

Strengthening Conservation Through Localized Definitions of Wellbeing: Understanding what is meant by 'A Good Life' in Namibia's Zambezi Region

Alida O'Connor
alida.a.oconnor@gmail.com

UBC IRES



What is effective conservation?



A shift from...

- Fences and Fines: Conservation achieved in isolation from people to
- Community-based conservation: Conservation that engages local communities

Community-Based Conservation

Rethinking Community-Based Conservation

FIKRET BERKES 2004

From hope to crisis and back again? A critical history of the global CBNRM narrative

WOLFRAM DRESSLER^{1*}, BRAM BÜSCHER^{2,3}, MICHAEL SCHOON⁴, 2010

What is Wellbeing?

Create Your Better Life Index

Rate the topics according to their importance to you:

	-	+
 Housing	<input type="range"/>	
 Income	<input type="range"/>	
 Jobs	<input type="range"/>	
 Community	<input type="range"/>	
 Education	<input type="range"/>	
 Environment	<input type="range"/>	
 Civic Engagement	<input type="range"/>	
 Health	<input type="range"/>	
 Life Satisfaction	<input type="range"/>	
 Safety	<input type="range"/>	
 Work-Life Balance	<input type="range"/>	

Retrieved from OECD

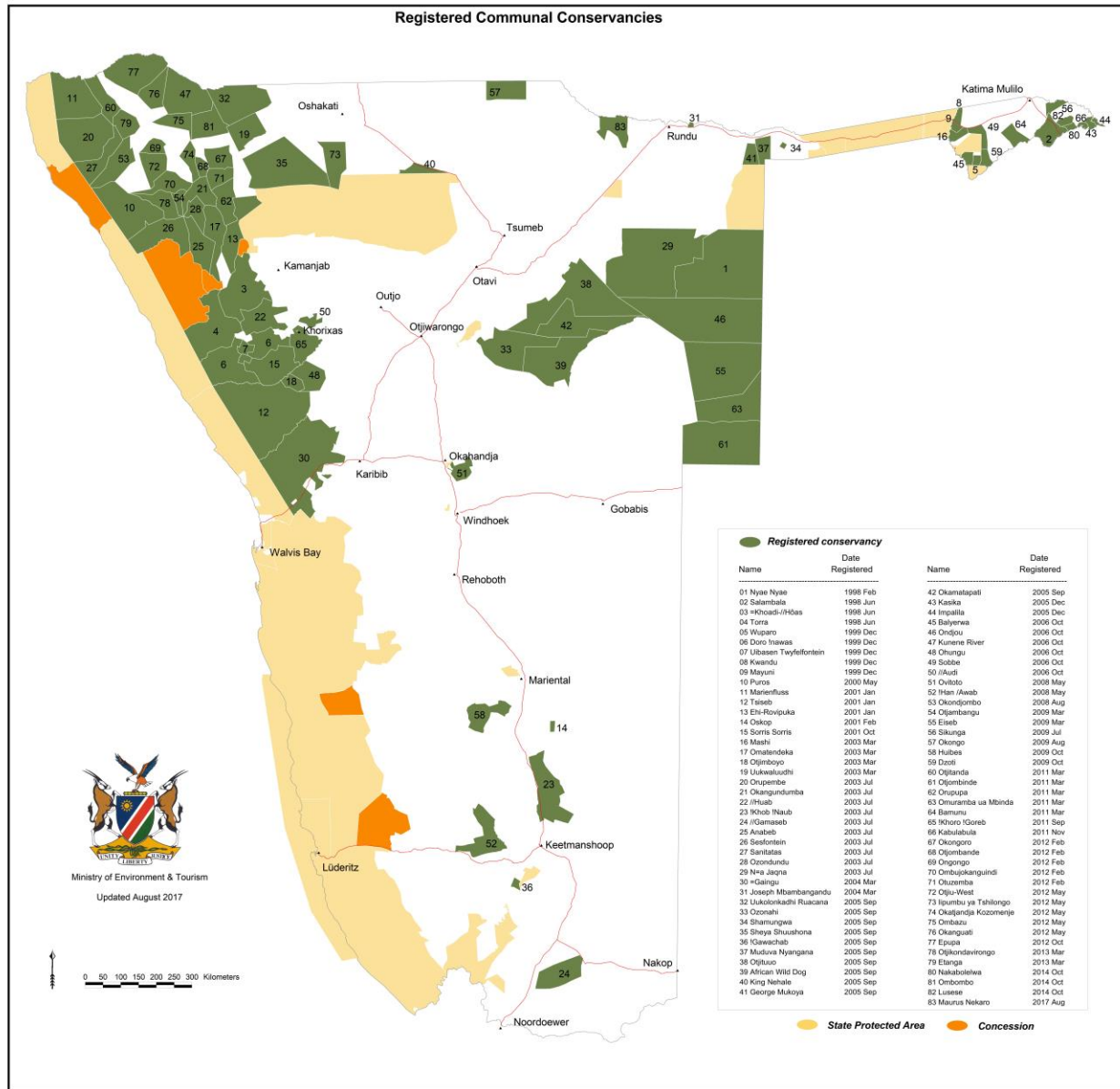
- Wellbeing measures must include economic AND social, cultural, environmental and political concerns
- Most indices are created for national and international scale comparisons

Can these broad categorizations of wellbeing represent local realities?

Takeaways from the Literature

1. Conservation should include local people, as people are embedded in larger socio-ecological systems
2. Community based conservation has tried to do this, but has not been as successful as anticipated
3. Understanding wellbeing could help address this gap, but needs to be understood at the local level

Case Study: Namibia's conservancy programme



Retrieved from www.naco.org

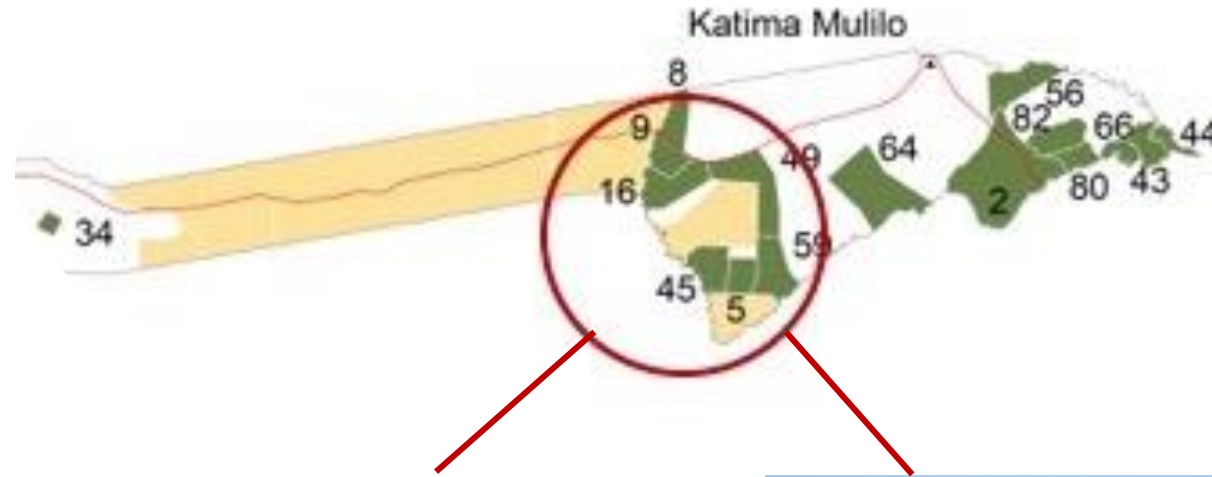
- Has grown from 4 conservancies in 1998 to 83 conservancies today
- Elephant and Rhino population has tripled
- Growing lion population outside of national parks

Objectives

1. How is wellbeing defined by community members living within Namibia's conservancies?
 - How are the conservancies impacting wellbeing?
2. Create a wellbeing monitoring tool for the WWF
 - Replicable
 - Easy for a committee member to use



Site Selection: Zambezi Region



Interviews & Focus Groups



Mashi Conservancy Focus Group



Game Guards and Committee Members

Results: Wellbeing Defined Locally

Wellbeing Dimensions
1. Health: <i>proximity to clinic</i>
2. Water: <i>near and safe water source</i>
3. Information and News: <i>staying connected</i>
4. Education: <i>possibility of new and different futures</i>
5. Natural Resources: <i>small scale security</i>
6. Family: <i>supporting kin</i>
7. Agriculture: <i>a way of life</i>
8. Employment: <i>alternate incomes</i>
9. Wildlife: <i>as wealth and wonder</i>
10. Community: <i>cohesion and cooperation</i>

Water: *near and safe water source*



“We have a lot of elephants, hippos, and crocodiles here. We are not having a better life here through water [living by the river].”

(Mashi Conservancy Interview)

“It’s good to stay very far from the river because we get water from the borehole. If we swim, or wash in the river, or bathe in the river, it’s not safe.”

(Sachona Focus Group, Mashi Conservancy)

Wildlife: *as wealth and wonder*



*“Our family, they got **employment** with the conservancy, so we are happy about that. And also we get the **benefits**, like money they give us at the end of the year. And also the **meat**. All those things. Also they give **money** to our schools and our churches. So we rely on the conservancy.”*

(Sachona Focus Group, Mashi Conservancy)

Wildlife: *as wealth and wonder*



*“We are taking care of the wild animals for **the future generations**. For them to know them, to know this is a zebra. I don’t want to have to travel other places to see the Zebra. Wildlife is for the future generation also, to use as a resource.”*

(Lubuta Focus Group, Mashi Conservancy)

Key Takeaways

- Wellbeing dimensions must be interpreted locally
- Local definitions must be incorporated in conservation planning and ongoing monitoring and evaluation

Wellbeing Tool



Context

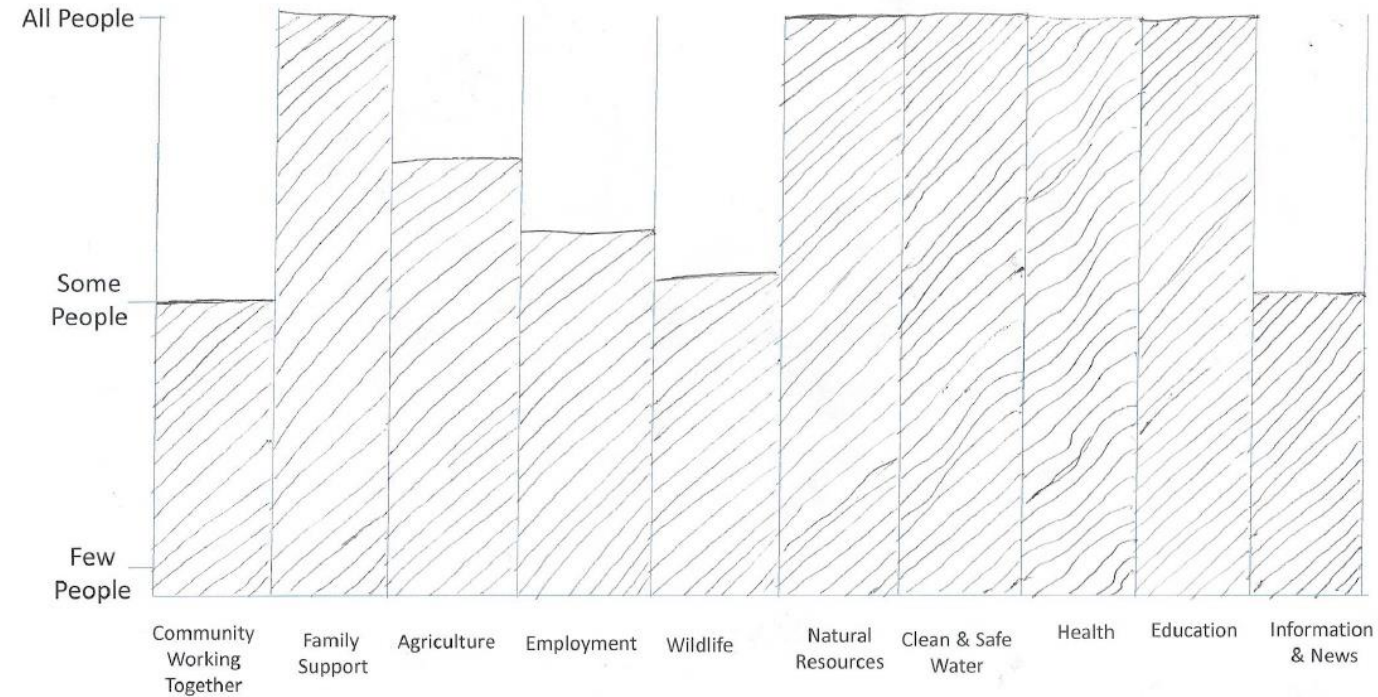
Objectives

Methods

Findings

Conclusions

	☹️	😊	😄
Community			
Our village members support one another			
Our village members can resolve conflict			
Our village makes decisions together			
Family			
Families have what they need to live well here			
Families can take care of each other			
Agriculture			
We have the tools we need for harvesting			
We had a good harvest this year			
Our livestock did well this year			
Employment			
There are enough jobs for people to live well here			
People are satisfied with their jobs			
Natural Resources			
We have access to the natural resources most important to us			
Clean and Safe Water			
We have access to clean and safe water			
We don't have to walk far for clean and safe water			
Health			
If someone is sick they can get help			
We don't have to walk far to the clinic			
Education			
There are opportunities for people to learn new skills			
There is a school nearby			
Information and News			
We have access to the news that most concerns us			
Wildlife			
We can live peacefully with wildlife			
Wildlife is good for life here			
Conservancy			
The conservancy is good for people			
The conservancy is good for wildlife			
The conservancy makes life here better			
The conservancy makes living with wildlife easier			



Implications for the Future

- Conservation initiatives that are better tailored to local needs can foster more meaningful community involvement
- 60% of the world's poor will live in rural areas by 2025, depending on the natural resources around them

Acknowledgements

Dr. Terre Satterfield, Dr. Milind Kandlikar, Dr. Robin Naidoo
Obicious Siyanga & Eben
Interview & Focus Group Participants
WWF & IRDNC
CCL Conference



a place of mind
THE UNIVERSITY
OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



Social Sciences and Humanities
Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada