PEKKA VIRTANEN

Nation Building, Difference and Otherness

The Politics of Natural Resource Management in Post-colonial Mozambique

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
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Preface

The present study is based on fieldwork carried out in two multi-disciplinary research projects financed by the Academy of Finland, namely Popular participation in the management of natural resources: the role of endogenous institutions in Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Mozambique (1998-2000), and Conditioning global and local climate, biodiversity and development policies: changing institutional and environmental contexts of tropical forests (2000-2002). I express my gratitude to my colleagues in the projects, as well as all the others who have contributed to the study. In particular, I would like to thank my colleagues in the following institutions: University of Tampere, Department of Political Science and International Relations, in Finland; Ministry for the Co-ordination of Environmental Affairs (MICOA), Manica Provincial Office, Cultural Patrimony Archives of Mozambique (ARPAC), Manica Provincial Office and Eduardo Mondlane University, Department of Forestry, in Mozambique; and University of Zimbabwe, Institute of Environmental Studies, in Zimbabwe.

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The language of the thesis summary has been corrected by Mr. Robert MacGilleon; any mistakes that may have slipped in during the final editing stage are, however, entirely my own fault.

Palokka, August 2005

Pekka Virtanen
# Contents

List of original articles constituting the thesis  
*page* 7

Introduction  
9

Research data and theoretical framework  
16

*Mr. Mwanaka’s nine removals*  
16

*Research data: from political thought to fieldnotes*  
20

*Sign systems and semiotic theory*  
22

Nation building, difference and otherness  
25

Natural resources and political decentralisation  
31

*CBNRM as a hegemonic development discourse*  
31

*CBNRM and rural development in Mozambique*  
35

*CBNRM and traditional institutions*  
37

Community, tradition and political legitimacy  
40

*Local community as a ‘community of place’*  
40

*Local institutions and global values*  
42

*The politics of identity in Mozambique*  
44

Conclusions: development theory in a post-colonial world  
47

References  
51
List of original articles constituting the thesis


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Introduction

The process of decolonisation in Africa and Asia in the aftermath of World War II constituted a major dislocation which, together with the ideological confrontation between the USA and the Soviet Union and their allies (the Cold War), characterised international relations up to the 1980s. Development co-operation, which emerged as a sequel to decolonisation in the 1950s, was launched by the leading industrialised countries essentially as a means of achieving and/or maintaining economic and political hegemony in the newly independent states of Africa and Asia in the new international context. Both sides in the Cold War had their own models of development, which the new states were expected to emulate in their economic and political programs (Albright 1990: 27-42; Bigler 1989: 94-103; Gendzier 1985: 22-43).

With pressure from the metropolitan colonial powers and the USA, the Western model of democracy was adopted by a large majority of the now independent states during the first phase of decolonisation, which took place relatively peacefully in the 1950s and early 1960s. In this context the individualistic basis of the liberal-democratic model, which in Europe was grounded in relatively high socio-cultural homogeneity, was transferred to the new states as an integral part of the notion of a modern nation. Its implementation in the drastically different socio-political situation of Africa and Asia implied, however, a reverse sequential logic. In order to justify the formal nationhood already granted, the political élites that took control of the state had to build a semblance of a unified political community out of the heterogeneous socio-cultural and denominational communities living within the artificial geographical boundaries inherited from the colonial era. A crucial choice had therefore to be made between unitary and federal forms of state.¹ In the ensuing debate the protagonists of

¹ According to a contemporary definition, “A state is unitary if its central organs have acknowledged authority over all governmental matters. In a unitary state all local or regional governmental authorities are clearly subordinate in all matters whatever to the central authorities, though in practice local governments may be allowed various degrees of autonomy. In a federation power over certain subjects is constitutionally assigned or reserved to separate governments of certain internal regions, the constituent states. The governments of the constituent states are considered to be independent governments except with regard to the subject matter constitutionally assigned or reserved to the central government” (Field 1951: 23-24).
the developmental unitary state argued that in the new countries only a strong and centralised state could overcome the widespread ethnic and cultural differences between population groups, which was necessary to implement the substantial economic and political reforms involved in building a modern nation-state. Others resisted the subsumption of various linguistic, cultural and ethnic communities within a centralised unitary state under the pretext of modernisation, and supported a federal or consociational\(^2\) structure reflecting the new states’ multi-cultural composition (Smith 1985: 214-221; van Hensbroek 1999: 107-108).

By the early 1960s the issue of socio-cultural heterogeneity was increasingly subdued by a debate on the merits of capitalist vs. socialist development strategies, which was fuelled by intense rivalry between the antagonists in the Cold War. The western model of democracy was challenged by proponents of radical socialism, who argued that democracy was impossible under the conditions of poverty and exploitation characteristic of the world capitalist system. A developmental state would be unduly restrained by adhering to standard liberal-democratic institutions such as the separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers, political pluralism and civil liberties, and a socialist single-party system of government was, therefore, recommended for developing countries (Haynes 1996: 45-47; van Hensbroek 1999: 107-108).

Despite important differences in terminology, both the socialist and the capitalist model of development in this period were nonetheless based on fairly similar notions of political modernisation. Both sought to deconstruct ‘traditional’ ways of life and create particular new forms of socio-political consciousness, epitomised in the ‘rational individual’ of capitalism and the ‘new man’ of socialism. This, again, was used to legitimise new forms of state power. Notwithstanding some inherent tensions, in both models the counterpart to the ‘modern’ individual was a centralised unitary state, which was expected to serve as the main tool in bringing about rapid progress (Entin 1988: 48-52; Hall and Young 1997: 221-223). The state was expected to: a) command a monopoly of the legitimate use of force within its domain; b) rule over a

\(^2\) Federalism involves sharing power territorially, while consociations are based on the principle of proportionality: the ethnic or cultural composition of society is proportionally mirrored in the
discrete geographical area; c) be administratively and politically centralised; d) retain a monopoly of sovereignty; e) make state law the only normative system of social ordering in the entire territory; and f) regulate and oversee economic development, both within its boundaries and in relation to the international economy (Haynes 1996: 27).

During the 1980s there was a major change in the western concept of ‘developmental state’, especially its economic aspect, as major western donors such as the World Bank group abandoned remaining traces of Keynesian welfarism and began to insist on more orthodox neo-liberal economic policy. The new doctrine - implemented in developing countries in the framework of ‘structural adjustment’ policies - involved a combination of reducing the economic role of the state and reforming the structure of the economy, with a stress on liberalising markets, increasing competition and opening up to the world economy (Haynes 1996: 84-86; Peet 2002: 64-65).

Attempts to implant economic liberalism in the 1980s were made, however, without embedding policies in domestic socio-economic conditions, which in Africa were characterised by a weak administrative capacity of the state and the absence of ‘modern’ civil society institutions. No adequate regulatory capacity was thus in place to supervise the newly liberalised markets and private sector activity (Aron 2003: 471-472). The subsequent revision of the neo-liberal discourse coincided with the end of the Cold War in 1989 and the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the subsequent disappearance of Marxist socialism as a credible alternative to the liberal-democratic model. These parallel changes marked a second major dislocation in international relations, which was reflected prominently in development cooperation. Transition to a practically unipolar international system has effectively deprived African countries of the leverage in securing aid which they had disposed of in the Cold War era. At the same time external pressure from donors in terms of aid conditionality, expressed in required economic and governance reforms, became overt. Given that the main avenue for exerting state presence and legitimacy domestically has been through ‘delivering development’, increasingly restricted access to external development resources has

institutions of the state (UNDP 2004: 50-51).
effectively constrained the expansion and consolidation of state power (Ndegwa 2001: 7-8).

In recent years both bilateral donors and international organisations have expressed renewed interest in strengthening institutions to guide privatisation, encourage civil society and promote good governance. New ideas, again, have been sought in pluralist theories which recognise the cultural heterogeneity of African societies. Already in the late 1980s administrative devolution based on customary institutions had been promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) under the ‘endogenous development’ concept, initially within the state-centred model and critical of the globalisation process (Ould Daddah 1988). By the early 1990s the World Bank group had also adopted a program favouring decentralisation based on endogenous management practices and institutions, but with an emphasis on market economy and a reduced role of the state, and thus compatible with the neo-liberal agenda (Davis and Ebbe 1993: 18-26). Subsequently local knowledge systems and customary institutions came to comprise part and parcel of various conventions and institutions established within the United Nations (UN) system, especially in the field of environmental management (Laird 1999: 354-356). Most recently the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report of 2004 has focused on different institutional frameworks to ensure the political participation of diverse cultural groups, for example federal and consociational types of power-sharing and policies on customary law and legal pluralism (UNDP 2004: 47-72).

Two reasons can be identified for the new interest in federal, consociational and other forms of government which reflect the socio-cultural heterogeneity of the populations and specific traditions of the new nations. First of all, in recent discourse a distinction is generally made between different types of pluralism instead of lumping them together as undemocratic and outmoded on the basis of a specific historical manifestation. Thus hierarchical pluralism, which characterised such undemocratic colonial institutions as British indirect rule and South Africa’s apartheid regime, is now distinguished from segmentary pluralism. In the first-mentioned a culturally and/or racially distinct section of the population dominates the rest of the population, while in
the latter different sections of the population enjoy equal political and legal rights, which they hold through their membership in a constituent element (usually but not always territorial) which has internal autonomy (Ghai 2003: 593-606; Smith 1985: 208-209). Secondly, it is increasingly recognised that even though the ‘modern’ (western) normative paradigm presupposes that each state has only one legal system and authority, administrative and legal pluralism is a reality at the local level in most African countries. As noted by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2003: 48-54), the fact that only one legal system is officially recognised indeed affects the way the other systems operate, but it does not prevent them from operating. Recognition of existing plurality does not, on the other hand, need to reflect any specific political orientation.

Mozambique provides a particularly clear case of a strongly modernisation-oriented African country, where all pluralist alternatives were rejected with resolution immediately after gaining independence from Portugal in 1975. Unlike the Afro-socialist experiments of the 1960s, which sought to combine the received western model with socialist and traditional African components, the new rulers of Mozambique chose to create national unity on the basis of one of the then dominant global political philosophies, Marxist socialism. The leadership of the only legal party, Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO), specifically ruled out the possibility of basing national unity on African ethnic groups and communities, their institutions and traditions and their specific values (Machel 1975: 16-23; Vieira 1979: 12-13). In the process of building a unitary state under a single-party system the ruling party came to dominate politics and the economy and controlled the mechanisms of indirect participation by the population in all spheres of life. Despite the modern notion of equality before the law regardless of ethnic, religious or social status, the political culture that emerged under single-party rule actually gave primacy to political affiliation. After the move to multi-party democracy in 1994, however, the need to recognise the socio-cultural heterogeneity which characterises Mozambique3 and to base the creation of national identity on existing local communities has once more come to the

3 Both ethnic and religious fragmentation are relatively high in Mozambique. Described by index, the figure for ethnic fragmentation is 0.75 (over 0.55 signifies a high level), while the figure for religious fragmentation is 0.62 (over 0.45 signifies a high level). The index measures the

The crux of the debate is that reducing the notion of democracy to ‘free, openly contested periodic elections’ does not provide an adequate basis for understanding the problems encountered in the recent democratisation process, which followed the liberal-democratic mode. The challenge is not in meeting the electoral criteria (which Mozambique has achieved reasonably well in the three national elections since 1994\(^4\)), but in creating a new political culture where difference is not converted into otherness, into something that must be excluded from the political community as took place under Portuguese colonialism but also during the single-party era (Mazula 2000; Ngoenha 1992; cf. Norval 1996). Therefore, while ‘post-colonialism’ in the title of the thesis can be understood as a chronological marker demarcating the transition from colonialism to independence, we should also keep in mind a more pungent interpretation which it has acquired in recent theoretical discourse. In the latter context the term poses the question of the extent to which the modernisation policies pursued by African and Asian post-colonial governments and the development co-operation programs mounted by industrialised countries in fact represent new forms of political and cultural domination akin to imperial colonialism? In the context of an international system based on state sovereignty, claims to statehood continue to justify devaluation of endogenous ways of life and their displacement by the ethos of western modernity. Post-colonial governments, through their commitment to unilinear modernity, can thus be seen to be complicit in silencing the ‘other’ within their national borders (Darian-Smith 1996: 292-294).

In the eight original articles which constitute the basis of this thesis I look at the process of nation building in Mozambique during both single-party rule and multi-party democracy, and in three different contexts ranging from modern national legislation and probability that two randomly selected individuals belong to the same ethnic or religious group (Lane and Ersson 1994: 133-135).

\(^4\) It should be noted, however, that the record of electoral fairness has gradually deteriorated since 1994, and in the latest national elections of December 2004 international observers complained of numerous irregularities and lack of transparency in the computerised tabulation of results (Africa Research Bulletin 2004: 16015-16016; cf. Braathen 2003).
global development paradigms to traditional community organisation. The overall research question is how the political leadership of independent Mozambique has succeeded in its mission to build a ‘modern’ nation-state based on sovereignty of the people, and how it has dealt with alternative forms of power, notably customary authorities? The articles are grouped into three sets which proceed from African political thought through national legislation to more pragmatic development discourse, which is finally set in the context of local communities and their life-worlds. The direction is, therefore, from global to local, which is also reflected in the data used. While the articles provide a broad multidisciplinary approach to the research question, they are united by a common semiotic orientation developed in relation to recent trends in international relations and political science, for example post-colonialism and hegemonic discourse theory.

In the first two articles, ‘Defining the “other”: democracy in Mozambique within’ and ‘The politics of law in Mozambique: customary authority and changing premises of legal reform’, the focus is on placing FRELIMO’s radical project in the context of African nationalism and other attempts at socialist modernisation. In this context delimitation of the political community and definition of its metalanguage through legislation had a crucial role in the creation of a new political culture.

Access to and control of natural resources was selected as the main focus for discussion, as it provides the mainstay for rural livelihoods in Mozambique. During the last two decades natural resources and their sustainable use have become a source of intensive international concern and major bi- and multilateral development interventions. In the form of new conservation paradigms such as community-based natural resources management (CBNRM), the underlying global environmental values have also had a major impact on current national development strategies, including a controversial process of decentralisation in Mozambique. In the articles ‘Local management of global values: community-based wildlife management in Zimbabwe and Zambia’, ‘Community-based natural resource management in Mozambique: a critical review of the concept’s applicability at local level’ and ‘Land of the ancestors: semiotics, history and space in Chimanimani, Mozambique’ I study the adoption of
CBNRM in Mozambique, and especially the role of customary authorities in rural development projects.

In the last three articles, ‘Evolving institutional framework for community-based natural resource management in Mozambique: a case study from the Choa Highlands’, ‘The role of customary institutions in the conservation of biodiversity: sacred forests in Mozambique’ and ‘Tradition, custom and otherness: the politics of identity in Mozambique’, I focus on one rural area in central Mozambique, through which I study the role of tradition, identity and community in the light of modern development discourse. By examining my findings from the fieldwork area against recent studies on local communities and customary institutions I seek to insert a local viewpoint in global and national debates on neo-traditionalism and political decentralisation.

Research data and theoretical framework

_Mr. Mwanaka’s nine removals_

Mr. Mwanaka, one of the persons I interviewed during my fieldwork in Manica Province in central Mozambique in 1998-2001, recounted the story of his life through a series of migrations. He explained that he was born in the 1920s in the Sellborne area in former South Rhodesia. From there he moved with his parents first to Juliasdale in the present Manica District of Zimbabwe, and then again to Nyanga in the same district. In 1952 he decided to move with the family he had by then established to Adhabi in the Caeredzi valley on the Mozambican side, where he lived for ten years. From there he moved to Nyamaropa, just across the Caeredzi river on Rhodesian side, and lived some years there. He then returned to the Mozambican side, now to the highland area called Chôa above the Caeredzi valley. In the early 1970s he once more crossed the border to Nyamaropa in Rhodesia, but returned after a couple of years to the same highland area in Mozambique, which had meanwhile become independent. This stay likewise turned out to be short, and in the early 1980s
he moved back to Nyamaropa, now in independent Zimbabwe. Finally in 1992 he returned to Adhabi in Mozambique, where he now lives (Interview, Nyafaru 13 December 1999).

While the history of an old man’s migration may seem trivial and uninteresting for a study of international relations, when read against the changing economic and political contexts of the two colonies in the process of becoming independent countries, the choices involved in the frequent decisions to move acquire political meaning. Like many of his African contemporaries, Mr. Mwanaka was reacting to colonial economic policies and political violence, and later to the policies of independent African governments through - formally illegal - migration across international borders. Instead of opting for ‘voice’, which would mean seeking to define the form of political order, generating support for the existing order or promoting changes in it, many rural Africans have chosen to avoid the risks of involvement by withdrawing or disengaging from overt public action (Lubkemann 2001: 91; cf. Hall and Young 1997: 85; Manji 1999: 443-451). Such individual cases of physical dislocation can thus provide us with important insights into local perspectives on both national and international politics of development and citizenship, for they reflect socio-political dislocations at the national level and even globally.

In the first three decades of the 20th century social differentiation in rural Southern Rhodesia was mediated by customary institutions which reflected local normative systems such as communal tenure. One feature of this latter was that it permitted each family to plough as much land as they could, and by the early 1930s a class of rich African peasants had emerged. This represented a political dilemma for the colonial state, and in the context of a boom in post-war European immigration to Rhodesia, combined with a growing demand for tobacco on the international markets, the colonial state attempted to replace the system of communal by individual tenure. This policy was enacted into the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951, which basically sought to integrate Africans into the colonial economy in a dependent position, either as small peasants or manual workers. In practice it lead to the expulsion of more than 110,000 Africans from areas reserved for European settlers (Tshuma 1997: 23-28). This was the political and economic context which prompted Mr. Mwanaka’s first
migration to Mozambique, where land was still available and access was controlled by customary authorities.

Mr. Mwanaka’s move back to Southern Rhodesia in the early 1960s coincided with another change in Rhodesian development policy. The Community Development Policy, adopted in 1962, centred around the problems of forced settlement and inequitable distribution of land which had resulted from attempts to implement the 1951 Act. The new policy sought to create a mechanism for transferring control in local development from central government to local communities, and recommended restoration of the customary authorities’ power to allocate land and relaxation of the strict system of land-use control by the central state. The new policy had been developed within the United Nations system, and it was promoted in Rhodesia by the influential U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) (Mutizwa-Mangidza 1985: 13-27). Such concessions to the African majority led, however, to seizure of power by the white minority in 1965 (Tshuma 1997: 18). As the Portuguese colonial government in Mozambique, weary of the threat of armed resistance which had already started in Angola, was pursuing a ‘hearts and minds campaign’ to appease the African population, Mozambique provided a more interesting economic environment than minority-rule Rhodesia. The changes achieved there included formal equality between European and African citizens, prohibition of forced labour and forced cotton-growing, and increasing social expenditure on education and health for the African population (Newitt 1995: 527-528).

The main expressed objective of Mr. Mwanaka’s migration decisions was economic advancement, which he sought to achieve through independent entrepreneurship (Interview, Nyafaru 13 December 1999). Along with access to arable land, an important critical factor in his strategy was the security situation and related interventions by the state. FRELIMO, the main nationalist movement in Mozambique, had embarked upon an armed struggle in 1966, and by July 1972 guerrilla activity had spread to central Mozambique. In 1972-1974 ‘protected villages’ were constructed by the colonial government along the main roads, and a number of African communities were forcefully moved to these villages or to areas around main urban centres such as Vila Guveia (now Catandica), where there was a major
Portuguese military base (Alexander 1994: 40). This development prompted Mr. Mwanaka’s decision to move back to Nyamaropa in Rhodesia, whence he returned to the Chôa highlands after Mozambique gained independence in 1975. The latter translocation took place at a time when the guerrilla activities of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) gained strength on the Rhodesian side and violent repression by the Rhodesian security forces intensified, leading to a widespread move across the border to independent Mozambique (Moore 1998: 383).

During his second stay in the Chôa highlands Mr. Mwanaka managed to buy a tractor from the estate of a Mozambican farmer, who had bought it just before the war of independence reached the area. Soon thereafter the farmer had died, and the tractor was left in Catandica while the family fled to Rhodesia. When FRELIMO came to power in Mozambique the new government/party representatives wanted to confiscate the tractor for use on the state farms which were being established at the time as part of the socialist production strategy. However, Mr. Mwanaka went to Rhodesia to fetch the widow of the farmer, and with her he managed to convince the party representative in Catandica that he should be allowed to buy the tractor despite government policy to the contrary. Eventually it followed with him all the way to his present farm in Adhabi, whence he finally sold it for spare parts (Interview, Nyafaru 13 December 1999).

Even after national independence, security continued to be a problem on both sides of the border. Armed resistance to the FRELIMO government had already commenced in central Mozambique in the late 1970s, initially with support from the Rhodesian minority regime. Return to violence implied a considerable reduction in the new state’s ability to provide and maintain social services and marketing networks for rural populations in the areas ravaged by the intensifying civil war. In Chôa the administrative headquarters were evacuated to Nhachigo and a large part of the population moved as refugees to urban centres or to neighbouring countries (Alexander 1997: 4-7). For Mr. Mwanaka the civil war meant a major setback, for he lost the large herd of cattle he had managed to accumulate, and was eventually forced to flee once more to Nyamaropa, now in independent Zimbabwe. However, as soon as the civil war in Mozambique ended in 1992 he returned to Adhabi, where access to
cultivable land continues to be much easier while economic policy has become more market-oriented.

Research data: from political thought to fieldnotes

A key methodological objective in my thesis, which is reflected in the case of Mr. Mwanaka, was to bring the study of international relations down to local level without, however, sacrificing the linkage to national and global levels. In the eight original articles which constitute the basis of the thesis I seek to create a broad view of nation building in Mozambique, the official political culture and its reception by the rural population, focusing on decentralised control of natural resources and the role of customary authorities. The papers have been grouped into three thematic units which reflect the three different levels of analysis as well as different types of data used in the analysis. This thematic organisation is used in the following chapters. The first two articles discuss Mozambican political discourse in the context of African nationalism and attempts to implement it through legal reforms at the national level. Here the primary data consist of published writings by key African political thinkers and Mozambican legal documents, supported by public texts reflecting the political debate. In the second group of three articles the focus is on international development discourse, notably the community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) initiative propagated by international development organisations, and attempts to implement it through projects in Mozambique and the southern Africa region. My discussion sets out from an analysis of CBNRM programs in Zimbabwe and Zambia, which served as regional models for the CBNRM initiative. In the other two articles the focus moves to its implementation in Mozambique. In this group the material consists of project documents and related studies, but increasingly also of my own fieldwork material based on participant observation and open-ended interviews. The third group (three articles) is based primarily on my fieldnotes collected during 1998-2001 in Barrie District in central Mozambique, which was the main fieldwork area. The focus is on the potential role of traditional institutions in the management of local
resources, and more broadly in political decentralisation. This discussion concludes with an analysis of the role of tradition, history and boundaries in identity politics.

As noted above, part of the research data used in the articles is somewhat unusual for a thesis on international relations. This remark concerns especially the fieldwork data, which rely heavily on participant observation, an approach borrowed from anthropology. The novelty of the anthropological approach lies in the importance attached to everyday life and in the belief that the most important aspects of culture are embedded in the basic premises of action and the meaning attached to them (Bloch 1990: 194-195). This kind of anthropologically informed analysis has become established in such neighbouring disciplines as African history (see e.g. Feierman 1993) and human geography, where it was recently expressed in the methodological statement that forms of peasant politics are deeply rooted in the material conditions of peasant existence. In general terms this implies that the researcher must pay substantial attention to everyday practices of social reproduction and place making which influence rural livelihoods, which can lend insight into the cultural and material bases of indigenous politics (Bebbington 2000: 498, 514-515; Perreault 2003: 63).

My fieldnotes consist of a field diary and separate records of individual interviews, supplemented with maps and photographs. The interviews were carried out in Portuguese or English, or with the help of a local interpreter in ChiManica or ChiNdau, the dialects of ChiShona spoken in the main study areas. In these areas my strategy was to make repeated and prolonged visits to the same places during the three years, interviewing the same individuals on different occasions. By living in these relatively remote areas, which are difficult if not impossible to access by car and provide no public facilities for accommodation, I managed to create a relationship of relative trust at least with a few key informants, which made it possible to deepen my understanding of their life and views. The importance given to participation derives from the premise

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5 On anthropological fieldnotes and published texts as description, interpretation and rhetorical construction, see Clifford (1991) and Marcus and Cushman (1982). We should, however, keep in mind that linguistic phenomena are only one part of culture, most of which is non-linguistic. While non-linguistic knowledge can be rendered into textual form, it inevitably changes its character in the process (Bloch 1990: 186).

6 At the time of my fieldwork I was able to speak basic ChiManica, which made it possible to follow the discussion roughly and guide it when necessary, even though I needed an interpreter for a detailed translation.
that cultural concepts involve implicit networks of meanings which are reproduced
through the experience of, and practice in, the external world (Bloch 1990: 186).
Placing this ‘local’ understanding against the background of national and global
political debates and changing legal framework I was able to grasp some of the varied
meanings of such ostensibly universal concepts as environment, development,
decentralisation and identity politics in a new light.

Sign systems and semiotic theory

In order to characterise the data used in the thesis a distinction between demonstration
and argumentation is useful. Demonstration is a characteristic of formal logic which,
basing itself on true premises (or premises assumed to be true), results in conclusions
which are either true or calculably probable irrespective of the audience and its social
context. All argumentation, on the other hand, is a function of the audience to which it
is addressed and to which the author is obliged to adapt him/herself. It, therefore,
depends for its premises on what in the social context of the audience is acknowledged
as valid (Perelman 1959: 123-125). The texts which provide the main data for this
thesis are argumentative rather than demonstrative.

Effective exercise of argumentation assumes a means of communication, a common
sign system. Semiotics, which provides the theoretical framework for the thesis, can be
understood as a theory of sign systems used in human society. According to Gottlob
Frege’s seminal text ‘Über Sinn und Bedeutung’ (1970 [1892]: 57; Tugendhat 1970:
178), a sign is always connected to a significance, to which it refers, and a sense,
wherein its mode of presentation is contained. In positivistic science, where external
reference is presupposed, a proper name is usually taken as the norm of the
relationship which Frege established between a sign and its extension. This is,
however, a highly controversial assertion, as it provides a commonplace solution to a
problem which Frege had underlined by his unusual choice of words. While those who
take the name-relation as the root analogy for every system of signs have translated
Bedeutung as nominatum (Frege 1965 [1892], translated by Herbert Feigl) or
reference (Frege 1970 [1892], translated by Max Black), a more adequate English
translation would be significance or importance. This has an important implication for textual interpretation, for instead of transferring the characteristics of name-relation to sentences it prompts us to define the significance of names by means of the same type of relationship through which the significance of sentences is defined (Tugendhat 1970). For example in political discourse the significance of texts can be assessed only in relation to specific political cultures, for they consist of essentially programmatic sentences which have only an indirect significance.7

The problematic relationship between the signifier (or sign) and the signified (its extension) was subsequently taken up by Jacques Lacan (1966: 497-505), who noted that if we try to grasp in natural language the constitution of the signified we will realise that it can only be found at the level of the concept8. Any given concept, when used in communication, is, however, linked to various different chains of meanings even though it is not permanently tied to any of them. A stable and linear relationship between the signifier and the signified is, therefore, an illusion at least in the case of communication in natural languages. In any particular occurrence only some of the potential chains of meanings are actualised depending on the author, the audience and the context of discourse.

A parallel distinction is usually made within semiotic tradition between the semiotics of the sign and the semiotics of language as a sign system. The first derives from Peirce and Morris, and the second from de Saussure. In the first approach the researcher’s attention is focused on the sign in isolation, that is, on the semantics, syntactics and pragmatics of the sign and on its structure. In the second case, which is more interesting for the present thesis, the focus is on language as a mechanism which employs a set of elementary signs for the communication of content. This is also the basis for the classic sequence content/code/text, where linguistic structure provides the coding mechanism for transforming messages into texts. However, as the Saussurean tradition is primarily interested in the study of code and its function as a mechanism for

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7 According to Frege demonstrative sentences normally have, besides a sense, a significance in terms of truth and falsity. Where complex sentences are not truth-functions of their component sentences, however, the significance of the latter is its oblique or indirect significance, its sense (Tugendhat 1970: 186).

8 Frege maintained that concepts constitute the significance, not the sense of common names, while possible objects falling under the concept belong to a different level (Mohanty 1982:6).
transferring messages adequately, it tends to neglect other important functions which are inherent in sign systems in their natural state. At the level of meaning-generation sign systems are inseparable from the audience and the content they express. Since the actual use of sign systems involves an addressee and an addressee, textual analysis must take into account the history of the communicative act and examine how a text is read differently by various audiences. On the other hand, individual sign systems are parts of larger entities called semiospheres, which consist of differing but interdependent sign systems (Chernov 1988: 10-14; Lotman 1990: 11-13).

Yuri Lotman (1990: 12-19) distinguishes three important functions a sign system may have, namely transmitting messages, generating new messages, and condensing cultural memory. Conformable to the Saussurean tradition, the basic function of a semiotic mechanism is to transfer messages adequately. In the ideal case the message received by the addressee would be identical to the one dispatched by the addressee. For this to occur they would have to have wholly identical codes, which is in reality possible only to a very relative extent under special circumstances (e.g. formal logic). In most cases, therefore, instead of a precise correspondence there is a conventional equivalence between the messages. In this case the codes used overlap but are not identical. Since the meaning resulting from such a translation process is not only an invariant remnant which is preserved, but also what is altered, there is an accretion of meaning in the process. According to Lotman a text has also the capacity to preserve the memory of the contexts in which it has acquired interpretation and which are in a way incorporated in it, suggesting certain chains of meanings. This meaning-space created by the text around itself enters into relationship with the cultural memory (such as religious tradition or political culture) already formed in the consciousness of the audience, and thus the text acquires semiotic life.

Emphasis on the dynamic aspects of sign systems typical of argumentative communication, for example the generative function of translation and articulation with the cultural memory of the audience as a necessary condition for effective communication, makes Lotmanian semiotics an interesting starting-point for studying

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9 Similarly Frege was concerned not with the mere internal consistency of language but with its relation to the world (Mohanty 1982: 8-10).
the changes in political culture which took place during the process of nation building in post-colonial Mozambique. The fundamental task of a political system lies in structurally organising social relations among the members of a political community. This requires a meaning-forming principle which gives a sense of structuredness to the world of socio-economic and cultural phenomena, thus providing a basis for collective political identity. This principle can be an explicit political doctrine such as Marxism-Leninism or liberal democracy, but the same function can also be served by less obviously political systems of thought such as African traditional religions. The organising principle which becomes dominant is, however, only one of various potential constitutive elements in the system, and thus open to contestation and eventual dislocation. A crucial question from the point of view of democracy is, therefore, how the supporters of alternative organising principles are treated in the political system: whether they represent something to be won over by argumentation or something to be destroyed by violence - either physical or mental. Another crucial issue is resilience, or the political system’s capacity to accommodate change through accretion of meaning - both within the political community and in relation to the outside.

Nation building, difference and otherness

To be sustainable, a political community must appear as a bounded structure which functions under unified constructive principles (cf. Lotman and Uspensky 1978: 227). According to Lotman (1990: 128-142), every culture begins by dividing the world into ‘its own’ internal space and an external space belonging to the ‘other’. The basic mechanism behind this phenomenon is universal: one part of a culture’s core structure creates its own system of norms, which it strives to extend over the whole culture. Nation-building, whereby the central state seeks to transfer loyalties from peripheral areas and parallel institutions to itself and its normative system, is a typical example of this process. In the new centre this system of norms is fully accepted, while on the periphery the relationship between existing semiotic practice and norms imposed from
above often becomes strained. In some cases such tension leads to an accelerated maturing of one sub-culture and the emergence of an alternative system of norms. In the sphere of politics this means a process of socio-political dislocation which, if successful, culminates in the creation and enforcement of a new legal system.

In the case of Mozambique the brief period of unified Portuguese rule over the present national territory was not sufficient to create a homogeneous political community possessing a broad consensus on ‘what is reasonable and unreasonable’ (Perelman 1984: 53), or the principles of orderly political life. As consensus on the essential questions of social and political principles was lacking, the colonial state was unable to impose itself on the subject population in other ways than by force. Support to the armed independence struggle which commenced in 1964 was therefore widespread, and when power was handed over to the main liberation movement FRELIMO in 1975 the disruption of relations with the former metropolitan country was total and abrupt. The new radical leadership sought to break all continuity with preceding stages of society and base its rule on ideological unity following the principles of Marxism-Leninism. Striving for the then dominant model of a unitary state, the new government used its legislative power to curb manifestations of diversity within the political community, which it feared might lose its unity and disintegrate.

In post-colonial Africa this kind of a situation, where newly independent states have been structured according to the political vision of hegemonic élites created - even if involuntarily - by colonialism, has actually been the norm. Other social forces have, however, not necessarily been absorbed in the state hierarchy or dissolved, but continue to persist as recalcitrant elements for the state (Lloyd 1997: 189). This was also the case in Mozambique, where the ideological unity which the new rulers sought to create was challenged by armed opposition movements supported by Mozambique’s conservative neighbours. After a long and bitter civil war the political system was again drastically changed in 1994, now towards the liberal-democratic model which had become globally dominant. In the case of Mozambique both attainment of independence from colonial rule in 1975 and transition to multi-party democracy in 1994 can, therefore, be interpreted as political culmination-points whereby the dominant metalanguage was dislocated.
Based on her study of the apartheid discourse which served as the metalanguage of the white rulers of neighbouring South Africa for forty years, Aletta Norval (1996: 301-302) has identified some key elements in the constitution of collective political identities. According to her view the dislocation of a political metalanguage is not historically determined, but is the result of contestatory processes which make visible the vulnerability of the dominant system. The result of the process depends, therefore, upon the context in which the dislocation takes place, on the depth of the dislocation, on what is dislocated, and the nature of the discourses available for a new metalanguage. According to Norval the range of elements available for re-articulation is proportional to the degree of the dislocation: the greater the dislocation, the wider the field of elements available. But while a large degree of dislocation is necessary for the institution of a new political metalanguage, it is only in the theoretical case of complete breakdown that a total re-articulation of the social becomes possible. Usually the number of elements which have become floating signifiers is limited, and therefore the extent of re-articulation is narrowed down.

While Norval agrees with Lotman’s premise that the drawing of a border between members and outsiders is necessary for any political system to survive, she further argues that what makes the difference between an authoritarian and a democratic political system is the point at which such exclusions become operative and the terms in which they are justified. Even though the structure of identity formation requires that identity be formed through differentiation, it does not follow that all differences must be excluded from the system. On the contrary: what a democratic system must provide is the possibility of consolidation of identity through the constitution of difference, rather than otherness (Norval 1996: 302-303).

Despite obvious differences in the ideological content of the two political projects and in the contexts in which the key dislocations took place, the general characteristics identified by Norval give an interesting point of departure for analysing the nation-building process in Mozambique, which is the subject of my article ‘Defining the ‘other’: democracy in Mozambique within’ (Virtanen 2003a). In Mozambique the main nationalist concern of extending the franchise to the majority of the African population, who had been excluded from political life during the colonial rule, was
implemented at independence under the new institutions of ‘people’s power’. Increasing concentration of power to party leadership - who also held all top positions in the central government - rendered, however, institutions of local participation nominal and led to their eventual stagnation (Hall and Young 1997: 69-81).

From the perspective of party leadership, diverse popular interests were destined to be absorbed in the national project so that what was significant in them were those elements that lent themselves to national and/or ideological ends. Other elements, which were incompatible with the thrust of the national project, were excluded from official political discourse. This logic operated also at the level of individuals. The party leadership that took power at independence represented the result of a prolonged exclusion process which had strengthened the position of radical socialists in the liberation front, and this process was turned nation-wide by a program of ideological unification which followed formal adoption of Marxism-Leninism in 1977.\footnote{According to President Machel (1975: 23), it was imperative that all socio-cultural ‘peculiarities’ be removed to create ideological unity between citizens: “We do not know tribes, regions, races or religious beliefs. We know only Mozambicans who are equally exploited and equally desirous of freedom and revolution”.
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While some of the dissidents managed to get organised as opposition parties, they were forced to operate in exile as only those, who had chosen armed resistance and had accepted support from such conservative neighbours as South Africa, were able to operate inside the country. The regime’s tolerance for difference either inside or outside the party was indeed extremely limited.

While FRELIMO called forth the Mozambican people - or at least workers and peasants - for its political project, its lack of tolerance for socio-cultural difference drove away a large part of the individuals summoned. Similarly to other nation-building projects in Africa, when faced with the aberrant elements that did not fit the official self-description of ‘the people’ the state designated these elements irrational, primitive and criminal (Cf. Lloyd 1997: 189). In the article ‘The politics of law in Mozambique: customary authority and changing premises of legal reform’ (Virtanen 2004) I analyse the change which took place during the early 1980s in the official characterisation of the ‘other’ from merely ‘noncorrect’, and thus recoverable, to ‘incorrect’ and actively hostile. In the process disparate elements of the population such as representatives of
traditional society, those operating inside the flourishing informal economy, and ordinary criminals were included in the growing category of ‘internal enemies’ along with supporters of political opposition and those who had collaborated with Portuguese colonialists (see e.g. Machel 1985 [1980]).

Here we may note some parallels with Norval’s findings concerning the changes in apartheid discourse in South Africa when it was losing its hegemonic position. Like FRELIMO’s ‘new man’, ‘Afrikanerdom’ came into being by a process of differentiation from a series of ‘others’: from Jews, from liberals, from communists, from English-speaking whites and so forth (Norval 1996: 300-301). In both cases the naming and prosecution of such ‘enemies’ was linked to self-regulation and surveillance of the conduct of others. Resistance to these forms of control also increased, and it forced a continual redefinition of the nature of the respective political projects. In South Africa the multiplication of forms of resistance began to disarticulate the official metalanguage of apartheid, which became incapable of integrating the multiplicity of dislocations and was re-literalised during the 1980s (Norval 1996: 301). In my second article (Virtanen 2004) I analyse a similar and contemporary process which took place in Mozambique in terms of a change from a political culture directed mainly towards content to one directed towards expression. In both cases the double movement governing the constitution of collective identities is clear. As long as the metalanguage was interpreted as a system of rules it remained flexible and capable of responding to new social demands. Once it became divorced from the code which provided its normative basis and became fixed in a selection of ‘correct texts’ taken literally, however, its ability to dominate the socio-political discourse withered (Cf. Lotman and Uspensky 1978: 217-223).

The construction of collective identities is based on effective argumentation, which depends for its premises on that which is accepted by the audience as true, normal and valid. Thereby it anchors itself in the social, the characterisation of which varies according to the nature of the audience (Perelman 1959: 125). Even though in the case of Mozambique the stagnating impact of Portuguese colonialism and subsequent destabilisation by neighbouring minority-rule regimes were without doubt major factors in the failure of FRELIMO’s socialist project, it also suffered from a major
communication problem. The party leadership’s failure to translate its ideological project into concrete actions that would have responded to its predominantly rural audience’s felt needs explains in some respects the success of the armed opposition’s politically confused alternative project. In the second article (Virtanen 2004) I draw attention to a certain parallel between the Mozambican experience and similar processes attending the transition to socialism elsewhere, for example when collective forms of production were implemented in Vietnam. In the cases observed the root problem was the failure of the political leadership to come up with premises of argumentation which would be acceptable to the predominantly rural population: there was no shared cultural memory to support the centre’s radical program of social transformation.

In Mozambique, like in other new states, the ‘inverse’ character of the nation-building process that resulted from the rapid decolonisation seems to have strengthened the propensity of the central state to relegate other modes of sociality to the domain of non-sense: in order to proclaim its legitimacy the political leadership felt that it must expurgate, through ideological or repressive state apparatuses, those cultural or social forms whose rationale was other than its own (Cf. Lloyd 1997: 191-192). Under the single-party system, which characterised most of Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, this often took the form of outright repression, but after the widespread democratisation process of the 1990s the mechanisms have become more sophisticated. As discussed in my first article (Virtanen 2003a), in Mozambique the transition to multi-party democracy in 1994 made the opposition’s political projects legitimate for the first time in the country’s history. At the same time the ruling party has, however, refused to accept any linkages between political pluralism and cultural difference - a view that was upheld even in the new liberal-democratic Constitution. Its political opponents, on the other hand, see cultural difference as a constitutive element of African socio-political reality, and defend devolution of power to cultural regions and local communities as an effective means to engage the whole population in the political process.
Natural resources and political decentralisation

*CBNRM as a hegemonic development discourse*

Globally dominant metalanguages such as the neo-liberal discourse in the post-Cold War era have been critically analysed in the framework of hegemonic discourse theory. A hegemonic discourse is characterised by “the imposition of *theoretical legitimacy*, in terms of linking formalised systems of ideas with a recognised interpretation of a dominant, regional experience, set down in a hegemonic textual tradition, and widely accepted as proven and universally applicable; the establishment of a more directly *realistic legitimacy*, in terms of a prevailing sense of technical viability as adjudicated by expert opinion; several kinds of *institutional legitimacy*, in terms of the labelling of ideas as ‘mature and responsible’ in a social accounting process controlled by conventions derived from dominant ‘proven’ practices of wealth accumulation; and *popular processes of the carrying of conviction from experts to people* through cultural practices developed by established media that marshall broad patterns of consent” (Peet 2002: 57, italics added by PV). Read against this characterisation, the emergence of community-based management of natural resources (CBNRM) as the dominant resource management and conservation paradigm in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s seems to have followed a typical hegemonic discourse trajectory (see e.g. Adams and Hulme 2001; Neumann 1997; Singh 2001; Wolmer 2003).

The CBNRM paradigm is based on three main predications: 1) that management of natural resources should be community-based; 2) that the resources should be so managed as to achieve both development and conservation goals; and 3) that markets should play a key role in the management process. Points in common with the neoliberal economic theory are thus evident in the reduced role of the state and the importance CBNRM gives to economic incentives and markets. It also appears consonant with the liberal-democratic political theory, as by helping local communities to organise themselves to manage natural resources it seems to support decentralisation and deepen the democratisation process. By claiming to provide a
practical means for translating ‘sustainable development’ into a concrete development strategy CBNRM also benefits from the world-wide policy commitment that followed the 1987 Brundtland Report and the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 (Adams and Hulme 2001: 15-17). In social science the theoretical base for the CBNRM approach is rooted in the advances made over the past 20 years in common property resource management theory (Jones 1999: 296; Singh 2001: 33-34), while evidence from conservation biology and genetics has been referred to in order to justify the need for conservation initiatives which go beyond the boundaries of isolated protected areas (Adams and Hulme 2001: 17-18; Wolmer 2003: 263-264).

The theoretical legitimacy of the CBNRM paradigm has been expanded by more pragmatic reviews and guidelines published by leading environmental institutions such as the Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), this approach having consolidated its status as an accepted practice (see e.g. Shackleton and Campbell 2001; Matose and Wily 1996; Ribot 2002; Turner et al. 2002). In the field, CBNRM programs have been initiated largely by environmental NGOs such as the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN), multilateral organisations (notably the World Bank), and bilateral donors (especially the USAID, the German Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit/GTZ and the British Department for International Development/DFID) as a means of protecting biodiversity and decentralising state power (Adams and Hulme 2001: 13, 18; Singh 2001: 33-36). By the mid-1990s it had been adopted as an official conservation strategy by the majority of governments in southern Africa, including Mozambique (Anstey 2001: 79-84; Ribeiro 2001: 4-8). According to Adams and Hulme (2001: 17-18) the reasons for the rapid espousal of CBNRM at government level lie in the high degree of aid-dependence and the relative weakness of the state which characterise sub-Saharan Africa, and the subsequent extensive influence of international development agencies over domestic policies.
A regional ‘subhegemonic’ CBNRM model for southern Africa was provided by the CAMPFIRE and ADMADE programs developed with donor support in Zimbabwe and Zambia, respectively (Newman and Webster 1993: 106; Wolmer 2003: 267). These two have also been frequently cited as the main sources of influence in the case of the recent paradigm shift in Mozambique (Anstey 2001: 81; Madope 1999: 218; Matakala and Mushove 2001: 12), where the prolonged civil war and lack of qualified staff for natural resource management had rendered the government particularly dependent on external experience and resources. In my article ‘Local management of global values: community-based wildlife management in Zimbabwe and Zambia’ (Virtanen 2003b) I studied these regional models of CBNRM in relation to two aspects: how well the programs have been able to combine the diverse objectives of nature conservation and economic development, and to what extent they have solved the institutional problem of structuring collective action at the local level, and thus supported political decentralisation in resource management.

Analysis of a number of case studies shows that most international incentives for sustainable natural resource management depend on effective regulation mechanisms and accountable institutions at international, national and local levels. On international level attempts to create institutions for control with supranational powers or to influence domestic policies of developing countries in order to address global environmental concerns are often regarded as an infringement by the industrialised countries on developing countries’ legitimate right to economic development. This is, however, not the whole picture as heavy dependence on donor funding, which characterises most African states, has strengthened internal division between government institutions. This is particularly clear in natural resource management, where different organs of the state pursue different, often contradictory policies. Land tenure provides a good example. While access to agricultural land is an important issue

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11 According to Peet (2002: 60) subhegemonic discourses originate in regional experience, but they are effectively incorporated into the hegemonic discourse by being interpreted through conventions which correspond to universal norms set by the latter.

12 CAMPFIRE stands for Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources, while ADMADE stands for Administrative Management Design for Game Areas.

13 Political decentralisation refers to transfer of power to lower-level actors who are accountable downwards, to their constituencies. Deconcentration likewise entails transfer of power to lower
in domestic politics, promotion of global environmental values has become a key condition for African governments to access donor funds. In this situation economic calculus has become a widely used justification for land-use policies. For example wildlife conservation must for this reason be constructed in such a way that it can be demonstrated to be more profitable than livestock or agriculture. This choice of premises tends to pass over aesthetic and symbolic values of nature while neglecting completely its intrinsic value.

Critical analysis of the ADMADE and CAMPFIRE programs indicates that adoption of the CBNRM approach has not been accompanied by the fundamental changes needed for political decentralisation to take root. Incorporation into conservation projects of de-concentrated formal state institutions such as rural development councils in Zimbabwe, or customary authorities such as traditional chiefs in Zambia, has not resolved the institutional dilemma. In neither program has local participation been pursued beyond the level of marketing rhetoric, while implementation has suffered from the colonial legacy of technocratic and authoritarian development. These findings must be set against the conclusion reached by recent studies on local level natural resource management from the southern African region, which show that the presumed benefits of decentralisation become available to local populations only if the empowered local actors are downwardly accountable (Dutton and Archer 2004; Galvin and Habib 2003; Murombedzi 1999; Songorwa 1999; Wily 1999). In the third article (Virtanen 2003b) I, therefore, conclude that the institutional objective of CBNRM, the creation of viable local-level management institutions which contribute to local development needs and enjoy widespread legitimacy, has largely failed in the cases of CAMPFIRE and ADMADE.

levels, but in this case to actors who still remain accountable to their superiors in the hierarchy (Agrawal and Ribot 2000: 475; Ribot 2002: 4).
Hegemonic discourse is disseminated through powerful international academic-institutional media producing different variations of the same text to audiences which have already internalised its premises (Peet 2002: 58-60). When a text or a strategic plan is read thus in a self-oriented manner, it acts as a mantra: it enhances the audience. Instead of a plan for action, the message becomes a code which transports the reader’s mind to a mythical plane. The information conveyed in the message acquires new content, a make-believe content which indicates what one should become, what one should look like (Broms and Gahmberg 1983: 482-490; Lotman 1990: 22). Development planning during Mozambique’s socialist period (1975-1994) frequently functioned like a mantra. Official production plans, for example, read like fantasies about creating the ‘new society’, far removed from the reality on the ground (Verschuur et al. 1986: 83). In the present era of liberal democracy the CBNRM strategy has likewise been adopted in official discourse as Mozambique’s new paradigm for rural development and nature conservation. Through repetition in scientific publications, policy documents and popular media it has been turned into a semi-official mantra of sustainable development. Whether it is implemented as a means for political decentralisation by the government, and whether it has actually been embraced by the rural population remains, however, open to serious doubt. Diffusion of the CBNRM message to rural areas is expected to take place through pilot activities, and in the article ‘Community-based natural resource management in Mozambique: a critical review of the concept’s applicability at local level’ (Virtanen 2005a) I examine more closely two pilot projects from Mozambique.

The status of CBNRM as official development paradigm in Mozambique is duly reflected in new statutes, which in principle make CBNRM legally possible. Despite high-level political endorsement of the concept, however, national legislation remains inconsistent and decentralisation of authority to local communities over natural resources actually depends on the discretion of state authorities. So far the respective authorities at national and provincial levels have been reluctant to devolve power downwards. Operationalisation of the new laws through regulations has been very
slow, and their adaptation to local conditions in the form of officially ratified by-laws has been very rare indeed. By 2001 only one community had obtained full authority over local natural resources. The findings of my fourth study (Virtanen 2005a) conclude, therefore, that in Mozambique CBNRM has remained at the level of political rhetoric which is regularly celebrated in donor meetings and international media, but rarely implemented fully at grassroots level. The same situation seems to prevail in other sectors of legislation which were supposed to strengthen political decentralisation. One example is provided by community tribunals, which, even though created by law in 1992, continue to hang in the air without a clear mandate and powers (Santos 2003: 72-73).

The two pilot projects studied in my fourth article also indicate that espousal of the CBNRM model by local communities cannot be considered independently of the political context. This was particularly clear in the case where the majority of the population had voted for the opposition in the national elections, and did not trust the ruling party or share its political premises. This antagonism was reflected on the community’s relationship with the government staff who tried to introduce the CBNRM approach, which consequently practically failed. Comparison between the two cases shows quite clearly that the way the audience appraises the sender’s political intentions is a crucial factor even in ostensibly pragmatic argumentation, even though this has been largely neglected in the CBNRM debate.

In a country like Mozambique, where more than two thirds of the population live below the poverty line, and most of the poor are located in rural areas, the emphasis given to economic factors in the CBNRM approach is clearly relevant. The issue is, therefore, how to translate the developmental component of the CBNRM mantra into concrete local benefits which are at the same time environmentally sustainable? In this respect the finding of my fourth article (Virtanen 2005a), that while local inhabitants may not consider nature conservation a priority issue, they do value environmental services and are - subject to certain conditions - willing to give up or restrict the use of crucial resources to maintain them, is important. If, on the other hand, CBNRM projects fail to introduce both sustainable and economically viable alternatives to the prevailing livelihoods, environmental values are easily sacrificed. The results thus stress
the importance of reconciling local subsistence needs with nature conservation, for unless this dilemma is solved the CBNRM discourse is likely to fail in its mission to create ‘popular processes of the carrying of conviction from experts to people’.

**CBNRM and traditional institutions**

CBNRM projects involve three important political decisions: delimitation of the local community, selection of the institution within the community which will undertake management responsibilities, and definition of the authorities which will be delegated to the selected institution (Hulme and Murphree 2001: 293-294). In this context the historical constitution of the local community and its intimate relationship to space, its ‘locality’, is often taken for granted. Recent scholarship in human geography has, however, drawn attention to the fact that ‘local’ sites and institutions are never wholly local, but are produced at least in part by extra-local actors and forces. According to these scholars the scales on which power operates are contingent upon social, political and economic contexts, all rooted in particular histories (Cox 1998: 19-21; Perreault 2003: 63-66).

In line with its neoliberal basis, the CBNRM paradigm is critical of the privileged position of the state as the locus and main referent for political practice, which was typical of the modernist development models of the previous decades. Instead it seeks to promote local resource management, which in southern Africa is usually translated to mean management by traditional institutions. In this context semiotic theory provides interesting insights for analysing tension between the state, which seeks to reinforce its control over the periphery, and local communities, which struggle to maintain their socio-cultural integrity. In most cases the local legitimacy of traditional institutions is in inverse relation to the state’s capacity to manage economic development and cultural change. If the state fails in its mission to fulfil the crucial material and socio-cultural needs of its citizens, the latter may choose to revert to traditional institutions – even if they seem outmoded and undemocratic (Arnfred 1988: 8-12; Honwana 1999: 9-12). From the perspective of liberal-democratic politics, this means choosing the ‘exit’ option (Lubkemann 2001: 98-102). As Santos (2003: 79-80) has noted, the
resurgence of traditional institutions in Mozambique is closely linked with two predominantly non-local factors, the globalising effect of the hegemonic neoliberal discourse and the weakness of the state.

In the article ‘Land of the ancestors: semiotics, history and space in Chimanimani, Mozambique’ (Virtanen 2005b) I discuss the problematics of power and scale - both spatial and historical - in the context of a transfrontier conservation project in central Mozambique. While according to CBNRM theory the new management institutions are supposed to create a democratic mechanism for grassroots participation, in the transfrontier project they have rather been used by elite groups to consolidate power and gain access to additional resources. The problem is that despite the strong grassroots empowerment ethos of the CBNRM approach, the central state has preferred to use the development resources provided by donors to strengthen its faltering control over the periphery, where - at least in the case of Chimanimani - it has collaborated with certain business-oriented regional élite groups. As this process has threatened traditional access rights of local small-scale farmers, many of the latter have fallen back on traditional institutions. In this context continuing confusion over the role of different local institutions makes it difficult to establish adequate structures of accountability towards community members, which would guarantee more equitable access to land and other natural resources.

The issue is linked to the question whether customary authorities should be given a special position among the various power-structures existing in local communities. The present FRELIMO line regards them as merely one type of local authority on a par with others. This ‘politics of trivialisation’ was codified in a recent government statute (Decreto 15/2000), and it must be read in the context of the present political debate on pluralism, or whether independent local authorities can be recognised without risking the authority and unity of the state. In Mozambique there is considerable reciprocal contamination between administrative and political control, which causes conflicts when there are valuable resources such as land involved. This is why the government seeks to make use of the administrative capacity of traditional authorities while simultaneously neutralising their political role (Cf. Santos 2003: 83-84).
In the Mozambican context the CBNRM message has failed to penetrate rural society beyond some elite groups and official rhetoric. This is partly due to the heterogeneous character of the global CBNRM discourse, which lays it open to different and to some extent incompatible interpretations (Adams and Hulme 2001: 13-18; Neumann 1997: 561-577; Wolmer 2003: 262-268). In Mozambique the process was bogged down in a politically sensitive debate on the role of traditional institutions in local administration. The roots of this debate can be found in the early post-independence period, when the new government set out to abolish the power of traditional chiefs and other ‘feudal’ institutions. The radical project of rural transformation was, however, never fully implemented in peripheral areas of the country, which suffered the greatest losses during the civil war. The peace accord that ended the war in 1992 stipulated a liberal-democratic mode of government and economy, but even before that FRELIMO had renounced Marxism and adopted market capitalism in the form of a ‘structural adjustment’ programme. What remained from the old doctrine were formal equality between citizens and the territorial unity of the nation - both elements which are shared by the socialist and liberal-democratic versions of the modern project.

If we compare the political strategy of the government with that of customary authorities in the study area from the point of view of semiotics, the parallels and key differences become apparent. As an ideal construction the cultural code of customary authority is comparable with the radical project of FRELIMO at the time of independence. Despite their radically different time-frames and geographical scope, both represent essentially a system of semiotic rules for transforming human life experience into culture. However, in contrast to the government’s political strategy, which relied on adopting a new code while trying to legitimise the transition (and exclude federal and consociational types of power-sharing) by maintaining a few core texts, representatives of customary authority have sought to respond to changes in the socio-political context by re-invigorating the code provided by traditional religion. The strategy is underpinned by selected texts of oral history, which serve to re-adjust the collective memory to a new political situation. While this neo-traditional project may also be compatible with some interests of ‘global capitalism’ in that it implies
fragmentation of the power of the nation-state (Amin 1996), it cannot be reduced to the ‘contradictions of capitalism’ as hegemonic discourse theory would have it.

Community, tradition and political legitimacy

Local community as a ‘community of place’

Community is the key concept in the CBNRM paradigm, but at the same time it is an extremely vague and elusive one. In the African socio-political context community has often been understood as a ‘community of place’, a small spatial unit with a homogeneous social structure based on shared norms (for a critical view see Agrawal and Gibson 1999). Case studies of natural resource management from different parts of Africa have, however, convincingly demonstrated the problematic character of the concept (see e.g. James 2000; Kloeck-Jenson 1998; Moore 1998; Sharpe 1998). A more dynamic characterisation is provided by Edmund Barrow and Marshall Murphree (2001: 24-27), who emphasise four aspects of community in the context of CBNRM. These are cohesion, demarcation, legitimacy and resilience. Cohesion refers to a sense of common identity and interest for collective action, which leads community members to differentiate themselves collectively from others. It is commonly understood to derive from a shared history and culture, but it can also arise from contingent external factors. Demarcation sets boundaries of jurisdiction for the collective regime. It is typically based on a fixed land area and the resources on it, but it may also be drawn on the basis of socially sanctioned access to given resource categories. Legitimacy of the power and authority of community leadership is also crucial; it can be conferred by an external authority such as the state, or it can be endogenously derived and based on cultural and/or socio-economic criteria. Resilience is requisite in that the bases of the above three factors may change, and an effective community organisation must be able to accommodate such changes as they evolve over time.
In the article ‘Evolving institutional framework for community-based natural resource management in Mozambique: a case study from the Choa Highlands’ (Virtanen 2001) I critically examine the main characteristics of ‘community of place’ mentioned above, namely territoriality, homogeneity, and grounding in shared norms, drawing on my fieldwork in a peripheral rural area in central Mozambique. While these characteristics are more or less parallel to the first three aspects listed by Barrow and Murphree, the fourth aspect brings in the crucial dimension of change which is missing from the other characterisation.

As noted by Lotman (1990: 136-142), borders both unite and separate. They can, therefore, turn peripheral areas into transition zones, where external influence is digested and translated to the system’s own ‘language’. This is made possible by the layered character of political borders: despite their proclaimed unity and sovereignty, all political communities are transected by boundaries of different levels. In the study area neither official nor customary administrative borders function as exclusive territorial boundaries between neighbouring communities. On the other hand, the area forms an ethno-linguistically homogeneous socio-cultural islet which has strong historical ties to neighbouring Zimbabwe. This linkage has facilitated, for example, the creation of an incipient market-oriented production capacity based on knowledge and resources acquired from the Zimbabwean economy. Therefore, while border communities tend to shun state control, they can also provide important inputs for the larger society.

In addition to a common vernacular, shared customary norms strengthen the cultural coherence of the study area. This unity is gradually weakening, however, because the basis of consensus - traditional religion - is being challenged by the penetration of new religious doctrines and other socio-cultural influence transmitted through the area. Nevertheless, the effects of penetration of new people and ideas are not always antithetical to traditional values, and selective adaptation of new elements can even invigorate traditions. The most acute changes seem to concern local rules of land tenure, which are being redefined to reflect increasing penetration of market economy. The emerging rule systems are strongly rooted in local practices of social
reproduction and place making, even though increasing plurality of the normative system is in contradiction with the government’s unitary legal paradigm.

**Local institutions and global values**

During the last decade customary institutions have been promoted as a more democratic alternative to deconcentrated state institutions in the development of local governance and management of natural resources in Africa (Ayana 2002; Kajembe 1994; Wunsch 2000). In my article ‘The role of customary institutions in the conservation of biodiversity: sacred forests in Mozambique’ (Virtanen 2002) the value of one such institution, the traditionally protected forest, is studied in terms of sustainable management of biological diversity, a broadly endorsed global value. The results from my case-study in Choa show that the traditionally protected forests studied are indeed valuable for conservation purposes. They provide vital fire refuges for plants and animals in areas frequently ravaged by bush fires and are, therefore, highly important for many thinly spread populations of endangered species.

The allegedly undemocratic institutional basis of traditional authorities (Neumann 1997: 571-574; Ribot 2002: 12) constitutes, however, a complex problem for their use in the context of national and international conservation policy. A number of researchers have recommended empowerment of those broad constellations of local institutions, which are presently managing local resources without official recognition. Replacing them with externally initiated new structures has seldom brought sustainable results, even though the new institutions may better fulfil western standards of democracy (Anstey and Sousa 2001: 204-205; Fairhead and Leach 1995: 1027-1029). On the other hand, the current legitimacy of traditional institutions such as sacred forests varies considerably, and even in cases where they still hold good the diversity of socio-cultural contexts makes it difficult to enforce them by unitary state law (Falconer 1999: 370). If institutions based on local religious beliefs are enforced by the central state as a tool for nature conservation, separating thus the institutions from their socio-cultural bases, they are bound to lose their local legitimacy.
The problem with norms which rely on voluntary observation is that they depend on a community-wide consensus as to what is proper and reasonable (Perelman 1984: 53). When faced with an influx of outsiders with belief systems that are different from local socio-cultural values and norms, the existing normative system can function only if local institutions are given appropriate legal authority to enforce it. Granting such authority to traditional chiefs in a uniform manner is problematic even in remote and relatively homogeneous areas such as the Choa Highlands, for after the recent political turmoil the legitimacy of office-bearers remains contested in many communities. Instead of concentrating on one privileged institution such as traditional chiefship it might be wiser, therefore, to start off from a wider combination of local management practices. While placing one local institution above others may be convenient for administrative purposes, the emphasis of decentralisation should be on creating enabling legislation and socio-economic conditions to support efficient local management.

The dilemma faced by the pluralist paradigm is how to combine different community-based normative systems with the dominant liberal-democratic principle of equal rights for all individual citizens, who in most African countries do not share the same cultural and religious traditions. Here it is important to note the drastically different socio-cultural composition of states in Europe. There states are essentially secular institutions based on religious and ideological pluralism, but with relatively high socio-cultural homogeneity of citizens and uniform legal systems - even though this situation is rapidly changing. In Mozambique the socio-cultural and ethnic heterogeneity of the population made smooth construction of a modern unitary state difficult, and the recent transition to multi-party democracy has brought out the latent tensions which two decades of single-party rule had attempted to suppress. During the process such traditional institutions as sacred forests have become entangled in the political struggle, not as historical relics but as elements of living local cultures which continue their “complex and partially self-transforming, partially subordinated existence in the shadow of the state” (Lloyd 1997: 189).
Scholarly contributions to the discussion on ‘community’ in the context of CBNRM indicate that both those in support of community-based management grounded in customary institutions and those opposing it are well aware of the complex nature of the issue and its strong political connotations (see e.g. Li 1996; Neumann 1997). While simplified ‘ideal types’ of community - unlocated in time and place - are widely used in the debate, according to proponents of CBNRM they are justified by their political appropriateness in a macro-policy context and should not be judged against their ethnographic accuracy (Li 1996: 504). In southern Africa the legitimacy of customary authority continues, however, to be debated on the basis of their ‘authenticity’ deriving from pre-colonial origins or ‘falsity’ due to their role in the colonial system of indirect rule. The depiction of tradition as invented and false is based on the modernist idea of truth, and in this context historical accuracy has been advanced by both scholars and politicians as a key criterion in assessing the validity of customary authorities’ claim for official recognition. While such a modernist approach is supported by the classic distinction made by Hobsbawm and Ranger between tradition and custom, the conclusion I reach in the article ‘Tradition, custom and otherness: the politics of identity in Mozambique’ (Virtanen 2005c) is that this distinction is both theoretically inadequate and politically misleading.

As scholars writing within the post-colonial paradigm have noted, in modernist state-centred political discourse the nation-state regulates what counts as history and sets the limits on what is considered significant and what is left out as merely incidental. However, while pre-colonial African culture no longer exists except as an object of ethno-historical or archaeological recovery, those rural people who continue to follow the norms of traditional religion and respect customary authorities nonetheless inhabit the same global world as us. Their culture is, therefore, neither traditional nor modern but contemporary (Lloyd 1997: 177-179).

14 According to Hobsbawm (1993 [1983]: 2) the main characteristic of tradition is invariance. The past, real or invented, to which it refers imposes fixed practices which are re-enforced by repetition. In contrast, custom does not preclude innovation and change, though these must
As shown in the article (Virtanen 2005c), the apparent incongruity between permanence and change, which characterises customary institutions, is dissolved in semiotic analysis which maintains that even though the self-representation of a semiotic system frequently insists on strict constancy in the realisation of its rules, its resilience actually depends on its inner dynamism. This refers to its power of regeneration while still preserving the memory of preceding states and, consequently, of its identity and coherence. In the process of regeneration forgetting has a crucial role. By reason of semantic coherence, the exclusion of some elements of cultural memory - defined as nonessential - is a necessary condition for the inscription of others, which thus influence the way the cultural code is realised (Lotman and Uspensky 1978: 215-216). While the formal aspect of chiefship is made to appear as an unchanging system based on immemorial tradition, the way the institution actually meets its constituency’s concrete expectations is very different. Contemporary legitimacy of a traditional chief cannot, therefore, be determined by scientific scrutiny of the oral traditions of chiefly succession which he/she can provide, but rather by his/her acceptance by members of the local community. This does not mean that related academic studies should be based on fiction or that they have no political relevance, but rather that current arguments about traditional legitimacy must be assessed in the present socio-political context.

My second argument in article eight (Virtanen 2005c) concerns the explanatory power of local and global factors in development studies. The inventionist/modernist reasoning assumes the primacy (either beneficial or detrimental) of the global economy and related processes of societal modernisation in different spheres ranging from ideological models to concrete development interventions. In line with such post-colonial writers as Norval (1996) I argue, however, that historical necessity or other teleological forms of reasoning cannot serve as an explanatory factor for socio-political change. The point is that people - not ideologies or market forces - make history, and while the unequal relations of power and wealth at the global level are no doubt important, their impact is mediated through the world-views and actions of individuals appear compatible with the precedent. Instead it confers upon a desired change the sanction of social continuity and natural law as manifested in history.
and groups. While all human beings are dependent on culture in structurally organising the world around them (Lotman and Uspensky 1978: 213), conditions of extreme poverty and socio-economic marginalisation tend to intensify demands to consolidate conventional identities, especially if the deprived groups feel neglected or deceived by the state authorities. This happened also in war-ravaged Mozambique, where various relatively conservative institutions such as religious and customary authorities have become serious rivals to the modernist party/state as the reference group for socio-political affiliation.

In broad outline I tend to agree with the post-colonial thesis that the development of institutional practices which accept difference and recognise the instability of identity is a crucial element of a genuine pluralist project. However, my own findings do not concur with the categorically negative way post-colonial writers tend to exclude ‘given and sedimented forms of identity’ such as traditional chieftaincies from the sphere of legitimate expressions of socio-cultural difference (Norval 1996: 303-304; cf. Lloyd 1997: 192). To me this aspect of the ‘radical pluralist’ view represents a narrow ‘inventionist’ rendering of customary authority to a form of ‘tradition’ without any substantial elements of ‘custom’ which make them flexible and open to contestation. As I argue in article eight (Virtanen 2005c), during the civil war in Mozambique customary authorities served crucial local needs in maintaining community structures and social identity, working flexibly with other grassroots institutions. Today they continue to enjoy local support in many rural areas, and while they may not constitute an ideal element in a ‘modern’ pluralist system of democracy, their integration in the emerging system of decentralised governance in a way that strengthens their local accountability must be seriously considered.
Conclusions: development theory in a post-colonial world

The established development paradigms of the Cold War era, modernisation and dependency, contemplated a linear tradition-modernity transition. In the former the model of the ‘modern’ was derived “from the political systems in which structural specialisation and functional differentiation have taken place to the greatest extent” (Almond 1960: 16), referring to the political systems of western industrialised countries. The main focus was on the fundamental change modernisation would bring about in the nature of people’s occupational roles and associated values which would assure their governability under a liberal-democratic system. Ethnic, religious and communal identities were, on the other hand, seen to belong to an earlier, pre-modern stage of society which was bound to disappear as developing countries modernised (Haynes 1996: 93; Otto 1996: 340-342). The same eurocentric concept of development, which assumed that people who want improved health services and education facilities must also adopt ‘modern’ modes of conduct and beliefs, was shared by the political leadership of independent Mozambique (Hall & Young 1997: 82).

While dependency analysts criticised the eurocentric premises of modernisation theory, they had little to say regarding ethnic and religious identities, except that capitalism had emptied them of their content. According to Samir Amin (1996: 7), for example, the differences in the development of non-European cultures have “nothing to do with the specific characteristics of diverse traditional cultures, but everything to do with the forms of capitalist expansion, both central and peripheral”. He, therefore, interprets the recent focus on culture and identity in development discourse as a cynical attempt to manipulate ordinary people by using atavistic ethnic sentiments for political purposes.

Despite our increasing awareness of the malleability of identities, it has by now become clear that the assumed ‘automatic’ process of cultural homogenisation, which is a key component in the modern project in both its capitalist and socialist varieties,
has not taken place. In African cultural studies and history post-1970s scholarship on ethnicity has emphasised the constructed nature of ethnic identities and consciousness, and that ethnic processes must be considered in the light of global phenomena such as European colonialism and international capitalism. The invention-of-tradition discourse is a prominent example of this intellectual trend. Due to its intellectual roots in European modernity and dependency theory, however, the inventionist discourse continues to see identities based on religion and ethnicity as symptoms of incomplete or partial modernisation (or proletarisation) of the global periphery.

This kind of unilinear concept of development was criticised as far back as the 1950s and early 1960s by African neo-traditionalists such as Kofi Busia (1962: 40), who noted that while African cultures have been radically affected by the technological superiority of European cultures and by the political and economic domination of Europeans, they have not been totally destroyed or replaced by them. This is because every culture represents a unique answer to certain universal human questions in the context of a particular historical situation, particular resources, skills and knowledge. The notion of multiple modernities implied in Busia’s thesis has resurfaced in recent anthropological discourse, which maintains that such ‘traditional’ African institutions as witchcraft should not be understood as a reaction to modernity imposed on pre-modern societies by international capitalism, but as phenomena operating within modernity in its culturally specific form in which the global market economy is one important element (Englund 1996: 258-260). Recognition of the multiplicity of modernities and the interdependence of local, national and global levels has resulted in a radically new kind of critical discourse: instead of trying to give a voice to what is outside of the ‘modern world’ by taking a countermodern position, new trends such as subaltern studies seek to find ways to push the boundaries of modernity, to understand what it means in different contexts, and to document alternative ways to live it (cf. Otto 1996: 356; Bebbington 2000: 514-515).

By reducing the socio-political changes taking place in Africa to such Eurocentric mental constructs as economic modernisation or class struggle, we “miss what is crucial to any account of politics: the production of discursive horizons which allow people to make sense of their history” (Norval 1996: 52). The narrow focus on
national or international development strategies and universalist (western) ideological constructs on which they are based, for example the early socialist and subsequent neo-liberal development models adopted by the FRELIMO government in Mozambique, or more pragmatic rural development approaches like CBNRM, leaves us with a very superficial and distorted understanding of contemporary socio-political dynamics. From the eight articles that constitute the basis of this thesis we may conclude that, despite their high visibility in international and national media and - at least rhetorical - adoption by national political leadership, these ‘hegemonic discourses’ have only marginally penetrated the ‘discursive horizons’ of Mozambique’s rural population. The problems faced by the FRELIMO leadership in its nation-building project, which consisted essentially of extending the official metastructural self-description pegged at the Marxist-Leninist doctrine over the whole nation, can be interpreted more fruitfully in the light of semiotic theory. The increasingly strained relationship between local semiotic practice on the periphery and the norms imposed on it from the centre, as well as the inclination of the latter to become more rigid and incapable of further development, are common tendencies in all semiotic systems (Lotman 1990: 134). However, as noted above, in political systems these are tendential - not necessary - characteristics, and what separates a democratic from an authoritarian political system is precisely the inclusive and open-ended character of its identity-formation process.

This brings us back to Frege and the theoretical premises of the thesis. As Lotman has noted, the relation of culture to the sign and to signification comprises one of its most basic features. In a culture directed mainly towards expression this relation is regarded as the only possible one, while in a culture directed chiefly towards content the relationship is understood as convention-based. In the former, correct name-relations constitute the basis of a world-view in which content is predetermined and it is only necessary to know the right code. The world can thus be reduced to opposite pairs: modern-traditional, progressive-conservative, comrade-class enemy, and so forth on a permanent basis. In a culture where the relationship between the sign and the signification is based on convention some degree of flexibility is assured in relation to both content and expression, while the possibility of other conventions is (at least
implicitly) recognised. Such cultures can be depicted as a system of relatively open rules operating like a generative mechanism, and it is precisely this kind of incomplete regulatedness of culture as a semiotic system that makes it possible to live in a world of multiple modernities and relate to cultural difference without turning it into anticulture (Lotman and Uspensky 1978: 217-222).

This theoretical finding is directly relevant to the research question underpinning the present thesis, the political organisation of the relationship between endogenous ‘traditional’ authorities and imported ‘modern’ institutions of governance in independent Mozambique. Hegemonic accounts of political development, which characterise both the radical socialist and liberal-democratic political projects, are locked into a unilinear narrative of modernity, where a unitary nation-state is assumed as the only possible end of the historical development process (cf. Lloyd 1997: 178). In this tradition recourse to a modernist idea of truth as the criterion of political legitimacy has led to quasi-logical forms of argumentation based on teleological ideas of history, which legitimise one set of correct texts and a fixed code to interpret the world. Quasi-logical arguments, however, only simulate the formal reasoning of demonstrative science while they lack the universally accepted premises and formal reasoning characteristic of the latter (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971: 193). They do not, therefore, provide a coherent basis for political discourse.

In order to be effective, political argumentation is obliged to build on premises acceptable to the audience and to be open to contestation by it. It must thus be compatible with various grounds of argument arising from and familiar to the audience instead of insisting on one externally established code. With respect to the research problem of the thesis this means that in a democratic political system based on the people’s sovereignty the field of ‘correct’ bases of political institutions cannot be confined to those fitting the western criteria of ‘modern’ but must - at least tentatively - accept as wide a range as possible of potential systems of political representation. This presupposes that the basis of systemic identity is built on relatively open and flexible rules grounded on a widely accepted convention regarding the principles of orderly political life instead of a single ideological code and a predetermined set of correct expressions.
References


