

Editorial

Editorial for Special Issue: “Livelihood and Landscape Change in Africa: Future Trajectories for Improved Well-Being under a Changing Climate”

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1. Introduction

Rural people’s livelihoods are intimately linked to the landscapes in which they live and are particularly vulnerable to changes in these landscapes (Suich et al. 2015 [1]). At the same time changes in livelihood activities may have negative feedbacks on landscapes and the ecosystem services they provide. In much of Africa, rural landscapes are subject to increasing pressures from environmental and socio-economic change. Ongoing and accelerated change in climate, populations, migration, land use and national and local economies often translate to increased vulnerability for both local natural resource-dependent communities and the biodiversity and ecosystem services they depend on (Reid and Vogel 2006 [2], Fraser et al. 2011 [3]). Considering climate change, Africa is one of the most vulnerable regions, globally, to climate change (Niang et al. 2014 [4]). Some of the expected impacts include, an increase in extreme weather events, increased exposure to water stress, a decrease in rain-fed agriculture in some countries, and the transformation of some 8% of the land surface towards greater aridity with multiple consequences for people, biodiversity, and landscapes. For example, there is emerging evidence of changes in species ranges and ecosystems, beyond the effects of land use change and other non-climate stressors. Water scarcity and water insecurity are highly likely to increase with serious consequences for agriculture and food security (Niang et al. 2014 [4]). Moreover, in the African context these climate driven changes are frequently superimposed and feedback on a wide range of cross-scale, socio-economic stressors that contribute to social vulnerability in the first place. These stressors include, high levels of poverty, food insecurity, health concerns, and associated shocks (such as disease epidemics), low levels of development, rapid urbanization, weak governance and natural resource management systems, ecosystem service degradation and land and green grabs (forms of nature commodification that effectively exclude local users) to name just a few (African Union 2014 [5]). Such pervasive changes can translate into increased risk and vulnerability at the local level, particularly for poor natural resource-dependent communities and small-holder farmers. Indeed, the continual onslaught of multiple stressors on poor rural communities can overwhelm their ability to cope and adapt, and potentially draw them into a poverty trap (e.g., Casale et al. 2010 [6], Shackleton and Luckert 2015 [7]).

To address these challenges and concerns, we argue that there is a need for improved knowledge on the complex interactions between the multiple drivers of landscape and livelihood change and the impacts of, and responses (both autonomous and facilitated), to these changes. Such knowledge

development may range from a greater understanding of the social-ecological changes taking place and their consequences, to exploring the outcomes of different local responses, external interventions and policy actions, including new governance arrangements, that purport to enhance sustainable agriculture, land management and stewardship, and consequently rural livelihoods. While the need for transformations in how landscapes are used and managed for ecosystem services, livelihood production and human well-being is well-recognized as critical for more resilient future pathways, the question of how this can be achieved in ways that are equitable, take account of local cultures, complexities and realities, and contribute to long-term sustainability requires more in-depth investigation ((Folke et al. 2016 [8], Berbes-Blasquez et al. 2017 [9], Pascua et al. 2017 [10]). Often development and landscape management interventions and adaptation options are de-contextualized and de-politicized and ignore the legacies of colonialism, as well as the socio-cultural drivers of change or stagnation (and implications for transformation and stewardship) (see Pas [11] and Scheba [12]). Ignoring the political, cultural, and contextual aspects of these interventions and adaptation options may have dire consequences for both livelihoods and the ecosystems that underpin these livelihoods (e.g., Shackleton and Luckert 2015 [7], Murphy et al. 2016 [13]).

This special issue of LAND draws together a collection of 11 diverse articles at the nexus of climate change, landscapes and livelihoods in rural Africa; all explore the links between livelihood and landscape change, including shifts in farming practices and natural resource use. Articles were invited that link social-ecological drivers of change across scale to changes in livelihood strategies and human well-being, and landscape functioning and management. We were particularly interested in studies that could assist in answering some of the following questions: What are the changes we are observing in landscapes and livelihoods in rural Africa? What are the multiple, interacting socio-economic, political and environmental drivers of these changes? What are the responses to these changes and what do they mean for future livelihood trajectories? Where responses are potentially maladaptive, what transformations are needed to set livelihoods on more sustainable trajectories given the uncertainties associated with climate change? Where have there been success stories and what are the lessons from these?

We received a range of articles from research undertaken in nine different African countries that cover several, not necessarily mutually exclusive, thematic areas relevant to the special issue. Five articles center on smallholder farming and livelihoods under new climate risk, two address the long-term dynamics of livelihoods and landscape change and future trajectories; and four consider aspects of natural resource management and governance under a changing climate, spanning forests, woodlands and rangelands (Table 1). Across these categories the articles cover a wide range of methods: Some are based on purely qualitative data, while others are highly quantitative and apply different types of models, and a few use mixed methods.

Table 1. Categories of articles, focus, and key emerging messages.

Article	Thematic Area	Main Focus	Key Messages Related to Landscape and Livelihoods Dynamics
Scheba [12]	Governance	REDD+, local politics, power dynamics and livelihood outcomes in Tanzania	A mismatch between formal governance institutions and local practices, and the instability of carbon sales and livelihood options pose significant challenges to market-based conservation. REDD+ without major reconceptualization and greater funding and inclusion is unlikely to facilitate sustainable and resilient livelihoods and landscapes into the future.
Pas [11]		Landscape changes, pastoral mobility and rangeland management policies and institutions in Samburu, Kenya	A range of factors including climate change, land degradation, and constraints on mobility across landscapes has impacted on livelihood outcomes of pastoralists, with pastoral mobility involving longer periods and distances due to fewer resources and new rules of access. New institutions to support mobility that build on local knowledge and practices are needed.
Kariuki, Willcock and Marchant [14]		Impact of interacting biophysical and socio-economic factors in driving land use and livelihood strategies in rangelands in Southern Kenya	Simulation models can be useful in exploring changes, challenges and practical solutions in rangeland landscapes. For example, policy goals to promote intensive livestock production through privatization were found to discourage pastoral mobility and encourage agriculture, settlement expansion and sedentarization, while conservation subsidies promoted income, livestock, wildlife and rangeland connectivity.
Findaly and Twine [15]		Trends in natural resource governance in South Africa, focusing on fuelwood	Weak natural resource management is driven by complex socio-political factors including political expediency. Societies need to adapt and innovate new forms of governance, which build on what is appropriate locally to ensure previously effective (traditional) systems and institutions do not become ineffective under new conditions, and lead to ecosystem service degradation and livelihood insecurity.
Akrofi-Atitianti, Ifejika Speranza, Bockel and Asare [16]		Small-holder farming/farm dwellers	Exploration of the adoption and benefits of climate smart agriculture (CSA) as a solution to unsustainable cocoa farming in Ghana
Mango, Makate, Tamene, Mponela and Ndengu [17]	Adoption, benefits and determinants of farmer-driven small-scale irrigation in southern Africa		Where there are sufficient water resources, access to small-scale irrigation can significantly reduce farmer vulnerability to climate change and other stressors and enhance income. But there are constraints to the adoption of this option for many farmers. These include weak institutions, access to surface water, equipment and markets. Greater local uptake needs to be supported by policy change and appropriate support.
Mwavu, Kalema, Bateganya, Byakagaba, Waiswa, Enuru and Mbogga [18]	Impacts of the expansion of sugar cane as a commercial crop on household food security and local landscapes, Uganda		The assumption that commercial crop production amongst smallholder farmers contributes to improved income and food security is challenged, with study results indicating this farming strategy tends to increase food insecurity and the future vulnerability of farmers under climate change (contrasting with the findings of Östberg et al. [19]). Sugar cane has replaced areas previously used for food crop cultivation, especially nutritious foods and contributed to forest loss and ecosystem service degradation.

Table 1. Cont.

Article	Thematic Area	Main Focus	Key Messages Related to Landscape and Livelihoods Dynamics
Spear and Chappel [20]		Vulnerability and barriers to farm based adaptation in semi-arid Namibia	Multiple barriers within an increasingly harsh environment as well as high dependency on grants and drought relief support were observed to thwart adaptation and livelihood improvement amongst smallholder farmers. Solutions such as more information on options, demonstration sites and development of self-help groups are suggested as solutions.
Hornby, Nel, Chademana and Khanyile [21]		Increasing precarity of farm dwellers in South Africa	Double exposure to climate change and the social dynamics underlying structural agrarian change is increasing the vulnerability of neglected farm dwellers. Future policy pathways need to be orientated towards social justice as well as climate change adaptation to ensure this group does not become more vulnerable.
Östberg, Howland, Mduma and Brockington [19]	Long-term change in livelihoods and landscapes	Repeat longitudinal study of livelihood change in Central Tanzania	Livelihoods have improved since the 1990s and households had become more prosperous. The local economy had diversified. Multiple factors contributed to this, but it came at a price. Increased clearing of land for sunflowers as a cash crop has negatively impacted biodiversity, forest cover and soil retention and fertility. At the same time there are no institutions for land management and rehabilitation, which could impact long-term sustainability.
Masunungure and Shackleton [22]		Analysis of long-term change in livelihoods and landscapes applying human-environmental timelines in Zimbabwe and South Africa	Both negative and positive drivers of change were identified, but the negative changes appeared to outweigh the positive changes in Zimbabwe contributing to asset erosion and vulnerability and increased pressures on natural resources. In South Africa better service provision, as well as access to social grants mitigated the impacts of negative changes (including declining agriculture) on livelihoods.

2. Highlights and Emerging Commonalities and Issues

Despite the varying focus of the articles published in this special issue, several common themes and messages emerge that relate to enhancing landscape and livelihood sustainability and resilience. We share these below under three sections that relate to drivers of change, responses and interventions/solutions, and future research.

2.1. *Complex Drivers of Change and Implications*

For all of the articles, the landscape and livelihood changes identified were the result of a combination of biophysical, socio-economic, and political drivers across both temporal and spatial scales, and which together created complex impacts and inspired different responses at the local level. While climate change was acknowledged as an important driver, several articles highlighted how it needs to be considered alongside other stressors on landscapes and livelihoods, especially since new climate risks can exacerbate these. Very few drivers or changes were viewed as having a positive impact on livelihoods other than in the articles that consider long-term changes by Masunugure and Shackleton [22] and Östberg et al. [19]. In these two studies, improved road and communication infrastructure, enhanced water supply and other services, and new opportunities for entrepreneurship (e.g., through electrification and piped water access) were shown to have improved rural livelihoods. But in all cases, concerns were expressed by local people regarding the increasing impacts of their changing livelihood activities on ecosystems (e.g., rivers, woodlands, and forests) and the numerous services they provide. It was also highlighted that new and incipient risks and threats have the potential to outpace and supersede any positive changes that may have strengthened livelihoods in the past. Understanding the dynamic linkages and feedbacks between multiple drivers of change and how these impact both livelihoods and landscapes is essential to identifying avenues towards local sustainability.

Concerns for future generations (access to land, food security, social concerns) were expressed by participants in many of the studies presented in this special issue. The speed of the changes taking place and the negative impacts of many drivers, with no immediate solutions being evident, as well as limited existing opportunities, resulted in pessimism regarding how the younger generation is going to cope in the future. However, a few of the studies also showed how younger farmers were more likely to adopt new farming approaches and how youth, that have been working in towns and cities, may bring home new ideas with the potential for innovation (e.g., Akrofi-Atitianti et al. [16], Mango et al. [17], Östberg et al. [19]). The next generation, who are likely to face some of the greatest impacts of climate change, are rarely included in the type of research covered in this issue's articles. More work focusing on this societal group, particularly in the rural context, is required.

2.2. *Unpacking Responses and Uptake of 'Solutions'*

Local knowledge, practices, cultures, and realities often do not receive adequate attention before the implementation of external 'solutions' for improved landscape and farm management. At the same time local ways of life and institutions are under increasing pressure from the multiple changes taking place. There is a need to harmonize local responses with external support to build on what is appropriate and works locally. This was emphasized in several articles including Pas [13], Spear and Chappel [20], and Scheba [12].

Related to the above point, technical or policy solutions on their own are inadequate. For landscape management, agricultural, and governance interventions to be effective at a local level, equal attention needs to be given to the social and relational dimensions, including local politics, of these as is given to the technical or policy aspects. This requires working closely with affected people and communities and allowing space for local definitions of concepts such as poverty or wealth and local expressions of changes and their impacts. Good examples of this include the importance of farmer-to-farmer support and learning in the practice of Climate Smart/ Agroecology farming amongst Ghana cocoa producers

(Akrofi-Atitianti et al. [16]) and the need to understand traditional forms of land access in Samburu, Kenya, which are based on values of reciprocity and trust (Pas [13]). Further, Östberg et al. [19] highlight the role of local entrepreneurs and community initiatives in creating the opportunity for ‘change from within’ as important factors in stimulating the local economy and improving opportunities for livelihood security in their study in Tanzania. Conversely, Spear and Chappel [20] argue that a lack of such enterprise and resourcefulness is hindering livelihood security and adaptation in communities in Northern Namibia. Östberg and colleagues [19] contend that there is a need for further research to distinguish between the role of exogenous factors (e.g., policy, infrastructure) and endogenous factors (e.g., attitudes to wealth and work) in contributing to transforming livelihoods. They also assert that such nuanced social relations are best identified through in-depth, qualitative place-based studies.

As a result of the multi-dimensional nature of landscape and livelihood challenges, most of the articles mentioned the need for multiple stakeholder and cross-sectoral engagement and the participation of local farmers and resource users in any proposed solutions. For example, in the article by Kariuki et al. [14] there is mention of the need for more effective collaboration between the Wildlife Conservation Authorities and those responsible for agriculture and rangeland management, as well as for the inputs of local actors, while the article by Akrofi-Atitianti et al. [16] argue for “extensive coordination and collaboration between key stakeholders, many of which have traditionally not collaborated, like the Cocoa Board and the Forestry Commission”. Linked to this, and related to the point above, is the need for more holistic and multi-pronged approaches and cross-scale transformations from a policy level through to local institutions and community relations.

Interventions, such as climate smart agriculture (Akrofi-Atitianti et al. [16]), small-holder irrigation (Mango et al. [17]), and wildlife management alongside livestock production (Kariuki et al. [14]) were seen to improve the incomes of farmers and pastoralists, but the ability to take-up such new practices and livelihood strategies was conditional on a range of factors that prohibited some households from participating. The result is that the majority of farmers continue to employ conventional farming methods. For example, amongst cocoa farmers in Ghana, those with secure land tenure, who are settlers and who have good access to extension services are more likely to engage in CSA (Akrofi-Atitianti et al. [16]). Similarly, one of the factors influencing small-holder-driven irrigation adoption is access to off-farm income amongst household members (Mango et al. [17]). Issues of equity therefore require careful consideration if such initiatives are to be scaled-up and benefit the most vulnerable households. Moreover, despite good intentions, some interventions such as REDD+ in Tanzania (Scheba [12]) and the expansion of sugar cane cultivation amongst smallholders in Uganda (Mwavu et al. [18]) can have negative impacts and even undermine local livelihoods and well-being. Such aspects need more careful exploration and the on-going monitoring of livelihood and landscape outcomes is critical.

2.3. Future Research: Needs and Opportunities

The importance of longitudinal data for assessing the social and economic impacts of new risks and stresses, local responses and external interventions was highlighted in several of the articles. Only in this way can the dynamics of landscape and livelihood change be properly tracked. More studies of the nature of that by Östberg et al. [19], that undertake in depth and longitudinal research in a place over many years, are needed. This is also emphasized by Hoffman et al. [23] in a special issue on change in the arid Karoo region of South Africa. These authors argue that “long-term studies of shifting social dynamics in the Karoo in recent decades are missing. This reflects the relative paucity of such studies for significant issues, such as migration patterns, changing social identities, intra-community relationships, and social challenges such as poor educational outcomes and substance abuse” (Hoffman et al. 2018, p. 389 [23]).

The importance of understanding policy, governance processes, and institutions (and changes in these over time from the colonial period to present) was mentioned in all the articles as critical to finding approaches and governance systems to support improved landscape management and livelihoods into the future. Insufficient institutional capacity, linked to other obstacles such as finance, was seen as a

major barrier to effective implementation of solutions, such as climate smart agriculture and improved natural resource management in several of the articles (e.g., see Mango et al. [17], Findlay and Twine [15], Kairiuki et al. [14]). Greater understanding of these barriers and the links amongst them is required.

Trade-offs between ecosystem services, different land uses and between socio-economic/livelihood and environmental benefits are often a feature of landscape and land use decision-making. It is argued that more research is required to find ways to minimize such trade-offs. Some of these trade-offs have emerged in more recent years as the demand for land for farming or alternative sources of natural resource income have increased. This is highlighted in Östberg et al. [19], Mwavu et al. [18], and Masunungure and Shackleton [22] amongst others.

Several of the articles highlight the role of different forms of government social protection (from unconditional grants to food for work, agricultural subsidies, and drought relief) in: a) improving livelihood sustainability; b) reducing pressures on ecosystem services (see Masunungure and Shackleton [22], Östberg et al. [19], Mwavu et al. [18] and Mango et al. [17]); but also in c) potentially undermining local agency (Spear and Chappel [20]). At the same time, there is mention of the benefits of, or the need for, local safety nets through collective efforts and systems of mutual support. This is an area where there appears to be a gap. There is very little research considering how different forms of social protection impact local livelihood and landscape dynamics and how they could be part of the solution moving forward.

Aspects of intersectionality, social equality and justice require more attention in studies similar to the ones in this special issue. This added level of complexity is only superficially dealt with in most of the articles in this issue, and mainly in those that explore the factors influencing the uptake of different land management options, where, for example, age was found to play a role alongside other factors (e.g., Mango et al. [17] and Akrofi-Atitianti et al. [16]). There is a need to unpack the differential impacts of changes on different social grouping (particularly with regards to gender and age) and critically interrogate who wins or who loses under different forms of intervention. We need to think about what is needed to ensure both social justice and environmental integrity.

Integrated research to understand the dynamics of landscape and livelihood change for greater sustainability and resilience, and which aims to have impact and effect transformation at a local level, requires more conscious engagement with transdisciplinary approaches. More effort is needed to ensure co-production of knowledge with local actors, e.g., landscape users, farmers, implementers of landscape management approaches and policy and decision makers. Ideally, for maximum impact, there needs to be opportunity for learning and the integration of different knowledge systems, throughout the research. Generally, there is a tendency to pay lip-service to the idea that we need to learn from farmers/local people. To avoid this requires process orientated projects that embed all actors in the research from start to finish, with ample time built-in for sharing, reflections, and communication. Furthermore, gaining insight into what works, or worked in the past, and why for local livelihoods and landscape management (see Pas [13]), without using the 'lenses of labels' such as CBNRM, CSA, or climate change adaptation, among others, could better capture the circumstances under which actors in rural areas make their choices around different livelihood options and landscape management practices.

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