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Nature Conservation, Conflicts and Local People's Resistance Around Protected Forests in Southern Africa

Conservação da natureza, conflitos e resistência das populações locais do entorno de florestas protegidas do Sul da África

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ABSTRACT: This article focuses on the failure to fully address access and rights through co-management arrangements that takes place in forest conservation and the resultant resistance by local people. In so doing the article develops a typology of resistance as a way of contributing to the on-going debates about resistance from a Southern African perspective. Two typologies are developed based on empirical evidence gathered over many years of in-depth interviews and observation with concerned people across two sites in South Africa and Zimbabwe. What is different from most of the scholarship on resistance is locating it within property relations that were introduced at the beginning of colonialism in Southern Africa and continues unabated in post-colonial times. The circumstances surrounding access to and rights over resources are what lead local people in different places to resist and engage with the state over conservation practices, given the fact the denial of access and rights marginalises them, thereby becoming unequal members of their countries. The salient point is that resistance, as is argued in the article, results in many dimensions of repossession by those who had lost their land, forests and rights. I tease out this dimension to resistance and make the case that resistance takes different forms and does not lead to the formation of movements by the actors struggling to gain rights over and access to forest resources. Loss of rights and access results in dispossession and loss of livelihood opportunities. At the same time states need to recognize the inadequacy of giving rights *or* access to resources dispossessed from communities around conservation areas, but giving both rights over *and* access to resources that may reduce the subsequent marginalisation.

Keywords: domination; rights; access; resistance typologies; Southern Africa; forests; local people.

RESUMO: Este artigo é focado na incapacidade de resolver totalmente os acessos e direitos por meio de arranjos de co-gestão que têm lugar na conservação das florestas e na resistência resultante pela população local. Ao fazer a análise, o artigo desenvolve uma tipologia de resistência como uma forma de contribuir com os debates em curso sobre a resistência de uma perspectiva sul-africana. Duas tipologias são desenvolvidas com base na evidência empírica adquirida ao longo de muitos anos de entrevistas aprofundadas e observações com pessoas envolvidas

em dois locais na África do Sul e no Zimbábue. O que é diferente da maioria dos estudos sobre a resistência é localizá-la dentro de relações de propriedade que foram introduzidas no início do colonialismo na África do Sul e que continuam inabaláveis em tempos pós-coloniais. As circunstâncias envolvendo o acesso e os direitos sobre os recursos são o que leva as pessoas locais em lugares diferentes a resistir e a questionar o Estado sobre as práticas de conservação, dado o fato de que a proibição do acesso e dos direitos os marginaliza, tornando-os membros desiguais de seus países. O ponto importante é que a resistência, como discutido no artigo, resulta em muitas dimensões de reapropriação por aqueles que perderam suas terras, florestas e direitos. Eu examino essa dimensão da resistência e defendo que a resistência assume formas diferentes e não conduz à formação de movimentos pelos atores que lutam para ganhar direitos e acesso aos recursos florestais. Perda de direitos e acessos resulta em desapropriação e perda de oportunidades de modos de vida. Ao mesmo tempo, os Estados precisam reconhecer a inadequação de dar direitos *ou* acesso aos recursos retirados das comunidades em torno de áreas de conservação, mas dar ambos, direitos *e* acessos a recursos que podem reduzir a subsequente marginalização.

Palavras-chave: dominação; direitos; acesso; tipologias de resistência; África do Sul; florestas; populações locais.

1. Introduction

This contribution focuses on why local people have not risen up against states in many local settings in Southern Africa where not only land and forest resources, but include other natural resources, knowledge and property rights, have been dispossessed from them by the state. Why have they not bothered to take on states by engaging in revolutionary activities in a Marxist sense of the oppressed will rise against their oppressors (Marx, 1977)? How and why do they cope with being dispossessed of their forests, their land and their heritage? At the core of this article is an analysis of how the dispossessed are not quiet but wage struggles that are mostly hidden and only surface on some occasions. Hidden is used in the Foucauldian sense of the exercise of power relations between state actors (using hegemonic power) and local people who exercise their power through mostly covert ways (Foucault, 1991). Such exercise of power by both state and local actors is often hidden from public

gaze¹ and these are the politics referred to in the paper. So then, how are these forms of struggle waged, by whom, where, and under what circumstances?

This contribution offers an analysis of forest conservation conflicts, the quotidian politics and practices of different villagers across two sites in Southern Africa pursuing to change property relations in order to gain access to and benefit from forests dispossessed from them for more than a century. The two sites are Dwesa-Cwebe, South Africa (see Figure 1) and Mapfungautsi, Zimbabwe. The conquest and dispossession that took place in the 19th century was accompanied by a distortion of prior existing common property relations through privatisation by the state². As a result of these structural changes over property around forests, the two states of South Africa and Zimbabwe attempted to stem conflicts through collaborative arrangements with dispossessed communities. Protected forest areas become protected spaces for the state to exercise forms of government³ through conservation (in the sense of preserving certain natural resource

¹ Scott (1990).

² Beinart (1989).

³ Foucault (1991).

species from general public access and use) that are routinely resisted through every-day practices that take different forms across different spaces and people. Protection is in the form of not only alienating land from local communities but also setting in place rules and regulations governing the use of all natural resources found on such alienated land that falls under state control. While co-management is often used by the state⁴ to resolve conflicts in conservation, this contribution makes the claim that without resolving property rights in the form of rights *and* access at the same time such projects do not yield intended outcomes⁵. For both cases, the state's co-management projects, that are meant to retain the state's hegemony over protected forests, are found wanting and rendered ineffectual through the resistance of local people. For the South African project, the state restored rights to the forest reserve through the restitution programme but takes away access to resources in anticipation of tourist revenue. For the Zimbabwean case, rights to forest land and resources are denied while access is provided through the co-management project between the state, represented by the forestry agency, and local communities living around the protected forest.

Data for the Zimbabwe case were initially collected for my doctoral studies in the late 1990s⁶, with subsequent research being undertaken from time to time between 2000 and 2014. Research after the 1990s was undertaken over periods lasting two weeks each year that an experienced local researcher would live within the local villages. For the South African case (see Figure 1), an initial research exercise was undertaken in 2000⁷ in

which I lived within the Dwesa-Cwebe reserve for 3 weeks, with subsequent research being undertaken between 2010 and 2014 in which there would be research periods spent over four weeks during each yearly visit by a local research assistant. In both the South African and Zimbabwe cases, a combination of methods were used which included detailed interviews, participant observations during periods of living amongst research respondents, attending meetings and local social activities amongst local communities where information would be gleaned for writing purposes.

For both cases, in-depth interviews and key informant interviews with individuals across a variety of actors were selected on the basis of their specialised knowledge of interests and concerns in the wider social setting to include, various resource-user groups (fishers, grass collectors, livestock herders, timber harvesters, craft-makers, herbalists, and traditional healers) so that all axes of social differentiation were represented. These techniques were complemented by a combination of informal conversational interviews and participant observation in order to gather the in-depth stories behind people's experiences with their environments.

My interest has been in understanding the strategies that local people have deployed whilst living under the state's failure to make collaborative projects work in both settings. The joint management of protected forests did not change property relations that obtained under colonial and Apartheid rule. Local people then wage hidden politics that hardly come into the open but are criminalised when they do⁸. The rest of the paper is organised as

⁴ Borrini-Feyerabend *et al.* (2000); Carlson and Berkes (2005); Ramutsindela (2004).

⁵ see Ribot and Peluso (2003).

⁶ Matose (2002).

⁷ Grundy *et al.* (2004).

⁸ Kull (2002).

of the empirical evidence of resistance from two select cases which is followed by a discussion section before some conclusions are drawn.



2. Background of dispossession in Southern Africa

Both colonial and contemporary conservation in rural Southern Africa have been a significant cause of current marginalization and injustice (Beinart, 1989, p. 157). Conservation practices have led to such marginalization through various forms of dispossession – both literally, materially and discursively through knowledge and other practices. The first lens relates to the colonial period, and is described here as wilderness preservation visions. This lens focuses on a disjuncture between European (largely British and French) and African conceptions of rural Africa, and how this led to injustice and inequality (Beinart, 1989). Europeans saw rural Africa as an unspoilt natural wilderness that could provide an escape from the constraints of modernity, while Africans viewed it as a dwelling place and a means of production (Cronon, 1996, p. 8). The second lens is based on David Harvey's (2004) concept of accumulation by dispossession, and how this relates to the commodification of contemporary conservation. In its simplest form, this lens illustrates how neoliberal conservation benefits powerful actors at the expense of rural populations (Buscher *et al.*, 2014). In the case of this lens through the search for means of capital accumulation from nature conservation unlike in the first lens in which preservation was perceived to be good for the sake of Edenic visions that were being sought in Africa.

Contemporary conservation practices continue to lead to injustice and inequality in rural Southern Africa in a direct manner, as they have an influence on how rural land is currently managed (Matose, 2014). Colonial conservation practices, on the other

hand, have a more indirect relationship with current inequality and injustice. They facilitated material dispossession as well as deprived local communities of a say in conservation practices in the past, which has made it possible for current inequality and injustice to take place (Beinart, 1989, p. 157).

The consequence of such policy and practice was that it deprived local people in the rural areas from a former supplement to their diet and income, including arable land that was used for growing food (Beinart, 1989). Therefore, not only were local people restricted in accessing land that was previously an essential part for their survival, but their right to partake in cultural practices such as hunting, was also taken away. This attitude still persists in Africa today, in the Southern Africa forests that are used as case studies in this contribution.

3. Typology of resistance around forest conservation

In examining the resistance strategies deployed by local people over collaborative arrangements around protected forests, I developed a typology whose terms I borrow from Sitas *et al.*⁹ The typology is underlain with different power relations (hidden politics) that are deployed by various actors including women, men, autochthonous people, members of different resource user groups, embedded in the resistance strategies. So the typology represents particular ways of exercising power through the acts that are deployed. The terms used in the typology evolved from words and meanings that were articulated to me by the various performers across different localities. Through their use, the attempt is not to denigrate terms already in existence in resistance literature, including those defined by

⁹ Sitas *et al.* (2014).

Scott, Kull and Holmes, but to try and perhaps make sense of local people's own practices of their engagements.¹⁰ In my typology, the first form of resistance is what I refer to as 'articulatory' resistance. This is characterised by an act that articulates or signifies intention either through the language used or some performance that is deliberate in communicating the fight for rights over or access to resources. The acts or struggles that I categorise as such are often more overt as they are intended to articulate the actors' position regarding the political battles with the state as well as the trajectories at play. For example, occupation or squatting inside a state forest clearly articulates peoples' contestation of rights over land and resources. At the same time such squatting represents the exercise of 'mass' power by the dispossessed in regaining lost rights and access. The overall impact of this set of acts is to communicate to the state about intent by the performers and an indirect assertion of rights over resources denied by the state.

The second form of resistance in my typology, 'existential' resistance, refers to acts that are associated with the performer's assertion of meaning of life or existence (*impilo yam*).¹¹ Existential acts are less about the exercise of power compared to the first type of resistance as often people in forested landscapes used materials around them for their day to day lives and existence. The main challenge for such people is having access to, and rights over such resources that are being denied by the state's own exercise of power over the same resources. Performers of these acts undertake them as part of their overall existence regardless of whether such acts are prohibited or not. 'Poaching' of timber from

protected forests is an activity which illustrates this resistance. People use timber for the construction of their houses and need to do so because otherwise they would not have shelter and having shelter is just the way life is – a part of human existence in forested landscapes in which people depend on resources around them. Such forms of resistance therefore form part of the repertoire of hidden politics that local people deploy against the more powerful states.¹² Moreover, they are not mutually exclusive but tend to overlap and each act may illustrate both forms of resistance and are used to differentiate the intended outcomes of those performing them and as heuristic devices.

4. Case studies of resistance against collaborative projects

This section provides evidence of the resistance drawn from the two case studies that were examined over many years. For each narrative, a brief background to the conservation project is given in order to situate the resistance that takes place.

4.1. Dwesa-Cwebe Nature Reserve, Eastern Cape, South Africa

Dwesa-Cwebe Nature Reserve is located in the Amathole District Municipality on the Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Dwesa-Cwebe's total land area of approximately 235 square kilometres consists of both state and communal lands. The Dwesa-Cwebe community

¹⁰ Scott (1985; 1990); Kull (2002); Holmes (2007).

¹¹ Literal translation from IsiXhosa *impilo yam*: "that's the way I live" in other words 'that's what life is all about'.

¹² After Poteete/Ribot (2011).

comprises of seven communal villages. The population density in the area is low, with an estimated 15,000 people, consisting of approximately 2,400 households and poverty levels are high. The community which was removed from part of its ancestral land in the late 1800s now co-manages the Dwesa-Cwebe Nature Reserve following successful land restitution in 2001. The nature reserve is managed jointly by the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA), representing the state, and the community through the Dwesa-Cwebe Land Trust. The nature reserve is just under 6,000 ha and occupies a small coastal strip of approximately 14km long and extends from 3 to 5km inland. The nature reserve conserves the largest tracts of indigenous coastal forest in the Eastern Cape.

The Dwesa-Cwebe Settlement Agreement of 2001 gives the communities ownership of the conservation areas, with resource access being managed through a co-management committee in conjunction with the state. Dwesa-Cwebe residents depend on forest resources for many of their livelihood needs¹³. When the ECPTA took over the running of the reserve from the Forest Department in 2007, the access rights regime changed. Access to resources, including materials for construction and medicines, marine and seashore resources for food, became restrictive, denying people access to several resources for their livelihoods such that by 2010, relations worsened and many people were arrested, assaulted and shot at because they entered the Dwesa-Cwebe Nature Reserve¹⁴. The level of conflict to date has escalated as local people are frustrated by the failure of the co-management arrangements to assist them access forest resources as

well as lack of revenue returns that were expected from ecotourism receipts¹⁵. Whereas Dwesa-Cwebe Reserve is formally owned by local communities under the 2001 Restitution, in practice, local people have little say in the management of the reserve, hence resistance to the co-management arrangements in which the state has retained hegemony. In other words, local communities have representation on the management committee responsible for decisions about how the reserve is managed, but the committee's governance gives more power to the state's representatives in decision making.

While people around Dwesa-Cwebe are denied access to forest resources in deference for a pristine nature for discerning eco-tourists, such commodification has barely produced tangible benefits for them in the form of revenue. The following narrative was extracted from several interviews of people in the Cwebe area between July and September 2011 after the shooting to death of a man who was harvesting poles inside the reserve for his family's existence.

4.1.1. Case Study 1: The Shooting incident of June 2011

In June 2011, John (first name) was shot by a forest ranger when he was harvesting construction poles inside the Cwebe Reserve. According to witnesses, John bled to death and his body was taken to the nearest town of Elliotdale without consultation of his family or the local chief, as should have been done. The ranger was never arrested because the family did not lay charges. John's family said that he was shot by the ranger on his leg close to the waist and

¹³ Palmer *et al.* (2002); Timmermans (2004).

¹⁴ Ntshona *et al.* (2010).

¹⁵ Paterson (2010) and Fay (2008).

bled to death. The ranger who shot John is known to the family. The family states that John had left his home early in the morning to go and cut poles for fencing inside the Cwebe part of the nature reserve. At around midday, the chief was visited by police and taken to where John was felling the trees and shot. The chief revealed that he could not tell what had really happened at the site in the reserve. The ranger who shot John said that he had confronted John for felling trees inside the reserve (an activity denied by the state). John had indicated that he had no intention to stop cutting timber. The ranger then got back to the office for assistance in confronting this situation. With another ranger they went back into the reserve to confront John. When confronted again, John got agitated and threatened the ranger with his axe. In order to protect himself, the ranger took out his gun and shot John. Many Cwebe residents did not believe the ranger's version of the story as they had not seen John's body. John's family, the local chief and the entire Cwebe community were very upset about the fact that when they visited the site of the incident, the body had already been taken away by the police without their consent or witnesses. The only evidence they saw were the poles that John had felled. The shooting incident and subsequent death had ramifications across all the surrounding villages to the Dwesa-Cwebe Nature Reserve¹⁶.

Whereas John had overtly articulated his need for construction materials from the reserve, with fatal consequences, the year before there had been another fatal incident of a hunter, the ECPTA, through the rangers, had in turn articulated its authority over the reserve. The ranger who had shot and killed John has long since left his job in the Nature Reserve but his colleagues argued that the ranger, and them as well, were performing their statutory responsibilities in denying local people access to resources which would otherwise lead to

the loss of the environmental value of the reserve in the long term. In 2014 a park ranger was killed by local people inside the reserve who had been caught on the wrong side of park regulations and carried out some form of 'revenge' killing for the previous two deaths¹⁷. John's case represented local people's need for resources from the reserve following its restoration to community ownership in 2001 but managed through co-management. However, access continues to be denied by the state through the ECPTA much to the disdain of communities surrounding the reserves. Reserve rangers who are state representatives around the reserve, physically do not allow local people into the nature reserve and anyone who is found inside is prosecuted for one transgression or the other. Local people therefore feel that it is risky for their lives to be found inside the reserve. At the same time, John's incident also illustrates existential resistance through the shelter materials that were being harvested from the forest. Such materials not only formed part of John's family's life but shaped it through his death as well. Overall, people surrounding Dwesa-Cwebe pointed out that even though some of them had been shot at, killed, and assaulted, "we will continue fighting for our own rights as legitimate owners of the land to access and use natural resources within the protected area."¹⁸ 'Fighting' is what local people are doing through several 'weapons'. On the one hand, there are pending court cases through which they are challenging the state, while on the other, some members continue to gain access to resources inside the reserve through extra-legal means (Sunde, 2014). The state on its part is also using legal means through the prosecution of local people caught with

¹⁶ Compilation from interviews of several relatives of 'John' between July and September, 2011. Interviewed and translated by Simphiwe Tsawu.

¹⁷ Details about this incident and many more are provided in Matose, *forthcoming*.

¹⁸ Interview with a Cwebe Villager in July, 2013. Interviewed and translated by Simphiwe Tsawu.

resources inside the reserve as well as through the physical patrol of the reserve by the few rangers who guard the reserve daily.

4.2. Mapfungautsi Forest, Gokwe, Zimbabwe

Mapfungautsi State Forest lies in Gokwe South District, Midlands Province, north-western Zimbabwe. It is the third largest Protected State Forest in Zimbabwe and is almost entirely surrounded by communal areas. When it was first demarcated as a state forest in 1953, the forest was 101,000 ha in size (Vermeulen, 1997). In 1972, the Northern part of the forest was reclassified as a communal area, due to rampant squatting, and some parts of the southern part were proclaimed, leaving the forest with a total of 82,100 ha. A co-management programme called Resource Sharing Project (RSP) was initiated by the Zimbabwe Forestry Commission (FC), a state agency responsible for forestry conservation, in 1994 and all the neighbouring villages surrounding the forest. This was with communities within a five kilometre radius of the forest boundary. In the RSP, local people were invited to participate in the management of the forest and also gain access to non-timber forest products. Products such as timber were however excluded from the RSP and these continued to be sources of conflict between the FC and local people living around the forest who continued to access them illegally. Under the RSP, communities around the forest were divided into 14 Resource Management Committee (RMC) areas with each given a certain portion of the forest to manage access (Mutimukuru and Matose, 2013). Their main roles involved administering permits for

resource users to harvest forest products, monitoring the harvesting process, opening and keeping a community bank account and advising the community on how revenues generated could be spent. Thus, a collaborative project was offered in lieu of conflicts with local people living outside the State Forest by providing access but no enduring rights to forest land. However, the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) introduced by the Zimbabwe government in 2000, provided opportunities for local people to reclaim their lost rights to the forest. Some formerly displaced forest residents teamed up with liberation struggle war veterans and led the resettlement over Zanda Plateau inside the forest, reclaiming their land through illegal settlement. Interviews we conducted with local community members in 2002 revealed that about 75 households had settled in the forest. By 2004 there were over 200 households in Zanda Plateau occupying a forest area that stretched for 16km in length¹⁹. At the last count in 2014, the figures had risen to 880 households.

In the case of Mapfungautsi Forest, Zimbabwe, articulatory resistance took a different form, which is ‘squatting’ as a means to repossess land from the state. The case below is a compilation from several years (2006, 2007 and 2013) interviews of different settlers on state forest land.

4.2.1. Case study 2: Returning displaced residents

People who were evicted from the forest in 1986 due to a civil war²⁰ returned to Zanda Plateau in 2000. For example, Sabhuku²¹ Dongi, whose father used to be

¹⁹ Mutimukuru-Maravanyika & Matose (2013).

²⁰ Matose (1994).

²¹ Sabhuku refers to a village head – lowest governance leadership and hereditary.

a forest resident prior to 1986, returned with some households to start a new village inside the forest. He took early retirement from Harare to resettle on his ancestral land. His village has 20 households. An FC employee however made a counterclaim that, by the time the forest inhabitants were evicted out of the forest in 1986, Dongi's father had already left the forest on. Then there was Sabhuku Chikuni who was the first to return to the forest and was also my respondent in 1994 (Matose, 1994). His homestead was the venue for all ruling party rallies in the early 2000s when violence was perpetrated against opposition party supporters outside the forest. Consequently, one of the first make shift schools was established in his village. Other former residents include Mr. Marose and Mr. Makosi who did not hold leadership positions. However when the FTLRP started they came to settle in the forest and claimed to have had leadership positions before the evictions. To cement their positions, the two are active ruling party cadres. At the same time, new Sabhuku Marose showed me the tree under which his late father was buried. Yet another former forest resident was Sabhuku Mandamba who did not previously hold a position of authority. He had been a neighbour to a/the village head but when the forest invasion started, he came to settle and claimed the authority of Sabhuku Kangazane, who went to settle further away from the forest after the 1986 eviction and never came back. "We belong here, here is home. I will live long now that I am back to my roots. It's good for my spirit" eulogised an elated Mr. Marose. Marose is a formerly displaced forest resident who felt settled for the first time since 1986, now that he was living back inside the forest. Sabhukus were given metal insignias similar to those issued to official village heads and headmen. Chiefs Nemangwe and Njelele facilitated the issue of these insignia of authority. These village heads are not officially recognised by the state yet, as they did not receive monthly allowances accrued to official village heads. Nonetheless, the resettled village heads still enjoyed settlement levies of US\$500 for each land seeking household which could be paid in kind, in the form of a cow²².

The case illustrates the complex intricacies of different arms of the state and the 'squatters'. The forestry agency does not recognize local people who self-settled on forest land while for the last decade and a half has witnessed the local government authorities stopping the FC from any attempts of evicting them. Chiefs, who are part of local authority of the state, were the earliest to recognize the local leadership and settler/returnees as falling under their jurisdictions. Displaced people who are now 'squatting on forest land' took advantage of the land occupations obtaining in Zimbabwe to articulate their reclaim and repossession of their ancestral lands lost to the state. Beyond settling on their ancestral land, former forest residents are also asserting a different perspective about managing nature with humans as a part of it by living inside a protected forest. They surrounded themselves with households to cushion themselves in the form of villages and collaborated with the ruling party officials to assert their claim on forest lands. At the same time, they also mobilised local chiefs to recognise them through the issue of insignias which will make it difficult to dislodge them. The state, for now appears to have lost this battle to the articulatory power of local people, formerly displaced forest residents.

5. The politics of resistance in forestry: A discussion

Both cases, in which the state has retained control of conserved forests through various collaborative management arrangements, demonstrate the hidden politics of the weak through their resistance strategies they deployed to regain both access and

²² Interviews of village heads in Zanda, July 2013 by Witness Kozanayi (also translator).

rights to forest resources. In Dwesa-Cwebe the co-management agreement between the state and surrounding seven communities is very slowly unravelling due to the resistance examined here. In Dwesa-Cwebe, the one resistance type was deployed against the state as local people strived to regain access to essential natural resources for their day to day survival. Whereas de jure, the nature reserve belongs to local people through the 2001 restitution, in practice, however, local people feel the state has retained control of the reserve and thereby continues to dispossess them of their rights to the land and natural resources. The state retained physical and technical control to the reserve's resources by having rangers patrolling and keeping local people from physically gaining access to resources they needed and wanted. Ultimately this threatened the very existence of local people in different ways. Prohibiting people from the nature reserve, their main access to the key resources upon which their lives have depended for many generations. People on the Cwebe side of the reserve were particularly impaired, as their lives are much more intertwined with resources inside the reserve such that if they failed to obtain construction materials then their future would be bleak and without shelter. As a result, they became defiant and used covert means to articulate their needs from the reserve. This is illustrated by the fact that some of the people lost their lives in order to articulate their needs. Overall, the co-management arrangements of managing resources around Dwesa-Cwebe have been rendered redundant as the day-to-day hidden battles of the 'weak' demonstrate.

The Mapfungautsi case illustrates 'squatting' or land occupation as probably an even 'louder'

illustration of 'articulatory resistance' in which local people, particularly those formerly displaced from the forest in the 1980s, fought for their rights to the land. Such displaced people have occupied the forest for more than a decade and continue to grow in confidence as the state slowly begins to concede defeat. The co-management arrangements, through the former resource sharing project, have long since been abandoned as local people have taken over parts of the forest that formerly belonged to them. The parts strategically settled are the ones where former forest residents used to farm and had their homes prior to their eviction in 1986. While the technical agency of the state may be obliged to deal with people that have settled in the forest, the local governance part of the state is having a greater say and not finding it politically expedient to deal with the settlers. While Mapfungautsi forest might not have as much potential for eco-tourism development as Dwesa-Cwebe, the state is perhaps ambivalent in either letting it revert to community control or retaining it as a state property. Mapfungautsi remains far from the eco-tourism routes and is not as endowed in the commercial hardwood species as other Kalahari Sand forests in Zimbabwe²³. All the same, the state has been overwhelmed by the land occupation strategies of former displaced people who have regained an upper hand in repossessing their ancestral lands. It may be that the state has lost the battle to weapons of the weak after all²⁴. However, settlement of parts of the forest results in forest clearance for cultivation which might have adverse implications for forest ecology if the clearance and settlement is unchecked.

Turning to some of the broader discussions raised from this contribution, Brockington and

²³ Matose (2002).

²⁴ Scott (1985).

Igoe (2006) for example already presented some of the shortcomings of how protected areas lead to marginalisation and subsequent resistance by those displaced. This contribution presents more empirical material of how local people resist the loss of property rights and access. Through the two cases, an attempt has been made to illustrate how as local people are denied access to resources they need for their livelihoods (Kull, 2002; Brockington and Igoe, 2006) they resist such marginalisation through articulating their loss. For many years the loss of access had been mostly benign until the incidences highlighted in the first case when they came to the surface. In the Zimbabwe case, the denial of rights to forest land and some key resources has been resisted since 1986 when forest residents were evicted. Things took a different turn in the early 2000s with the shift in state policy over land with the FTLRP. Former forest residents took advantage and resettled themselves on forest land they were evicted from using squatting as a means to reclaim their rights (cf. Scott, 1985). In the South African case, the existential form of resistance was deployed in order to gain access to key resources for shelter – construction materials. In the case of Zimbabwe, articulatory form of resistance was deployed in order to regain rights to forest land. Whereas for both cases the state had co-management arrangements in place, I argue that each case failed to offer access and property rights, respectively. The arrangements retained state hegemony over resources and led communities to use these strategies to resist the continued state of affairs.

Dealing with the how, by whom and under what circumstances the struggles are employed, the broader contribution of this article is that the form of resistances are intricately linked to the

circumstances of property relations linked to the access and rights denied by the state. In the South African case, communities who are more dependent on resources from the reserve, particularly on the Cwebe side, were caught up in the more articulatory type of resistance. This is because of their livelihoods that revolved around resource use. Over ten years of waiting for the state to offer alternatives to forest resources but while still denied access under co-management led to some people engaging in the hidden struggles. The Zimbabwean case is led by former forest residents who are the earliest inhabitants to that plateau on which the forest is found who lost their land through eviction in 1986 (Matose, 1994). In all my research in the area since the mid-1990s, early 2000s and in the last 3 years, that displaced group of people who were dispossessed of their rights and land were dissatisfied with the co-management arrangements. The broader political economy of Zimbabwe has been focused on land reform which precipitated the localised struggle to retake land which the state had not put on offer as was happening with former commercial farmland elsewhere in the country. So in this case ‘squatting’ as a strategy was employed by former forest residents to articulate their claim over property rights.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, through the use of resistance typologies deployed by local people around forests in Southern Africa, I tried to take up the call alluded to by Peluso²⁵ of disentangling the trajectories of actors, the state and their quotidian effects. The denial of access to and rights over forest resources results in situations in local people resist the state’s continued control of forests through poorly devel-

²⁵ Peluso (2012).

oped collaborative. The denial of rights and access leads to marginalisation of local people which in turn leads to engage in hidden battles with the state. Two cases presented here provide evidence that local people cast away by the state engage in resistance to regain and retain access to their forests for their basic existence and articulate their rights. Only two such forms of resistance were used here.

By digging into the particularity of place and listening to the voices of the people who live in or near forests, a much more nuanced perspective emerges. These are the ‘hidden’ struggles that outsiders often do not see. In situating the theoretical approach to which I have much debt to Scott²⁶, Siviramakrishnan²⁷, Holmes²⁸ and adapted to the southern African context where my particular concern is for local people’s lost rights and access to forests through conservation practices. If collaborative projects do not restore rights to forests nor give access to forest resources, then such projects are re-

sisted by local people. The effect of such resistance is mixed. In the Dwesa-Cwebe case a stalemate has been achieved and renegotiations are needed. For the Mapfungautsi case, ‘squatting’ has informally restored lost rights to forest land where access was previously considered adequate by the state.

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²⁶ 1985 and 1990.

²⁷ 2005.

²⁸ 2007.

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