



STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE AND POWER RELATIONS IN THE MOUNT CAMEROON NATIONAL PARK

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ABSTRACT

Observing the disconnect between local communities and the conservation agencies which manage Protected Areas in Cameroon in general and the Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP) in particular is what sparked this study. During the last couples of decades, opposition to conservation policies and wildlife management strategies have increased and materialized through a large number of NGOs. But how does local people in the Mount Cameroon National Park (MCNP) resist conservation rule? In this paper we examine the 'what and how' of subtle resistance and power relations in the MCNP which is highly appropriate for the peace, organic solidarity and sustainable management of the protected area. The data were collected through in-depth interviewing and participant observation in eight of the villages close to the borders of the park. Results show a lack of community interests and belongingness among the communities. We identified that the way the local people in the MCNP response against conservation rules are subtle, many of which are embedded in their everyday forest based livelihoods struggle. The paper concluded that in the heart of subtle resistance, lies what matters to poor people.

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INTRODUCTION

Forests are the source of human well-being in most rural communities in Africa, making issues of the relationship between protected areas and local communities of vital importance to biodiversity conservation (Brechin *et al.*, 2003). One response to these global environmental concerns has been a widely adopted strategy of nature protection through the creation of natural protected areas. The concern for the protection of biodiversity has become a key element for national and international movements, especially as a consequence of the growing awareness of the extent and impact of tropical forest degradation. The underlying philosophy behind the creation of protected areas emphasizes that ecosystems must be protected from local communities (McCracken 1987; Pimbert and Pretty 1995; Mashinya 2007; Cioc 2009; Becker 2001; Mugisha 2002). These authors give the impression that local communities are the only destroyers of the environment. This is not true because depletion is mostly due to uncontrolled exploitation by all sort of alien

agents including logging companies, huge agro-industrialists and mining industries. As in several African countries and Cameroon in particular, biodiversity conservation policies are intrinsically related to ethnic, cultural and livelihood issues. This has resulted to many communities resisting conservation rules. A central cause of resistance to conservation is the banning of certain livelihoods practices (eg. hunting, farming, collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) etc), and the way that this becomes an implicit challenge to conservation of forest resources. Though we lack overall numbers, the local consequences of these impositions of protected areas on the lives of indigenous and local peoples have been better documented (Barraclough *et al* 1995, Bell 1987). Summarizing the extensive literature and field studies, indigenous peoples commonly experience:

- A Denial of rights to land
- Denial of use of and access to natural resources
- Denial of political rights and the validity of customary institutions
- Disrupted kinship systems
- Disorganized settlement patterns

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- Loss of informal social networks, fundamental to the local economy
- Undermining of livelihoods, loss of property, no compensation
- Poverty
- Disruption of customary systems of environment management
- Enforced illegality. People become “poachers,” “encroachers,” and “squatters” on their own land and are subject to petty tyrannies by park guards.
- Forced resettlement
- Leadership systems destroyed, for if the community leaders accept the relocation they are accused of betraying their people, but if they resist they are proved powerless. Forced resettlement presents a no-win situation to community leaders.
- Symbolic ties to environment broken
- Cultural identity weakened
- Intensified pressure on natural resources outside the protected areas
- Popular unrest, resistance, incendiarism, social conflict, and ensuing repression

It is now widely recognized that the exclusion of local communities from protected areas can also undermine conservation objectives by creating conflict between local communities and parks managers. As a response to the increasing anthropogenic activities in the Mount Cameroon Forest Area, the government of Cameroon, in accordance with Decree number 2009/2272/PM of 18 December 2009 announced on the 17 February 2010 the creation of the Mount Cameroon Forest Park, covering a surface area of 58,178 hectares (Laird *et al.*, 2011). Its creation has been linked to "intense efforts and collaboration since 2007 between the Ministry of Forestry and Nature Protection (MINFOF) and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), with the financial support of the German Cooperation (Kfw)".

The creation of the park is a development programme of the Republic of Cameroon that is being co-financed by the Federal Republic of Germany through kfw, and in collaboration with the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ now GIZ) and the German Development Service (DED). Since then local access to forests has been severely reduced and customary rights restricted as an effect of forest conservation. The local people living near the park are trapped between their dependence on resources from this area to meet their local development aspirations, and international pressure to protect resources of high international value. Serious efforts have been made, of course, in biodiversity conservation as a whole, driven by the dynamics of the process of building participatory principles in ecosystem protection. For example, the Community-based Natural Resources Management (CBNRM) initiatives have become synonymous with ideals such as sustainable development and democratic decision-making processes concerning community participation, thus increasing the likelihood of acceptance and legitimacy of protected area management (Stoll-Kleeman, de la Vega-Leinert and Schultz 2010). Nevertheless, in spite of widespread acceptance of participatory principles in ecosystem protection strategies and recognition of the importance of communities and institutions for collective resource management, positive outcomes have been few in the Mount Cameroon area. Participation is at the most elementary level. The reality on the ground continues to illustrate the application of exclusionary approaches to nature

protection (Young 1999, Diegues 2000). The livelihoods of the rural communities around the Mount Cameroon National Park chiefly involve the direct exploitation of local natural resources. This often comes into conflict with the institutions of the MCNP. Before the official functioning of the Mount Cameroon National Park, the Divisional Officer (DO) for Buea went out to sensitize the villagers that would be affected by the creation of the national park. Even though he explained to them the advantages of the park and the importance of preserving and protecting the area for posterity, the villagers did not take the proposal in good faith. The majority of the villagers left the sensitization session far before the DO and his team could end their session. The government, however, went ahead and created the National Park. As a result, after the creation of the National Park, the local people endorse to different forms of resistance to the conservation rules. The local people do not resist the park administration openly, thus creating a false impression of harmony. Because of fear of repression from the powerful forest stakeholders in the area (government, through the use of eco-guard and other government agencies) local people avoid open confrontation in a formal manner but, rather in a subtle and informal manner embedded in their day- to-day livelihood activities such as hunting, farming, harvesting of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP), heavy production of charcoal, local collaboration with poachers and illegal timber agents, etc. To understand this friction, it was necessary for us to examine the deeper symbolic meanings of the different actors and stakeholders involved in this situation.

Theoretically, this paper suggests that local resistance to conservation rules in the MCNP is principally subtle (otherwise referred to as a ‘backyard movement’ by local people), many of which are surrounded upon their individual livelihood pathways. Theories within emerging “resistance studies” differ but they agree that resistance is an oppositional act. Like all acts, resistance is situated in certain time, space and relations, and engages with different (types of) actors, techniques and discourses (Vinthagen and Johansson, 2013). Gills, (2000) indicates that, the classic theoretical frameworks for understanding resistance is based on the literature of Karl Polanyi, Antonio Gramsci and James. Scott. Like Weitz (2001), we think research on resistance has to move away from the focus on consciousness and intention, and instead “try to assess the nature of the act itself”. It is sure that in any classic socio-anthropological definition of social action, the intention of the actor is the key. Therefore, also (Subtle and everyday) resistance is indeed done with intent. “Everyday resistance” is a theoretical concept introduced by James Scott in 1985 in order to cover a different kind of resistance; one that is not as dramatic and visible as rebellions, riots, demonstrations, revolutions, civil war or other such organized, collective or confrontational articulations of resistance (Scott 1985, 1990, 1998). However, everyday resistance is not only a matter of creative ways of doing things “differently”, but also a silent, somewhat hidden way of (at least potentially) undermining power. Such acts are "everyday" because of their commonplace, ordinary nature and as Scott notes, "everyday acts of resistance make no headlines" (Scott 1985). To detect, understand and analyze the everyday resistance act is an art in itself, with several pitfalls. It seems inherently difficult to measure these acts. In its mundane, repetitive and non-dramatic way of subverting domination it acquires an almost invisible character (de Certeau 1984). Everyday resistance acts are hard to capture since they rely on contextual tactics,

opportunities, individual choices, temporality and it is shifting, moving and transient (Vinthagen and Johansson, 2013). Empirically, many studies (Holmes 2013; Robbins *et al.*, 2006) put forward that subtle resistance is important in understanding the real reasons why and how local people resist conservation rules, yet this is largely neglected in the social science literature, especially in our study area. Exploring open and organised resistance is not enough if our aim is to understand why and how local people disagree with conservation rules in a more holistic way. This is the area of resistance this paper is focusing on in the Mount Cameroon National Park. This form of resistance can be found in the local people's day-to-day livelihood activities like farming, hunting, and collection of NTFP etc). Understanding subtle resistance may help lead closer to the heart of people-conservation controversy in the Mount Cameroon area.

METHODS

Study Area: Mount Cameroon is found in the South West Region of Cameroon with its altitude of 40,100 metres (Cameroon Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife 2014), is the third highest mountain in Africa (Schmidt-Soltau 2003). Mount Cameroon is an active volcano and has witnessed several volcanic eruptions since 1800 such as in 1982, 1999 and 2000 (Suh, Ayonghe, Njumbe 2001). In the Mount Cameroon forest zone, agriculture is the most important economic activity for both the indigenous people and local and international immigrants. Communities around the MCNP are multiethnic. Traditional ethnic structures are certainly evident, but in all of the communities covered in this study, we find a conglomerate of ethnic backgrounds. The ecology and environment of the area have possible influence on their lifestyles including food, livelihood strategies, clothing etc. For example, due to the equatorial maritime climate, and the high fertility of the soil, the Bakweri people are predominantly agriculturalists, and their main source of income is from rudimentary subsistence farming and the forest. These people practice a combination of subsistence and cash crop farming. Their survival heavily depend on the natural resources around them.

Data collection techniques: Ethnography is the principal approach used in this study characterised by in-depth interview, village walk, key informant interviews and participants observation techniques. This was done in eight (8) of the villages around the park. Forty-eight (48) villagers in forty-five (45) households and five(5) conservation officials were interviewed. We were privileged to experience the ways of living of the local people in these very remote communities in the MCNP. Better portrayed as interpretive and symbolic in its emphasis, we benefited from the influential contributions of Clifford Geertz. Geertz, of course, has famously argued for keeping the analysis of symbolic forms closely tied to concrete social events and occasions. To this end, Geertz has called the perspective of the anthropologist one of extended acquaintance with extremely small matters. He has gone further to advocate a narrative approach in the interpretative quest of the ethnographer, to keep the connections between theoretical formulation and thick description unobscured by appeals to dark sciences (Geertz 1973).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Power Relations and Drafting of the 1994 New Forestry Law: The drafting of conservation law and policy marked the

beginning of ecological resistance in modern Cameroon and by extension the MCNP. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) Tropical Forest Action Plans (TFAP) of 1985 was behind the drafting process of the 1994 Forestry Law. The TFAP for Cameroon was initiated by FAO/UNDP in 1987. Eventually, several other stakeholders were involved including the World Bank that heavily influenced the activities of the drafting of the forestry law. The forest policy documents that were produced in 1992 and 1993 were written at the suggestion of the World Bank. This was done without any proper consultation with the government of Cameroon. Forestry Department did resist certain World Bank suggestions, and refused to consider all the recommendations of the World Bank's 1993 consultants' report. This resistance was often overcome by the World Bank by repeating its threat to suspend its co-operation or financial assistance (SAILD 1995). The second determining factor in the balance of power at the drafting stage was the financial and political vulnerability of Cameroon between 1989 and 1994, a period of serious economic and political difficulties for the Cameroon Government.

The Government's financial and political worries made perfect ammunition for the World Bank. Though this resistance from the government was way back as 1994, recently we still noticed some aspects of pessimistic utterances from some government officials. For example, the Minister of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) said that "western countries must pay more for us to conserve our forest".(The Green Version, No. 0043 December, 2017). The same Minister further stressed that "the western countries must financially and technically equip developing countries [including Cameroon] so that they can conserve their forest". He was speaking during one of a top programme "Inside The Presidency" aired over Cameroon's state broadcasting network, CRTV in December, 2017.

Local mode of resistance to conservation rules: Away from this government resistance against alien influence in the 1994 forestry law, manifestation of local resistance to biodiversity conservation in the Mount Cameroon National Park is embedded on the local people's modes of struggle for livelihoods. A central aspect of resistance to conservation in the MCNP is the continuation of banned livelihood practices which we are going to examine below. The local communities find themselves acting according to the dictates of a logic that is externally imposed on them. So, the local methods of controlling their claims over the local resources exemplify the two basic types of power resistance, one based on the threat of physical violence, and the other, more subtle method of everyday resistance embedded on the different adaptive livelihood pathways. Findings from the field reveal that, the cultural context of struggle for livelihoods is important as it reveals acts of resistance that otherwise would remain hidden. Most forms of everyday resistance in the MCNP are, after all, deployed precisely to thwart some appropriation by the state and other conservation agencies in the area. What gives these techniques a certain unity is that they are invariably quiet, disguised, anonymous, often undeclared forms of resisting claims imposed by claimants who have superior access to force and to public power. Part of the strength of implicit resistance comes from the strong symbolism that it contains. Previous practices became outlawed, giving them a new meaning to both conservationists and those who practiced them. For example, hunting became poaching, and the animals themselves come to be seen as the property of conservationists

and the state, rather than the local populace. Across all of the sites, the most discussed and worrying effect of the creation of the MCNP was the impact on livelihood strategies and outcomes. The forms and strategies of local resistance to conservation in MCNP are examined from the livelihoods strategies of the local people.

Livelihoods and Illegality as forms of resistance in the MCNP: Manifestation of local resistance to biodiversity conservation in the Mount Cameroon National Park is embedded on the local people's modes of struggle for livelihoods. Livelihood strategies comprise the diversity of activities and choices that the people undertake to achieve their livelihood objectives.

- Corruption in the Small-Scale Logging Titles:** The 1994 forestry law provides for small-scale logging titles to be issued to Cameroonian nationals in the non-permanent forest estate. However, in 1999 the Ministry issued a ministerial regulation that suspended all small-scale logging titles. The formal suspension of these titles remained in place until 2006, when another administrative act revoked it. It is worth noting that the latter decision will not fully restore the potential returns to be derived from small-scale logging because in 2006 another "Ministerial Letter" banned all exports of timber harvested using small-scale logging titles in order to ensure that domestic demand was met, given that industrial logging companies were and are still exclusively focused on the export market. The suspension of small-scale logging titles neither reduced corruption nor made much sense with regard to sustainable forest management. Furthermore, it is thought to have had negative impacts on livelihoods. Despite the prohibition on the felling of trees for timber and a general decrease in such activity, illegal logging continues. Authorities of the Southwest Regional Brigade of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife intercepted the transportation of over 1400 pieces of sawn planks which were headed for Douala by an illegal exploiter. The scientific name of this wood is *Microberlinia bisulcata* commonly called in the area as zebra wood or Zingana. It is no more a secret how corrupt most public affairs are carried out in Cameroon. This illegal exploiter did not possess neither authorization nor exploitation permit. The chief of Dikome village admitted that the Forestry chief of Post of the area had presented the forest exploiter to the community for exploitation of their forest. The villagers accepted without any reservation given that the exploiter was with the chief of post- a government official, and the species was considered a hindrance to the growth of their crops. In this regard, the chief of post reportedly advised the villagers not to collect money in exchange of the trees but rather to ask the exploiter to reward them through a developmental project in the community. To this effect, the villagers went into verbal agreement with the exploiter in which he was to exploit and saw out 10.000 pieces of logs and in return construct a modern community hall of 15m X 8m consisting of two bedrooms, a conference hall and 2 modern toilets. Consequently, he exploited and transported 2 trucks of the species on two occasions. On the third occasion, the villagers held the truck filled with sawn pieces of Zingana hostage because he had not commenced his side of the bargain as promised. To this effect, the verbal agreement was transformed into a written agreement with the community. On a patrol to area by the South West regional MINFOF brigade team supported by a local NGO called Environment and Rural Development Foundation (ERuDeF), a pile of over 1400 sawn pieces of Zingana were found pending transportation to Douala

by an illegal exploiter in the village. The MINFOF team confiscated the sawn logs using the official forestry hammer and reported the matter to the Regional office and area gendarmes which prompted the detention of the illegal exploiter. He was charged 2 million FCFA as penalty and damages caused which was to be paid into government treasury before his release. Nonetheless the villagers still interrupted the confiscation and auction of the logs by MINFOF authorities. They argued that the logs could not be auctioned because the owner of the logs had gone into agreement with the community before exploiting the species and till then had not executed his terms of the agreement. The Regional Delegate of Forestry, together with his team summoned a conflict resolution meeting at the community. In the presence of the Divisional Officer of the area, community members and ERuDeF staff, the conflict was sought to be resolved. The Regional Delegate said the wood had to be auctioned and the money paid into the government coffers. The Regional Delegate of Forestry however said that given the underlying circumstance, he would talk with his team and seek to consider that 50% of the logs are given to the community to sell and use the money to complete the hall while 50% is auctioned and money paid into the government coffers. Speaking at the meeting, the Divisional Officer (D.O) blamed the community for accepting and going into agreement without his consent. He highlighted that the DO as the administrator of the area had been sidelined by the community and illegal exploiters hovered into the community. He emphasized that villagers had privileges and not rights of allowing persons to exploit the forest without informing the necessary government authorities.

- Local collaboration with poachers and other Illegal forest dealers:** Able bodied and usually unemployed men from neighboring villages occasionally hunt wildlife, in order to supplement their plantain, cassava, cocoyam and maize-based diet with bushmeat. However, in recent years a growing number have been motivated by the increasing demand for certain animal species in the traditional medicine business, and trade in animal parts to supplement their income. Another group of hunters is comprised of wealthier men who come from distant areas to hunt for trophies illegally. Local hunters justify their 'illegal hunting' by reference to the notion of 'survival'. In terms of this notion, hunting in MCNP does not constitute a crime due to the historical claim that villagers have on the land and its resources. On the other hand, conservation laws and other regulations imposed by government forbid hunting by villagers inside the park. However, the local people have developed a way to resist this policy. Poaching and illegal trade in wildlife has become an organized, lucrative and a capital intensive business, with trafficking routes extending from the farmland, meandering into thick bush to the park. Animals are trapped mostly in farmland and thick bushes. Some of these animals are endemic to the area. For examples, the drill (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*), Preuss's guenon (*Cercopithecus preus-si*), red-eared guenon (*Cercopithecus erythrotis*) and Mount Cameroon francolin (*Francolinus camerunensis*). The carcasses of all of these animals together with some other common species are traded for bushmeat. Monkeys and rodents are the most common (Tako 1999). Elephants and chimpanzees are rare and endangered because of their high demand. It is certain that the new conservation rules governing use of national park land have affected hunting. To counter this rule, hunters have agents from the cities that buy from them in the jungles. They also have some

villagers who collaborate with them by giving the poachers information on the positions and activities of eco-guards, assist in transporting the catch, keep some of the poachers' hunting materials and even housing them in the villages in return for money and bushmeat. This same collaboration can be noticed in illegal extraction of wood from the park as illustrated above. Though government authorises the activities of some hunters (licensed hunters), they are most often unchecked. The forest guards are supposed to check illegal exploitation of forest products but majority of these guards are often bought over by these hunters. The corrupt and inefficient forest guards connive with illegal hunters and other exploiters of the forest for material gains. However, pinpointing the exactness of such occurrence is difficult. This is because villagers are aware the activity is prohibited and show concern about disclosing information that may implicate them. This difficulty is aggravated because the nature of hunting has changed from that of a common group activity frequently carried out as a social hobby, to one conducted alone. Therefore, the stigmatization of the act and fear of prosecution under government prohibition has led to a form of hunting performed in secrecy from community viewing resulting in little opportunity for overt observation as was common before the park's inauguration. The selling of wild meat has also progressively become more veiled and less likely to be sold in the street or the market. It is now more likely to be sold quietly door-to-door or only to trusted acquaintances. The activity is most apparent in areas where hunting is accessible and people have been experiencing greater livelihood shocks like in the bomboko, Etinde, Bova villages.

The restriction of their principal means of livelihood is probably a major reason that some local people began killing of elephants in protest. At some points, some allegedly began collaborating with ivory poachers. Fuelled by Asian demand for Ivory, in Mount Cameroon National park, African Elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) are the major target for professional poaching. Their tusks that are so valuable, made elephants the target for groups of poachers in the area who sell the tusks (horns) to the Far East users at high prices. It is the state and its conservation law which suddenly transforms these subsistence routines into everyday forms of resistance. Because the locals are dissatisfied with the high level restrictive conservation rule and corruption, they clandestinely collaborate with these foreign poachers by either keeping their hunting material in the village, inform them about the activities and position of forest guards, assist in carrying their catch etc. In some cases, poachers transport their poached goods in the night by motor bike to evade authorities and another by hiking the rough mountainous terrain of the area. This sort of arrangement exemplified why poaching is common in the MCNP. For example, On Monday 24th October, 2016, some 123 elephant tusks and 350 kg of pangolin scales were confiscated by the Southwest Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife at the Tiko wharf. According to the Technical Adviser No. 4 at the Southwest Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife, the number of elephant tusks indicates that over 62 elephants were killed. The perpetrators were not apprehended at the time of the confiscation but the Regional Delegate of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF) for the Southwest affirmed that investigations were ongoing. Information from the South West Regional Delegation of Forestry and Wildlife indicates that some traffickers who were trapped last year, after they were caught in Idenau with parts of endangered wildlife species are presently on trial in the court

of first instance. Similar cases are also on going in at the Court of First Instance in Tiko, Muyuka, Mamfe and Kumba.

● **Fuelwood and Charcoal Production:** Although firewood gathering in their farmland is understood by local villagers as an unrestricted activity when carried out in their farmland. Fuelwood is the main source of energy used for cooking and almost all the households rely on it. This further helps to explain the magnitude of the people's dependence on forest. Despite a supposed ban on the selling of firewood, the activity continues in all success, however mostly on a small scale. Although fuel wood is used mainly for domestic consumption, there is a high demand from restaurant and roasted meat (soya) operators, fishing communities and cocoa producers who need supplies for their processing activities but when stocks run low the local people go past park boundaries. Thereby, breaking the rules. The charcoal business is even more lucrative to sellers. These charcoal dealers said they are aware that they are operating in illegality and that the woods are sometimes harvested from government reserves. As a result, they often are confronted by forestry officials and may have to either bribe their way or have their charcoal seized.

● **Harvest of Non-Timber Forest Products:** Mt Cameroon area has an enormous variety of Non-timber forest products that contribute to all aspects of rural life providing food, fuel, medicine, craft material and other household items (Tchouto *et al.*, 1999). *Prunus africana* (Pygeum), is an important commercial value medicinal plant. in the Mount Cameroon area, poachers cut down and steal redwood trees and bark of *Prunus* from the park. Theft of *Prunus* is a major problem in the Mount Cameroon area. Common fruits, seeds and nuts obtained from the forest include: *Cola acuminata* (cola nut), *C.pachycarpa*, *C. Ficifolia*, *C. lepidota* (monkey cola), *Elaeis guineensis* (oil palm), *Garcinia Kola* (bitter cola), *Tetracarpidium conophorum* (cashew) and *Dacryods edulis* (bush plum). Wild species of vegetable such as *Gnetum africanum* (eru), and *Heinsia crinita* (atama) are widely used. Many wild species such as *Aframomumhanburyi*, *A. Citratum* (mbongo), *A. Limbatum*, *A. melegueta* (alligator pepper), *Afrostryax lepidophyllus* (country onion or bush onion), *Piper guineensis* (bush pepper), *Ricinodendron heudelotii* (njangsanga), *Tetrapleura tetraptera* (esekeseke), *Monodora myristica*, and *M. Brevipes* are commonly used for local consumption and for sale (Tchouto *et al.*, 1999, Tchouto 2005).

● **Agriculture, farm encroachment and bushfire on portions of the Park:** Because of population increase and the demand for new farmland, the local people are taking interest to penetrate the park by setting fire on portions of the forest. Due to fertile soil, encroachment of forests during the agricultural season has become a common occurrence. In spite of having been warned by the park authorities, the encroachers refuse to vacate the land occupied by them. The proposed plot is slashed and fire is set on the area. The people, deliberately use fire to clear the forests for farming, agriculture, hunting, extraction of honey etc. In most cases, the fire is uncontrollable. The local people who know the researchers, sincerely confined to me that fire is an important weapon to resist conservation. Because they need more land for farming, and for fear of arrest, they enter the reserve in the night and set fire. This help us to occupy more land, some informants said. They pleaded to remain anonymous. Recently, there has been a new relationship between the Mount Cameroon Race and

landscape fire. During the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope, it is common to find fire in the mountain. Our interviews indicate that, tracks for the mountaineers to go up and down the mountain is traced by burning the run-way especially in huts 1 and 2. But, deliberate fire burning of the forest is also attributed to bee farmers. They deliberately use fire as a weapon to harvest honey. It is common for the inhabitants of Buea and its environs to observe huge fire up the mountain. Usually, this perpetrators of mountain fire carry out their act in the night in order to be anonymous. One of the most popular forms of protest against conservation in the MCNP is fire, noticed in all the eight villages of our study area, a reflection perhaps of its popularity throughout rural history as a tool for rural protest (Kuhlken 1999). This makes fire a key form of resistance in the MCNP. It allows a powerful statement to be made, with some livelihood benefits, while it has fewer constraints than other forms of protest because of its anonymity. Bush fires in the MCNP specifically is aimed at limiting state control.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper demonstrates how conservation in the Mount Cameroon National Park is resisted by the rural 'poor' and 'weak' living in and around the place. Though other forms of resistance (other-wise referred to as a 'backyard movement' by local people) to conservation are undeniably important, the ways in which the poor and weak (subordinate) respond against conservation rules in protected areas are subtle, many of which are embedded in their everyday livelihood pathways. These methods of subtle resistance are characterized by the little planning that they require, their avoidance of direct confrontation, and their function as a type of self-help for perpetrators. These everyday acts of resistance represent the ways relatively powerless persons accommodate to power while simultaneously protecting their interest and identities. As opposed to the public resistance of open discussion and interaction, the hidden resistance, contains the thoughts and feelings of parties to subordinate situations that cannot be made public at that particular time and place. The attempt to establish collaboration has not been fruitful because the people feel they are being deprived from their traditional rights without adequate justification. Conservation practitioners should move away from labeling all infringements of conservation regulation as encroachment, and to recognise and address this vibrant everyday politics to produce policy that is both better for biodiversity and those who live close to protected areas.

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