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**Fishing, Livelihood and Everyday Life on the Shores of Lake
Kariba, Zimbabwe**

by

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Dedication

For my late father, Jacob Tigamba Chatya, my brother Fidelis, my wife, Salome, and our lovely daughter, Anenyasha.

Abstract

This study explores fishing, livelihood and everyday life in Gache-Gache fishing villages on Lake Kariba's shores in Zimbabwe. The study is a culmination of ten months of ethnographic fieldwork (including participant observation, informal conversations, and transect walks) and some interlocutor diaries in the five fishing villages of Gache-Gache. It reveals the numerous social, ecological, economic and political challenges faced by artisanal gillnet fishers—predominantly men—and their households and how they navigate these constraints to construct meaningful livelihoods. In a context where politico-economic crises have characterised daily life for over two decades and persist, this study sheds light on the resilience and resourcefulness of these communities, whose livelihoods are primarily based on informal means of scraping by.

Gache-Gache and the rest of the Lake Kariba shoreline communities on the Zimbabwean side are further subjected to state-controlled fishery and wildlife conservation on and off the lake as protected areas surround them. Lake Kariba is a multipurpose water body with a composite ecosystem, where the users (and inhabitants) are categorisable into humans and other-than-humans. Human users include artisanal gillnet fishers, tourists, hoteliers, and safari operators. Other-than-humans, which play a significant role in shaping the livelihoods of the fishing communities, include crocodiles, hippopotami, and those beyond the living, such as ancestors. Each of these constituent users shapes how artisanal gillnet fishers construct their livelihoods and live on the shores of Lake Kariba in diverse ways. This makes livelihoods and everyday life on the shores of Lake Kariba about how to ethically build livelihoods and live life in a way that facilitates mutual coexistence between the diverse users of the lake. Against this background, the study is framed under a tripartite conceptual framework comprising posthumanism, moral economy and livelihood concepts of vulnerability and coping.

A shared, though shifting, 'moral economy of survival ethic' emerged as one of the most important values guiding fisherfolk in their decision-making regarding important livelihood questions such as fishing gear and fishing method choice and notions of belonging. The fishery's natural functioning and the fishing gear's properties are critical variables determining fisher compliance with fishery regulations. The lake and fishery also comprise a complex network of humans, animals, and those beyond the living – ancestors. Other-than-humans' influence in Gache-Gache is critical – a wave or a crocodile may appear as natural entities at one point. Still, at another, ancestors may ensoul them. Catches may decline naturally due to seasonal rhythms and ancestral anger. In a nutshell, other-than-humans' role in fishery-based

livelihoods in Gache-Gache is essential in influencing livelihood practices and everyday life. The study contributes to various thematic areas of fisheries research, belonging and livelihoods.

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I am greatly indebted to the Gache-Gache community for opening their doors and allowing me to bother them with my countless questions; it is difficult to name everyone who assisted me during my time there, but I will mention a few. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the composite Mupepe household for their hospitality and patience as they adopted me into a nephew and brother. Mdara waKiddo, sekuru Zebedi, Mzaya and all the village heads, I am forever indebted to you for setting aside your time to listen to my endless questions. I also thank Joshua Matanzima, who accompanied me on my first trip to Gache-Gache and voluntarily worked as a research assistant during the first two weeks of my fieldwork and introduced me to some of the key interlocutors for this study.

I suffered and continue to suffer what I will call here “the burden of ethnography” – in developing long-lasting relationships with interlocutors, which have kept me in the loop regarding the goings on in Gache-Gache. Countless times, I have had heartache at the news that a fisherman or a resident has drowned in Lake Kariba or has been killed by a crocodile, and there have been a fair few such incidents. On that note, I wish to acknowledge two key interlocutors, Mr Chipfumbu and village head Nematombo, who passed a few months after I left the field. Their insights and guidance contributed immensely to this thesis, and Mr Chipfumbu and his wife opened their homestead for my frequent visits as I bothered them with endless questions. May their souls continue to rest in peace.

One of the challenges I faced during fieldwork was accessing the map(s) of Gache-Gache fishing villages. For this reason, I would like to thank my brother, Tinotenda Magadza, for drawing the maps for me. Salome, my wife, and our daughter, Anenyasha, this is for you. You have been pillars of strength when I felt like quitting. Thank you to Salome for transcribing some interviews and typing the diary entries. I also immensely thank Temba Verenga for helping transcribe some of the interviews.

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Chapter One: Livelihood-Making and Everyday Life on the Shores of Lake Kariba

1.1 Introduction

Since my arrival in Gache-Gache¹ in October 2019, I had regular mid-morning conversations with sabhuku (village head) Mupepe, one of my hosts and one of the main interlocutors throughout my ten-month stay in the villages. I referred to him as sekuru (uncle) Mupepe, taking after my research assistant, who had introduced me to Gache-Gache and village head Mupepe's household. Sekuru Mupepe was the village head for Musampakaruma village, one of the five fishing villages of Gache-Gache. Sekuru Mupepe had two sons, kule Diva and kule Luke, who, together with their wives and children, lived on the same Mupepe residential plot (commonly referred to as a Residential Stand in Gache-Gache and the rest of Zimbabwe). Village head Mupepe had given kule Diva space on the Mupepe residential plot to build a house for his wife and two children. As such, kule Diva had a three-roomed house, and his nucleus family unit had some 'independence' regarding daily livelihood necessities. Kule Luke, his wife and his son were still under village head Mupepe's household unit. Additionally, village head Mupepe had a daughter, mai Debbie, who had her hut on the Mupepe residential at the beginning of my fieldwork. However, she later purchased a residential plot, where she built her house away from the Mupepe homestead.

Sekuru Mupepe, kule² Diva, and kule Luke were all gillnet fishermen. Mbuya Mupepe, sekuru Mupepe's wife, engaged in rod and line fishing, especially during the cool-dry season when gillnet fishing was bedevilled with low catches. Mbuya Mupepe also engaged in vending, such as kutengesa mitsvairo (selling traditional brooms in the city) and gardening³. Mai Debbie was a cross-border trader who sold several commodities, including clothing and fishing nets, in Gache-Gache. In times of livelihood stress, the composite Mupepe family, including kule Diva and mai Debbie, would pull resources together to help each other scrap by. Assistance could be in the form of sharing part of the catch for relish or financial assistance to buy daily necessities and handing out fishing gear such as nets. Such reliance on family relations or social capital during times of livelihood stress was a common feature of many households in Gache-Gache.

¹Gache-Gache is interchangeably written as Gatshe-Gatshe, and for this thesis, I have chosen to use Gache-Gache throughout for consistency and to avoid confusing readers who may be unfamiliar. Efforts to understand what the name means were fruitless as no one among the villagers I interviewed, including older residents, could explain what the name means.

² Kule is slang for sekuru, which means uncle

³ Though a useful livelihood strategy, gardening was practised at a very small scale and very few villagers engaged in it because wildlife frequently destroyed gardens and the crops.

The composite nature of the household was also not limited to the Mupepe family. I elaborate on this and the nature of livelihoods in subsequent chapters. In addition to reliance on familial relations in the face of livelihood stress, a strong sense of a '*moral economy and survival*' ethic characterised livelihoods and everyday life in Gache-Gache, as chapter two elaborates.

Now, back to the regular mid-morning conversations with sekuru Mupepe. We generally focused on his encounters with his workmate on the lake. A man in his mid-sixties at the time, village head Mupepe practised ndombolo, a fish-driving-based type of fishing, because he still had the energy to do so. From fishery managers' viewpoint, Ndombolo was an illegal fishing practice because it was unsustainable. A few fishers agreed with this viewpoint, yet for various reasons, many practised it regardless. However, many fishers disagreed with the sustainability view of fishery managers as they believed that, for various reasons, *hove hadziperi* (lit. fish stocks are inexhaustible) in Lake Kariba. As a village head, sekuru Mupepe's involvement in ndombolo influenced other fishing villages' residents not to comply with fishery regulations because, according to the fishing regulations of the Gache-Gache fishery, village heads are part of the administrative assemblage responsible for enforcing compliance with fishery regulations. Fishers thus questioned the legitimacy of fishery regulations when some of the people tasked with enforcing the rule broke the same rules. It is essential, however, to highlight that sekuru Mupepe is not the only village head who broke the fishery regulation rules. In fact, in the words of the Gache-Gache Fishers Association, Mr Manzungu, 'Every fisherman breaks fishery regulations every day to try and make ends meet. Going to the lake and returning home without being fined is pure luck...'⁴

Some residents blamed sekuru Mupepe that he was not setting a good example for compliance with fishery management rules. As one of the community leaders, they did not approve of his involvement in what was deemed an illegal fishing practice. Ndombolo violated the fishery regulations in several ways. First, it was practised outside the stated gillnet fishing timetable. Second, it involved fish driving, which is an unsustainable fishing practice from the perspective of fishery managers. Finally, ndombolo is practised using the twine monofilament net, which, from the perspective of fishery managers, is a threat to the sustainability of the fishery. However, factors behind non-compliance with fishery regulations were far more complex and are not solely attributable to sekuru Mupepe or other community leaders' involvement in ndombolo or other illegal fishing practices. As this dissertation will show, the arguments

⁴ Conversation with Mr Manzungu, November 20, 2019

against ndombolo were contested by the fishers who practised it as they tried to get by in their everyday struggles to make a living in an environment of precarity and uncertainty.

Gache-Gache is an environment of manifold forms of vulnerability, precarity and uncertainty. Each mid-morning conversation with village head Mupepe centred on these multifaceted forms of uncertainty and livelihood-making endeavours. For fishermen in Gache-Gache, one of the sources of vulnerability and uncertainty revolved around the dangers of facing crocodiles and hippopotami or encountering waves while casting fishing nets on the lake. Lake Kariba is a multipurpose lake, and among its functions are gillnet fishing (which this study focuses on), commercial fishing (whose target species are the sardines) and tourism. The lake is host to a considerable number of crocodiles and hippopotami. The presence of crocodiles and hippos endangers fishers (who, in the context of this study, are mainly men) through the destruction of livelihood assets such as nets and boats – crocodiles destroy gillnets, and hippos destroy fisher boats, especially unmotorised ones. During the early days of my fieldwork, fishermen were keen to emphasise the dangers they encountered, leading to injuries and death:

Every day, I leave to cast nets with my workmate, and we encounter crocodiles or hippos, especially crocodiles. It is expected to see a crocodile or two while casting nets; sometimes, you see them tearing your nets. However, we are not allowed to kill them; ZimParks protects them, and they have more rights than we fishers. Each time I am on the lake, I am reminded that there is a thin line between my life and death. On each fishing trip, I face the painful fact that I may not return to my family alive.⁵

Added to the crocodiles and hippos that fishers faced on the lake, most of the littoral is a National Park – Matusadonha – and wildlife animals, including those that pose a danger to human life like elephants and lions, abound. At the time of this study, the fence meant to separate Gache-Gache villages from Matusadonha National Park had been destroyed. Fishing villagers had different explanations regarding how the fence had been destroyed/ disappeared. The most common narrative given by Gache-Gache residents is that “Zambian poachers” had cut the fence to use as snares for wildlife in Matusadonha. This appeared to be a convenient way to exonerate themselves from any form of responsibility towards the disappearance of the fence. Whatever had happened with the fence, its disappearance exposed Gache-Gache residents to everyday interactions with dangerous wildlife animals such as elephants, buffalos and lions. Wildlife animals such as elephants frequently roamed the homesteads of Gache-

⁵ Conversation with Gwenzi, 13/10/20

Gache in search of food, particularly during the cool-dry season when the *masawu* fruits (Indian Jujube) ripened. Most Gache-Gache homesteads had *masawu* fruit trees, the roaming elephants in villages when the fruits were in season. As I highlight in the paragraphs below and subsequently in chapter three, during the cool-dry season of 2020, elephants not only came for *masawu* but further destroyed huts in search of maize seed – a staple food for Gache-Gache villagers – adversely impacting the livelihoods and wellbeing of the villagers. The maize seed was donated to villagers by the Social Welfare Department during the cool-dry season as food aid.

Added to the challenges posed by the animals were struggles with waves on the lake, causing accidents through boat capsizing, which frequently resulted in loss of life and contributed to inconsistent/fluctuating catches. Most of these everyday challenges gillnet fishers face, from an outsider’s view, can be explained narrowly in terms of the natural functioning of the fishery. For instance, research on Lake Kariba (see, for instance, Muringai et al. 2020; Magadza 2011; Ndebele-Murisa et al. 2011) indicates an intricate link between climate change and fluctuating catches. For fishers like village head Mupepe, not all challenges are attributable to natural causes. For most of the Gache-Gache fisherfolk, the fishery and the rest of the littoral are to be understood through the lens of – to borrow anthropologist Munyaradzi Mawere’s (2015) term – “a hierarchised environment” that includes humans, other beings, and the environment.



Figure 1 Artisanal fishers draining nets, Dandawa Fishing Grounds

Village head Mupepe emphasised this understanding of the environment and everyday life during our mid-morning conversations. Whenever an accident occurred on the lake, or catches became extremely low for many days, he worried it might be because they had not visited the spirit medium for over a year. Most of the challenges they faced, village head Mupepe explained, were because the ancestors may be angry that Gache-Gache residents, the village head's 'children', had forgotten that their ancestors needed a 'drink'. "*Huro dzaanasekuru dzaoma*" (the ancestors are thirsty), village head Mupepe used to say. By the ancestors needing a drink, village head Mupepe meant it had been long since they last held a thanksgiving ceremony. During the thanksgiving ceremony, they would brew beer and pour it into Lake Kariba to thank their ancestors for protecting and providing them with the fishery and its resources. One major challenge village head Mupepe cited was the lack of money to arrange for a trip to the spirit medium who lived in the Hurungwe district so that they would know what to do.

In July 2020, however, something happened that made the need to go and see sekuru Chitehwe –the spirit medium – even more urgent. Village head Mupepe and other elderly residents were visibly worried. Elephants were devouring maize seeds meant for food relief amid livelihood stress and destroying huts in the village, an occurrence which most villagers said was happening for the first time. There was a need for an urgent visit to the spirit medium to ensure no further damage would be caused to livelihoods and human life. Most villagers were convinced that more dire consequences would follow if they did not consult sekuru Chitehwe to know what had made the ancestors angry. However, they faced a significant challenge: they did not have the money to transport the elders to the spirit medium's homestead in Hurungwe district. One of the reasons why the villagers found it difficult to raise the money for transport is that this was the cool-dry season, during which fish catches are typically low and therefore, fishers make relatively less money compared to the rainy season when catches are higher. According to villagers, these low catches during the cool-dry season of 2020 were made worse by the ancestors' anger – hence, again, the need to visit the spirit medium to appease the ancestors.

"Hongu tinoziva kuti hove hadzinanyanyobatika nguva yechando. Asi varikumhepo havasiye vana vavo vachiziya nenzara" (We know that catches are low during the cool-dry season, but our ancestors do not leave us to starve unless they are punishing us for our transgressions), explained sekuru Mupepe one Sunday morning. For him and other Gache-Gache residents, the elephant raids on huts and devouring of maize seed were emblematic of ancestral anger. This

did not end there – catches were declining, too, because of ancestral anger. Curious to learn more, I asked village head Mupepe if I could be allowed to assist by providing money for fuel to ferry the village heads to and from the spirit medium’s residence in Hurungwe district.

A meeting was convened where village head Mupepe explained my offer to assist with transport money. All the village heads approved of my offer to assist with money for fuel. On the 11th of August 2020, four village heads, Nakwema (a representative for village head Dandawa), kule Diva, and I, were at sekuru Chitehwe’s residence. It was a busy place with many people from different places who had come for assistance with, presumably, different needs. We joined the queue, and while we were there, we were told that we had to pay about USD10-00 for *mari yekupinda mumatare* [to allow us access to the spirit medium]. This was more than double the amount that the community had brought. They said they thought the money was still the same as when they last visited. I offered to pay the additional five dollars. After the spirit medium had relayed the faults of Gache-Gache residents to us, we found ourselves at a nearby bush. In the bush, the four village heads, Nakwema and kule Diva, each digging small holes where they were to pour boiled water from little clay pots to cleanse them of their faults and ensure that their livelihoods would be secure. In addition, each of the six men had received three *nyora* (incisions) in the head and some herbs rubbed into the cuts for protection and general well-being. This reveals how livelihoods and everyday life in Gache-Gache are not only a cultural product in which humans are the sovereign makers of history but a product of the complex imbrication between the semiotic and the material (see Fontein 2015).

1.2 Thesis Argument/Significance

Against the background above, the central objective of the thesis is to probe the ways by which fisherfolk and their families construct livelihoods and “get by” in their everyday lives in Gache-Gache. Wooten’s (2009, xiii) ethnographic study explores how Mande farmers construct livelihoods in a rural Mali context, highlighting how a livelihood is a cultural product, with people striving to build and maintain livelihoods in meaningful ways through ongoing assessment, reflection, and action. Similarly, this thesis investigates how Gache-Gache fisherfolk and their households assemble meaningful livelihoods in the face of challenges and the strategies they adopt to respond to them. The thesis is rooted in a livelihood perspective viewed through an other-than-human anthropological analytical lens. This juxtaposition fits the context in which Gache-Gache fisherfolk construct livelihoods and live their lives because it unpacks micro-practices silenced by mainstream Kariba lakeshore and fishery management regulations directly affecting livelihoods and everyday life.

Fisheries anthropology broadly explores a range of topics, including but not limited to maritime tenures and economies, the gendered nature of fishing, how people cope with danger and risk, and the specificities of how this watery nature is manifested in social, political, and cultural systems (McCormack and Forde 2020, 1). Key themes in fisheries anthropology include local and indigenous marine environmental knowledge and practices, the existence of territoriality and sea tenure, and nuanced accounts of the changes necessitated by the imposition of new fisheries management regimes and technology (McCormack and Forde 2020, 1-2). Increasingly, fisheries anthropologists have contributed to understanding property relations, neo-liberalisation, financialisation, governmentality and nature-culture relations (McCormack and Forde 2020, 2).

The people of Gache-Gache live in a context of two dominant environmental knowledge types (ways of being in, living in and understanding the world), Western and Other-than-Western, which coalesce to affect everyday life and livelihoods. Moore (2012) describes fisheries as critical sites for studying the interconnections between social and ecological processes. An important insight highlighted by fisheries anthropologists is that human interaction with the sea environment is mutually constitutive, that the sea is a place lived in and created by people, and that the boundaries that constitute ecosystems, fishing grounds, marine zones, and the human and non-human are dynamic and permeable (McCormack and Forde 2020, 2; King and Robinson 2019). Other-than-Western ways of understanding and living in a specific environment are commonly defined under the uniform term of Indigenous/Local Knowledge Systems (IKS). In this thesis, I mainly use the term Other-than-Western knowledge to refer to Gache-Gache people's knowledge and ways of living and relating to other beings and the environment. The term "local" knowledge systems read like a reinforcement of Western epistemology (where "local" is taken as the opposite of "Western", and "Western" refers to "objective Science"). According to that local, only "Western" knowledge is globally relevant (and universally applicable). Local knowledge suggests knowledge that is only relevant at a local level for a given community and not beyond the borders of that community.

This identity construction process by white settlers propagated a "wilderness vision" of the landscape that promoted the separation of "nature from people" (Wolmer 2005; Hughes 2006; Fontein 2015). This vision did not end on the littoral but also extended to the Kariba Dam, where fishing by members of displaced African communities was regulated and policed in a way that sought to promote tourism and protect sport fishing to the benefit of white settlers and

tourists. These arrangements persist into the present as fishers are not allowed on the lake when there are tourists present to preserve the pristineness of the lake for tourists and sport fishers.

This policy of displacing and dispossessing Africans ignored the fact that when settlers came, the lands they sought to preserve as “pristine, unadulterated” were already landscapes ‘humanised’ by Africans based on alternative non-European understandings of the environment/nature. (Wolmer 2005). This Europeanisation of African landscapes did not obliterate African ideas of the environment; instead, African landscapes remained alive and affective (Fontein 2015). Against this background, this thesis seeks to understand how people living within the confines of an administrative assemblage of “science”-based conservation policies (fostering a kind of nature-culture dualism), on the one hand, and Other-than-Western cosmology, on the other, navigate this contrasting knowledge to construct and maintain livelihoods and live a meaningful life.

The study builds on the extensive Zimbabwean literature on fishing, conservation, and fishery-based livelihood portfolios (Bourdillon et al. 1985; Nyikahadzoi 2009; Mashongera 2013; Muringai et al. 2020). However, paying attention to the complex imbrication between humans, other beings, and the environment (see Mawere 2015) is a less explored theme in Zimbabwe. An emerging theme in the literature on Lake Kariba is human-wildlife conflicts and the impacts on livelihoods among fishers (see Marowa and Matanzima 2021; Matanzima et al. 2022; Marowa and Matanzima 2023). This emerging literature has, however, focused predominantly on the adverse effects of interactions between people and animals and not on the broader complex connections between people, other beings and their shared environment that shape everyday life.

In his (2015) monograph on *Humans, Other Beings and the Environment*, philosopher and anthropologist Munyaradzi Mawere highlights the complex relationships and connections between people, forests, ancestors, and other beings (of which Harurwa are a part) and shows how they are all implicated in varied ways in conserving forests and thus in livelihood sustenance in Norumedzo Communal Area in Zimbabwe. Similarly, in this thesis, I explore how humans, fish, hippopotami, elephants, crocodiles, and waves coalesce, sometimes through *ensoulment* (see Sullivan 2017, 160), to shape livelihoods and everyday life in Gache-Gache. Like Mawere (2015), I deviate from “flat ontology” by emphasising the hierarchical order of things, that is, recognising the essence of people and beings beyond the living, such as ancestors (Mawere 2015). In doing so, I refer to other beings by their specific names rather than putting

them in a homogenous grouping of other-than-humans. Gache-Gache cosmology comprises Mwari (the Creator), ancestors, people, animals, and intangible entities in that hierarchical order. The following chapters demonstrate that agency and intentionality are not distributed evenly among these entities.

Studies exploring fishery-based livelihoods mainly mention some other-than-human beings/entities in shaping livelihoods (weather and seasonal fluctuations, fish migration, waves) (see, for instance, Simmance et al. 2022; Allison and Ellis 2001; Alwang et al. 2001), and beings beyond the living, such as ancestors (Mawere 2015) but less so from an ethnographic and anthropological perspective. McGregor (2009) touches on some of these questions by highlighting the crocodile figure in her study of Tonga in Binga, Lake Kariba. She highlights how, in addition to destroying fishermen's nets and eating their catch, the figure of the crocodile is also implicated in narratives of witchcraft. This thesis tries to make an empirical contribution from an ethnographic perspective, looking at how different beings, entities and people are imbricated in a complex semiotic and material network that shapes livelihoods and everyday life in Gache-Gache.

The study will contribute to broader social science literature by advancing theoretical insights based on an ethnographic analysis of everyday life, revealing the mutual interdependence between rural Zimbabweans, fish, crocodiles, hippopotami, elephants, and their ancestors to understand ecosystemic knowledge that shapes livelihoods and everyday life. Acheson (1981, 275) notes that notable contributions in the anthropology of fishing have focused mainly on how people adapt and make a living in a marine environment. Most of these studies investigate what happens on board ships and in the fishing industry but are not shore-based studies of fishing communities (Acheson 1981, 276). This study is an exception in this regard because it investigates both the onshore and offshore experiences of fisherfolk and their households.

Fishing occurs in a very heterogeneous and uncertain environment, and a primary source of uncertainty is the socio-ecological environment in which fishing takes place (Acheson 1981, 276). The sea is an alien environment where man is poorly equipped to survive (Acheson 1981, 276). A critical emerging body of scholarship in Africanist scholarship is about the politics of land, with particular significance in former settler colonies where race remains a central social cleavage and inflects debates about state and nation. The study will also contribute towards understanding how belonging is played out through the politics of land and land rights in African countries whose land tenure/ownership systems continue to be racialised.

1.3 Research Question(s)

The thesis sought to investigate and understand livelihoods and everyday life among fishers and other villagers in Gache-Gache. I frame the study within a conceptual framework of a shared moral economy of survival guiding everyday life and livelihoods and the influence of ‘other-than-humans’. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to understanding fisheries, belonging and identity, and livelihoods. Secondary questions include:

- What does it mean to be a fisherman in Gache-Gache, and what constitutes acceptable ways of fishing and living in Gache-Gache?
- In what ways are livelihoods and everyday life made meaningful in Gache-Gache?
- What specific other-than-humans characterise Gache-Gache residents’ understanding of the environment, and what role do they play in shaping livelihoods and everyday life?

The following section details the background to the study, starting the incessant economic crisis which shapes how livelihoods

1.4 Everyday Life in a Crisis-Ridden Economic Context

We face many challenges as fishermen. As a fisherman, I am like a farmer *ari kumamisha uko* (in the communal areas) or the A1 farms [small-scale agricultural plots allocated to Zimbabwean people during the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme that started in 2000]. My petition is, if possible – as someone farming in his field [fishing in the lake] – I must not be restricted regarding what time I must enter the field and what time I must leave it. We are being given a timetable. We are allowed to cast our nets at 4 pm. By 9 or 10 am the following day, we should have drained the nets and taken them off the lake. If caught on the lake, it is a punishable offence, usually through a fine or confiscation of fishing gear. They say other lake users will also be ready to use the lake. Then, at 9 am, when I should have drained my nets and left the lake, there may be a strong wave, meaning I will fail to drain my nets during the stipulated time. By the time the wave subsides, I will be compelled to go and check my nets because I need to exist. I need daily income from fish sales for my family to survive. When the wind subsides after 9 am, I enter the lake, and chances are high that I will meet lake management authorities. They will likely confiscate my nets, or they may take me to court or fine me. However, this is my farm (the lake) where my source of livelihood is predicated. So, if there is rainfall early in the morning, will I be trespassing if I go weeding in the afternoon? (Sekuru Zebedi, 18 August 2020).

The above excerpt from a conversation with Sekuru Zebedi, one of the interlocutors, summarises a few of the many everyday challenges fisherfolk face in Gache-Gache fishing villages. A multipurpose lake – shared by safari operators, Kapenta fishers, aquaculture companies like Lake Harvest, tourists, conservation NGOs and lake management authorities like the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (hereafter ZimParks) and the Lake Kariba Fisheries Research Institute – Kariba is the centre of many conflicts. Kapenta fishers are different from gillnet fisherfolk in that they are large-scale commercial fishers, use different fishing gear, and focus on one specific fish species – the sardines. Although it is an artificial waterbody, Lake Kariba typifies Cock's (2007) conceptualisation of nature as a site of struggle, where dominant interests prevail over those of subaltern members of society. As the epigraph above highlights, gillnet fishermen are subjected to regulations about their work on the lake that frequently put their livelihoods at risk. The timetable issue that Sekuru Zebedi highlights in the excerpt above is just one of the many rules and regulations put in place by lake management authorities to guide fishing and everyday life on Lake Kariba's shores and the fishing villages.

The timetable for gillnet fishers set by ZimParks would not be a bone of contention were it not for other-than-human elements like waves that frequently disrupt the fishermen's schedule. The presence of wildlife – crocodiles and hippopotami in this instance – also adds to the challenges that fisherfolk in Gache-Gache face on the lake, pushing them into incessant precarity. In designing the timetable, lake management authorities did not factor in these other-than-human elements of the fishery that could disrupt the fisherfolk's timetable. As a result, gillnet fishermen, in their pursuit of a livelihood, find it dangerous or impossible not to comply with the timetable regulation, leading to conflicts with lake management authorities.

Everyday life for gillnet fishermen is characterised by having to navigate their way around the lake's regulations and the behaviour of the fishery itself. In addition to the rules and regulations that govern fishing and lake use, the Gache-Gache fishery comprises many other elements that affect fishing on the lake. Some such elements include the climate, waves, crocodiles, and hippopotami. Other-than-humans' actions combine with those of humans to constitute everyday life on the shores of Lake Kariba. The Gache-Gache fishery has seasonal variability that also directly impacts fishermen's behaviour and, in the process, affects whether fishermen comply with the rules and regulations put in place by lake management authorities. Additionally, the country's macroeconomic and political context also influences the everyday experiences of gillnet fishermen. This section provides the background context and focuses on Zimbabwe's

incessant socio-economic and political crisis and how this directly impacts life in marginal areas such as Gache-Gache.

Zimbabwe has been in a state of perpetual crisis for over two decades. Since the turn of the millennium, Zimbabwe has faced unprecedented economic decline and politically instigated chaos, now commonly described in the literature on Zimbabwe as the Zimbabwean crisis. During this period, Zimbabwe experienced broad upheaval on a wide scale, but productivity was the most affected (Jones 2010). The most singled out factors behind the Zimbabwean crisis are the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme's (hereafter FTLRP) impact and its consequences and the political tyranny perpetrated by the ruling party against all its perceived enemies (Gwande 2017, 91). The FTLRP was implemented in 2000, when a pronounced economic decline and political turmoil became glaringly noticeable. The FTLRP involved violent, uncompensated, and compulsory white owned white-owned commercial farm acquisition as ZANU political elites, liberation war veterans and villagers from rural areas across the country (mainly ZANU PF supporters) 'grabbed' plots for themselves. It was a radical land redistribution exercise, marred by violence and was carried out in an unplanned manner that resulted in significant employment loss for many farm workers. The country also lost its famed status as 'the breadbasket of Africa'. Hence, the Zimbabwean crisis is often discussed in relation to the FTLRP and the economic decline that followed.

However, although the developments of the year 2000 and beyond are major significant contributors, signs of economic decline had already begun to show in the early 1990s when the government implemented the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1990 (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004:3582004, 358; Gwande, 2017:922017, 92). The effects of the structural adjustment programme were disastrous for most of the population (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004:3582004, 358). Raftopoulos and Phimister (2004, 358) observe that the number of households living in poverty increased from 61% in 1995 to 75% in 2000 mainly because of the introduction of the structural adjustment programme. In this sense, some of Zimbabwe's challenges post -2000 are due to global shifts, for instance, the deepening effects of neoliberal change, post-2000 are due to global shifts, for instance, the deepening effects of neoliberal change and increased pressure against subsidies and other welfarist strategies (Jones, 2010:288). Jones (2010) agrees that the roots of the Zimbabwean crisis are traceable back to the inception of ESAP, but it is difficult to capture its full effect on Zimbabwe's economy.

It is important to stress, however, that most of reasons for the Zimbabwean crisis are local in origin. For instance, the government of Zimbabwe compensated the liberation war veterans in 1997 through unbudgeted payments and this, which significantly contributed to economic instability (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004; Jones, 2010). This was after the liberation war Liberation War veterans had confronted the government and the president over the neglect of their status and welfare (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2004, 360). The government also decided to participate in the Democratic Republic of Congo war from 1999 to 2002 (Gwande 2017, 92) also consuming a big chunk of the national budget in the process, consuming a big chunk of the national budget. All these factors complement each other in explaining the incessant Zimbabwean crisis.

The crisis has generated a new mode of economic action commonly referred to in Shona slang as *kukiya-kiya* or *kujingirisa* (multiple forms of making do) (Jones, 2010:285; Gukurume, 2019:280). Formal or 'straight' ways of transacting that follow laid down rules have over the years given way to 'zig-zag' deals directed at individual survival (Jones, 2010:285). Prior to the post-2000 Zimbabwean crisis, informal livelihood strategies were perceived to be for women and low-class citizens surviving on the margins of urban areas (Jones, 2010). The *kukiya-kiya* economy after 2000, however, has expanded and spread from the perceived bottom of society and now comprises almost everyone: from youths to civil servants, wage labourers and even the rural poor (Jones, 2010:298). As Jones (*ibid.*) observes, even state institutions partake in the *kukiya-kiya* economic logic. For instance, some teachers at Gache-Gache Secondary School are involved in fishing and the buying and selling of fish. Regardless of repeated complaints from parents that some teachers spend more time *mumvura* (lit. in the waters) than they do teaching, teachers continued to engage in fishing to compensate for their meagre salaries. A few other teachers also engaged in hoarding diesel and petrol for sale at a black-market rate, which is higher than the official rate.

In the face of such a need for resourcefulness and ingenuity, it is important to note that state institutions and the authorities running them have also defected into *kukiya-kiya* mode, taking bribes and getting involved in corrupt deals as a means of survival. It is a strategy that knows no spatial boundaries as people in rural and urban areas engage in various forms of informal, and at times illicit, ways of surviving. Many studies on the informalisation of livelihoods (for instance Jones 2010; Kamete, 2010; Chagonda, 2016; Gwande, 2017) have paid attention to urban areas to the neglect of rural frontiers such as Gache-Gache and the Zambezi Valley.

This pronounced relational understanding conceives everyday lives as an arena existing within broader structured processes (Helliker 2021, 5). In showing significant agency and ingenuity in everyday practices, ordinary people are always on the watch and devise their own localised sub-systems of rules and actions, which are likely illegible to the dominant order (de Certeau 1988,199-200). Everyday life is arbitrary, and speaking of tactics, what works today may not be applicable tomorrow (Chabal 2009,151). In the Zimbabwean context, Jones (2010) observes the emergence of a generalised culture of evasion: evasion of social institutions like the state, the bureaucracy and the law and evasion of cultural norms and hierarchies”.

This kukiya-kiya economic logic has meant that people must adopt “precarious modes of survival” (Kamete 2010, 55). These survival strategies are made possible through defiance of official spatial planning controls and resisting authorities' often violent restoration of order (Kamete 2010; Jones, 2010). The kukiya-kiya economic logic, as a response to the challenging living conditions in Zimbabwe, requires the suspension of most, if not all, formal ways of livelihood construction. At the peak of the crisis, especially in 2008, the country was bedevilled by a hyperinflationary environment that made it difficult for many people to sustain themselves from the meagre salaries they got from formal employment (Gukurume 2015). Especially in 2008, the country was bedevilled by a hyperinflationary environment that made it difficult for many people to sustain themselves from the meagre salaries they got from formal employment (Gukurume 2015, 219). The Zimbabwean crisis destroyed financial capital at both household and national levels (Kabonga 2020, 199). The Zimbabwean crisis (especially during its peak from 2007 to 2008) effected a decimation of many if not all, of the five livelihood capitals – natural, financial, social, human, and physical (Kabonga 2020) affected a decimation of many if not all of the five livelihood capitals – natural, financial, social, human, and physical (Kabonga 2020, 192). Most Zimbabweans have been forced to innovate, be resourceful and ingenious to survive the scathing conditions (Gukurume, 2019; Kabonga, 2020).

The period from 2000 to 2008 is generally referred to as the ‘crisis period’ as the ‘crisis period’, but the conditions of informality and livelihood precarity have continued to date. There was a period of general calm from 2009 to 2013 when the ruling party and the opposition united to form a Government of National Unity (GNU). The GNU also saw the government adopting a multi-currency economy with the United States dollar and the South African Rand as the main currencies. Basic goods that had been hard to find in shops became available again. However, the calm brought during this period was short lived because the cost of living became more

expensive again as short-lived because the cost of living became more expensive again as during this period was short-lived because the cost of living became more expensive again when the government reverted to the use of the Zimbabwean dollar in 2016. Additionally, even during the GNU period of relative calm, the kukiya-kiya economic logic remained prevalent. It is a miscarriage of justice therefore if the period from 2000 to 2008 is the only one referred to as the crisis period because what has been described as the Zimbabwean crisis by scholars is still prevalent, therefore, if the period from 2000 to 2008 is the only one referred to as the crisis period because what has been described as the Zimbabwean crisis by scholars is still prevalent, especially in terms of people's livelihoods and the authoritarian nature of the state.

The kukiya-kiya economic logic as a concept has barely received much scholarly attention regardless of the various strategies inherent in its various inherent strategies (Kabonga, 2020:192). Kukiya-kiya is a strategy that has been adopted across a broad spectrum of the Zimbabwean population including the employed and unemployed, educated, including the employed and unemployed, educated and uneducated, the young and old, women and men (Jones, 2010; Kabonga 2020, 192). Zimbabweans' everyday lives cannot be directly read and deduced from the broad national descriptions about the character and nature of the crisis (Helliker, et-al. 2021,1). The crisis is "invariably refracted, mediated and translated by means of using intricate and fluid social repertoires in specific localities and understood both spatially and temporally (Helliker, 2021, 1). Explicit everyday lives literature remains marginal within Zimbabwean studies (Helliker et-al 2021, 2). The notion of everyday lives involves routinised activities and practices in which people – collectively - engage daily in their micro-situatedness (Helliker et-al. 2021, 2). The notion of everyday lives involves routinised activities and practices in which people – collectively - engage daily in their micro-situatedness (Helliker et al, 2021, 2 -3). The content of everyday life is context-specific spatially as well as temporally (Helliker et al. 2021).

The effects of the Zimbabwean crisis on everyday life in Gache-Gache have not been explored in a major way. McGregor (2008; 2009) is an exception. In her study conducted in 2001, McGregor (2008, 861) observed that as Zimbabwe's crisis deepened, the decades old and formerly well-established conservation regime governing Lake Kariba became increasingly incapacitated. Unregulated economic activities were burgeoning in this Zambezi Valley marginal frontier in the early 2000s (McGregor, 2008:861). McGregor (2008) studied Tonga fishermen in Binga district – one of the two districts in which fishing camps on the Zimbabwean

side of Lake Kariba are found. Gache-Gache is in the other district Nyami-Nyami. The same observations made by McGregor (2008) in 2001, when the crisis was still in its infancy, were also observable in Gache-Gache in a more pronounced manner in 2019. During fieldwork, I observed the violation of many laid down rules for the management of the fishery. The epigraph in the introduction is an indication of the violation of the Gache-Gache fishery regulations. In the face of the incessant politico-economic crisis, many people have migrated into Gache-Gache and other fishing camps along the Kariba lakeshore and fish without permits.

The Zimbabwean crisis brought with it a massive reconfiguration of state power in the Zambezi Valley and the informalisation of livelihoods (McGregor, 2008, 861). This is evidenced by Tonga fishermen in Binga district who engage in fishing patrols at night (McGregor 2008, 861) in defiance of laid out rules for fishing. The fishing patrols that McGregor refers to involve casting nets during the night in prohibited areas of the lake areas. to evade being caught by conservation authorities. The ability of fishermen in Binga to “etch out informal economic spaces in a time of austerity and inflation is not so much about the emergence of spaces outside of state power but is a recrafting of the role and nature of the state” (McGregor 2008, 861).

Such reconfiguration of the role and nature of the state was also evident in Gache-Gache during my study to the extent that fishermen created relationships of convenience with some lake management authorities that allowed them to circumvent the prohibitive fishery regulations. For instance, in some areas of the Gache-Gache fishery, fishermen pay a small token called a ‘tollgate fee’ to Lake management authorities for permission to fish in restricted areas and outside the permitted gillnet fishing timetable. This section has provided a brief background to the Zimbabwean crisis and the kukiya-kiya economic logic. The following sections are connected to this context, which presents the current situation. Most of the literature on Gache-Gache and the Zambezi Valley on the Zimbabwean side of the Lake does not speak to the current politico-economic context of Zimbabwe. If presented outside the context of the Zimbabwean crisis, the research site will give the reader an impression of a strict conservationist regime that has not been corrupted and fishermen who are the passive victims of rigid conservation laws.

1.4.1 Fisheries Co-Management on the Shores of Lake Kariba

Under co-management arrangements, the assumption is that fishermen have a sense of responsibility, can monitor each other’s behaviour, and can impose punitive measures on members who violate the regulations (Malasha 2002, 2). However, introducing co-management arrangements has not led to scrutiny and amendment of existing fishery regulations. In the Lake

Kariba case, Isaac Malasha (2002, 2) argues that regardless of the on-paper argument that fishing regulations seek to protect the sustainability of fisheries from a scientific point of view, the primary purpose is to protect the economic interests of the powerful groups of people who designed the co-management regime. The interests of the powerful groups differ from those of the local fishermen. Thus, there are unending violations and poor implementation of regulations under a co-management regime. The scientific perspective regards licensing as a measure for preventing the depletion of fish stocks, but the licence's social, economic, and political role is often hidden from this perspective. In practice, licences are used to restrict access to natural resources. Fishing licences have also been used to raise funds for the treasury (Malasha 2002, 4).

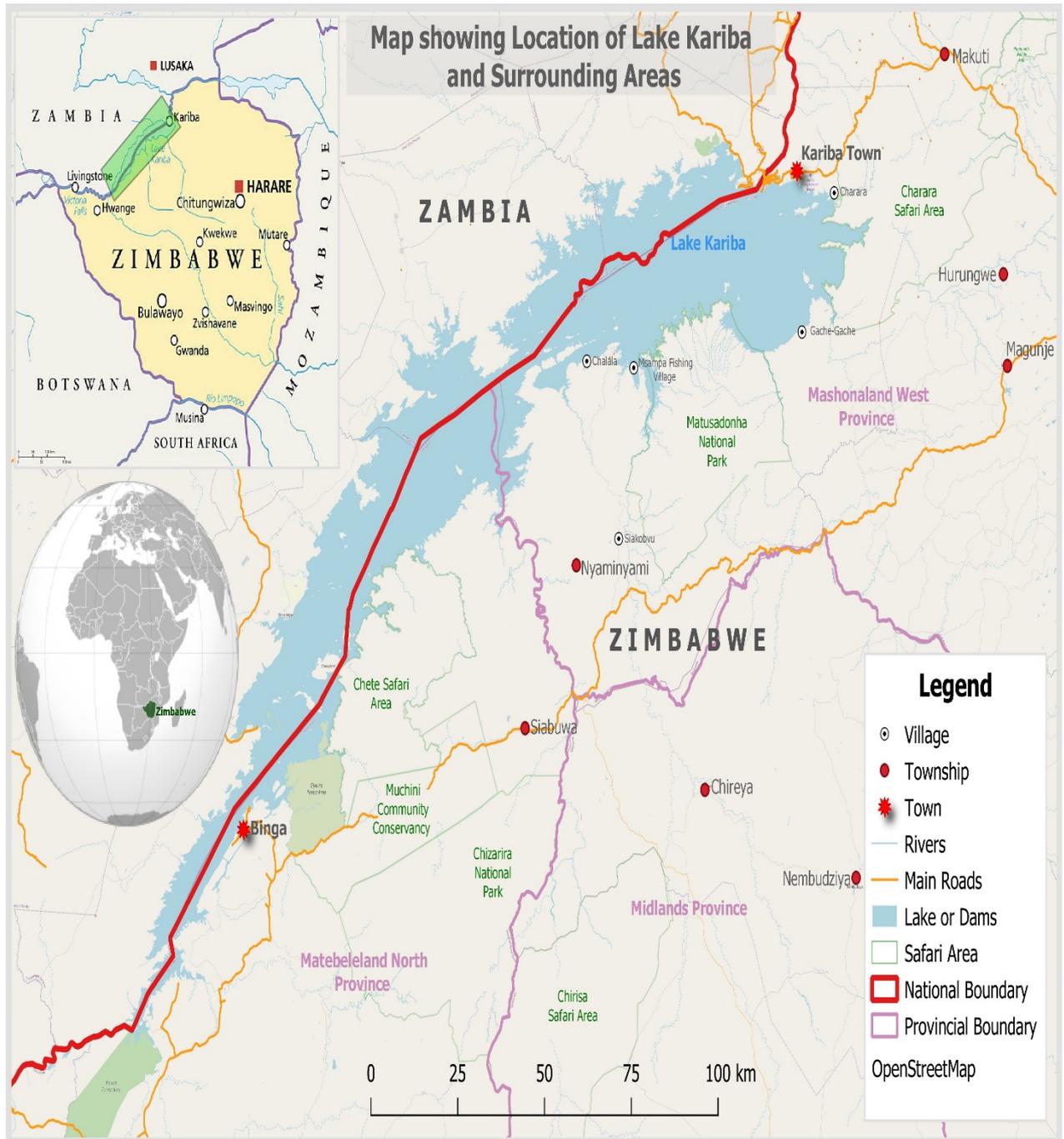


Figure 2 Map Showing Lake Kariba and Surrounding Areas

The plummeting Zimbabwean economy after 2000 made Lake Kariba more prominent as people turned to fishing and cross-border trading (McGregor 2009, 175). Inflation was rising, and formal employment was collapsing. Before 2000, the state, through conservation, large-scale commerce, and tourism, projected the image of an “uninhabited wilderness” (McGregor 2009, 175) on the Zimbabwean side of Lake Kariba. As a result of the post-2000 crisis, developing social networks crisscrossed the landscape of the lake and border, disrupting the

image of uninhabited wilderness because state capacity was crumbling rapidly (McGregor 2009, 175).

The pre-inundation period is presented in the literature as a period of integrated knowledge and resource management system that supported the livelihoods of the riverine communities, most of whom are Tonga. After inundation, the integrated knowledge and resource management system was replaced by the present-day dysfunctional assemblage of fragmented systems. The fragmentation of natural resource governance through a tenure transformation in which vast tracts of land were set aside as protected areas took away power from the people to the state. Today, the Zambezi Valley and the lake support a range of economic and social interests that are detrimental to marginalised local people's livelihoods. Mhlanga (2009:586) describes the pre-impoundment Zambezi Valley as "a vast integrated resource used for multiple purposes by the Gwembe Valley Tonga, whose local resource-management approaches were based on religion and spirituality".

An understanding of the set of fishing regulations on Lake Kariba on the Zimbabwean side can be best understood within the context of the country's colonial land dispossession and spatial ordering in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe. As such, the following section provides an overview of colonial displacement and dispossession in the Zambezi Valley. The displaced on the Zimbabwean side, mainly the Tonga people, were pushed far away from what the colonial government categorised as the Crown Unassigned/Undetermined land. This thwarted any possibility of compensation (McGregor 2009, 110). The lack of political will to compensate the displaced was, in a sense, predetermined as the land on which the Zimbabwean Tonga were living had long been categorised as 'unassigned' under the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 (McGregor, 2009; Malasha, 2003). As such, the displaced on the Zimbabwean side were not entitled to compensation claims that accrue to displaced peoples as the land they had been dispossessed of was deemed Crown Land (McGregor 2009, 110).

At present, ZimParks and the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) refer to them as poachers (Dzingirai 1999, 41), while their meagre agricultural produce is annually destroyed by wild animals like elephants, hippos, and buffaloes, which are strictly protected by the state (Musona 2011). The colonial landscape rezoning exercise in the Zambezi Valley was meant primarily to generate electricity (Bourdillon et al. 1985, 10; Dzingirai, 2003a, 2003b; Musona, 2011; Mashingaidze 2013; Sibanda 2001; McGregor, 2009; Murphree, 1988). However, as Hughes (2006, 2010)

highlights, the Kariba project was also a cultural identity cultivation project, as white settlers tried to belong to the country through nature (the Zambezi valley) and simultaneously displaced the Tonga people from their natural habitat. In other words, through the Kariba project, the white settler state sought to convert land and the environment in the Zambezi Valley into a wilderness landscape. The modernising dam project did not distract from this but facilitated it by creating, for instance, a lake for tourist wilderness adventures for white settlers.

Europeanising African land into landscape has entailed the displacement of indigenous populations. Physical displacement pushed the Tonga people to the periphery, where they could now hardly access the waters of the Zambezi River. They were physically displaced from the ecologically rich Zambezi River (Weinrich, 1977; Mashingaidze, 2013; Musona, 2011; Dzingirai, 2003; 1998; Sibanda, 2001). After displacement, they have been continuously alienated from accessing the resources in their respective relocation areas. This has seen a rise in Tonga activists claiming their right to restitution and access to land and natural resources (McGregor, 2009; Mashingaidze, 2013). The Zimbabwean Tonga provide a substantive case of how settler colonialism generated contemporaneous processes of primitive accumulation and land resource enclosure that still haunt Zimbabwe.

In principle, fishery governance in Gache-Gache is governed at three levels that, on paper are supposed to complement each other. First is the office of the village heads. Village heads are responsible for allocating and allowing residence for new immigrants. They are also tasked with vetting whether new immigrants qualify for applying for a fisher's permit. They vet by writing a letter to support an immigrant's application for a permit to the rural council. This is where the authority or power of village heads ends. During fieldwork, village heads were seen as having minimal power. First, they were referred to as "homwe" (lit. pockets), meaning representatives or "eyes" of the chief. The chief does not live in Gache-Gache, and the village heads were seen as responsible for the traditional rule of Chief Musampa. Gache-Gache is somewhat complex and different from the rest of the rural communities in Zimbabwe in that it has both elements of permanence.

Kariba's shoreline on the Zimbabwean side is administered by two rural district councils (Binga and NyamiNyami), one Town Council (Kariba Town), one Forestry Commission and the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority. During the colonial period, only registered fishermen could fish in the Lake. After political independence, the Lake Kariba Fisheries Research Institute (LKFRI) allowed each licensed fisher to employ two workers who

could fish on behalf of the permit holder (Jackson et al. 1998, 108). The permit holder will get two-thirds of the catch per fishing trip while his two workers share the other third. Fishers must have a licence/permit to fish on the lake to control access and effort (Machena 2003). This, however, has proven difficult to enforce and monitor. Worsening economic conditions in Zimbabwe have not helped. People living around the lakeshore are predominantly agrarian regardless of unfavourable climatic conditions. Crops frequently fail, and this makes the situation around the lake desperate during dry years. The Kariba fishery is a multiuser resource, and the inshore fishery competes for access with other users (Khan et al. 2004, 62). Khan et al. (2004, 62) estimated the fishing population to be about 1 240. However, this figure by Khan et al. (2004) was probably arrived at prior to the Zimbabwean crisis. This is because, in Gache-Gache only, the number of fishermen far exceeds this estimated figure.

1.4.2 The Gache-Gache Fishery: Social Organisation and Administrative Setup

MAP OF GACHE-GACHE CATCHMENT AREA

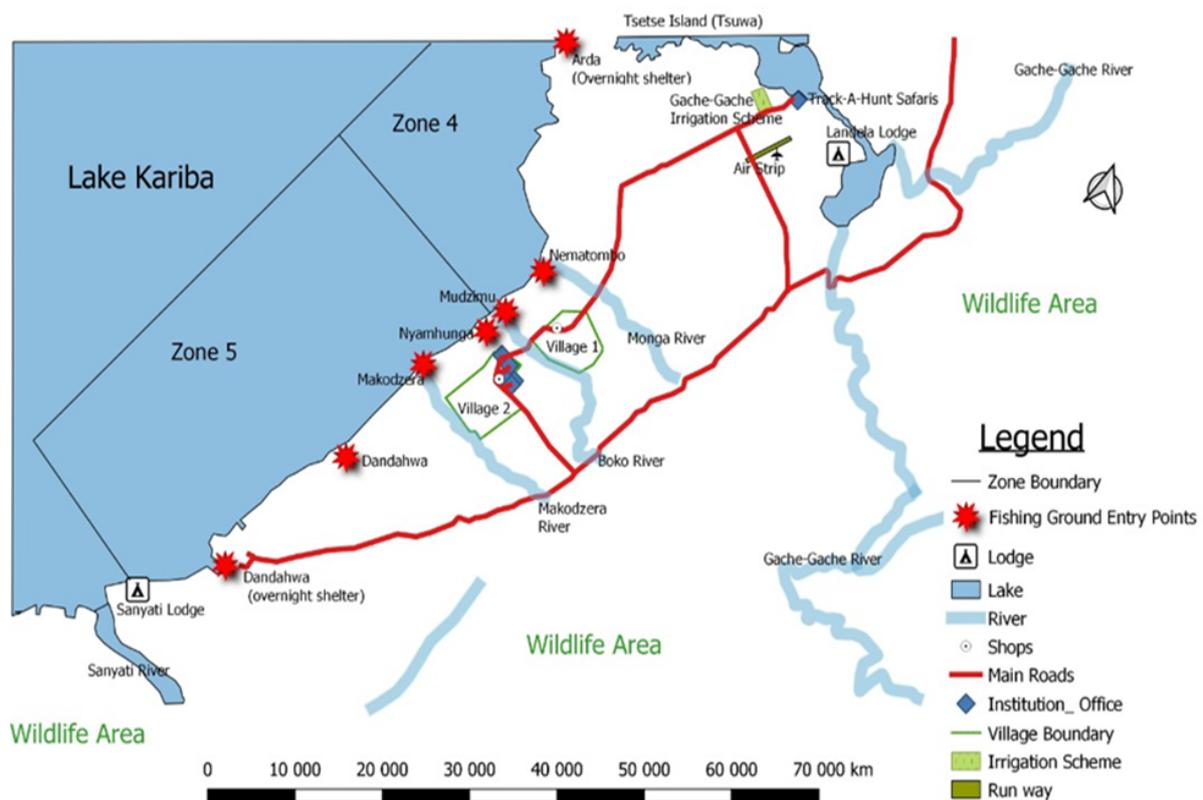


Figure 3 Map of Gache-Gache Catchment Area



Figure 4 Gache-Gache Village 1 Map

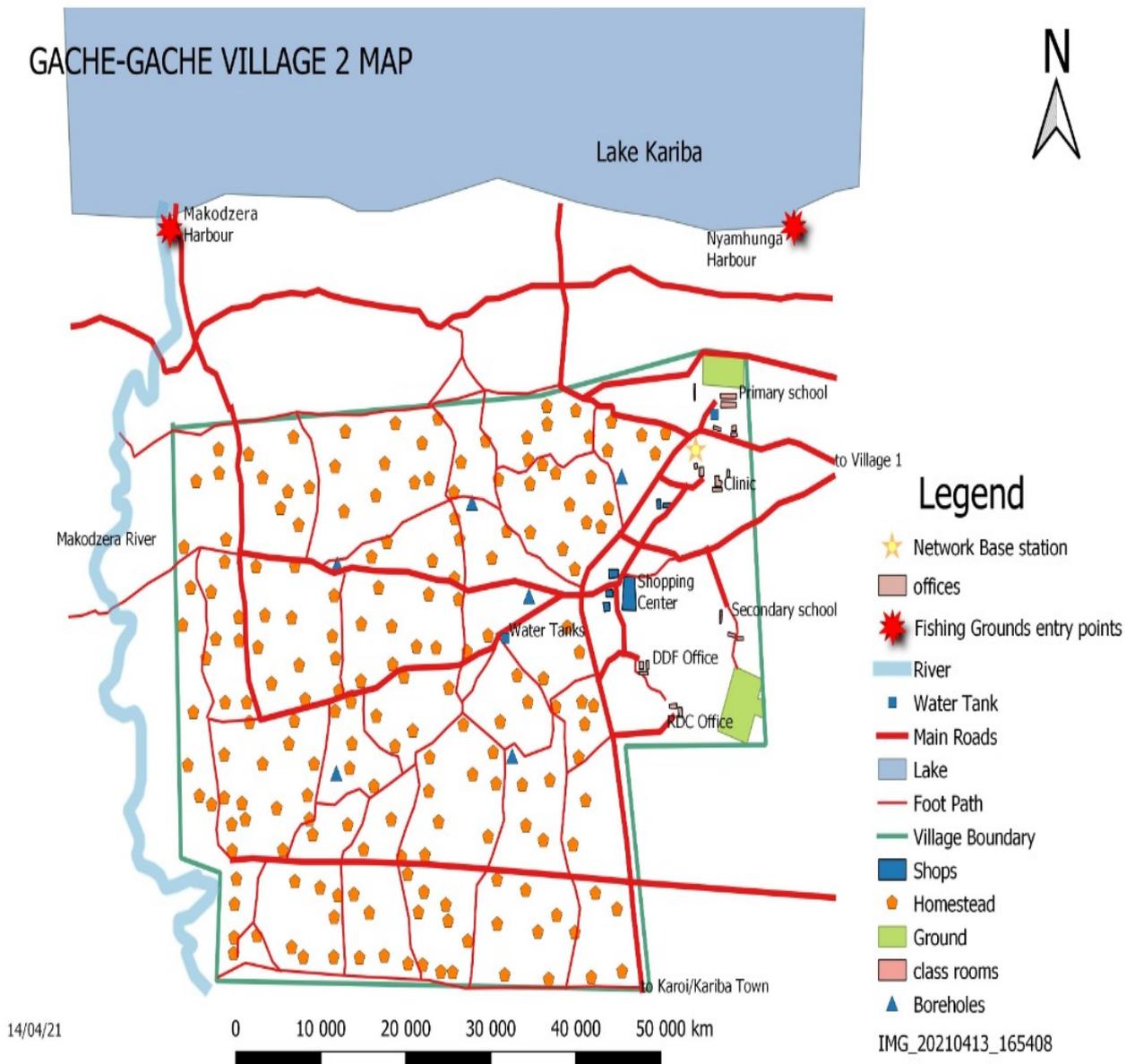


Figure 5 Gache-Gache Village 2 Map

Gache-Gache is in Nyami-Nyami rural district. Nyami-Nyami is one of the two districts on the Zimbabwean side of Lake Kariba’s shoreline, the other being Binga district. All the fishing villages or camps are in these two districts. NyamiNyami district is divided into three communal lands: Omay, Kanyati (now Makande), and Gache-Gache (Sibanda 2001 38; Mubaya 2008). Gache-Gache Communal Land, under which the fishing villages in question fall, has one ward comprising two main villages. The nine wards in NyamiNyami district, broadly speaking and in terms of contemporary state structures instituted by the colonial state, fall under the jurisdiction of NyamiNyami Rural District Council (hereafter NRDC). In Gache-Gache, the Korekore people constitute the majority ethnic group. Tonga people constitute the “traditional population of NyamiNyami district” (Mashinya, 2007: 14), but in Gache-Gache

Korekore people are the most dominant group. Gache-Gache fishing villages comprise five combined fishing camps, named after five of the chiefs who were displaced to pave the way for the construction of Lake Kariba.

Of the five, four Korekore chieftaincies were displaced and resettled in Hurungwe district. Only one of these chieftaincies – Musampakaruma – was resettled in NyamiNyami district, and Musampakaruma’s people claim to be of Tonga origins. However, all people in Gache-Gache fishing villages speak Korekore or other Shona language dialects. The four other chieftaincies, resettled in Hurungwe district, are Dandawa, Nyamhunga, Nematombo, and Mudzimu. As the maps above show, Gache-Gache fishing camps have been combined to constitute villages one and two. Village two comprises Dandawa, Musampakaruma and Nyamhunga camps, while village one comprises Nematombo and Mudzimu. Combined, these two villages of Gache-Gache constitute Ward Two. In Zimbabwean local government terms, a ward is governed by an elected ward councillor. This makes the local government in Gache-Gache, just like other rural areas in Zimbabwe, an assemblage of customary and formal government structures. I shall discuss this assemblage in subsequent paragraphs.

Gache-Gache fishing villages are named after the chiefs who were displaced, and during the early years of establishment, these fishing villages were primarily populated by persons with homes in resettled areas of the same chiefs. Therefore, for every village that is found in Gache-Gache, there is a chieftaincy that bears the same name in communal areas away from Gache-Gache, that is, in areas where the chiefs were resettled to pave the way for the construction of the Lake. When the fishing villages were established, the resettled chiefs did not relocate again to Gache-Gache. Instead, some people belonging to their respective chieftaincies relocated to Gache-Gache when the fishing villages/ camps were established.

Each chief is represented in the fishing villages by a village head. Village heads help their respective chiefs in the resettled areas to govern people in the fishing villages customarily. Village heads solve most disputes in the villages, and only when the dispute is beyond the powers of the village head is the matter referred to the chief. In the words of the ward councillor during fieldwork, “*masabhuku ihomwe dzaanamambo vavo*” (lit. village heads are pockets for their respective chiefs). This means village heads are viewed as mere representatives of their chiefs and do not hold much power. This common perception in the fishing villages determines widely held attitudes towards village heads. Every day, talking with fishermen and residents of

Gache-Gache revealed that fishermen do not respect the authority of the village heads because the office heads are just in name.

During some informal conversations, some of the villagers openly told some of the village heads that they do not command the kind of authority they should because they spend too much time drinking with their subjects. Arguably, however, village heads lack authority mainly because of the assemblage of traditional and formal government set up in Gache-Gache. Village heads are also responsible for communicating or referring matters of spiritual significance to their respective chiefs and the spirit medium. For instance, spiritual cases referred to the spirit mediums during my time in the field, including elephant raids on village homesteads. Seasonal decline in fish catches, especially during winter, although a frequent occurrence, is also referred to as the spirit medium.

Two forms of leadership structures exist in the Gache-Gache inshore fishery. First is traditional leadership, which was already explained in the previous section. Second, the post-independence political structure is implemented as part of the decentralisation programme (Jackson et al. 1998). Prior to independence, traditional leadership was more influential in the fishing villages than they are today. In the past, chiefs-controlled fishing villages where only their subjects fished (Machena 2003). This system has broken down. One of the primary reasons for the breaking down this authority of the chiefs and village heads can be explained by the new post-independence administrative setup of local government in the fishing villages.

In principle, each village head recommends residents for fishing permits. On paper, people from the respective resettled chiefs – those whom Nyikahadzoi (1998) refers to as the original settlers – can settle in the fishing villages and obtain fishing permits. The responsibilities of the village head include vetting aspiring fishermen to ensure they are from the communal area of the chief allocated a particular fishing village (Jackson et al. 1998; Machena 2003). On paper, the village head is also expected to exclude other fishers from the village. Today, village heads in Gache-Gache are less keen on excluding other fishermen from the villages. As highlighted in the introduction, they often cite *pachivanhu chedu hazvina kunaka* ('our concept of being humane does not allow us to exclude others when life is generally difficult for everyone in this country'). In accepting everyone who comes to fish without discrimination, village heads also contribute to non-compliance to fisheries. In many cases, they receive a small token to write

down a newcomer's name and help the newcomer apply for a permit by recommending him to the rural council.⁶

Local government in Gache-Gache is the responsibility of the NyamiNyami Rural District Council (NRDC). Rural local government authority in Zimbabwe comprises a two-strand administrative structure (Matyszak 2010, 4). One of these is an officially elected council. The other consists of elected traditional leaders and appointed officials imposed by the government (Matyszak 2010, 4). Therefore, Gache-Gache, like other rural areas in Zimbabwe, comprises multiple modes of rule – customary rule and formal rule under the aegis of rural councils (Hammar 2005).

The result of such a leadership arrangement is that loci of power run parallel in rural areas. The implications are that many tentacles of power emanating from different sources in this bifurcated system touch upon and control the lives of the inhabitants of rural areas (Matyszak, 2010:4; Alexander, 2018:135). Contemporary Zimbabwean state institutions cast chiefs as customary, but they constantly call upon them to implement technocratic edicts or enforce partisan loyalties (Alexander, 2018:135). Chieftaincy has often played a crucial role in shaping the spheres of property relations and citizenship in Zimbabwe (2018:135). Yet at the same time, formal law and authority still hold significant power through rural district councils (Hammar, 2005; Alexander, 2018).

Hammar (2005:18) describes Zimbabwe's rural local government as being 'a significant if somewhat ambivalent arena of public authority, being in many ways at the frontier of state and ruling party hegemony, while equally being engaged with specific dynamics of local politics.' Despite the rural council's formal definition within an established legal framework, it is subject to multiple interpretations in practice (Hammar 2001, 552). The result of such multiple interpretations is an uneasy challenge to the state's 'sovereignty and project of legitimation in the margins' (Hammar 2001, 552).

The post-colonial government significantly curtailed the powers of the chiefs and village heads in the village heads. The power to manage the fishery lies in the hands of the rural council and the ZPWMA. These bodies are responsible for issuing permits and controlling fishery rules and regulations. However, excluding village heads from decision-making processes has fuelled pronounced non-compliance. It is increasingly difficult, for instance, to trace unregistered

⁶ Observation, fieldnotes

fishermen because when they are not on the lake, no one can detect them as they can easily deny that they are involved in fishing. The table below shows the total population in the five Gache-Gache camps over five years, from 2014 to 2019.

It is important to note that the figures for Gache-Gache above do not include unregistered fishermen. I compiled the figures using the village heads' records over five years. The yearly figures for registered fishermen already surpass Khan et al.'s (2004) figure, which represented the total population for all fishing camps/villages in the Zambezi Valley. During fieldwork, many fishermen admitted that the total number of people fishing in Gache-Gache is more than thrice the permitted number. This is because many fishermen have immigrated to Gache-Gache for livelihoods after the Zimbabwean crisis.

Village	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
	NH	TP										
Dandawa	96	452	98	486	101	712	102	339	101	612	99	548
Musampakaruma	84	290	92	300	100	380	101	400	108	500	115	600
Nyamhunga	56	193	52	227	83	187	86	300	98	362	113	402
Nematombo	80	100	100	135	115	255	120	305	135	314	140	424
Mudzimu	167	730	144	686	142	646	137	654	138	552	141	575
Gache-Gache	483	1765	486	1834	541	2180	546	1998	580	2340	608	1974
Totals												

Table 1 Household and Population Changes 2014 - 2019

It is difficult to document the total number of fishermen who are not registered because they are not found in any official records. This means the 175-permit cap for Gache-Gache has already been exceeded. The number of fishing permits within a given fishing village is based on a Catch-per-unit effort study using data collected over a long time (Machena 2003). The permitted number of fishermen per fishing village is based on the ecological constraints within the given fishing ground(s). These guidelines are no longer being followed in Gache-Gache, given the prevailing economic context where laid-down rules have been suspended in search of survival.

There are restrictions regarding the number of nets each fisherman is allowed. Each fisherman is allowed a total of five nets. Only cotton nets are permitted, and the monofilament net is illegal. The minimum mesh size for the nets is four inches. However, because nets that meet these criteria are not readily available in Zimbabwe, monofilament nets are prevalent in Gache-

Gache as informal traders from neighbouring Zambia smuggle them over the border. Monofilament nets are relatively cheap to buy compared to cotton nets, but they quickly get damaged. Lake management authorities also illicitly encourage the illegal monofilament net by confiscating them when they catch fishermen using them and then reselling them to other fishermen. In the context of the politico-economic crisis in the country, it is crucial to recognise that both the enforcers and the fishermen can conveniently set aside a restrictive set of conservation laws.

1.5 Entering the Field

In possession of three letters, one from the Minister of State for Mashonaland West Province, another from the Kariba District Administrator's office and the third one from the office of the Chief Executive Officer for NyamiNyami Rural District, my research assistant and I left Kariba town headed for Gache-Gache on the 3rd October 2019. We were heading for Gache-Gache from Kariba, and this route does not have regularly scheduled transport that ferries people from town to Gache-Gache or from Gache-Gache to Kariba town. As a result, the means of transport if one wants to travel by road is mainly provided by fish buyers. One must plan with the fish buyers them in advance because it is not everyday when you can find a fish buyer travelling to Gache-Gache. Another alternative, again mainly provided by fish buyers, is by water using motorised boats.

Initially, I planned to conduct fieldwork in Mola, still in NyamiNyami district, where I had previously conducted fieldwork for my Master's study. I had some contacts in Mola who were ready to be my hosts and research assistants, but in Kariba town, I met Joshua Matanzima⁷, who suggested that I change my field site to Gache-Gache. Gache-Gache had several advantages, which convinced me to follow Joshua's suggestion. First, Gache-Gache predominantly has people of Korekore origin, and Chikorekore is one of the many Shona dialects spoken in Zimbabwe. I speak Chikaranga, another Shona dialect, and conducting research in Gache-Gache meant no language barrier. I would also not be viewed as an outsider from an ethnic perspective. Mola is predominantly domiciled by the baTonga people. The baTonga are a minority ethnic group and have historically been marginalised regarding access to Lake Kariba and general infrastructural development. This is not to say Gache-Gache is peculiar compared to the rest of the Zambezi Valley communities, deriving their livelihoods mainly from Lake Kariba. Scholarship on Lake Kariba (see, for instance, McGregor 2009;

⁷ His real name, used in this thesis with his consent

Manyena 2016; Dhodho 2022; Matanzima and Marowa 2022) has documented how marginalised communities living on the shores of Lake Kariba and of these communities, the Tonga constitute most of the population (Mashinya 2007). McGregor (2009) highlights the baTonga's engagement in a politics of recognition, mainly post-independence, where they have tried to reverse their continued marginalisation. Given this background and my experiences when I first conducted research there, I felt that researching in Mola would present the challenge that I would potentially be viewed as a stranger and a representative of the dominant Shona-speaking people who have historically marginalised the baTonga. Researching in Gache-Gache would make me no less a stranger, but preconceived stereotypes based on ethnic origin would not be there.

In addition to the above, Joshua volunteered to be my research assistant, and he liaised in advance with a Gache-Gache household to be my hosts, and they agreed. Joshua had previously worked in Gache-Gache as a relief teacher at Gache-Gache Secondary School, and he would introduce me to the community of Gache-Gache, starting with the Mupepe family. Indeed, Joshua's familiarity with most residents made it easy for Gache-Gache residents to accept me without much suspicion that I may be a state security agent. It is common among Zimbabweans to treat strangers with the suspicion that they may be secret agents of the state. In Gache-Gache, such suspicion could also potentially take the form of being viewed as a potential employee of ZimParks spying on those who break fishery regulation rules. A few weeks after we arrived in Gache-Gache, Mrs Chipfumbu, one of the interlocutors Joshua introduced me to, said,

“If not for Joshua, who introduced you to me, I would not have accepted to be one of your participants. It is not easy to welcome someone you do not know in your home. You will think you are helping a student with their research, yet you are assisting a state security agent to arrest you, and before you know it, you are under arrest. You know how we make a living here; no one can say they do not break the law in one way or another; every fisherman breaks the law somehow.”

Though she was not a fisherman, her husband, Mr Chipfumbu, was a gillnet fisher who concentrated on catching tigerfish at Dandawa fishing grounds. Mrs Chipfumbu's understanding that every fisherman breaks the law was as a result of her being wife to a gillnet fisher. Interacting with fishers and their household members meant that, as a researcher, I had access to information about their everyday lives that they would not ordinarily be comfortable sharing with an outsider or, in Mrs Chipfumbu's words, a “stranger”.

Having decided to focus on Gache-Gache as my field site, the next task was to arrange transport to ferry us to Gache-Gache from Kariba town. Joshua contacted some female fishers in Kariba who fished in Gache-Gache as rod and liners to ask when they would go fishing. The idea was to hire an omnibus to ferry us to Gache-Gache at a lower fare. The women rod and line fishers would fish closer to Nyaodza fishing camp, a few kilometres before Gache-Gache. We could not depart for four days for two reasons. The female rod and line fishers highlighted that, because of the wind, which indicated that there would be a wave on the Lake, it was pointless to go fishing because it is difficult to catch fish when there is a wave on the Lake. We finally departed on the fifth day of waiting for the wave to subside. I had to pay for two women who cancelled their journey because they were worried a wave would still be on the lake.



Figure 6 Fish Buyer Vehicle at Gache-Gache Irrigation Scheme

We left Kariba early in the morning, and by 10 am, we had dropped the women fishers close to Nyaodza fishing camp and headed towards Gache-Gache. The driver informed us that he would pass by '*kumagadheni*' (the Gache-Gache Irrigation Scheme) because there was a parcel he wanted to drop off for one of the residents there. As we arrived at the Irrigation Scheme residential compound, a man was on the phone, visibly angry and shouting. I later learnt that this was Ferreira, the director/owner of Track-A-Hunt Safaris, which bordered Gache-Gache fishing villages. On the phone, he complained about ZimParks rangers, whom he accused of allowing irrigation scheme members to fish in restricted areas, breeding grounds for fish. As I learned a few months later, the Gache-Gache Irrigation Scheme was meant to train Gache-Gache residents to become experts in farming so that they could be resettled to communal lands where agriculture is practised at a relatively large scale. The idea of the irrigation scheme and subsequent resettling of people was in light of the view of the fishery managers that the fishery could not sustain a larger population. In principle, resettling some of the village residents would

relieve pressure from the fishery resources. However, at the time of the study, the irrigation scheme was only in name, as it had become a haven for fishers who, in collaboration with some ZimParks rangers, were fishing in restricted parts of the Lake. The economic challenges meant fishing was a more attractive option than resettlement in communal areas as farmers.

After our driver had handed over the parcel, he drove us to Gache-Gache fishing villages and dropped us off at the Mupepe homestead in Musampakaruma village. This was the homestead of village head Mupepe, and we found his elder son, Baba Elsie, whom I refer to in this study as kule Diva, waiting for us. In this context, the term kule is slang for uncle and can also be slang for grandpa. In the case of kule Diva and his younger brother kule Luke, I followed how Joshua referred to them – they became my uncles because Joshua referred to them as such. After Joshua introduced me to the Mupepe household, village head Mupepe suggested that he would take us to village head Dandawa and village head Nyamhunga’s homesteads, and his sons kule Diva and kule Luke would introduce us to village heads Nematombo and Mudzimu. Village head Mupepe decided not to accompany us to these later villages because they were a few kilometres from his homestead. So, he decided to assign the task to his two sons. Village head Mupepe said he did not want other residents to suspect he was housing a poacher or anyone of questionable status in Gache-Gache. In his words, “You have to be known *muzukuru* so that if anything happens, no one will say it is that stranger living at Mupepe’s homestead,” he said emphatically. After being introduced to village heads, fieldwork started slowly the following day, and we started by visiting the nearest harbour to observe what was taking place.

1.6 Ethnographic Accounts

The study is predicated on a multispecies ethnographic perspective, and fieldwork observations discussed here are based on ten months of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and participant diary entries on everyday life on the shores of Lake Kariba. A multispecies ethnographic perspective enables the study to explore the Gache-Gache environment and how humans (fishers and their households) and other-than-humans (wildlife). Fieldwork commenced in October 2019 and ended in September 2020. There was a two-month interruption (April to May 2020) because of COVID-19-induced travel restrictions and lockdown arrangements put in place by the Zimbabwean government to try and manage the spread of the pandemic. During this two-month interruption, I returned to Harare and worked on transcribing interviews. The study was initially designed to last twelve months, but in the end, it became a ten-month ethnographic study with participant diaries, participant observation, and informal interviews and photographs.

Ingold (2013) suggested an anthropology beyond the human, which recognises the “constitutive mutualities” of dwelling and cohabitation through which life unfolds through dynamic interrelations. Instead of being neglected or symbolically or materially appropriated, multispecies ethnography gives other-than-humans all kinds of lively agency, which plays a role in constituting worlds jointly shaped by the activities of humans and other-than-humans (Locke 2018, 1). Multispecies ethnography is a methodological approach and theoretical perspective that advocates understanding habitats as “multispecies landscapes” (Parathian et al. 2018, 756). It is premised on a post-humanist perspective that seeks to deconstruct the “humanism” of landscapes (Parathian et al. 2018, 757). Multispecies ethnographers explore how the lives and deaths of various organisms are connected to human social worlds (Kirksey 2010, 545). This resonates with anthropologist Eduardo Kohn’s (2007, 4) concept of the “anthropology of life”, suggesting an anthropology that is not only limited to humans but also explores the effects of humans’ entanglements with other living beings.

Multispecies ethnography emphasises the agency of other-than-humans, integrating them socially, historically, and ecologically in accounts of life in environments shaped and shared by humans and other-than-human species (Locke 2018, 1). Observing the imponderables surrounding everyday life in Gache-Gache (human-environmental relationships) was made possible by interviewing people in a language they understand. The community of Gache-Gache predominantly speaks Chikorekore, which I am familiar with, and all interviews were conducted in Shona, of which Chikorekore is a part. The following sections detail the various ethnographic methods that I used and the steps for data collection.

1.6.1 Interviews

The thesis draws on semi-structured and informal conversations. During the first few months of fieldwork, I relied on semi-structured interviews from the indicative list of questions I had drafted beforehand (see appendix). I used a recorder for participants who consented to be recorded during the semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews generally focused on the experiences of fishers and other villagers regarding fishing, fisheries' governance, compliance and the people’s relationships with the environment and their understanding of their position in the environment. The semi-structured interviews were important in initial conversations with fishers and villagers, but more importantly, the informal discussions played a significant role. Informal interviews enabled data collection in a natural

setting, which is the primary objective of every ethnographic study. Informal conversations allowed interlocutors to reveal the intricacies of everyday life that would have otherwise been missed with more structured interviews. Informal conversations allowed interlocutors to lead the research process, as interlocutors started most themes identified from these conversations. From these naturally occurring conversations, I picked up themes which I found exciting and probed for elaboration where there was a need. It is through informal discussions that some of the major themes that emerged that I had brainstormed beforehand. For instance, the concept of *chiposhongwe*⁸ and how fishers deal with seasonal fluctuations arose from informal conversations. I engaged in informal discussions with village heads, gillnet fishers and ordinary fishing village residents.

I also frequently visited a nearby harbour called Makodzera to observe the interaction between fishers, fish buyers and petty commodity traders. “Hanging out by the harbour”, as I loosely refer to it, also allowed me to get acquainted with several gillnet fisherfolk and others who later played a crucial role as interlocutors. I continued with the hanging out at the harbour throughout the fieldwork, even after I had established rapport with many fishers and other villagers. This allowed me to listen to everyday conversations in their natural settings without a recorder. To that effect, I used a field diary. I entered field notes for and about the conversations. The field notes diary was updated daily, mainly at the end of each day, to ensure I captured as much information as possible before I forgot it. I updated my field notes away from the gaze of participants, often in my room, which my primary host, kule Diva, had given me.

1.6.2 Participant observation

I employed moderate participant observation to maintain a balance between insider and outsider. This was done by drawing out the salient and prominent issues concerning fishing, livelihoods and everyday life in Gache-Gache. The central themes and sub-themes were checked to ensure that they speak to the primary and subsidiary objectives of the study and that the content of the empirical chapters in the thesis reflects my thematic coding and analysis. An integral part of the process of observing was writing down notes as the observation took place or writing as soon as each observation day ended. This was done to avoid losing data by recording it while it was as fresh as possible in my mind.

⁸ See chapter four a detailed explanation of what this is

I also participated in various activities in the villages, including mending fishing nets and accompanying some fishermen to drain and wash fishing nets. I attended village community meetings and workshops and participated in some traditional rites. One of the major traditional rites I participated in was the visit to the spirit medium – sekuru Chitehwe in Hurungwe – as the Gache-Gache community sought solutions to the elephant raids problem. Participant observation enabled me to become familiar with a range of everyday life activities that fisherfolk and other villagers got involved in. I also regularly joined fishers during their relaxation time at the local beerhall where most of them spent a great deal of their social time over a few beers. In these settings, some of the conversations about everyday life in Gache-Gache and fisherfolk's encounters/experiences were shared. I also attended some important events such as funeral. Participation in these activities/events not only helped in generating data but also strengthened the rapport between the researcher and the interlocutors.

1.6.3 Diaries

Participant diaries were also integral to my fieldwork, though they were not administered in my initial research plan. I distributed a total of ten diaries to fishermen to document their everyday life on the Lake and in the villages. The Matusadonha National Park borders the Gache-Gache community and thus lives in proximity to various wildlife animals that impact people's livelihoods, notably, in the context of this study, elephants, lions, and buffalos. Lake Kariba, where Gache-Gache livelihoods are mainly predicated, is a multipurpose water serving wildlife conservation, tourism, and small-scale and commercial fishing objectives. On the Lake, Gache-Gache fishers interact with animals such as hippopotami and crocodiles, and these also have a direct or indirect impact on fisher households' livelihoods and well-being.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I distributed participant diaries to gillnet fishers (all of whom were men) in Gache-Gache. This study commenced during the rainy season. During this season, catches are generally high, save for days when waves are on the lake. Diaries were distributed so fishers that could document their everyday experiences on and off the lake. Gillnet fishers documented their encounters on the lake with ZimParks officials, crocodiles, and hippopotami. They also noted their daily struggles regarding the destruction of livelihood assets like fishing nets by crocodiles and the theft of fishing gear and boats. Diaries allowed participants to highlight aspects of their everyday lives that they felt comfortable sharing. Diaries as a data generation method complemented informal conversations in that they enabled

interlocutors to be the centre of constructing narratives of the everyday experiences of the anglers as they documented their daily encounters on the lake and in the villages.

However, there is no inclusion of women diarists, which means that data generated from the diaries are only from men and thus are not representative of the population of Gache-Gache as far as livelihoods and everyday life are concerned. There are several reasons why women were omitted. As I have highlighted in previous sections of this chapter – gillnet fishing is predominantly a male endeavour. Women support livelihoods through alternative activities, including rod and line fishing, vending, gardening, selling dried fish in the city and other off-lake activities. For its part, rod and line fishing thrives during the cool-dry season when there are low catches from gillnet fishing. As such, in the initial research plan, I intended to hand women their diaries to document alternative livelihoods and their everyday life experiences during the cool-dry season. Still, before I had done that, an outbreak of COVID-19 forced me to temporarily suspend my studies as the government of Zimbabwe put in place a set of restrictions to control the spread of the pandemic. Distributing the diaries to gillnet fishermen first was because I first wanted to understand their experiences on the lake and then turn my focus afterwards to women and how they complement gillnet fishing during the cool-dry season through rod and line fishing, selling dried fish in the cities and other related livelihood activities that women in Gache-Gache are involved in. I stopped fieldwork for two months (April to May 2020), and by the time I returned to the field in June, I had not brought a set of diaries for women as I was unsure whether I would continue with fieldwork without any further disruption.

1.6.4 Positionality

I highlighted in the previous section how my background as a Karanga augured well with the fact that I was going to conduct a study among the Korekore people because both Chikorekore and Chikaranga dialects are part of the language commonly known in Zimbabwe as Shona. This, in a way, made me less of an outsider, but it had its limitations because I did not come initially from Gache-Gache. I thus remained an outsider on many levels because I came from a different part of the country and spoke a different dialect. My identity also in Gache-Gache shifted through the months, with the first few months some few participants directly expressing their suspicion that I may be a state security agent. As an outsider who had only been introduced by my research assistant to a few gatekeepers and residents, I carried what Dakwar (2002,36) refers to as “special sensitivity” that generated some distrust in the study. Most of this mistrust

was evident during the first few months of the study. On my second day after arriving in Gache-Gache, I went with my research assistant to Makodzera harbour; some fishermen were making u-turns, avoiding coming straight to disembark, so we were standing at the harbour to disembark elsewhere. My research assistant highlighted that it might be because we were putting on sunhats, something associated with ZimPark rangers. We were to remove our hats each time we went to the harbour, not further to generate this distrust, regardless of the scorching sun.

Signs of distrust were not only evident at the harbour. During most of the afternoons, I would accompany kule Diva, my leading host-turned-main research assistant, to the grocery stores, where he would be drinking and relaxing with friends; we met one man, Mupedziswa, who later became a participant, but only after many days of persuasion and interaction. On the first day we met Mupedziswa, kule Diva introduced me to him as his “homeboy” because he was initially from Masvingo province, where I also come from. At first, he appeared elated to have met someone from *kumusha* (‘homeland’), but he quickly frowned and said, “Diva, I do not trust you. Have you not been bribed to sell me out? Is he not a C-number? [slang for a state security agent]. I learned that Mupedziswa associated my bald haircut with police officers in Zimbabwe. It took several months of interaction for Mupedziswa to trust me and agree to an informal interview about his everyday life in Gache-Gache.

Mupedziswa held suspicions that I may be a state security agent. One potential participant refused to participate on those grounds and clearly stated that he was uncomfortable to join because he “knew” that the government had sent me to spy on Gache-Gache residents and report on any violations they made. He justified his refusal to participate, saying:

“You are unlucky today; you met someone who has worked in government before. You cannot trick me into giving you information that will incriminate me tomorrow”.

I highlighted in the previous section how the presence of Joshua Matanzima as my research assistant for the first two weeks of the study generated some trust among interlocutors to whom he introduced me. However, this did not stop even those I was introduced to from misconstruing my identity. Some, such as village head Nematombo, misconstrued me as a Non-Governmental Organisation employee and assumed that I was conducting the study so that eventually I would return with some donations to the community. After Joshua had introduced me to village head Nematombo, and after I had explained the nature of my study (an academic study with no foreseeable financial benefits for the community), he still went on to instruct us that we must

not interview what he referred to as the “grocery shop based fishers” and that we must not put their names on the list that we were noting down because they were illegal and that they were the ones who violated the fishery regulations.

Like this misconstrued identity by village head Nematombo, the Ward councillor also made the same mistake, thinking that I was bringing with me some financial benefit to the community as he said to Joshua, *Handiti mari yacho tinenge tichidya tese zvedu?* (‘We will be sharing the money from the research, right?’). My background as an international student studying at a European University also seemed to influence these perceptions about my study, potentially bringing some form of financial benefit to the community. Throughout most of the study, I felt some community members depicted me as that researcher with money, which he did not want to share with the community, and this may have influenced the responses they gave me during the conversations I had with them. The COVID-19 lockdown in 2020 and my return after two months while the lockdown was still in force also made me realise the power I possessed in the eyes of the community.

My return to the field during the lockdown was made possible by the three letters of clearance for my research, which enabled me to travel and pass through the numerous roadblocks without any trouble from the security forces (police and army officers) manning the roadblocks. For many Gache-Gache residents who engaged in mobile livelihoods, particularly vending, travelling had become difficult, with most having to bribe their way to nearby cities. As I returned to Gache-Gache, I reintroduced myself to the village heads, and village head Nematombo commented, “Oh, you are the privileged ones who can travel without any restrictions from the government, right? Are you immune to the virus?” Not only did this comment make me aware of the power that I possessed as I had the privilege to travel easily, but it also reminded me of the distrust generated by my being an outsider. This, again, may have affected the nature of data collected.

While I felt *othered* and more of an outsider for most of the research process, after my return to the field during the COVID-19 lockdown, something made me feel accepted by the rest of the community for the first time. Elephants were ravaging some huts and eating donated maize intended as food relief during the cool-dry season. The unanimous position for most of the residents, especially the seniors, was that there was a need to consult the spirit medium in Hurungwe. The community needed money for transport and consultation. Out of curiosity about how this understanding of the environment and everyday life worked and how the visit

to sekuru Chitehwe, the spirit medium, would be, I offered to assist with fuel money, and the Track-A-Hunt Safaris director offered his vehicle for transportation. This gesture to pay for fuel money enabled me to be invited to village heads' caucus meetings I had never been invited to before. In these meetings, I was invited as *mwana wedu arikudzidza* ('our child still at school'). For the first time, I felt the community trusted me. I was also invited to community gatherings, such as a workshop that the Lake Kariba Fisheries Institute hosted and a meeting with chief Musapakaruma both of which were held in Gache-Gache. This participation facilitated by the community elders, such as village heads and the Gache-Gache Fishermen's Association's chairperson, necessitated enabled the establishment of rapport with many Gache-Gache residents, which I felt before these meetings had only existed among a few residents whom I had been able to interview.

Attending the meetings and workshops, however, made me aware of the burden that I brought to my hosts, the Mupepe household being perceived as the ones who were hosting a potential state security agent. After the workshop with the Lake Kariba Fisheries Research Institute officials, for instance, one of the Gache-Gache residents came to me and said, "Oh, you are a student? I thought you were an employee of the state or a relative of the Mupepe household." Many other residents warmed up to me after these meetings in a different way than before because many now knew me as *mwana wedu arikudzidza*. However, I also realised that the burden of being hosted by the Mupepe household did not disappear. As explained in the previous section, village head Mupepe implored us to go with him so that he would introduce us to other village heads to avoid the tag of being the village head hosting a stranger. The perception that village head Mupepe was benefitting because I was living at their homestead did not completely go away for those who believed there was a financial package to the study.

1.6.5 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics are professional issues that include fundamental principles such as honesty, fairness, and respect for persons, to mention but a few (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 2000). Informed consent was paramount in this study, as in all other studies, since it helped respondents understand why they were participating in the research and, in the process, respecting the right of participants to exercise the freedom to decide whether to take part in the study.

I also sought the compliance of gatekeepers like the village heads and ward councillors for Gache-Gache, and they permitted me to conduct the study. Conducting a study in Gache-Gache

required permission from the Mashonaland West Province Minister of State, and I made sure that I followed all the steps needed to obtain a letter of approval from the Minister of State's office.

Before commencing interviews, each interlocutor was handed a participant information sheet (see appendix) explaining the nature of the study. Though written in English, I explained the study in Shona, the local language used by people in Gache-Gache. In addition, I gave participants an informed consent sheet (see appendix), which they signed before participating. Notably, regardless of their informed and voluntary participation, some of the data in this thesis contains some illegalities that, however, do not amount to what could potentially bring participants in danger of physical, emotional or psychological harm. I have ensured all participants' anonymity and confidentiality, where necessary, through pseudonyms. Only those participants who expressed willingness to have their real names entered into the study instead of pseudonyms have real names in the study. However, it is essential to note that complete anonymity is not entirely possible in ethnography because of the extended period spent in the field and the description of places, events and people that can be easily traceable.

However, the illegalities documented in this study—use of illegal fishing gear, fishing outside the designated timetable, fishing in restricted areas, and many more—have become part of everyday life in Zimbabwe as a means of survival or getting by, and this does not amount to putting participants in any form of danger. Some of these illegalities were published with the real names and faces of some of the Gache-Gache residents before this thesis was completed, and the information was already in the public domain.⁹ In a newspaper article, the Gache-Gache Fishers Association chairperson is quoted as saying if he did not hold the chairperson of the Fishers Association, he would practice ndombolo fish driving to earn more. This shows how the illegalities documented in this study are less about the danger they pose to the people of Gache-Gache but their moral image in the community. Nonetheless, pseudonyms were used for all participants whose real names they did not want to be published in the thesis.

1.6.6 Challenges

There was a significant change to the research design due to COVID-19 disruption. Initially, the study was designed to incorporate the experiences and perceptions of the varied users of

⁹ [Zimbabweans Find Risk and Reward in Illegal Fishing \(globalpressjournal.com\)](https://www.globalpressjournal.com/)

Lake Kariba, including Gache-Gache gillnet fishers, large-scale Kapenta fishers, ZimParks rangers and Safari Operators. Due to COVID-19, I adjusted the research design to focus only on gillnet fishers. While this is a challenge in that it altered the initial plan, it also enabled me to focus on understanding everyday life in the fishing villages.

I had also planned to triangulate ethnographic data with archival research at the National Archives to understand the history of fishing and fishing regulations. However, this became impossible due to the lockdown, as the National Archives were closed for individual researchers when I tried to conduct archival research. Again, this was due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

1.7 Chapter Outline

The rest of the thesis is structured in the following way. Chapter two addresses questions of belonging and navigating fishing regulations. The chapter elaborates on a prevailing “moral economy of subsistence” or socialised dispositions that villagers in Gache-Gache use to allow everyone registered or not registered to fish for survival. However, given the persistent formal regulations enforced by the rural council, ZimParks and conservation NGOs, I argue that the moral economy of subsistence in Gache-Gache is not permanent – when registered fishers are pressed to pay for their permits, they begin to question the right of unregistered fishers to fish without paying. This caveat is important because it reveals the nuanced nature of the moral economy of subsistence – registered fishers only support the continued “right to subsist” and “belong” through fishing of unregistered fishers for as long as the fishing regulations enforcers do not ask them to pay for their permit.

Chapter three explores the complex relationships between people, other beings, and the environment in Gache-Gache and how these relationships coalesce to shape livelihoods. The chapter demonstrates the complex imbrication between the semiotic and the material (Fontein 2015). It discusses how livelihoods are more than just income generation but instead earning a living in a way that is ethically acceptable in the community. For instance, while outsiders can interpret incidents such as elephant attacks, waves, and crocodile attacks as naturally occurring, an emic view reveals that they are not constantly occurring. As the chapter will demonstrate, fish catches are also determined by beings beyond the/this? world, such as the ancestors, who respond to the moral conduct of Gache-Gache residents.

Chapter four looks at questions of fishery compliance and the politics surrounding conservation and fishing gear regulation. The central focus is on the fishing net and the reasons behind the

continued use of the monofilament net despite it being banned on the Zimbabwean side of Lake Kariba. The chapter problematises fishery management regulations, which, in principle, are based on science, but in practice, are inflected by social and political interests. The chapter also discusses the importance of fishery and the fishing net in determining a fisherman's choice of fishing gear.

Chapter five discusses Gache-Gache residents' everyday lives and coping strategies in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and the winter season's fish catch fluctuations. The challenges discussed here are gendered and experienced differently by fishermen and women fish traders. I argue that a multiplicity of challenges – COVID-19, climate, environmental and fishery regulations – coalesce as livelihood shocks and fisherfolk in response, devise locally relevant, albeit temporary, strategies for survival. It is essential to highlight that different groups in Gache-Gache are affected differently and, therefore, devise different adaptation strategies. These groups include fishermen, petty goods traders, fish-buying agents, female traders who sell dried fish and elderly people who rely on handouts.

Chapter six discusses livelihood uncertainty in Gache-Gache and how fishers and their households react. The uncertainty here is discussed in terms of fluctuating catches and the uncertain belonging in Gache-Gache in the face of changing regulations, which sometimes threaten the continued residence of fishers in the area. The chapter argues that the Gache-Gache socio-economic and political context makes fishing a livelihood prone to multiple difficult stressors. Nevertheless, fisherfolk devise several means of 'getting by' in the face of natural, institutional, and socio-economic challenges. There is a need not to overemphasise the agency of fishermen in confronting livelihood stress, but these multiple forms of getting by are the focus of the chapter. I am interested in the everyday tactics (and their efficacy) that fishermen employ in the face of a combination of fishery-based livelihood stressors. Chapter Two highlighted the notion of belonging where descendants of the 1950s Kariba dam-induced displacement claim some form of autochthony; this chapter highlights the precariousness of such claims based on how even those with autochthonous claims do not know whether they will live in Gache-Gache for the rest of their lives.

Finally, Chapter seven provides some concluding remarks and some reflections on contributions to knowledge.

Chapter Two: ‘The Right to Fish,’ Belonging and Everyday Life on the Shores of Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe

2.1 Introduction

In August 2020, Nyami-Nyami Rural District Council (hereafter NRDC), through their substation in Gache-Gache fishing villages, circulated a fishing permit payment request memo to enforce the payment of licence fee arrears for fishers in Gache-Gache. The message warned of potential fishing permits forfeiture for those in arrears, which meant a loss of the right to fishing. The drive targeted permit-holding fishers because they are the officially recognised fishers in Gache-Gache. Thus, the NRDC can easily trace and ask them to pay for their permits. The term fisherman in Gache-Gache is used by the Rural Council and ZimParks officials to refer only to registered fisherfolk whose monthly permit taxes are fully paid. Non-registered fishers are officially called poachers by the lake management regime and do not have the formal right to fish. Regardless of their everyday fishing activities on the lake and potentially outnumbering registered fishers, official institutions like the Lake Kariba Fisheries Research Institute (LKfri) explicitly refused to refer to unregistered fishers as fishers. During a workshop with Gache-Gache residents on September 9, 2020, one of the LKfri officials concluded by issuing books where fishers were to record their daily catches. As he handed the books, he emphasised, “Only real fishers [meaning those with permits] should come to get these books.”

“The person you are talking about is not a fisherman”, explained Mr Magura one afternoon. Mr Magura was the Rural Council’s senior ranger at the Nyami-Nyami Rural Council substation in Gache-Gache. I had asked him about Mdara waKiddo, a fisherman whose boat had been confiscated by ZimParks officials for violating the gillnet fishing timetable. Seeing that I was surprised at his response, Mr Magura explained that Mdara waKiddo was in arrears – he had gone for more than a year without paying for his permit. Unbeknownst to him, Mdara waKiddo was now considered a poacher; his right to “belong” to the Gache-Gache fishing community had ceded, and with it, his right to fish. That meant Mdara waKiddo was fishing illegally in the eyes of the rural council and ZimParks officials. Many other fishermen fell in this category for being in arrears regarding monthly permit payments. This official position of the rural council and ZimParks was in stark contrast to the general position of most fishermen in Gache-Gache – they believed that they should be allowed to fish without paying for permits and that unregistered fishermen should be allowed to fish given the prevailing economic

challenges in the country. The fishers and villagers' conception of living "ethically" and "being humane" (see Samuel 2023, 2; Mawere 2015) in the face of endless nationwide economic misery (see Fontein 2015) and livelihood stress revolved around giving everyone a chance to survive through fishing, registered or not.

The fishers used a kind of moral justification for subsistence that, if allowed, would override the conservation rules that only allowed registered fishermen and their registered employees to fish. However, the registered fishers' worldview is not possible given the rigid set of fishing regulations in Gache-Gache. The rural council, in principle, held on to a dominant fishery management model based on the "equilibrium" view, which matches the perceived fishing capacity of the resource and the number of fishers – the objective being to achieve the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) (Allison and Ellis 2001, 377). In Gache-Gache, the maximum sustainable yield was maintained at 175 fishing permits. This management model does not allow the flexibility of enabling non-registered fishermen the right to fish amid livelihood stress because doing so would threaten the fishery's sustainability. In contrast, the villagers were driven by a shared "moral economy of subsistence" logic (James Scott 1985), which left room for unregistered fishers to fish for survival amidst the general livelihood stress bedevilling the country.

A tale of two contrasting moral economies of conservation and fishing? The contrasting moral economy tales – one which justified and sought to preserve the moral right to subsist in the face of economic misery and another which sought only to allow registered fishers to fish to maintain sustainability – were not fixed, neither could they be neatly ascribed to a fisher versus state employee dichotomy. By presenting the lake management and fishermen as having two opposed worldviews, I do not suggest a simplistic 'the state' versus 'the community' analogy, which misses the nuanced nature of the micro-practices (see Donald Moore 2002; 2005) characterising everyday life as it happens in the villages. In practice, the situation is more nuanced on the ground, and the reference to a general shared "moral economy of subsistence" is a point of departure into very complex and less straightforward relationships, values and beliefs that shape livelihoods, belonging and everyday life in Gache-Gache.

In fact, like in Donald Moore's (2005) ethnographic study in eastern Zimbabwe, state employees (council and ZimParks rangers) seldom uphold the stated objectives of the state. Regardless of their mandate to enforce fishing regulations, many NRDC and ZimParks' rangers shared the same "moral economy of subsistence" view that prevailed in the villages and gave

exceptions for fishers to fish regardless of registration status. Additionally, in the rangers' quest for survival, some violated the rules, sometimes through bribes, as one of the rangers elaborated in the following way: "...we are all looking to survive. Who does not know the hardships we face as a country? *Nzungu dzatinopiwa hadziraramise mhuri*" (the paltry salary we get can barely help our families survive).¹⁰

As the state showed internal contradictions through rangers who also held the position of the moral economy of subsistence, the villagers' seeming unanimity on the need for survival for everyone was also impermanent. In response to the memo circulated by NRDC, many registered fishers, some of whom had vowed never to pay for their permits during my earlier conversations, responded to the council's circular by paying and updating their permits. However, the rural council's drive missed more than double the other irregular fishers who fish in Gache-Gache without permits. Paradoxically, the presence of unregistered fishermen who fish without being pestered for licence fees angered many registered fishermen, who began questioning unregistered fishers' right to livelihood and belonging. As such, the registered fishers only supported the moral right to survive for as long as they were not pressured to pay for their permits.

"The memo has been well received, and fishermen have responded positively by paying for their permits. However, they say they now want to see poachers barred from fishing. *Mukatadza kudzinga mapoacher mafishermen vati varikuuya kuzoridza ngoma pamusuwo wekanzuru* (If you fail to stop the poachers from fishing, fishers have promised to go to the council offices to protest)," explained councillor Makanyaire to one NRDC official who had visited Gache-Gache. Additionally, though registered fishers generally support the right to survive for unregistered fishers, some of them questioned their right to belong and fish in situations where they did not contribute financially towards the *renda* (ancestral ceremony) to 'make safe' the lives of residents of Gache-Gache. As a result, some registered fishers referred to unregistered fishers as *vatorwa* (strangers) engaging in "thievery" who constantly mess up *chivanhu* (tradition) for *vana venzvimbo* (children of the Gache-Gache as a place).

Against this background, this chapter explores questions of belonging and the right to livelihood in Gache-Gache amidst the general precarity of livelihoods. Belonging and the right to fish in Gache-Gache are seldom fixed and fluctuate depending on the situation. It is necessary to differentiate complex categories of actors according to varying situations. Using

¹⁰ Fieldnotes, 16/06/20

the moral economy concept, the chapter explores the conditions that structure the ethics of care, interdependence and belonging among fishers in Gache-Gache. I ask and try to answer the following three questions: To what extent does the subsistence ethic pervade the community of Gache-Gache? Why? Under what conditions are the values of the moral economy of survival as the long-standing socialised dispositions of villagers in Gache-Gache modified, and with what effects do they affect the livelihoods of unregistered fishermen? As a point of departure, the following section discusses ubuntu and the moral economy of survival as concepts to understand everyday life among fishers in Gache-Gache.

2.2 Belonging and the Politics of Belonging

Although it seems self-explanatory and straightforward, belonging carries diverse meanings (Mee and Wright 2009, 772; Antonisch 2010; Yuval-Davis 2011). Lovell (1998, 1) asserts that belonging is a way of remembering, essential in creating “collective memory surrounding a place.” This collective memory encompasses a sense of who a person is and a set of moral dispositions regarding how people are expected to lead their everyday lives. Belonging as an analytical concept involves the politics of belonging, which comprises setting boundaries and constructing specific collectivities (Yuval-Davis 2011, 10). Wright (2014, 1) notes that a sense of belonging involves,

“...being legally, morally, or socially recognised as belonging *to a place or group ... [it]* has the power to change lives, create communities and collectives, and bring together and separate in the most intimate, loving, accepting exclusionary, or violent ways” (emphasis added).

As a concept and idea, belonging also involves defining resource access, including who is to be excluded and who is not from having access to livelihood resources. Social groups with different histories are likely to have other memories, which result from conflicting worldviews about how to live in a place and questions about natural resource entitlement, access, and use. Differing worldviews about how to live in a place are not only inherent to differences among social groups with different histories of places. Differences also tend to exist between local communities and government institutions that regulate the use and access to natural resources. Where such differences exist, there are bound to be conflicts resulting in either non-compliance on the part of local community members or the instating of strict regulation rules.

In this study, belonging essentially involves but is not limited to questions around entitlement to access to the lake and its fish resources and the ability to practice fishing to benefit people’s

livelihoods in the context of livelihood stress and the general Zimbabwean economic crisis. This includes the right to fish without the exertion of some of the strict fishery regulation rules, such as those on fishing gear and the timetable. Belonging is relational because it involves relationships between not only humans but also other-than humans and the environment more broadly (Mujere 2011; Wright 2014).

The relationship between belonging and access to land and natural resources in Zimbabwe and other former settler colonies evokes notions of autochthony and a sense of being rooted in specific places (Geschiera 2009; Mujere 2011). Autochthony involves people claiming their attachment and link to the soil (Geschiera and Nyamjoh 2000). Although many studies have focused on the link between migration, translocality and belonging, placed-based belonging premised on autochthony, indigeneity, spirituality, and natural resource access still matters, especially for rural folk deriving livelihoods predominantly from natural resources (see Hammar, 2002; Geschiera, 2009; Mujere, 2011; Boas and Dunn, 2013). Another essential and widespread strategy in Africa that people use to assert belonging and claim natural resource access is being first comers to a place (Lentz 2005). In the Zimbabwean case, Hammar (2002) notes that a government of Zimbabwe-sanctioned conservation programme in the late 1990s displaced Tonga people and resettled them in Gokwe, north-western Zimbabwe. Hammar (2002) further notes that settlers who were later resettled in the same area were non-Tonga (Shonas and Ndebeles) and were excluded by Tonga based on being latecomers.

In most rural places in Africa, questions of belonging and identity play a critical role in decisions about access to natural resources, which are essential for livelihood construction. A given place comprises varied notions around these issues. For example, when the Kariba dam was constructed, over 57000 Tonga people were displaced (Colson 1971; Scudder 2005), disrupting their livelihoods and ancestral and cultural heritage (Marowa 2010). The Tonga people had what anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1996, 20) calls a “we belong here intimacy” with ancestral links to place. Ancestral links to place produce a sense of rootedness (Geschiera 2009, 1; Mujere 2012) that people claim unquestioned land and natural resources entitlement. Geschiera (2009) explains that,

“Autochthony represents the most authentic form of belonging: born from the earth itself – how could one belong more? To its protagonists, autochthony – the special link with the soil – seems to have some primordial quality”.

Direct and indirect claims over autochthonous belonging to a place legitimise a community's entitlement to land and other natural resources and cultural and spiritual dimensions. Ancestral graves are a vital resource because their presence affords a material presence of the living-dead (see Mawere 2015) through whom the living can claim entitlement to natural resources for livelihoods. It is thus no surprise that when they were displaced for the construction of Lake Kariba, the Tonga people expected that water would follow them to where they were resettled to when they were displaced (Tremmel 1994). Water was critical for the Tonga people's survival as they were a riverine community deriving livelihood from the Zambezi River, mainly through fishing before its inundation (Colson 1971; Bourdillon et al. 1985). As much as the white settlers made a promise that the water would follow them (which never happened), the Tonga felt entitled to access it because they sacrificed their ancestral land for the construction of the Lake. Their graves and homes were destroyed for the sake of the construction of the lake, yet they received little to no compensation for the loss of their livelihoods and cultural heritage. The colonial and postcolonial governments have continued to overlook Tonga's claims regarding the development of places they reside in today. Tonga people continue to engage in "politics of recognition" (McGregor 2009).

Belonging and the politics of belonging are both discursive and material, reflecting the mutual constitution between landscape/ the environment and people. In the Kariba case, it has been highlighted that the Tonga people are the traditional population of the Zambezi Valley (Mashinya 2007). However, Gache-Gache residents also claim autochthonous belonging to the Zambezi Valley and, by extension, access to Lake Kariba and its resources. Tonga refutes these claims because the history of those living in Gache-Gache is that their great-grandparents were displaced from what is now Chirundu, closer to the Zambia-Zimbabwe border. Marowa and Matanzima (2023,150) highlight that the construction of the Kariba also impacted ethnic groups other than Tonga. These different ethnic groups lived quite a distance from the Kariba Gorge, including chiefs Mudzimu, Dandawa, Nyamhunga and Nematombo and their people. They were resettled in what is now Hurungwe, and their descendants constitute the most significant percentage of the present-day Gache-Gache fishing village population.

Initially, the people of Gache-Gache eligible to get a fishers' permit were descendants of the 1950s dam-induced displacement who resettled in the Hurungwe district. If someone was from outside the line of descent, they had to live in Gache-Gache for at least five years before they became eligible for a fisher's permit. However, with time, the five-year rule for people without any link to Lake Kariba induced displaces to become eligible to get fishers permits, provided they had the money to pay the monthly taxes. At the time of the study, most people got permits by taking over permits with huge debts and paying the arrears first. Most fishermen who held permits lost their licenses because they owed the rural council for an extended period. The rural council forfeited their permits without informing the permit holders. The concept of moral economy is closely related to how people claim belonging and entitlement to resources on the lake. The following sections explain the idea of moral economy and how it is applied in this thesis.

2.3 Moral Economy: Conceptual Overview

Anthropologist Fiona McCormack (2007, 46) defines moral economy as a type of economy characterised by relations of production premised on kinship and mechanisms of redistribution that play a levelling role among members of a given community. McCormack (2007, 46) highlights that the premise of the moral economy is that during times of hardship, essential commodities necessary for survival are accessible to those in need. E. P. Thompson and Scott's original ideas of the moral economy relate to an underlying notion of class politics and consent's successful (or unsuccessful) production (Karsak 2024, 519). The concept of moral economy was first used to analyse and understand protests and everyday forms of resistance, and E. P. Thompson is the chief proponent of the idea (Boucquey 2017, 139). Thompson (1971) studied food riots caused by hunger and unemployment in 18th-century England (see Wolford, 2005). Thompson (ibid) opined that the food riots were rooted in 'legitimising notions or ideas about morally acceptable conditions for a standard of living (cited in Boucquey, 2017:139). Similarly, in his study in Asia, James Scott (1976:167) observed that despite difficult living conditions, protests sometimes occurred because of a shared moral universe "woven into the tissue of peasant behaviour". In this sense, the driving cause of rebellions or resistance was when commonly understood livelihood rights were violated (Boucquey 2017, 139).

These early studies on resistance and protests focused on the rebellions of people with low incomes and, as such, focused only on the moral economies of people with low incomes rather than those of the upper classes (Boucquey 2017, 139). The concept of moral economy has further been developed by scholars (see Fassin 2005; Sayer 2004; Goodman 2004) to analyse

political economic philosophies and, practices and policies at the level of the state and society in general. In geography, the concept has been used to study heterogeneous social groups' perceptions of the use and distribution of resources (Boucquey, 2017, 139). Neumann (1998:37), for instance, conceives of his use of the concept of moral economy to analyse and understand "...the struggle over norms, values and expectations related to subordinate classes". In Neumann's work, the development of moral economies is intricately linked to geographic places' social histories.

Moral economy as an approach simultaneously integrates the traditional objects of political economy (relations between capital, class, and state). However, it further anthropologically explores how they are permanently embedded (Palomera and Vetta 2016, 415). In other words, the moral economy simultaneously advocates a grounded understanding of the more abstract and global political-economic processes. At the same time, it historicises the everyday realm of observation by accounting for class-informed dispositions in a particular time and space (Palomera and Vetta 2016, 415). The approach is suited to the analysis of political culture, norms and expectations of various groups of people involved in social reproduction, power relations between the governed and the elites, and the articulation of such dispositions and relations with capitalist processes of continuity and change (Palomera and Vetta 2016, 415).

Moral economy comprises the locally understood concepts of property rights, community membership, and the social good (right) that make agrarian communities resilient to environmental or political stress (Munro 1998, xxii). E. P. Thompson highlights that custom stands at the interface of law and pastoral praxis." This conceptualisation means local customs such as ambience, mentality, and vocabulary of legitimation and expectation." For Scott, the moral economy resides in the close intertwining of the social and the technical arrangements of production that inform a panoply of relations of social obligation and reciprocity. According to McCormack (2007, 46), Thompson's seminal work on the moral economy is essential for three reasons: first, it highlights interconnections between the emergence of the market economy and private property rights; second, it pays attention to the critical role played by culture in the marketplace; and lastly, it emphasises the dynamic role of tradition as an instrument used to challenge situations of deprivation.

James Scott (1976) analysed peasant households in Burma and Vietnam and started from the micro setting of everyday life, exploring peasants' livelihoods' entanglement with more enormous transformations, specifically colonial state formation and free-market expansion

(Palomera and Vetta 2016, 416). Scott (1976) wrote about the moral economy of the subsistence ethic. The subsistence ethic hinges on a guarantee of a minimum level of subsistence and informs the notion of economic justice and the working definition of exploitation (Palomera and Vetta 2016, 217).

For James Scott, moral economy helps understand the normative roots of peasant politics (Wolf 1969, 4). Moral economy inflects an exchange between people and elites buttressed by norms of reciprocity and the right to subsistence, as evident in daily routines (Simeant 2015, 164). For Scott, subsistence is critical (Simeant 2015, 164). This involves behaviour characterised by caution and survival strategies premised on a social and technical order that avoids risk; for instance, some cropping patterns are safer than others. This produces a conception of justice where a leader is legitimised based on an understanding of the needs of the farmers and his ability to provide those necessities of life (Simeant 2015, 164). Through his exploration of farmers, Scott (1976) connects the ethics of subsistence, personal dependence and the micropolitics of resistance in the village (Simeant 2015, 164). Scott's (1976) approach is more structural and less historical than Thompson's, meaning that any life situation produces its subsistence ethics without determining its practical expression (Simeant 2015, 165). As a result, Scott can be critiqued for not paying attention to the local and, by extension, moral variations of his concept of moral economy.

James Scott, building on earlier works by Thompson, Chaynov, Wolf, and Polanyi, argues that the essential feature of the peasant economy is the moral content of the subsistence ethic: that there is a close interconnection in the peasant mind between economic calculation and moral norms (McCormack 2007, 46). Scott envisaged peasants as people living close to the margins of survival, and this ongoing precarity led to the development of a subsistence ethic. This led to social arrangements comprising:

...patterns of reciprocity, forced generosity, communal land, and work-sharing [*which*] helped to even out the inevitable trough in a family's resources, which might otherwise have thrown them below subsistence (Scott, 1976: 3).

James Scott's work on the moral economy has been widely used to analyse food and agriculture economies (Karsak 2024, 518). Karsak suggests that a productive way to understand moral economy denotes the generation of consent in capitalist societies, especially at a local level where one can identify a set of morals shared by most community members— 'in the sense

that morality implies a collective and systemic basis in long-term shared values' (Hann 2016, 4).

Scholars have interpreted moral economy differently, but two strands stand out. The first one uses moral economy to scrutinise systems of provisioning that appear to originate outside or in the cracks of the market (Palomer and Vetta 2016, 414). This lens focuses on solidarity and alternative or informal practices (Palomera and Vetta 2016, 414). Such analyses present moral economy as synonymous with an organised field of values, where economic practice is embedded in moral obligations and social norms (Olivier de Sardan 1999; Tripp 2006; Langegger 2015). Hann (2010) highlights that central to this approach is that it challenges the economic view by emphasising values and norms. The growing interest in values and norms has led to scholars dropping the production and distribution of resources from the picture (Palomer and Vetta 2016, 414). Fassin (2009) noted that this production and distribution drop risks fostering culturalisation and depoliticisation (Palomera and Vetta 2016, 414).

Anthropologist Evelyn Pinkerton (2015, 410) explores the moral values and practices that foster equitable economic opportunities and a sense of fairness in North American small-scale fisheries. However, neoliberal policies have affected these moral economies, emphasising efficiency, rational self-interest, and wealth accumulation (Pinkerton 2015, 410). Pinkerton (2015, 410) argues that small-scale fisheries and their moral practices appear marginalised and undervalued by neoliberal regimes. Pinkerton further asserts that these moral economies are essential in promoting social, economic, and ecological welfare. Pinkerton (2015) uses the term moral economy to refer to "long-established values, norms and practices of both fishermen and government that are considered fair and just ways to promote well-being in the fishery and society."

The term moral economy was first used by Alexander Chaynov (1966) to analyse how household economies functioned, that is, how members of a household economic unit decided how much to produce. Anthropologist Paul Durrenberger (1980) adopted Chaynov's (1966) framework of "utility/drudgery vs value of production" to explore the ways that small-scale fisherfolk in Mississippi crafted the same economic decisions as those in different places, including Newfoundland, Carbo Verde, France, and Norway (Pinkerton 2015,410). Durrenberger observed that fishermen in these other places worked only enough to meet the needs of household members. Chaynov (1966) also revealed how families in these economic units of production work and act according to a moral code which is not predominantly driven

by maximising profit. These fishing economies generally operate as peasants found worldwide (Edelman 2005).

In the context of Thompson's work, the peasants were protesting to assert the need for a traditional fair price instead of the free market price. They opposed profiteering on essential commodities while people were starving, which, in their eyes, was immoral. The moral economy includes the notion of the right of peasants to subsistence agriculture insurance during crisis times (Pinkerton 2015, 411). Anthropologist James Scott propounded this idea in his study of Asian peasant communities. Moral economy has been used in nearly every economic policy, which takes cognisance of the role played by moral values in achieving the financial goals of any society. It has influenced research on "social economy" (Tolley and Hall-Aber). Early work by anthropologists on moral economy focused on a range of themes, including the gift economy (Cheal 1988), which emphasises reciprocal relationships, and political economies focused on maintaining social cohesion and solidarity (Meillassoux 1981). Anthropologists also focused on reciprocity and the gift economy concerning households (Silverstone et al. 1992), traditional views regarding social norms and obligations (Thompson 1971), and economic justice and exploitation (Scott 1976).

The strength of the moral economy approach mainly lies in its ability to highlight ambiguous logic and values that guide livelihood practices by looking at the dynamic fields of struggle around the boundaries of what is good and acceptable, their power hierarchies and the political projects they might inform (Palomera and Vetta 2016, 415). Wolford (2005:245) draws from Thompson and defines moral economy thus:

“Moral economies are the expression of and production of a social group's explicitly normative frameworks outlining the ‘proper’ organisation of society and division of (what are perceived as) scarce resources. They contain ideological elements and are historically and spatially situated in concrete material contexts.”

Nair (2022, 210) highlights the shift that the moral economy concept has undergone, from being a concept to understanding shifts in political economy; it has increasingly been used to understand the role played by morality and values in non-capitalist economies. Resource-dependent communities are depicted as examples of moral economies, comprising morals premised on equality and reciprocity and thus seen as the antithesis of modern capitalist societies (Nair 2022, 210). This later formulation changes the focus from social change – the

foundation of the earlier moral economy framework – to focus on morality and participants in ‘moral’ economies (Nair 2022,210).

Bocquey (2017, 139) uses the moral economy lens to explore social and political relationships between fishery groups—a shared moral universe (Scott 1976,167). Rebellions only occurred once commonly understood subsistence rights were violated (Bocquey 2017, 139). Researching two contrasting moral economy tales regarding the conservation and value of fish, Bocquey (2017) observed that moral tales of state-facilitated conservation are by no means universal among recreational fishermen. However, the storylines of the purpose and value of fish are echoed by many powerful and politically active recreational fishing groups (Bocquey 2017, 138). On the other hand, commercial fishermen use their moral tales that mainly depict fish as food and a source of income to express their view about how fish must be integrated into people’s social and economic lives. Fisher's moral economies demonstrate that these concepts are deeply felt and purposefully wielded in savvy political efforts to control resource access (Bocquey 2017, 139). Neumann (1998) emphasises the importance of specific geographic places and their social histories towards developing moral economies. Differing meanings of appropriate resource use tend to exacerbate political conflicts around environmental management.

Drawing from this definition, the moral economy of individuals and social groups strongly emphasises the principle of fair resource use, and this is influenced by how they are situated within specific spaces, social histories, and political-economic processes. More importantly, moral economies are renegotiated as needs and relationships change (Bocquey 2017, 140). In Gache-Gache villages, one must add the shifting of context.

2.3.1 The Moral Economy of Survival: Notions of Reciprocity and Obligations

Two distinct ways explain the moral dimension of economic action (Karsak 2024, 519). The first emphasises the social embeddedness of economic activity. This position assumes values predating market relations upon which market relations are enforced (Karsak 2024, 519). Hann (2016) articulates this position well, discussing economic activity's “moral dimension” and the ethical context. The second position, explained by Carrier (2018), supposes a set of social expectations and obligations resulting from economic activity. Carrier (2018) argues this is an understudied understanding of the moral economy. In Gache-Gache, the villagers demonstrated the concepts of fairness and equal opportunities in various ways. For instance, there was a consensus among villagers that food donations must be ethically distributed, and transport money must not be charged.

My interlocutors often voiced that no one should be deterred from earning a living from the Lake during these times of distress because fish are a gift from Mwari (the Creator). Some of the rural council and ZimParks employees also shared the same position, with one ZimParks ranger saying to me during an informal conversation, "...If you confiscate nets or take away fish from someone because they do not have a permit, with this challenging economic environment we are living in, *Mwari vanokuranga. Munhu wese aripakutsvaga*" (lit. God will punish you. Everyone is looking for a way to survive). This demonstrates a prevailing socialised belief among the villagers and those enforcing regulations, emphasising the right to subsist. This standard set of beliefs asserts that God punishes those who deny others and reinforces a Durkheimian conception of religion as 'sui generis', i.e., religion reigning over and above the individual, pushing registered fishermen to accept unregistered fishermen to fish.

Maritime anthropologists have documented many facets of the moral economies operating in fishing communities in North American fisheries, and they reveal moral economies which are predominantly informed by the high-risk nature of fishing (8-10). These moral economies of fishing communities often comprise a strong ethic of equal economic opportunity for those who risk their lives on the same boat (Hess 2010; Firth 1966). Pinkerton (2015, 411) identifies three elements of equal economic opportunity predominant in small-scale fisheries worldwide. First is the idea that the share system that determines how benefits from a fishing trip are shared should be divided fairly. The second and third elements identified by Pinkerton concern state regulations regarding allocating fishing opportunities to different fishing gear, large and small, to allow small-scale fishers to have fair access. The third element concerns limits on corporate control of fishing licenses or boats so that price competition.

Anthropologist Katherine Browne (2009) argues that fishing communities' moral economies generally reveal their political philosophies regarding their positive right to welfare, which is the right to equal opportunity. These moral economies contrast with what Browne (2009) describes as a negative neoliberal morality regarding the right not to suffer interference from regulation and state control in most parts of the economy. Browne's (2009) conceptualisation of the moral economy takes cognisance of the fact that a moral economy can shrink or expand under differing conditions.

Fishers in Trincomalee believe in a profound supernatural influence on their fishing livelihoods (Lokuge and Munas 2018, 244). Religion plays a critical role in how people make decisions, and just like in other areas of life, religious beliefs profoundly shape how fishers understand

fisheries (Brown 2008). Fishing is, by nature, characterised by dynamic risks, and fishers are exposed to unpredictable elements of the open sea (Acheson 1981). As such, fisher communities resort to forces that are more powerful than them to ensure successful and meaningful livelihoods (Lokuge and Munas 2018, 244).

Gateway and McCay (1990, 15) highlight that anthropologists often explore how different communities' value systems, convictions, and social organisation may be intricately linked to their modes of production and ways of making a living. Similarly, Sayer (2004, 1) asserts that “rules, habits, norms, conventions and values” significantly influence economic practices and institutions. Sayer (2004, 1) notes that these values, norms, habits, and conventions vary across societies. Morality or ethics refer to formal and informal norms, values and dispositions concerning behaviour that affect others and involve conceptions of good or bad (Sayer 2004, 3). Morality can also be understood as objectives instead of profit accumulation, including social cohesion, status, and the sustainability of an economic system (Nair 2011, 400). Values may be how a community perceives and understands things (Chan et al., 2012).

Wolford (2005) uses moral economy to understand how the ruling elite and landless workers construct specific narratives to defend their positions and actions. According to Wolford (2005:244), applying the concept of moral economy comparatively “recognizes the diversity in their social and productive motivations or relationships [while also] placing the two groups on equal footing as value-laden, historically situated claims to a given set of resources”. This comparative approach is critical, but it is also important to highlight that when comparing two or more social groups, they may not always hold distinct and antagonistic positions regarding how resources should be managed, accessed and used for livelihood construction. This is particularly so in the context of livelihood stress such as Gache-Gache. For instance, some conservation institutions' employees emphasised the need to relax some fishery regulations to let people survive. The following snippet from an informal interview with village head Mupepe illustrates the general acceptance of unregistered fishers in Gache-Gache based on the moral right of subsistence for everyone in Gache-Gache,

“I see no reason why anyone, including the unregistered, should be denied access to the Lake and its fishery resources. *Nekumira kwakaita nyika uku muzukuru tinongovagamuchira hama dzedu idzi. Ungadzinga munhu pakadai kana kuti usapinde mumvura chokwadi nemaomero akaita zvinhu iwaya?* (‘With our country’s situation,

we welcome them [unregistered fishermen]. You cannot chase them away or deny them the opportunity to go and fish on the Lake with [the?] the way life is tough like this?"

Village head Mupepe's words above demonstrate that despite the official position of the lake management regime, the right for everyone to live reigns supreme over the rules instituted by the government under the scientific management of fish stocks that sought to minimise the number of fishers. In explaining the moral economy concept, Neumann (1998:37) asserts that the concept can be used to understand "the struggles over norms, values and expectations related to livelihoods of subordinate classes". Neumann (1998) observed that African farmers and rural villagers developed a moral economy of resource use within the borders of national parks that opposed a colonial legacy of different land uses. Neumann's work reveals the importance of specific geographic locales and their histories in developing moral economy tales or justifications behind social action. In the previous section, village head Mudzimu referred to the dam and fish as a "gift from God" and that, by extension, they are obliged to share the fish with everyone regardless of registration status. The people of Gache-Gache have developed this moral economy of subsistence. This starkly contrasts the formal management approach adopted by the state's institutions responsible for the lake's management. In this sense, moral economies of social groups express a particular notion of fair resource use, influenced by how they are situated within specific histories, spaces and political-economic processes (Bocquey 2017, 140).

However, eschewing a monolithic state versus local people dichotomy is essential because it does not always follow that the state, through its employees, is against the people being governed. As Moore (2005) notes, micro-practices matter, and state officials do not always do what state officialdom dictates. In Gache-Gache, this was demonstrated through rangers who, in their pursuit of livelihoods, share a joint position of the moral economy of subsistence shared by the fishers. Mr. Ganye, a clinician and secretary for the Gache-Gache Fishers Association explained that:

Some get into informal agreements with rangers. There is rampant corruption here. Rangers sometimes do not see it as beneficial to keep confiscating fisher's nets. They would instead get a bribe of fish or money and let the fishermen go with their nets. That way, it is better because they will starve if they take the nets tomorrow. No one can catch about 400 kg worth of fish without getting into an agreement with rangers. Where would he line his nets to get such a big catch? (Informal conversation, 20/06/20).

Mr Ganye's words above demonstrated that although management of natural resources is initiated from the outside, "people's everyday practices are shaped by their own rules and moral codes" (Wilson 2002, 150) on the ground, and this can be at variance with what official rules state in principle. Official law never covers all areas of human activities. It leaves "free spaces" in the gaps between law and local moral rules" (Wilson 2002, 150). Evans and Boyte (1986:17) discuss what they term "accessible spaces", referring to settings between private lives and large-scale institutions where citizens can act with dignity, independence, and vision (Evans and Boyte 1986, 17).

It is also crucial to note that moral economies are not static but renegotiated as needs and relationships shift (Bocquey 2017, 140). The room for renegotiation of a moral economy is significant to highlight because it helps in understanding how narratives of registered fishers change depending on context – that is, when their subsistence is threatened by the need to pay tax, they start to question why unregistered fishers continue to fish without paying tax. Such a position, which is in contradiction with the communitarian view of ubuntu, was clearly illustrated by village head Nematombo, who, at the beginning of my fieldwork, castigated the presence of unregistered fishers in Gache-Gache, as the fieldnotes below detail:

07 October 2019. In the scorching sun of Gache-Gache, my research assistant and I visited the village head, Nematombo, for the first time. His immediate reaction after I briefed him about my research revealed fundamental issues affecting everyday life and fishers' livelihoods in Gache-Gache. Once he got an idea of my study's focus, he interjected it before I finished explaining it. He instructed us to disregard the perceptions of the 'grocery shops-based' fishers, particularly the complaints and problems that he presumed these fishermen would raise in the interviews – especially conflicts between fishers and ZimParks officials. He claimed that the ZimParks officials rightfully confiscate fishermen's fishing gear because they are illegal. By describing fishers as 'grocery shops-based' fishers, issues of belonging were being raised, meaning the fishers are of no fixed abode. Insisting that he complies with the designated fishing gear, village head Nematombo also claimed that those who complain are not permanent residents of Gache-Gache. He said they are "squatters" who come to "poach" fish.

The fishermen to whom village head Nematombo was referring were mainly unregistered. After spending a couple of months in the field, his instructions for us not to entertain complaints regarding the challenges these fishermen face revealed the selective nature of narratives that fisherfolk give outsiders (unregistered fishermen) depending on context. Village head Nematombo's first impression was that we (myself and my research assistant) belonged to a

Non-Governmental Organisation that would potentially return with food or another form of donations. He instructed us not to speak to these ‘squatter fishermen’ to ensure that these fishermen would be excluded from whatever benefits we would bring back to the community. As weeks turned into months, I realised that this was a strategy used by registered fishermen, particularly those holding administrative positions, to give negative impressions of unregistered fishermen when they think they will get something in return or when they encounter fisheries management compliance authorities, particularly those from ZimParks¹¹ to make sure finite resources reached registered fishers first/ registered fishers had priority.

I first observed registered fishers' perceptions of the general acceptance of unregistered fishers' right to fish when one of the ZimParks rangers died on the 31st of December 2019. Tembo, the ranger in question, was one of the stricter ZimParks employees and died while patrolling the Lake to curb poaching. Gache-Gache residents speculated that he had been chained by poachers from Zambia, whom he had allegedly arrested and was taking to Kariba police station by boat. Instead of expressing sympathy for Tembo's demise, many Gache-Gache fishers rejoiced. The one who was indiscriminately willing to send people to prison for violating fishing regulations had been eliminated. Surprisingly, village head Nematombo, who had castigated ‘grocery shop-based’ fishers for using illegal fishing gear, was also happy that Tembo had died. People's way of life in Gache-Gache is presented or narrated differently depending on the context and to whom the fishermen speak—after the demise of Tembo, village head Nematombo, shared a more nuanced view of unregistered fishermen. One January afternoon in 2020, I visited him and found him mending monofilament nets. I asked why, when I first arrived in Gache-Gache, he was speaking against the grocery shop fishermen; he replied,

The grocery shop fishermen you are talking about, we allow them to fish for as long as they do not threaten our survival. We know that they come here looking to survive on the Lake. However, when they misbehave, we remind them that they are only visitors and should not expect to get the same treatment as the children of Gache-Gache.

Based on this, one can argue that though there is a general sense of the moral right for everyone to survive through fishing regardless of registration status and a principle of mutual sharing and caring, registered fishermen's perceptions are not fixed. There is, therefore, a need not to romanticise the prevalence of ubuntu principles in communities such as Gache-Gache because these are in a constant renegotiation process depending on context. Apart from generally

¹¹ The Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management is a successor to the Department of Wildlife Management

accepting unregistered fishermen in Gache-Gache, some registered fishermen welcomed new fishermen in Gache-Gache because they are a source of alternative income through the provision of accommodation, for which they received a small monthly rental fee.

In concurrence with village head Nematombo's above sentiments, some fishery regulation authorities admitted to finding it challenging to send offenders to prison on the same narrative of the need to survive. A ZimParks ranger, whom I had the opportunity to have a short informal conversation with, explained it in the following way, "We all know that everyone is here to fend for their family. Whenever I catch you without a permit violating fishery management rules or a permit, I may ask you to grease my pockets a little and allow you to continue fishing. We are all trying to make a living in a difficult environment," explained the ranger.

Still, not everyone welcomed newcomers – some of those not directly benefitting from unregistered fishermen castigated the practice and the uncoordinated efforts of the fishery rules institutions. Those benefitting from unregistered fishermen did so by offering them accommodation at a monthly rental fee of between five to 10 United States dollars. However, those opposed to this practice referred to it as corruption, while those involved said it was a means of survival for both parties. There is thus a need to emphasise a general presence of the principles of being humane (in the sense of acknowledging the need for everyone to survive through fishing) and a general moral economy of subsistence, but to be careful in avoiding a generalisation that misrepresents the nuances in how that survival is imagined - contestation over how it is best achieved.

When faced with challenges, fishers modify their stance when they see that they are being disadvantaged, just as village head Nematombo highlighted in the interview excerpt above, where he emphasises that unregistered fishermen are allowed to fish for as long as they are not a threat to registered fishers' survival. As highlighted in the previous sections, strangers/outside (unregistered fishermen) get away with fishing without being taxed but have their belonging and right to fish questioned when the registered fishers feel their welfare is threatened. In situations of economic hardship, such as suspending restrictive criteria deterring unregistered fishers.

Moore (2002,136), in his ethnographic study in Nyanga, Zimbabwe, observed that community members used idioms that deal with claims to environmental resources, for instance, *nhaka* (meaning inheritance) and *zvisikwa* (meaning resources to be utilised). Moore (2002, 136) argues that these idioms reflect what Bourdieu (1977) calls the *habitus* – a set of historically

developed dispositions and cultural habits. Moore (2002, 136) notes that people's historical relationship to Kaerezi and migration within the region has not been uniform, leading to the "coexistence of multiple historicities...within a particular locality". Cultural idioms are pervasive, but they are not always harnessed for the same purposes not experienced in the same way (Moore 2002,136). Similarly, Gache-Gache fishers seek to make a living that fits within their ethics of being humane. However, what happens when the conditions for making a living are threatened by the enforcement of fishing regulations, such as when they are asked to pay for permits?

There is a sense of 'we all have to survive' and less emphasis on a "tragedy of the commons"-like worldview (see Garrett Hardin 1968) individual competition for resources and survival. In this sense, the communitarian and sharing nature of ubuntu can be used to frame the common ground that fishers in Gache-Gache held regarding the right to fish, where they disregard registration status to focus on the need for survival of everyone amidst a general zeitgeist of economic misery (Jones 2010; Fontein 2015; Tombindo and Gukurume 2021) that continues to characterise everyday life in Zimbabwe since the turn of the millennium.

Allowing everyone to fish in Gache-Gache is based on the humane principle and excluding unregistered fishers is seen as inhuman. "Hatingavaregi vachifa nenzara, dhamhu takaripiwa nevadzimu iri" (We cannot leave them [unregistered fishers] starving; the ancestors gave us this dam), explained village head Mudzimu one February afternoon in 2020. Village head Mudzimu referred to the dam as a gift from the ancestors and, therefore, the need not to ignore the need for unregistered fishers to subsist through fishing. Village head Mudzimu implied that because their ancestors gave them the dam, they had a moral obligation not to exclude unregistered fishers, lest they would be punished by the same ancestors who gifted them the dam, demonstrating the principle of mutual sharing and caring.

2.4 The Fishing Permit: A Burden?

Who is a fisherman? On paper, one who owns a permit or is registered. The fishing permit carries with it the right to fish and to belong to Gache-Gache fishing villages. However, there is a caveat of ancestral history to the fishing permit. When fishing villages were established, the 1950s Kariba Dam-induced displacees and their descendants were targeted to benefit from fishing. Today, people who do not fall in this category can get a permit if they have lived in Gache-Gache for five years and can pay for it monthly. The acquisition of permits by people not linked initially to the Kariba-dam displacement has not mattered because the fishing permit is a burden because of the monthly permit payments, which are difficult to keep up because of

the erratic nature of catches. Many in Gache-Gache despise permit ownership because it is some form of monthly tax burden.

Though it seems meagre to an outsider, this amount significantly affects livelihoods because not every fishing trip produces abundant catch. This demotivates them because those who do not have permits fish despite not having permits and not being recognised by authorities. A fisher's permit is the main requirement to be considered a fisherman. Equipment such as a lifejacket, a boat and nets are essential. However, the fisher's permit is the primary requirement for one to be officially recognised as a fisherman by the Parks and Council officials. One elderly man, an ex-fisherman, sekuru Bundu, explained the importance of the fishing permit in the following way:

What is required for one to become a fisherman? You must have a fisher's permit for which you pay a licence fee monthly. Your permit, boat, nets, and other small things that are not worth mentioning, like lifejackets, are essential requirements to be considered a fisherman. However, the most important is your permit, without which you are a thief [meaning poacher] (09/10/19).

The term poacher needs qualifying, though, because possessing a permit does not entirely absolve one from being regarded as a poacher. Fishers who have permits but fish in restricted areas of the lake are also considered poachers by lake management authorities. As such, 'thief' or poacher depends on who uses the term and in what sense. For the fisherman above, thief refers to someone who does not have a permit and, therefore, does not have the right to fish. In agreement with sekuru Bundu, another fisherman, Mr Muzvarwa, said there is no excuse for one to fish while unregistered. Describing unregistered fishermen as thieves as well, he said,

Right now, I am using someone else's permit. He travelled to the communal areas and left the license in my hands. I had to pay off the debt he left on the permit and register my name on his permit as an employee. Every month, I pay licence fees for the permit owner and, on top of that, for myself as an employee under that permit. A license is essential because it allows me to fish according to the rules. Others are fishing without a permit, but *humbavha* (it is thievery), it must not be allowed. Taking resources that belong to the government for free is thievery. A licence is suitable because the village head and the Gache-Gache Fisher's Association leaders will recognise me as a fisherman. If I fall into a problem, they will not hesitate to assist me because they know they will support a fellow fisherman. However, if I am someone who just fishes, after just arriving here from the communal areas and fishing without paying any form of tax and I do not pay any money for *renda* (ritual ceremony) when the spirit medium for this

place comes to show that I live in this area how am I to be protected? Those with permits, in most cases, are the ones who have plots. If someone gets a portion of a plot belonging to someone, it does not make him/her the plot owner. The stand owner is the one who will pay tax for the stand¹²

At the same time, for lake management authorities, the term poacher is broader and includes those without permits and those fishing in restricted areas such as breeding grounds. While emphasising the importance of the permit in that it grants fishermen the security of fishing without fear of being targeted as a poacher, sekuru Danger, an ex-fisherman who now specialises in making and selling boats and one of the older generation of fishers explained his dismay at the exclusionary nature of the permit system. He instead suggested that,

There should not be a cap on the number of permits. Everyone who wants to fish should get a permit to pay tax. How does it help not to give them a permit, yet they still fish? When the lake was constructed, the people living in the valley feared working on constructing the dam wall. The people who worked on its construction came from Zambia and other faraway places in Zimbabwe, such as the Ndau people in eastern Zimbabwe. The Ndau people were the ones who were not afraid, and they worked on building the wall; many of them died. Fishing permits and rights should not be limited to those descendants of the 1950s displacees (20/06/20).

Note how the two responses from the three fishermen above differ – two fishers agree with the narrative set by the lake management regulations. The other is more inclusive and accommodating of unregistered fisherfolk. Therefore, as explained in the section on ubuntu, ethics of mutuality and sharing are not to be neatly ascribed to every fisher and resident of Gache-Gache.

Each permit holder can employ two workers. According to the maximum sustainable yield standard principle that governs fisheries (see Nyikahadzoi and Rakajaer 2014), Gache-Gache fishing grounds have a maximum capacity of 175 fishing permits to avoid exceeding the capacity of the fishing grounds. Chapter Three explains in detail that this is based on contentious scientific assumptions because fish stocks are difficult to accurately determine, especially in tropical lakes such as Kariba (see Kolding and van Zwieten 2012). This arrangement is where the two workers get a third of the catch per fishing trip (one-sixth for each worker), and the permit holder gets two-thirds. In Gache-Gache, fishers call this

¹² Interview 10/06/20

arrangement “three-share.” The two workers embark on every fishing trip together to help cast nets and paddle each other. The boats used by fishermen in Gache-Gache are mostly not motorised, homemade and made of cheap roofing iron sheets. Paddling is, therefore, a challenging manual endeavour that requires the effort of two people.

In principle, the two people paddling to line their nets in the evening or to check nets in the morning are supposed to be workers working for a permit holder or the permit holder and one of his workers. In practice, however, because the “three-share” arrangement is not so beneficial for the workers, people choose to fish without registering under a permit holder but on their own to get a more significant share which they divide among themselves. At the time of this study, this arrangement just remained in name. Former workers either applied for fishing permits and became permit holders or were still waiting for the outcome of their applications for a permit. Permit holders or not, fishermen now preferred fishing without working for someone. Those who do not have boats borrow from boat owners at a fee of US\$6-00 per trip. The practice of registering workers declined because people no longer wanted to be workers on someone else’s permit or because permit holders no longer wanted to have workers.

As of September 2020, a permit holder paid US\$ 3-00 per month to the rural council for their fishing licence. If there are people who want to be registered as workers, each worker pays US\$1-00 per month to the council. The fees for a fishing permit and residence tax have significantly changed from what they were at the start of the study to what they had changed towards the end. At the beginning of the study in October 2019, licence fees were paid in Zimbabwean dollars, but towards the end, they had changed to United States dollars. The monthly cost of the permit at the beginning of my study was 10 Zimbabwean dollars (just under one United States dollar), which was very affordable compared to the new licence fees now charged in United States dollars. Registered fishermen still found paying the monthly licence fees difficult because many unregistered fishermen were fishing for free. The concept of ubuntu and the moral economy of subsistence as already highlighted earlier only applied insofar as the registered were not being asked to pay for the residence and permit taxes.

The fishers’ permit allows for only five fishing nets; in principle, and these normally belong to the permit holder, not the workers. In her study in 2001, McGregor (2008; 2009) observed this exact arrangement among fishermen in Binga, Lake Kariba. This means the fishermen in Binga were complying with these rules at the time of McGregor’s study. In Gache-Gache, however, at the time of my study, fishermen were not complying with the limitation on the number of

nets. Fishermen strove to have as many nets as possible to maximise their catches. What limited the number of nets that each pair of fishermen carried with them to work was affordability. Moreover, most of these pairs of fishermen did not hold any permits, meaning they would be called poachers by the rural council and ZimParks. In discussions with rural council rangers, such as in the snippet of the conversation that I had with Mr Magura, I realised that just being a permit holder was not enough – several months' arrears of permit licence fees rendered someone a poacher, and they lost their right to fish. The use of many nets by fishermen in Gache-Gache can be attributed to the stiff competition for fish among the many registered and unregistered fishermen working in the Gache-Gache fishery.

Nowadays, there are many fishermen in Gache-Gache. The children we sent to this local school hoping for a better future are now fishermen. The same children also have friends coming from communal areas to become fishermen in Gache-Gache.

Asked whether he thinks the increased number of fishermen in Gache-Gache affects the residents in any way, Mr Danger replied,

It is the same as when there were fewer fishermen. Some years back, it seemed like there were more fish, but that is because fish used to be in the shallow waters closer to the shore. The fish population has increased, but they have migrated to deeper levels of the lake. Three types of fish are caught in the lake: the bream, tiger, and bottle fish. These are not the types of fish we used to catch long back. Fish are like prophets. If you catch them for some years, they sense the danger and migrate to deep waters that fishermen cannot reach. Fish stock can never be depleted because there are many chiefs whose graves were drowned when the lake was constructed.

In addition to paying licence fees for the permit, registered fishermen must pay residence tax to the rural council. The residence tax is also US\$3-00. Those who are unregistered but live and fish in Gache-Gache avoid paying these fees and taxes because they are not registered. During this study, though undocumented because they are difficult to trace, there were more than double the unregistered fishermen compared to the cap of 175 permits.

Before the turn of the millennium, it was challenging to become a fisherman without being registered as a permit holder or as a worker under a permit holder. Now it is still just as challenging to register but easier to fish without registering. The issue of belonging was critical. One had to come from either of the five villages to qualify to apply for a permit. This was emphasised as well by other permit holders who were initially not from those five villages.

They obtained permits after they became more accessible or based on long-term residence. They noted that they were viewed as *vatorwa* (strangers) and, therefore, not eligible to apply for fishing permits. Permit applicants must have lived in Gache-Gache for five years before a village head could recommend them to the rural council for registration. One of the village heads had this to say:

It was not easy because fishermen used to live in camps rather than villages. Each village head had his group of fishermen in his camp. It was challenging to start fishing without a permit. The law did not allow that. For one to qualify for registration, you had to initially come from either Mudzimu, Dandawa, Musampa, Nyamhunga, or Nematombo chieftaincies in the Hurungwe district. The law would not allow; for instance, someone from Masvingo province to arrive and wake up tomorrow asking for a fishing permit. You had to be a “muzukuru wekugova” (a descendant of the Zambezi valley gorge) dam displaces] child, a descendant of those chased away from the Zambezi River.

The five chiefdoms highlighted above belong to five chiefs who were displaced to pave the way for the Kariba dam's construction. All five chiefs were resettled in the Hurungwe district. This proof was a letter from their chief in the Hurungwe district in North-West Zimbabwe. In conversations during fieldwork, these people who originally came from either of the five chieftaincies referred to themselves as children of the village, emphasising their right to fish and belong in Gache-Gache.

Most fisherfolk in Gache-Gache regarded a fisher's permit as a burden because of the constant requirement to pay licence fees. At the same time, possessing a permit gives a fisherman a sense of security regarding one's future in fishing villages. During informal conversations with fishermen, they often expressed fears that one day they may be chased away from Gache-Gache if ZimParks or the rural council decide so. Instead of seeking a permit or registering as a worker under a permit holder to fish legally, most fisherfolks viewed the permit as burdening them with the requirement to pay licence fees monthly. As such, quite a significant number of fishers, particularly children of registered fishers, preferred being unregistered and fishing illegally. This makes them immune from paying licence fees to the rural district council. This, in turn, frustrated registered fishermen who were the target of the rural council concerning paying licence fees. This was explained by one of the village heads:

... I remember a few years ago, Mangwana and Partners debt collectors came to collect debts from the Rural District Council's office. Everyone (fishermen) who was found owing monthly payments for their fishers' permit was asked to pay their debt. Non-permit holders were unaffected; they were safe. They (unregistered fishermen) were spectators laughing at permit holders for the harassment they received from debt collectors (village head Mudzimu, 08/08/20).

In this sense, the vast debts were seen as a burden. The presence of so many unregistered fishermen is one of the critical drivers of registered fishermen's non-compliance. Registered fishermen cited the presence of too many unregistered fishermen who fish undisturbed by councils and parks as one of the reasons they were either not paying for their permits or did not bother registering under other permit holders.

2.5 The Fishing Permit and Practices of Belonging

Today, one's origins – regarding where s/he originally came from – do not matter in issuing a permit in Gache-Gache. The most crucial thing is a supporting letter from a Gache-Gache village head in whose village s/he resides. This is unlike in other fishing villages/camps, especially those where the Tonga people are most residents – identity and background are essential, as noted by Nyikahadzoi and Songore (1999), who observed that permit issuing in Binga prioritised descendants of the 1950s dam-induced displacement victims. In Gache-Gache, if one had the support of a village head, s/he would qualify for a fishing permit. By being the referees for permit applications, the village heads have power that makes them significant players in enforcing fishery compliance. This shows that people care about the permits even though enforcement is not regular.

Some fisherfolk emphasised weak enforcement of rules. During formal and informal conversations, fisherfolk often said that if I wanted to get registered and become a fisherman, I could quickly become one without hindrance from other fishermen. The fragmented nature of co-management, including the moral aspect of the need for survival, prevents leaders like village heads from controlling/ monitoring fishermen entering the lake. On the land, the council mainly collects tax and licence fees but is responsible for determining whether there are living in the villages. At the same time, they are unregistered and fall on the village heads. One participant narrated the nature of uncontrolled settlement and fishing like this:

If we agree, you can build a house on my residential plot, and no one will question you. No one will ask you about your identity and where you come from. Right now, if I take my boat and nets, you and I can go fishing in Kazungura [one of the prohibited areas for fishing on the lake], and no one will deter us.

After the circular by the rural council compelling them to pay for their permits, registered fishermen expressed their anger by requesting that they take the responsibility of arresting unregistered fishers in their own hands:

Recently, I heard people (registered fishermen) complaining because unregistered fishermen fish without being held accountable. They were demanding authorisation from the rural council to arrest unregistered fishermen. ‘Council should give us the powers to arrest unregistered fishermen on our own’, they demanded. I told them they already have the power, and lake management authorities are blaming registered fishermen and that they are the ones who are hiding them [unregistered fishermen] in their homes, protecting them from arrest. (Councilor Makanyaire, 08/08/20).

There is an uncontrolled settlement in Gache-Gache. Some of the settlements and the building of houses are unknown by the village heads. One of the village heads stated that at times he gets surprised when he visits or passes by some of the residents’ homesteads only to realise that there are new houses with new settlers living in them. At times, the new settlers do not build houses within the compound of the owner but instead pay monthly rentals to live in already existing houses in the compound of the permit holder or an old resident. By old resident here, I am referring to residents who have lived in Gache-Gache for quite a while but still do not have fishing permits. At the start of fieldwork, monthly rentals generally stood at ZW\$ 40-00 per month, but towards the end of fieldwork, the figure stood at US\$6-00. 40 Zimbabwean dollars at the start of my fieldwork was equivalent to just over US\$4-00, meaning the rental prices had increased at the end of fieldwork.

A senior ranger, responsible mainly for issuing business permits for the rural council, admitted that few fishermen were paying for their fishing licence/permits. The rural council is also aware of unregistered fishermen in Gache-Gache. The senior ranger explained the situation like this:

Yes, we have many cases of people who fish without permits. A person comes from faraway communal lands and starts fishing without being registered. Sometimes we try to engage the people through awareness campaigns to

encourage people to get registered first. Newcomers do not live in the forest when they arrive here; they live in the community with people already living here. The protocol is that newcomers first register themselves with a village head (09/10/19).

The words of the senior ranger give the impression that it is easy to get registered to become a legal fisherman. However, because of the 175-block permit cap, getting a permit is not necessarily easy and thus, newcomers are compelled to fish without getting registered.

Many newcomers are getting permits because the original settlers and permit holders are not paying for their permits. After a certain period – usually a year or more – without paying licence fees, the rural council usually cancels a permit holder's licence and issues it to a new applicant. A fisherman's status as a newcomer or resident in Gache-Gache also determines his inclination to comply. Newcomers are often accused of disregarding some of the rules for fishing. Lack of awareness of some rules' usefulness and corruption sometimes leads to non-compliance. From 2000, immigration into Gache-Gache increased as people sought greener pastures. One of the reasons cited by participants regarding the failure to pay fishing permit licence fees is that they realised that they face many challenges on the lake, which the council and ZimParks do not address. One major challenge is that of crocodile attacks. One of the participants – a permit holder – had this to say:

Many newcomers are joining us and getting fishing permits from the council. They are getting permits because the fishing villages' children [referring to the firstcomers and descendants of the dam-induced displacement victims] refuse to pay for permits. They realised that they face many challenges in the waters [of Lake Kariba]. Being attacked and killed by crocodiles is one of the enormous problems they are facing. They first identified and realised that working in the waters is risky. If a child (firstcomer) gets devoured by crocodiles on the lake, there is no help. So, tell me, why must we pay licence fees? Fishing on its own is like signing a death contract – you go to work afraid that one day you may get eaten by crocodiles. And then the council comes to ask me for licence fees? What for?

In a similar narration on the frustration of lack of support from the council, another registered fisherman had this to say:

As far as I know, the law requires that if someone is involved in an accident on the lake, the council must assist them financially if they cannot fish again due to injury. The first thing they must do is check whether the person is registered as a fisherman. However, our council sometimes lies that the person is not registered to avoid assisting.

In addition to the frustration around the lack of support from the rural council during times of crisis and accidents, registered fishers also complained that those not paying taxes were catching big. In this manner, not only were permit payments perceived as a burden, but the presence of unregistered fishers fishing without any disturbance made registered feel it was unfair for the authorities to ask them to pay for permits. At the same time, those paying taxes did not enjoy any privileges, which made registered fishers question the right of unregistered fishers to fish. One registered fisher had the following to say:

We, the permit holders, are paying for permits. However, there are just coming vokoma twumaboats [they construct boats] and start fishing without paying. These are the same people who are catching big; we are complying and paying for permits we struggle to catch. The council should make a stand to ensure that such fishermen are removed from the lake to make it easier for us registered fishers. The number of fishers allowed is already total. We, the registered villagers, allow these people from the communal lands with their iron sheets; they make boats while we look after them in our homes and start fishing without anyone bothering them.

Another reason why fishermen do not comply or pay for their permits is the realisation that the council is incapacitated to control illegal fishers from fishing on the lake. One ‘child from the village’ explained the situation in the following manner:

For so many years, unregistered fishermen have been settling in Gache-Gache. Children now realise that the council does not stop illegal fishers. If the council had controlled the situation from the beginning, there would not be this many fishermen here, and we would not face the challenges we face today.

Dore (2000) argues that the authority of the traditional leaders over natural resources lies only on paper, while statutory agencies (ZimParks, Rural and Council and the LKFRI) hold the technical control. However, in Gache-Gache, village heads held an important role, although it is limited in influence compared to council and park officials. Village heads are responsible only for confirming knowledge of a resident’s status for them to qualify for a fishing permit.

They are essential in terms of allocating residential plots to newcomers. However, village heads cannot control what happens in enforcing compliance on the Lake. Their influence is limited to what happens in the villages. However, the fishermen did realise the power and influence that village heads wield, as explained by one of them below:

Everything in Gache-Gache requires the endorsement of a village head. The council always refers you to the village head. If you want a residential plot or if you are involved in a dispute regarding newcomers who may come to build a house inside your residential plot, you are referred to the village head; he is the one who will resolve your issues. The village head is the real deal; the council has no power. No papers can be filled in the absence of a village head.

Sometimes fishermen stop going to work for various reasons, including finding alternative work in and outside Gache-Gache. Sometimes they stop after encountering accidents such as capsizing or nasty encounters with crocodiles and hippos. Regardless of such pauses in going to work, a registered fisherman is expected to still pay for licence fees to keep his permit. This is one of the registered fishermen's concerns, suggesting the need to adjust licence fee payments. One who also works as a carpenter had this to say:

Every month I must pay for my permit. I think there must be a review whereby if a fisherman stops going to fish, they must not pay licence fees. The council must devise an arrangement like the one for fish buyers. Fish buyers only pay for a fish buying permit for as long as they are coming to buy fish here, but when they stop, no one traces them to follow up on them for fish buying fees. The same should apply to fishermen without their permits being revoked.

Another issue that fishermen raised is the failure of the Rural Council and ZimParks to make permits that accommodate a permit holder and his entire household. The permit only accommodates the permit holder and two other people whom he chooses to be registered as his workers. Workers can be from the household or outside the household. This arrangement automatically means it is difficult for many born in Gache-Gache and would, in principle, qualify to become permit holders and be legal fishers to obtain their permit and fish legally because of the 175-permit cap. A concerned fisherman regarding this arrangement expressed his thoughts thus:

I think the permit should be permanent, and it should serve all members of the household. If I am to die as the head of the household and permit holder, the

permit should be used by my wife and children. All my dependents should be considered legal fishermen under that permit.

The requirement to pay licence fees every month means that some permit holders, especially the elderly and those who can no longer go and work on the lake, surrender the permit to non-disabled, or the council will cancel it. The predicament they face is that once the permit has been taken away from them, they become illegal settlers in Gache-Gache because their legal residence is contingent on their fishing.

There is a general acceptance or realisation that the fight for survival is increasingly challenging in Zimbabwe due to a high unemployment rate and incessant inflation. As a result, Gache-Gache residents accommodative of unregistered fisherfolk because the newcomers and fishermen also need to survive in the harsh Zimbabwean economic climate. As such, illegal fisherfolk are left to fish unperturbed. This was explained by one of the permit holders thus:

...it pains those paying for their fishing permits to realise that many non-permit holders are fishing for free. Take it this way: if I buy groceries for sale, go to the shopping centre, and start selling without paying the tax other shop owners pay, the shop owners will not like it. It is not comforting, but we can do nothing about them (non-permit-holding fishers). Life is difficult for everyone. If you look closely at the current situation in the Gache-Gache, one cannot secure employment other than fishing, no matter how well-educated. So, the unregistered fishermen have found a haven here.

While recognising the potential threat of overfishing caused by the increased number of unregistered fishermen in Gache-Gache, some fisherfolk still paid more attention to the need for the unregistered fisherfolk to survive. They thus prioritised the survival of people ahead of the need to comply and conserve fish resources. One of the permit holders had this to say:

...even if we are to add more people (expanding the number of permits), remember that the resources are never expanding. The resources remain the same. That is, the Lake and the fishing basin remain the same. That means we are overcrowding the resource base – the fishing basin. So, is increasing the number of permit holders technically not an advantage for the fishery's future? However, according to our way of thinking, we say let people fish so that they can survive regardless of their eligibility to fish.

Considering the consensus among residents of Gache-Gache (registered and unregistered), non-permit holders often criticise the strict 175 permits cap. They argue they have no choice but to fish without a permit because of the cap. Ignoring the sustainability argument, they argue that the rural council and the ZimParks must issue permits to everyone who wants to fish. One unregistered fisherman explained the matter like this:

People are arguing that the authorities are refusing to go beyond the 175-permit cap regardless of the many fishermen who want to acquire permits and fish legally. We are not refusing to pay for permits. The council must issue permits so everyone who decides to fish can pay for them. They must move away from the strict block permit rule, which only restricts us to 175 permits.

For some fishermen, the Gache-Gache fishing grounds are enough for the designated number of registered fishermen. However, the grounds are now insufficient, given the increased number of fishermen (including unregistered ones).

2.6 Livelihood-Making: Bribes and Non-Compliance

The prevailing economic crisis in Zimbabwe has led to rampant corruption and irregular survival strategies in the Gache-Gache fishery. Participants often cited the issue of bribes from state officials – those who are supposed to enforce compliance demand bribes from offenders. One of the fishermen had this to say:

What I observed is that those who control fishing – the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and the Rural Council – are the ones who have a problem. The Rural Council rangers sometimes arrest people without permits by the harbour. They find them, confiscate their nets, and ask them to follow them to the office. Tomorrow you will see the same person arrested back at work on the lake without a permit. Do you see what I mean? (18/08/20)

It is common for people to turn to fishing in the face of economic collapse. For instance, Davydov (2014:381) observed the same among the Evenki in the Baikal area, Russia, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the Baikal area, Evenkis often ignored quota and time restrictions because fishing was their primary source of income (Davydov 2014, 381). Legitimacy is critical to fishery compliance (Hauck 2011, 206). By legitimacy, here is how the fishermen perceive the rules and regulations, that is, whether fishermen see the rules as fair and for the common good. Another participant – a village head – weighed in on the cost-benefit

analyses that the management authorities engage in regarding bribes and compliance enforcement:

Life has become difficult for everyone (including management authorities). It makes one think, 'If I arrest this person, he will be fined US\$ 50-00, then I will give him a receipt from the office, instead of asking him to give me a bribe of US\$30-00 and I will buy bread for my family. I should leave him to fish illegally, and I will also survive through the bribes (18/08/20).

Village heads are not the only ones who argued on the need for lenience for unregistered fishermen. The argument for the need to realise that everyone is struggling to survive was also put forward by management authorities from the council and parks officials. Remarks such as 'you need to realise that you are working with people who have families to feed' were made by some management officials whom I had conversations with. In the drive to realise the plight of fishermen, however, these officials would also take bribes in the form of money or fish, making the transaction one of mutual reciprocity whereby fishers pay a bribe and in return, rangers let them continue fishing.

The absence of police officials in Gache-Gache perpetuated the prevalence of bribes and weak enforcement. This is one of the reasons why unregulated activities and corruption go unreported. Even the Parks officials take advantage of this situation by taking bribes and incorrectly receiving fines. One of the fishermen had this to say after observing corrupt engagements between fishermen and Parks officials:

Today I observed what a ZimParks official was doing. It was a criminal activity. He was receipting ZW\$200-00 per every confiscated boat, but each of the fishermen was being asked to pay ZW\$1 400-00. That means he was receipting ZW\$200 and pocketing ZW\$1 200-00 for his subsistence. That is corruption; I do not know how to classify it. It is theft of the highest order. (16/10/19).

The above figures have significantly depreciated since the time of fieldwork. During the interview, they were generally too high for fishermen. However, because of the depreciation of the Zimbabwean dollar, ZW\$ 1 400 is now just over US\$ 10:00. Consequently, non-compliance must be viewed two ways – the fisherfolk who violate rules and the state officials who fuel it by demanding bribes. Fisherfolks see no reason to comply in a fishery where they know they will only pay bribes and be let go scot-free. It is a vicious cycle.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter explored belonging and the right to livelihood in Gache-Gache amidst the general precarity of livelihoods. I argue that belonging and the right to fish in Gache-Gache are seldom fixed and fluctuate depending on the situation. It is necessary to differentiate complex categories of actors according to varying situations. Using the moral economy of the concept of subsistence, the chapter explores the conditions that structure the ethics of care, interdependence, and belonging among fishers in Gache-Gache. Livelihoods for fisherfolks are made in the context of two contrasting forms of fishery governance - customary and statutory, which, as Mhlanga (2017) rightly notes, constitute a “dysfunctional assemblage” of rules (Mhlanga, 2017). In the face of economic misery, traditional leaders – village heads – relax the requirement that those who fish must only be permit holders. In the spirit of a moral economy of survival, they allow unregistered fisherfolks to come and fish because everyone needs to survive. These concepts are essential in understanding the different positions taken by fishermen and Gache-Gache residents regarding the presence of unregistered fishermen in Gache-Gache. The major highlight of the chapter is that the principles of mutual caring and sharing among registered fishermen are not fixed but shift depending on the situation. The state and fishers’ positions are also not to be taken for a uniform dichotomy because state employees also, at times, share in the same moral economy of survival principle and do not enforce the mandate given to them by the state.

Chapter Three: Humans, Other Beings, and Fishing: Livelihoods and Everyday Life in Gache-Gache.

3.1 Introduction

15 August 2020, early in the morning. We had a caucus involving village heads Musampa, Mudzimu, Mupepe, councillor Makanyaire and kule Diva. We gathered to quickly discuss the way forward regarding a return visit to sekuru Chitehwe, the spirit medium. Sekuru Chitehwe lived in the communal areas in the Hurungwe district, where people were resettled, paving the way for the 1950s Lake Kariba construction. When we first visited sekuru Chitehwe, he highlighted several offences for which “his children” (Gache-Gache residents) were asked to pay five goats and five sets of *bute* (snuff) per village to appease the ancestors. The first visit was mainly in response to recent elephant raids on Gache-Gache homesteads that destroyed several houses by the elephants and ate the maize seed donated by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare to support food security in Gache-Gache. Every Gache-Gache resident I conversed with regarding the elephant raids said this was the first time they had witnessed elephants raid houses in Gache-Gache, “stealing” maize seed. Maize seed is critical for household food security in Zimbabwe, as it is ground into *upfu* (maize flour) to make *sadza*, the Zimbabwean staple food. The destruction of houses and devouring of the donated maize seed thus severely affected households in Gache-Gache that were already struggling for a daily meal, given the meagre fish catches during the cold, dry season (May to August).

Sekuru Chitehwe explained that the elephant raids were an expression of anger against several transgressions by his children (Gache-Gache residents), including not sending a share of the meat to sekuru whenever an animal is killed by the rural council in collaboration with the safari operator. “*Varidzi venzvimbo* (lit. owners of the place/territory referring to the ancestors) are angry. *Masango anokurerai muchiguta* (the forests look after you and provide enough food), you kill animals and do not send a share to sekuru. I know you say it is the safari operator [referring to the Track-A-Hunt Safaris owner who lived adjacent to Gache-Gache fishing villages] who kills the animals, but in whose land is he living?” was part of sekuru Chitehwe’s explanation of the reasons for the elephant raids.

Gache-Gache cosmology conceives of forests as not just forests but a hybrid comprising animate and inanimate beings and ancestors. That is why, in the sekuru Chitehwe’s explanation, he uses the phrase, “the forests look after you,” which projects an idea of the forest as an “ensouled” (see Sullivan 2017) entity that takes care of Gache-Gache residents. In an

ethnographic study among the Tonga of Mola in Nyami-Nyami district, Zimbabwe, Tombindo (2017) noted that ancestors are referred to as banalyo gundu (lit. owners of the land) and can send lions to wreak havoc in the villages when certain cultural mores are not observed as they should. Similarly, in Gache-Gache, added to the problem of elephant raids, there were roaming lions in the villages in the past year, the persistent problem of low catches of fish, which most fishermen attributed to the ancestors' anger. "*Chivanhu chinoda kuteedzerwa*" (tradition must be followed) is a phrase I came across in the villages during livelihood uncertainty and hardships like these. Therefore, there was an urgent need to visit sekuru Chitehwe to address the situation before it escalated into loss of human life. Ancestors are a crucial part of personhood, living ethically and livelihood-making not only in the Zambezi Valley but across the rest of Zimbabwe and Africa (see, for instance, Gwervevende 2023; Wolgamuth 2013; Fontein 2006). Sekuru Chitehwe gave the village heads a week to get the required goats and snuff to appease the ancestors. He warned them that failure to meet the requirements within two weeks would have dire consequences, particularly wildlife wreaking havoc and "*kusabatika kweusavi*" (drawing blanks regarding fish catches).

The August 15th caucus thus was to brainstorm not only how to give feedback to the rest of the villagers on the initial visit to sekuru Chitehwe (the spirit medium) but also to devise ways to fundraise for what was needed for the renda (ritual ceremony for ancestral appeasement to stop elephant attacks, roaming lions in the villages and persistent low catches). Among the actions, sekuru Chitehwe highlighted that the destruction of a hut belonging to Matope (a self-proclaimed prophet) needed urgent attention. Sekuru Chitehwe said that the calamities faced by Gache-Gache villagers – elephant attacks, roaming lions in the villages, and persistent low fish catches, among others – were also in part because of the presence of Matope and his rituals, particularly his nguwo tsvuku (red robes) that were taboo in Gache-Gache and at Lake Kariba. This clash between chivanhu (tradition) and a religious sect premised on Christian beliefs that do not augur well with ancestors. Ontologically speaking, therefore, everyday life was not the same for every Gache-Gache resident because some opposed what sekuru Chitehwe and the ancestors' guidance.

One of the five village heads – Dandawa – absconded the August 15th caucus because he was in a drunken stupor, to everyone who was present's disdain. Village head Mudzimu – the secretary for the five villages – updated everyone in attendance, saying, "I am coming from Dandawa village, and residents have agreed to hold a meeting at Gache-Gache Secondary School tomorrow. The meeting will include all residents from the five villages." As the

secretary for all five villages, village head Mudzimu was responsible for taking minutes at meetings, organising and coordinating meetings, and giving feedback to the Gache-Gache community on any event that took place, such as this recent trip to the spirit medium. Village head Musampa added, "... because we are already discussing the matter, "vakuru" (lit. elders, referring to the ancestors) have opened doors for us to appease them. I passed by Makodzera harbour today, and fishermen came out with good catches." Councillor Makanyaire, nodding in affirmation, said, "Yes. They open doors, so we will raise the required money to return to sekuru (spirit medium) on time." Village head Musampa added: "Unfortunately, some of the fishermen when the ancestors opened for us like this, think the calamities are over, and they will refuse to contribute the money needed to get everything needed for the renda." "Yes, because some fishermen will think everything was fixed during the first visit to sekuru. When they see these improved catches, it will be difficult to convince them to contribute money for the goats and snuff", Councillor Makanyaire agreed.

The above snippet from fieldwork offers only a snapshot of everyday life and livelihoods in Gache-Gache. It demonstrates that livelihoods are not constructed mechanistically but in a web of relationships between the people, other beings, and the environment (see Mawere 2015). Fishing as an income-generating activity is also a cultural process and product. As Wooten (2009) notes among the Mande agriculturalists in Mali, livelihood-making is an artistic product that involves a continuous process of reflection to construct livelihoods in a meaningful manner. Similarly, fishing as a livelihood in Gache-Gache involves structured dispositions of making fishing and living ethically the Gache-Gache way. By the Gache-Gache way, I am not here referring to an essentialist position which puts Gache-Gache in some form of peculiarity. The role of ancestors has been widely documented across Zimbabwe and other parts of Africa (Spiereburg 2002; Mukodzongi 2016; Ombati 2017; Takuva 2021). Instead, by the Gache-Gache way, I am referring to the context specificity of the micro-practices that characterise living ethically in each given place, and it is essential to highlight that while the essence of ancestors appears to be ubiquitous across the African continent, there are specificities regarding ritual processes and how residents are expected to live.

This chapter outlines and discusses the role of other beings and the environment in livelihood construction and everyday life in Gache-Gache. I ask and try to answer the following questions: how can we, without undermining the essence of humans, understand everyday life and livelihoods as assembled products of an unending mutual constitution between humans, other beings, things, and the environment? Using the concept of a 'hierarchised environment'

(Mawere 2015) – Mwari (creator), ancestors, humans, and other beings – I try to understand how everyday life and livelihoods are shaped and understood in Gache-Gache. A posthuman approach critiques modernist ontologies, opens a way to rethink critical humanities and opens different ways of thinking about the world (Mawere 2015). Mawere advocates the advancement of post-humanist literature by incorporating ethnographic data and problematises flat ontology and argues instead that there are hierarchies to the order of things: animals, humans, vadzimu and Mwari in this order (Mawere 2015, 7). Through the post-humanist perspective, this chapter and thesis centre on understanding human lives in Gache-Gache but recognise that humans are part of an associative network of other-than-human beings and the environment that affects everyday life and livelihood construction. Taking after literature on assemblages (see Moore 2005) and materiality (Fontein 2015; Ingold 1993; 2000), I argue that humans and other-than-human actors play an essential role in livelihood-making, everyday life, place-making and shaping of the history of places. The following section outlines and discusses assemblage thinking and actor-network theory as part of the framing for analysing the empirical material in this chapter.

3.2 Post-humanism and the Lake Kariba Context

“Gods talking through the bodies of cows, Indians in the bodies of jaguars, jaguars in the clothing of whites, the runa puma enfolds these. What are we anthropologists – versed as we are in the ethnographic charting of the distinctive meaning-filled morally loaded worlds we humans create (distinctive worlds that make us feel that we are exceptions in this universe) – to make of this strange other-than-human and yet all-too-human creature?” – (Eduardo Kohn 2013, 5).

At approximately half-past four in the morning of March 19, 2020, Luke, mdara waKiddo and I embarked on a trip to check on gillnets in Dandawa fishing grounds. This was the first time since my arrival that I had garnered the courage to accompany fishers on their journey to observe first-hand what happens on the Lake. Kule Diva and many of my interlocutors had tried without success since my arrival in Gache-Gache to convince me to observe practices like ndombolo as they happened on the Lake. Each time when kule Diva left with his workmate to line their nets to practice ndombolo fish driving, I was always left afraid that this may be the last time we see each other because fishing in Gache-Gache is such a dangerous endeavour. Waves, crocodiles, and hippopotami are some of the other-than-human beings in the Gache-Gache fishery and environment that affect gillnet fishing and everyday life. It reads oddly to refer to waves as a “being”, as one would refer to crocodiles, hippos, elephants and other

“living” beings. However, in Gache-Gache, waves like the above animals are sometimes believed to be “ensouled” by ancestors to communicate a message to the residents.

As we journeyed to Makodzera harbour, where their boat was parked, kule mdara waKiddo asked me, “*Handiti hauna kupoya mudangaka muzukuru?* (lit. My nephew, you have not escaped from the kraal, right?). Mdara waKiddo used a metaphoric phrase, “escaping from the kraal” to refer to extramarital sex.



Figure 7 Kule Luke, mdara waKiddo and the Researcher on Lake Kariba (left); The Researcher Holding a Tigerfish, part of the day's catch (right)

He wanted to know whether it was safe for me to accompany them. If I had engaged in extramarital sex, it would have resulted in wave-induced turbulence that could have resulted in capsizing and drowning. In such situations, these are not natural waves but ensouled waves that communicate ancestral anger and punishment. Pálsson (1991:23) argues that anthropological musings on fishing have focused on a natural model that presents the individual producer as an autonomous isolate engaged in the technical art of catching fish. Fishing is embedded in local Indigenous environmentalities and the practical experiences of Gache-Gache people in their everyday livelihood strategies that cannot simply be narrowed into the technical process of catching a fish. Fishing is as much a means of earning an income as it is an entry point into understanding the social identity of the villager and their relations with other beings on the shores of Lake Kariba. Fishing in Gache-Gache reveals the position of humans in the Gache-Gache villagers' hierarchised cosmology of Mwari, vadzimu, humans and other beings (fish, crocodiles, hippopotami, lions, plants).

This applies to other beings like crocodiles, hippos, lions, elephants, and other animals—they have their natural intentionality and behaviour that already affects fishers on an everyday basis,

such as the destruction of nets and eating fishers' catches (crocodiles) and the destruction of boats (hippos). However, at times, they are ensouled by ancestors. Outside ensoulment, there is a natural intentionality of other-than-humans, such as animals, and the natural occurrence of waves and weather fluctuations on the Lake.

The sea is often portrayed as nature beyond human control (McComack and Forde 2020, 3), and fishing is one of the most precarious livelihoods undertaken by humans (Andersen and Wadel 1972). For instance, weather forecasting is one of the most challenging endeavours for fisherfolk compared to those engaged in land-based economic activities. This danger is related to the ontology of ocean environments, but it also has a social origin. Modern vessels and technologies have altered the nature of fishing, mitigated against sudden changes in weather conditions made visible underwater worlds (McCormack and Forde 2020, 3). However, the materialities of water environments are unequally distributed between small- and large-scale sectors, subsistence, customary, recreation and commercial fishers and the Global North and Global South (McCormack and Forde 2020, 3). As the epigraph above highlights, social anthropology has traditionally focused on distinctively human attributes – such as language, culture, society, and history – and uses these to fashion the analytical lenses to understand humans (Kohn 2013,6). However, in the same epigraph, there is evidence of other-than-human intertwined with the social (Gods speaking through bodies of cows) in a complex imbrication between the semiotic and the material.

Since the 1960s, studies have been on the devastating consequences of Kariba dam-induced displacement. Longitudinal studies on the social and environmental impacts of the Kariba Dam by Thayer Scudder and Elizabeth Colson (starting in the 1960s) have led to dam-induced displacement becoming almost a genre of its own (Fontein 2015, 7). Common themes of such longitudinal studies on Kariba Dam have often focused on displaced communities' socioeconomic and cultural rights. A common trend in these studies is their emphasis on the dams' social and environmental devastation (Colson 1971; Scudder 2005; Cliggett 2003; Tremmel 1994). In the Kariba Case study (specifically on the Zimbabwean side), subsequent social research has focused on the politics of access to fishery and wildlife resources, especially in the context of the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe (see, for instance, Dzingirai, 1998; Nyikahadzoi, 2002; 2009; Murombedzi, 1992; Malasha, 2002).

A less explored and more recent theme focuses on dams' cultural and political productivity. David Hughes (2006; 2010) is an exception in the Kariba context. Hughes (2006; 2010) explored how white Zimbabweans 'manufactured nature' to create a sense of belonging to the dry and challenging to live in landscapes of the Zambezi. Hughes argues that since settling in the landlocked, dry landscapes of Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia), white settlers struggled to belong to the landscape. Part of the reasons for this difficulty to belong and emplace themselves, Hughes (2006; 2010) argues, was because they were used to European waterscapes and not the dry landscapes of Zimbabwe. For Hughes, then, the Kariba dam offered white Zimbabweans requisite 'escapist feelings of belonging' through the provision of water (Hughes, 2010: xii; Hartnack 2016, 9). However, his work has been critiqued for homogenising and describing all 'Euro-Zimbabweans' as 'children of the glaciers' who shared a common British ancestry and tried to belong to the country in the same way (see Hartnack, 2016). Another critique against Hughes's work concerns its partiality - he only looks at whites and ignores other social groups (such as blacks) who shared the dam with whites. Nevertheless, Hughes' work is a good point of departure on this less-researched theme of Kariba.

Another work that focuses on more than just the adverse effects of Kariba is that by McGregor (2009). McGregor traces the history of claims to the Zambezi River and illustrates how historically marginalised Tonga fishermen use this history of claims and entitlement to construct livelihoods through fishing. McGregor's (2009) work is more about the Zambezi River than the Kariba Dam. However, it significantly illustrates how the Zambezi River and, later, the Kariba Dam have been subject to competing claims among different social groups over time. McGregor (2009) also demonstrates how the Zambezi River and the Kariba Dam have meant different things to different people over time.

Hughes (2006; 2010) and McGregor (2009) have no doubt laid an excellent foundation for studying the cultural and political productivity of the Kariba dam, but there is a glaringly missing theme in their work - that of materiality - and an exclusive focus on humans as the sovereign makers of history in the Zambezi. My reading of their work is that they reduce the Zambezi Valley and Lake Kariba to human conquest of the environment without paying attention to the imbrication of the other-than-human world and human experience in the everyday practices of belonging to the landscape. For instance, everyday life in Gache-Gache cannot be reduced to the intentionality of humans if one considers the opening few paragraphs of this chapter. The raids by elephants and the actions of 'angry ancestors' coalesce to affect fisherfolk behaviour. In all situations, human intentionality – endeavours to construct

livelihoods through fishing – is entangled with the intentionality of other beings to co-create livelihoods and everyday life. It is a mutual constitution between people, other beings, the environment and the world beyond the living. This is best analysed and framed through assemblage thinking and actor-network theory, and the following paragraphs endeavour to do this.

3.2.1 Assemblage Thinking and Actor-Network Theory

Assemblage thinking focuses on human activities in conjunction with non-human entities (Beauregard 2012). It reconceives space and agency due to the association(s) between humans and other-than-humans that form precarious wholes (Muller 2015, 27). The concept of assemblage is traced back to French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Deleuze and Parnet (1987, 69) defined assemblage as,

“... a diversity of many heterogeneous terms and establishes liaison, relations between them across ages, sexes, and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage’s only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a ‘sympathy.’. It is never important filiations but alliances, alloys...”

In the Gache-Gache fishery, I use such an approach to consider, among other things, the behaviour of the fish and animals (hippos, crocodiles, lions, elephants) in the lake, climate and weather conditions, ancestors, and the ways through which these various constituents influence (and are influenced by) to co-create everyday life and livelihoods in Gache-Gache. In anthropology and geography, assemblage as a concept has been used to map historically contingent convergences (Marcus and Saka, 2006) “and how they coalesce in objects, spaces, and landscapes” (Braun, 2005; Ogden, 2011). In his ethnographic study in Southeast Zimbabwe, anthropologist Joost Fontein (2015, 5) observed how the material presence of the ancestral *mapa* (graves) in the very substance of the soil generates “immanence of the past” and the “materialities of belonging”. Such connection between humans and other-than-humans is evidence that everyday life comprises associative networks comprising humans and other-than-humans. Anthropologist Donald Moore (2005, 23 – 24) describes assemblages thus:

“...Humans are not the only entities making mixtures not of their choosing ... Assemblages are arranged provisionally, giving emergent force to contingent alignments of social relations, material substance, and cultural meaning. Moreover, like places, assemblages foreground multiplicities irreducible to a single sense, structure, or logic. In such a vision, history and politics are inflected with *consequential materiality* of the milieu of nonhuman entities and artefacts” (original italics).

Simply put, assemblage is a way of ordering heterogeneous entities to work together for some time (Muller 2015, 28). In its original formulation, Deleuze and Guattari conceived assemblage as being without hierarchy and “there is no single organising principle behind assemblages ... be it capital of military might” (Muller 2015, 28). This reasoning assumes that all entities in an assemblage – “humans, animals, things and matter – have the same ontological status to start with” (Muller 2015, 28). Elizabeth Grosz (1994, 167) explains that the world cannot be said to be without strata and flattened. Instead, the hierarchies are attributable to the modes of organisation of disparate substances and not inherently due to their nature and value (Grosz 1994, 28). The concept of assemblages, however, is only an approach and not a theory, so I use the actor-network theory to complement the assemblage approach in framing the study.

Actor-network theory (ANT) suggests an agency beyond human intentionality and defines an agent as “anything that does modify a state of affairs by making a difference” (Latour 2005, 71). According to ANT proponents, what matters is how intentionality is shaped (allowed, blocked, encouraged, rendered possible) through an extension of causal relations between humans and other-than-humans and not intentionality itself (Dwiartama and Rosin 2014, 3).

The ANT perspective asserts that other-than-humans are “active, vibrant agents that also exert power” (Dwiartama and Rosin 2014, 3) rather than passive resources. Bruno Latour (2005, 72) highlights that “ANT is not the empty claim that objects do things instead of human actors: it simply says that no science of the social can ever begin if the question of who and what participates in the action is not first of all thoroughly explored, even though it might mean letting elements in which, for lack of a better term, we would call nonhumans. The project of ANT is to extend the list and modify the shapes and figures of those assembled as participants and to design a way to make them act as a durable whole.”

Actor-network theory shares some similarities with the philosophical ideas of assemblage thinking. Like assemblage thinking, actor-network theory focuses on the provisional socio-material ordering of entities instead of one general principle (Muller 2015, 30). Bruno Latour and John Law pioneered the theory in their Science and Technology Studies (STS). However, ANT has been taken beyond STS because it speaks to many concerns at the centre of research in other disciplines like anthropology and geography, including the relationship between nature and society (Muller 2015, 30). Actor-network theory also suggests that relations between humans and other-than-human entities produce new actors and behaviour methods (Muller 2015, 30). ANT also indicates that all entities – governments or atoms – have an equal

ontological footing (Muller 2015, 30). As highlighted above, my study deviates slightly from this thinking in that I do not consider all entities as having the same ontological footing but instead as being hierarchised in a field of unequal power distribution. The associations formed between these entities determine whether one becomes more powerful than the other (Muller 2015, 30). Latour (2005, 9) describes ANT as a “sociology of associations.” Like assemblage thinking, ANT emphasises the processual nature of the socio-material (Muller 2015, 30). Law (1994, 101) posits that “there is no social order. Rather, there are endless attempts at ordering”.

Critics of ANT cite its avoidance of power differentials, for instance, race, gender or class, and the ability or inability to create associations, and thus its failure to recognise unequal power relationships (Muller 2015, 30). ANT also does not distinguish a priori between humans and other-than-humans, eschewing the ability of humans to pursue their interests and intentions, whereas other-than-humans are less likely to. An actant does not act alone (Bennett 2009, 21). Its efficacy and agency work in collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces (Bennett 2009, 21). Bennett (2009, 23) defines assemblages as “ad hoc groupings of diverse elements, of vibrant materials of all sorts”. One of the most extensive critiques against the ontological turn is the tendency to “arrive at reductionist solutions that flatten important distinctions between humans and other beings as well as those between selves and objects” (Kohn, 2013,7). In “How Forests Think”, Kohn (2013,7) provides a critique of how anthropologists have viewed humans as “exceptional and thus fundamentally separate from the rest of the world”. Kohn (2013,7) attempts this by providing a “robust analysis for understanding human relations to non-human beings”. He asks, “What might it mean to say, “forests think?” Life is constitutively semiotic (Kohn 2013,9). Kohn advocates a move beyond “dualistic anthropology (in which humans are portrayed as separate from the worlds they represent) towards a monistic one (in which how humans represent and how jaguars represent humans can be understood as integral, though not interchangeable parts of an open-ended story).

However, the assumption of no hierarchisation in assemblage thinking advances a flat ontology (see McGregor 2009; Country et al. 2014; Mawere 2015) and is equivalent to producing historical accounts disregarding the significant power humans possess and play in history. For McGregor 2009, 6), these theories seek to “analyse the constraining role of provisional and material arrangements of human and non-human things” and provide an interpretation of the power of non-human actors. Because of this, McGregor (2009:5) deliberately casts people, claim makers at Lake Kariba, as the primary actors of her study in the process of writing against

the recent interest in the agency of non-human actors because, for her, equalising non-human actors and humans, blurs the categorical boundaries that separate them.

To counter the critique of a flat ontology, Mawere (2015) proposes a framework of hierarchisation among his interlocutors, other beings, and their environment. As I contextualise this study, more of this hierarchisation is outlined in the next section. Mawere's essential contribution through his hierarchisation hypothesis is that power is unequal. However, one must not lose sight of the essence of humans and their disproportionate power in shaping history compared to other-than-humans. If fishers were given the power to do as they please regarding crocodiles, hippos, and elephants, they would likely not face some of their challenges with these animals. They would likely cull them, but fisher livelihoods would still be structured by the dictates of what ancestors want from a Gache-Gache cosmological viewpoint.

The ontological turn in anthropology concerns understanding the realities of the other and recognising the multiplicity of forms of existence enacted in concrete practices (Descola 2013). Different bodily perspectives of actants shape agency and are, therefore, ubiquitous (Sullivan 2017, 160). This means that every activity – by animals, components of weather, plants, spirit beings, ancestors and so forth – is simultaneously imbued with a moral, if relative and often ambiguous dimension (Ingold 2000). In defence of post-human work, Mitchel (2002, 52-3) argues that cognisance of the agency of non-human things does not mean “introducing a limitless number of actors and networks, all of which are of equal significance and power. Instead, it means making the issue of power and agency a question instead of an answer known in advance.”

Considering the above context and background, this chapter draws inspiration from scholars who have looked at the ‘complex reciprocity’ (Beinart 2000, 287) that underscores the ‘imbrication between the semiotic and the material’ (Moore 2005, 24; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 337; Fontein 2015, 8). I argue for the need for research on the materiality of Lake Kariba and its shores. I say that the various elements that constitute the materiality of the Gache-Gache fishery (ancestors, waves, seasonal fish behaviour, crocodiles, and hippopotami) are significant factors that are yet to be considered in the governance and conservation rules of the fishery.

3.3 A Hierarchised Environment

Besides potentially falling into the trap of proposing a flat ontology, the ontological turn in the social sciences also has the challenge of openness regarding other-than-humans and entities. Kohn asks if anthropology can make general claims about how the world is. Ontology in

anthropology is a thorny term. One version depicts it negatively as the search for ultimate truths – the kinds that the ethnographic documentation of so many different things of doing and seeing is so good at documenting (Carrithers et-al. 2010, 157). On the other hand, it is sometimes used as a trendy word for culture, especially when a possessive pronoun precedes it: our ontology versus theirs (Holbraad 2010, 180). Kohn (2013,14) attempts to develop an analytic that takes anthropology beyond the human without losing sight of the pressing ways in which we are “all too human and how this bears on living.”

There appears to be no limit to what the other-than-human beings and entities are. Some of the other-than-humans considered in this chapter – ancestors – have no easy categorisation because some may want to define them as humans or mention of ancestors as beliefs and, therefore, a mere social construction. However, given how ancestors shape livelihoods and everyday life, I consider them as other than human beings and taking after Mawere (2015) and Sullivan (2017; 2018), I propose an ontological hierarchisation that places ancestors above humans and other-than-humans. Mawere’s (2015) ethnographic focused on conservation locally initiated through humans and other beings such as Harurwa, mhondoro (lions, ancestors/senior ancestors) and vadzimu (ancestors). Mawere (2015, 8), in his ontological hierarchisation thesis, argues against equating animals with humans, an idea propounded by other post-humanists such as Wolfe (2010) and Haraway (1991). Mawere (2015, 8) describes such an idea as “opprobrious” or degrading. Things cannot be grouped into the binary modernist categorisation of humans and non-humans (Mawere 2015, 8).

In Norumedzo, Southeastern Zimbabwe, where Mawere (2015) conducted his ethnographic study, particular beings, such as ancestors and Mwari (creator), are considered neither human nor nonhuman. Such beings are not considered earthly beings but beings in the world beyond (Mawere 2015, 8) and can mingle, comingle, associate, and dissociate with people and other earthly beings (Mawere 2015, 8). Such beings escape the purview of modernist categorisation of humans and nonhumans. Thus, Mawere refers to them as beings by their specific names and does not classify them as humans or nonhumans because this categorisation blurs the specificities of their different ways of being in the world. Varumedzo cosmology reveals connections and relationships between vanhu and zvisikwa, allowing people to relate to zvisikwa as both resources and companions in the world they inhabit and not as equal beings.

Mawere (2015, 1-2) also critiques the prevailing literature, which mainly focuses on externally initiated and controlled Community Based Natural Resources Management. According to

Mawere (2015, 2), this narrow view must be broadened to capture the complexity of relationships between people and other beings. Focusing on the complex relationships between people and other beings allows for exploring the mutual relationships between people, biological organisms, and other beings (Mawere 2015, 2). Mawere deploys “symmetrical anthropology” (Latour 2007), that is anthropology that “moves beyond the nature/culture divide and is open-ended”. He challenges the standard position in the literature that collective community conservation is initiated from outside. His monograph challenges this as he observed that the community he studied initiates conservation from within (Mawere 2015, 3) through sacred controls, traditional restrictions, and collective community participation.

Ontologically, ancestors are spirits or souls that have left humans whose bodies have died (Sullivan 2017, 161). These spirit beings have ontological reality in the present. They are not simply people who lived in the past, nor are they entities that require worship and sacrifice as in other African contexts. They are understood as specific types of entities that, through pragmatic relationship practices, are called upon to intervene – to assert agency – in the present to influence outcomes (Sullivan 2017, 161). The agency of ancestors sometimes involves intervening in the agency of other non-human agents like lions, a species with which humans live in close contact. Lions figure in people’s realities as imbued with agency and intentionality (Sullivan 2017, 161). Kohn (2013, 217) describes spirits as being “their kind of real” that emerges from “a specifically human way of engaging with and relating to a living world that lies in part beyond the human.” Spirits are often discounted in the ontological assumptions that inform scientific endeavour (Chakrabarty 2000).

Some people may live in specific relational contexts with different agency-asserting entities, but only some are humans (Sullivan 2017, 163). What is clear in such contexts in an extended zone of agency that includes entities beyond the human (Sullivan 1999; Kohn 2013; Kelbessa 2014) is that these are embedded and constituted in specific and relational settings (Sullivan 2017, 163). In another ethnographic case study of the Vezo in Madagascar, Muttenger (2020, xxix). Honouring ancestral spirits' sacred places is a way fishers use to defend their livelihoods against conservationists and outside competitors. Vezo fishers believe catching sharks requires fishing nets and a fishing charm. Tucker et al. (2015) describe this as “ecological and cosmological coexistence thinking (cited in Muttenger 2020, xxix).

Mawere refers to ancestors as beings that have moved beyond the world of humans (Mawere 2015, 8). Mawere (2015) problematises the modernist approach, which has a binary

classification of things as humans and non-humans. Mawere argues that this classification blurs their “specificities or different ways in the world” (Mawere 2015, 8). Mawere (2015, 8) observed the interconnections between humans, *zvisikwa* and other beings that have moved beyond the world of humans (such as *vadzimu*). Animals, humans, ancestors, and creators are socially connected (Mawere 2015, 8). Through a West Namibian ethnographic case study, Sullivan (2017, 161) highlights that some groups of people live in a world with multilayered and interacting agencies that demand appropriate practices and observations (Hannis and Sullivan 2018). Sullivan (2017, 161) notes that ancestral agencies, through “the realm of the spirit of the dead, are requested to act in the present to open the road so that travellers can see the best way to go.” Ancestors are also asked for the best way to do things. They are also asked to mediate activities of potentially dangerous animals such as lions, understood as ensouled beings who assert their agency and intentionality (Sullivan 2017, 161).

Among the Maori, fish are viewed as *tupuna* (ancestors). The Maori trace their *whakapapa* (genealogy) “is traced from *Ikatere*, the son of *Tangaroa* (god of the sea), to *Papatuanuku* (earth mother) and *Ranginui* (sky father), where all life originates (Roberts 2013). The interconnections expressed in this genealogical weaving inform Māori's relationships with their ocean environments. Diver et al. (2019, 402) refer to these as reciprocal in which “the language of mutuality reflects deeply held beliefs that shape human thinking and behaviour towards nature”. McComack and Forde (2020, 11) describe the social relationship between humans and other-than-humans as “kin-like”. Menzies (2016, 88) gives an example of such relationships when writing about Gitxaala oral history, which warns people to avoid disrespecting the gifts of their other-than-human relations: The princess of the Salmon People married *Txemsum* and after that, having a steady supply of salmon, they never went hungry. *Txemsum*, however, growing jealous of his wife, began to distrust her:

“His wife became furious. “I will return to my people as I fear you will injure me.” So she went out of the house and called out as she went out, “Come my children, come with me.” She went down into the stream, into the water and disappeared, and all of the dried salmon now became alive, and all jumped into the water and became live salmon and swam away after the woman, the Princess of the Salmon. *Txemsum*’s supply of salmon was all gone. ... He was now starving, with nothing to eat.” (Menzies 2016, 88).

That salmon is not just a food source but rather an integral part of the dynamic relationships between humans and the natural world is evident in the words of *Winnemem Wintu* chief

Caleen Sisk, “when the salmon comes home, whatever happens to salmon, happens to us. If we can replenish the salmon, maybe we get to grow in population too” (Maclean 2018).

In Gache-Gache, fishing is also deeply embedded in the people's culture, beliefs, and everyday lives. Norms and values influence what behaviour is allowed and not, both on the lake and in fishing villages. This is in tandem with Palsson’s (1990,51) assertion that “fisheries are embedded in social lives”. In concurrence with Palsson (1990), Jentoft (2020,390) contends that fisheries involve social relations rooted in local communities much more than in markets. As an example of the social embeddedness of fishing, in Gache-Gache, there is a belief that if a fisherman’s wife is involved in adultery, he will be involved in accidents or calamity on the lake either through strong waves that lead to downsizing of the boat or through attacks by crocodiles or hippos. As a result, there are countless incidents of people changing workmates if there is any suspicion that the workmate’s wife is having an adulterous affair. In this way, the Gache-Gache extends beyond what happens on the Lake. Instead, what happens in the villages is closely knit into an assemblage of human behaviour and other-than-human constituents that ultimately combine to structure fisherfolk’s everyday life and sociality. There is no clear demarcation between what happens on the land and the water – it is a continuous set of constituents – human and other-than-human – that combine to shape the Gache-Gache fishery’s sociality.



Figure 8 A House Destroyed by Elephants in Gache-Gache



Figure 9 Village Head Mupepe with Snuff for Ancestral Appeasement

The fishery and surrounding environment in Gache-Gache are actively shaped by and simultaneously shape human action. An example of the way the Gache-Gache fishery is a first-hand account by Mavhima, a regular fish buyer in Gache-Gache. Mavhima is well known for being a ‘womaniser’ although he has a wife in Harare, where he sells fish bought in Gache-Gache. In Gache-Gache, if one or their spouse commits adultery, they will be involved in accidents related to wave-induced boat capsizing or hippo and crocodile attacks. Mavhima would come and book for a few nights at a local lodge with a woman from Gache-Gache before he focuses on buying fish and returning to Harare.

In June 2020, Mavhima embarked on a trip to buy fish in Gache-Gache and followed the same routine – spending a few nights at the lodge before buying fish. This was wintertime, and fish buyers competed for fish because fish catches were low. Mavhima and a few other fish buyers got into a boat to follow the fishermen and buy fish on the lake instead of waiting for fishermen to come to the harbour with fish. They did this to beat competition from other buyers at the harbour. On their way towards the deep waters, where fishers with motorised boats line their nets, a strong wave hit their boat, which was on the verge of capsizing. Mavhima immediately started openly confessing his promiscuous lifestyle and praying for forgiveness from the ancestors who ruled over the lake. He had been well-informed of the consequences of adultery, and he decided to say a little prayer asking for forgiveness because this was the end of his life. People at the harbour laughed at him as he narrated his ordeal, but this is evidence that the

fishery is an assemblage of humans and other-than-humans that mutually constitute each other to produce a sociality beyond the human.¹³

Similar to Mavhima's experience above, fishery challenges such as waves, hippo and crocodile attacks, and seasonal fluctuations in fish catches are seldom explained through a single cause but a coalescence of factors or beings, including angry ancestors, taboos such as adultery or other deviant behaviour by fisherfolk and those who depend on the fishery. In other words, the Gache-Gache fishery comprises a mutual constitution between fishers and other-than-humans (such as ancestors, waves, hippos, crocodiles, elephants, fish, and the water). The attribution of low fish catches and elephant raids to 'angry ancestors' demonstrates that the fishery is not only shaped by fisher intentionality and agency, but human action/agency is complemented and sometimes shaped by other-than-human constituents. Explaining Gache-Gache cosmology and how the fishery fits in it, one of the participants, sekuru Danger, said,

“Some fishermen die because of their women's infidelity. If you go into the lake and your wife engages in adultery while on the lake, you will be hit by a hippo. Why? Your wife will have made your home dirty. As a result, you will be punished, *ndiwo murao wacho, wakagara uripo kubva panaMwari* if an elephant chases after you to attack you, *ukareurura ndakabata mazamu, ndakaita zvakati zvakati, unoona yamira.*” (Sekuru Danger, 20/06/20)

Asked why I would be attacked for my wife's adultery, sekuru Danger replied with a quote from the bible,

“The Bible says when man and woman get married, they become one flesh. Any violation of that principle makes the ancestors and the creator angry.”

The ontological turn of the social sciences, which has led to increasing attention towards other-than-human elements, has resulted in an “emerging recognition of sociality beyond the human” (Lien and Palsson, 2019, 4). Attention to other-than-human constituents of sociality is not a move away from the human is still at the centre of anthropological research and analysis (see Fontein, 2015; Lien and Palsson, 2019) but instead, it is a move away from a view of culture and sociality as an exclusively human attribute (Lien and Palsson 2019, 4). As exemplified through excerpts from the field above, other-than-human elements significantly constitute everyday life in the Gache-Gache fishery.

¹³ Fieldnotes June 13, 2020

3.4 Everyday Experiences and Placemaking in the Gache-Gache Fishery

3.4.1 Wave-induced Turbulence and Livelihood-Making

When I arrived in Gache-Gache in October 2019, it had been approximately two weeks with fishermen failing to go to work in bad weather, especially wind that caused waves on the Lake. A few days after I arrived in Gache-Gache, Sazita (lit. namesake) passed by kule Diva's homestead, and as he arrived, he took a handful of soil from the ground. His name was Felix Garawaziva, and he and I used the term *Sazita* to refer to ourselves. Slowly and gently, Sazita threw the soil he picked from a maize field close to kule Diva's house and threw it into the air to determine the direction of the wind. With sadness, Sazita told kule Diva, "It is not safe for us to go to work again today." Kule Diva nodded in affirmation and an equal measure of despair. I was surprised and asked why he had done that and why he said it was unsafe for them to go to work. "*Sazita vana vangaziya nezara kumba uko* (Sazita, my children are almost starving at home). I need to know whether it is safe for me to go to work today", Sazita replied. Sazita was a married man with five children. He also lived with two grandchildren. *Mhepo yepagomo* (the wind from the mountain) made life difficult for two weeks without going to work for most fishermen, who, as I observed in Gache-Gache, live from hand to mouth. They needed to go to work frequently for their families to survive. If the wind direction was from the mountain to the East of Gache-Gache, it was a signal that there would be a wave on the Lake. It would be safe not to go fishing because their unmotorised homemade boats would quickly capsize against any reasonably strong wave on Lake Kariba.

Sazita's ritual of picking up some soil to determine the direction of the wind demonstrated the 'imponderabilia of everyday life' as a fisherman in Gache-Gache that outsiders like me would not ordinarily pick up. The dangerous *mhepo yepagomo* is what Sazita and kule Diva detected, which meant fishermen could not go to work again on this day. Knowing when to fish in the lake required someone familiar with this environment and the fishery context. As the soil fell to the ground, there was very little dust to determine the wind direction for an outsider like me. Even as he determined the direction of the wind through this ritual, I was also surprised that he considered that there was wind when I thought the air was very calm without any substantial wind because I could not hear any slightest sough. However, for Sazita and kule Diva, my host, and other fishermen, it was easy to detect that there would be a strong wave on the Lake even when the air seemed calm for the unfamiliar like me. Even as Sazita dropped the soil, I struggled to understand why he said there would be a wave on the Lake. The skills demonstrated by Sazita demonstrate what marine biologist Johannes (1992, 32), in his book, "Words of the Lagoon", reveals of fishers developing a lunar that forecasts fish behaviour and,

“...where, when, how and for what to fish. Its phases accurately foretell not just the timing and approximate height of the tides, the tidal currents' strength and direction, the night's brightness, and the accessibility of different fishing areas but also the locations, behaviour, and vulnerability to capture many fish species.”

Johannes (1992) observed that in Tonga, the sea is perceived as a jealous woman who loathes the presence of other women. Fishing is predicated on knowledge of species and environments regardless of a discourse of luck that may characterise fishers' narratives (McCormack and Forde 2020, 9). Traditional ecological knowledge is very sophisticated, having developed over many years and generations (Akimichi 1978; Johannes 1992; Hviding 1996). Johannes (1981) is a marine biologist whose keen anthropological sensibility made him realise that ecological knowledge of indigenous fishers, including knowledge of fish behaviour and environmental factors that help determine and predict it, is consistently overlooked by scientists (cited in McCormack 2020, 9). Johannes (1981, ix) describes this misrecognition as a “manifestation of elitism and ethnocentrism.”

In Gache-Gache, a community where information about the weather rarely reaches residents due to limited access to national broadcasting services, such familiarity with the environment was essential. In Gache-Gache, the easterly wind ‘yepagomo’ determined not only whether fishermen went to work but exposed them to livelihood precarity, such as in September 2019 when it took more than a fortnight for fishermen unable to go to work. The easterly wind was dreaded by all fishermen in Gache-Gache such that they would not dare go to cast or check their nets should they sense or suspect a wave on the Lake.

The wave on Lake Kariba was locally termed *bhambu* (lit. bomb) in Gache-Gache. Bomb, as a euphemism for the wave, carried with it memories of the loss of life (as fishermen drowned after boats capsized), livelihood assets (boats drowning), and the dangerous endeavour that fishing is on Lake Kariba, especially for gillnetters. Rod and liners, however, were not exempt, and one morning, I accompanied Mbuya Mupepe and her friend on a rod and line fishing trip; they expressed their wish that there would not be a *bhambu* so that they could stand a chance for a decent catch. As we dug for worms to use as fishing bait, Mbuya Mupepe said, “I hope there will not be a *bhambu* today. Otherwise, this trip will be in vain”. “Our work is based on faith and hope; the *bhambu* is our biggest enemy. We continue fishing because we have no option, but it is dangerous. If the water from the Lake were to dry up, we would see a lot of rusty boat and bone remains from fishers who drowned because of boat capsizing”, Mbuya

Mupepe's friend added. While they both highlighted the dangers of the wave, I was left wondering whether gillnetters would agree that the wave was the main "enemy" for them because there were also hippos, crocodiles and ZimParks rangers who affected catches. ZimParks rangers would sometimes sink homemade boats because they did not meet the standards expected for the safety of the fishers, and sometimes the boats were not registered. Thus, the rusty boats referred to by Mbuya Mupepe's friend had not only sunk because of capsizing due to bhambu only.



Figure 10 Rod and Line Fishing - mbuya Mupepe, her Friend and the Researcher

Wind and waves, atmospheric components of the Gache-Gache fishery, are unpredictable and have lively behaviour that should be understood as part of everyday life in the fishing villages. Waves, for instance, have the potential to influence catches. Waves, as an integral part of the Gache-Gache fishery, also animate everyday life and livelihoods in Gache-Gache. Ingold (2008) describes air and water as not objects that act but material media in which things are immersed and experienced by their currents, forces, and pressure gradients (Ingold 2008). Barry (2013) and Strang (2014) add that material artefacts and physical systems – such as

water, houses, and earth – must not be treated as passive and a stable foundation for politics and social life (Barry 2013; Strang 2014). They possess characteristics and behaviours that are formative of human and other-than-human relations (Strang 2014). During fieldwork, those unfamiliar with the easterly wind often found themselves on the receiving end of waves on the Lake because they went fishing without the soil-throwing ritual to determine whether there would be a wave. If they were fortunate and depending on where they were on the Lake when the wave started, fishers would land on an island and wait until the wave had subsided. Sometimes, they would climb on sticks and hope for help to come when the wave subsides.



Figure 11 Sticks on Lake Kariba

Waves are an objective hindrance to the everyday fishing routine, yet they can also express ancestral anger against children who violate the proper ways of living expected of them. Hanging out at the harbour also enabled me to listen to fishermen’s conversations about the rage of the lake. “*Mvura inombotsamwa iyi* (lit. sometimes these waters get extremely angry). It requires quick thinking; otherwise, you will drown”, exclaimed Nomia, one of the fishermen, one July morning as he narrated the ordeal of encountering powerful waves one June mid-morning. That morning, we anxiously gathered with other villagers as we waited for the bodies of two fishermen who had drowned after their boat had capsized the previous night while they were practising *ndombolo*. With the help of a boat provided by a conservation NGO, the rural council rangers embarked on finding the bodies of the deceased. As we waited, one of the rangers in the search party informed the villagers back home that the bodies had been found. This was a sigh of relief because it meant the end of *mahakurimwi* (lit. prohibition from

farming), which meant fishers could resume fishing. Mahakurimwi is a local Zimbabwean practice whereby people abstain from work as a mourning period. Mahakurimwi is typical in communal areas of Zimbabwe, where farming is the main livelihood activity. However, in practice, it means no working during the grieving period when someone has passed away; in Gache-Gache, it means no fishing. Some fishermen did go fishing, though, in defiance of this practice. In Gache-Gache, it was customary that people do not go fishing when someone has died on the Lake until their body has been found and they have received a proper burial. Stories of harrowing encounters with waves on the Lake were told frequently in Gache-Gache. My host's uncle told one such story while we were resting at Makodzera Harbour. He said:

You see that big boat over there? I went with my colleague one night for a fish drive. That huge boat over there was being lifted by waves and making clattering sounds as if someone was slapping the water with the palm of their hand. We used our familiarity and knowledge that when a wave strikes, another one is coming quickly, so we would struggle to turn the boat to avoid being hit by the next one. We were not going anywhere; it was not possible to move.

Waves are an objective hindrance to the everyday fishing routine. However, they can also express ancestral anger against children who violate the proper ways of living expected of them. Four months after this story by my host's uncle, I embarked on a fishing trip together with my host and his colleague. It was a fish-driving endeavour where they had to leave me by one of the islands while they went fishing. Two hours after they had left me on the island, I was woken up by the noise of someone who was asking for help to dig a hole in the sand on the island so that he could sleep in there and bury his whole body except his head. On switching on my torch, I realised it was my host's colleague – soaking wet and trembling. They had rushed back to the island because of a wave that had just started on the lake. All the above observations reveal the mutual constitution between humans and their environment. Mangena (2015) describes African cosmology, particularly among the Shona people, as comprising “onto-triadic deep ecology”. It is a tripartite relationship involving humans, other-than-humans and the creator or ancestors. The exact relationship characterises waves and the lake's other inhabitants, such as crocodiles and hippos that fishermen face in the Gache-Gache fishery. Waves are not always interpreted as naturally occurring in Gache-Gache. There are cultural mores that if one breaks, they can encounter violent waves leading to their boat capsizing. One such cultural more is unfaithfulness to one's partner.

3.4.2 Place and Animal Names

Kariba is a multipurpose Lake shared by tourists, safari operators, gillnet and kapenta fishers. Added to these are regulatory authorities who have an overall say in ensuring users comply with the rules and regulations. Despite attaining political independence in 1980, the fishery regulatory regime still uses conservation laws from the colonial period (see McGregor, 2009; Nyikahadzoi, 1998). This has meant that animals such as hippos and crocodiles are strictly protected while the plight of fishermen, such as calls for the culling of crocodiles and hippos, are ignored. When I first arrived in Gache-Gache, fishermen often mistook me for a state employee. They gave me their chemo (petitions) to deliver to the government so these problem animals could be culled. When my research assistant and I sat down with my first participant in 2019, he said, ‘The government does not care about us. We are being devoured by crocodiles every day. The hunter, whom they gave a contract, feeds the crocodiles to make sure they breed in multiple numbers. Moreover, the hippos, when you enter the lake, it is the groaning, grunting, and wheezing of hippos all over. We only go to work because we have no alternative’.

Over the years, because of their everyday encounters with these dangerous animals, fishermen developed some exciting names for the animals that reveal how the animals animate the lives of fishermen. The names reveal fishermen’s encounters with the animals on the lake. Hippopotami are called “Boko”, a shortcut for Boko Haram, the Nigerian jihadist organisation. The name Boko features prominently in fishermen’s everyday talk, reminiscent of the behaviour of hippos attacking fishermen’s boats on the lake, making fisherfolk’s work very risky on the shores of Lake Kariba. Hippos have several victims in Gache-Gache, some of whom died from their attacks while others are still alive but were severely maimed.

Towards the end of the winter season and the beginning of summer in September 2020, everyday talk at the harbour revealed fishermen’s worries about the impending increase of crocodiles. Conversations with fishermen towards the beginning of the summer season revealed that crocodiles hibernate to lay their eggs during winter. Retrospectively, I remembered that during the winter season, I had heard no complaints against crocodile raids on fisherfolk’s nets in search of fish. One informal conversation I found interesting was when a fisherman exclaimed, “Manje, manje tinenge taakunetsana nanaE.D” (lit. Very soon, we will be fighting battles against the E.Ds). E.D. is an abbreviation of the Zimbabwean president’s name, Emmerson Mnangagwa. At first, I was startled, not knowing who these “vanaE.D” (lit., the EDs) are, who will be ready to pounce on fishermen when the temperatures get warmer, but I quickly picked up that they were referring to crocodiles. Ordinary citizens in Zimbabwe

refer to Emerson Mnangagwa by the nickname ngwena (crocodile), reminiscent of his authoritarian rule and lack of hesitation in silencing his critics by killing them like a crocodile.

In addition to the way place and animal names reveal the nasty encounters fishers have with animals in the Gache-Gache fishery, the following conversation between fishers on an island tells of the way crocodiles affect livelihoods and everyday life. Kule Diva and other fishermen had taken me to one of the islands where some fishers camp to practice ndombolo, especially during fish scarcity. We were relaxing as we sat around a fire, and some fishermen were mending their nets, and a conversation started as fishers were reminiscing about Macheni Bay. Macheni Bay is a name fishers gave to a part of Lake Kariba in Gache-Gache where, according to fishers, many fishers have been attacked by a crocodile. When their bodies are found, only their testicles will be missing. The name Macheni came from the Shona name for testicles, *machende*, but to avoid sounding obscene, when fishers discuss this crocodile, they say Macheni (lit. chains). “Referring to the crocodile as Macheni avoids obscenity but also provides a grave description of the painful death victims of Macheni face when captured and killed, tantamount to being chained and choked to death,” explained one of the fishermen. There is, however, no consensus as to whether Macheni is only one crocodile attacking people, though there is a tendency to think it is only one. The following conversation by different fishermen camped at Jamaica Inn Island demonstrates the inconclusiveness of how people understand Macheni:

“Macheni Bay is where we used to catch fish during the days when we used to camp at Tsuwa Island. Now with this weather here, you catch nothing; you spent the day farting and gossiping!” exclaimed Baba vaJohn.

“You people, the owner of Macheni died,” replied Evans.

“Mmm, old man, no wizard or witch owns Macheni. It is a natural crocodile and does not belong to anyone,” quipped Ronald.

“Why does it not eat the people it kills?” asked Chris, supporting Evans’ position.

“You need to understand that a crocodile eats its prey when it starts decomposing. Whenever a fisherman disappears, he is found before decaying,” replied Ronald.

“That crocodile has killed and eaten many people. It may as well be many crocodiles instead of one. Where there is plenty of fish, there are bound to be many crocodiles too,” Peter joined in the conversation.

“It is one crocodile, and it is very old. It only eats testis because that is what it finds soft enough for it to chew. When it starts catching people, you know fish catches are now going to rise,” kule Katongo added to the conversation.

The conversation continued, and there was no consensus regarding the nature of Macheni, the crocodile, whether it was part of witchcraft or was a natural crocodile. It is clear, however, that Macheni did affect everyday life and livelihoods in Gache-Gache, and many fishermen feared going to cast their nets at Macheni Bay despite the high catches fishers said one would get if they fished there.

3.4.3 Waves, Animals and Fishery Governance

The discussion has so far focused on actants other than the fish, which is the primary resource at the centre of fishermen’s livelihoods. During fieldwork, I observed that fish behaviour also impacts fishermen’s lives and affects the politics of fishery governance in Gache-Gache. Like Bear’s (2012:21) observation in his study of the Cardigan Bay fishery, I observed that the territorialising tendencies of fishery governance rules often entangle with the smoothing movements of fish in Gache-Gache. Participants informed me that during the winter season, fish such as the bream migrate to cleaner parts of the lake because, close to the lakeshore where fishermen legally cast their nets, the water will be dirty because tributaries like the Sanyati River deposit dirty sediments. As a result of this fish migration, fishermen also tend to migrate in search of fish, often casting their nets in prohibited areas. Because the fish are not bound by the boundaries pegged by lake management authorities, fishermen are bound to break the rules that require them to fish only in designated areas.

During winter (May- August), fishermen persistently complained about low catches. In particular, fishermen unanimously believed that the 2020 winter season was a season of meagre catches compared to previous seasons. “Hadzisi kuchekeka, kucheka jecha” (lit., we cannot cut the fish, we are only cutting the sand, meaning “we are drawing blanks”) were common phrases. As a result, fishermen resorted to checking their nets every three or four days instead of daily as the conservation rules require. The conservation rules require that gillnet fishermen drain their nets daily to allow other lake users to use the lake during the day. However, due to these persistent low catches, fishermen leave the nets in the lake in breach of the rules, which leads to conflicts with other users. Fish do not adhere to the territorialising tendencies of the conservation rules. As such, conflicts between the authorities and gillnet fishers have partly to do with the behaviour of the fish seasonally as fishers migrate to areas where they feel they will catch more fish outside their designated boundaries.

Waves are also central to conflicts between conservation authorities and gillnet fishers. Because of the multipurpose nature of the Lake, gillnet fishers are required by lake conservation authorities to cast their net between 4 pm and 8 pm. They are then asked to search and drain their nets between 4 a.m. and 8 a.m. Outside this timetable, fisherfolk are kept from entering the lake. These rules do not look at the material relations that characterise fishing, some of which have been highlighted above, especially waves. One of the primary complaints fishers held against lake management authorities was their failure to recognise that, at times, there will be waves that make it impossible for fishers to adhere to the strict timetable. If there is a wave between 3 a.m. and 8 a.m., fishers are forced to go and search for their nets outside the stipulated time frame. This puts them at risk of having their boats confiscated and getting fined.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed livelihoods and everyday life, considering the complex imbrication between the semiotic and the material. The binary division between nature and culture traditionally impedes the preunderstanding of environmentalities (Mawere 2015). In contrast, a posthuman approach (see Haraway 1991; Mawere 2015) focuses on the relationships between people, animals, the state, and things. Taking after literature on assemblages (see Moore 2005) and materiality (Fontein 2015; Ingold 1993; 2000), I argued that humans and non-human actors play an essential role in livelihood-making, everyday life, place-making and shaping of the history of places. The concept of assemblages and actor-network theoretical perspectives were adopted to frame the study. These perspectives are helpful because they capture the complex livelihood-making processes among Gache-Gache fishers. Livelihoods and everyday life in Gache-Gache are animated by other-than-humans that, together with humans, are intertwined to co-produce them. While the concept of assemblage and actor networks are helpful, there is a need to be careful to eschew producing ahistorical narratives through a flat ontology that ignores the disproportionate power possessed by humans in shaping history (McGregor 2009). To avoid an account that equates all entities as equal, the chapter adopts Munyaradzi Mawere's (2015) concept of a hierarchised environment comprising the creator, ancestors, humans, other beings, and entities in that order. Such hierarchisation takes note of the power that humans have in shaping history but also takes note of the influence of other-than-humans.

Fishing in Gache-Gache involves the effort of the fisherfolk, their fishing assets (nets and boats), and other-than-human beings – ancestors and animals that directly structure and affect everyday life and livelihoods. Not only are their cultural mores, but other-than-human

constituents of the fishery also shape these cultural mores. For communities living and working on its shores, Lake Kariba is not just an external water body upon which they derive their livelihood. It embodies their identity and being because the ultimate authorities who determine its use are the ancestors whose lineage is traceable to the pre-displacement phase.

Other-than-humans partake in or shape fishery governance and fisher compliance politics. In this study, waves directly affect whether fishers in Gache-Gache comply with the set timetable, as demonstrated in this chapter. Fishers failing to go and cast or check nets because of the wave means that sometimes they go onto the Lake outside the designated timetable as they struggle to make a living, which generates conflicts between fishery managers and gillnet fishers. Other beings, such as crocodiles, are essential from the perspective of fishery managers and those involved in crocodile farming. However, they directly affect the lives and? livelihoods of gillnet fishers when they destroy fisher nets and eat their catch and injure and kill fishers. This again generates conflicts between fishery managers and fishers whose livelihoods are threatened by these other-than-humans. Though other beings and entities are not equal to humans, they directly affect and shape livelihoods and the politics surrounding everyday life in Gache-Gache.

However, it is essential that from a Gache-Gache residents' ontological perspective, there are other beings – ancestors and the creator – who have power above humans in Gache-Gache cosmology. This allows for processes of ensoulment whereby ancestors use other beings to communicate with the residents of Gache-Gache. This was demonstrated in the chapter, for instance, the elephant raids, roaming lions in the villages, and wave-induced turbulence when one indulged in extramarital sex. In this sense, an associative network of ancestors, other beings, and entities coalesces to shape everyday life and livelihoods in Gache-Gache.

Chapter Four: "What choice do we have?": Fishing Gear, Ndombolo and Livelihood Security in Gache-Gache.

4.1 Introduction

One Saturday afternoon in September 2020, *sabhuku* (village head) Mupepe – one of my hosts – looked pale and sick and complained that he was feeling cold. I was surprised because it was sweltering, with temperatures ranging between 35 and 40 degrees Celsius, typical of Gache-Gache and the rest of the Zambezi Valley. Sabhuku Mupepe explained that he and his co-worker had spent the previous night on an island on the Lake, occasionally jumping into the Lake at the cavitating sounds of the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks) rangers' speedboat, which was on patrol that night to pounce on irregular fishers, illegal fishing methods (especially ndombolo – a fish driving method popular among Gache-Gache fisherfolk) and the use of the illicit twine monofilament net. The occasional jumps into the water on the night in question had resulted in sabhuku Mupepe catching a cold. Usually, when no rangers are patrolling the Lake, fishermen who practice ndombolo go and cast their monofilament nets and have several rounds of fish driving, intermittently checking their nets and returning home when they are tired. On the night in question, sabhuku Mupepe and his workmate failed to return home because of the rangers who were patrolling the Lake because they were afraid of being caught working outside the designated fishing timetable.

Why did sabhuku Mupepe engage in illegal fishing methods, fishing in restricted areas, outside the official fishing timetable and using illegal fishing gear? For someone of his status *yehusabhuku* (of village headship) – expected to play a pivotal role towards enhancing fishery co-management – why did he break the rules? "What choice do we have? Fishing in Lake Kariba is a war, *muzukuru* [my nephew]. If you follow what ZimParks rangers say, your family will starve. ZimParks rangers and other environmental conservation agencies [such as African Parks, a conservation NGO, and some safari operators] claim to fight the use of the monofilament net, but they also survive from it. They say they do not want it; it will finish all the fish from the Lake, but they confiscate it and re-sell it to other fishermen... how will we survive if we stop using the twine net? Where will we find the [recommended] cotton nets? They [cotton nets] are expensive and mostly catch tigerfish [*Hydrocynus vittatus*], instead of the bream [*Oreochromis mortimeri*], the most in-demand fish on the market in Gache-Gache ...," sabhuku Mupepe painstakingly asked these fundamental questions around everyday forms of getting by as we conversed about why he had not returned home the previous night.

The questions were familiar. During the eight months of my time in Gache-Gache that had elapsed, sabhuku Mupepe and many other fishermen explained to me in many informal

conversations, and I had also observed first-hand the invaluable role played by the twine net (regardless of its status of being illegal) towards fishers' everyday food security and daily needs. It is essential, however, to note a caveat of nuance – though famous among many fishermen, ndombolo fish driving practice and the monofilament net were not used by everyone – some loathed them. Labels such as “*sabhuku wechione day*” [lit. a village head obsessed with “overnight-brewed” beer] and “*homwe yaShe yakabooka*” [chief Musampakaruma’s pocket that is tattered] were ascribed to village head Mupepe by some community members, especially older fishermen, who viewed his participation in ndombolo and the use of the monofilament net with utter disdain. As a sabhuku, he and the other four sabhukus were expected to be the “eyes” of the Hurungwe-based chief Musampakaruma, under whose chieftaincy Gache-Gache is.

Though the monofilament twine net was famous for many fishermen, it was also a source of vulnerability – a fisherman could buy a set of nets today – often on credit – and find himself without nets the following day – not because of theft but because of destruction by crocodiles. Against this background, I argue in this chapter that the fishing net is an entry point towards understanding everyday strategies for getting by from a more-than-human perspective. I will try to answer two fundamental questions in this chapter. Focusing on the fishing net and the fishery constituents, what are the reasons behind the fishing gear choice for fishers in Gache-Gache? From the fishers’ perspective, what vulnerabilities are generated by the fishing gear and methods they choose? Answering these questions requires a discussion of the literature on fisher behaviour and fisher compliance.

Scholars on fisher decision-making and behaviour broadly frame their studies on rational choice and normative theories (e.g., Hauck 2011; Gezelius and Hauck 2011; Blanchemanche et al. 2010). Cepic and Nunan (2017) go a step further and investigate how fishers justify non-compliance to fishing regulations. None of these studies, however, examine how the properties of the fishing gear and the way the fishery as an ecosystem operates (independent of humans) are critical affordances behind fisher behaviour. In sum, the affordances, or properties of the fishing net and how the fishery operates are essential parts of the “ensembles of biosocial relations” (see Palsson 2013, 22) that constitute fishing as a way of life and determine fishers' gear choice. Rational choice and normative explanations provide a critical foundation towards understanding fisher behaviour. Still, we can further complement this existing body of knowledge by analysing how other-than-human beings, things and processes contribute towards fisher behaviour and livelihood vulnerability. Understanding fishing gear choices and

the consequences of these choices on livelihoods in Gache-Gache first requires a discussion of the historical context of fishing regulations on Lake Kariba since its construction. As such, the following section discusses fishing regulations on Lake Kariba.

4.2 Fishing Gear Regulations on Lake Kariba: A Fractured Set of Rules

4.2.1 The Science-Based Global Fishing Regulations Regime

Today, Wednesday, 16 October 2019, ZimParks rangers patrolled the Lake around 02:00 am. People who were at work around this time were asleep, waiting for a wave on the Lake to subside so that they could resume work. ZimParks rangers found them sleeping and arrested them. They were fined a lot of money, which pained me because it was a lot of money. One fisher was being asked to pay ZW\$700; if there were two fishermen per boat, they were paying ZW\$1400-00. The money was not being officially accounted for [through issuing official receipts]; obviously, it was for the rangers to take home...how do they expect people to survive? What pained me most is that they were fining people for monofilament nets but not receipting them, and this is not the first time this has happened (diary entry, 16/10/19).

The above is an excerpt from a diary entry by one of the diary participants, Mr. Gwenzi. It raises several questions regarding the centrality of the monofilament fishing net in Gache-Gache in livelihood construction for fisherfolk. It reveals part of the vulnerability context for fishermen, who constantly get arrested and penalised for using it. This raises the question, why do fishermen continue using the monofilament net anyway? The entry also demonstrates that ZimParks rangers also weaponise the ban on the net to extort money for their survival without officially receipting and accounting for the so-called fines they take from fishermen. In this sense, the set of fishing regulations on Lake Kariba, including the ban on the monofilament net, make livelihoods precarious. The following paragraphs outline some of the critical tenets of the fishery regulations on Lake Kariba and how they were developed and continue to be maintained.

The fishing regulations on Lake Kariba derive from a regime of fishery governance developed in the Global North. Therefore, there is a need to briefly explain the epistemic roots of mainstream fishing regulations on Lake Kariba. Since their inception, global fisheries management approaches have, in theory, been dominated by biological scientific reasoning (Nyikahadzoi and Rakjaer, 2014; Kolding and van Zwieten, 2011). Positivist scientific values – portraying the world in a deterministic and mechanistic manner – dominate fishery management and regulations, emphasising rationality and impartiality (Malasha 2002, 2). Two fundamental objectives guide this approach. First is the fear of open access regimes, and second

is the condemnation of catching immature and undersized fish (Kolding and van Zwieten 2011, 267). This model has survived many decades and is predicated on the standard property theory and the maximum yield per recruit theory (Kolding and van Zwieten 2011, 267). This reasoning, predicated in Garrett Hardin's (1968) Tragedy of the Commons thesis, proposes that individuals are naturally selfish. Hardin(1968) assumed selfish rationality when resources are open access and argued that people compete against each other and overexploit them. As such, measures must be implemented to control the overexploitation of the resources in question. It is against this assumption that fishing regulations were developed with the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) and the Total Allowable Catches (TAC) as the standard instruments to guide the fishing effort (McCormack and Forde 2020).

The MSY emerged from the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 1995 Food and Agricultural Organization Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (McCormack 2017). This framing allows for the construction of water bodies (seas, oceans, dams, etc.) as bounded spaces into which scientific research on fish productivity (MSY) is assumed to be representative of the reality of nature and enable the managerial setting of fishing limits, that is, the total allowable catches (TAC). It is premised on preventing the reduction of fish stocks beyond the level at which they can be replenished, and emphasis is placed on maintaining the spawning biomass at a level that retains reproductive capacity (McCormack and Forde 2020; McCormack 2017). The scientific study of fisheries is commonly believed to be distinct from the messy management realm. It has analytic merit, but it is not easy to maintain this neutrality in practice (McCormack and Forde 2020, 12-13). This is particularly true in Lake Kariba, a transboundary water body between Zambia and Zimbabwe whose fishery regulations were tailored to meet the two countries' needs.

Two fundamental flaws characterise the fishing regulations of the global fisheries management regime. First, although it is based on science and considered value-free, fishery regulations in practice are dictated by the interests of those in power, even when decisions are contrasted with data provided by science (see Malasha, 2002). In line with the natural sciences, fisheries science is commonly presented as a closed, depoliticised bureaucratic regime concerned with biomass levels, stock assessments, theory, sampling, and quantitative analytical procedures (McCormack 2017). However, in practice, fishing regulations are designed to fit within the context of the political and economic rationality of the state in which they are developed (McCormack and Forde 2020, 13; Malasha 2002), which means they are seldom value-free. These rationalities of the elite and state interests are often at odds with those of science

(Malasha 2002, 2), as in the Kariba context both in the colonial and postcolonial periods, where sport fishing and tourism are promoted at all costs. The second flaw is that the biological models of fishing regulations appear to be effective in industrial fisheries in the single-species industry-focused fisheries in the Global North and are maladapted to the multi-species, fluctuating artisanal tropical inland fisheries of Africa (Kolding 1994; Jul-Larsen 2003; Kolding and van Zwieten 2011). Kolding and van Zwieten (2006) highlighted that Lake Kariba has a possibility of underfishing and restrictive regulations, such as those on the Zimbabwean side, which are not in tandem with fish stocks.

McCormack and Forde (2020, 12) highlight an apparent absence of indigenous and local knowledge and concerns in fisheries management, which is in part linked to the ethnocentrism of scientists. It is thus unsurprising that the concerns of fishers in Gache-Gache are disregarded as an insatiable thirst to maximise profit at the expense of the sustainability of the fishery. Fisheries science is based on numerical modelling under the reasoning of bio-economics, and this limits the basis of information by rendering local knowledge incompatible and irrelevant due to its finer scale (St Martins 2001). Jentoft (2000) argues that fisheries management in most countries focuses almost exclusively on the relationship between a government agency and individual users without seeking input from the local people who live with and work with the fish resources. An example of this exclusion of local ecological knowledge and concerns in the Gache-Gache case is the exclusionary nature of how formal institutions like ZimParks and the Lake Kariba Fisheries Research Institute define a fisher as formally registered.

Ultimately, fishery management is a highly politicised process, characterised by the imposition of a particular vision of nature and the prescription for human participants: who should control it, how should it be used, and who should benefit. One of the limitations of the MSY calculations is that they are based on a technical framework (Heidegger 1977) that manufactures a monoculture bounding of all fish species as a singular stock, which has significant ontological consequences for species and all other elements in the marine ecosystem. Maguire (2014, 124) highlights that this framework plays down the fluidity and agency of fish populations (Maguire 2014). These flaws are explained in detail in the next section, where the fishing regulations on Lake Kariba are discussed in more detail.

4.2.2 Fractured Regulations on a Trans-Boundary Lake

As a transboundary water body, Lake Kariba comprises a fractured set of fishing regulations contradicting each other. Zambia is more liberal, giving fishers more freedom to fish where they want and less restrictive on fishing gear type and use (McGregor 2009). At the same time,

Zimbabwe pursues a rigid, restrictive approach to fishing (Hughes 2006). In the history of fishing regulations on Lake Kariba, for both Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), it has been widely documented that the two countries pursued radically different approaches regarding access and catch (see McGregor 2009; Nyikahadzoi 2009; Hughes 2006; Malasha 2002) and this is mainly because of their different political and economic interests. These persisting inconsistent and contradicting regulations for a transboundary lake fuel discontent among Gache-Gache, as fishers question the legitimacy of a parallel set of rules. This also applies to fishing gear, particularly the monofilament net, which is banned in Zimbabwe and not in Zambia. One Gache-Gache fisher, Mr Kurambarara, expressed disgruntlement regarding such inconsistency. He said,

ZimParks must build a good relationship with fishermen...This net that they have banned [the monofilament net], they must bring it to us and explain why they are banning it. It confuses us that we are banned from using this net, but Zambians come and poach in our fishing grounds using this same net, and nothing happens against them. Yes, Zambians are using the monofilament twine net. One Lake, different rules; why? (Mr Kurambarara, 22/02/20).

Before the construction of Lake Kariba, Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) appeared to adopt the same policies towards fishing regulations. The colonial governments in Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia categorised fish as game and fishing as another form of hunting – fishery regulations emanated from game laws developed earlier in the two countries. Responsible authorities enforced closed seasons and licenses to limit the number of harvested fish and prevent the depletion of fish stocks (Jackson 1961). After the Lake's construction, fishing regulations initially put in place were like those for other fisheries in the country. However, these were considered interim and were to be revised after obtaining more data regarding how the Kariba fishery system worked (Malasha 2003).

Zambia and Zimbabwe implemented fishery regulations emphasising the minimum mesh sizes of fishing nets and permissible width of apertures for fish traps and baskets. Although fishery regulations such as the licensing system appear scientifically sound in controlling access to the resource, they also conceal the political, social, and economic role of licenses in subsidising colonial rule (Malasha 2002, 4). In Zambia, for instance, the fishing license system introduced in 1943 paid salaries to chiefs and other employees of the authorities (Malasha 2002, 4). Zambia supported the optimum use of the fishing industry to supply food for labour in towns

and to pay for the running of the Native Authorities (Malasha 2002, 15). The optimum use of the fishery involved allowing fisherfolk access to most water bodies in the country. In contrast, Zimbabwe pursued a policy and regulations that promoted fishing as a sport. Regarding fishing regulations, the first difference between the two countries was the right mesh size (Malasha 2002, 16). In Zambia, the Director of Game and Fisheries to Permanent highlighted in July 1962 that there was no need to restrict the mesh size of gillnets to be used (Malasha 2002, 16). The Director of Game and Fisheries, cited in Malasha (2002,16), is said to have argued in 1960 that:

"In light of information from research, it was fully agreed that there was no necessity whatsoever for continuing to impose the four-inch mesh size as a minimum. If anything, encouragement should be given to the use of smaller meshes in an endeavour to achieve a more balanced take-off from the fish population. It is not known on what evidence Southern Rhodesia bases its desire to persist with the four-inch minimum restriction".

Zambia and Zimbabwe also differed on fully exploiting the entire fishery – the Zambian government advocated full-scale gillnet-based commercial fishing before the Lake reached its extent (Malasha 2002, 17). Zimbabwe refused to open the entire fishery to fishing (ibid, 17). The Zimbabwean government prohibited net fishing until the fishery stocks had stabilised (ibid, 17). Paradoxically, the colonial government only restricted African fishermen from using nets and exempted white-owned concessionaries (Malasha 2002, 17). Gillnet fishing was only allowed after establishing the Fish Conservation and (Kariba Controlled and Fishing Area) Regulations in 1962 (Malasha 2002, 17).

With time, Zimbabwe had a more extensive white settler population that developed a large lobby group that advocated the development of sport fishing (Malasha 2002, 12). Malasha (2002:12) notes that most white settlers in Zimbabwe were from Europe and pushed for the development of fishing as a sport in the country. In Zimbabwe, individuals, associations, and clubs with vested interests in sport fishing, rather than government initiatives, developed fishing regulations (Malasha 2002, 13). It was only in 1949 that the government passed the National Parks Act. For the first time, the government formed the National Parks Board. It employed officers specifically responsible for fisheries (Malasha 2002, 12). The recommendation was that emphasis should be placed on sport fishing to attract tourists (Hey 1948). The focus on sport fishing was mainly because the diet of the white settlers was wide-ranging so as not to make fish a staple (Malasha 2002, 14). African fishing methods were

frowned upon as destructive and unsportsmanlike as white settlers accused African fishermen of using poisonous plants and remnants of beer dregs into the water and scooping all sizes of dazed fish (Malasha 2002,185) and therefore they identified a need to control the fishing activities of African fishermen to prevent overfishing.

On the Zimbabwean side, only 60% of the shoreline is fished by artisanal fishermen (Malasha 2005). The minimum mesh size remains 100 mm (Malasha 2002, 18). Regardless of the strict fishing regulations on the Zimbabwean side, Malasha (2002, 9) notes that fishermen continue to violate the regulations through networks that assist them in evading being caught. Such networks, Malasha (2002, 19) notes, inform fishers about the presence of guards in closed areas or when using small mesh-size nets. These differences between Zambia and Zimbabwe reflect the different roles of the fishing industry to the countries' respective social and economic interests (Malasha, 2002. 18). For Zambian authorities, species such as the *Hydrocynus vittatus* (Tiger Fish) were of little commercial value. For Zimbabwean rules, however, the emphasis was on sport fishing. Thus, they promoted species such as the Tiger Fish because their virtues of superiority and fighting ability were essential (Malasha 2002, 18). The tigerfish (*Hydrocynus vittatus*), due to its essential recreational value as an angling fish, has always attracted particular attention in the management regulations of Lake Kariba. This species is particularly vulnerable to fishing with small mesh sizes (Kenmuir 1973; Marshall et al. 1982; Langerman 1984; Scholz 1993). Sanyanga (1995) classified it as an endangered species in Lake Kariba and recommended giving it conservation status. Against this background of a fractured set of fishery regulations at Lake Kariba, the following section discusses compliance and fisher behaviour questions. This background to the set of regulations on Lake Kariba provides the discussion of fisher behaviour and compliance questions, and the next section briefly focuses on this.

4.3 Fisher Behaviour and Compliance Questions

Compliance is conformance to rules developed to influence behaviour (Tyler 1990), and the rules can be formal or informal, monitored through either formal or informal means or both (Hauck 2011, 197). Regarding fishery compliance in the Gache-Gache, plenty of rules come to mind, including but not limited to being a permit holder, nets (mesh/size or net type), boat type and adhering to the designated timetable for casting and removing nets from the Lake. In this chapter, the analysis of compliance and non-compliance is limited to nets, specifically net type – the cotton and monofilament nets and fishing methods. There are two broad approaches to understanding fisher behaviour: rational choice/ instrumentalist and normative theories (Cepic

and Nunan 2017), and they generally focus on identifying the motivating factors for non-compliance (Kuperan and Sutinen 1998; Nunan et al. 2018). Rationalist and normative perspectives are not separate or mutually exclusive and can be drawn on to analyse and understand fisher behaviour (Gezelius and Hauck 2011; Kuperan and Sutinen 1998).

The rational choice theory was mainly propagated by economists who attributed fisher decisions to comply or not from the instrumentalist approach (Cepic and Nunan 2017; Boonstra et al. 2017). This approach assumes that the individual primarily responds to the immediate benefits of compliance or non-compliance behaviour (Cepic and Nunan 2017, 104). Following the instrumentalist approach, fishery managers try to enforce compliance by increasing monitoring, control, and surveillance to increase the potential of catching illegal fishers (Boonstra et al. 2017, 682). Under this approach, fisherfolk decisions are based on a cost-benefit analysis of partaking in certain activities, factoring in the probability of getting caught. Concomitant sanctions (Nunan et al. 2018, 62). Suppose we apply this approach to fishing gear choice in Gache-Gache. In that case, fishers only focus on maximising their catch through the monofilament net regardless of the potential for fish depletion in the Lake. The enforcement of compliance to fishing gear in Gache-Gache follows this typical instrumentalist approach without analysing the context in which fisherfolk live and work. However, this approach as already highlighted in preceding sections, is flawed because it does not take cognisance of fishers' lived experiences and knowledge. During a workshop with LKFRI officials, Gache-Gache fishermen tried to negotiate a potential waiver of the ban on the monofilament net until cotton nets were readily accessible in Zimbabwe but were quickly silenced. One of the officials from the LKFRI replied thus:

What does the law say? Does it not ban the twine net? If it does, please let us move on to other questions. If you want cotton nets in Zimbabwe, register a company and apply for a licence to import them from Zambia. There is no excuse for using the twine net, which depletes fish stocks. We want to work with the future generations in mind. If caught using the twine net, you will be arrested... and some of you have developed this dangerous habit of jumping into the Lake when you see the Parks officials coming after you. Why risk your lives like that? (09/09/20).

The LKFRI official's response above is in line with the monolithic approach to fishery which only considers the rules set by fishery science and the state without attending to the lived experiences of Gache-Gache fishers whose everyday experiences are dismissed. Hatcher et al. (2000, 450) note that where the rate of non-compliance with regulations is perceived as

significant, policymakers generally focus on increased deterrence, which in practice usually involves greater enforcement efforts as the only solution because economic analysis of enforcement in fisheries assumes that fishermen act in all circumstances as self-interested agents. Suggesting that Gache-Gache fisherfolk must obtain an importing license for cotton nets eschews attending to the fact that these people live from hand to mouth. The idea of fishermen in their capacity raising the money to register a company and navigating all the complex bureaucratic processes of registering a company in Zimbabwe is to suggest the impossible. As such, fishers continue to use the easily accessible twine net and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future, regardless of the risks involved.

The normative lens focuses on the role of norms, morality, the perceived legitimacy of regulations and systems and other sociocultural influences (Nunan et al. 2018, 62). This approach highlights the multiplicity of factors affecting fisher behaviour (Hauck 2011, 200) – economic, social, institutional, and biophysical. In contrast the rational choice theory, research has revealed that fisher behaviour is predominantly determined by normative foundations (Cepic and Nunan 2017, 104). Cepic and Nunan (2017:104) identify four themes fishers use to justify non-compliance: superfluosity, necessity, utility, and futility.

Legitimacy applies when fishers feel entitled to be autonomous and limited by the state when and how to fish. In the Gache-Gache context, the selective banning of the monofilament net cultivated legitimacy issues while allowing it in other lakes led fishers to query the legitimacy of its ban at Lake Kariba. The four modes of justification for non-compliant behaviour are not necessarily separate nor mutually exclusive (Cepic and Nunan 2017, 109). In the context of economic sociology, Cepic and Nunan (2017:109) argue that fishing is embedded in broader social and cultural structures of beliefs and values. In the introduction to this chapter, sabhuku Mupepe highlighted the superfluosity of avoiding the use of the monofilament; employees working for regulatory authorities propagate its use through bribes and corruption.

Small-scale fisheries are embedded in a system comprising the fishery's ecological, social, economic, political, and institutional aspects and how they interrelate. Artisanal fishers construct livelihoods in a context of precarity regarding market dynamics, customary fishing practices, institutional arrangements, and formal laws (Hauck 2011, 199). Acknowledging this nature of small-scale fishing is critical to understanding fisheries compliance (Hauck 2011, 199). An integrated approach to fisheries compliance requires a thorough analysis of the different components of the fishery system and how they interrelate (Hauck 2011, 200). In a

comparative study between Canada and Norway, sociologist Gezelius (2004, 10) observed a moral distinction between poaching for food and commercial poaching. The fishers whom Gezelius (2004,11) researched regard food as morally innocent. Thus, activities meant to supply food are not subject to the communities' moral vigilance. Fishermen in Gache-Gache emphasised that,

“conservation authorities in Gache-Gache need to realise that they are working with people and recognising that the times we live in are difficult. Therefore, they must not confiscate fisherfolk's nets, considering the economic hardships everyone in the country faces”.¹⁴

I found this argument from fishermen in Gache-Gache to have a similar moral undertone to that observed by sociologist Gezelius (2004) in his qualitative sociological study: the right to food and survival must come first before people consider conservation and other goals.

4.4. Contested Knowledge and Implications for Livelihoods

At the centre of one of the reasons why fishers in Gache-Gache continue to use fishing gear described as destructive and illegal fishing methods, like fish driving, is the question: whose knowledge or reality counts? Do fishers in Gache-Gache unanimously believe that the twine net and ndombolo fishing methods are destructive? Cepic and Nunan (2017,104) assert that failure to comply with fishery regulations can lead to a reduction in fish stocks, thus undermining the foundation on which fisher livelihoods are mainly predicated. However, as discussed in the previous section, there is no apparent linear causality between non-compliance and fish stock depletion (Kolding and van Zwieten, 2011; Nyikahadzoi and Rakajaer, 2014). Kolding et al. (2016), in their research on Lake Kariba and the fishing effort on the Zimbabwean side, suggested that there is evidence of underfishing instead of overfishing because of restrictive fishing regulations.

Many fishermen who use the monofilament net do so under the perception that contrary to what regulatory authorities say about its threat to the fishery's future, fish will not be depleted. They instead blame the restricted fishing grounds. Baba Tanaka, a participant in this study and a Gache-Gache resident who works as a fish buying agent, briefly and emphatically said, "...

¹⁴ Conversation with a gillnet fisher, 24/03/20

fish will never deplete; we see them, the younglings, and they are many." Kule Diva, who was present during this conversation with Baba Tanaka, supported him, saying:

...that is what I told you the other day, Felix – fish will never deplete because other grounds are not being used. The Lake stretches far and wide, and as you move away from the shoreline into the deeper parts of the Lake, very few fishermen can go there because the boats or canoes we use do not have engines and can quickly capsize if they face strong waves. We fish in shallow waters and cannot, therefore, overfish.

Management regulations such as limited entry and restricted mesh sizes, as in Zimbabwe, result in higher stability for the individual fisherman but, on the other hand, in a severe under-utilisation of the potential yields (Kolding, Musando and Sanyanga 2003). Contrary to orthodox fishing regulations, this evidence resonates well with many Gache-Gache fishermen who believe they are not overfishing using the monofilament net and ndombolo fish driving. Many fishermen in Gache-Gache believe that fish stocks cannot be exhausted. One of the fishermen had this to say when asked about ndombolo fish driving and the use of the monofilament net:

Fish in Gache-Gache are fleeing from the noise from ndombolo fish driving. You cannot deplete fish stocks in Gache-Gache. In my fifteen years in Gache-Gache, people practising ndombolo were always there. Fish cannot be depleted, but they have seasons when catches get reduced, not to the extent of getting depleted. After the first 21 days of the COVID-19 lockdown in April, when fishermen were banned from going to the lake when we resumed, the catches were significantly higher than the pre-lockdown days. It will not take time for fish stocks to get replenished; it is a matter of a few days without the ndombolo noise. The only thing we should be worried about that has the potential to threaten fish stocks is two-inch nets, which some poachers use in breeding areas. It is not the net type but the mesh size that has the potential to threaten fish stocks [Interview with Mr Muzvarwa, 10/06/20].

Echoing the same line of thinking that there is no depletion of fish stocks but rather migration of fish running away from ndombolo fish driving noise, another fisherman, Katongo, said,

Zambian fishers introduced the ndombolo fishing method to us. It was first introduced in the Nyaodza fishing camp close to Gache-Gache. Fish in Nyaodza were many, but the catches reduced in no time, the catches declined, and fishermen started complaining of low catches, and many migrated to Gache-Gache. Right now, in Nyaodza, catches have risen because there is less noise after the migration of fishermen to Gache-Gache. Fish driving is terrible because of the noise. We have got tiger fish, for instance, when

I once practised ndombolo, when you hit the water just once during ndombolo exercise, you will hear noise from a few metres away – a tiger fish hitting your nets fleeing from noise. However, if I use the lining method, even if I use the twine net, it means I am catching fish that is moving on its own accord, without me forcing or driving it [09/02/20].

Through local ecological knowledge gathered over years of fishing in Gache-Gache, fishers share a worldview contrary to that of the management authorities. They hold the view of a giving environment (see Muttenger 2020), which supposes that fish stocks are infinite and thus feel not obliged to comply (Cepic and Nunan, 2017). Among the Vezo people in Madagascar, anthropologist Muttenger (2020) observed that fishers view the sea as a “giving environment” that keeps giving to sustain livelihoods and thus differ in perspective from fishery managers who argue that fish resources are finite. In conversations with older Gache-Gache residents about whether they see fish as gradually depleting compared to yesteryears, they often said catches in the past used to be bigger, and there was less need for fish driving, which is now rampant. Explanations among older fishermen varied, with some believing that the increased numbers of fishermen have led to reduced catches. Those who believe fish stocks are depleting partly attribute this to new illegal fishermen who use illegal fishing nets and methods like fish driving. When I posed this question to Kule Diva, who is younger, he had this to say about the stark difference between catches during past years and nowadays:

...fish stocks are not depleting, but you must understand that fish are a species that does not like noise. Fish driving has a lot of noise pollution. As a result, fish migrate to deeper parts of the Lake that are quieter. There are places you have probably not heard of before, like Zunguza, where fishermen with engines cast their nets and come back with huge catches. Fish will never get depleted, never.

This was a predominant position among Gache-Gache fishermen. On one of my visits to the Dandawa fishing ground with gillnet fishers, mdara waKiddo and kule Luke, they showed me fingerlings at the harbour (see Fig. 1 below). They emphasised that this was evidence that fish stocks would not be depleted in Lake Kariba. “Just look at how plentiful these fingerlings in this small place are. Now imagine how big the Lake is. You will not finish the fish from this Lake *mzaya* [nephew]”, exclaimed kule Luke as we were preparing the Tigerfish they had caught from their nets.



Figure 12 Fingerlings (left image) and kule Luke preparing Tigerfish, Dandawa Harbour

In concurrence to kule Luke’s words, mdara waKiddo said, “One fisherman can spend two years catching fish produced by one fish. The challenge is that the fish have migrated to deeper levels not easily reached by fishermen because we mostly use non-motorised boats that do not allow us to reach deeper levels of the Lake.” This brings to the fore the importance of other-than-Western ecological knowledge - fishers believe fish stocks will not be depleted regardless of the effort and are incapable of putting much effort anyway, given their poor fishing implements, including homemade boats that do not allow them to sail to deeper lake levels.

It is essential, however, to note that not all fishermen believed that fish stocks could not be depleted. The choice of the respective mode of justification is not attached to collectivities but to situations, and therefore, individuals are obliged to shift between different fishing nets. This resonates with fishermen whom I observed shifting between fishing gear, including cotton nets, depending on their needs or encounters on Lake Kariba. As such, there is a need to understand the reasons behind fishers' behaviour and to develop appropriate fisheries management arrangements that reflect these (Hauck 2011, 199). Some fishermen acknowledged the dangers of the monofilament net, such as harming tiger fish, but they often questioned the unequal application of the law against its use. In conversations with fishermen in Gache-Gache around the fishing nets, they highlighted that the twine net is not considered illegal in lakes other than Lake Kariba, such as Lake Chivero. This makes some fishermen reluctant to comply with the law against using the monofilament net. One of the fishermen had this to say:

We went to the province, ended up in Harare, and asked why fishermen in Lake Chivero in Harare (the Capital) use the twine net without facing any problems from conservation authorities. It would be good if Zimbabwean laws were applied equally

across the country. We are catching fish like those caught by fishermen at Chivero. If I am to give you an illustration, it is problematic that in Zimbabwe, some provinces can smoke dagga, and only one is banned. They (ZimParks) told us that Lake Chivero has many fish so the fishermen can use the twine net as a culling measure. Still, the twine will deplete the fish stocks in Kariba and remain banned (Mr Manzungu, and Fishers Association Chairperson, 11/12/19).

In the end, such discrepancies in the application of the law resulted in many fisherfolks in Gache-Gache failing to make sense of the legitimacy of the ban on the twine net. What they do understand, and many acknowledge, is that their interests clash with those of the influential tourists. Many alluded that because tourists bring foreign currency into the country, their interests are bound to be more respected than the subsistence-based interests of gillnet fishers. A typical example highlighted by participants was the annual Tiger tournament in which tourists participate. During the game, gillnet fishing is suspended. The Tiger tournament directly clashes with using the twine net because the net hurts tiger fish. When a twine net catches a tiger fish, it usually bites the net and flees away with patches of the monofilament net wrapped around its body. The ban on the monofilament net is not entirely based on scientific grounds but also the socio-political and economic interests of those advocating it. There is no consensus on whether fish can be exhausted in Lake Kariba.

The fight to eradicate the use of the monofilament net had always been tense since I arrived in Gache-Gache. Indeed, encounters with rangers on the Lake resembled a war as village head Mupepe described it in the introduction. One ranger working for ZimParks, named Tembo, is one of the famous names I quickly became familiar with. Fisherfolk described Tembo as a nonsense chap who would not hesitate to take those caught in possession of the monofilament to court. Tembo was feared in the whole of Gache-Gache such that fisherfolk ended up befriending some game rangers to ascertain whether Tembo would be on patrol on the Lake before fishing. "Dai Mwari vamukomborera afa" (May God bless him through death), Kule Diva sarcastically exclaimed one November morning after Tembo had confiscated his nets.

One's status in terms of being a newcomer or having been a resident in Gache-Gache also determines their inclination to comply. Newcomers often are said to disregard some of the rules for fishing. Lack of awareness of some rules' usefulness and corruption sometimes leads to non-compliance. Corruption leads to the continued use of illegal fishing gear, especially twine nets. Mr Kurambarara, a fisherman in his late forties at the time of the study, has lived in Gache-

Gache since birth. He explained the contribution of new fishers towards non-compliance and continued use of the monofilament net as follows:

Those who lived here when the Lake Kariba Fisheries Research Institute used to carry out awareness programmes now know that fish do not like disturbance. A fisherman without the opportunity for such educative programmes is unaware...he does not have that knowledge. These new fishers coming to Gache-Gache these days...rangers tell them the twine net is not good or that ndombolo is not good. How will they understand without being educated first?

These perceptions make fishermen who support monofilament nets reluctant not to use them. Previous researchers have also significantly influenced the perceptions and knowledge of some Gache-Gache fishermen about fish stocks in Lake Kariba. Marshall Murphree, Angela Cheater, and Michael Bourdillon – all of them social anthropologists – are some of the notable early authors on fishing and everyday life on the shores of Lake Kariba on the Zimbabwean side. In Gache-Gache, residents frequently mentioned Marshall Murphree (now late) and the research and workshops he conducted there. One of the residents and fisherman, Mr. Kurambarara, said, "Marshall Murphree taught us the life cycle of a fish. He also told us that we would never be able to fish to the extent of finishing all the fish in the Lake. Do you know how many eggs a single fish lays every year? A single fish can lay over 4,000 eggs, most of which will hatch. How can we finish fish stocks with these simple tools we use?"

Marshall Murphree conducted his research during the 1980s and 1990s and served as the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Board Chairman from 1992 to 1995. The context differed from what is obtaining now, especially regarding the number of fishers and the fishing methods. Whether the conditions obtained now can lead to the depletion of fish stocks is outside the scope of this dissertation. However, it is interesting to note that the knowledge or views imparted to fishermen during those early years influenced fishers' perceptions and decisions regarding fishing gear. Their belief that fish stocks cannot be depleted makes fishermen who use monofilament nets see no reason why the net must be banned. The argument by regulatory authorities that the monofilament net is a threat to the future sustainability of the fishery is not received well by fishermen who support its use.

4.5 Affordances of the Monofilament Twine Net for Fishers in Gache-Gache

The central argument of this chapter is premised on this section, which explores the affordances of the fishing net and how these affordances affect fishers' gear choice and the politics surrounding fishing gear. In the previous sections on fisher behaviour, decision-making is

premised entirely on human intentionality without paying attention to how things other than humans also determine fisher compliance and fishing gear choice. Whose reality counts? Monofilament nets are harmful towards fish, especially the tiger fish, which is part of the annual three-day Tiger tourney – conducted every year in October. However, the tiger tournament fishers also harm fish. What is important: essential fishers' livelihoods or the tiger tournament whose revenue seldom trickles down to the fishers every day getting by needs? Answering these questions, focusing on the fishing net's affordances is an entry point towards the contested Western knowledge versus other-than-Western knowledge systems— unravelling the influence of things as central to human politics.

Though fishing gear choice is not entirely based on the affordances or properties of the fishing net, this perspective has not yet been sufficiently explored in the literature on ecological anthropology, which seeks to understand how humans adapt to their environments (Ingold 2022). The Gibsonian concept of affordance has two irreconcilable propositions. First is the realist position, which posits that objects in the environment afford what they do because of their nature (Ingold 2022, 52). In other words, affordances are intrinsic properties of objects, regardless of whether any living being is there to realise them (Ingold 2022, 52). They define a niche in the environment for a creature to remove the creature, and the niche is still there. The second position can be called relational, and it explains that affordances exist in so far as they are realised in the activity of a creature for which or for whom they are of consequence (Ingold 2022, 53) and if there is no creature, there is no affordance.

To reconcile the two positions, Gibson explained that affordances are accurate, objective, and physical, even as they are properties of an environment that, in explicit contrast to the physical world, is constituted only about the being whose environment it is (Ingold 2022, 53). Anthropologist Frank Muttenger (2020, xvii) highlights that environmental affordances are directly perceived objective correlates of what used to be called “cognised models” or “cognitive schemes”. In his ethnographic study of the Vezo people, Muttenger (2020, xviii) observed that they perceive the ocean as “a giving environment), and their actions are determined by views of the ocean as an inexhaustible container of fish (Muttenger 2020, xviii). From the fishermen's perspective in Gache-Gache, two sets of affordances surround their use of the monofilament net and their practice in ndombolo fish driving. First is the emphasis on an ever-giving environment (fishery); fish stocks cannot be depleted, just as the Vezo believe in the ocean as a giving environment. Second, are the monofilament twine net's properties, making it an indispensable livelihood asset.

UNEP (2004) highlights that regardless of worldwide bans on the monofilament net, artisanal fishers have generally continued to use it. This continued use could be explained in terms of the affordances and efficiency of the monofilament twine net. Molin (1959) observed that the monofilament net is about seven times more efficient than the cotton net and four times as efficient as the multifilament twine net. The monofilament nets are more than three times as effective as multifilament alternatives (Simasiku, 2014). As sabhuku Mupepe highlighted in the introduction to this chapter, the monofilament net is effective in catching the most in-demand Kariba bream as opposed to the cotton net, which mostly catches tigerfish. When in water, it is transparent, and fishers can practice ndombolo even during the day and catch bream, unlike the cotton net. Most of the fish buyers who come to Gache-Gache come to buy fresh bream and not tigerfish, which is sold as dried fish. One of the reasons the monofilament net is effective in catching the bream is because of the physiological difference between the tiger and the bream. Through their sharp teeth, tigerfish can bite through the monofilament net and escape. The bream, on the other hand, cannot bite through to escape. In the Gibsonian definition of affordance, the monofilament net has intrinsic properties (i.e., transparency when in water, efficiency in catching the in-demand fish) that make it favourable for fishers regardless of the ban by regulatory authorities on Lake Kariba. Explaining the efficiency of the monofilament net and his preference for it, especially in the face of the increased numbers of fishers in Gache-Gache, sekuru Kakwenya, a fisherman in his mid-50s, said

Long back, with a few cotton nets, even three, *wainge utori murungu* [you would be a boss]. Now you need many nets. Right now, I need two kilograms worth of nets to stand a chance of getting a decent catch, and if I go to the line with only 600 metres of nets, I will barely catch anything. Ndongolo and the monofilament twine net are good because you will quickly fill a crate with fish if you are lucky enough. A crate of fish weighs 50 kilograms... Lining cotton nets is different... [it] has less returns in terms of catches and income. They do not catch many fish at the Dandawa fishing grounds [where fishers line cotton nets for tigers].

For many Gache-Gache fishers, the twine net is preferable because they say it catches many fish even during seasons characteristic of low catches like winter. Before population growth in Gache-Gache, the cotton net used to be viable. In the face of population growth, in which an increase has not followed in fishing grounds size, cotton has become less desirable because it cannot be used in Ndongolo fishing. This fish-driving method can be done even during the day. The cotton net cannot be used in Ndongolo because it is detectable by fish, especially

during the day, and thus, it is challenging to drive the fish into it. The twine net also catches fish even during the full moon because it is invisible in the waters. Commending the twine net, one participant said:

The twine net catches fish more than the cotton net. During the old days when we used the cotton net, we were still very few fishermen here in Gache-Gache. The cotton net was used to catch many fish because there were still plenty of fish in the Lake. The twine net is good because it catches fish and helps people survive, but it leads to arrests and fines (Conversation with Mr. Ngenge, 19/10/19).

Regardless of the usefulness of the monofilament net for fishers in Gache-Gache, fishers know that it harms fish, particularly the tigerfish when it escapes the monofilament net trap. Regulatory authorities label it destructive fishing gear because it can cause "ghost fishing" (Ecoforum, 2013; Oceanium, 2016) because pieces of torn monofilament net can remain in the lake and continue to catch fish as fish get trapped in the torn pieces of the net that remain in the Lake. With the monofilament net, incidents of caught fish still living but trapped in a piece of nylon monofilament net have been observed (Link et al. 2019, 4). Fishery managers present this as a 'scientific fact', but perceptions from fishers sometimes challenge this as inaccurate (see Thiao et al. 2017). While Thiao et al. (2017), in their study on the monofilament net in Senegal, observed that fishers sometimes dispute the "ghost fishing" properties of the monofilament net, in Gache-Gache, it was different. Several fishermen I spoke with acknowledged these effects of the monofilament net, with many of them describing it as a "ghost net" because torn pieces (torn by crocodiles or caught by sticks in the Lake) from the net can stay in the Lake catching fish or harming them.

In their case study on the continued use of the nylon monofilament net in Senegal, Thiao et al. (2017) argue that for a complete ban to be successful, it is necessary to understand the reasons behind its continued use. Additionally, there is a need to explore what alternatives exist. The nylon monofilament net lacks biodegradability and can remain in the water for years (Thiao et al. 2017, 339). Because of these properties, the twine net has been a target of conservation communication campaigns describing it as a "ghost net" capable of ghost fishing (Thiao et al. 2017; Ecofund 2013; Oceanium 2016). In the case of Senegal, fishers argue against the depiction of the nylon monofilament net as a ghost net because they believe "the roughness of the sea will eventually destroy the nets and wash them onto the beach" (Thiao 2017, 239).

Figure 2 below shows two images of tigerfish caught by kule Luke and mdara waKiddo, demonstrating the harm caused by the monofilament net to the tigerfish. The picture was taken during a trip with the two fishermen in Gache-Gache as they searched their nets. A cotton net caught this fish, which had a piece of the monofilament twine net sunk into its flesh around the gills. As seen in the image, it had an injury caused by the twine net. This does not happen with cotton nets because fish cannot bite through as the cotton net is more robust and thicker. The monofilament nets get torn, and pieces float loose in the water for tiger fish to get tangled in, which does not happen with cotton, hence the term ghost net and ghost fishing. A cotton net is the one that catches it in the end. This means it had survived with the piece of twine net for some time before the cotton net caught it.



Figure 13 A Tigerfish with parts of the monofilament net around its body

The effects of twine nets on tiger fish as shown in the two images above, are central to conflicts between tourists and gillnet fishermen. During a tiger tournament, if a contestant catches a tigerfish injured by the twine net, as in the image above, their catch will not win any trophy regardless of the size of the fish. As such, conservationists and tourists are against using the twine net on Lake Kariba, while on the other hand, gillnet fishers regard the twine net as a very reliable source of their livelihood. The fishing net as a livelihood asset is central to the politics of survival versus the protection of elite interests in tourism and sport fishing. It opens a conversation about skewed fishing regulations in the Lake Kariba context that management authorities must review if co-management is to yield positive results for all parties involved. For fishermen, sport fishing also harms fish, but this is unquestioned.



Figure 14 A Derelict Monofilament net at Dandawa Fishing Grounds

Although the monofilament net's properties make it attractive to many people, the same affordances are also why some fishers prefer the cotton net. One of the fishers who prefers the cotton net, Mr Muzvarwa, though agreeing that the monofilament twine net is effective in catching many fish per fishing trip, explained his choice of the cotton net thus,

I use cotton nets. Some use the most popular one these days, the twine nets. The most helpful net from my experience is the cotton net, which I use to catch tiger fish. Tiger is a fish species whose income you can carefully budget and plan to invest in more significant things. It took me one year to focus on tiger fish using cotton nets, and I managed to save and buy an engine and a fibre boat. The twine net has no long life... It is very effective in big catches but for a very short period...With the twine net, you spend much money buying new nets to replace tattered ones. It is a net you frequently buy, and if you leave it in the sun, it quickly gets torn. The twine net is also challenging to mend. The cotton net, in contrast, even if it gets pulled into a giant hole, can be easily mended and last longer [10/06/20]

Asked why he thought the twine net was terrible given that it catches more fish compared to the cotton net, Mr Muzvarwa said,

The challenge is that when we catch many fish, we invest in booze and leisure a lot. A fisherman who catches a few fish has a higher chance of saving his income and planning for his future. When a fisherman catches many fish, he will say, I will go back again tomorrow to see some more. He will leave some of the money with his wife so that she can have something to eat with the children while he takes the rest to the beerhall to celebrate the big catch with other fishermen, buying beer for everyone in the beerhall. When he returns to the lake tomorrow, the twine net gets destroyed by crocodiles or sticks, and he returns home with nothing, with no option but to go and

borrow a new twine net. When he finishes paying for the net he borrowed, the net is almost worn and torn [10/06/20].

In agreement with Mr Muzvarwa, another fisher, Mr Gwenzi explained that,

Per day, a fisher who is into cotton nets can catch 10 kilograms of fish, but such fishermen can plan and achieve a lot more with those small catches than someone who catches 1000 kilograms of bream. Go to Mudzimu [where most fishers living there engage in ndombolo and use the monofilament net]; there are a few homesteads where you can say these are properly built homes. Of the people living in Mudzimu, only a few practise the lining method...when they catch fish from Ndombolo. Those who do ndombolo, when they get home, say to themselves, “we will go back and catch some more fish tomorrow”. They spend the money recklessly, believing they will catch more tomorrow.

On this basis, though acknowledging the efficiency of the monofilament net in catching more fish compared to the cotton net, some fishers avoid using it because they fear getting carried away by the high catches and failure to save and plan. Additionally, relatively older fishermen considered the cotton net essential for genuine or honest fishing. During an informal conversation with one of my key participants, Mr Garawaziva, he expressed regret over his young workmate who had recently deserted him to work with another who was into twine nets. “*Ruka akanditiza*” (Luke deserted me), he explained to me one afternoon, expressing disappointment that kule Luke had left him to focus on ndombolo fish driving using monofilament nets. “When he [kule Luke] saw that Kapenta rigs had destroyed my cotton nets, he quickly deserted me for someone into twine nets. I wanted to teach him good fishing, but he was not patient. Real fishermen do not use twine nets and are not into ndombolo.”¹⁵ The cotton net was also recommended by village head Nematombo, who said,

Since I started fishing, this [monofilament twine] net has always been deemed illegal. We have always been using the cotton net. As you see me, with all these children of mine, I raised them working with the cotton net as my fishing gear. When the twine came, and with the increase in fishermen, people began deserting the cotton fishing net, and we are depleting our resources in the Lake (15/10/19).

¹⁵ Fieldnotes, 10/03/20



Figure 15 Mdara waKiddo with new cotton nets

While acknowledging the efficiency of the twine net in catching lots of fish, fisherfolk also highlight the potential of the net to deplete fish stocks. Village head Mupepe had this to say:

This net depletes fish stocks in the Lake. Yes, it is good for catching fish, but it also finishes the fish. When it was introduced, we [Gache-Gache fishermen] gradually realised that we started finding it difficult to pay for our permits (15/10/19).

One of the main reasons behind using the twine net, even though it is criminalised, is that it is the most readily available net compared to the recommended cotton net. Additionally, the properties of the twine net also make it favourable for some fishermen. While admitting knowledge of the detrimental effects of the twine net, some fisherfolk continue to use the net because of several factors, including affordability, availability, and effectiveness in catching the Kariba bream, which is the most sought-after fish on the market compared to other fish types like the tiger. Some participants called for a review of the rules and regulations that make the twine net illegal. Two key issues are highlighted in that regard. First, the twine net is the one that is readily and cheaply available compared to the cotton net. Second, using the correct mesh size, some perceive the twine net as harmless. The proper mesh, according to ZimParks, starts from four inches upwards. Headman Chirumezani explained the matter like this:

We have a big challenge of ZimParks officials arresting us because we use the twine net. However, it is challenging to find the old cotton nets we used to work with in the old days. The cotton net is scarce, so we do not have any option but to use the twine net, but if you are caught with it, you get arrested. I wish they could make it legal because it enables us to look after our families. What is alarming is using a small mesh that kills small fish (17/10/19).

The dynamics of the natural system and the resource constraints are essential to understand the fishery system (Hauck 2011, 202). In Gache-Gache, seasonal variability, directly linked to catches, also affects the shifting allegiance concerning fishing gear and the type of nets used for fishing by different fishermen. During the winter season, when yields are traditionally low, I observed many fisherfolks who shifted allegiance from cotton nets to twine nets in search of high catches for survival. This shows that it is seldom a single factor determining non-compliance but rather an assemblage of elements, including the weather and fish behaviour. This observation augurs well with Chuenpagdee et al.'s (2005:3) argument that for fishers to make a living when no alternative sources of employment are available, and one's bargaining position is weak, the only response is for fishers to increase their efforts.

4.6 The Fishing Net and Ndombolo as a Source of Livelihood Stress

15 November 2019, approximately 4:30 pm. It is a scorching day, as is characteristic of the weather during this time of the year in Gache-Gache fishing villages and the rest of the Zambezi Valley. I have paid a second visit to one of my elderly participants – Mr Kapururira. He is a victim of a mid-1990s crocodile attack on Lake Kariba while fishing, resulting in his left arm being amputated. Like when I first visited, he is mending old cotton-made fishing nets. The old cotton-made nets are ancient, and they have lost their original white colour to become pale brownish with countless patched parts – a sign of the many years of service they have provided for their owner. It is also a sign of their durability – surviving through patches from bites by net-raiding crocodiles that steal fish from them on the Lake.

Mr Kapururira immediately stops his work as he welcomes me, pointing towards a chair for me to sit on. 'Keep on working, Grandpa; my presence here should not disturb your work' I encourage him to continue mending the nets, ashamed that I have distracted him from his work. 'Do not worry; I was almost done when you arrived', he replies. On this second visit, we dive into an in-depth conversation about his means of livelihood. The conversation revolves around his fishing nets and boats, which he rents to able-bodied fisherfolk. He is incapacitated to go fishing because of the amputated hand. As such, he relies on fisherfolk who take his nets for the lining. Fisherfolk who take his nets to the Lake often do not have nets of their own and, as such, rely on getting a third of the catch from Mr Kapururira's nets. This arrangement is commonly referred to in Gache-Gache as 'three-share' – the one working for the owner of the nets gets a third of the catch, and the owner gets two-thirds.

Mr Kapururira complains that fisherfolk often avoid coming to him for boat and net renting because his nets are cotton. Cotton nets are the recommended fishing gear by the regulating

authorities on Lake Kariba on the Zimbabwean side. However, many non-disabled young fishermen prefer the illegal twine or monofilament net, which many perceive as effective in catching many fish per fishing trip. For Mr Kapururira, using the twine net, while favourable for his livelihood, is inconceivable because of the shame that will befall him if he were to be arrested for using illegal fishing gear. As such, he sticks to using worn-out cotton nets that threaten his source of livelihood. He does not have the money to buy new cotton nets.

Mr Kapururira's predicament tells a broader picture of the fisherfolk's lives in Gache-Gache concerning livelihood vulnerability and fishery compliance and non-compliance that partly revolves around the type of fishing gear. Mr Kapururira's situation demonstrates that while the twine monofilament net effectively catches fish, it is also a source of livelihood vulnerability. For Mr. Kapururira, though, the conviction of wanting to do what he considers morally right by sticking to cotton nets exposes him to this vulnerability. For Mr Kapururira, though effective, the monofilament net is not an option because it is illegal.

The monofilament net is a source of livelihood vulnerability because of the constant arrests by ZimParks rangers who demand bribes from fishers. ZimParks rangers conduct patrols to control illegal fishing, but the patrols result in conflicts as rangers are accused of chasing and confiscating fishing boats and nets, in most cases, in return for bribes. McGregor (2005) observed the Zimbabwean state's reluctance to enforce rules and regulations in the Binga fishery on Lake Kariba. McGregor (2005; 2009) observed that it was not incapacitation of the state not to enforce the rules of compliance, but rather the state officials' rent-seeking practices led to relaxing some of the regulations.

Similarly, in Gache-Gache, I observed first-hand council rangers' monofilament nets they had confiscated from fishers on the Lake. Fishermen use the monofilament nets for survival, and the rangers, in attempts to complement their meagre monthly salaries, take bribes or confiscate and resell them. On one occasion, when council rangers were selling monofilament nets they had confiscated, one ranger said to the fishermen they were selling to, "Ndiyo yacho, mbudzi inofurira payakasungirirwa. Twumabond twatinopiwa nehurumende hatwuraramise mhuri utwu (This is the way; we must take advantage of the opportunity and power at our disposal to survive. The Zimbabwean dollars we get as salary do not enable us to make ends meet). In this way, the war on eradicating the use of the monofilament net remains a pipedream because both enforcing authorities and many fishermen rely on it for their livelihood. Fishery compliance should, therefore, not be seen in a simplistic manner where regulatory authorities enforce

conservation. In a relatable case, Thomas, Kule Diva's nephew, told me how his uncle had been rendered more destitute because his monofilament nets had been confiscated, and he could not recover them because he did not have the money to pay a bribe. Thomas said,

I am despondent for my uncle. His life has not been going well since his five-month layoff from work [as a gillnet fisher]. Just two days ago, he decided to go back to work, but unfortunately, he was caught by ZimParks officials while trying to line his nets. He saw the ZimParks officials when they were still far from him, and he jumped into the water. His idea was to flee by swimming, but the Kariba waters are mighty, and the ZimParks officials use a very fast speedboat. They caught up with him before he could swim away. They confiscated his nets (Obvious, 10/06/20).

Thomas' uncle is Kule Diva, my host throughout fieldwork. The five-month layoff had been caused by an injury from a fight he had with his then-workmate in early February 2020. The fight had resulted in them going their separate ways, and Kule Diva was left with no fishing nets. His former worker had run away with everything. When he was fit to go back to work, he struggled to assemble a few nets. He managed to mend some old monofilament nets, which put him at risk of losing them to regulatory authorities in the long run. Moreover, he lost them; he did! His jumping into the Lake – something that many fisherfolk resort to when they sense danger from regulatory authorities – paints a picture of someone whose livelihood is under dire stress. Kule Diva's predicament brings forth questions of compliance and non-compliance in Gache-Gache with respect to fishing nets. Why do fisherfolk, regardless of the costs of non-compliance – inclusive of suicidal jumps into a crocodile and hippo-infested Lake – continue to use the illegal twine net?

As this chapter demonstrates, using the monofilament net by fishers in Gache-Gache offers a nuanced nature of fishery compliance and livelihood construction strategies. If read in isolation, the vignette above would suggest that all Gache-Gache fishers use the monofilament net for survival. That is not true. Some fishers do not use it for various reasons, including the moral undertones of what is good fishermen's behaviour and what is not. Some use it only when they feel it is safe to do so. What cannot be denied is that the monofilament net is more effective in catching the in-demand fish.

4.7 Conclusion

The net as a livelihood asset is at the centre of the politics surrounding the quest for survival for fisher households on the one hand and the protection of the elite's tourism and sport fishing interests on the other. There is a gap between the understandings of fishers, whose ecological

knowledge derives from many years of living and working on the shoreline, which makes them confident that the fishery, to quote Muttenter's (2020) observation among Vezo fishers in Madagascar, is an infinitely "giving environment". Based on science and official globally accepted (though problematic) approaches to fishing regulations, the state and other conservation agencies describe the monofilament net as destructive fishing gear capable of depleting fish stocks. The question of whether fish stocks can be depleted is contested. Previous studies (e.g., Allison and Ellis, 2001; Nyikahadzoi & Rakjaer, 2014; Cepic & Nunan, 2017) have highlighted the importance of fisher knowledge accrued over years of living and working within the environment and how this, in part, shapes whether fishers comply with fishing regulations. The same can be said about Gache-Gache fishers, many of whom believe that fish stocks cannot get depleted. Over the years, low catches have been explained by fish migration to quieter parts of the Lake. In this sense, fisher non-compliance with fishing gear regulations can be explained in terms of the superfluousness of the fishing regulations (see Cepic and Nunan); fishers do not see why they must be stopped from using the twine net under the guise of finishing off all the fish from the Lake.

The monofilament fishing net is also at the centre of contestation regarding the essential priorities – should the interests of tourists and the state be promoted ahead of the survival interests of the fishers? In Gache-Gache, fishers and conservationists generally agree regarding the dangers of ghost fishing caused by the monofilament twine net. However, fishers in Gache-Gache question the effects of the annual Tiger tournament, which they say also similarly harms fish. In this sense, there is an impasse between fishers and the state, and fishers do not see the reason why they must stop. It is also essential to note that fishing regulations enforcement officers also pounce on the illegal monofilament nets by confiscating them and re-selling them to other fishers.

Chapter Five: Seasonal Fluctuations and Livelihood Coping in Gache-Gache

5.1 Introduction

"Fisheries-resource-based livelihoods become increasingly defenceless as the character and magnitude of climate-induced changes operate rapidly at a pace beyond the adaptive capacity of the fishers" (Deb and Haque 2016, 341).

10. 06. 20, mid-morning, it is the cool-dry season (May to August). I returned to Gache-Gache from Harare four days ago after a two-month absence due to the government-imposed COVID-19 travel restrictions. Kudzai and Mavhima, fish buyers, ferried me from Harare to Gache-Gache as they embarked on their first fish-buying trip since the commencement of the lockdown. The lockdown coincided with the beginning of the cold-dry season, a very challenging season for fisher households in Gache-Gache because it is commonly characterised by low fish catches. On this day in question, kule Diva (my host) and I sat on the veranda watching as kule Luke and his co-worker, Knowledge, mended their twine monofilament nets. Around mid-morning, Kudzai and Mavhima returned from Makodzera harbour empty-handed despite having spent the previous night scavenging fish from other fish buyers. It was the third consecutive day since we arrived from Harare that they had drawn blanks. Not a single fish. Kudzai and Mavhima had a good relationship with the Mupepe household and camped there during the cold, dry season as they struggled to fill their containers with fish. They appeared weary because the ice in their containers (to keep the fish fresh) would soon run out. As such, on this day, Mavhima and Kudzai sat down with kule Luke and Knowledge and gave them some money to buy new nets and some money to bribe ZimParks officials to be allowed to cast their nets in restricted areas where catches would be high. In addition to their agreement with kule Luke and Knowledge, Mavhima and Kudzai had to negotiate with maposhongwe (fish-buying agents), who assisted them with “hustling” for fish, fish preparation and packing into their vehicles.

Some fishers, such as Baba Tanaka (detailed in subsequent paragraphs of the chapter), suspended their roles as fishers to work as fish-buying agents who act as go-betweens (known as maposhongwe in Gache-Gache) for fishers and fish buyers; some fishers draw on their connections with fishery management authorities to cast their nets in restricted grounds/ parts of the Lake to enhance their catches and hence maximise profit. For their part, maposhongwe use their skills in fish preparation and connections with fishers to determine/fix. The price of fish and, fish buyers, desperate to fill their containers before running out of ice, abide by the price set.

The ethnographic snippet above mirrors what the epigraph above aptly describes – the defencelessness of fisher livelihoods and the disruptive nature of climate change. For Gache-Gache households, this defencelessness became especially acute during the cold-dry season when the fish catches are frequently meagre—the cold-dry season of 2020 stood out because of the added challenges caused by the travel restrictions imposed by Zimbabwe's government

to curb the spread of COVID-19. For Gache-Gache households, most alternative onshore livelihood activities, such as vending and waged labour migration, became challenging. In the face of limited mobility *in*-fishery coping strategies became essential. Against this background, this paper examines chiposhongwe, a form of in-fishery livelihood coping in the face of seasonal fluctuations and COVID-19 travel restrictions in Gache-Gache fishing villages. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and concomitant lockdown restrictions in 2020, some off-lake strategies became inaccessible, or household members had to by-pass travel bans by bribing law enforcement officers as they travelled to purchase goods for resale in Gache-Gache.

Livelihoods scholarship (see, for instance, Sarch and Allison 2001; Morand et al. 2012; Deb and Haque 2016; Roscher et al. 2022) has extensively documented diverse alternative and complementary livelihoods for small-scale fishers, including wage labour migration and other onshore activities. Livelihood diversification is how households construct varied strategies and social support capabilities to survive and improve their standards of living (Ellis 1998, 1). Diversification can be a deliberate, planned strategy (Stark 1991) or an involuntary response to distress (Davies 1996). The concept of coping provides hope that fishers do not give up in the face of an occupation bedevilled with entrenched uncertainty and high risk (Jentoft and Eide 2011, viii). I use the concept of coping because of its focus on the “actions of ordinary people...within the limits of existing resources and range of expectations to achieve various ends” (Jentoft and Eide 2011, viii). In this sense, in-fishery coping in the form of chiposhongwe became a fundamental way to “get by” in the face of livelihood stress and food insecurity. Using the two concepts of “environmental affordances” and “livelihood coping” as a conceptual framework, the paper investigates how seasonal fluctuations and fish scarcity offer fisher households an innovative way of “getting by” in a confined environment with limited mobility outside their locale. Chiposhongwe strongly depends on season-induced low fish catches and can be conceived as an environmental affordance necessitated by seasonal fluctuations.

Fishing is a highly seasonal livelihood prone to seasonal fluctuations, putting the livelihoods of fisher-dependent households at high risk of livelihood stress and food insecurity. Most natural resource-based livelihoods are seasonal; thus, people combine various activities to achieve smoothing throughout the year. As is evident through Kudzai and Mavhima’s experiences above, the cool-dry season in Gache-Gache is not just constraining in terms of reduced catches. These seasonal rhythms facilitate a rearrangement of the social relations and trading terms around fishing, fish preparation, and selling fish. The Anthropologist Messer

(1988,131) highlights seasonality's sociocultural, environmental, and physiological dimensions. Some of these are discussed in this chapter, for example, the development of a complex web of temporary connections and terms of bargaining necessitated by the cool-dry season as a means of coping or “getting by” for households in the face of seasonal livelihood stress. I argue that this web of connections and the reordering of the terms of bargaining and fish selling are intricately linked to the natural functioning of the fishery, or what can be termed, after ecological psychologist James Gibson, “environmental affordances”. Environmental affordances or the natural functioning of the fishery transform the hierarchy or order of transacting and survival strategies between a constellation of people - fish buyers, fishers, and fishery regulation authorities in Gache-Gache.

The rest of the chapter is organised as follows: the next section explains what chiposhongwe and maposhongwe means. The section that follows this provides a conceptual framework through environmental affordances, getting by, and coping/diversification. The third section discusses chiposhongwe in practice as a coping mechanism and its social reordering in fishing, fish preparation, and selling. The fourth section provides a conclusion to the chapter and consolidates the argument of the chapter.

5.2 Maposhongwe/Chiposhongwe: Who are they? What is it?

Maposhongwe (poshongwe in singular form) is a noun that describes fish-buying agents, and the name derives from storks. Storks are always hovering around the harbour, scavenging for fish and fish waste (from fish cleaning/preparation) to eat. Poshongwe is a Chikorekore name for a stork. Plenty of these (stork birds) are on the shores of Lake Kariba as they look for fish that has gone bad and gets thrown away by fishermen, fish buyers and fish buying agents. They are usually found at the harbour as they look for food. It is their constant stay/presence at the harbour from which fish-buying agents got their name. A Chikorekore prefix in the plural form “ma” is added to the word “poshongwe” (stork) to name fish-buying agents because, during the cool-dry season, they spend most of their time at the harbour waiting for fishermen to return from the Lake so that they can hustle for fish. The practice of hustling for fish by fish buying agents translates to chiposhongwe by adding a Chikorekore¹⁶ prefix “chi” and pairing it with the word “poshongwe” (meaning stork) to describe this livelihood coping activity as chiposhongwe. Chiposhongwe means acting or being like a poshongwe (stork). It describes all the activities involved in being a fish-buying agent: staying at the harbour throughout the night

¹⁶ Korekore is one of the Shona language dialects spoken in Zimbabwe.

and waiting to scavenge for fish preparation. It is an innovative survival strategy that draws on the affordances of the fishery and its seasonal cycle, which restructures the power dynamics between fish buyers and fishers. Honest, a high school pupil who joined chiposhongwe in the cool-dry season of 2020 after the closing of schools due to COVID-19, explained the origins of the name maposhongwe for fish buying agents in Gache-Gache thus:

“The link between our work and stork birds is that stork birds will usually be in the lake or by the harbour. Even us—sometimes I leave home, say today, for instance, and spend a week without returning. As a result, people decided to call us maposhongwe because a person can spend a week without returning home.”¹⁷

Chiposhongwe is an arduous job that involves spending cold nights amidst ravaging mosquitoes. Honest explained further:

“We spend the night at the harbour lest some fishermen return from their fishing trips deep in the night. The fishermen who practise ndombolo (fish driving) do not have a fixed timetable – they are already breaking the law, fishing outside the designated timetable, fishing out of the bounds of our designated fishing grounds, using illegal fishing gear, and using unlawful fishing methods. So, they quickly return whenever they feel they have a good catch. As a poshongwe, you cannot sleep with all your eyes closed lest other maposhongwe will fetch all the fish while you are asleep.”¹⁸

Maposhongwe comprises a diverse group of Gache-Gache residents. Some are ex-fishermen; others are school kids who found an opportunity to make money when schools were closed because of the COVID-19-induced lockdown. Others are petty goods traders who practise chiposhongwe to diversify their strategies for making ends meet. Senior maposhongwe (mostly ex-fishermen) overpower/bully younger maposhongwe as they compete for fish for their respective clients at the harbour. Baba Tanaka, one of the senior maposhongwe said:

“When I am at the harbour looking for fish to buy, I simply outmuscle them. If they are stubborn, I command them, ‘Hey, get away from my fish; I already paid for them’. I do this even if I have not had prior arrangements with the fishermen for them to reserve the fish for me. I do not have to run into the waters risking my life like what the young novice maposhongwe do. I stopped fishing to focus on chiposhongwe partly because I

¹⁷ Interview, 10/06/20

¹⁸ Interview, 10/06/20

was tired of fearing that one day a hippo or a crocodile would kill me. Why should I risk my life now by rushing into the waters scrambling for a few fish?”¹⁹

Maposhongwe create relationships with fishers and fish buyers – they are the point of contact between them. Maposhongwe guard their territory by controlling access to fishers. This access to fishers is maintained by what maposhongwe refer to as “pampering fishermen” through various ways such as buying beer for them, negotiating with fish buyers so that they provide fishers with money for fishing nets and bribing ZimParks officials to cast their nets in restricted parts of the Lake to enhance their catches. In return, fishers ensure that when they come from the Lake, they sell their fish through the poshongwe or maposhongwe that would have “pampered” them. In this way, maposhongwe control who gets fish first among the buyers. Consistent with livelihood studies (for instance, Mitra 2008 and Sakdapolrak 2014), social capital or connections are crucial in the practice of chiposhongwe. A livelihood comprises a set of social interactions which may or may not necessitate diversification and improve resilience (Matera 2016, 23). Investing in social capital does not end with the pampering of fishers by maposhongwe. Maposhongwe also forge ties with fish buyers beyond just buying fish on their behalf of them. To diversify their income, some maposhongwe buy their fish and ask fish buyers to go and sell on their behalf at a higher profit margin than the urban areas.

After the cool-dry season, Chiposhongwe continues beyond the cool-dry season, but primarily for senior maposhongwe, who work during summer mainly preparing fish and loading them in the buyers’ vehicles. This is because fish will be abundant, especially during the summer season, and fishermen will be desperate to sell their fish quickly before they go bad. The following section discusses the concept of affordances and how they link with seasonal fluctuations and chiposhongwe.

5.3 Decreasing Fish Catches in the Kariba Fishery

During the 2020 winter season, Kule Diva – my host – and his workmate drew blanks to the extent that they checked their nets less frequently. Instead of checking their nets the following day after lining them, they resorted to checking them every three to four days after lining them. They were tired of going to the lake and returning empty-handed. However, less frequent checking of nets exposed them to the risk of losing the little fish they may have caught because fish is perishable. In the past few years, scientists (see Marshall, 2012; Ndhlovu et al., 2017; Nhiwatiwa, 2017) have observed declining catches in Lake Kariba. However, the Kariba case

¹⁹ Interview, 13/07/20

is not an outlier because scientists have observed a general global decline in fish catches attributable to ecological and climatic factors (Free et al. 2019). Climatic factors such as erratic rainfall, rising temperatures and harmful algal blooms are part of the backdrop for fishery-dependent communities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Simuyu et al.,2018; Rogrer et al., 2020). Seasonal fluctuations in Gache-Gache, especially during the winter season, make fishery households vulnerable to livelihood shocks that that heighten risk of stress and food insecurity.

Water temperature in Lake Kariba fluctuates annually, and this has a direct impact on fish catches. Magadza et al. (2010) observed that surface water temperatures reach 32 degrees Celsius from October to December (summer season) and drop drastically to 18 degrees Celsius between June and August. For Lake Kariba and the Zambezi Valley, there are three identifiable seasons: cool-dry (May–August), hot-dry (September – October) and hot-wet (November – March) (Magadza, 2010).I Each of these seasons influences fish catches. Empirical studies (see Magqina et al., 2020:1) have revealed that fishermen on the shores of Lake Kariba record high catches during the hot-wet season. In their study, Magqina et al. (2020:6) observed that fishers catch an average of 50 kilograms per day, the average record of catches. In contrast, the cool-dry season has the lowest catches, averaging 15 kilograms daily (Magqina et al. 2020, 6).

The conclusions of? Magqina et al. (2020) increasingly point towards the probability of temperatures influencing catches. However, Marshall (2012:45) argues that determining water temperature and measuring whether it has changed is relatively easy, but that it is difficult to interpret the effects of climate change on complex systems. O'Reilly et al. (2003) attributed a decline in fisheries productivity to changes in stratification caused by warming of the lake. They hypothesised that the rising temperatures resulted in the locking of nutrients in the 'permanent hypolimnion of the lake and no circulating back to surface waters because decreased trade winds reduced the upwelling of nutrient-rich deep waters' (cited in Marshall, 2012:45). However, Sarvala et al. (2006) have challenged this, highlighting that changes in catch data were misinterpreted, and suggesting? instead that these changes could be attributable to changes in fishery practices. They argue that there is insufficient evidence to support the position that climate change caused?/is causing? declining fish stocks in the lake (Marshall 2012, 45). From an ethnographic perspective, it is difficult to determine which factors or combination of factors determines the decline of fish catches. However, what is clear is that during the cool dry season season, fish catches are meagre, putting the livelihoods of Gache-Gache residents at increased risk.

Earlier chapters highlighted how small-scale fishing on the Zimbabwean side of Lake Kariba had gained importance due to the Zimbabwean economic decline and dwindling employment prospects in the past 20 or more years. Since the mid-1980s, many people in Zimbabwe have been forced to relocate in search of jobs (Ndhlovu-et al., 2017, Nhiwatiwa et al., 2017). Against that background, gillnet fishing on the shores of Lake Kariba has become an essential socio-economic safety net (Ebner et al., 2016). This has meant increased pressure on the Kariba fishery as more people have migrated to the fishing villages and camps. There is no conclusive evidence, but Marshall (2012; 2017) argues that fisher behaviour, particularly overfishing, may partly explain the gradual decline of fish catches in the Kariba fishery.

Another factor highlighted in attempts to explain the gradual decline of catches is the annual sport fishing tournament - the Kariba Invitational Tigerfish Tournament. The tournament began in 1962 with approximately 400 participants (Kenmuir, 1973). There has since been a remarkable increase in the number of participants, with up to 700 participating in 2016 (Kariba et al. Tournament, 2016). An estimated four tonnes of Tiger Fish are caught annually during the Tiger Fish Tournament (Lake et al. Institute, 2017). The consistent increase in the number of participants in the tournament has thus added to the fishing pressure on the Tiger Fish population in Lake Kariba (Mhlanga, 2014).

Amidst the many reasons put forward to explain declining fish catches in the Kariba fishery, a vital dimension currently not discussed in detail in the existing literature is that of fisher coping strategies as they try to mitigate low catches during the winter season. Fisheries are sensitive to climate, and their productivity is likely to be affected by changes in climate (FAO, 2016). Rainfall and temperature variability are some factors identified as core drivers of a decline in production systems, including fisheries (Rice and Garcia, 2011). Brander claims climate change affects artisanal fisheries through fluctuating water levels and flooding (2007). Artisanal fisheries in developing countries are found in remote areas where alternative livelihood sources are hard to come by (Bene et al., 2007). This is true in the Gache -Gache case; if one adds the COVID-19 effects, the livelihood portfolios of fishers become even more precarious.

5.4 The COVID-19 Pandemic in Zimbabwe

25 July 2020, Makodzera harbour. An 8 am news bulletin on a Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation radio station announces new coronavirus cases. Nomia, one of the fishermen, quips, 'They must announce the names of those who have tested positive. Here in Gache-Gache, I have never heard anyone say they tested positive for COVID-19. Even in other rural

areas, I have never heard of anyone saying I have tested positive or that they have a relative who tested positive.’ ‘Are you saying the cases being announced are fake?’ I asked Nomia. He replied, ‘Corona is real, but they exaggerate the number of cases. Maybe they are exaggerating the cases to seek international help in the form of money. During the early days, they used to announce the names of those who would have tested positive.’

The above conversation generally mirrors the perceptions of Gache-Gache residents regarding the way the government handled the pandemic. Some further asserted that the pandemic was a disease of the wealthy and urbanites. Tom (2021:941) observed that some of his participants were sceptical of the COVID-19 pandemic and described it as a ‘myth’, ‘unAfrican’, or a pandemic of the developed countries. Towns are categorised as carriers of the virus. Following regulations such as masking up was frowned upon. When I returned to Gache-Gache and put on a mask, people frowned upon me to the extent that I ended up not masking up. What was clear, however, is the fact that Gache-Gache villagers were affected by the regulations put in place by the government, namely the ban on intercity travel.

In late March 2020, the government of Zimbabwe announced the first ‘total’ lockdown, which effectively began on the first of April 2020. Total lockdown entailed strict regulations, including staying at home, physical distancing (often called social distancing), and banning intercity travel except for essential service provision purposes. Cross-border travel was also banned. The Zimbabwean government presents its mainstream response to the COVID-19 pandemic as ‘national and all-encompassing’ (Ministry of Health and Childcare, 2020). However, it has several gaps in practice, especially regarding the rural population (Tom 2021, 935). However, COVID-19 is more than just a biomedical problem but also an agrarian one (Tom, 2021). It was conceptualising the pandemic as more than just a biomedical problem that broadens the horizons for understanding it. However, the government of Zimbabwe, like most countries globally, mainly took a biomedical approach that made the livelihood activities of rural and agrarian communities challenging.

For instance, complete physical distancing is difficult because of common grazing areas and water sources (Tom 2021, 942). The COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe has been described as a crisis within a crisis because of the fragility of the healthcare system and the decades-long incessant shrinking of the formal economy (2021:944). In Kenya, like the rest of the world, the pandemic led to the advent of government policies seeking to control population behaviour and movement (Firrella et al., 2021). The Zimbabwean government passed the Statutory Instrument

77 of 2020 Public Health (COVID-19) Prevention, Containment and Treatment regulations (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020). Under this statutory instrument, travel restrictions were put in place throughout the year to mitigate the spread of the disease.

Mhlanga and Ndhlovu (2020) argued that unless safety net measures for smallholders were implemented, the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe could potentially reproduce the same adverse effects of previous epidemics such as Ebola in West African countries where agrarian food systems were disrupted, and livelihoods destroyed. Mhlanga and Ndhlovu (2020) highlight that the government focused more on capital-intensive large-scale projects, making smallholders more vulnerable. In the Gache-Gache context, mobile livelihoods were severely affected. For instance, local fish buyers could not travel to the city to sell fish, vendors could not travel, and when they did, they had to dodge law enforcement agents such as the police and game rangers. In many cases, they were forced to pay bribes to be allowed to travel, and this further affected their livelihoods because their income was already meagre.

5.5 Seasonality and Affordances

One afternoon in January 2020, I accompanied Mdara waKiddo and Kule Luke to wash their nets. As we arrived at Dandawa harbour, many other fishermen, including Mr Chipfumbu and Mr Manzungu, the Gache-Gache Fishers Association. After exchanging greetings, Mr Chipfumbu started a conversation about how Gache-Gache fishermen found it difficult to bargain for fair prices for fish. “I have urged fishermen countless times to unite to set fairer fish prices. How can a kilogram of fish be sold for less than one United States dollar? With the dangers in this lake and the efforts to dodge ZimParks authorities, any price of less than one dollar is a mockery of what we go through to catch fish. Fish buyers resell the fish for over three dollars a kilogram in Harare.” Mr Manzungu added to what Mr Chipfumbu had said, “We all know how you have tried to negotiate for fairer prices, but younger fishermen are desperate to sell for any price so that they get some money for beer.” To this, Kule Luke replied, “You can blame us as younger fishermen, but everyone knows that fish buyers take advantage of the abundance of fish during this time of the year. If we raise the prices, the fish buyers will go to the islands, where they will find irregular fishermen who are not from Gache-Gache, and these will be willing to sell to them at lower prices. Do you forget that fish buyers have bargaining power when catches are high around this time of the year because we are desperate to sell before the fish become stale? How does it help us to continue demanding a higher price when, in the end, we risk losing our catch?”



Figure 16 Artisanal Fishers washing nets at Dandawa Fishing Grounds

The debate continued until we washed the nets and returned to the villages. This debate made it clear that when fish abound, fishers are disadvantaged because they must sell their fish as quickly as possible before they go bad. A few months later, when the cool-dry season started, as evidenced in the introduction to this chapter, the price of fish went up above USD 1.50, and fish buyers had to spend money on forging network relationships with fishers-turned-fish-buying agents so that they could access the increasingly scarce fish. As such, when fish catches are high or low, fisher households face many challenges and opportunities: low prices when catches are high and high prices when catches are low. The Gibsonian (1979) theory of affordances offers a useful conceptual lens to understand these dynamics and how fishers dealt with the threat to food security during the fish scarcity caused by the cool-dry season through practising chiposhongwe. It is on chiposhongwe and the concept of affordances that the remaining paragraphs focus.

Added to the fish migration during the cool-dry season is the nature of fish as a perishable food. This puts buyers under the added pressure of filling their containers as quickly as possible before they run out of ice and lose whatever fish they have bought. Fish is a resource that fluctuates (in terms of catch/availability) with seasons, and it is also a perishable food. This can potentially be understood through the lens of the functioning/affordances of the fishery, combined with the skills of the fishers, which provide a coping/livelihood diversification option not yet explored in the literature on livelihood diversification, how it tilts bargaining power from fish buyers to fishers. However, What the fishery affords, as already highlighted in the above conservation among Gache-Gache, is reversed when fish are in abundance, with fish buyers taking advantage of fishers' desperation to sell their catch before it goes bad.

The following section discusses the concepts of coping, diversification and making do. These complement the concept of affordances in analysing chiposhongwe as a coping strategy. While affordances of the fishery present an opportunity for fishers and fish buying agents to earn more

from the fish buyers, how they manage to do so depends more on how creative they are and how they manage relationships.

5.6 Fisher Coping Strategies and the Cool-Dry Season

Livelihood portfolios in developing countries, especially in rural settings, comprise diversification as an essential strategy to ensure resilience in the face of livelihood shocks and stress (Amevenku et al. 2019, 2). There are limited studies on diversification among fishing households, as most studies focus on crop and livestock farmers (Asravor 2018; Eneyew 2012). Faced with fishery resource fluctuations, fisher households devise diversification strategies to obtain livelihood resilience (Matera 2016, 22). Livelihoods exist in a complex milieu comprising interpersonal relationships, social institutions, property rights, public services and other wide-ranging social benefits that support living standards (Bebbington 1999). Diversification is intended to increase livelihood resilience as a form of adaptation to [or coping with) resource fluctuations, seasonality, changes in accessibility and policy, etc. (Matera 2016, 23). Resiliency refers to the ability of a system to withstand disturbances/stress and maintain its functions and structure (Walker et al. 2004). Diversification among small-scale fishers includes but is not limited to livestock ownership, agriculture, rental income, remittances, and waged labour (Matera 2016, 23). In a context of restricted mobility and limited opportunity for agriculture, chiposhongwe offers an alternative to ensure households can put food on the table in Gache-Gache.

Diversifying into supplementary livelihood strategies, such as spearfishing, netting, etc, is an example of how fishers adapt their livelihoods, allowing for increased resilience in fluctuating environmental, economic, and political contexts (Matera 2016, 23). With in-fishery diversification, fisher households can alternate between target species, seasonal closures, and seasonal species abundance (Matera 2016, 23). Allison and Ellis (2001) highlight that fishers' livelihoods are "opportunistic" and involve flexibility to involve efforts where most gains are made. The capacity to diversify livelihoods under situations of livelihood stress is crucial for the survival of rural households (Shepherd et al. 2011). Motivations for diversifying livelihoods are generally categorised into two: pull (positive) and push (negative) factors (see Ellis 2000; Brugere et al. 2008). Asravor (2018) explains that pull factors are favourable and opportunity-initiated, leading to diversification of livelihood strategies. Push factors, conversely, are survival-led or initiated by harsh conditions that force households to diversify their income-generating activities away from their primary source of income (Asravor 2018).

Diversification and coping strategies can also be conceived as creative strategies for making ends meet in the language of making do and everyday tactics. Making do and tactics are concepts developed by Michel de Certeau (2005). Turgo's (2010) doctoral study tried to understand how small-scale artisanal fishing communities cope with seasonal fluctuations and used the concepts of making do and tactics. Turgo (2010, 106) explores how fishers deal with challenges in the fishery industry in the Philippines on an everyday basis. Turgo (2010, 106) refers to these as "everyday tactics of making do." Social relations comprise power relations (Turgo 2010, 107). A similar study on getting by, by Nygren and Myatt-Hirvonen (2009, 27), uses the concept of scraping to analyse the ways through which rural households in Honduras strive to earn a living and cope with livelihood stress in the face of globalisation and the dwindling contribution of agriculture and market-based models of rural development. Nygren and Myatt-Hirvonen (2009, 827) note that regardless of an array of diversification strategies, their sources of income continue to be sporadic, and the strategies continue to be vulnerable.

Turgo argues that in a more prominent social organisation, such as a fishing community, power relations can be felt in how people manoeuvre and outmanoeuvre each other as they compete for scarce resources. In exploring the myriad economic strategies of fishing communities, one gets to understand how power functions in communities rendered powerless (Turgo 2010, 107). Similarly, in analysing chiposhongwe, as the next section details, coping involves manoeuvring and outmanoeuvring each other and making the most of the scarcity of fish to the advantage of fishers and fish-buying agents. Chiposhongwe combines what the fishery and the environment enable fishers and maposhongwe and their creative ways of making ends meet by outcompeting each other.

Turgo (2010, 109) defines "making do" as practices seeking to take advantage of other people or performing acts to advance one's position to survive difficulties. According to one of Turgo's (2010, 109) interlocutors, making do is about "keeping one's mouth full and the roof safe from leaks." Turgo (2010, 109) further describes making do in his field site as an economic field where people try to outwit each other. He writes about "the ordinary man", whom he describes as "the murmuring voice of societies" (2005, 213). Similarly, chiposhongwe is about fish-buying agents making the most of seasonal constraints regarding catches to ensure their respective households are food secure.

Practice is defined as "ways of operating," "acting," and "making" – and is how agents enact their cultures in loosely regulated, improvised ways, pursuing tactical strategic and personal

aims that are realised within a culture's normative spaces (De Certeau 2005, 214). Fisherfolk in Gache-Gache reconciles individual aims with the community's values and beliefs. De Certeau recognised the possibility for everyone to creatively explore, through tactics creatively, the interstitial spaces to create new paths (Helliker et al. 2021, 4). Tactics may involve resisting or subverting the dominant order. However, they often entail strategies and acts of "getting by" or "making do" as people work the system in living out their lives (Helliker et al. 2021, 4). De Certeau (1988:27) highlights the cracks and gaps in the total system that lead to localised and fluid tactics of manoeuvring within the "interstices" of the social order.

5.7 Practising Chiposhongwe during COVID-19

20.06. 20. Today, Baba Tanaka deflated the tyres of a vehicle belonging to Mavhima, a fish buyer. In frustration, Mavhima hurriedly returned to the villages to borrow a tyre inflator. He was mumbling words of frustration and throwing his hands in the air, protesting the non-fulfilment of their agreement with Baba Tanaka. Baba Tanaka was supposed to buy fish on Mavhima's behalf within two days. Given the scarcity of fish during winter, Baba Tanaka failed to get the tonne of fish that Mavhima was looking for. Mavhima was in a predicament – his ice was fast melting, and the over 200 kilograms of fish in his vehicle were on the brink of stale. Baba Tanaka is a twenty-six-year-old man with a small family of two kids and his wife. He currently works as a poshongwe. His job as an agent is to solicit fish, especially during the winter season when the catches are typically low. He has been in this job at chiposhongwe since 2011. Baba Tanaka is a very famous and feared senior poshongwe in Gache-Gache. Baba Tanaka and another agent, nicknamed Power, dictated which buyer was next to fill their containers.

As already highlighted in earlier sections, during the cool dry season, they must fill their containers quickly before the ice melts, lest the fish they have already bought become stale. If the ice melts before they have reached their order target, there is no way for them to buy more ice as there is no supply in Gache-Gache. They buy the ice from Harare or Kariba town, and the melting process begins as they travel to the fishing villages. This is where fish-buying agents like Baba Tanaka come in handy. Fish buying agents are residents in Gache-Gache, and they maintain strong connections with fishermen to ensure they quickly access fish in times of fish scarcity. Fish-buying agents like Baba Tanaka are former fishermen who left fishing for

several reasons, including dangerous encounters with hippos and crocodiles and difficulties accessing fishing gear²⁰.

Baba Tanaka describes himself as a senior agent, and during the cool-dry season, he charges between 35 to 40 United States dollars to fill a fisherman's containers. The altercation between Baba Tanaka and Mavhima described above resulted in two contradicting positions. Mavhima believed that because Baba Tanaka failed to fill his containers within two days, he did not have to pay him for non-fulfilment of the initial agreement. In contrast, Baba Tanaka believed he deserved to be paid despite failing to meet the two-day target.



Figure 17 Fish Buying Agent Holding a Stork Bird, Makodzera Harbour

Baba Tanaka explained that "...I am not the one who makes fish scarce. I have spent the past two nights at Makodzera harbour, bearing the brunt of mosquito bites and in the cold. Mavhima must wait a few more days to get the one tonne he wants." In the end, after his return from the villages with a tyre inflator, Mavhima was forced to pay Baba Tanaka to the satisfaction of Baba Tanaka, who said, grinning widely as he received the US\$40-00: "This is how you work properly with people my brother. There is always a tomorrow. You need me, and I need you, we have not started working together today. Semazuva ose ndine mbuva yangu yandoda kuti undonditengereserawo pataundi. Madii mamhanya paKariba munowedzera ice mdara tikuzadzirei musaita loss? (As usual, I have got my own few kgs of fish that I would like you to go and sell on my behalf. Why don't you rush to Kariba to buy more ice so that we can fill your container?).

²⁰ Fieldnotes 20/06/20

Baba was demonstrating his symbolic power and the control that maposhongwe has over the access to fish and fish buying during the cool-dry season. For all his frustration, Mavhima realised he had no other option but to comply with what Baba Tanaka was saying/asking for. Such power displayed by Baba Tanaka can be traced back to the affordances of the fishery – scarcity during the cool-dry season and the perishability of fish are what made Baba Tanaka and other maposhongwe powerful and be able to control fish buyers like this. There was an added caveat of the embodied skills of maposhongwe – fish preparation, which made them invaluable for fish buyers who could not prepare the fish on their own.

But why chiposhongwe? Why did the fish buyers not just transact directly with the fishermen as they did during the hot-wet season when fish were plentiful? Maposhongwe come with some handy skills that fish buyers from towns do not have. The origins and importance of chiposhongwe can be understood from two perspectives – that of the maposhongwe and that of the fish buyers. First, it is essential to highlight that chiposhongwe mainly thrives during the cool-dry season when catches are meager. From the perspective of fishermen, chiposhongwe is less risky than fishing, which exposes them more to the hippos and crocodiles of Lake Kariba. From the perspective of fish buyers, preparing fish is such a dangerous endeavour and maposhongwe often get injured by the fish as they handle and prepare them. In particular, tiger fish are hazardous because of their sharp teeth, which often cut those that are prepared for drying or refrigeration. Baba Tanaka explained the importance of maposhongwe and their work by emphasising the difficulty associated with fish preparation. Fish preparation is a skill that fish buyers do not have.

Power, one of the powerful maposhongwe explained the invaluable skills of a poshongwe in the following way, “...the job is tough; the fish bones can leave deep cuts on you. It is a precarious business; you can end up in a hospital if you are not skilled in fish preparation, and the meagre fees we charge for fish preparation on behalf of fish buyers are not commensurate with the hospital bill you will have to pay in case you get hurt. The tigerfish can leave deep cuts on your hands. Some say it bites even though it is dead. If you were to join the fish-buying business, you would need my services; otherwise, you would not be able to prepare and pack the fish.”²¹

As such, chiposhongwe requires excellent skills, which fish buyers do not have in the face of scarce fish. One of the maposhongwe, Svomho, began as a vendor and later switched to

²¹ Interview, 08/06/20

chiposhongwe. He used to sell foodstuffs, which he ordered in bulk from Karoi. He was into vending from 2016 (when he moved to Gache-Gache) to 2018. He started chiposhongwe in 2019. He said, “The reason for the emergence of maposhongwe? Most fish buyers grew up in the city, so they do not know how to handle and clean the fish – it is difficult for them. We are used to handling and preparing fish. That is why fish buyers look for our services. Here, we know and are well-connected to people, the fishermen. We are the conduit between the buyers and fishermen. Even if the buyer already knows some fishermen, he or she cannot prepare the fish alone. Sometimes, fish arrive at the harbour in bulk and must be prepared, washed, and packed quickly. A buyer alone cannot do that. Moreover, some fish buyers are unknown people, including fishermen. It will be difficult for him or her to get acquainted with people, and that is where we chip in.”²²

Svomho explained that for a buyer to buy fish, she or he must be known by people. Asked whether fishermen only sell to people they know, Svomho said, “Take, for instance, nowadays when the fish are difficult to catch, a buyer may struggle to get it. As a result, she or he will look for people who will help him by waiting for fish at different harbours. The little that each agent will bring back to the buyer will help him or her to quickly fill up his containers and return to the city before the fish goes terribly (Svomho, August 23, 2020).

Asked whether chiposhongwe is more rewarding than vending in terms of income, Svomho said, “No, it is not better paying. We used to work at Tsuwa island as vendors, but ZimParks closed that base and banned fishermen from camping there. To get clients, we target new buyers. She/he looks for who can assist her/him. If you are around, present yourself and tell her/him you can help. What makes her/him come back for your services is the quality of your service – how you will have worked with her/him. If she/he realises that you did not steal from her/him, she/he will return and look for you” (Svomho, August 23, 2020).

Honest had just joined the chiposhongwe, and at the time of the interview, he was just a month into the livelihood strategy. He explained his reasons for joining chiposhongwe thus: I realised that staying at home yields nothing since schools are closed. I decided to look for a source of income through being a poshongwe. Honest said he tries to balance studying and being a poshongwe but highlighted that he spends most of his time doing chiposhongwe. There are specific necessities that I need that cannot be provided by my parents. I decided to look for income through chiposhongwe and can use that money to cater for the necessities of a young

²² Interview, 23/08/20

man. My father tried to block me from joining chiposhongwe because he wanted me to focus on school. He asked what I was lacking, but I asked him to give me a chance to see where this would take me (June 10, 2020).

Although chiposhongwe gains more significance during the winter season because of the pronounced fish scarcity, there are already reasons that entice people to become maposhongwe instead of fishermen. No more, a senior poshongwe who joined in 2012 explained the reasons behind his becoming a ??? thus:

I was once a fisherman. I joined fishing at a very tender age in primary school. With time I realised that fishing is a perilous endeavour. You may paddle on the lake and pass through where there is a hippo, and it attacks you. Alternatively, you can line your nets where there is a crocodile, and in trying to chase it away, it may attack you. This made me consider joining chiposhongwe because, as a poshongwe, I do not have frequent encounters with hippos and crocodiles.

However, regardless of the argument that they chose to become maposhongwe because of the dangers of fishing, they still enter the lake while running for fish as fishermen return to the harbour, thus endangering themselves again. There are two different ways of working as a poshongwe. Some arrange with fish buyers to borrow a motorised boat belonging to fishers and buy fish from the fishers on the lake before the fishers reach the harbour. It is a way of beating competition from other poshongwes and fish buyers.

Most poshongwes, however, wait at the harbour and scramble for fish, running into the shallow waters as the fishers approach the harbour back from their fishing trip. When poshongwes rush into the water, they sometimes run to parts of the lake where the water reaches their waist, increasing their chances of getting attacked by crocodiles. This is where I find the explanation by poshongwes that they joined chiposhongwe to avoid crocodile attacks less convincing. However, when one considers that fishers struggle to buy nets and access boats. One of the poshongwes explained that there are cases of poshongwes whom crocodiles attack. He said, “Chiposhongwe is risky. When we run, the water level can reach our waists, where we encounter crocodiles. Some poshongwes run up water levels and reach their necks chasing after fishers’ boats to beat competition from other poshongwes. It is hazardous, and it is not a surprise to hear that a poshongwe has been attacked and devoured by a crocodile.” (June 10, 2020).

Seniority and trust relationships are essential in the work of a poshongwe. The more senior a poshongwe is, – based primarily on age, experience, and personality – the more likely he will be sought after by fish buyers. Baba Tanaka, one of the senior poshongwes, had this to say:

In my case, fish buyers trust me because I know how to handle fish. I was once a fisherman, and they knew me already. When I joined chiposhongwe, most trusted me already, so it was easy for me to be hired by many of them (June 8, 2020).

Many mapsohongwe compete for fish for their clients during winter, and the 2020 winter season has even increased competition because many fishermen see themselves in chiposhongwe because of the difficulties they have with access to nets. As a result, maposhongwe devise several strategies to beat competition from competitors. One of the strategies used to beat competitors is strong networking skills with fishermen to get clients. Baba Tanaka explained some of the strategies he uses to maintain good relations with fishermen so that whenever he gets a job from a fish buyer or fish buyer, he is assured that he will quickly meet the target required. He said:

I must know what each of the fishermen I work with needs. When I find a fish buyer, I tell him or her to give the money for buying fish and some extra money that caters to the fishermen's needs, such as cigarettes, soft drinks, beers, biscuits, or other snacks. Fishermen need these snacks and beverages as they work on lining nets, especially when they engage in fish driving. It is a physically draining endeavour. I give fishermen the snacks and do not charge them a fee, do you understand? If the fishermen work as a pair, I give them the same number of snacks and beverages. That means I will have booked the fish in advance. On their way back to the harbour, the fishermen will make sure that no poshongwe will touch the fish, they belong to Baba Tanaka. (June 8, 2020).

In trying to maintain relationships with fishermen, mapsohongwe sometimes enter agreements that disadvantage them. For instance, maposhongwe sometimes pays fines on behalf of fishermen, who game rangers will have to arraign for breaking fishery regulations. Svomho adds, “Sometimes you are left without anything. We live with fishermen here. You see, sometimes he comes to you and says, my friend, please lend me some money. There is something I want to do. Alternatively, can you please buy a net for me? You lend him the money he will have requested to buy a net. We do this to build a relationship with fishermen who will give us the fish tomorrow. After buying the net myself, that person may not give me back my

money. I will suffer a loss while trying to build a relationship with the fisherman to get fish for my buyer client” (August 23, 2020).

Junior maposhongwe charge relatively lower fees for their services. Honest, a junior poshongwe, explained that he charges US\$ 5-00 per 100 kgs I buy, prepare, and load for a fish buyer. If a buyer comes and s/he wants a tonne, senior maposhongwe usually charge between US\$25-00 and US\$30-00.²³ In contrast, senior maposhongwe like Baba Tanaka and Nomore charge more. Baba Tanaka highlighted that the fee he charges differs depending on the season. “During the summer season, when fish availability is high, our fees are low because the only job we will be doing is to prepare and pack the fish, but during winter like this, the fee goes up. I normally charge between US\$20-00 and US\$25-00 for my services during summer, but during winter, I charge between US\$35-00 and US\$40-00.” (June 8, 2020).

The winter season has the disadvantage that a poshongwe can spend a week with just one fish-buying client. Moreover, the money they agreed on will remain the same, although the poshongwe will be working overtime compared to when fish catches are high. When fish is abundant, it can take a poshongwe only two days to fill up a client’s container, and he will get his money, and you move to the next client. During the summer, a poshongwe can serve two clients in one week, which means he will get more money. If a poshongwe works well with a fish buyer, some of them provide benefits for him. A poshongwe can negotiate with a fish buyer for him or her to give him a loan that he will repay. He can also buy his fish, which he will ask the fish buyer to go and sell on his behalf in the city, where prices are higher than in Gache-Gache.

Given the inconsistent and meagre income maposhongwe get from chiposhongwe, they often combine chiposhongwe with other livelihood activities such as buying and selling petty goods such as clothes and essential commodities like different food items. Because of covid, these complementary livelihood activities were affected because maposhongwe could not travel to the cities to get new stock. Those who risked travelling regardless of the 'total' lockdown had to dodge the police and game rangers, and, in many instances, they were caught. They had to pay bribes if caught, further jeopardising their livelihood options.

5.8 Winter, COVID-19, and Local Fish Buyers

Climate change has exacerbated challenges for fishermen and fish traders/buyers. VaManeja is a widow who has lived in Gache-Gache since 1994. She owns a boat and possesses some

²³ fieldnotes, June 10, 2020

fishing nets, which she gives to her son to go and fish. She used to possess a fishing permit, but the rural council repossessed it because of tax arrears. VaManeja is also into buying and selling dried tigerfish. She contends that long back, the effects of the winter season were lesser than what villagers are now experiencing in Gache-Gache. Asked whether she expects to go back to the fish buying and selling business after the COVID-19 pandemic dust settles down, she said, “I do not know; it is difficult to get the fish; there is no fish. There is a big difference if we compare availability during the yesteryears to availability nowadays. In the yesteryears, you would know that fish availability declines during winter, but at least you would get fish to buy and resell in nearby towns. Nowadays, there is a total blank; there is no fish.” (June 22, 2020)

Another female resident who bought and sold dried fish – Mbuya Chitando – bemoaned the winter season, the decrease in catches, and the length of the period it takes for the effects of winter to go away. She said, “Since I returned, I cannot even buy a single fish; they are scarce. My son, who uses my boat to cast nets, returned yesterday with nothing. How can we survive? Moreover, we still have two months – August and September – for winter to disappear completely. After those two months, the water in the lake will change its temperature, and fish will start moving again. Only then will catches increase.’ (July 12, 2020).

The 2020 winter season coincided with a series of lockdowns by the Zimbabwean government to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. This made chiposhongwe more essential in seeing people through a difficult time. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Zimbabwe exacerbated the challenges these fisherfolk face in their daily livelihood construction struggles. COVID-19 severely affected Gache-Gache residents who are into buying and selling various goods, especially those who buy and sell fish and fishing gear. Mbuya Chitando explained that she had to stay in Kadoma for four months and could not return to Gache-Gache because of the lockdown. When the first lockdown was announced in late March 2020, she had to go to Kadoma, her hometown, to sell fish. She highlighted, ‘...ndakavharirwa Koko (lit. I was shut out while there) and could not return for four months. It disturbed me because I had gone to work (selling fish). I ended up spending all the money I had made because there was no other option for me to make a living because of this corona. It was impossible to travel back. I just returned a few days ago. I had to be innovative to come back here. When I realised that some motorists had started to travel despite the lockdown being still in force.’ (July 12, 2020)

COVID-19 also complicated life, particularly for local fish buyers. VaManeja said, ‘COVID-19 has brought nothing good for us. Our counterparts (referring to fishermen) are the ones who are benefiting from it. When they hear that a basic good, say, sugar’s price, has increased, they also increase the price of fish. They do this although the United States dollar does not easily depreciate.’ (June 22, 2020).

During the first three weeks of lockdown, fishers also felt the brunt of COVID-19 because they did not have buyers to buy their catches. Even with subsequent lockdowns, which at least recognised the fishing industry as essential, Gache-Gache residents highlighted that not all fish buyers were coming to buy fish because some were afraid of contracting the virus. One resident and fisherman, Mr Vhareta, said, “Corona has greatly disturbed us. Finding fish buyers who can come and buy the little fish we will have caught is difficult; there are no buyers. Those who sell nets are not coming.” I was surprised to hear this because the interview occurred when fish was scarce; fish buyers struggled to fill their containers in winter. Asked whether the buyers found at the harbour at the time were not buying all the fish available, Mr Vhareta said they buy, but our job requires that buyers come in their numbers. When everything is normal, there will be many buyers, so we do not struggle to sell our fish. Buyers can bring us goods that we want from town, or they can give some loans that will pay back later through fish. Only a few are coming; some of them we do not know, and the ones we trust are no longer coming because of COVID-19 (August 4, 2020).

Residents also complained that they were suffering from food insecurity. Most vehicles that used to bring mealie meals are no longer coming. “We are hungry. Prices have also changed because they now charge in United States dollars. Getting the United States dollars while you are here in Gache-Gache – I am not sure if it is available in cities – here in Gache-Gache, it is difficult. Asked whether they sell their fish in United States dollars, Vhereta said it is just in principle. Because even after selling in United States dollars, the grocery shop owners charge exorbitant prices for their goods”, said Mbuya Bundu, an elderly woman, during an interview.

5.9 Challenges within Chiposhongwe

There are several challenges faced by maposhongwe. One of the main challenges is the failure of fish buyers to honour the agreement reached when giving a poshongwe a job. There are frequent misunderstandings and conflicts between fish buyers and maposhongwe because the former refuses to pay after a poshongwe has finished the job. The opening vignette in the section of chiposhongwe above is evidence of this. A fish buyer may come expecting to buy a tonne of fish, but it will be challenging to meet this target in time because fish is scarce during

this season. The ice brought by fish buyers melts very fast, and there is nowhere they can replenish the fast-depleting ice to wait longer. Trying to do so would mean travelling to Kariba town and extra costs that will not have been budgeted. As a result, fish buyers often opt to give mapshongwe only part of the money for the job they will have done. In contrast, maposhongwe does not think it is their fault for not meeting the target because fish is scarce, and the melting fish buyers' ice is not their fault.

Junior poshongwes are sometimes taken advantage of by fish buyers. Earnest, a junior poshongwe who joined the business in the winter of 2020, explained that sometimes they must seek the help of senior poshongwes like Baba Tanaka. He said, "Our relationship with fish buyers goes smoothly if they fulfil our agreement. When we agree that the job we are doing is for a certain amount of money, the fish buyer must fulfil his or her part of the bargain. Sometimes, we meet the buyer at the harbour, s/he gives us a job. However, in the end, s/he refuses to pay us. Sometimes, we leave the harbour and agree with the fish buyer that he/she will pay us at the shopping centre. We recently had a misunderstanding with a fish buyer, and we called Baba Tanaka because the fish buyer said we had failed to fill their vehicle. They wanted a tonne of fish. We had agreed that if we filled their vehicle with a tonne of fish, they would give us US\$15-00. We called our senior poshongwe, baba Tanaka, and he told the fish buyers that they had to pay us the full amount, although we had failed to meet their tonne target. However, the fish buyers only paid us part– US\$10-00. Since that incident, I stopped working for them" (July 5, 2020).

Maposhongwe also complains about the ill-treatment they receive from some fish buyers. Earnest explained, "Some buyers come and hire a poshongwe. They do not give us food. The poshongwe goes hungry the whole day, and he relies on borrowing food from vendors, yet his boss will be there, and he should cater for that." This is a common challenge maposhongwe faces. To rectify this, I think we must sit down and agree with the fish buyer before we start working that this is the amount, he is going to give us and if he is not going to buy lunch and dinner for me, I will also have to charge him an extra amount so that I can feed myself. I cannot return home for meals when working as a poshongwe, so the fish buyer must provide lunch and dinner" (July 5, 2020).

Sometimes, maposhongwe buy fish in the absence of the fish buyer. When he comes to weigh the fish, he uses a malfunctioning scale that steals some kilograms. Maposhongwe will have a shortfall, and as a result, the fish buyer will underpay him because he will claim that the

poshongwe did not reach the agreed target. However, maposhongwe also frequently pilfer from fishermen and fish buyers using strategies such as tampering with the scale or putting aside some already-weighed fish.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter discussed chiposhongwe as an in-fishery coping strategy in the face of the cool-dry season's reduced fish catches and the travel restrictions imposed by the Zimbabwean government in attempts to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant a curtailment of most of the diversification options for households in Gache-Gache as the mobility of people to other places outside Gache-Gache was limited. Though Gache-Gache household members still tried to travel to other places for vending and other onshore livelihoods strategies, they faced further challenges, such as bribing ZimParks officials and police officers manning roadblocks to enforce the lockdown. In this context, chiposhongwe gained traction as the most critical in-fishery way of coping with the threat of livelihood stress and food insecurity. As highlighted throughout the chapter, appraising chiposhongwe as a coping strategy must not be misconstrued as Gache-Gache households' mastery over the threat of food insecurity but just an attempt to "get by" as they struggle to ensure they are food secure within the confines of their locale and limited mobility.

However, the on-the-ground practice of chiposhongwe provides some helpful lens through which to contribute to discussions on the mutual constitution between the environment and humans. In concurrence with the scholarship on the literature on fishery-based livelihoods (see, for instance, Allison and Ellis 2001,378; Simmance 2002, 706; Deb and Haque 2011, 2058), fluctuations in catches expose fisher households to food insecurity and affect the functioning of households/families. Alisson and Ellis (2001) stress the importance of understanding the creative coping strategies of fishers as they face resource fluctuations and other shocks. In most cases, these coping strategies are trans-local and, therefore, involve travelling; less has been discussed regarding contexts where travelling is restricted. Diversification often involves fishers migrating to other fishing grounds (see Nunan 2010; Muttенzer 2020; Gonzalez-Mon et al. 2021) or focusing on different fish species as an in-fishery coping strategy (Anderson et al. 2017; Gonzalez-Mon 2021). As a form of in-fishery coping strategy, chiposhongwe adds to how we can understand how fishery-dependent households try to cope amid livelihood stress. though not a long-lasting solution, chiposhongwe helps us know that the natural functioning of the fishery, in this case, fish scarcity, can also help fisher households. As fishers deploy their skills in fish preparation

As illustrated in this chapter, the chiposhongwe practice in Gache-Gache is one form of in-fishery coping strategy that uses the fishery's natural functioning. It must be highlighted that chiposhongwe is by no means a long-lasting solution, and it does not satisfy all the needs of a given household in all situations. Maposhongwe are crucial people, usually fishermen who suspend fishing to focus on being go-betweens for fishers and fish buyers. Maposhongwe practice chiposhongwe (fish hustling and preparation on behalf of fish buyers in return for money and other on-the-ground informal agreements, such as having fish buyers sell their fish on their behalf for more significant profits. Maposhongwe are mainly fishermen who stop fishing during the cool-dry season because of decreased catches to capitalise on the desperation of fish buyers competing for scarce fish. Chiposhongwe can be described as an in-fishery coping strategy in the face of livelihood stress and food insecurity due to decreased catches during the cool-dry season. It is this coping strategy that is the focus of this chapter.

Admittedly, they face many hardships and challenges but strive to make ends meet through thick and thin. More so in a context where opportunities are limited because of a more two decades politico-economic crisis that has made fishing one of the safety nets not only for the Zambezi Valley residents but many more who trekked to eke out a living from fishing in the face of limited livelihood options elsewhere. It is, at best, a stop-gap measure amidst the four-month winter season in Zimbabwe, which helps households get by each day as it comes. As a coping strategy, chiposhongwe also reveals the complex nature of coping strategies because it succeeds in earning an income, albeit in the short-term, and is mediated by factors such as seniority and age. In analyses of coping strategies, variables such as age must be considered in addition to the capital/assets a household has access to. Ultimately, chiposhongwe epitomises a form of survival chance-seeking “everyday-crises-living” (see Helliker et al. 2021) strategy that does not provide long-term livelihood security.

Chapter Six: “We Do Not Know What the Future Holds”: Livelihood Vulnerability and Uncertainty in Gache-Gache

6.1 Introduction

When I first arrived in Gache-Gache, I could not help but wonder why fishermen struggled to make ends meet; compared to life in the city or other parts of Zimbabwe, they appeared to have a better chance of earning a significant daily income. This outsider’s viewpoint was not conversant with (to borrow Dyck’s term) the everyday “co-precarities” that threaten the survival of small-scale fishing communities due to a range of factors, including climate change, financial hardship and unclear tenure laws (2019: 1). Gache-Gache fisher households face multiple livelihood stressors. One August afternoon, during an illuminating conversation on the challenges fishermen face in Gache-Gache, one of the fishermen quenched my curiosity about this question. The fisherman, sekuru Zebedi, has over fifteen years of fishing experience and lives in Gache-Gache. He came to Gache-Gache during the early 2000s when a white-owned commercial fish-buying company – Irving and Johnson – he was working for closed in Zimbabwe due to the nationwide redistributive exercise embarked on by the Zimbabwe government from the beginning of the year 2000. Sekuru Zebedi explained the reasons why fishermen and their household members remain in a vicious cycle of poverty:

I usually work on the islands during the cold, dry seasons like these. I will be away from home for close to a month. On a typical day, I must take three meals, that is, US\$3-00 without beer and a soft drink. If I want beer, I will spend US\$ 7-00 or US\$8-00. However, we are discussing the cold season when catches that give you more than US\$10-00 are barely realistic. I also must send some fish for relish for my family back in the village. Most of the time, I must borrow the boat. It is US\$6-00 every morning for the boat – or you give the boat owner four kilograms of fish from your catch. The boat owner does not care whether you caught anything; he will demand payment every morning. I first visited Gache-Gache in 1989, and villagers lived in ramshackle huts, as you see now. Our conditions will never change, and we do not know our future.²⁴

Understanding how people make a living and make life meaningful (Bebbington 1999) involves examining how they react to chronic and acute stressors and manage uncertainty. Vulnerability refers to the risk that harm may befall an individual, a community or a broader social group that is unable to either absorb the impacts of stressors or adapt to reduce exposure to risk and sensitivity to stressors (Eakin and Luers 2006). Resilience is the capacity of a social-

²⁴ Interview with sekuru Zebedi, 18/08/2020.

environmental system to cope with and adapt to changing risks and opportunities (Adger and Brown, 2009). Vulnerability is high exposure to shocks, stresses, and proneness to food insecurity, and has two dimensions. First is the exposure to shocks and stresses from internal and external sources. Second, individuals' inability to take appropriate measures in the face of those risks. The household is often used in livelihood analysis, though it is seldom a unitary entity because intrahousehold dynamics and conflicts abound (Prowse 2010, 219). It is also important to note that households are not solitary independent units but embedded in social relations with other households and social actors (Sakdapolrak 2014, 21). Besides the challenges highlighted by sekuru Zebedi above, fisherfolk in Gache-Gache face several challenges that militate against their livelihoods. These challenges are in various forms, including regulations by management authorities and some fluctuations related to fishery resources. This chapter discusses livelihood uncertainty and coping strategies among fishermen in Gache-Gache. I argue that the Gache-Gache socio-economic and political context makes fishing a livelihood prone to multiple stressors.

Dyck's (2019) ethnographic research focuses on the ongoing economic and environmental precarities among the Shipibo communities in the Peruvian Amazon. Her study observed that co-precarities of climate change, financial hardship and restrictive land tenure laws potentially overwhelm communities. Dyck argues that the most essential tool to enhance the resilience of indigenous communities is granting them secure tenure rights that enable them to govern themselves based on their knowledge. Fishing in Gache-Gache fits Jentoft and Eide's (2011, viii) description of fisher lives: "Fishers are big risk takers and optimists. They are not folk who speak or act in terms of averages. Their fishing outcomes fluctuate between the zenith of the bumper catch and the nadir of drawing a blank after a hard day or night at sea. Their habits and lives mirror this". Sekuru Zebedi gave an example of such uncertainties between catching big and drawing blanks in the following way:

A fisherman lives from hand to mouth. You catch fish today, sell them and spend the money with minimal opportunity to save. You live with the hope that tomorrow I will go again and catch some more to get some more money. In Gache-Gache, no one has a granary for storing food stocks like maize. This makes it difficult for a fisherman and his family. The hope that I will catch some more fish does not always become a reality

– you go to the Lake tomorrow and face many challenges, forcing you to return home empty-handed.²⁵

Regardless of the fluctuations generating uncertainty, fisherfolk devise several means of ‘getting by’ while facing natural, institutional, and socio-economic challenges. There is a need not to overemphasise the agency of fishermen in facing livelihood stress, but these multiple forms of getting by are the focus of the discussion below. I am interested in the coping strategies (and their efficacy) that fishermen employ in the face of a combination of fishery-based livelihood stressors. While chapter two highlighted the notion of belonging where descendants of the 1950s Kariba dam-induced displacement claim some form of first-comer autochthony, this chapter highlights the precariousness of such claims based on how even those with autochthonous claims do not know whether they will live in Gache-Gache for the rest of their lives.

This chapter revisits some of the core themes highlighted and discussed in the previous chapters and frames these within a discussion of vulnerability and uncertainty. Chapter Five discussed livelihood coping in the form of *Chiposhongwe's* in-fishery survival strategy during the cool-dry season. This chapter discusses livelihood vulnerability and uncertainty experienced by fisher households throughout the year and how uncertainty shapes their perspectives about their future in Gache-Gache. I argue that the glaring uncertainty generated primarily by a lack of tenure security plunges households into further vulnerability as, in the words of sekuru Zebedi, one of the interlocutors, “do not know what the future holds”. The chapter also discusses how, in the face of vulnerability and uncertainty, the moral economy of subsistence and a shared moral universe regarding the right to livelihood and survival appears uneven and situational. I highlight how fisher households deal with manifold forms of livelihood vulnerability and uncertainty. In their attempts to deal with vulnerability, the shared moral universe of survival is disrupted. The chapter is divided into two main sections—the first deals with general sources of vulnerability and uncertainty around fishing in Gache-Gache. The second section discusses external institutional support for food aid and the politics surrounding food aid in Gache-Gache.

6.2 Livelihood Vulnerability and Uncertainty in Gache-Gache

To understand livelihood vulnerability and the uncertainty surrounding fisher livelihoods in Gache-Gache, I use the concepts of vulnerability and coping borrowed from the Sustainable

²⁵ Conversation with Vhereta, 27/7/20

Livelihoods Framework (SLF). One of the strengths of the SLF is that its epistemological roots are embedded in local knowledge and experiences, and engagement with local people. It draws on Robert Chamber's (1983) approach, in his words, 'putting the last first' (Natarajan 2022, 1). Vulnerability and coping as analytical concepts provide the lens to tease out the challenges communities face in earning a living, which are tied to events, processes, and policies that extend beyond the local realm. A livelihood is "a means of gaining a living" (see Scoones 1998, 5).

In developing countries, small-scale fishers are categorised as some of the poorest socio-economic groups (Bene 2003). Scholars also highlight the susceptibility of small-scale fishing communities to natural, health and economic-related shocks or livelihood stressors (Alisson et al. 2009; Bene 2009). To understand the livelihood portfolios of fisherfolk in Gache-Gache and their households, the lake management regime, already highlighted in preceding chapters, plays a crucial role. The sustainable livelihoods approach can be used to understand the survival strategies of artisanal fishers who live in fluctuating fishery resources (Allison and Ellis 2001, 277), such as those in Gache-Gache.

However, this is not always the case; fishermen are aware of park patrols on the lake. As one diarist details, one of the days, he and his workmate had to run away after a tip-off by fellow fishermen of an ongoing patrol by parks officials. Working on the Kariba waters for Gache-Gache fishermen is always a risky affair. Concerning fishing equipment and boats, for instance, fishermen opt to use unsafe homemade boats for fear that if they use motorised boats. The fine for a confiscated motorised boat is US\$ 1000-00. This is beyond the reach of many fishermen in Gache-Gache. In the end, fishermen risk their lives using unmotorised boats. When caught with a motorised boat and charged with any form of non-compliance offence, the motorised boat is confiscated. In contrast, non-motorised boats are not confiscated, and if management authorities decide to punish offenders with non-motorised boats, they sink the boats instead of confiscating them. The experiences of fishermen with motorised boats were explained in detail by sekuru Zebedi:

...many accidents and deaths on the lake are caused by hippo or crocodile attacks or waves/currents. Many people are dying in the waters; why? I, for instance, currently have a motorised boat made of fibre. It has an engine and airtight compartments. If Parks officials arrest me, with these twine nets that I use – I already know that one day they will arrest me – I will not be able to pay the fine for them to return my boat. They

will charge me 80,000 Zimbabwean dollars, equivalent to 1000 United States dollars. I will never find that amount of money. So, I put everything in God's hands daily, knowing He is my only protector.

The lake management officials emphasise the need for fishermen to use cotton nets with a mesh size of four inches and above. However, in Zimbabwe, there is currently no supply of such nets. The nets fishermen use are imported from Zambia, and most imported nets are twine nets. This lack of local net supply means fishermen opt for the illegal twine net. Other incentives make fishermen choose the twine net (such as its ability to catch fish during the day because of its transparency). However, this lack of institutional support concerning the local supply of nets means fishermen fail to comply with the required fishing gear and often get fined.

An ideal livelihood system displays high resilience and low sensitivity, while a highly vulnerable one has low resilience and high sensitivity (Salmi 2017, 23). In fisheries livelihood systems, adapting to uncertainty involves flexibility within fishery operations (targeting different species), geographical mobility, and livelihood diversification (Salmi 2017, 23). The other option is pluriactivity, defined by Eikeland (1999, 360) as “gaining an income from more than one economic activity.” Peterson (2000, 85) notes that household livelihood diversification strategies in Norway involve fishing income, social welfare payments and occasional farming income. Livelihood analysis can provide a lens to understand how vulnerability and resilience are socially differentiated (Clay 2022, 44). Social differentiation of vulnerability and resilience means different individuals, groups and societies have different capacities to cope and adapt to stressors and opportunities ((Clay 2022), 44).

Livelihoods underpin food security and are how people can economically and physically access food (Simmance et al. 2022, 700; Connolly-Boutin and Smit 2016; FAO et al. 2020). A livelihood perspective provides ready tools for describing and analysing fishers' everyday lives within a context of vulnerability. It reveals the range of strategies, capabilities and outcomes achieved (Simmance et al. 2022, 701). Capturing the realities and knowledge of fishers allows a deeper understanding of the vulnerability contexts and livelihoods (Simmance et al. 2022, 701; Barclay et al. 2017; Rasweiler et al. 2020). Some risks and stress faced by Gache-Gache fisher households revolve around the lack of tenure security and clarity on whether they will be allowed to live in Gache-Gache for the rest of their lives.

Livelihoods for all rural people denote how they make a living regardless of whether their livelihoods are secure or vulnerable (Ahmed and Lipton 1997, 6). Livelihood security refers to

“secure ownership of, or access to resources and income generating activities, including reserves and assets to offset risk, ease shocks and meet contingencies” (Chambers 1988, 1). An individual or household has livelihood security if s/he/they have a broad entitlement that includes future claims and access to income from private sources and common property (Ahmed and Lipton 1997, 7).

Food security is only one of the variables households pursue – the goal is livelihood security. If based on an incomplete understanding of livelihoods, state-led and community use-rights arrangements can result in management directives incommensurate with resource conservation and social and economic goals (Allison and Ellis 2001, 377). Research in small-scale fisheries in developing countries emphasises small-scale fishers’ resource dependence and the open-access nature of fisheries, leading to resource depletion, poverty, and marginalisation (Allison and Ellis 2001, 377). Fishery policy in developing countries is based on an “equilibrium” view of fishery resources, which matches the fishing capacity of the resource – the objective being to achieve the maximum sustainable yield (MSY) (Allison and Ellis 2001, 377).

There is an emphasis on people-centredness and scrutinising people’s survival and coping strategies (Kaag et al. 2004, 52). One August afternoon, an informal conversation with Sekuru Zebedee, who has lived and worked as a fisherman in Gache-Gache for over fifteen years, revealed the nature of uncertainty that fisherfolk and their households face daily. One such uncertainty revolves around a lack of tenure security and the perceived lack of clarity on whether they will be allowed to live in Gache-Gache for the foreseeable future. Below is an excerpt of what sekuru Zebedi said:

...villagers frequently suspect that the council will one day just come up with the idea that they want to urbanise and peg off our plots for a housing project that will be out of our reach because we do not have the capital to invest in buying a house. This deters most fishers from building permanent structures here in Gache-Gache – the fear that what we see with Murambatsvina in urban areas may be brought to us one day. So, we choose to remain in these huts, which, if destroyed, will not lead to a massive loss for fishermen. We do not know what the future holds, neither do we know where we are going. It is a fishing camp; it is called a fishing camp. If you are camping, you will likely pack and leave tomorrow. We cannot develop because we do not have title deeds;

we may be chased away tomorrow. We have schools, a clinic and the Lake that entice us to continue living here, but there is no guarantee that we will live here until we die.²⁶

A similar conversation with another fisherman, a forty-year-old Mr Buba, who has lived in Gache-Gache all his life, raised similar concerns about the uncertainty of households in Gache-Gache. He had the following to say regarding the uncertainty of living and fishing in Gache-Gache in future:

... all these village heads, including the Village Development Committee (VIDCO) members – all those we consider to be our leaders – the situation is the same, *muzvigayo immune demo marinara* (we all live in these grinding mill-like dilapidated houses). I once asked other villagers why there are no permanent structures built here. Most of them expressed concern that any day, the rural council could come and say we must leave, and they destroy your house. Have you ever heard of *Murambatsvina*? That can happen here if the government plans to venture into something and thinks the fishers' presence will be a hindrance.²⁷

It is striking that both fishermen mentioned *Murambatsvina* (dubbed restore order by the government of Zimbabwe), a programme first implemented in 2005 to destroy structures, primarily houses in urban areas that were deemed to not be on the city's plan. Most scholars on Zimbabwe (see Potts 2006; Moore 2008; Mhiripri 2008; Mlambo 2008) have labelled this a politically motivated programme, which sought to displace many opposition political supporters from urban areas where the opposition had its stronghold. The above sentiments by sekuru Zebedi and Mr Buba demonstrate, at a community level, the perceived defencelessness of fisher households in Gache-Gache. While these fears may appear as if they are benign, especially given the fact that all communal land in rural Zimbabwe is state land and no one holds title deeds in rural Zimbabwe this uncertainty regarding tenure security appeared to have far-reaching consequences regarding food security for some of Gache-Gache households. The lack of certainty about their future in Gache-Gache led some fishermen to spend more on alcohol, such as what was documented about kule Luke at the beginning of this chapter. In frustration that the rural council and other institutions pass regulations that disenfranchise fishers, younger fishermen like kule Luke told me they take to alcohol to “forget their sorrows”. Kule Luke had this to say as he mended nets in a nearby bush with his co-worker:

²⁶Conversation with sekuru Zebedi, 11/08/20

²⁷ Conversation with Mr Buba 21/07/20

You see, Mzaya [nephew, referring to me], I must work in town or as a ranger at this age. These are my most productive years, but I am wasting them away, endangering my life in a crocodile-infested lake. When you see me drinking in a stupor, do not judge me. I am trying to forget my sorrows; I do not know whether I will still be alive tomorrow. Each time you go to the lake, you feel this may be the last time you see your family. To add salt to the wound, you have the ZimParks rangers who either harass you on the lake for bribes, or they just make unreasonable alterations to the fishing timetable so that you violate it for them to arrest you for bribes. How would you deal with that kind of stress every day other than drinking to forget your sorrows?²⁸

The above excerpts from conversations with fishermen demonstrate what Deb and Haque (2011, 2502) call cross-vulnerabilities bedevilling small-scale fishers. In their qualitative study in Bangladesh, Deb and Haque (2011, 2502) examined linkages between “cross-scale vulnerabilities” and the “livelihood war” of coastal and floodplain fishers. They argue that various livelihood stressors singly or synergistically impact well-being and livelihood resilience (p. 2502). Deb and Haque (2011, 2502) use the metaphor livelihood war to describe the dismal state of livelihood characterised by persistent food insecurity, prolonged hunger and a silent form of pseudo-famine associated with an internal state of defencelessness and shattered capabilities of the victims. Fishing communities, as noted by Dyck (2019,1), are bedevilled by a range of challenges that produce what he calls co-precarities. By co-precarities, Dyck (2019, 1) refers to the many forms of precarity that combine to threaten survival.

6.3 Fishing and Livelihood Vulnerability

27. 01. 20. Onset of dusk. Kule Luke mumbled words of affirmation to his wife, Gogo Mai Cayden: “Trust me, I will give you *mari yechigayo* (the money for grinding maize into flour at the grinding mill)”, he said, jetting out of the hut, heading towards kule Diva’s veranda, where I was relaxing in a chair. “*Muzukuru, rega ndimbopinda mumaraini* (Nephew, let me wander about in the village),” he said to me as he headed towards Knowledge’s (his friend and co-worker) homestead. Barely a minute later, Gogo Mai Cayden came out of the hut and asked me whether I had seen her husband, and I informed her that he had left for Knowledge’s homestead. She exasperatedly frowned and said,

“This is his habit; he would rather spend little money on beer than fend for his family. I know they have gone to the beer hall. I only wanted a dollar to go to the grinding mill

²⁸ Conversation with kule Luke, 17/02/20

to grind a bucket of maize for *sadza*, and he told me that he would change the 10-dollar note he had to give a separate dollar. We have run out of maize flour. We cannot always expect *baba* or *amai* (lit. dad or mum, referring to village head Mupepe and his wife) to provide the money for the mealie meal.”

Kule Luke and Gogo Mai Cayden lived with sabhuku Mupepe and Gogo Mupepe (village-head Mupepe’s wife), and they pooled resources as a household unit for survival. Sabhuku Mupepe’s homestead was divided into two – a more significant part of the homestead housed village head Mupepe and his wife and kule Luke and his wife. These two families comprised a household unit and ordinarily pooled resources for everyday life, including meals. However, as evidenced by Kule Luke’s reluctance to provide money for mealie meal, not every household member contributed the same to the household unit. Kule Luke was sabhuku Mupepe’s youngest son and had a one-month-old son at the beginning of my study in October 2019.

The remaining part of Sabhuku Mupepe’s homestead belonged to Kule Diva and his wife. Kule Diva had built a three-roomed house where he lived with his wife and their two children. Kule Diva and his wife, Gogo Mai Elsie, were an independent household unit and, in large part, were responsible for their day-to-day upkeep without much input from sabhuku Mupepe’s household. In times of emergency, however, they would assist each other by sharing daily essentials such as maize flour, soap, cooking oil, salt, etc. Additionally, when food donations from the Social Welfare Ministry came, sabhuku Mupepe would always ensure that kule Diva’s name was on the list of beneficiaries, although (for X REASON) kule Diva was not eligible to be on the list. In times of difficulty, too, kule Diva and Gogo Mai Elsie would assist other compound residents in cash or kind. These connections within the Mupepe compound were not a unique phenomenon but revealed the importance of social capital, an important safety net or coping strategy in the face of livelihood stress. The term coping strategy has been defined by Aarsaether and Baerendholdt (2001) as local actions that result from reflexivity processes. According to Aarsaether and Baerendholdt (2001), coping strategies comprise networking, innovation, and identity formation. Social capital in Gache-Gache is cultivated through creating interpersonal relationships that transcend the limits of institutionalised social fields. Gache–Gache households generally had a more expansive network upon which they drew resources for everyday upkeep and coping during livelihood stress and insecurity. Resources that households and individuals could draw on from their network included receiving small goods such as mealie-meal, money to go to the grinding mill for *upfu* (maize flour), fishing nets bought on credit and borrowing a boat in return for a fee after a fishing trip.

What kule Luke did – failing to provide money for *upfu* – was not an isolated occurrence. Quite often, fishermen, especially the younger ones, spent most of their income on alcohol, citing various reasons, including a lack of certainty regarding their future in Gache-Gache, the expectation that they can always return to the lake to catch some more fish for more income and the stress of facing dangerous animals on the lake. This behaviour of some fishermen brings to the fore one of the pertinent questions long discussed in livelihoods scholarship – the household as a unit of analysis. Livelihoods scholarship highlights that the household is seldom a smooth unit for analysing livelihoods – conflicts and unevenness characterise how members contribute to livelihood wellbeing and food security. As demonstrated by kule Luke above, not all income contributes to the food security of the Mupepe household.

There was a striking similarity in how kule Luke, kule Diva and other relatively young fisherfolk contributed to their households' income and well-being. As Kule Luke did above – choosing to spend on beer rather than provide food for his family – kule Diva spent a substantial amount of his income from fishing on beer. Kule Diva would come home and hand over money from the sale of his catch to Gogo Mai Elsie and ask for some money for beer. However, he would return home and ask for some more until, in most cases, all the money would be finished. Whenever Gogo Mai Elsie tried to stop kule Diva from spending more on beer, he would tell her off and exclaim that he was the one who risked his life by going fish in the crocodile and hippo-infested Lake. “I do not know when my last day is. Each day could be my last. Besides, when the money is finished, I will go back and fetch some more, *“hove hadziperi muzukuru”* (fish will always be there in the Lake),” he would always say. He was not an exception, as many other fishers spent a considerable proportion of their income from fishing on alcohol.

As highlighted in previous chapters, many fishers believed they could always return to get more money. Some of the significant reasons fishers insisted on spending the money on beer included the physically draining nature of gillnet fishing and the uncertainty surrounding fishing in Gache-Gache. As was also clear in previous chapters, fishing involved risks such as getting arrested for not using the correct gear, destruction of gear by crocodiles, and loss of life through attacks by wildlife. All this threatened household food security in Gache-Gache and put livelihoods at risk.

Vulnerability does not mean lack or want; instead, it refers to defenselessness, insecurity, and exposure to risk (Chambers 1989, 1).

Let us look at how we (Gache-Gache residents) live – if we did not have this food aid programme – the poverty levels and struggle to put food on the table would be even more dire. Still, the maize seed received per household is only 50 kilogrammes, and if you have a more extensive family/household, you can barely finish the month while still having food security. It is not easy. If you have children, they may still need to attend school, and you must pay school fees. Maybe if God intervenes, life will become less complicated for us one day.²⁹

Rather than linear, nature is unpredictable and dynamic (Berkes et al. 2003). Consequently, communities that rely on extractive economies must learn how to adapt to dynamic environmental changes and disturbances (Deswandi 2017, 45). As an inland fishery-based, the Gache-Gache community must constantly cope with changes and disturbances within the fishery. Such changes include seasonal fluctuations in catches. As already demonstrated in previous chapters, fishers depend on unpredictable fish resources and experience higher uncertainty than agriculture-based communities. For instance, through an Asian case study, Deswandi (2017, 45) notes that seasonal variability may severely affect fishing activities to the extent that daily catch levels can barely support subsistence.

Scholars highlight the susceptibility of small-scale fishing communities to natural, health and economic-related shocks or livelihood stressors (Alisson et al., 2009; Bene, 2009). This is mainly because small-scale fishing is typically labour intensive, with low capital investment, fishers use relatively small fishing vessels, embark on small fishing trips close to the shore, and have relatively meagre catches per vessel (Muringai et al., 2020; Tietze 2016; Frawley et al., 2019). It is common practice among Gache-Gache fishermen to drink excessively because they do not know when they will die from this risky employment.

For marginal communities facing a recurrence of exposure to natural hazards, livelihoods often lie in a precarious position. They are prone to failure, thus making a generalised conclusion about rural livelihoods challenging to arrive at. In the context of Zimbabwe, due to the high dependence of rural livelihoods on agriculture, the context in which people construct their livelihoods is primarily determined by the natural environment, which is the base upon which other viable activities for survival are built. Muringai et al. (2020) categorised fishermen's challenges on Lake Kariba's shores into two broad categories: climate and non-climatic. Under the climate-induced challenges or livelihood stressors, they listed declining fish catches, waves

²⁹ Conversation with Baba Eva, 16/08/20

or water currents, crayfish (an invasive species that preys on other fish), food insecurity and shrinking fishing ground boundaries (Muringai et al. 2020, 3).

For the non-climate-related challenges, they listed wildlife, a lack of early warning systems, inadequate fishing equipment, and lake co-management (Muringai et al. 2020, 3). Many rural farming households in Zimbabwe rely on natural rainfall for their farming activities. They are worst affected by changes in weather patterns (Nyambara 2003, 4), and the risk and uncertainty associated with semi-arid regions, in particular, the recurrence of drought and the frequency of crop failure mean that farmers [must] adopt risk-coping strategies (Mortimore and Adams, 2001). The assertion that communities persistently pestered by natural disasters must be ingenious or adopt risk-coping strategies does not suggest that vulnerability is peculiar to marginal rural farmers (in any case, all people are vulnerable and must cope with livelihood stress). However, vulnerability severity and the means to cope with such vulnerability often differ.

A study by Sen (1981) on constraints that prevent people from changing ‘entitlement’ strategies resulted in expansive studies on how people cope with natural disasters like droughts by focusing on coping strategies. While acknowledging the ability/ tendency of people to adapt or react to livelihood stress, emphasis needs to be laid out that the success of such ‘strategies’ varies across different households. Cannon (2008:1) castigates outsiders who focus on the survival of people after a risk, thereby romanticising the ability of people to be resilient. Acknowledging agency's limitations is vital for rural livelihoods scholarship to avoid developing an oversimplified ‘agency/coping culture’ that ignores the proneness of specific households to livelihoods failure.

6.4 Access to Assets: Nets and Boats

Two excerpts from two diary entries from two diary participants during October 2019 read as follows:

...I carried my nets and other equipment that we use for fishing. When we arrived at the harbour, we could not find our boat. It had been stolen by thieves whom we did not know. We called those by the harbour and asked if they had seen the culprits who had taken our boat. All of them said they had not seen anyone taking our boat. Because things were hard back home [referring to a lack of basic needs in the household], we did not return home. We waited at the harbour for the thief to return – possibly the following morning – so that we could make them pay a fine for stealing our boat. The following day, we found our boat dumped quite a distance away from the harbour, and we were upset because we slept at the harbour, being bitten by mosquitoes (Gwenzi, 07/10/19).

...it had been several days without recovering our boat, and today, we decided to return home to at least have some food, a proper home-cooked meal. Instead, we proceeded to Jamaica Inn island, and sunset approached before we finished searching for the boat. ...this was a painful day for me because we travelled at night, unable to see where we were going ... it was time for wild animals to move around, and our mobile phones' batteries had died. We struggled to walk because we did not have a torch, and we were fear-gripped because of wild animals we knew abound in the Matusadonha forest in which we were travelling. We met a range of animals – hippos, lions, elephants, impalas, foxes, and buffalos – but persevered until we arrived home. What was painful was having to move without seeing where we were going and a strong wind strongly blowing dust on our faces. My wife gave me food, but I was distraught because we had not recovered our boat. It was barely two weeks after the acquisition of this boat for US\$120-00 or ZW\$1200-00 (Joseph Kapururira, 10/10/19).

The above excerpts depict one of the common challenges Gache-Gache fishers face regarding access to fishing livelihood assets. Having access to crucial livelihood assets – boats and nets – does not guarantee that fishers can go and cast their nets when they decide to because theft is rampant. Coupled with the unevenness of catches, theft of boats and nets means a further threat to livelihood security for most households in Gache-Gache. The vulnerability and uncertainty of livelihoods are broader, complex, and limited to the theft of livelihood assets. This chapter explores the susceptibility of fisher households' livelihoods to risk (vulnerability) and the ensuing uncertainty of livelihoods and food security. Vulnerability does not mean lack or want; instead, it refers to defencelessness, insecurity, and exposure to risk (Chambers 1989, 1).

Owning a boat and having nets is crucial because it ordinarily means one can cast nets without paying a rental fee to use someone else's. Not owning fishing equipment, mainly a boat, means one will have to pay a fee, further dwindling the potential remuneration from catches that are not guaranteed, and cases of fishers borrowing a boat and drawing a blank are rampant. This means paying boat rental fees without earning anything in return, further jeopardising households' food security.

Wealthy fishers (in relative terms) have mechanised boats, while poor fishers need more money to afford a net and talk less of a mechanised boat. Affording basic meals and the number of meals is also seasonal. The seasonality of fishing significantly affects the functions of many fishing families (Deb and Haque 2011, 2508). As the diarist above highlights, boats in Gache-Gache are critical assets, which one only gets after a considerable investment of money.

US\$120-00 may seem small to an outsider, but for Gache-Gache residents, it is enormous. Moreover, do the boats purchased through such an amount still not meet the specifications? The Lake captain and other lake management authorities recommended them. These are make-do boats that are homemade by local artisans in Gache-Gache.

These homemade boats are made of used roofing iron sheets, wood and tar and are very dangerous when paddling in the Kariba waters. Because they are not motorised, they also mean that fishers are restricted to fish in shallow waters, and from the perspective of fishermen in Gache-Gache, this limits their catches because they believe more fish can be caught in deeper water levels where there is less *ndombolo* noise. However, they are crucial for fishermen's livelihoods in Gache-Gache. Therefore, the diarist in the above quote expressed deep sorrow at the thought of losing the boat, which they had recently acquired at US\$120-00.



Figure 18 A Home-made non-motorised Boat at Makodzera Harbour

Assets in livelihoods research have mainly been conceptualised economically and materialistically because of the highly material view of the world (White and Ellison 2006, 13). Bebbington (1999, 2022) posits that other than their instrumental function (making a living), assets are also a source of “hermeneutic action” (making a living meaningful); they possess emancipatory power because they enable people to challenge the structures within which they live. Fishermen in Gache-Gache are susceptible to several environmental and human-induced risks that threaten their livelihoods. One of the main threats to livelihoods is waves on the lake. Waves make it impossible or difficult for fisherfolk and frequently blow away cast nets to the extent that fishermen may never recover them. One of the diarists detailed some such difficulties in the following way:

...we struggled against waves today. We had a challenge finding our nets; the wind had moved them. Some fish have gone stale, and we had to dispose of them. A significant loss has destroyed two more nets beyond recognition and repair. We departed and came back from the afternoon cast (24/10/19).

Some of these fishermen spent days on islands – especially unregistered–searching for good catches. The fishermen who camp on islands, some of whom do not own boats and nets, engage in stealing boats belonging to registered fishermen. When registered fishermen check their nets in the morning, they leave their boats at the harbour. As already highlighted in the introduction, fishermen without boats can steal boats from the harbour and use them on the islands without the owner's knowledge. This puts the livelihoods of fishermen whose boats are stolen at risk because, at times, they go for days without going to work. Having access to assets such as boats does not guarantee that fisherfolk can always go to work. They also face setbacks like the theft of those assets by other fishermen who do not have them. To recover stolen boats, fishermen sometimes spend days searching and sometimes visiting islands, where most irregular fishermen camp for several days to weeks. Since Gache-Gache is surrounded by a national park, tracing boat thieves is risky, especially as victims must travel at night in search of their boats, and there is a risk of meeting dangerous animals such as elephants, buffaloes, or lions.

The fish-driving exercise is the most common fishing method in Gache-Gache for several reasons. First, the monofilament net is affordable compared to the cotton net. This leaves fishermen no choice but to opt for the twine net. At the same time, however, the twine net is quickly destroyed by sticks on the lake and by fish-hunting crocodiles. It is common for fishermen to cast brand-new twine nets once and discover that crocodiles have destroyed them. Because of the fragility of the twine net, fishermen resort to relationships of convenience with those who sell nets. The typical arrangement between fishermen and net traders is that fishermen buy nets on credit and pay the following day. This arrangement often lands fishermen in trouble with traders because each fishing trip does not guarantee they will catch enough fish, enabling them to raise the money and pay the debt.

6.5 Human-Wildlife Conflict

Fishing is a precarious livelihood in Gache-Gache because of protected wild animals, particularly crocodiles and hippos. Fisherfolk in Gache-Gache deal with wild animals, particularly on the lake. One diarist sums up the dangers of fishing by detailing his encounter with a hippo on his way back to the harbour:

I went to work during the night and met a hippo with its calf. It did not retreat, and so I had to divert my route. While at work, I met a crocodile eating fish from my nets. I threw a stone at it, and it ran away, but my net was left in tatters to the extent that I had to buy a new one (19/10/19).

Another diarist gave a chilling eyewitness account of how he saw a boat with fishermen that was coming to the harbour narrowly escape an attack by a hippo:

...a hippo with a calf ‘popped up’ from the water very close to a boat with fishermen coming from work. The men paddled, and the hippo followed, chasing after them. After a few minutes, it gave up the chase and returned to where it had left its calf (22/10/19).

Fisherfolk often lose not only their catch but also their nets to crocodiles. One diarist detailed how he and his workmate lost his nets to a crocodile regardless of attempts to chase it away:

...while lining our nets, a crocodile passed through and tore one of our nets into two pieces. We tried to chase it away because our boat was almost drowning. We left the net there on the Lake (26/10/19).

Human-wildlife conflict accounts such as those detailed above will persist because of the diverse interests among lake users on Lake Kariba. Crocodiles, for instance, are protected by conservationists regardless of the threats they pose against fishermen’s livelihoods.

6.6 Everyday Coping Strategies

Sekuru³⁰ Luke and his workmate – Knowledge – have been mending nets without going to work for over a fortnight. The nets they are mending are highly torn, and it is taking them an unusually long time to close all the patches. They also do not have a boat and depend on hiring a boat from boat owners at a fee of US\$6-00 per fishing trip. For Sekuru Luke and his workmate – and indeed for many other fishermen who do not own boats – this is a tremendous amount of money they struggle to pay, especially during the cool-dry season when fish catches are typically very low. At times, fishermen resort to ‘borrowing’ boats without the owner’s knowledge/permission and return (or abandon) them afterwards for owners to recover at the harbour. This strategy of secretly ‘borrowing’ boats sometimes backfires when the owner(s) catch the culprits red-handed. For instance, several times during my stay in Gache-Gache, my host – kule Diva – and his workmate, kule Tonde, were caught, and the owners did not only

³⁰ Uncle

take their boat back. They also confiscated their catch, and sekuru Diva and his workmate returned home empty-handed. The boat owner took the catch and distributed it to people at the harbour. This is a form of punishment for offenders like sekuru Diva. It puts their respective households at risk of food insecurity since most fisher households rely mainly on these daily catches and have tiny bases for food stocks.

On the seventh of July 2020, Kudzi, a fisher buyer, arrived from Harare, the capital city, to buy fish. Kudzi, like other fish buyers, re-sells fish for more than double the amount he buys from fishermen. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the price of fish in Gache-Gache fluctuates depending on the season and availability of fish. When catches are low, as is the norm during winter (the current season we are in now), prices are relatively high and currently, a kilogram of fresh fish is being sold for US\$1.00. Fish buyers resell the fish at US\$ 3.50 per kilogramme. After the painstaking net-mending process, Sekuru Luke and Knowledge liaised with Kudzi for an upfront payment so that they could borrow a boat and bribe lake management authorities to cast their nets in prohibited areas of the lake. It is winter, and catches are meagre. Fishermen resort to diverse strategies to increase their catches, including bribing lake management officials to fish in restricted areas.

Instead of fishing as per their agreement with the fish buyer, Sekuru Luke and his workmate decided to go boozing. It is not difficult for them to explain to Kudzi why they failed to fulfil their part of the bargain. ‘We will simply tell him that Parks officials confiscated our nets,’ explains Sekuru Luke. The relationship between Kudzi, the fish buyer, and fishermen like Sekuru Luke is one of the temporary solutions for making ends meet. This is a practice not exclusive to Sekuru Luke and his workmate. Occasionally, fishermen extort money from fish buyers for alcohol for short-term de-stressing (through alcohol) from the challenges of everyday life in Gache-Gache. Heavy drinking puts their families at risk of food insecurity because many fishermen in Gache-Gache spend much money from a fishing trip on alcohol. When they have a good catch, fishermen, especially those practising *ndombolo* – a fish-driving practice that requires much manual labour – take a few days while ‘feasting’ on the money from the sale of their catch.³¹

Ndombolo, as already highlighted in chapter three, is practised at night, and fishermen face many challenges, including crocodiles hunting for fish from the fishermen’s nets. They also must avoid being caught by management authorities who will be on patrol to control illegal

³¹ Field notes, 02 June 2020

fishing. Waves or water currents on the lake also frequently disturb them, and in worst-case scenarios, they result in boats capsizing, drowning and death if help does not arrive on time. Most *ndombolo* fishermen (most Gache-Gache fishermen practise this) believe that fish will not be depleted in the lake and that there is no need to save on the proceeds from a fishing trip. 'We will go back to catch some more...' is a common phrase I encountered whenever I asked fishermen why they tended to indulge in excessive drinking and not saving for unforeseen emergencies.

However, in the long term, their families face a dire situation of food insecurity and starvation. Occasionally, they fall back on small donations of food from their relations. Sekuru Luke's predicament is not an isolated case. Instead, it resonates with most fishermen in Gache-Gache. The lives of fishermen in Gache-Gache are based on multiple forms of 'getting by', much like de Certeau's (1980) concept of everyday life as tactics. Their livelihoods are predicated on many short-term strategies of 'making do' or 'getting by'. In livelihood terms, one may be tempted to refer to this as diversification strategies, but some of these practices are temporary to the extent that what worked today will not work next time. For instance, after duping Kudzi, the fish buyer, for his money and not fulfilling their promise, it is unlikely that they will convince him to pay them upfront next time. Indeed, fisherfolk and household members in Gache-Gache diversify their livelihood portfolios. However, some practices are only used once and next time, they will have to devise different ways of getting by.

There are common disputes between fishermen and net traders when fishermen fail to pay for nets bought on credit. I witnessed many such disputes, with one resulting in the confiscation of a fisherman's properties, including a mobile phone, by a net seller. To overcome such disputes, some fishermen engage in what one fisherman called 'robbing John to pay Peter'. Robbing John to pay Peter refers to the practice whereby fishermen borrow nets from one net trader to afford them to fish to repay their debt to another net trader. They would have failed to pay because their batch of nets was destroyed before they had repaid the debt. These are relationships of convenience that enable fishermen to manage debts temporarily. After 'robbing John to pay Peter', fishermen still have to pay John for the nets they would have bought on credit. They remain in debt in the long term, but in the short term, they will have solved a pending debt, and the potential ruining of relationships with Peter will close the door for future transactions.

Wooten (2009: xviii) argues that the process of constructing and maintaining a meaningful livelihood is a creative one. Without overstating the agency of fisherfolk in Gache-Gache, there are several creative ways in which fisherfolk use Gache-Gache to create livelihoods—jumping from one workmate to another because of the availability or lack of assets (nets and a boat) and using connections to access assets like nets on credit, and paying ‘tollgate fees’ to Parks Officials are some of these creative ways Gache-Gache fishermen use to construct livelihoods.

In addition to nets being destroyed by crocodiles and sticks, fishermen risk having their nets confiscated by lake management authorities. Nets usually confiscated do not meet the recommended mesh and twine nets. As discussed in Chapter Three, the monofilament net is deemed illegal regardless of the mesh size. The smallest allowed mesh size for the legal cotton net is four inches. Fishermen frequently avoid having their nets confiscated if they are willing and able to pay a bribe to the lake management authorities. Some parts of the lake have acquired telling names such as the ‘tollgate’. At the ‘tollgate’, fishermen pay tollgate fees to access restricted areas and use illegal nets. Some fishermen go to the extent of developing relationships with lake management authorities such that, during one raid on illegal fishing at the Gache-Gache irrigation scheme, one of the affected fishermen shouted at a Park's official, *...but tinokupai muriwo use tinokutengerai doro nhasi maakukanganwa* (...but we often give fish for relish and buy beer for you yet today you seem to be forgetting). This reveals that fishermen try to be resourceful and get over the difficulties they face through relationships of convenience. These relationships are temporary, and fishermen face multiple sources of livelihood stress daily.

There are other key players with whom fishermen develop relationships of convenience – fish buyers. As already highlighted in the introduction, fishermen sometimes negotiate with fish buyers to get money either to hire a boat, bribe lake management officials or buy nets. While it is not always the case that fishermen will fulfil their part of the bargain afterwards, these relationships with fish buyers sometimes enable fishermen to buy nets to go to work, something which they would not otherwise afford, especially when they are going through difficult times, especially during winter. Again, these seasonal and temporary relationships do not solve fishermen's long-term challenges.

6.7 Food Donations and Everyday Tactics of Access in Gache-Gache

In Gache-Gache, just as in other rural areas of Zimbabwe, institutional livelihood support in the face of livelihood stress is provided by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare and some Non-Governmental Organisations in the form of food donations. This was a

food relief programme facilitated by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare to help people cope with food insecurity, particularly during the cool-dry season when fish catches were meagre. On paper, the target beneficiaries are the infirm and most vulnerable in Gache-Gache. One of the interlocutors, Richard, explained the criteria for selecting people who are expected to receive food donations thus:

Regarding people living with disabilities and orphans, what happens is that the donor – GOAL, Christian Care, or World Vision – comes to donate food. These donors do not just come in an unplanned manner. They first come for an assessment with the help of a local committee responsible for selecting beneficiaries. “Right, we are from Goal, and we have come to assist people living with disabilities, orphans and the elderly with maize seed, cooking oil, beans, peas and so forth.” After meeting residents in the whole of Gache-Gache, they unanimously claimed that I did not deserve any food aid because I was well-to-do and could afford a decent living, but I am just like most of those you see getting food aid. It happened just last month when people from the Department of Social Welfare came to update the list of beneficiaries.³²

Another Gache-Gache resident, Mr Buba, explained the selection criteria but also highlighted that this was leaving many residents disenfranchised because whether or not one is infirm, most people are already poor in Gache-Gache. He said:

It is food for those who are struggling to make ends meet. It is food meant for the elderly and those living with disabilities, so understandably, people like me do not qualify. Those living with disabilities and orphans, I also do not fit in this category because I am grown up, a father to other children. However, I am poor, and when they create a group of beneficiaries of poor people, I expect to be part of it. Some people raise their hands to say he is not poor; he is better than everyone in Gache-Gache. That means I do not fit any of the categories and criteria for food aid. I only benefited last time because they asked those who had never received food donations before to receive them. After all, there was a surplus.³³

Residents who have lived in Gache-Gache for many years also complained that the selection of those considered most vulnerable at times meant that newcomers benefitted ahead of them. Questions of belonging came into the discussion as residents who settled earlier in Gache-

³² Conversation with Richard, 17/08/20

³³ Conversation with Buba, 22/07/20

Gache complained that those who had recently immigrated benefited from the food relief programme. One such resident, Sazita, had this to say:

Some people who have barely been here for a year received food aid before us. I know one man who recently married a woman related to a household on the list of food aid beneficiaries. The household he married into keeps the book containing the beneficiaries list. The next round of donations he was on the list did not surprise us, but we were not happy. Therefore, besides fulfilling the stated criteria for receiving food aid, where you come from and who you know also determines whether you can receive food aid.³⁴

Another resident, Mr Ngeenge, raised similar concerns:

People are coming here looking for a way to survive, but they are making life difficult for us. Imagine someone who just disembarked from the bus last night being on the food aid list ahead of me, someone who has lived here for years—*Tirikudiyiwa takasvunura sedemba* (we are being prejudiced in broad day light).³⁵

In the face of the above-discussed manifold forms of livelihood vulnerability and uncertainty – particularly the inconsistent fish catches – households struggle to the extent of missing or reducing the number of meals they have per day. As such, the food donations, though temporary, go a long way in ensuring household food security. One of the food aid beneficiaries in August 20XX, sekuru Zebedi, had the following to say after receiving a sack of maize:

... I received a sack of maize, which comprises five buckets of maize, and it means I have saved US\$30.00. Of the US\$30.00, I must subtract US\$5.00 for transport, meaning I have saved US\$25.00. To have the five buckets of maize ground into flour, I must set aside US\$5.00. So, in the end, I saved US\$20.00. If my children attended school, I would use the US\$ 20.00 saved through this food donation to pay my daughter's fees. However, I am only giving you this easy breakdown because I can still go to work; I am not yet disabled. What if I get injured at work and am not on the food aid beneficiaries list? It is a challenge. This is how most people live here in Gache-Gache, *kuita zvekutsvara-tsvara* (they survive by scavenging).³⁶

³⁴ Conversation with Sazita, 15/08/20

³⁵ Conversation with Ngeenge, 19/08/20

³⁶ Conversation with sekuru Zebedi, 09/08/20

Sekuru Zebedi emphasises the importance of the donation he just received, enabling him to budget his meagre income from fishing towards other responsibilities like paying his child's school fees. However, he does not lose sight of the precarious position that he finds himself in because his job as a fisherman does not give him sufficient income to save, and he is also aware that he may get injured or die on the lake because of waves, crocodiles, or hippos. Sekuru Zebedi reveals that he was not supposed to be on the list of beneficiaries. However, he used subtle tactics to put his name on the food donations list. He explained how he got himself on the list as follows:

I have lived here for more than 15 years. I send my wife here, or I phone my sister to ask her children, Peter and John, to come and live with me for at least a month. I will ask that they bring with them their father's death certificate. The two will descend the mountain, and I will host them. When we get the notice that there will be food aid on this date, I will take Peter and John to the Child Protection Committee to register them on the food aid beneficiaries list. I will get food aid because I am looking after orphans. This is how I have survived for fifteen years, *ndiyo tsoro irikundiraramisa* (the trick enabling me to survive).³⁷

Kule Diva explained a similar tactic used by Gache-Gache residents to ensure they get on the beneficiaries list:

Some are using the names of people who have passed on. The people responsible for handing out the donations only look at the national ID card of the beneficiary in question. They explain that the beneficiary is at home, she/he cannot walk anymore, she is 70 or 75 years old, and I am her/his nephew. When the village head is asked whether he knows the person, he usually answers in the affirmative. The village head will already have received a cut in money or beer.³⁸

Some residents who did not have the leverage to be on the beneficiaries' list took advantage of some of the beneficiaries by asking them to sell some of the food they would have received. They knew that these beneficiaries would still need some money to go and have their maize ground into flour and to buy some daily necessities like soap. Gwenzi, one of the interlocutors said:

³⁷ Conversation with Mr Garawaziva, 23/08/20

³⁸ Conversation with kule Diva, 19/08/20

We survive by following beneficiaries at their homestead to buy basics like cooking oil at reduced prices compared to grocery shops. You may find someone with seven two-litre bottles of cooking oil.³⁹

Explaining the criteria for food aid, sekuru Zebedi acknowledged that the target beneficiaries, on paper, are the most vulnerable residents in Gache-Gache but also strongly hinted that every household was struggling. Everyone was struggling, hence the tactics used by other residents to get themselves on the list of beneficiaries.

As I explained the other day, we cannot voice our concerns during village meetings with many people. The food aid programme in Gache-Gache is currently meant for people who are over 60 years old, those living with disabilities, orphans and those considered to be poor. However, who is not poor here, if you look at it? We can blame the food distribution committee for putting down names of people who are not deserving, but the situation forces them. No one wants to steal from those struggling, but who is not struggling in Gache-Gache?⁴⁰

The above tactics ensure that some residents get on the beneficiaries list were not limited to ordinary residents only. Village heads and those leading the compilation also ensured they included individuals who would not ordinarily have qualified to be on the list. For instance, one August afternoon in 2020, village head Mupepe instructed me thus “When Elsie’s dad returns home, tell him to come to the DDF⁴¹ premises to fetch two sacks of maize,”. The two sacks of maize were for the two households of the Mupepe household – one for Kule Diva and his wife, Mai Elsie, and another for village head Mupepe and his household unit. These donations, however, were subject to on-the-ground manipulation and politics as people struggled to make ends meet. From the committee responsible for putting down the list of beneficiaries to those involved in transporting the food to Gache-Gache, everyone tried to take advantage of the situation to benefit their immediate household members. Villagers mainly complained about the requirement for beneficiaries to pay for the transportation of the food donations to Gache-Gache. Residents also complained about the transportation money asked for from beneficiaries, who, in their view, are already struggling and would find it difficult to pay the US\$2.50. This, in the view of many, was furthering the precarious situation which

³⁹ Conversation with Gwenzi, 17/08/20

⁴⁰ Conversation with sekuru Zebedi, 09/08/20

⁴¹ Acronym for District Development Fund

beneficiaries were already in. Residents suspected that this was corruption by those handling the food donations at a local level. Mr Buba had this to say:

I have some unanswered questions regarding the money food aid beneficiaries are being asked to pay. I was calculating the other day: If I hire a truck for transporting maize seed from Karoi or Magunje, using their figures, that will amount to US\$ 2600. Let us assume that the vehicle has transported about five tonnes of maize seed – would that amount be reasonable? No. My workmate and I once hired a truck to transport five tonnes worth of fish from Gache-Gache to Harare, and the money we paid for that did not surpass US\$ 300. With the current number of beneficiaries, they are making a killing.⁴²

Village head Mr Mupepe used his position to have his name and son, kule Diva, on the list of beneficiaries. The food relief programme targeted senior residents (65 years or older) and those with disabilities and chronic ailments. This meant village head Mupepe acted outside the official guidelines for food aid beneficiaries by including himself and his son. This calls for rethinking the moral economy of subsistence argument put forward in chapter two. While in chapter two, I argued that a general moral economy of survival is prevalent in Gache-Gache, actions such as these by village head Mupepe appear to suggest the contrary. However, this only reveals the unevenness of this “shared moral universe”. In some circumstances, such as in the face of food insecurity, individuals pursue their self-interests ahead of the community. Generally, a moral economy of survival is present, but individuals concentrate on ensuring food security for their households during crises. More micropolitics as ordinary villagers bring children from the communal lands to Gache-Gache to have them benefit. In the face of livelihood stress, however, the pursuit of self-interest was also seen throughout the food distribution exercise in Gache-Gache. Richard complained about nepotism in the selection of beneficiaries, highlighting that it is only when there is deemed to be some surplus that residents without any relationship or connection to the village and selection get on the beneficiaries list:

If you look at it, there is much nepotism here in Gache-Gache. Most people who get food donations are connected through kinship ties or marriage – father, son, daughter, son-in-law, aunt, sister-in-law, etc. Surnames may be different, but you can see that this person who has just received her donation is the mother, and the next in line is the daughter-in-law, followed by the son, then the nephew until the chain is finished. When

⁴² Conversation with Mr Buba, 21/07/20

you see us, the unconnected getting the donations, the connected will have almost finished everything. The food donations, which rarely happens, will be in surplus for us to get on the list and get the food. We pick up the crumbs that fall from the table after the masters have been well-fed.⁴³

Clearly, in the face of struggles by nearly every household to be food secure, the shared moral universe that puts the interests of the most vulnerable first was put aside. In addition to adding ineligible beneficiaries to the list, some took advantage of those who did not have the money to pay for transportation. They paid the transportation money in return for sharing the food received in half. This pushed the beneficiaries into further precarity because they only received half of the intended donation, meaning they would only last a few weeks. One such resident, who relied on paying for transport in return for a share of the donation, said, “If I pay for your donation, you must give me a bucket of maize. That is fair. If the Social Welfare Department is donating the food, they must bring it, and my name must be on the list. I am poor, as you can see. If I were not poor, I would have been able to offer you something to eat or drink, even just a cup of tea.”⁴⁴ Some of the residents, however, paid on behalf of beneficiaries who did not have money for transport without asking for a share in return. Mr Buba expressed his views on the situation thus:

Recently, I went to receive food aid for my mum, and I saw this older woman to whom I gave US\$2.50. The woman lives with her niece, who is unemployed. Someone had offered to give her US\$ 2.50 on the condition that they would share the donation equally. I felt this was unfair, so I assisted her for free. I also met two other people who only had US\$ 2.00 each and assisted them with 50 cents, which they were short of.⁴⁵

Sekuru Zebedi also expressed similar concerns regarding beneficiaries after an encounter with a beneficiary complaining about the payment for transport. He had this to say:

I met this woman complaining that she did not see how they were being helped when asked to pay for the donations. It is more like being asked to buy food that is supposed to be free. Those in charge threatened to take back the food because of her complaints. It is a challenge. You see, my case is different because I am still able-bodied, and I can fend for myself. Whenever we run out of essential food, I need to spend at least US\$ 6.

⁴³ Conversation with Buba, 22/07/20

⁴⁴ Conversation with Ba Tanaka, 23/08/20

⁴⁵ Conversation with Buba, 22/07/20

00 – US\$ 5.00 for a bucket of maize and US\$1.00 for grinding the maize into flour for *sadza*.⁴⁶

Ultimately, institutional support in the form of food donations did not achieve its intended objectives for several reasons. The fact that most households already live in a state of precarity, and livelihood uncertainty means that even those households not officially designated as beneficiaries tried to find informal means to benefit from the donation to ensure food security albeit for a very short period.

6.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed manifold forms of vulnerability among fisher households in Gache-Gache, affecting livelihoods and food security, and these vulnerabilities or co-precarieties shape fishers' views about their future in the Gache-Gache fishery. The manifold vulnerabilities emanate from various sources but are mainly institutional and environmental. The vulnerabilities such as reduced fish catches, lack of access to credit to invest in safe fishing assets (such as boats and life jackets), and lack of a reliable source capital for assets like fishing nets push people to get by through informal means such as borrowing nets from net traders to pay for after selling their catch, “stealing” other fishers' assets (especially boats) to go fishing and avoiding following official rules to get on the food aid beneficiaries list. This resonates with much of what previous livelihoods scholarship has extensively documented. The borrowing of livelihood assets such as nets with the intention of paying back later can be framed under the importance of social capital –it is not every fisherman that a fishing net trader will lend to but those whom they trust and have a history of paying their debts. However, environmental vulnerabilities within the Gache-Gache fishery sometimes break such ties of trust when fishermen cast nets, which are destroyed before they have made money to pay back the debts.

State institutions such as ZimParks maintain less favourable conditions for livelihood construction from fishermen's perspective, such as the conservation regime that protects crocodiles at the expense of the safety of fishermen on the lake. More importantly, even though Gache-Gache is considered customarily a communal land under the leadership of village heads, villagers in Gache-Gache still do not have security of tenure, and interlocutors expressed worry that the state may displace them in future should they decide to embark on a big project. It is from the lack of tenure security that part of the title for the chapter “We do not know what the

⁴⁶ Conversation with VaManeja, 27/08/20

future holds” emanated as some fishers were deliberating on the changes to the fishing timetable that had been affected by ZimParks in September 2020 directing all fishers to stop casting nets when there is a full moon. Fishers felt defenceless, affecting how they dealt with their vulnerabilities in the face of uncertainty about their future.

In tandem with livelihoods scholarship, the household as a unit of analysis must be treated with caution. As demonstrated in the chapter, some household members choose to spend the meagre income they get on alcohol, partly because of the frustrations and dangers they face while fishing on the Lake, the belief that they can always go back and fish some more and earn more money, and the lack of clarity regarding their future in Gache-Gache. As such, they understand and tease out some of the everyday subtleties surrounding individuals within households and what they contribute to the household regarding food security and enhancement of livelihoods.

Though institutions co-produce livelihood vulnerability in Gache-Gache, institutional support was not wholly absent in Gache-Gache because, due to food insecurity, the government and some non-governmental organisations supported the community through food donations. Though temporary, food donations contributed towards significant relief amidst livelihood stress and food insecurity, especially during the cool-dry season when catches and income from fishing are relatively low. The everyday politics around food aid and how food donations are distributed, however, call for a revisit to some of the concepts used earlier in the thesis, such as the persistence of a shared moral universe that protects the interests of everyone in the community. Non-disabled community members taking advantage of the vulnerable intended food aid beneficiaries means that villagers prioritise their survival at the expense of other community members during livelihood stress.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This thesis has ethnographically explored livelihoods and everyday life in Gache-Gache, a community of five fishing villages representing five different chiefs and their people who were displaced to pave the way for Lake Kariba's construction in the 1950s. I framed the study through three interrelated concepts: moral economy, post-humanism, and livelihood-making. The study is about everyday life and livelihood-making, not just people earning an income for their households and families. In most former settler communities, people sharing borders with protected areas bear the brunt of conservation rules that have a bearing on their livelihoods, usually in an adverse way (see Munro 1998; Neumann 2002). Such contexts are often characterised by legacies of the bifurcated colonial state model, which comprised civic and customary rule – entangling two frequently contradictory ways of understanding and living with the environment. This historical context is essential in understanding how people make livelihoods in ways that are meaningful to them. The ways through which meaningful livelihoods are constructed Gache-Gache require paying attention to moral values and other-than-humans' role in shaping livelihoods and everyday life. To conclude, I invite the reader to the following excerpt from an interview with my host, kule Diva, at the beginning of fieldwork in October 2019. Kule Diva detailed how his father, village head Mupepe (sabhuku), 'initiated' him into life as a fisherman:

...a few days after my wife eloped with me because she was pregnant with our first child, sabhuku [village head Mupepe] had an honest and challenging conversation with me: he told me that I had to man up; I was now a grown man and had to work to provide for my family. I was distraught, did not know how to paddle, and worse, was afraid of crocodiles and hippos in the lake. We went to a poaching area on the first day that sabhuku took me to work. We entered the lake from an island called Tsuwa. We paddled until we reached the Gache-Gache River. We passed the Gache-Gache irrigation scheme and Ferreira's safari hunter's lodge. We lined our nets for tiger fish in the Gache-Gache River. It was during the rainy season, and we would 'fetch' fish aplenty. We constantly checked our nets every five minutes to counter crocodile raids on our nets. Crocodiles frequently destroy our nets in search of fish caught in the nets. During these escapades, my dad tried collecting fish from the nets. A crocodile appeared very

close to where he was but did not seem fazed. I think he had neither noticed nor heard the splashing of the water. “What is that?” I asked him, my heart beating very fast in fright. My father was holding fish when he wondered what had popped up in the water. He immediately dropped the fish into the water, and the crocodile grabbed the fish that had been dropped, and my father narrowly escaped a crocodile attack...

What kule Diva said above sums up much of what livelihood-making and everyday life in Gache-Gache comprise. It highlights aspects of fishery governance and non-compliance as they cast nets in restricted areas—what Kule Diva refers to as a poaching area. The excerpt lays bare the intricate link between gillnet fishing, livelihood-making, and vulnerability. Kule Diva had to fend for his wife and family. In the process, he participated in a risky endeavour where they interacted with crocodiles, risking his life. His father had to initiate him into fishing regardless of the dangers of fishing that his son was afraid of. This is representative of most if not all, households in Gache-Gache: fishing is about livelihood sustenance regardless of the dangers fisherfolk encounter on the lake. Fishing on the shores of Lake Kariba is a risk well documented in the literature on Lake Kariba (see McGregor 2009; Matanzima and Marowa 2022) as it happens in a multipurpose lake which gillnet fishers share with not only other human users but also dangerous animals like hippos and crocodiles and unpredictable weather conditions.

From his narration, we also learn that kule Diva and his father engage in fishing during the night. As already detailed in the thesis, this form of fishing, particularly in chapters two and four, is called *ndombolo* and is considered illegal by fishery regulatory authorities. Understanding why fishers like kule Diva and his father engage in it, however, requires one to look beyond fishers’ economic motivations, incorporating a moral economy of survival lens as well as an approach that considers the broader functioning of the fishery through a consideration of the other-than-human elements of the fishery. The moral economy of survival in the context of Gache-Gache generally refers to the right to livelihood and the expectation by Gache-Gache residents that the regulatory authorities should relax some fishing regulations, such as the requirement to be a registered fisher before they can fish. This right to fish is emphasised by fishers in the face of the incessant economic misery that has continued to trouble Zimbabwe since the turn of the millennium when the state affected a poorly planned land redistribution exercise. On that understanding, this thesis used a tripartite analytical lens, namely the moral economy approach, materiality and actor-network theory, also drawing on some concepts from the livelihood’s framework, particularly vulnerability and coping, that help us to understand a range of essential themes in studies of fishery-based livelihoods and

everyday life. The following sections below focus on some of the major themes discussed in this thesis. The chapter concludes with a section on contributions to knowledge, reflections on how the research questions were answered and some suggestions for further research.

7.2 Belonging and The Moral Economy of Survival

Belonging and, by extension, the right for people to fish are part of the major themes from the data. I argue that ‘belonging’ and the ‘right to fish’ in Gache-Gache are seldom fixed and fluctuate depending on the situation. It is necessary to differentiate complex categories of actors according to varying situations. Using the concept of the moral economy of survival, the thesis revealed the different conditions that structure the ethics of care, interdependence and belonging among fishers in Gache-Gache. The argument is that the principles of mutual caring and sharing – encapsulated in a shared moral economy of survival – among registered fishermen are not fixed but shift depending on the situation. Fishery managers' and fishers' positions are also not to be taken for a uniform dichotomy because state employees also, at times, share in the same moral economy of survival principle and do not consistently enforce the mandate given to them by the state.

7.3 Other-than-Humans, Livelihoods and Everyday Life

The thesis also highlighted the importance of recognising other-than-humans' role in understanding livelihoods and everyday life in Gache-Gache. A binary division between nature and culture impedes the preunderstanding of environmentalities (Mawere 2015). In contrast, a posthuman approach (see Haraway 1991; Nayar 2009; Mawere 2015) focuses on the relationships between people, animals, the state, and things. Taking after literature on assemblages (see Moore 2005) and materiality (Fontein 2015; Ingold 1993; 2000), I argued that humans and non-human actors play an essential role in livelihood-making, everyday life, place-making and shaping of the history of places. The concept of assemblages and actor-network theoretical perspectives were adopted to frame the study. These perspectives are helpful because they capture the complex livelihood-making processes among Gache-Gache fishers.

Livelihoods and everyday life in Gache-Gache are animated by other-than-humans that, together with humans, are intertwined to co-produce them. While the concepts of assemblage and actor networks are helpful, there is a need to be careful to eschew producing ahistorical narratives through a flat ontology that ignores the disproportionate power possessed by humans in shaping history (McGregor 2009). To avoid an account that equates all entities as equal, the chapter adopts Munyaradzi Mawere's (2015) concept of a hierarchised environment

comprising the creator, ancestors, humans, other beings, and entities in that order. Such hierarchisation notes humans' power in shaping history but also recognises the influence of other-than-humans.

Fishing in Gache-Gache involves the effort of the fisherfolk, their fishing assets (nets and boats), and other-than-human beings – ancestors and animals that directly structure and affect everyday life and livelihoods. For communities living and working on its shores, Lake Kariba is not just an external water body upon which they derive their livelihood. It embodies their identity and being because the ultimate authorities who determine its use are the ancestors whose lineage is traceable to the pre-displacement phase.

Other-than-humans partake in or shape fishery governance and fisher compliance politics. In this study, waves directly affect whether fishers in Gache-Gache comply with the set timetable, as demonstrated in this chapter. Fishers are unable to go and cast or check nets because waves sometimes go onto the Lake outside the designated timetable as they struggle to make a living, which generates conflicts between fishery managers and gillnet fishers. Other beings, such as crocodiles, are essential from the perspective of fishery managers and those involved in crocodile farming. However, they directly affect the livelihoods of gillnet fishers through destruction of fisher nets, eating their catch, injuring and killing fishers. This again generates conflicts between fishery managers and fishers whose livelihoods are threatened by these other-than-humans. Though other beings and entities are not equal to humans, they directly affect and shape livelihoods and the politics surrounding everyday life in Gache-Gache.

However, it is essential to note that in Gache-Gache residents' cosmology, other beings – ancestors and the creator – have power above humans. This allows for processes of ensoulment whereby ancestors use other beings to communicate with the residents of Gache-Gache. This was demonstrated in the chapter, for instance, the elephant raids, roaming lions in the villages, and wave-induced turbulence when one indulged in extramarital sex. In this sense, an associative network of ancestors, other beings, and entities coalesces to shape everyday life and livelihoods in Gache-Gache.

7.4 'Scraping By' Amidst Declining Catches

Chapter Four explored how the net as a livelihood asset is at the centre of the politics surrounding the quest for survival for fisher households on the one hand and the protection of elite tourism and sport fishing interests on the other. When discussing fisher decisions about fishing gear, these concepts become more persuasive. Fishers choose the monofilament net

because of its materiality, affordability, and availability. The efficiency of the monofilament net, coupled with the consensus that everyone needs to survive in a context of livelihood stress, leads many to choose fishing gear otherwise deemed illegal by the fishery regulatory authorities. There is a gap between the understandings of fishers, whose ecological knowledge derives from many years of living and working on the shoreline, which makes them confident that the fishery, to quote Muttenger's (2020) observation among Vezo fishers in Madagascar, is an infinitely "giving environment". Based on science and official globally accepted (though problematic) approaches to fishing regulations, the state and other conservation agencies describe the monofilament net as destructive fishing gear capable of depleting fish stocks.

The question of whether fish stocks can be depleted is contested. Previous studies (e.g., Allison and Ellis, 2001; Nyikahadzoi & Rakjaer, 2014; Cepic & Nunan, 2017) have highlighted the importance of fisher knowledge accrued over years of living and working within the environment and how this, in part, shapes whether fishers comply with fishing regulations. The same can be said about Gache-Gache fishers, many of whom believe that fish stocks cannot be depleted. Over the years, low catches have been explained by fish migration to quieter parts of the Lake. In this sense, fisher non-compliance with fishing gear regulations can be explained in terms of the perceived superfluosity of the fishing regulations (see Cepic and Nunan); fishers do not see why they must be stopped from using the twine net under the guise of finishing off all the fish from the Lake.

The monofilament fishing net is also at the centre of contestation regarding priorities – should the interests of tourists and the state be promoted ahead of the survival interests of the fishers? In Gache-Gache, fishers and conservationists generally agree regarding the dangers of ghost fishing caused by the monofilament twine net. However, fishers in Gache-Gache question the effects of the annual Tiger tournament, which they say also similarly harms fish. In this sense, there is an impasse between fishers and the state, and fishers do not see why they should change their methods. It is also essential to note that fishing regulations enforcement officers also profit from illegal monofilament nets by confiscating them and re-selling them to other fishers.

Seasonal fluctuations produce precarity and uncertainty that lead to survival innovations such as *chiposhongwe*, an in-fishery coping strategy in the face of the cool-dry season's reduced fish catches and the travel restrictions imposed by the Zimbabwean government to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. This meant a curtailment of most diversification options for households in Gache-Gache as the mobility of people to other places outside Gache-Gache

was limited. Though Gache-Gache household members still tried to travel to other places for vending and other onshore livelihoods strategies, they faced further challenges, such as bribing ZimParks officials and police officers manning roadblocks to enforce the lockdown. In this context, chiposhongwe gained traction as the most critical way of coping with the threat of livelihood stress and food insecurity in fisheries. As highlighted throughout the chapter, appraising chiposhongwe as a coping strategy must not be misconstrued as Gache-Gache households' mastery over the threat of food insecurity but just an attempt to "get by" as they struggle to ensure they are food secure within the confines of their locale and limited mobility.

However, the on-the-ground practice of chiposhongwe provides a helpful lens through which to contribute to discussions on the mutual constitution between the environment and humans. In concurrence with the scholarship on fishery-based livelihoods (see, for instance (Allison and Ellis 2001,378; Simmance 2002, 706; Deb and Haque 2011, 2058), fluctuations in catches expose fisher households to food insecurity and affect the functioning of households/families. Alisson and Ellis (2001) stress the importance of understanding the creative coping strategies of fishers as they face resource fluctuations and other shocks. In most cases, these coping strategies are trans-local and, therefore, involve travelling; more needs to be discussed regarding contexts where travelling is restricted. Diversification often involves fishers migrating to other fishing grounds (see Nunan 2010; Muttenger 2020; Gonzalez-Mon et al. 2021) or focusing on different fish species as an in-fishery coping strategy (Anderson et al. 2017; Gonzalez-Mon 2021). As a form of in-fishery coping strategy, chiposhongwe adds to how we can understand how fishery-dependent households try to cope amid livelihood stress. Though not a long-lasting solution, chiposhongwe helps us know that the natural functioning of the fishery, in this case, seasonal fish scarcity, can also present opportunities for fisher households.

As illustrated in chapter five, the chiposhongwe practice in Gache-Gache is one form of in-fishery coping strategy that responds to the fishery's seasonal fluctuations. It must be highlighted that chiposhongwe is by no means a long-lasting solution, and it only satisfies some of the needs of a given household in all situations. Maposhongwe are crucial people, usually fishermen who suspend fishing to focus on being go-betweens for fishers and fish buyers. Maposhongwe practice chiposhongwe (fish hustling and preparation on behalf of fish buyers in return for money and other on-the-ground informal agreements, such as having fish buyers sell fish on their behalf in urban locations for more significant profits). Maposhongwe are mainly fishermen who stop fishing during the cool-dry season because of decreased catches to

capitalise on the desperation of fish buyers competing for scarce fish. Chiposhongwe can be described as an in-fishery coping strategy in the face of livelihood stress and food insecurity due to decreased catches during the cool-dry season. This coping strategy is the focus of this chapter.

Admittedly, they face many hardships and challenges but strive to make ends meet through thick and thin. More so in a context where opportunities are limited because more than two decades of politico-economic crisis have made fishing one of the safety nets not only for Zambezi Valley residents but many more who have migrated to eke out a living from fishing in the face of limited livelihood options elsewhere. It is, at best, a stop-gap measure amidst the four-month winter season in Zimbabwe, which helps households get by, taking each day as it comes. Chiposhongwe also reveals the complex nature of coping strategies because Maposhongwe's success in earning an income, albeit in the short term, is mediated by factors such as seniority and age. In analyses of coping strategies, variables such as age must be considered in addition to the capital/assets a household has access to. Ultimately, chiposhongwe epitomises a form of survival chance-seeking "everyday-crises-living" (see Helliker et al. 2021) strategy that does not provide long-term livelihood security.

The thesis also highlighted manifold forms of vulnerability among fisher households in Gache-Gache, affecting livelihoods and food security, and how these vulnerabilities or co-precarities shape fishers' views about their future in the Gache-Gache fishery. The manifold vulnerabilities emanate from various sources but are mainly institutional and environmental. The vulnerabilities such as reduced fish catches, lack of access to credit to invest in safe fishing assets (such as boats and life jackets), and lack of a reliable source of capital for assets like fishing nets push people to get by through informal means such as borrowing nets from net traders to pay for after selling their catch, "stealing" other fishers' assets (especially boats) to go fishing and avoiding following official rules to get on the food aid beneficiaries list. This resonates with much of what previous livelihoods scholarship has extensively documented. The borrowing of livelihood assets such as nets to pay back later can be framed under the importance of social capital –it is not every fisherman that a fishing net trader will lend to but those whom they trust and have a history of paying their debts. However, environmental vulnerabilities within the Gache-Gache fishery sometimes break such ties of trust when nets are destroyed before borrowers have made enough money to pay back their debts.

State institutions such as ZimParks promote unfavourable conditions for livelihood construction from fishermen's perspective, such as the conservation regime that protects crocodiles at the expense of the safety of fishermen on the lake. More importantly, even though Gache-Gache is considered customarily a communal land under the leadership of village heads, villagers in Gache-Gache still do not have the security of tenure, and interlocutors expressed worry that the state may displace them in future should they decide to embark on a big project. It is from the lack of tenure security that part of the title for the chapter “We do not know what the future holds” emanated as some fishers were deliberating on the changes to the fishing timetable that had been announced by ZimParks in September 2020, directing all fishers to stop casting nets when there is a full moon. Stopping fishing when there is a full moon is a practice hitherto practised by fishermen who cast nets and leave to check them the following morning. The logic behind this is that when there is a full moon, fishers are unlikely to catch fish because fish can detect or see the net. Now, the ZimParks authorities were forcing every fisherman, including those who practice ndombolo, not to go fishing until the full moon is gone. Fishers felt defenceless, affecting how they dealt with their vulnerabilities in the face of uncertainty about their future.

In tandem with livelihoods scholarship, the household as a unit of analysis must be treated with caution. As demonstrated in the chapter, some household members choose to spend the meagre income they get on alcohol, partly because of the frustrations and dangers they face while fishing on the Lake, the belief that they can always go back and fish again to earn more money, and the lack of clarity regarding their future in Gache-Gache. As such, they understand and tease out some of the everyday subtleties surrounding individuals within households and what they contribute to the household regarding food security and enhancement of livelihoods.

Though institutions co-produce livelihood vulnerability in Gache-Gache, institutional support was not wholly absent in Gache-Gache because, due to food insecurity, the government and some non-governmental organisations supported the community through food donations. Though temporary, food donations contributed towards significant relief amidst livelihood stress and food insecurity, especially during the cool-dry season when catches and income from fishing are relatively low. However, the everyday politics around food aid and how food donations are distributed call for a revisit to some of the concepts used earlier in the thesis, such as the moral economy of survival discussed earlier in the thesis. Non-disabled community members taking advantage of the vulnerable intended food aid beneficiaries means that

villagers prioritise their survival at the expense of other community members during livelihood stress.

7.5 Contributions to Knowledge

The thesis has provided insightful answers to the research questions, revealing the precarious nature of livelihoods and everyday life and how fisherfolk strive to cope with livelihood stress. Using a shared moral economy of survival analytical lens and considering other-than-humans' influence, the study significantly contributes to our understanding of fisheries, belonging, identity and livelihoods, offering practical insights for policy and practice. Fisheries anthropology broadly explores a range of topics, including but not limited to maritime tenures and economies, the gendered nature of fishing, how people cope with danger and risk, and the specificities of how this watery nature is manifested in social, political, and cultural systems (McCormack and Forde 2020, 1). Key themes in fisheries anthropology include local and indigenous marine environmental knowledge and practices, the existence of territoriality and sea tenure, and nuanced accounts of the changes necessitated by the imposition of new fisheries management regimes and technology (McCormack and Forde 2020, 1-2). Increasingly, fisheries anthropologists have contributed to understanding property relations, neo-liberalisation, financialisation, governmentality and nature-culture relations (McCormack and Forde 2020, 2). The ethnographic material in this study adds to this existing body of literature by providing detailed descriptions of Gache-Gache residents' understandings of the environment (the fishery) and how this influences their decisions about important questions such as the fishing gear and the fishing methods they employ.

The thesis contributes to scholarship on small-scale fisheries, livelihoods, and everyday life in marginal areas. Its main contribution is empirical – an ethnography of everyday life and livelihoods in fishing villages - which helps understand broader themes around small-scale inland fisheries research, such as (non)compliance, governance, and livelihoods. As Wooten (2009) argued in the case of the Mande in rural Mali, livelihoods are constructed in a meaningful way in every given community. This thesis tried to understand how villagers and fisherfolk in Gache-Gache construct meaningful livelihoods, paying attention to the materiality of the fishery and environment. Recognising the importance of the materiality of the fishery and its affordances provides a leeway for understanding small-scale fisheries livelihoods in a way that does not solely focus on the agency and ingenuity of the fishers and villagers.

An analytical lens of other-than-humans enabled a more holistic understanding of how everyday life unfolds and how livelihoods are constructed. It reveals how people negotiate

livelihoods and everyday life, their identity, and their relationship with the environment. This approach has been critiqued for providing a ‘flat ontology’ that emphasises the agency of other-than-humans to the extent of equating them with the power and agency of humans. This is understandable given the many different approaches that researchers on materiality and other-than-humans focus on the agency and the lively nature of matter (see Bennet 2010) without emphasising the essence of humans. Heeding Mawere’s (2015) call for maintaining the essence of humans while acknowledging the agency of other-than-humans allows for understanding the complex ecological settings in which fishers construct livelihoods, with other-than-humans significantly shaping livelihoods and everyday life.

An analytical framework of humans, other beings and the environment, with hierarchy at the centre of it, as proposed by anthropologist Munyaradzi Mawere (2015), avoids flat ontology. Flat ontology is a critique levelled against some seminal authors on materiality and the agency of Like Mawere’s (2015) study in Southern Zimbabwe; this study placed humans at the centre of a hierarchised environment – ancestors, humans, and other beings. As elucidated in the thesis, multiple specific other-than-humans affect livelihoods differently in Gache-Gache. This is useful not only for an academic understanding of fishery behaviour but also for fishery managers and those concerned with enforcing conservation and sustainable use of fishery resources.

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Appendix

Information sheet

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Information Sheet for the project, 'Conservation, Landscape and Belonging on the Shores of Lake Kariba'.

Thank you for taking your time to consider participating in my study. This sheet explains my project and ensures that your participation is voluntary and that you have been informed of the nature of my study. You are free to consult other people before deciding.

I am a PhD student from the University of Birmingham and I am required to conduct fieldwork as part of the requirements for my doctoral studies. My study is about conservation, landscape and belonging on the shores of Lake Kariba. I am trying to understand the relationships that

different users of Lake Kariba – hoteliers, safari operators, fishermen and wildlife authorities - have with the natural environment, other non-human surroundings, and with other users in the past and present. The study combines historical sources with primary data through archival research and interviews with users of Lake Kariba. For the historical part, I am using the National Archives and the Lake Kariba Fisheries Research Institute. For the present day part, I am using informal interviews and participant observation with different users of Lake Kariba – fishermen, hoteliers (specifically Bumi Hills Hotel), safari operators and employees of the state.

I will partake in some of your work life (such as mending of fishing nets and other household chores in the fishing camp including gathering of firewood for domestic use, catering and hospitality services rendered to tourists). I will ask for permission to partake in these daily activities, and it is entirely up to you to approve or decline my participation in these daily activities of your work life. If you agree, I will also give you a diary in which you can record some of your daily activities related to my study – only record those activities, events or encounters that you are comfortable to share with me. I will record research data in the form of daily field notes, informal interviews and possibly photographs. Taking of photographs is contingent on approval from each research participant. Either during the interviews I will take notes, or I will record our conversations to write up later – depending on what best suits you. I will treat all the information you give me in confidence. Your participation in the study is completely anonymous, unless you request that your name to be used. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time up until the first three months of your participation. If you withdraw, I will destroy all data obtained from you. If you have difficulty with contacting me, you can get in touch with chief Mola, your ward councillor or any of the secondary school teachers at Mola High School.

Based on my study, I will write a PhD thesis about conservation, landscape and belonging on the shores of Lake Kariba, Zimbabwe which will be published by November 2022. I will potentially publish academic journal articles or a monograph afterwards.

Kind regards,

Felix Tombindo

Informed Consent Form

The following is a consent form for the research project on ‘Conservation, Landscape and Belonging on the Shores of Lake Kariba’ to be conducted by the researcher (Felix Tombindo). Prior to your decision to agree or decline to participate, I kindly ask you to read this form carefully and ask any questions that you may have. Before your participation, the participant (you) and the investigator (me) should sign two copies of this form.

Consent for Participation in Ethnographic Study

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Felix Tombindo, a student from the University of Birmingham. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about everyday practices of belonging and place making among users of Lake Kariba shores.

My participation is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time during the first three months of the study. I will not incur any penalty for withdrawing participation from the study. If I decline to participate from the study, no one in the community will be told.

I agree to participate in the following research activities (tick appropriate box):

- Informal interviews on daily activities on place-making and life on the shores of Lake Kariba. Yes No

I give consent to the researcher’s following research activities (tick appropriate box):

- Allowing the researcher to actively participate in some of my daily work life activities on the lake and in the fishing camp (fishing, mending of broken nets, partaking in daily household chores, daily hospitality chores at Bumi Hills hotel, boat cruising, site seeing, tour guiding) Yes No
- Keeping a diary in which I will document some of my daily encounters (that I feel comfortable revealing to the researcher) related to conservation and interaction with different users of Lake Kariba. Yes No
- Taking photographs if he has obtained my consent before taking them. Yes No
- Audio taping of the informal interviews that I will participate in. Yes No

- I understand that the researcher will not identify me by my name in any reports using information from the informal interviews, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Yes No
- I understand that subsequent uses of the records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions. Yes No
- I am 18 years of age or above. Yes No
- I have been provided adequate information on who to contact if I want to withdraw participation but unable to reach the researcher by email or phone after fieldwork has been completed. Yes No
- I have read and understood the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Yes No
- I have been given a copy of this consent form. Yes No

My Signature

Date

Participant Name

Researcher's Signature

Indicative List of Questions

- What are your primary sources of livelihood, and what, if any, are the challenges you face in livelihood-making?

- Your household composition is a crucial aspect of our research. Could you please share how many members are economically active? Your response will help us understand the local labour market and its dynamics.
- How long have you lived here?
- What, if any, are some popular place names that reveal people-animal relationships in this area? what do they tell us about people living here and their relationships with the environment? Can such relationships be extended towards understanding the relationships people have with the environment in this area? If so, how?
- The environment and animals are an integral part of our lives. Could you share what they mean to you and the role they play in your daily life? Your insights will help us understand the local ecosystem and its significance in your daily life.
- What are some of the key skills one must master to live in peaceful coexistence with wild animals in this area?
- What is the nature of your relationship with other non-human beings that you consider important?
- What is your general perception of the relationship between land and nature and their relevance to your sense of 'home' and living ethically in your area?
- Which would be worse: if humans died out and other life forms survived, or if other life forms died out but humans survived?
- Do you consider the natural world only valuable due to its use to human beings? Why?
- How much would you be prepared to give up preventing further damage to the environment/ animals?
- Should we be more concerned about the needs of people alive today or in the future?
- What is the nature of your current relationships with those employed with state to 'protect' the environment and wildlife?
- What, if anything, would you rather see improved about this relationship with the state ?

