extinction. With this knowledge they are able to use them more wisely in traditional ceremonies, as food, in curing illnesses and for activities such as building. Certain sites in the forest are used for rituals, predominantly to summon goodwill to protect the land. This is a belief the Bakweri continue to pass on from one generation to another, which is why their voices must have a place in decisions about managing biodiversity.

On balance, an analysis of the results indicates that people can decide to obey, resist or adapt to what is an unequal power relation through acts of agency. These gives them the space to negotiate, or make way for, a better and alternative position to deal with biodiversity within the constraints of the co-management system. The approaches I have detailed above do not exclude each other: they succeed when flexible and reciprocal partnerships are formed and when people use the land secretly, without revealing their identity. While it is important to acknowledge the benefits of traditional knowledge in preserving biodiversity, one must also recognize the risks associated with this claim, as post-colonial and decolonial studies have pointed out (Barcellos and Maria 2020; Whitt 1998). The risks include knowledge deprivation and commodification through processes of co-option, as well as incorrect application of such knowledge. This occurs especially when it is scaled up under neoliberal conservation regimes, where capitalistic practices impose various demands on indigenous people.

7. Discussion

The results have shown that relations between local people and state authorities involved in co-management systems are not always of ones of equal power or equal partnership in the sharing of responsibilities. Power relations can also reflect other inequalities in the system. The research has combined theoretical perspectives about power (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Parsons 1967; Rapport 2003; Victoria 2016), hierarchy (Flanagan 1989; Iteanu 2009; van Kleef and Morgan 1877) and egalitarianism (Cheng 2020; Flanagan 1989; Woodburn 2005) into as a broad theoretical framework. This was augmented with the concepts of traditional knowledge (Markkula et al. 2019; Nadasdy 1999), agency Chirozva 2015; Harvey 2002; Newman and Dale 2006) and cultural resilience (Clauss-Ehlers 2010; Davies and Moore 2016). This conceptual basis enables us to better understand imbalances in power as well as how they affect people's ways of acting and the knowledge people have about biodiversity.

In analysing the implementation of co-management and examining power relations between people the thesis drew on scholarly contributions on institutional bricolage (Büscher and Fletcher 2019); convivial conservation (De Koning 2011), and community resilience (Berkes and Ross 2013). These tools enabled me to identify the kinds of procedures the state uses in post-colonial settings of co-management to meet its objectives and whether such procedures give space for agency on the part of the local people. The results support critical scholarly views on co-management, which have identified power inequalities in partnerships and their consequences (Awung and Marchant 2018; Berkes and Armitage 2010; Berkes 2009; Berkes et al. 1991; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Monono et al. 2016; Nadasdy 2007, 2005, 2003). The present findings are partially consistent with analyses by scholars in resource management (Brockington and Wilkie 2015; Brockington & Duffy 2010; Wilkie 2018; West et al. 2006). This line of research has revealed the capitalist nature of conservation and demonstrated the poverty brought about by the management of protected area in communities.

Overall, the literature points to the fact that co-management grounded in top-down approaches of the state—whether its overarching purpose be participatory governance or resource management—does not value the local knowledge of people in decision-making or the management agenda. Rather, it re-creates practices of exclusion in communities. In the literature, however, little attention has been given to the mechanisms enabling people to overcome inequalities of power in co-management systems. To bridge this gap, I suggest a shift, one going beyond

criticism for criticism's sake, to interpreting the impact of and motive for people's actions in context when they realise a system is not operating in their favour. To explore the feasibility of such a shift, I set out to investigate the interconnection between power relations and the concepts of hierarchy, egalitarianism, agency and cultural resilience.

7.1. Power and Hierarchy

Power and hierarchy are related in many ways. At times the two are intertwined, with power implying status as a largely shared assumption in both the formation and transformation of society, informing the ideas, actions, judgements and ways we conceive of society (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Fabinyi et al. 2014; Flanagan 1989; Foucault 1991; Iteanu 2009; Nadasdy 1999; Nantongo et al. 2019; Parsons 1967; Rapport 2003; van Kleef and Morgan 1877). In other instances, power and hierarchical status can be usefully distinguished: the two do not necessarily go hand in hand, and those lower in the hierarchy might in fact have more power than those higher up. To determine how hierarchy and power are interrelated in co-management systems, we need to compare them. In André Iteanu's analysis of Louis Dumont's comparative anthropology (Iteanu 2009, p. 332-335), he compares hierarchy to a situation where a group recognises particular values that give society some specificity or state of relevance. Practices of hierarchy are predicated on values, not power. In this respect, people exercising political power are subordinate to a hierarchy, and political power is legitimate in that people can assume leadership in certain cases. Hierarchy in this sense is not always a case of society acting against the state or some chain of command. Likewise, power is not merely an instance of one party having control over another, but rather it is a value with its own autonomy within a system. In the context of power, values are not given recognition, and power is contingent on hierarchy which enables those in power to exploit various inequalities stemming from differences in wealth, race or the like - integrated systematically with power relations.

Both comparisons between power relations and hierarchy apply to co-management, allowing us to identify two types of relations. In the first, the state is an entity with a superior rank in the hierarchy uses political power with little recognition of people's values. In this regard, I examine the park regime's approach to co-management and the inequalities that are systematically embedded within it. In the second the local people hold on to their traditional values regardless of those values being subsumed under the hierarchical structure of the nation-state. Here, with reference to André Iteanu's assessment, I ask what kinds of values the locals cling to for societal relevance and whether locals assume some kind of leading role of their own in the hierarchical structure of the nation-state. Values in the context of hierarchy are perhaps most aptly described using Iteanu's words:

Or to put it differently, ideas and practices cannot be seized in themselves, but only in relation to a set of ideas and actions to which they belong. In this sense, each idea and each practice is immediately given with its relation to something else. This relation assigns it, or 'is', its value. Therefore, value is not here a norm or an idea as such, but a relation, which is inseparable from the content of an idea or a practice… (Iteanu 2009, p. 339).

Iteanu goes on to add: '…values do not apply equally to all individuals, but relatively to personal status. The value "choices" of individuals reflect their value ranking' (p.340). This description of value similarly applies in the hierarchical setting of co-management. The state-run co-management in the case of MCNP ultimately draws its hierarchical roots from colonial rule in Cameroon (1884 to 1961). The country was left with forms of state power and administrative systems inherited from German, French and British rule (the period 1884-1919, 1918-1960, and 1922-1961, respectively) as it went about fashioning a nation-state. It maintained a hierarchy, enhanced by centralised forms of governance and administrators who report to their respective colonial administrations. For instance, German Cameroon had acting governors; French Cameroon had high commissioners and governors, and British Cameroon had district officers, senior residents, and senior district officers (Ngoh 1996). When Cameroon gained independence in 1960, it had its first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, followed by a federal republic and the post of a prime minister in 1961, and a united republic in 1972. Since then, Cameroon has partially maintained this incremental form of government, adding to decentralisation policies in the 1990s. Today, the president is the head of government, and persons in administrative positions are subordinate to the holder of the office.

Co-management of the MCNP and its adjacent communities lies within a political hierarchy linked to the above developments in governance. The MCNP is a state property administered by MCNP Service, a subsidiary of the regional delegation for forestry and wildlife, which operates under the auspices of a regional governor (for Southwest Cameroon), who is subordinate to the prime minister. The prime minister answers to the president, who is head of the government. A governor administers a region, with the constituent divisions of the region governed by mayors. Divisional officers preside over sub-divisions. On the lowest rung of this hierarchy, one finds villages, led by chiefs. The term 'chief' is something of a travesty: during the colonial conquests, the colonialists found it increasingly hard to make trade deals with elders, who were well respected for their prominent role in looking out for their villages; they proceeded to appoint chiefs, persons of position who were used to promote colonial projects and, in many cases, the chiefs were dependent on the modern state (Geschiere 1993, p. 152). As the present study deals with villagers and their chiefs, who are subordinate to state political power, an important question

to be taken up below will be how this political organisation affects people at the bottom of the political hierarchy.

My analysis of the state's use of political power in the case of the MCNP shows that, in the co-management system, the regime introduces development agreements to make the people comply with state regulations. For example, depending on the amount of conservation bonuses (an incentive for funding income-generating activities in villages), the park regime can carry out community development projects; these may provide villagers with nurseries that promote mixed-agro forestry systems for oil palms, cocoa, and other non-timber forest products, improve the yields of crops like cassava and banana, or assist a village with other needs. As the powerful party in this political hierarchy, the regime can intervene to punish those who do not comply with state law, with punishments consisting of fines or imprisonment for infractions such as trespassing and other illegal activities. The regime can also fine and imprison an individual for one to three years if he or she caught in possession of a class A animal, the hunting of which is strictly prohibited both inside and outside of the MCNP (see also the Wildlife and Fisheries Act No 94/01 of 20 January 1994 laying down forestry, wildlife, and fisheries regulations). In this setting, chosen persons from villages and the village chiefs have a role in which they further the regime's projects. For instance, while a state-employed park conservator coordinates the planning and management of the park, cluster facilitators (locals appointed by the regime) are contracted to guarantee the information flow between park authorities and the villages, facilitate discussions in committees and engage closely with partners. Chiefs lead the committees, tokenistic forums whose members include people from the village, who deliberate matters concerning the park, but who have little influence on the decisions being made.

According to van Kleef and Cheng (2020), power and hierarchy are social phenomena displayed in the relations between people. They argue that hierarchies constantly fluctuate, with actors of a low-power rank navigating this flux, building on expectations and behaviours in pursuit of their goals. In some situations, individuals on the lowest level of the hierarchy tend to adapt their emotional expressions to the social context, exhibiting cooperation and negotiation; in others, they circumvent systems controlled by those with a high power rank. One of the perspectives van Kleef and Cheng propose is that hierarchies based on legitimate power can capitalise on motivating people towards social relatedness, boosting collective action and success. These ideas fit the case of MCNP. The results discussed in the previous chapter indicate that co-management does not empower local people to attain higher power ranks within the political hierarchy. Neither does the system provide any standard basis for recognising people's customary values when making decisions about resource management. When people realise they are not empowered, they find other ways to continue their culture by cooperating with, working out a compromise with or resisting the system. The MCNP is not only a

place for preserving biodiversity, but a source of state income through ecotourism and *Prunus* bark harvesting, both of which often require employing locals. Here, a flexible partnership exists in that the locals collaborate with the regime to generate income, benefiting the regime, and the regime, in exchange, welcomes some traditions of the people. One example is the dancing stone ritual, which park officials approve of to keep people safe in the park. Yet conflicts over land also emerge, for example, when people engage in acts of trespassing in the park. In such instances, people can be seen as asserting their ancestral and spiritual connection to the land as a source of power, compensating them for the lack of a formal status in the political hierarchy.

Bakweri cosmology, a set of values based on the dualism of being in the world, seen as the realm of both the living (*vaenya*) and the dead *(vawoo)*, presents an example of where this power lies and why cultural continuity exists despite the antagonistic nature of the co-management system. According to Bakweri belief, everyone has a responsibility to look after the living, such as plants, animals, birds and water, in order to sustain relations of power with the dead. These elements are akin to what Ferguson's and Jeffrey's (2015) hypothesize as natural amenities that represent spiritual resources, resources enabling people to connect to the sacred. Air, which is a life-giving element, links the living and the dead. *Vawoo* comprises invisible forces of nature, such as the spirits of the dead. The Bakweri believe that power can be brought forth by contacting the dead and performing acts that direct invisible forces of nature and shape life events for the benefit of people. Thus, their capacity to have a dialogue with the dead is also a resource for them.

The Bakweri perception of power is linked to mysticism; it is a blessing people have, one they can guide, invoke or share with the living and dead to various ends, such as wishing for a more bountiful harvest. This is why people continue to use certain sites in and around the MCNP for rituals. Even in the basic everyday life practices of the Bakweri, the power can be put to use, for example, when individuals in need of luck in their working life go to the graveyard where their ancestors are buried and pour wine, asking the spirits for blessings. When the sick visit a traditional doctor (*Gahga yowo*), the doctor uses herbs and, in an exercise of the Bakweri power, summons his ancestors to ensure that the herbs will bring about a cure. The discussion on the relation between power and hierarchy suggests that through their spiritual relation with the land the locals gain self-worth and enjoy a status and power vis-à-vis the co-management system, which contributes to their resilience to the pressures emanating from the political hierarchy.

7.2. Power vis-à-vis Egalitarianism

Writing about the accumulation of material wealth, van Kleef and Cheng suggest that egalitarian societies with a cultural ethos of individual autonomy and equality tend to echo features of social hierarchy (van Kleef and Cheng 2020, p. 11). Analysis of the MCNP adds another dimension to this interpretation which exemplifies a co-management system in which people who historically have had egalitarian ways of living share responsibilities with the state, which imposes a post-colonial hierarchy on them. Significantly, however, the people can still display their egalitarian social organisation through their practices, while at the same time internalising this hierarchy. Accordingly, hierarchy does not exclude egalitarianism nor egalitarianism hierarchy. Not much has been written about the egalitarian social organisation of the early Bakweri people. However, in Ambe J. Njoh's description of pre-colonial Bakweri society, we find strong evidence of egalitarianism:

> In pre-colonial Bakweri society, communities comprising mainly extended families (as opposed to individuals) controlled land. Such control as was commonplace throughout most of Africa before the European conquest did not imply ownership of any sort. Consequently, it was never permissible for individuals to alienate or transfer land as custom allowed for no more than the privilege to use land. Land therefore had use, as opposed to economic, value in this society, was never viewed as a commodity and therefore could not be sold. All living members of precolonial Bakweri society viewed themselves as custodians and not proprietors of the land bequeathed from earlier generations: the living had the responsibility of guarding and protecting land for the unborn (Njoh 2011, p. 71).

To understand how the above egalitarian elements may co-exist with the post-colonial hierarchy of co-management, we need to determine the interconnection between power relations and egalitarianism. Power relations are not only the various ways, strategies, capacities that make or produce society, but also the means by which individuals transform society to make it meaningful to them (Rapport 2003; Victoria 2016). In this sense, we could assess egalitarianism in the light of the behavioural patterns or qualities people display to access resources.

By definition, every member of an egalitarian society should be of equal rank and status. However, egalitarian societies may, in principle, have interpersonal power struggles as part of everyday life. Flanagan (1989) and Woodburn (2005) note that although egalitarianism implies equality for all people in opportunities and rights, it is quite rare to find societies that are wholly egalitarian, because there are individual power struggles at the interpersonal level that play out beneath this equality. The earlier writings of Lewis Henry Morgan and Louis Dumont offer useful ideas to

further understand the ideological nature of egalitarianism (Dumont 1966; Morgan 1877). For instance, when Morgan talks about 'savagery' in his work *Ancient Society*, he points to traditional or primitive societies with no inequality or class concluding that such societies have no individual property (Morgan 1877). Dumont, in his *Homo Hierarchicus*, which frames questions of hierarchy using an analysis of the Indian caste system, argues that ideal equality is artificial, regardless of whether it is superior, and inequality becomes inevitable (Dumont 1966). While the caste system ranks groups by status and power, it functions with an egalitarian aim of emphasising values that serve the common good of all members of a caste—although the group will most likely not achieve this. Equality in the egalitarian context therefore varies in kind; it is not homogeneous, as it can be perceived differently across societies as well as across individuals in the same society (Béteille 1994, p. 1010).

Woodburn's (2005, p. 431-432) concept of 'assertive egalitarian' underscores the above description through his account of the immediate-return systems among egalitarian hunters and gatherers. Writing about access to resources among the Hadza of Tanzania, Woodburn cites limitations on egalitarianism in societies with a division of labour between the genders. Even with men and women in the same kinship having equal right of access to resources, inequalities in yield occur, because the amount of wealth an individual might have, such as after a hunt, greatly depends on that individual's skills, persistence and luck. Moreover, a hunter can decide to immediately consume as much of the quarry as possible and only return the remaining portion, or a quantity of his choice, to his wife. A woman can act similarly when she gathers wild fruits from the forest. Apparently, these behaviours may trigger inequalities of power and wealth, although the Hadza use mechanisms to suppress acts of inequality, such as ridicule and scorn directed against adult hunters who boast about their hunting skills so. Similarly, among the Bakweri inequalities in yield exist in practices of subsistence, attributable not only to differing hunting and foraging skills among individuals, but also to variation in biodiversity, with some sites offering a richer yield than others. In such situations, an individual with better skills or with access to richer resources will share with those who have less luck or poorer land.

Today the Bakweri are governed through the co-management procedures of the political hierarchy, which in practice hinders people from continuing their customary use of the land. However, for many of the Bakweri interviewed for the thesis, egalitarian practices on the land are very much alive even when state control over land poses a threat to such practices. For instance, people continue to perceive the mountain as a place (not a commodity) that should not be sold, owned or transferred. Rather, people enjoy equal access to it. As members of the Bakweri society, it is their responsibility to be custodians of the mountain and its resources. This perception of place is firmly rooted in the hearts of natives who have blood ties with Bakweri ancestors (*wopnja*). For example, some natives participating in discussion forums of

the regime, such as forest management committees, have invented ways to continue using the mountain as custodians, with these including the practice of rituals more in secret and gathering a variety of forest resources anonymously. I refer to *wopnja* here because, due to social changes in Bakweri history, the MCNP community also comprises foreign settlers (*wajili*) with no blood ties to Bakweri ancestors, and co-habitants or war captives (*wokomi*) from neighbouring tribes. *Wopnja* enjoy distinct rights, such as contributing to the work of sacred societies.

Earlier anthropologists dealing with the problem of egalitarianism started with differentiating state from stateless societies (Fortes and Edward 1940; Middleton and David 1958). Flanagan (1989, p. 246) goes on in his definition of 'egalitarian by default' to describe state societies as clearly hierarchical, and stateless as having no centralised authority and no divisions based on rank, wealth or status. In these societies, people can be economically homogeneous, have lineage systems that are segmentary and can maintain order. Lewis Henry Morgan describes this egalitarianism as observed in early hunting and gathering societies, such as the North American Iroquois, a people who he understood as one in which men and women had equal relations, which engaged in communal collecting, sharing, and consuming of food, showed general reciprocity and had no exploitation or class-based relations (Morgan 1877). Without any sharp distinction of power, egalitarian societies can have people with exceptional qualities without their necessarily being defined as leaders. Flanagan refers to these as 'simple egalitarian societies' (Flanagan 1989, p. 246), because they have persons who, by behaviour or personal qualities, are capable of holding positions of prestige.

If egalitarianism must be defined from both a cultural and contextual perspective (Flanagan 1989), the implication is that power relations in egalitarian societies are not always (or entirely) equal. At the interpersonal level, people may desire equal opportunity and outcomes in accessing power and material resources, but such access comes to entail inequalities stemming from differences in merit and people's abilities. This being the case, egalitarian hunting and gathering societies, with collective ownership of the means of production and joint rights to resources, will rarely exist without some suggestions of power inequalities by kinship, age or gender, even if these differences are not accentuated. Female power among the Chipewyan of Canada, for instance, is enhanced by women's control over productive and reproductive resources. While the men search for food, women control the means of its storage, sharing and distribution. In the case of the MCNP, under co-management, one sees an apparent display of power in the membership of sacred societies, which is largely determined by gender; on the other hand, the societies collectively share the purpose of cultural continuity, invoking spirits in a desire for blessings on the land. In Articles 2 and 3, I discuss the case of the *Maale* and *Liengu* societies of the Bakweri, which continue to shape the everyday life of the people in spite of co-management regulations. By Bakweri oral tradition, *Maale*

is predominantly male and attributes spiritual power to Efassa moto, the folkloric god of Mount Cameroon, which is also the male counterpart of the female figure and goddess of the sea, Liengu-la-mwanja. The *Liengu* cult has a largely female membership, worshipping Liengu-la-mwanja, whom members in the cult consider a source of healing power. This implies that within co-management systems people can work within the power hierarchies of the system and at the same time can engage in egalitarian ways of using the land.

7.3. Power vs. Agency and Cultural resilience

In co-management systems, state-imposed relations of power can prompt reactions in which people produce alternative cultural realities. We can better capture and describe these realities through the lenses of agency and cultural resilience. Here, the state influences the law and decisions on resource management and is highest in the political hierarchy of co-management. The powerless, the local people, rank low ideologically. Indeed, in the previous literature we find this group described as living in a marginalised or exclusion-like situation (Awung and Marchant 2018; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Brockington and Wilkie 2015; Monono et al. 2016; Nadasdy 1999; Pyhälä et al. 2016). This does not mean that people of low rank do not have the agency to act or circumvent the political hierarchy to get what they want. But how do they succeed in doing so? In their analysis of power as grounded in people and their dealings with the social and physical environment, cited above, van Kleef and Cheng (2020), discuss the impact of rank on human behaviour, stating that 'conversely, when status differences are unstable, high-status individuals exhibit threat responses, whereas low-status individuals show challenge responses' (p. 8). Consistent with this argument, the case of MCNP reveals that people tend to challenge power inequalities in the system; they do so by becoming culturally resilient, which enables them to continue their culture despite the fact that their rank and their needs lack status in the political hierarchy.

Cultural resilience can be enhanced by the agency people express. Earlier, in describing the conceptual and theoretical framework of the thesis, I have, looked at the concept of agency as the capacity to act (Chirozva 2015; Harvey 2002; Newman and Dale 2006). In that same connection, I discuss cultural resilience as embedded in adaptive networks that afford opportunities to continue practices based on customary values, beliefs, knowledge and resources that individuals and groups use to overcome and recover from difficulties in society (Clauss-Ehlers 2010; Davies and Moore 2016). For anthropologists, agency, or the capacity to act, is deliberately mediated socio-culturally, with options and choices that people are aware of for bringing change to society. Further, people act based on the beliefs, values, preferences and goals, generated by complex processes of cultural adaptation

(Smith 2013). Agency and cultural resilience function in tandem, with agency enabling resilience. The present study bears out this dynamic because, as agents, local people can devise ways of doing things other than, that is, alternative to, those that the powerful demand they should follow in the co-management system. People can challenge obligations imposed by the system by being resilient.

At the heart of people's being able to do so are customary institutions. Scholars writing about customary institutions (Arjjumend and Hendrika 2018; Virtanen 2002) generally describe them as being formal or informal, operating for a long time and governing based on explicit rules, norms, and values that sustain people's access to various resources while enhancing the capacity for collective action. The foundations of such institutions apparently emerge in societies where, after many generations of maintaining cultural connections with ecosystems (e.g., sacred sites in forests), people begin to face challenges from external forces. Examples of such forces in the case of the MCNP include state laws, bureaucratic systems, and decentralisation processes that threaten the existence of sacred sites, people's autonomy and access to forest resources. In short, community-driven institutions arise to counter and mitigate external threats and help members of the community cope with them. Crucial to the institutions' existence is the autonomous power they hold (separate from political power), backed by community support, and the fact that they operate by tradition. What is more, customary institutions, through the taboos and proscribed beliefs they set out, prompt people to comply the institutions' religious and cultural rules (Arjjumend and Hendrika 2018). This is why customary institutions can, in practice, be considered co-producers and reinforcers of agency and cultural resilience.

Analysis of the MCNP suggests that the community's agency lies in the presence of such institutions and the beliefs they uphold. These in turn create the capacity for people to act and make resilient choices to preserve ritual practices and traditional beliefs, which they see as crucial for maintaining the solidarity and general stability of local communities. The Bakweri belief system considers objects in the forest as bearers of spirits with, on the one hand, the power to protect villages from hunger, drought, sickness and war, and, on the other, the power to exact retribution whenever taboos are violated. Both spiritual means of exercising power are integral to shaping Bakweri land use practices. For instance, people may use the land in ways that do not compromise biodiversity for fear of infuriating spirits of nature. This also explains why informants in my study view their traditions as capable of preserving biodiversity despite the regulations introduced by the co-management system as long as people continue their customary use of the land. Much of the people's agency may not be visible to people in the management regime, given that information about sites used for ritual practices within a protected area is kept secret. Examples among the Bakweri are the customary institutions *Nganya* and *Mbwaya*, both of which are instrumental in unifying the people, helping them safeguard their land and solving conflicts over the land.

My study adds a new dimension of cultural resilience to co-management theory. The research suggests that systems consist of people who can produce resilience. Resilience is not always a product of a pre-given practice, but of flexible behaviour. How does this resilience come into being? Stammler (2005, p.335) has shown how people can better respond to changes in their social and physical environments through timely moves and flexibility. Plueckhahn (2019) has demonstrated how people become flexible in their access to land during a dispute by making use of multiple sets of rights. Similarly, the testimony of the native Bakweri hunter about flexibility in the use of protected areas shows that some individuals tend to find means to continue land uses that are culturally relevant to them when they realise that park officials are not responding to their cultural needs (Nebasifu and Atong 2020c). As noted earlier in this thesis, the locals access the land clandestinely to avoid clashes with the management regime. Previous anthropological studies on land use suggest that indigenous people can be both secretive and selective in communicating their knowledge of the land. For example, Mazzullo's (2009, p.174-185) study of the Sámi in Finnish Lapland describes the attitudes of people who do not tell the real names of places to outsiders in order to defend their land against external encroachment. Similarly, in the MCNP, the locals maintain a degree of secrecy about areas in the forest deemed to have some value to them spiritually and for their livelihood. Their knowledge about the location and use of such sites is often kept hidden from the public to safeguard the continuity of their culture. This is one way in which the locals produce the resilience observed here.

Also illustrating the flexible display of cultural resilience in partnerships of unequal power are acts of reciprocity. Co-management has often been analysed as a system in which the management strategies of the powerful with regard to how people should adapt to ecological uncertainties are politically rooted in problems stemming from colonialist resource extraction; in effect, people become agents of their own marginalisation by complying with the system (Nadasdy 2007). The Cameroonian literature on co-management suggests that problems may lie in the use of approaches that negate the fair sharing of responsibilities, for example providing discussion forums to the locals even though the forums do not promote an inclusive role for local people in decision-making (Awung and Marchant 2018). At what point, therefore, is there reciprocity between persons at the top and persons at the bottom of the political hierarchy? It is important to distinguish what level of benefit exists in this context. In everyday language, an exchange between persons is thought to be balanced or meaningful when the goods or services being exchanged correspond in value or utility and the bargain satisfies both parties. But in the present case this definition seems unhelpful, because the utility people attach to the exchange cannot be readily measured. Reciprocity, can be based in the sanctions that stem from the obligations binding the parties to the exchange, as Bronislaw Malinowski noted in his ethnographic study of Kula exchange among the Trobriand Islanders

(Malinowski 1920). In this conception, 'one gives because of the expectation of return, and one returns because of the threat that one's partner may stop giving' (Yan 2020, p.4). Anthropologist Duran Bell contributes another assessment, which he calls 'relative benefit' as opposed to 'equal benefit' (1991, p. 252). His contribution is worth quoting:

> The patron-client relation is the extreme case of a presumed imbalance in benefit: Generally, each client is perceived to gain more from the patron than does the patron from a given client; and where the benefits to the patron from the set of clients is presumed to exceed the benefit received by each client. Although we cannot measure benefit, the patron-client relation is one where the parties differ maximally in social characteristics and where the perception of differences in benefit has greatest plausibility. Hence, it is clear that the criterion of equal benefits, as a basis for mutually acceptable exchange relations, does not apply. (Bell 1991, p. 252).

Comparing the arrangements in the MCNP to a patron-client relation as described above, the MCNP officials are patrons and the Bakweri clients. Here, power inequalities exist in that the regime, as patron, steers the nature of partnerships and thus tends to gain more from the system than the locals, who are clients. Hence, one could ask: why do the Bakweri engage with the park officials if they can get what they want if the park did not exist? This can be explained by how the Bakweri react to the regime's plans: they become frustrated or try to squeeze what they want out of the system. For the Bakweri, it is too abstract to pretend the park does not exist. Why do they engage then? They do get some kind of access, important access to their intangible resources. They did have access to them before, but there is a danger they will lose this if they do not engage with the park officials through community development schemes.

In this patron-client relation, both parties negotiate and get mutual rewards. Some of the elderly persons I interviewed made mention of their negotiations with park officials in which they requested that regime enhance the general wellbeing of the local communities in return for local compliance with forestry laws. Another example, detailed earlier, is that of the dancing stone in the MCNP, the beliefs associated with which park officials endorse for the safety of people in the park in return for the services of locals, who generate revenue for the state through ecotourism operators (Nebasifu and Atong 2020c). In this case, the reciprocity contributes to preserving biodiversity, but also benefits the culture of people. The reward for the client is relative and is reflected in assessments by both parties, who conclude that no preferable alternative exists to the kind of exchange they have negotiated. This conclusion implies that the parties are both content with the nature of the bargain, unless one or the other realises the exchange is

not beneficial. There are also differences in the value of the exchange, as Bell emphasises:

> ...such preferences are structured on social definitions of value vis-à-vis material and non-material resources, as well as on socially derived representations of self. And the force of any socially defined constraints that prove to be binding on behavior, or which are overcome, ignored or violated, are recognised in the formation of 'his own' [the patron's] preferences (Bell 1991, p.253).

With reference to an earlier analysis in this thesis, on the one hand, for co-management officials, employing the locals to work in the tourism and *Prunus* harvesting sectors provides a material resource valued in monetary terms, that is, income for the state through the sale of *Prunus* bark, park entry fees and services which tourists pay for. On the other hand, the locals get material resources such as salaries from the regime and forest products, albeit gathered by trespassing in the park, as well as a non-material resource, culture. Both the patron and client realise value with the people using the land flexibly. In other words, there is a regime that allows and forbids what is a wide range of activities; paradoxically, however, in doing so it lives off of and contributes to the cultural resilience of the people. Indeed, although it prohibits some activities, the regime does not expressly undertake to eradicate local traditions. While it may frown on them, it turns a blind eye to some where it is to its advantage to do so.

8. Conclusions

The foregoing discussion of power, hierarchy, agency and cultural resilience has produced insights into the functioning of a local society within a co-management regime. These are the focus of this concluding chapter.

8.1. Summary

In this thesis, I have argued for a move beyond criticism towards examining the various transformative actions that people in marginalised situations take. This would represent a shift from the orientation of much of the co-management literature centred on the marginalised status quo of people resulting from top-down and state-led systems in resource governance. Specifically, we should shift the focus to power relations and related questions of hierarchy, egalitarianism, agency and cultural resilience; these are forces which can be seen to trigger and enable transformation. The fresh focus I am suggesting highlights the value of what I would call cultural continuity in the face of co-management systems. While in the present case, the MCNP, this approach does not paint a complete picture of the people's co-production of knowledge with the land and all its beings, it does open up new insights into the present and future of the people as resilient social actors. I admire them for their ability to carve out space for themselves to continue their egalitarian ways of using the land and to get what they want even when inequalities of power in the system leave them with little space to work with.

In my last six years of living and working with the people of the MCNP, I became convinced that it is almost impossible to work together with these people and their relations to the land using any single theoretical perspective and methodology. This realisation came as no surprise, given the varying impacts on their lives: the country's colonial past, the establishment of the nation-state, state laws changing land use practices and, most recently, the creation of protected areas and state-run systems for governing them. Amid these developments the population has become increasingly heterogenous. In the thesis, I regularly refer specifically to the Bakweri, commonly recognised as among the earliest settlers on Mount Cameroon, who have continued to assert their presence on the land and autonomy in the face of state restrictions on forestry and wildlife. To some extent, I have also used the terms 'local people' and 'locals', because the population includes people from other regions of Cameroon. Although the Bakweri accept 'locals' as members of the Bakweri community, they

Ayonghe Akonwi Nebasifu: Knowledge Integration in Co-management

draw a distinction when it comes to access rights, these being more limited in the case of *wajili*, settlers without blood links to Bakweri ancestors and *wokomi,* co-habitants who have come from nearby tribes.

Irrespective of these distinctions, as people of Mount Cameroon, all share common concerns within the co-management system; that is, they adopt new ways of thinking to fit their way of living on the land. This is the focus of my study, and in spite of other possible cultural differences, in my work this similarity figured most prominently. Similar patterns of settlement can be found in other environments where co-management systems are applied (Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2007, 2004). However, for a finer-grained analysis of the people and their place in co-management, I have used sub-concepts often applied as an analytical framework in decolonial and post-colonial studies. Specifically, I have drawn on the notions of convivial conservation (De Koning 2011), institutional bricolage (Büscher and Fletcher 2019) and community resilience (Berkes and Ross 2013). These not only identify the pitfalls in systems of resource governance, but directly and empirically engage with the theoretical framework described above as analytical tools. They reveal the potential of local people to re-structure, re-shape, and adapt their day-to-day routines of living on the land in ways that prolong their culture even in adverse conditions of co-management.

Drawing on the concepts of agency (Newman and Dale 2006), cultural resilience (Davies and Moore 2016) and traditional knowledge (Markkula et al. 2019; Nadasdy 1999), I have explored how the relationships between people and the natural environment are transformed through power relations, specifically ones that are rooted in historical events and the introduction of state laws in the MCNP and its adjacent communities. In this setting, people engage in behaviours reflecting frustration and grievance, expressions of religious beliefs, while others simply comply with the management system using its economic incentives as a means to invest in other sources of livelihood. In effect, there is a reciprocity of giving and taking which strengthens the resilience of people and bring about other options for improving knowledge integration in co-management.

Methodologically, I have applied ethnography with the aid of a multimethod approach, drawing some motivation from Franz Boas' instruction in 1897 in collecting grammatical information from the *Kwakwaka'wakw* (Hall and Preissle 2015), described in chapter 4, section 4.2. In tandem, these theoretical and methodological choices have provided insights into the problem at large— understanding the power relations in a co-management system and how people affected by inequalities in the system co-produce knowledge for their own needs. I believe the framework and approach are to some extent the secrets of my success that other researchers can benefit from for a critical understanding of co-management systems.

The pivotal observation underpinning my findings is the perseverance of people's culture despite the difficulties brought by co-management. Critical studies of co-

management theory and related processes have shown that institutions in collaborative systems of management implement measures that require local people to conform to state management rather than continuing to draw on their beliefs and values (Berkes et al. 1991; Berkes 2009; Borrini-Feyerabend et al. 2004; Brockington & Duffy 2010; Brockington & Wilkie 2015; Dressler et al. 2010; Holmes 2014; Nadasdy 2007, 2005, 2003). One shortcoming of co-management that hampers rather than promotes conservation efforts is a mindset espousing a nature-culture divide, where people are distanced from their cultural attachment to the land (Brockington et al. 2008; and Brockington & Wilkie 2015; West et al. 2006). I have presented a number of related cases that illustrate problems encountered in the MCNP co-management system, such as land encroachment, and how people deal with these.

It is, therefore, reasonable to say that there are always challenges in co-management, particularly due to the varied opinions which diverse groups of actors have. Developing a common understanding is never simple. But this does not mean that people will always be powerless when it comes to satisfying their needs. In his study of Nenets culture, Stammler defines 'innovative adaptability' as a novel way of relating to changes that are beyond one's immediate control; this is a continuous process of introducing new elements into one's way of living, adjusting those elements to suit one's needs and making additions where sensible (Stammler 2005, p. 328). Based on my work with the people of the MCNP, I would put forward the concept of 'improvised adaptability' to capture the way in which they produce and perform cultural resilience in addition to coping with inequalities of the system. In the course of the thesis, I have used Anthony Giddens' thoughts about agency (Giddens 1984); Karp 1989) to elucidate people's actions, looking at relations between structure (elements that stimulate the choices people make) and action, and how these relations eventually shape behavioural patterns in society. This perspective prompted the insight that, as agents, people can improvise, giving rise to resilience under the conditions imposed by co-management. In the previous chapter, I have shown examples of resilience, such as the undisclosed use of land, but stressed that the agency people exercise in such instances lies not in violating the park rules but in their adherence to traditional beliefs, norms and values that they jointly hold in high esteem.

It is also worth adding, as regards power relations and egalitarianism, that while abiding by the terms of co-management people can practice their egalitarian ways of knowing the land and simultaneously adopt the power hierarchies of the system. Rapport (2003) and Victoria (2016) define power relations as including strategies by which individuals transform society such that it makes sense to them. Drawing on this definition, and the work of Flanagan (1989) and Woodburn (2005), I have demonstrated the co-existence of power and egalitarianism in the present context, which, to an extent, reveals the ideological nature of egalitarianism. Flanagan (1989) and Woodburn (2005) suggest that although egalitarianism implies equality

for all people as regards opportunities and rights, it is quite rare to find societies that are wholly egalitarian, because at the interpersonal level there are individual power struggles that play out beneath this equality. Using insights from the writings of Lewis Henry Morgan and Louis Dumont (Dumont 1966; Morgan 1877) to better understand the egalitarian ideology, I concluded that societies may perceive equality differently, with people ascribing diverse meanings to the notion. Where this occurs, egalitarianism can be merely artificial, an intention, or what a group aspires for in its manner of social organisation without achieving equality.

I have cited examples among hunters and gatherers such as the Hadza of Tanzania. They are an egalitarian people in that hunters share their catch with the whole family, yet differences exist between individuals in personal hunting skills and luck, with some having greater success than others. I have made a similar observation in the MCNP, although from a different perspective. For instance, among the Bakweri one sees differences in personal hunting and foraging skills despite the people's essentially egalitarian way of living: in subsistence activities some individuals catch more game and harvest more forest products than others, although differences may also be due to variations in biodiversity for area to area. These differences notwithstanding, the Bakweri share an egalitarian mode of life under their belief system, which espouses the norm that all members of Bakweri society have a responsibility as custodians of the land not to sell, own or transfer it. As I have shown, even in this setting Bakweri society is constructed according to distinct categories, one being gender, including the gender of spirits. Thus, egalitarianism among both the Hadza and the Bakweri does not mean that such societies cannot be organised into socially distinct units that become meaningful in particular situations.

Among the Bakweri, the land and all its objects, plants and animals are emanations of the spirits, with whom power can be invoked to influence the living. Even spirits are divided into distinct gender categories that reflect diverse functions in society. Since the expropriation of Bakweri lands in the 1890s following clashes with the German military, this belief has been a cultural basis for the people to claim their right of access to Mount Cameroon, a source of tension commonly referred to in the literature as 'the Bakweri land problem' (Ngwoh 2019). In the official political hierarchy, within which the Bakweri are of low rank, people tend to cooperate with higher-ranking officials who have political power. By doing so, people are able to obtain what is valuable to them—be it earning a salary or securing community development projects—and adopt it as a supplementary element in their mode of life.

In this link between power relations and egalitarianism, we must therefore distinguish two dimensions of power: that which lies in the political hierarchy and is held by those of high rank and used mainly to further the state's agenda for co-management, and that which is embedded in the spirits and supreme beings of the Bakweri, used predominantly to evoke blessings on the land. Thus, in the case

of the MNCP, co-management, even if problematic, has not marked the end of the people's culture and belief systems; the establishment of a protected area and the construction of park boundaries did not halt practices and subsistence on the land; and conservation development agreements have not replaced customary institutions in protecting and unifying people. What this suggests is the importance of incorporating flexibility in co-management systems and thus allowing people to take on multiple roles under the two dimensions of power identified above. Chiefs can exercise their leadership as heads of their villages and at the same time lead forest management committees in dealing with matters regarding the park; members of a sacred society can also be *Prunus* bark harvesters; and a local farmer can own and run a motorbike repair shop. I have argued that this flexibility is shaped by simultaneous acts of compliance with the system (for those who benefit from it), opposition to the system (for those who feel left out) and reciprocity (for those with services to exchange with the park for mutual benefit). What is presented here as reciprocity can also be seen as a form of extraction when viewed along the lines of Jason Hickel's "Less is More" (Hickel 2021). Hickel criticizes economies arranged around exchange relations of domination, extraction, and reciprocity, an example being when local people's knowledge and their being allowed to practice their traditions are exchanged in return for their agreement to cooperate with park officials; the arrangement leaves the locals with little to gain. The example of the MCNP shows, however, that even when the locals do gain less, they invest in efforts to continue their culture through agency by conforming to demands of the park regime. In doing so, the locals still gain something such as getting better access to markets through better roads, as a result of income which they then use to invest according to their own cultural needs.

I do not maintain that every co-management system has reciprocal relations between actors to ease the process of knowledge integration or that people always have the agency to produce resilience. I would submit, however, that this has the potential to take place in societies wherever systems and power relations similar to those in the MCNP exist. Some points should be made in applying participatory approaches to resource governance. Regardless of the lapses in co-management, institutions as social actors remain crucial as intermediaries in the development of knowledge that can help vulnerable groups build resilience and become more adaptable to obstacles in society (Berkes & Armitage 2010). Such mediation requires open systems for local empowerment, that is, ones where there is proper consultation with the local community and the use of accountable communication between partners. Such facilitation must also welcome legal standards for recognising and putting into use local/indigenous knowledge of the natural environment in the state's agenda for biodiversity conservation.

A recent analytical framework, the commons, acknowledges the inequalities of neoliberalism in resource management and presents models we can adapt

experimentally to strengthen the customary rights of people in systems of resource management (Nebasifu & Francisco 2021). These authors propose a number of prospects using localized co-management that generates joint initiatives broadly under the scope of local norms, values and needs. The initiatives are then implemented using indigenous strategies for resource management embracing the respectable use of the nature. In the case of the MCNP, the above suggestions should be translated into improvements in the plans for park management, since the Bakweri have experience spanning many generations as custodians of their environment. Their traditional knowledge would have great potential for biodiversity conservation in the co-management system analysed here.

8.2. Concluding remarks

This thesis has investigated people's efforts to secure cultural continuity under a co-management system. The research can be best understood in terms of its three objects of analysis, captured in the research questions in chapter 3: the nature of power relations between managers and local people; the agency people exercise to boost their cultural resilience against obstacles they face; and the connection between local knowledge and biodiversity. Anthropologists engaged in the critical study of co-management have helped in disclosing the shortcomings that emerge in state-led systems for resource management, but without enough attention to the factors enabling local people to continue their livelihoods. To overcome this gap, I used insights into the interplay between power, hierarchy and egalitarianism to uncover the nature of power relations between local people and conservation specialists in co-management. I have tapped the concepts of power, cultural resilience, agency and traditional knowledge to investigate whether local people as human agents can produce, change and bring resilience to bear in various situations during co-management. To critique the conventional nature of conservation and investigate the capacity of local people to live in balance with the nature, I used the sub-concepts institutional bricolage, convivial conservation and community resilience, that relate empirically to the theoretical framework. In the process I have demonstrated, among other things, the meanings locals make socially of inequalities in the system.

Methodologically speaking, communities with outside influence and diverse groups of settlers from elsewhere present significant challenges which cannot be properly dealt with without a research design comprising robust theoretical concepts and methods. Drawing on my experiences with the people of the MCNP, I have pointed out that external impact, the making of state laws governing land use and changes brought by the modern state have contributed to the internal contradictions observed in co-management. I nevertheless understand the people

as sharing common views on the land regardless of their living in heterogenous settlements. The locals get new elements and adding as a supplement to their ways of knowing the land where they acquire new experiences that supplement their traditional knowledge.

In concert, the multimethod approach and theoretical concepts applied in ethnographic research here have provided a sharp picture of the locals and their position in co-management, revealing the nature of power relations between local people and officials of the park regime. This combination may be useful for societies elsewhere, because all are heterogenous in principle. The present study suggests that research in anthropology can realize considerable analytical benefits by exploring rich and versatile combinations of methods and concepts.

Previous literature in the critical study of co-management acknowledges the unequal power relations in the sharing of responsibilities between partners in such a system. Top-down measures that exclude and marginalise people who were to be partners of equal standing in decision making reveal the capitalist nature of conservation (Awung and Marchant 2018; Berkes and Armitage 2010; Monono et al. 2016; Nadasdy 2007; West et al. 2006). I have suggested a shift that goes beyond such criticism, insightful as it may be, to an approach focusing on the transformative acts through which people express themselves in response to power inequalities. This would be predicated on examining power relations in the context of political hierarchy, egalitarianism, agency and cultural resilience. In light of the present study, one particularly salient interest would be to look for evidence of cultural continuity in the face of co-management.

It is evident that people with a low rank in the political hierarchy in co-management are not always powerless. The people exercise power using their belief system, which holds at heart egalitarian ways of knowing the land. This power consists in the self-esteem and authority they gain from their spiritual partnership with the land. This in turn contributes their cultural resilience to the disadvantages associated with their lower rank in the political hierarchy. This 'internal' status and power may well make it unnecessary for the people to fight for a higher rank in the co-management hierarchy.

In line with the above observation, a remark is in order about egalitarianism as an ideology and its role in shaping co-management systems. Egalitarianism is not always a guarantee of equality because individual struggles of power often play out invisibly under the shadow of equality. One instance is knowing places for ritual use in the park, where information is held by only a few individuals in sacred societies, in contrast to non-members, the public or officials of the park regime.

This thesis has also examined historical developments in Cameroon to better understand today's context of co-management. We have seen that the Bakweri practiced an egalitarian social organisation with land not being owned, transferred or sold. It was not until the coming of colonialism that hierarchical forms of power were brought into Bakweri society, an example being the creation of chieftaincies.

Hierarchical practices prevailed from the 1880s to independence in 1960 they persist to this day in branches of the nation-state and the park administration, having resurged with the implementation of structural adjustment policies in the 1990s. As an example of this power relation in the MCNP, I have elaborated upon the nature of collaboration between conservation specialists and local communities: it is a complex undertaking shaped by promoting local needs under conservation development agreements that serve to achieve state objectives for resource management. Complementing this case, I raised concerns about the risk of overlooking local input in co-management without considering other channels for agreement than the development agreements. My research followed the above lines of thinking, focusing on case-specific examples where, ironically, the co-management system exacerbates the challenges it aims at addressing.

For instance, in Article 1 (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b), I show how the management regime assisted remote communities to increase agricultural output, which led to locals requesting motorable roads and a water supply, among other things, that were often hard for the regime to provide. The article presents evidence of these demands to show the challenge facing the management regime in realising the needs requested by the locals. Article 2 (Nebasifu and Atong 2020a) also analyses narratives of individuals who lost their lands to the state without appropriate compensation to demonstrate how the co-management system for the MCNP essentially overlooks some communities.

Regardless of these problematic power relations, the analysis suggests that co-management institutions do have a potential to assist communities in the peripheries of protected areas (Nebasifu and Atong 2019b). Institutions are also pathways to connect and foster the knowledge of local people at local, national and international levels of governance. But this has the risk of co-opting and dispossession by incorrect application of local knowledge. One way of enhancing this process would be to undertake a thorough study of how people develop the agency to become culturally resilient. The process would also require that, at the community level, the officials who claim to oversee the MCNP need to be more aware of the value of traditional knowledge; resource managers and their institutions must be willing to pay attention to the voices of local people – and actually do so. I have identified the factors that necessitate the continuity of certain practices among people, allowing them to tap their ability to articulate agency, cope with environmental changes, make choices of their own, and adopt other ways to make their livelihoods work better.

For example, in using the land, there are patron-client power relations, which the locals might welcome if they are allowed to develop the capacity to act more flexibly within the management system. I observed that people welcome the good things about the park, examples being the access authorities grant to protected areas through income-generating activities such as state employment in tourism and the harvesting of medicinal plants for export. Those who become aware of the difficulties

in co-management develop various forms of passive resistance such as expressions of frustration and grievance in displaying their agency to address problems on the land. Such resistance includes people voicing complaints against failures by park officials to consult with the locals over matters of park boundary adjustments and invoking dispute resolution procedures to pursue a grievance against the regime. Other locals engage in anonymous acts of maintaining culturally appropriate practices. They tend to cooperate with park authorities where there are reciprocal benefits. Thus, this study suggests that even when co-management regimes do not give space to the customary use of protected areas, people can still produce their own space for attachment to the land.

In Articles 3 and 4, I illustrate instances in which cultural resilience is fundamental for people's attachment to the land (Nebasifu and Atong 2020b, 2020c). One such case among the Bakweri is the location of villages near park boundaries and the remoteness of villages that are hard for park officials to monitor frequently. Such locations enable residents to maintain culturally-embedded subsistence use of the land, in contrast to semi-urban areas, which are more accessible to the park regime and where the subsistence use of the land is limited by state laws. This suggests that even with the systematic problems brought by hierarchical structures of power in societies governed under systems of co-management, people can still keep their egalitarian connections to the land. I have presented examples drawn from interviews about beliefs in totems like *Njoku* and also the vitality of sacred societies like *Liengu* and *Maale* that remain crucial for stability of life among the Bakweri.

Ideally, the co-existence of hierarchical and egalitarian practices in societies might offer us a window on how people's cultures persist under systems of co-management. Previous scholars (Berkes and Armitage 2010; Berkes 2009; Nadasdy 2007, 2005, 2003) have uncovered evidence of hierarchies in co-management, but what is noteworthy in the present work is that, within power relations of inequality, people can become agents by remaining unidentified when continuing their traditions, which makes them culturally resilient in times of crises. The study has brought forward examples showing that people tend to customarily use lands other than those within the formal context of park governance. They can display their egalitarian social organisation on the land, while concurrently internalising the post-colonial hierarchy that the park regime imposes on them.

While this study has presented challenges in the distribution of power that are hard to ameliorate, a consideration of several issues will help improve the process of integrating local knowledge in co-management. Further, adjustments in co-management planning should be ones that recognise, on the one hand, the inclusion of local people as decision-makers and, on the other, incorporate means for ensuring the accountability needed at local levels of the community. In addition to the existing laws and mechanisms regimes use for co-management, the ancestral knowledge and traditional values that local people hold should become a central part of the

resource management strategy. Inclusion of people who have used their forests for several generations, and who know their land better than recent arrivals, would be a valuable asset in the co-management process. This would be advantageous to not only the state and its partners, but also and, significantly, to the local communities often ignored in governance schemes.

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