



Community Conservation through Sacred Natural Sites in Mozambique: Assessing the Conflicts of Values

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Sacred forests are those that have a spiritual significance to a group of people or community

They are usually areas that conserve biodiversity and provide ecosystem services



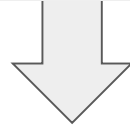
The sacred natural sites of the Xai-Xai Region in Mozambique have been informally established and maintained by local communities.



The Mozambican regulations on forests and wildlife conservation include a category of protected areas that are designed to preserve places of religious and other historical relevance for local communities

Sacred natural sites has the potential to be institutionalized as protected areas in Mozambique.

However, informal institutions that have conserve the sacred forest have been threatened by recent sociocultural dynamics



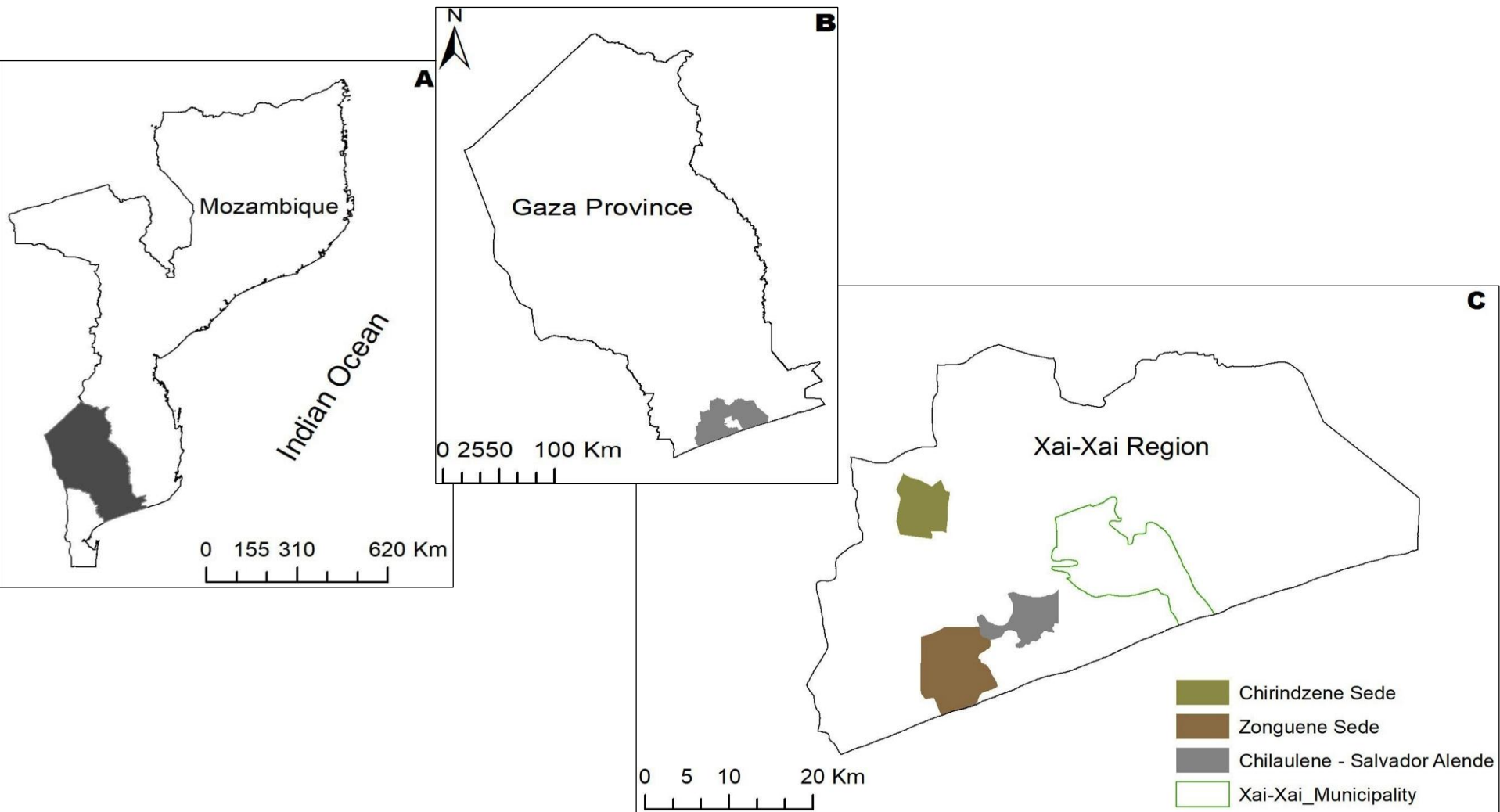
In this context, our objective is to identify challenges and conflicts related to maintenance of the sacred sites of Xai-Xai region, if communities are addressing them and how

Research Methods

- Direct observation
- Talking circles that brought together traditional leaders and community members
- Interviews with local community members

Community	Gender	
	M	F
Chilaulene	35	27
Zongoene	30	31
Chirindzene	25	15





Local communities view

Conservation of sacred forests encompasses biophysical & social-cultural factors

Main factors affecting conservation of sacred forests in Xai-Xai include:

- Size of forest area
- Presence of outside visitors
- Local community engagement in maintaining the forest and attending cultural events
- Respect for local norms relating to sacred forest

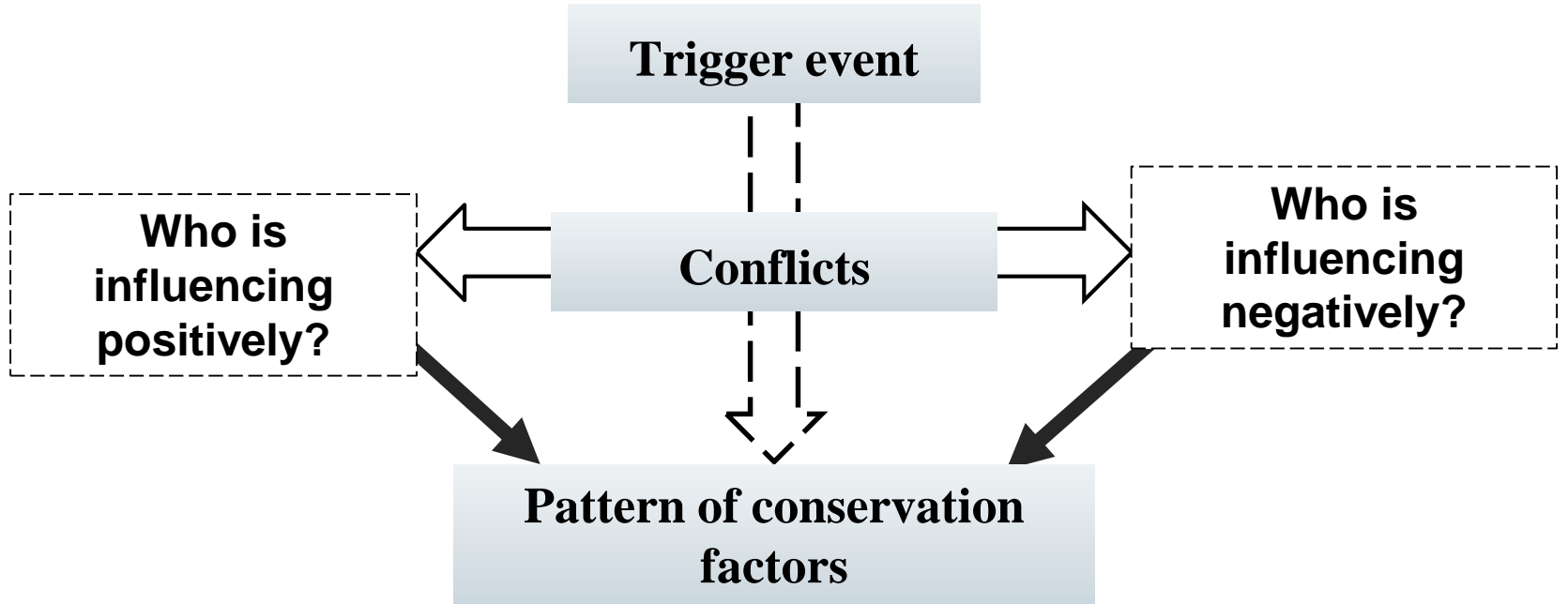


Conflicts are understood as any threat that contributes to an undesirable pattern of conservation factors:

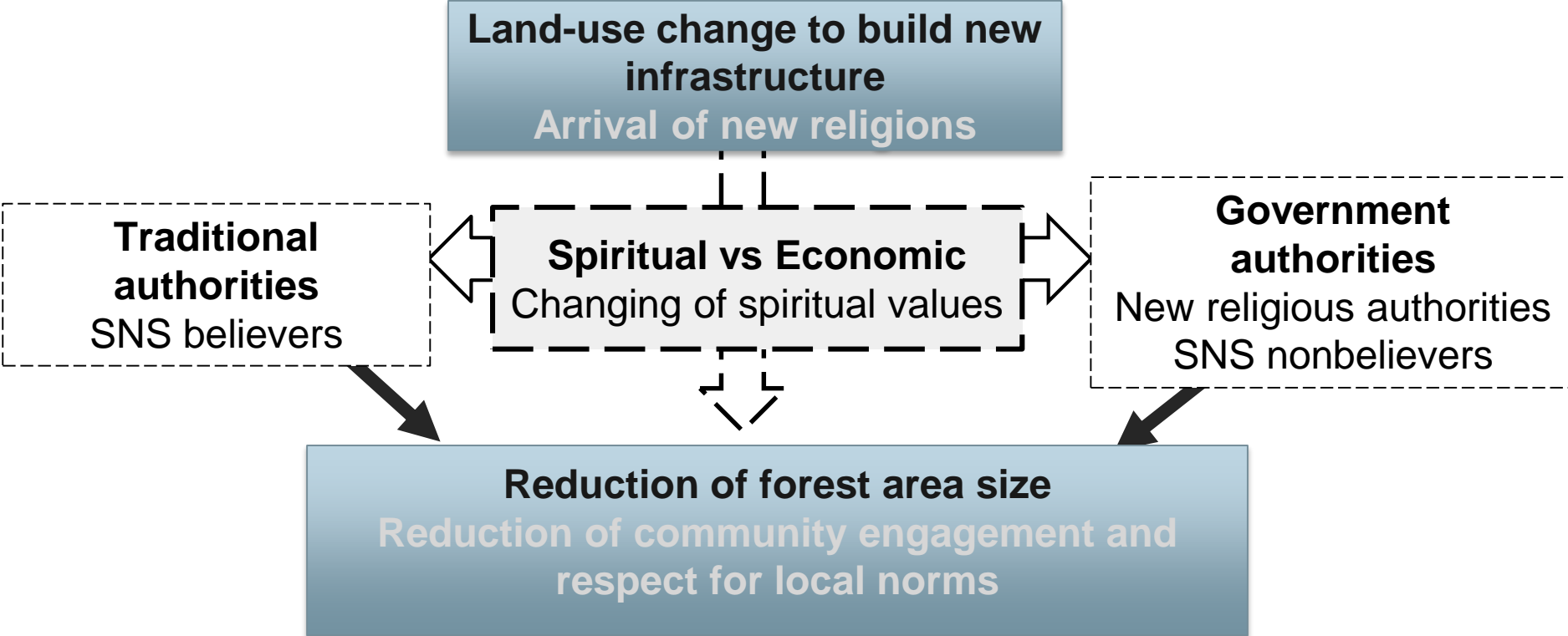
- Competition over natural resources
- Spiritual versus economic values
- Changing spiritual values

(Rute, 2011)





SNS Chilaulene (0.6ha) - forest fragmente and marsh



SNS Chirindzene (60.5ha) - forest fragment and stream

Change on governance
Land-use change build new infrastructure and agriculture
Arrival of new religions

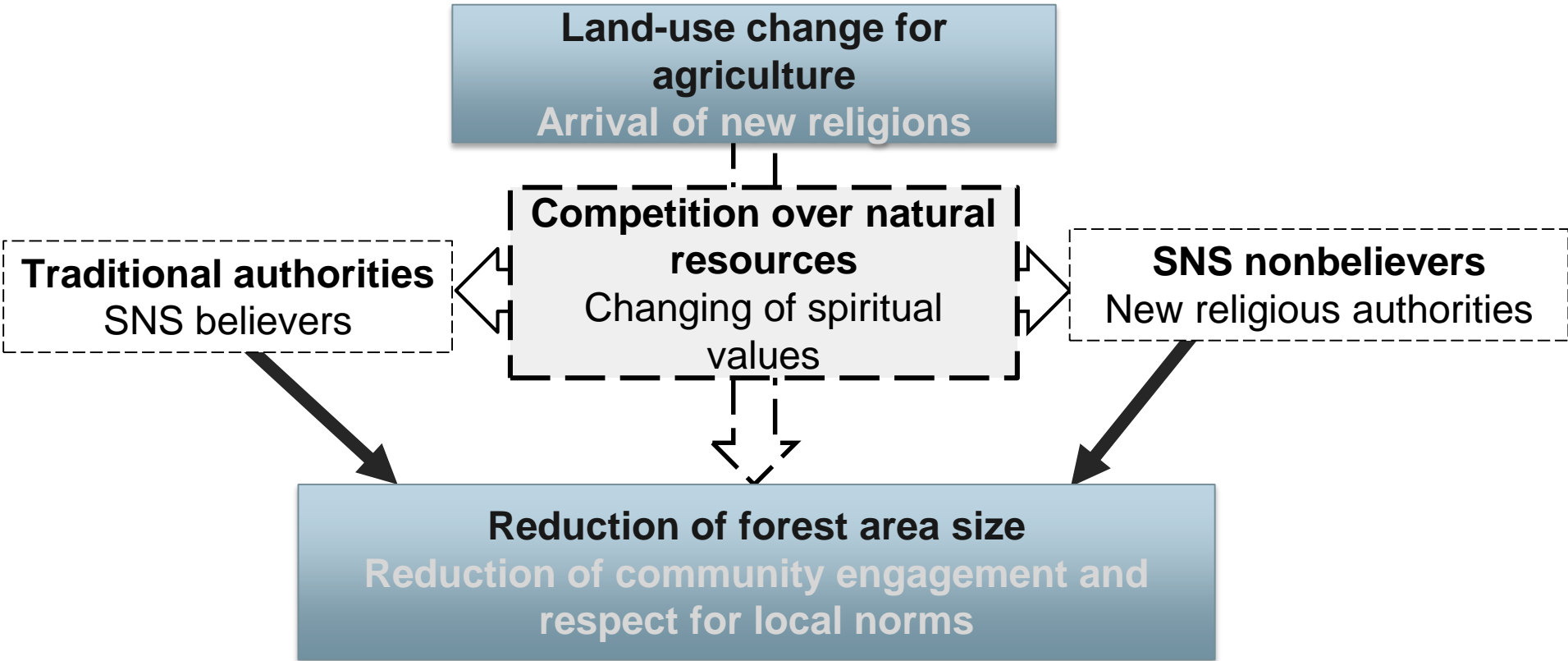
Traditional authorities
SNS believers

Changing of spiritual values
Spiritual vs Economic

Government authorities
SNS nonbelievers
New religious authorities

Reduction of visitors
Reduction of forest area size
Reduction of community engagement and respect for local norms

Zongoene (7.0ha) - forest fragment



What is the future of these sacred forest?

- All three communities face the similar threats and conflicts
- Sanctions for not respecting local rules seem to be curses given by the spiritual world. Historically, people do not remember of any sanction given by one to the other person.
- Up to 2017, communities have not sit together to collective discuss maintenance of these forest, i.e., to address the threats and conflicts.
- Transforming these Sacred Forest into protected areas of religious and cultural value according to Mozambique law is one promising possibility to maintain them.

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Thank you/Kanimambo!

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