Can holistic management sustain rural livelihoods? An actor-oriented livelihood approach incorporating everyday politics and resistance

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Background of the study

• Communal areas in Zimbabwe: occupy 49% of the total land area and 74.2% of CLs are situated in agro-ecological regions IV & V
• About 67% of the total population lives in CLs

Context
• Community-based grazing management project implemented in Hwange Communal areas, Zimbabwe

Scope
• The study focussed on **holistic land and livestock management (HLLM)**, which is based on Alan Savory’s Holistic Management
• **HLLM** promoted since 2005 by the Africa Centre for Holistic Management.
• This paper simply ask: how have farmers responded to HLLM?
Is there a concept in range management that is so controversial than holistic management?
HM Principles

• A **holistic** perspective is critical in natural resources management

• In **brittle environments (dry areas)**, resting from physical disturbances such as grazing leads to land degradation

• In HPG, livestock in high numbers is used as a proxy for the rotational grazing of wild herbivores bunched by predators which once roamed in the brittle environments

• Overgrazing is a **function of time** animals spent grazing on a particular area, rather than **animal numbers**
Two HM principles were adapted for use in HCLs:

**Animal impaction of crop fields**

- After harvesting, livestock are kraaled in movable kraals in the crop fields at night to consume or break crop residues, break up the soil with their hooves, and deposit dung and urine.
- In most cases, the livestock are penned for a period of 9 days before the kraal is shifted to another spot.

**Holistic Planned Grazing**

- This involves concentrating livestock at a very high density in order to induce heavy animal impact over a limited spatial & temporal scale to achieve desired outcomes e.g. improved forage, increased ground water, improved stream flow & water quality
How? My methodology

• Based on an ethnographic study
• Three villages in one ward were selected based on the degree of ‘success’

METHODS
• Participatory Rural Appraisals
• 16 key informant interviews with different actors (e.g. ACHM officials, government officials, headmen, chiefs)
• 62 semi-structured interviews with adopters, non-adopters & dis-adopters
• Document review
• Participant observations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Area (ha)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dibutibu</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>479</td>
<td>1433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monde</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>1095</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sizinda</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>1769</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Adoption patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Monde</th>
<th>Sizinda</th>
<th>Dibutibu</th>
<th>Monde</th>
<th>Sizinda</th>
<th>Dibutibu</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theoretical perspectives

• To gain a nuanced understanding of how farmers HLLM, the notions of “social interface” from the actor-oriented approach (Long 2001, 2004) and “everyday politics & resistance” (Kerkvliet 2009, Scott 1985) were used.

• Social interface – “[occurs] at points where different, and often conflicting, lifeworlds or social fields intersect; or, more concretely, in social situations or arenas in which interactions become oriented around problems of bridging, accommodating, segregating or contesting social, evaluative and cognitive stand points” (Long 2004:28).

• CENTRAL to the concept of social interface is the livelihood concept.

• Everyday politics – involves “people embracing, adjusting to, / contesting norms & rules regarding authority over, production of /allocation of resources & doing so in quiet, mundane, & subtle expressions & acts that are rarely organized” (Kerkvliet 2009).

• Everyday forms of resistance – include acts e.g. simple non-compliance, evasion, deception, sabotage, pilfering, absenteeism etc (Scott 1985).
Analysis of findings

So how did farmers respond to HLLM?

Differentiated responses...

• Compliance
  - Some farmers adopted animal impaction individually or collectively as a strategy for addressing soil fertility problems, thereby meeting one of their key priorities (i.e.) food security at h/hold level

  - In Sizinda, a group of farmers adopted HPG as a strategy to reduce herding labour during the planting season
• Evasions
- In Dibutibu farmers falsely complied with HPG in order to gain water supplies that come with HPG package

• Covert resistance/ everyday forms of resistance
  - Absenteeism at HLLM meetings when the meetings were held concurrently with other NGO meetings that offers immediate short term benefits e.g. food hand outs
  - Simple non-compliance HPG e.g. in Monde, farmers were not willing to combine their herds and herd together due to risk of disease

• Modifications
  - HPG adopters in Sizinda cutting the herding labor during the non-growing season by sending livestock to the paddocks without herders, because herding in the dry season competed with other seasonal non-farm employment
Village head in Dibutibu: “I am really disappointed with ACHM. Here our problem is water for livestock. When the ACHM people arrived in our community, we were very happy. We saw what they did in Monde & Dibutibu – they constructed a water tank and a borehole there and a community garden. Now the livestock are drinking clean water and make some extra cash. We were hoping that they were going to do same here. They promised that they will give us water, but they have not fulfilled that promise...”
Concluding remarks

• The study found that the programme secure low levels of adoption of the recommended practices, in part because farmers were more concerned with immediate problems such as water shortage than long-term problems of land degradation in the range.

THEREFORE

• Farmers responded by covertly resisting some of the recommended practices, while complying with others that have immediate benefits.

• It is therefore, not surprising that animal impaction of crop fields was more accepted because it address their immediate needs (i.e.) increased maize yields.
Thank you!