The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/43736 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

**Author:** Makuvaza, S.
**Title:** The management of the Matobo Hills in Zimbabwe: perceptions of the indigenous communities on their involvement and use of traditional conservation practices
**Issue Date:** 2016-10-25
8. Discussion and Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

The underlying goal behind the idea of considering traditional conservation practices and involving local indigenous communities in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes is to ensure the prolonged existence of the sites. It is also to guarantee the permanence of the so-called authentic original values which are assumed to be embodied in world heritage cultural landscapes. As has been discussed, one way, among several approaches, to ensure the prolonged existence of world heritage cultural landscapes and their values is to consider the relevance of traditional conservation practices and to involve local indigenous communities in the management of these areas. The focus, therefore, in part, is to devolve the management of world heritage cultural landscapes from government organisations and other authorities to local indigenous communities.

Although researchers and conservation managers extensively agree on the relevance of traditional conservation practices and the involvement of local indigenous communities in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes, there are a range of challenges and constraints which make it difficult to put this initiative into actual practice.

This study has shown that social, economic, and political factors, to a very large extent, are contributing to the decline of traditional conservation practices in much of the Matobo Hills. This is because, as the local indigenous communities of the Matobo Hills are modernising, they are also discarding several of their old cultural practices while they embrace new ones. Although most of these factors are anthropogenic, natural causes such as recurring droughts which lead to habitat loss, among other things, are also gradually contributing to the decline of traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills.

Given this background, in order for the idea of considering traditional methods of conservation to work, the appropriate approach would be perhaps to begin by preserving the practices that are still existing and relevant such as the rain making ceremonies and stories that first helped to protect archaeological sites before they could be reintroduced for conservation. This approach would be in accordance with the objective of the Convention on Intangible Heritage which is to preserve intangible values in monuments and sites (see UNESCO 2003). The desire to have

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

One of the major challenges that affect the idea of considering the relevance of traditional conservation practices and involving local indigenous communities in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes, especially in southern Africa, is entrenched in its primary objective of protecting world heritage cultural landscapes instead of preserving the traditional conservation practices themselves. Suggestions by informants in the Matobo Hills that the idea of considering the importance of traditional conservation practices can only be possible in the communal areas and that only existing practices should be considered indicate that, while a number of practices still persist, others have or are in the process of diminishing in many parts of the cultural landscape.

This study has shown that social, economic, and political factors, to a very large extent, are contributing to the decline of traditional conservation practices in much of the Matobo Hills. This is because, as the local indigenous communities of the Matobo Hills are modernising, they are also discarding several of their old cultural practices while they embrace new ones. Although most of these factors are anthropogenic, natural causes such as recurring droughts which lead to habitat loss, among other things, are also gradually contributing to the decline of traditional conservation practices in the Matobo Hills.

Given this background, in order for the idea of considering traditional methods of conservation to work, the appropriate approach would be perhaps to begin by preserving the practices that are still existing and relevant such as the rain making ceremonies and stories that first helped to protect archaeological sites before they could be reintroduced for conservation. This approach would be in accordance with the objective of the Convention on Intangible Heritage which is to preserve intangible values in monuments and sites (see UNESCO 2003). The desire to have
this issue addressed was expressed by some villagers who are concerned that, although tourism benefits from cultural practices, there are no major efforts by those who are in charge and in the tourism businesses to help preserve the cultural practices in the Matobo Hills. This is important because the local indigenous communities are aware that once some of their cultural practices have disappeared they cannot be easily resurrected.

Preserving traditional conservation practices, however, is not without its own challenges. One of the challenges is that there are some traditional conservation practices, shrines, and archaeological sites that local indigenous communities would not wish to disclose and share with the public. In southern Africa and perhaps in other parts of the continent and beyond, the use of shrines and the performance of cultural rituals are private and secretive affairs performed on selected ritual cultural landscapes. A study conducted by Zubieta (2006) to understand the link between the rain making ceremony and the Nyau ritual features of the Chewa people in the Chongoni Forest Area in central Malawi, for example, showed that these activities are performed in a secret ritual rock art site called Mwana wa Chentcherere II rock shelter which shapes their social actions and from which they derive their specific qualities.

Local indigenous communities with recent colonial experience, such as those of the Matobo Hills, may be averse to disclosing some of their cultural practices, shrines, and archaeological sites for fear that the sites could be appropriated as national monuments for economic reasons from which they will not benefit. As this study has shown, during the colonial period, local indigenous people in the Matobo Hills refused to disclose the location of several of their important cultural sites to the colonial authorities because they feared that their sacredness would be ruined and that the sites would be appropriated. Keeping their practices and cultural heritage sites a secret could be a way by local indigenous communities of safeguarding their cultural practices from being contaminated by modern values. It could also be a way of resisting the idea that they should be made public thereby being limited as a benefit for the concept of outstanding universal value which is assumed to be inherent in world heritage cultural landscapes. Additionally, it could be a way of preventing their shrines from being reduced to ordinary local attractions.

It would appear as though local indigenous communities can only make known to the public those practices, shrines, or archaeological sites that they deem to no longer be sacred and relevant. As further shown in this study, a Khami type site was kept a secret by the local indigenous people until recently when it was revealed to me during data collection for this thesis only because it is no longer important as a local community sacred shrine. Given the secretive nature of the local indigenous communities, it is quite likely that there are many cultural practices, shrines, and archaeological sites that are currently being kept as a secret in the Matobo Hills.

Another constraint that this research has shown is the European approaches of management that were converted into legal frameworks of conservation during the colonial period. As has been determined, these legal frameworks still function in the Matobo Hills today. However, as this study has shown, they continue to be an obstacle in the provision or respect of the interests and roles of local indigenous communities and their traditional conservation practices. Part of the reason is that, as observed by one informant, there are many of them in the Matobo Hills. Based on this observation, it can be argued that their multiplicity does not necessarily mean that the cultural landscape is adequately protected. Instead, they are a source of management problems as their applications overlap which, as in the case of the Matobo Hills, has led to the collision of interests between the ZPWMA and the NMMZ. As a further consequence of the clash of interests, the legal instruments have also persistently failed to address issues of poverty, employment, and land rights of local indigenous communities. The failure of legal frameworks to address issues of indigenous people could also be attributed to the fact that many of the issues are now archaic and require reviewing. In Zimbabwe, for instance, in spite of numerous attempts to review the NMMZ Act, the process has not been concluded due to both lack of expertise in the subject area (Matenga 2011) and possibly funding. Until the review is completed, efforts to consider traditional
conservation practices and involve local indigenous communities in the management of the Matobo Hills, for example, will continue to be hindered.

Failure to harmonise heritage legislations with other State legislations such as the Traditional Chiefs’ and National Parks Acts, as in the case of Zimbabwe and with international conventions related to the management of World Heritage Sites, also further impedes efforts to revitalise traditional conservation practices and to involve local descent communities in the management of Matobo Hills. While this anomaly has since been realised (see Ndoro, Mumma and Abungu 2008), attempts to rescue the situation appear to have met limited success and, in some cases, slow progress. This has also affected the harmonisation of local heritage legislations with international conventions related to the management of World Heritage Sites. An evaluation by Deacon and Smeets (2013) to determine the extent to which community involvement in heritage management has been represented in the texts of the World Heritage Convention of 1972 and the Convention on Intangible Heritage of 2003 and their Operational Guidelines has shown that the communities concerned are given no specific status or roles even after their cultural heritage is inscribed on the Lists of these Conventions. Based on this review, Deacon and Smeets concluded that, even though the Conventions and their Operational Guidelines require greater community involvement in heritage identification and management, despite their good intentions, they have become an obstacle to creating opportunities for greater community involvement and recognition of traditional conservation practices.

Further to the observations made by Deacon and Smeets, there is evidence of non-compliance by several states parties, and UNESCO does not have actual power to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Conventions and their Operational Guidelines. This is despite the fact that states parties are required to comply with the obligations of involving local indigenous communities and their cultural practices in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes as is spelled out in these documents (Keough 2011). At a workshop on the World Heritage Convention and Indigenous People in Copenhagen in September 2012, Professor Dalee Sambo Dorough argued that indigenous peoples have, in fact, been repeatedly pressured into surrendering their political, economic, social, and cultural pursuits when their lands are declared as World Heritage Sites while member states are never forced to give up their economic and political interests. She argued that this is guaranteed by the 1972 Convention itself which makes it clear that World Heritage Site designations are without prejudice to the sovereignty of the states on whose territory the respective sites are situated (Art. 6, para. 1). As a result of this situation, Professor Dorough concluded that it will require a major paradigm shift to effectively intersect the cultural, economic, social, and political context of indigenous people with the views of the World Heritage Convention (Disko and Tugendhat 2014, 9).

The renaissance of traditional conservation practices and the involvement of local indigenous communities in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes is further impeded by the fact that local indigenous people are not usually given a chance to occupy influential positions in local Site Management Committees or Site Management Steering Groups. This is not, however, suggesting that every proclaimed World Heritage Site has a steering group. There are some World Heritage Sites which do not have steering groups such as Khami in Zimbabwe. In cases where Site Steering Groups exist, they are typically composed of the so-called technocrats, professionals, and experts (Naeem 2013). Sometimes, as seen in the Matobo Hills, politicians are also included as part of the steering group or, as in the case of Britain, local government councillors often chair the committees (Belcher 2014). In this matrix, as demonstrated by experiences in the Matobo Hills, the representatives of the local indigenous communities are usually placed in insignificant roles of the steering groups and are co-opted only as committee members. This is because they are either considered as not having the capacity to implement Site Management Plans, or they are regarded as having no expertise in the field of world heritage management as well as in matters of related politics. As a result, the local indigenous communities are universally judged as having no
influence to represent their countries in international committees such as the World Heritage Committee. Also during the workshop on the World Heritage Convention and Indigenous People in Copenhagen in September 2012, Mechtild Rössler disclosed that, although delegations to the World Heritage Committee are required to include both diplomats and experts, this is no longer the norm as diplomats have dominated because the World Heritage Convention has become more and more politicised (Disko and Tugendhat 2014). Willems (2014) has also observed that, for many years now, political representatives in national delegations to the World Heritage Committee have shown increasing disregard for expert advice. According to Willems, this disregard has led to the proclamation of sites which evidently would have managerial problems in the future such as the temple of Preah Vihear located at the border of Cambodia and Thailand. After it was initially rejected in 2007 because the Temple lies in a disputed border zone, the Committee decided to inscribe the site against the advice of the Thai government. This decision eventually led to an open military conflict between the two countries (cf. Silverman 2011). In the context of the implementation of the Convention, this becomes an issue as local indigenous communities are not afforded an opportunity to contribute their opinions in matters of traditional conservation practices of world heritage cultural landscapes.

As the Matobo Hills case further attests, the selection of the local World Management Committee could also thwart the consideration of traditional conservation practices and interests of local indigenous communities in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes. This is because the representatives may not represent the interests of the local indigenous communities. As seen in this study, the selection of a ZANU PF local politician to chair the Matobo Hills World Heritage Committee could have been encouraged by the belief that the accomplishment of certain objectives of the Site Management Plan would require political support. The problem with this approach is that the position could be used to further the personal political interests of the chairperson or of the political party rather than the advancement of traditional conservation practices or the involvement of local indigenous people in the administration of the cultural landscape. The other issue is that politicians may lack understanding of the management issues that are beyond political expertise. Moreover, the political party affiliated to the politicians may not be popular among the local descent people living around a World Heritage Site. In the case of the Matobo Hills, the choice of a chairperson who is affiliated to ZANU PF, a political party that is remembered for the persecution and death of people during the 1980s and the civil fighting in Matabeleland, could not have been fully welcomed by some of the local indigenous people currently surviving in the cultural landscape. In cases where there is political interference, the Site Management Steering Group is not likely to receive the support of the local indigenous communities to consider the return of traditional conservation practices or their involvement in the management of the site.

While arguments that the heritage legal frameworks discussed above should be reviewed to consider the interests of local indigenous communities and that they should also be cohesive with other local legislations and conventions related to world heritage management, fulfilling this objective is one thing and implementing it is another. The major challenge has been that, although a number of World Heritage Sites are located in indigenous territories, there are no mechanisms in place that enable implementation of the meaningful involvement of local indigenous communities and their traditional conservation practices. Quite often, as the Matobo Hills experience has demonstrated, lack of implementation of legal frameworks could be as a result of a number of issues: power struggles between government institutions or between locals and site authorities, lack of support of the Site Management Committees, lack of funding, or a mixture of all these and other factors. As this thesis has demonstrated, where two or more government organisations contest to profit from a world heritage cultural landscape, as in the case of the ZPWMA and the NMMZ, the implementation of the Conventions and of the Site Management Plans becomes a tangential issue. Consequently, the consideration of traditional conservation practices and the involvement of local indigenous communities in the management of the cultural landscape are both disregarded and impeded.
The desire of several local indigenous communities to benefit from world heritage cultural landscapes suggests that the idea to consider traditional conservation practices can only work if they have something to benefit from the conservation of the areas. The primary reason for this is that, with the decline of the national economy, local indigenous people of Matobo are becoming more and more money sensitive and more orientated towards material benefits. Their attempts to charge entrance fees at archaeological sites that are outside the park demonstrates that they also want to extend their revenue collection base in addition to selling thatching grass and souvenirs. It also means that they want to benefit from their ancestral shrines which they know are being exploited at their expense by government departments and private tour operators in the Matobo Hills especially in the national park.

While this is the case, the issue of local indigenous communities failing to benefit from the management of world heritage cultural landscapes is not unique to only the Matobo Hills. Across the African continent and in other parts of the world, many local indigenous communities are also failing to benefit from the management and protection of World Heritage Sites. In Mali, for instance, despite the great fame of Djenné as a World Heritage Site, the majority of local indigenous communities living in the town are still underprivileged as they are failing to benefit from its management. This is because of UNESCO’s international vision of the town which is limited to architecture and archaeology (Joy 2011). Near the Matobo Hills in Botswana, the proclamation of Tsodilo Hills as a World Heritage Site has not benefited the !Kung (San people) and the Hambukushu who are the local indigenous communities currently surviving in the cultural landscape (Thebe 2006). Elsewhere in Indonesia, there were expectations for the Borobudur Temple, which is situated in a rural area in central Java, to bring benefits to nearby local indigenous communities when it was proclaimed as a World Heritage Site in 1991. However, contrary to their hopes, since 1985, the focus for tourism has been the Recreational Park which was developed around the main temple. As a result of the developments, approximately two million visitors visit the park every year, 80% of which are domestic. However, despite the high numbers of tourists and development of the park, poverty has, in fact, remained a critical challenge in the neighbourhood of the Borobudur Temple (Kausar 2014).

Chirikure (2014) argued that one of the reasons why local indigenous communities fail to benefit from the management of world heritage sites is that, as non experts, they simply do not have the influence to negotiate the favourable terms necessary to create more gains for themselves. The other reason could be that the decline of tourism, as in the case of the Matobo Hills, also means that the local indigenous communities cannot benefit from the little revenue generated as it is controlled by powerful government departments and private players for survival in an economy that is struggling. This subsequently indicates that the idea of the CSOT suggested in this research cannot be accomplished as there is nowhere in the Indigenisation and Empowerment Act that compels companies to donate money to a CSOT (Chikuhwa 2013, 429). For these and other reasons, the idea to consider traditional conservation practices and to involve local indigenous communities in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes is further constrained as the communities do not perceive any benefits associated with supporting such conservation initiatives. In addition, as argued by Miura (2005), they continue to be disregarded and marginalised by various authorities in the name of conservation and tourism promotion.

A further challenge of considering traditional conservation practices and involving local indigenous communities in the management of several world heritage cultural landscapes emanates from the historical land appropriations which led to the eviction and the creation of new local indigenous communities. There are cases where ancestral lands have been returned to local indigenous communities when they have demanded them back, as in the case of Basarwa people in Botswana (Taylor 2007) or in the case of the Endorois people of Kenya whose ancestral lands were returned to them around Lake Bogoria, which is part of the Kenya Lake System World Heritage Site (Lynch 2011). However, in Africa, the majority have completely failed to reclaim their ancestral lands back.
The failure in recent years of some local indigenous people in the Matobo Hills to repossess some of their ancestral lands means that the idea to resurrect traditional conservation practices cannot succeed in a world heritage cultural landscape where the inhabitants are resentful that they are denied their ancestral lands and, therefore, a chance to put their traditional conservation practices into effect. As experiences of local indigenous communities in the Matobo Hills have shown, the idea also cannot be embraced if they continue to be told or to feel that world heritage cultural landscapes or parts of them as well as shrines and archaeological sites situated in them are owned and managed by the government or by other people and that the indigenous people do not have the ownership rights to use them.

However, the desire to reclaim ancestral lands could certainly have helped the renewal of traditional conservation practices and their involvement in the management of the World Heritage Site if, for example, they would have been involved in the planning of the early 1980s resettlement programme. This would have provided them an opportunity to start their own initiatives which would have incorporated traditional ways of conservation. Conservation initiatives that would have been started by the local indigenous communities are likely to have had more widespread support amongst the local indigenous people than those that are introduced to them or imposed by the government, international organisations, or private conservation societies. Local conservation initiatives are also likely to have been successful, especially if the government, local, and international organisations as well as private conservation societies are involved only as supporters and collaborators and not as imposing of such initiatives.

The last and perhaps the most important constraint is that other existing management and administrative state arrangements may make it difficult to put into practice the idea of traditional ways of conservation and involvement of local indigenous people in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes. As seen in this study, the rural administrative arrangements of the area can actually usurp the powers of the traditional chiefs who are expected to promote the use of traditional conservation initiatives and involvement of local descent communities in the management of the world heritage cultural landscape. The legislations governing the administrative structures of the state are usually more powerful than those that govern the conduct of traditional chiefs. As seen in this research, this reduces the ability of traditional authorities to implement and enforce policies related to traditional ways of conservation. For this reason, traditional chiefs are often marginalised and are often avoided when matters regarding the management of cultural landscapes are discussed.

CONCLUSION:
IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

One issue that has emerged from this study is that, even although it is generally agreed that traditional conservation practices and local indigenous communities are relevant in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes, it is not easy to address some of the challenges and constraints that are discussed above. Given this situation, there must be a way forward to deal with some of these issues. This section will present and discuss some considerations which I think are significant when taking into account the idea of using traditional ways of conservation and involvement of local descent communities in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes.

First, there is a need to have a clear understanding of the local indigenous communities themselves. This study shows that there could be different types of local indigenous communities located in rural and remote areas with far reaching networks. It is also demonstrated that there are other indigenous communities of identity and interest that are physically dispersed across different locations in the cultural landscape. Understanding these local indigenous communities is important because it is then clarified who to address as far as the use of traditional conservation practices and their involvement in the management of the world heritage cultural landscape is concerned. Therefore, it is very important to define the local indigenous people
relevant to the management of the world heritage cultural landscape in question.

Secondly, it is also important to understand the issues that affect local indigenous communities in a world heritage cultural landscape. As seen in this study, these issues include, among others, the need of local indigenous communities to be employed, reclaim their ancestral lands, and to benefit from tourism ventures. Understanding issues that affect local indigenous people facilitates addressing them so that they can passionately support the idea of making use of traditional conservation practices and being involved in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes. Meeting the immediate needs of the local indigenous communities would also provide incentives that link conservation of the world heritage cultural landscape with their basic survival.

Thirdly, there is need to have an in-depth comprehension of the cultural landscape concerned and the traditional conservation practices which may be existing in the area if their use and involvement of local indigenous people in its administration can be a success. Understanding the cultural landscape is important because decisions can be made on which aspects and sections of the cultural landscape require traditional conservation practices and which traditional conservation practices can be applied. Understanding the cultural landscape itself can also help make decisions on whether or not traditional conservation practices can be effectively used for the conservation needs of the area. If not, other conservation measures can then be considered. It also helps to be aware of the limits of the boundary in which the traditional conservation practices are to be applied and the local indigenous people to involve. However, the latter consideration is often difficult to implement, as seen in this study, as the local indigenous communities often transcend the official margins of the world heritage site.

Fourthly, the underlying politics behind the management of world heritage cultural landscape must be understood before contemplating the idea of reviving traditional conservation practices and involving local indigenous communities in its management. As this study has shown, world heritage cultural landscapes such as the Matobo Hills are not exclusively cultural; they are also political landscapes. Understanding the politics of the world heritage cultural landscape may actually help determine whether or not the local indigenous communities would support the use of traditional conservation practices and their involvement in the management of the area. It may also help to make decisions on who to include in the local World Heritage Management Committee.

Last, but not least, there is need to consider the opinions of the local descent communities themselves if the idea of reviving traditional conservation practices and of involving them in the management of the world heritage cultural landscape is to be realised. Understanding the views of the local indigenous communities, as this study has established, is important because it becomes possible to know their conservation requirements and the ways they want them to be addressed. Based on their views, it also becomes possible to know the extent to which the local indigenous communities are involved in the management of the world heritage cultural landscape and if they would support the idea of using traditional conservation practices to guard their ancestral lands or not.

In conclusion, this study has shown that, although there are efforts to recognise traditional conservation practices and to involve local indigenous communities in the management of world heritage cultural landscapes, this consideration is inhibited by politics, diverse interests and values, as well as lack of recognition in state legislations and in international conventions related to the management of World Heritage Sites. This is because world heritage cultural landscapes are associated with different groups of people, individuals, and organisations which embrace different narratives to assert symbolic, cultural, political, and economic ownership over them.