

Linking Applied Ethnobotany to Social Learning

A Participatory Tool for the Promotion of Indigenous Plants Use in Matutuíne, Southern Mozambique

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Development-oriented research

- How to integrate natural and social sciences when looking at the multi-faceted questions of natural resource management?
- How to integrate all the major actors affected, including the local population, into negotiation and decision-making processes?
- How to integrate scientific and indigenous forms of knowledge in a search for and promotion of local potentials for development?

Transdisciplinary approach

- Interdisciplinarity
 - Identification of problems and solutions independently of disciplinary boundaries
→ integrated perspective

(Wiesmann, 2002)

Transdisciplinary approach

- Interdisciplinarity
 - Identification of problems and solutions independently of disciplinary boundaries
→ integrated perspective
- Science and Society
 - Integration of knowledge and perceptions of non-scientific actors in a participatory process
→ mutual learning

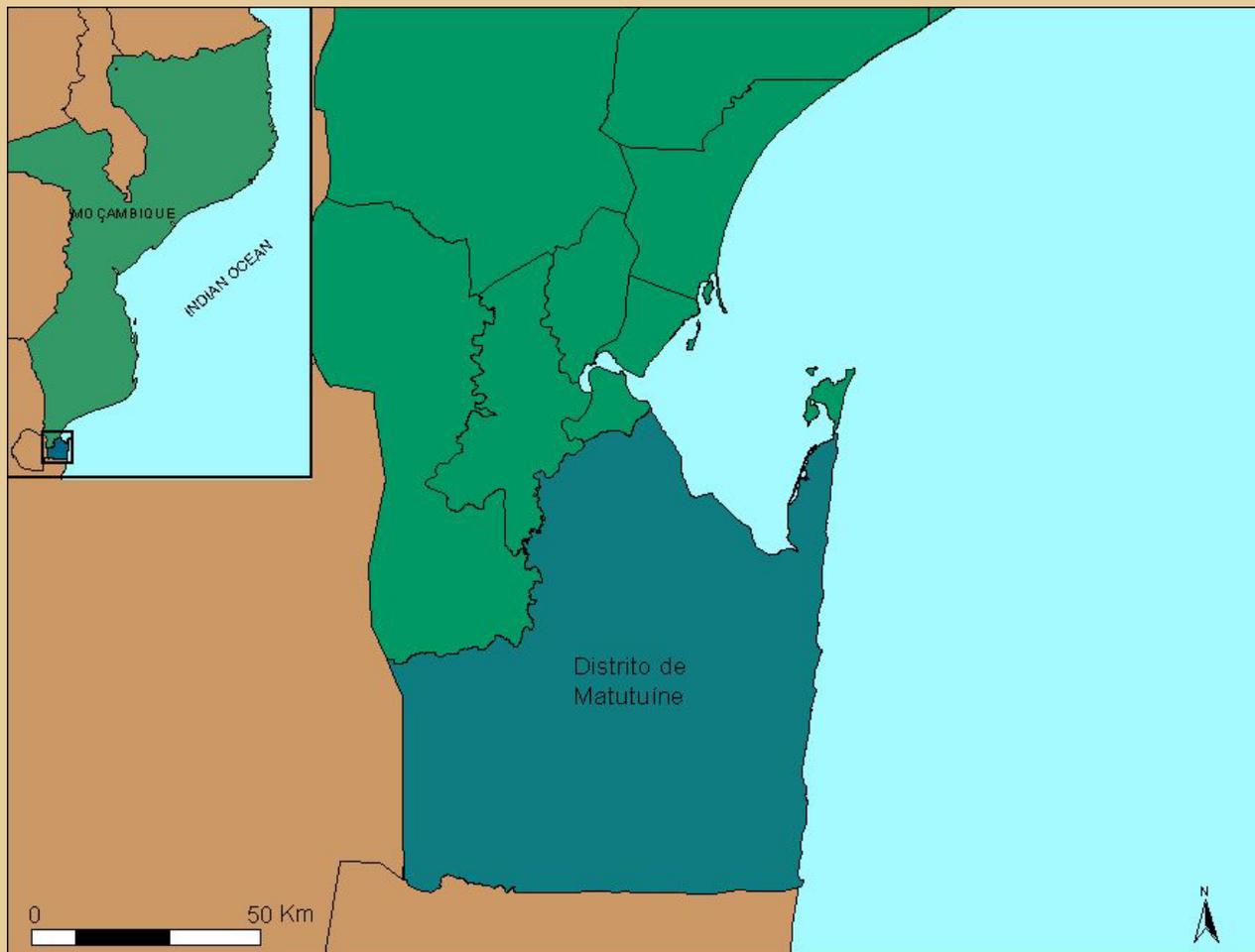
(Wiesmann, 2002)

Promotion of Indigenous Plant Use as an Alternative Source of Income in Matutuíne District, Mozambique (2003)

Partnership-based project:

- Helvetas Mozambique (Maputo, Mozambique)
- Impacto Lda (Maputo, Mozambique)
- Centre for Development and Environment, University of Berne (Berne, Switzerland)

Context: Matutuíne District



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- High diversity and endemism of natural resources: coastal forests, semi-deciduous forests, bushes, savannas, wetlands
- Potentials: agriculture, forestry, hunting, beach tourism, ecotourism



Context: Matutuíne District

- Poverty: poor access to education and health care, poor infrastructures, weak institutions
- Degradation of natural resources: illegal hunting, deforestation for logging and charcoal, uncontrolled fires



Project objectives

Identification and promotion of sustainable indigenous plant use as an alternative source of income for rural communities

- Improving the living conditions of rural communities
- Reducing the pressure on the natural environment

Project activities

- 1) Preliminary baseline study
- 2) Participatory workshop to identify natural resources with a potential for commercialisation
- 3) In-depth study of the local systems of use and ecology of the selected resources
- 4) Preliminary market study

Participatory workshop: methodology

- Applied ethnobotany
- Participatory research



SOCIAL LEARNING PROCESS

Setting

- 2-weeks training workshop
- In the local context
- In the local language (*Ronga*)
- Facilitation by local moderators

Setting

- Mixed group of participants: representatives of local communities (traditional healers, local leaders, men, women, etc.), extensionists and development workers, researchers
- Researcher is only one among the other participants!

Mutual learning



Exchange of knowledge, experiences, and perceptions among the participants

Plenary discussions, group exercises, field observations and, games, dramas, etc.

Participatory tools



Preference ranking



Group interviews



Transect walks



Resource inventories

1st step: to reach a common understanding of „sustainability“

Themes:

- natural resources and their degradation
- land use systems and their impacts
- local and external actors involved with their converging or conflicting interests
- sustainable management of natural resources
- endogenous strategies for NR conservation

2nd step: identification of resources with potential for commercialisation

Long process of inventory, evaluation, selection, analysis, discussion, and negotiation...

- Focus on sustainability
- Integrated approach: ecological, socio-cultural, and economic processes involved in the local use of natural resources

Main results

- 17 natural resources jointly selected for showing a high potential for commercialisation and sustainable use
- Participants achieved an understanding of ecological processes in the local context and learned to identify local potentials, problems, and possible solutions related to development



Mulala (*Euclea natalensis*) –
root used and sold in local
market for teeth treatment
and hygiene



Hungahunguana (*Hypoxis hemerocallidea*) – highly demanded medicinal plant sold in Maputo markets and exported to South Africa



Nala (*Hyphaene coriacea*) – Fermented drink sold locally

Further steps

- 1) Preliminary baseline study
- 2) Participatory workshop
- 3) In-depth study of the local systems of use and ecology of the selected resources
- 4) Preliminary market study



Follow-up project

- Identification and testing of options for selected resources production and transformation
- Sustainable production by local families and inclusion in the local market
- Identification of regional and international commercial networks

... was not carried out !

Strengths

- Combination of data collection with social learning process involving scientific and non-scientific actors
- Mutual learning provides a space for complementary forms of knowledge to meet
- Adoption of an integrated approach to natural resource management
- Involvement of local stakeholders in the identification of potentials for sustainable development and in the concrete project activities

Requirements / weaknesses

- Should be embedded within a long-term development project to ensure follow-up
- Careful preparation needed: participants, location, etc.
- Moderators with high facilitation capacities and flexibility: adaptation to group dynamics
- Humility and mutual respect, trust building: forms of knowledge, science and application, disciplines
- Potentially conflictual situations between participants

„Sustainable development“ itself, as a normative concept, can only be defined through social learning and consensus building between local and external, scientific and non-scientific stakeholders...



Thank you