Local participation in the management of protected areas: legitimate claims and unfulfilled promises: a case study of Wadi El Gemal Protected Area in Egypt

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Abstract: In Egypt, there has been an increasing recognition that the establishment of protected areas (PAs) alone cannot safeguard perpetuation of biodiversity, and local community participation is a viable strategy for reducing local costs of PAs, while improving their management performance. Here, the emphasis is on the local community perceptions of the practices and challenges of grassroots community participation in the management process of Wadi El Gemal Protected Area (WGPA), which is inhabited by the local community of Ababda tribe and heavily relies on the natural resources for their livelihood. The study revealed that the current participatory approach in the WGPA resembles in many aspects manipulative and passive-receptive participation, where people are involved by being told what is going to happen or what has already happened. This type of local participation in the WGPA does not identify local communities as managers and decision makers, rather as law abiders and in best cases as passive consultees.

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1   Introduction

Issues of the relationship between protected areas (PAs) and local communities are of vital importance to biodiversity conservation (Brown et al., 2018). A better understanding of how they interact, influence, and shape one another facilitates effective management of PAs while maximising benefits, or at least minimising costs, to the populations living in and around PAs (Holmes, 2013), who usually rely on natural resources for daily subsistence and are often economically vulnerable and politically marginalised (Dahal et al., 2013; Holmes and Cavanagh, 2016). It has been increasingly argued that if local peoples are not empowered to participate in the setting of the PAs' management objectives and actions, they develop negative attitudes towards biodiversity conservation and conflicts over nature resources are more likely to take place (Soliku and Schraml, 2018).

According to Buckles and Rusnak (1999, p.3), "these conflicts often lead to chaotic and wasteful deployment of human capacities and the depletion of the very natural resources on which livelihoods, economies, and societies are based." This underlines the need to further develop the understanding of the potentials and the challenges of co-management of PAs (Hellström, 2001). Such kind of research is important in developing countries as according to Hellström (2001), academic research has tended to focus on countries with long history of nature conservation, whereas countries with quite new endeavours of nature protection and/or little public attention to nature conservation receive scant attention. Therefore, the current study intends to examine the local community perceptions of the practices and challenges of grassroots community participation in the management process of Wadi El Gemal Protected Area (WGPA), one of the most ecologically diverse PAs in Egypt and is inhabited by the local community of Ababda tribe that heavily use the natural resources for their livelihoods (Moneer, 2015). Although the management plan was designed in a way that devises mechanisms of recognition to support the participation of the local community in the park management (Chemonics International Inc., 2007), environmental conflicts between the local people and the management authorities are still recurrent in the park (Moneer, 2015). Thus, there is a need for a critical analysis of local participation on the ground, the extent to which communities are empowered to influence decisions that are potentially detrimental to their livelihoods and the degree to which communities are collaborating with the management authority to achieve nature conservation (Rodríguez-Martínez, 2007; Mendez-Lopez et al., 2014).

2   Literature

The current study strives to understand and explain the importance of community participation from the actor's perspective under the lenses of Arnstein's (1969) concept of citizen participation and Chase et al.'s (2000) levels of citizen participation in a setting where multiple actors share diverse and competing interests. Arnstein (1969) defined citizen participation as "the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future." However, differences always exist, "between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process" [Arnstein, (1969), p.216]. Drawing on the work of Arnestin (1969) and Chase

et al. (2000), one can differentiate between levels of participation, from low to high. Indeed, these levels represent qualitative differences and degrees with which the voice, agency, or control of intended beneficiaries are salient (Mendez-Lopez et al., 2014).

Figure 1   The range of options for managing PAs from full control by government agencies to full control by other stakeholders (see online version for colours)
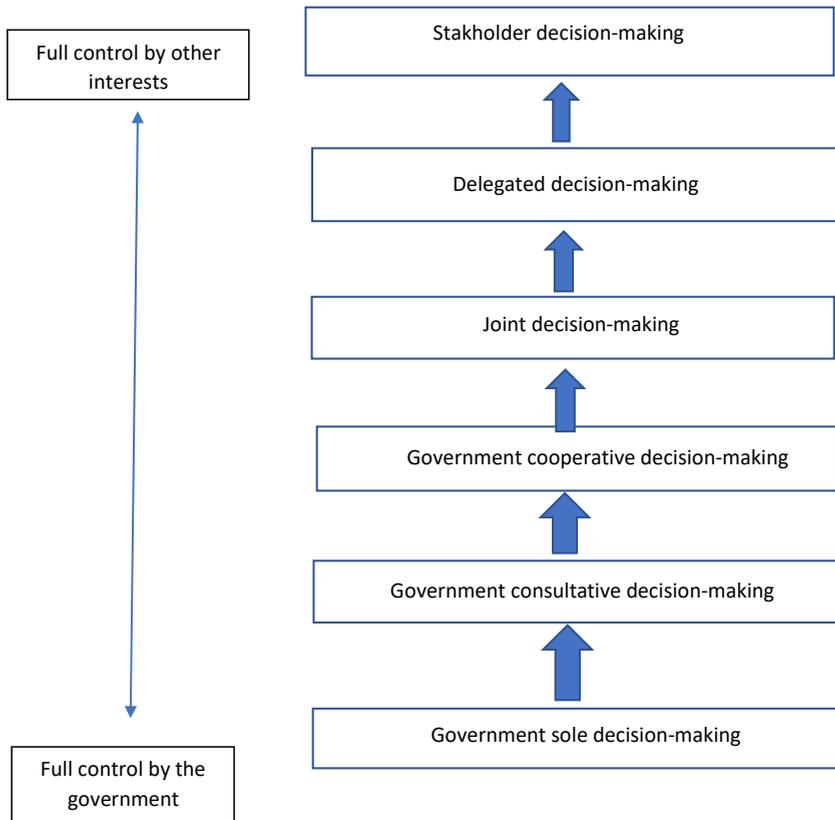
Source: Modified from Bertzky et al. (2012)

For community participation in natural resources management, Chase et al. (2000) developed a five-rung ladder of citizen participation that form a logical continuum over which the relative influence of citizens and agencies over management varies – from information and consultation under the expert authority approach to delegated power and transfer of management rights under co-management (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996) as explained here:

- Expert authority approach: The authoritative approach is where management agencies follow an 'expert model' making all decisions and taking all actions without consulting stakeholders (Lauber and Knuth, 2000). In the authoritative approach, the management authorities disseminate information to local communities but do not actively seek input, relying instead on a politically appointed committee or established information network (Leong et al., 2009). The authoritative approach is heavily criticised as it assumes a decide-announce-defend process, where public

meetings are used ritualistically to declare and defend decided policies with no local role in planning and decision making (McComas, 2001).

- Passive-receptive approach: It is a top-down approach, a passive and indirect form of community participation in which local communities only endorse and may participate in implementation of management agencies' decisions that are made for them rather than by them (Michael, 2009). In the passive-receptive approach, local communities may take the initiative to provide input to the management agencies, however the management agencies do not facilitate this process (Leong et al., 2009). Therefore, input received in this process is unlikely to be fully representative of or generalisable to perspectives of the affected community, which can seriously undermine the legitimacy and credibility of the participatory process, and may reinforce existing inequalities of power and access to resources (Involve, 2005).

- Inquisitive approach: This approach entails systematic attempts by the management authorities to gather local people inputs through public meetings, surveys, or other methods. The local people inputs include information about their beliefs, attitudes, preferences, expectations and behaviours (Chase et al., 2001). This type of participation simply implies ensuring the local compliance to the management plans, reducing local resistance to newly established rules and providing some benefits to the local people should existing livelihoods be compromised by the management practices (Tosun, 2006). Like the passive-receptive approach, local communities tend to be viewed as passive consultees, rather than as essential partners in decision making (Garrod, 2003). Meanwhile, professionals are responsible for defining management objectives, policies and actions and may modify these in the light of people's input. However, professionals are under no obligation to take into consideration the views and aspirations of the local people (Chirenje et al., 2013).

- Transactional approach: This approach entails that participation is a right, not an obligation or a method to achieve a goal. By this way, local communities participate in formulating action plans, and formation or strengthening of local institutions (Gebara, 2013). Important features of the transactional approach are developing trust between the management authorities and the local people, integrating different types of knowledge (e.g., indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge), debating the pros and cons of alternative policies and actions and reaching common grounds that reflect a balance between articulated stakes and impacts (Riley et al., 2002). In this regard, citizen task forces or advisory committees are common transactional techniques in natural resources management that enable representatives from the local community to directly contribute their knowledge and opinions in development and implementation of management decisions and actions (Sanginga et al., 2004).

- Co-management: It is different from the transactional approach in that it encourages stakeholder involvement in multiple stages of the management process, not just in decision making. Indeed, co-management is used interchangeably with concepts such as collaborative, cooperative, participatory, joint or multi-stakeholder management (Schusler, 2001). Co-management is adopted in a variety of forms based on the context, the objectives and the participants (Chase et al., 2001). For the purposes of this research, the definition of the World Conservation Congress is adopted in the study at hand [IUCN, (1997), p.43]: "Co-management is a partnership in which government agencies, local communities and resource users, non-governmental

organizations and other stakeholders negotiate, as appropriate to each context, the authority and responsibility for the management of a specific area or set of resources."

According to this definition, co-management is a partnership between multiple stakeholders and that the specific arrangements will vary depending on the situation (Chase et al., 2001). A practice of devolving some land rights back to local people can be seen as form of co-management. For example, Australia has handed over ownership and the governance of their indigenous PAs to the local aboriginal people who are reportedly successfully managing the PAs in collaboration with government authorities under a lease arrangement (De Lacy and Lawson, 1997). As a result of a global meta-analysis of 165 PAs using data from 171 published studies, it was found that the most positive outcomes were derived from management systems which imply co-management, local empowerment, decreased economic inequalities and sustained livelihoods (Shafer, 2019).

3 Case study: WGPA

3.1 Study setting

WGPA is a national park that is situated 325 km south of Hurghada along the Egyptian Red Sea (Baha Eldin, 2003). The park includes a marine component of 1,600 km^2, and a terrestrial component of 4,400 km^2. The park includes approximately 100 km^2 of coastline, extends eastward approximately 15 km^2 into the sea, and extends around 55 km^2 into the mountainous hinterland. Its northern and southern coastal borders are at the Shams Alam resort and the village of Hamatah, respectively (Mahmoud, 2010). The terrestrial component encompasses a substantial segment of the Red Sea hills and coastal desert. Wadi El Gemal and its delta are the focal attraction of the park, which encompasses the entire watershed of the wadi. However, the park includes other adjacent desert and marine habitats, which complement the wadi, both ecologically and functionally (i.e., in terms of representing a meaningful management unit) (El Halawani, 2013).

The park includes a number of small housing settlements, namely Sharm Elloly, Abu Ghusun, Qul'an, Sikat and Hamata. The housing settlements are mainly inhabited by native tribes of Ababda (Chemonics International Inc., 2007; El Halawani, 2013).

3.2 The Ababda community: culture and economy

Historically, the Ababda were a herding society; their livelihood is based on animal husbandry and mobility (Chemonics International Inc., 2007). More recently, Ababda abandoned somehow their original tradition of livestock herding due to extended drought conditions and became sedentary groups who live in small scattered settlements of 4 or 5 families of a single clan. However, the remoteness of the area and the difficulties associated with reaching and entering it have both helped the Ababda to maintain their traditional transhumance and cultivation (Al Ashry, 2001).

Figure 2   Map of the WGPA indicating the park's rich biodiversity and the local settlements and villages inside the park (see online version for colours)
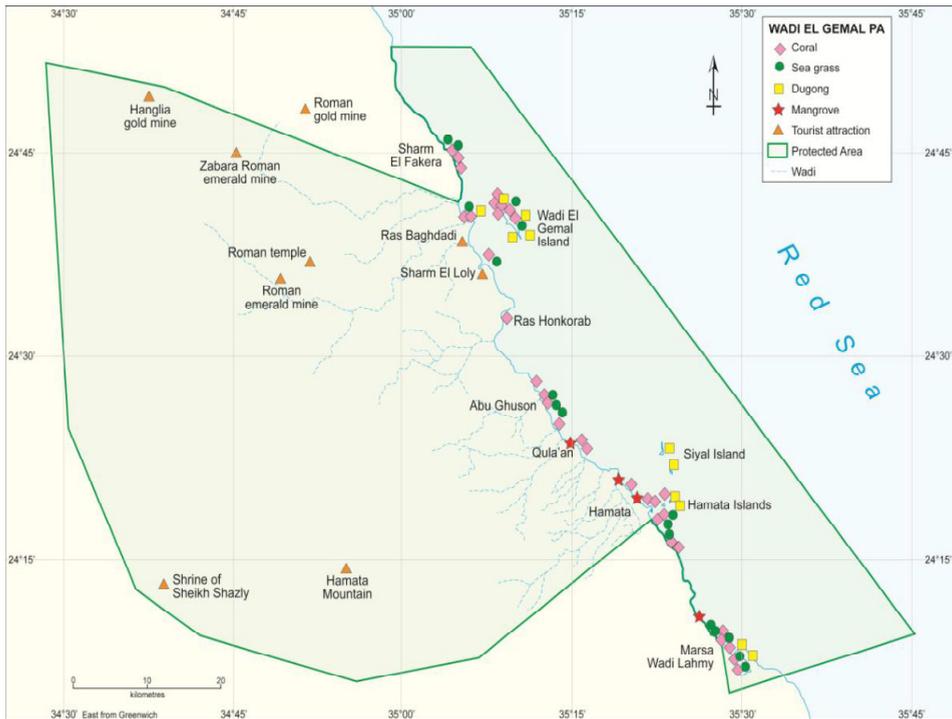
Note: Sikat village is not shown in the map.

Source: El Halawani (2013)

Despite the fact that many of the Ababda are still pastoral nomads, much of their nowadays activities could perhaps better be described as multi-resource nomadism or even hunting and gathering, which is convenient for most people with a mobile lifestyle (El Halawani, 2013). Most Ababda will go back and forth between a settled and a mobile lifestyle depending on their changing circumstances. The women and children, on one side, adhere to the nomadic lifestyle as they usually 'follow the rain', looking for areas that will provide sufficient grazing for their flocks. On the other side, men go out into the desert to hunt, to burn charcoal or to collect medicinal plants that are highly valued at markets in the Nile Valley (EEAA, 2010). Despite of the arid weather, scattered plots of barley and wheat are cultivated along the wadi beds, irrigated by floodwater from the mountains and by wells. Fruit and olive are grown at lower altitudes as well (Al Ashry, 2001).

Fishing is a predominately male activity and is practiced for subsistence purposes (El Halawani, 2013). With the rapid development of tourism in the Red Sea, tourism business has become a source of job creation for Ababda people. The tourist cities along the Red Sea (such as Hurghada and Marsa Alam) attracted Ababda to work in low-skilled and causal jobs such as cooks, waiters and drivers. In addition, the WGPA management authority provided some job opportunities for the locals (drivers and guides) as a way to compensate them for restrictions on resources use and access (Al Ashry, 2001).

The above mentioned is very important in order to understand the socio-economic conditions and the lifestyle of the Bedouin community in the WGPA and how this lifestyle is closely related to the existence and the use of the natural resources.

4   Methods

Data have been collected through in-depth interviews with the local community in the WGPA. Secondary data sources pertinent to the study are also consulted to provide robust theoretical support to research findings (Greenhoot and Dowsett, 2012). In-depth interviews captured issues pertaining to communities' understanding of co-management of the WGPA and the management authorities' actions to engage local people in the WGAP management. In this regard, 40 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with members of the local people in the WGPA. The research subjects were selected according to snow ball sampling. This sampling technique yields recommended informants through referrals made among people who know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest (Biernacki and Waldore, 1981).

Under this premise, active consultation with community leaders and gatekeepers (that is, community members in positions of official or unofficial authority), was developed in order to identify and recruit potential participants in the field work (Mack et al., 2005). The informants were defined according to certain criteria such as being knowledgeable with the history of the WGPA and involved in the management of the study area. The semi structured interviewing followed the open-ended approach that is characteristic of ethnographic and qualitative research. While the interviewer had a written list of questions and particular main themes to explore, there was no list of response possibilities that were setup in advance, such as that found in the survey style of structured interviewing (Whitehead, 2005).

During the interviews, the emphasis was on how the interviewee understands issues at hand, what the interviewee views as important in explaining and understanding events, patterns, and forms of behaviour. Thus, the interviewer elicited answers fully from the perspective of the study participants, and attempted to gain a greater understanding of the context and meaning of those responses through various forms of probing (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006).

Analysis of qualitative data was conducted inductively where meanings in concert with the study objectives were elicited and constructed. Views, perspectives, and responses of participants were coded and categorised to make sense of the various theoretical concepts in relation to the research problem (Wondirad and Ewnetu, 2019). Three types of coding (open coding, axial coding and selective coding) were used to extract major themes from transcribed raw data (Strauss, 1987).

As indicated by Williams and Lawson (2001), in examining issues related to community participation and perceptions, the search for the context and reasons beyond the local people's opinions of co-management may lie in the values, rather than demographic characteristics, of residents per se. Taking that into account, the current study pays minimal attention to participants' socio-demographic profiles due to the nature of the study. Nonetheless, in terms of age, the vast majority of respondents fall under the age groups of 20–25 (21 participants), then 26–40 (11 participants) and 41–55+ (eight participants). As far as the sex composition of respondents is concerned, 24 are male while the remaining is female. For educational level, 24 participants have completed

their elementary school, eight participants completed vocational education and the rest received no education. Concerning family size, most of the respondents (24 participants) belong to 5 to 6 persons' families. The others have small families of 3–4 persons and 2–3 persons. For economic activity, while the majority of the participants (19 participants) are engaged in grazing and herding, others (11) (work both in cultivation and as work labour). Only ten participants are working on tourism related jobs such as handicrafts and food businesses.

Table 1   Socio-demographic features of the research respondents

Total	Gender		Age		Education	
40	Male	24	20–25	21	Elementary school	24
	Female	16	26–40	11	Vocational education	8
			41–55+	8	No education	8
Total	Family size		Marital status		Economic activity	
40	5–6 family members	24	Married	31	Grazing	19
	3–4 family members	9	Single	9	Cultivation and work labour	11
	2–3 family members	7			Tourism	10

5   Results

Through the analysis, three key themes related to local people participation in the WGPA management were identified. The three main themes are overlapping at some points:

1   awareness of WGPA creation and participation in planning process

2   opportunities to participate in the management process

3   participation methods, involving both participation mechanisms and representation in decision making.

5.1   Awareness of WGPA creation and participation in planning process

According to the interviews results, the identification of physical, permanent boundaries of the WGPA by the government was not negotiated with local communities and thus did not take into consideration the cultural aspect of their traditional knowledge. One of the participants explained how the park boundaries were changed several times and every time the government discredit and overlooked the local people knowledge and traditional land rights as highlighted in the following statement: "If we were consulted, we would ask the government to excise the water points and grazing areas from the protected area. By this way we could keep using our resources without being accused of committing violations" (Participant 7). A main unsettled concern for the local community is the land insecurity. There was no clear information during the planning process about the land entitlement in the park and whether the local people will be deprived of the rights they used to enjoy over land and the economic benefits they derive from it. It was very common for the interviewees to express their concern about land insecurity and the associated losses in productivity and incentives to invest in the natural resources. This

feeling of insecurity was not adequately addressed by the government during the planning process.

Eventually, the park declaration led to the displacement of the local people. This displacement resulted in a loss of local people's land title, loss of the basis of their livelihood and food insecurity in some cases. This is clarified in the following statement.

"We had to abandon our land, water points and grazing areas. We could not rear livestock and poultry. We had to ask our relatives to help us, but they are poor too and could not provide much help" (Participant 33). Other respondents asserted that there was no code of procedures to carry out the logistics of relocation process or a formal policy guiding the displacement process. For example, a woman from Hamata described how she moved from her old 'wooden hut' saying: "When we moved out, nobody helped us. We had to rent pick-up car to move all our belongings" (Participant 14). Other respondents indicated that although a family who owns a registered house is entitled to live inside the park, the land is still considered government reserved area from the legal point of view. Therefore, our settlements have dubious rules for ownership and we hoped to settle this issue before the park declaration. However, things did not unfold that way and we are still struggling for our legitimate right to own the land (Participants 2, 9 and 16).

The management authority relied on the clan leaders in order to communicate about the establishment of the park. One of the participants said: "We were not invited to any kind of public meetings with the government in order to be informed about what was happening. We were debriefed about the park by our clan leaders" (Participant 1). Another participant added: "The government-built communication channels with our leaders to pass on their decisions and to receive little opposition. Clan leaders are the government intermediaries and this casts some doubts on their credibility" (Participant 3).

5.2   *Opportunities to participate in the management process*

The results reveal that local people are not only excluded from decisions on the creation of the WGPA, but they are also not involved in defining the management actions. For example, one of the participants indicated that the management authority typically prepares land and resource plans and zoning strategies that are in accordance with their management objectives. These objectives mainly include managing visitor access, protecting flora and fauna, monitoring tourists' activities and administering diving fees (Participant 22). Moreover, the park establishment led to the erosion of the customary management rights. In this regard, the management authorities put significant limitation on local access to the resources. These limits on access include physical limits through putting fences or barriers surrounding certain high biodiversity zones or by criminalising the unregulated access to the resources and impose sanctions on the violated persons. According to one of the participants: "For years we were able to sustain our herds through our familiarity with the natural resources. The freedom of movement allowed us to move our herds wherever water and pasture were available. The new boundaries squeezed us and our herds into restricted areas, where water and pasture are scarce" (Participant 20). A sheep herder said that: "Herders must have access to different grazing lands and water resources in order to get the different foraging needs for their herds. However, the management of the protected area does not take this into account" (Participant 11).

Furthermore, access to park resources is not well-defined. For example, the transit rights of shepherds are often negotiated on an individual basis and every shepherd has to get permission from the management authority before grazing in a certain area (Participants 3, 9, 13, 17 and 29). Another instance includes access to fishing grounds. Bedouins traditionally rely upon fishing as their primary source of livelihood during the dry season and preserve fish for the winter as they move to the wadis within the park to escape the cold front and strong winds at the coast. However, many Bedouin fishermen who were interviewed said that the management authorities banned fishing in some areas and limited their access to other areas, pushing them into the hinterlands where they are perceived as 'competitors' with the settled fishermen who used to fish in these areas (Participants 8, 21 and 23). Furthermore, monitoring of natural resource management is characterised by excessive regulations that lack incentives. In the case of fishing, for example, the park authorities have supported the policy that those fishers who do not get permission from the park management or borders guard unit will not be able to fish inside the park and in case of violation their boats and fishing equipment will be confiscated (Participants 1, 17 and 29).

A number of participants indicated that although the management authority allows for some 'economic' uses for the community. There are numerous conditions on how the natural resources could be accessed and used by the local people. The Bedouin community have to use the flora and fauna in the WGPA in a sustainable way and they are allowed to perform their cultural activities and religious ceremonies in a way that does not threaten the wildlife and the ecological integrity of the area. However, it is always up to the management authority to decide what is exactly compatible with protection. Therefore, access is totally prohibited in some areas considered too vulnerable (Participants 18, 23 and 40). Thus, the natural resources in the WGPA are inter-wound with livelihoods activities, however constraints on resource use and access denied local rights and disrupted their livelihoods.

5.3   Participation methods, involving both participation mechanisms and representation

The results demonstrate the importance of considering not only if local people are participating, but also how they are participating. Local input to the management plan is dominated by the elite groups including educated members and local leaders, with little consideration for other unprivileged groups.

One participant underscored that: "the management authority engages some members of the local people, particularly those who are well educated. They carry out some assigned tasks such as guarding the area, guiding tourists, and collecting diving fees" (Participant 8).

Although the community members emphasised the management authority's recognition of indigenous knowledge as a valuable asset. However, they showed a feeling of resentment about being approached in patchy and unsystematic way to solve certain management problems, instead of being treated as partners who are equally responsible for the management plans and actions. In this regard, one of the participants mentioned: "The government only consults us when they need our traditional knowledge. Our knowledge with desert trails, flora and fauna is very important to better manage the area. However, we bear the costs of the limitations on access and use. That is unfair, right?"

Another additional concern was the lack of transparency and accountability regarding the park declaration process, management actions, fees and funding allocation. Interviewees mentioned: "It is hard for locals to understand what is going on" (Participant 36), "We experienced several changes in management practices related to access rules (such zones for grazing), however we did not understand why these changes took place" (Participant 39). Therefore, the management actions are not clearly communicated and explained to the local community.

In addition, it was noted that some heads of the clans in the WGPA are perceived by some participants as opportunists, who emphasise their own personal interests at the expense of the collective tribe interest: "It is not always good that clan leaders speak for us, because at many times they did not voice our needs, rather their own needs!" (Participant 13).

Furthermore, it was found that selecting heads of the clans to take part in the WGPA decision making does not consider the Ababda's egalitarian social system in which groups decisions are generally reached by consensus rather than by considering the opinions of only a minority. This opinion is reflected in the following statement: "The Ababda people has a voice, but it is not good if the voice is represented only by the clan leaders as they may not be right" (Participant 27). Therefore, the current WGPA management decision making process may not be the optimal system to engage the Ababda as partners but may potentially be limiting local people participation.

The interviewees expressed their discontent about the way tourism in WGPA is currently developed. The local people believe that although they possess most of the tourism resources (natural and cultural) in the WGPA, they get limited benefits from tourism. For example, one of the respondents said: "Wadi El Gemal has about 70 km of coastal areas, which include beautiful diving sites and sandy beaches such as Sharem el Louli, Umm al Abbas, Sharm el Fakere and Abou Ghusun. All the revenue collected from diving fees are directed to the central government and we get nothing" (Participant 31).

Still, other participants acknowledged that the park management made some compromise to maximise local benefits of tourism. However, current efforts remain insufficient to meet local people's expectations: "The park helped us to establish restaurant and handicrafts outlet in Qualan and there is a Bedouin tent nearby Hamata. However, these projects are run by few of us. Furthermore, it is quite complicated to get license for new tourism projects, given the complicated bureaucratic procedures" (Participant 5).

Although the WGPA management plans aim to provide tourism as an alternative economic activity for the local people, the lack of wider community participation and equitable benefit sharing are still pressing challenges for tourism development in WGPA.

6   Discussion

In Egypt, although there is increasing emphasis on local people involvement in PAs' management as a culturally appropriate way to support sustainable use and management of biodiversity (Moneer, 2015), the local participation in the WGPA planning followed a top-down approach, and local residents' voices were barely reflected in the planning process. The information about the WGPA was mainly communicated to the clan leaders (sheikhs) as a way to meet bureaucratic goals and improve management environment. In

the quest to accommodate local people's preferences, natural resources management planners advocate for approaches to public participation that focuses on shared learning and cycles of engagements, as opposed to selective consultation with only few members of the local community (Rasch, 2019). Effective participatory management of natural resources relies on a toolbox approach, including public meetings, workshops, and facilitated small group discussions (Brown et al., 2014; Sinclair and Diduck, 2017).

These approaches to participatory natural resource management contribute to building relationships between planners and local people, increasing the legitimacy of the planning process by demonstrating procedural justice (Schlosberg, 2007), providing stakeholders with an opportunity to reflect on each other's preferences and values (Kangas et al., 2014), developing shared understanding of complex issues, and developing joint planning and management actions (Rasch, 2019). Furthermore, these tools help natural resources managers to focus the dialogue around causes that are relevant to the broader community, rather than discrete interests of certain groups that may not be representative to the whole community (Hedelin et al., 2017).

The need for an understanding of the property rights characteristics of access in the WGPA is of vital importance. Property is seen to be composed of different rights including 'access', 'withdrawal', 'management', 'exclusion' and 'alienation' (Ostrom, 1990). These property rights are split into two levels; operation level ('access' and 'withdrawal') and management level ('management', 'exclusion' and 'alienation') (Taufa et al., 2018). Prior to the park declaration, an open access system was in place where all community members have equal access and use rights and developed their traditional management practices. The park declaration, however, introduced a different type of management regime where local community has restricted right to access the resources. The right of withdrawal is the right to harvest the resources, i.e., fishing and grazing (Schlager and Ostrom, 1992). Within the WGPA, the local community have withdrawal rights for subsistence purposes. However, the withdrawal rights are outlined by the management authority in the form, for example, of fishing permits. The park establishment eroded the traditional management rights of the local community, and created new power relations where the management authority defines how, when and where harvesting of resources within the WGPA may occur. The input of local community is limited to consultation or informing the local people with the management decisions. The right of exclusion is the right to determine who will have the access right (Schlager and Ostrom, 1992). Since the WGPA was established, the exclusion right rests with the management authority that is responsible for defining who can access the resources, overseeing the access rules, and the control of illegal activities. The right of alienation is the right to transfer management and exclusion rights or both to another group, i.e., to sell or lease the resources (Rugadya, 2020). This right was transferred from the local people to the management authority.

Central to co-management is the meaningful participation by local community who are subject to regulations in a deliberative decision making process (Zachrisson, 2010). Deliberative decision making describes a process, in which participants listen to each other's position, offer reasons that others can accept in collective actions, and generate the best possible group choices after appropriate consideration (Mappatoba and Birner, 2002). Deliberation assumes that co-management is two-way interaction between the government and the communities, which foster social learning across stakeholders' interests, increase policy legitimacy and reduce conflicts among competing interests (Lundmark and Matti, 2015).

For deliberative arrangements to be successful, previous research suggests that the deliberation process needs to fulfil a number of requirements, including equality, transparency and influence (Zachrisson, 2010). According to Dryzek (2000), equality requires that all those subjected to a collective decision are allowed to express their opinions and preferences and take active part in deliberation on that decision. In case of WGPA, only clan leaders had opportunities to express their views and to take part in the planning process. Furthermore, the simple passing of information was mostly used in order to communicate the management decisions to the local people.

Equality in deliberative settings is not just a question of the number of involved participants. It is also about acknowledging and respecting rights and the diversity of identities, knowledge systems, and values of involved participants (Lundmark and Matti, 2015). In this regard, effective governance of PAs requires the integration of indigenous knowledge into management plans and the maintenance of customary forms of individual and collective land tenure (Stevens, 2014).

In WGPA, there are no clear policy mechanisms that provide for ongoing knowledge creation and exchange between the management authority and local people in a way that leads to social learning and transactive-decision making (KimDung et al., 2017). Instead, it appears that local knowledge, particularly regarding biodiversity, is used to strengthen central planning and implementation of management actions. Furthermore, the park declaration resulted in changes in land tenure from customary land rights system to government owned land, which aggravated the land tenure insecurity for the local people.

'Transparency' is another deliberative feature that is related to co-management of PAs, implying that those who do not directly participate in the planning and the management processes shall have access to information (Lundmark and Matti, 2015). Transparency relies not only on the willingness of actors to share all relevant information, but also the scope of information dissemination (who has access to what), timelines of information (access to relevant information by active dissemination and on request), and the relevance and accuracy of information (Franks et al., 2018). In WGPA, the local people lacked knowledge of rules and regulations, and management decisions were seen to be inconsistent – due to lack of effective communication by the management authority.

A further dimension of deliberative process is 'influence'. Influence implies that opinions of the local community are heard and considered in decision making and shape the actions and the outcomes of the management plans (Lundmark and Matti, 2015). The local influence in the WGPA can be described as consultative or advisory not only during the establishment phase, but also during the implementation of the management policy. This consultation process is part of a top-down approach to PAs management but is presented as a bottom-up approach, characterised by allowing the opinions of stakeholders to be heard to get an idea accepted or approved, but there is no real obligation to take stakeholders' opinions into account (Héritier, 2010).

Furthermore, effective co-management of PAs requires consistent regulations that define how to share the benefits and bear the costs of conservation initiatives (Wang et al., 2019). These regulations include how and by whom decisions on benefits allocation are made, availability of information on benefit sharing policy and implementation, who receive the benefits and their impacts on local livelihoods, and the integrity of the process, including avoidance of elite capture, nepotism and corruption (Franks et al., 2018). On paper, the WGPA management plans embrace ecotourism as an alternative economic activity that provides tangible benefits for the local people and is compatible with the nature conservation efforts (Moneer, 2015). However, the study

results indicate that tourism development in the WGPA is dominated by the elites and thus its benefits are not equally distributed among the local people. Unequal distribution of benefits of tourism development is reported as a typical trigger of conflicts and generates communal repulsion for tourism development leading to undermining the preservation efforts in PAs (Bello et al., 2016).

Some of the most pervasive costs wrought by PAs are visible in the physical eviction of locals from these areas and relocation to other sites (West et al., 2006). The most important critiques against displacement are the unfairness and disregard of human rights involved in the involuntary removal of disadvantaged natural resources-dependent peoples from their homes and lands (Cernea, 2006).

According to Agrawal and Redford (2009), displacement leaves the affected people, especially those who are less powerful, political marginalised, and vulnerable, worse off and therefore undermine the moral ground of conservation efforts that seek to protect the non-human at expense of livelihoods of humans. In WGPA, the population were displaced to other sites, which increased their vulnerability due to limited access to water and grazing areas. Those who were relocated were not given any clear information about displacement logistics, nor compensation mechanisms for incurred losses. Specifically, the land tenure insecurity remained unsettled concern for the displaced populations who did not receive any formal land title of the new sites.

7   Conclusions

Policies to improve the co-management of PAs seem, on paper, to be enjoying much more support than before. However, a comparison of conceptualisations of co-management as presented in scientific studies with actual implementation and its effects in the WGPA is somewhat perplexing.

The current participatory approach in the WGPA resembles in many aspects manipulative and passive-receptive participation, where people are involved by being told what is going to happen or what has already happened. It is based mainly on a unilateral announcement by the management of the WGPA and usually information shared belongs to government officials, who try to get community support or consent to their decisions. This type of local participation in the WGPA does not identify local communities as managers and decision makers, rather as law abiders and in best cases as passive consultees. This means that the government had already concrete policies in place and they imposed these policies in a top-down and centralised way and little importance were given to the local people input. Most likely, the local people were heard in order to meet two main objectives of the management authority: to fulfil the legal or the administrative procedure that necessitate procedural local community input during the PA declaration process; and to garner support for some management practices that cannot be successfully implemented without the people compliance. On the basis of these reflections and study results, the author calls for a discussion of the basis upon the current management plans are being conceptualised and implemented. One recommendation would be settling the injustices that are felt by the local people, including settling the land insecurity issue as this will generate numerous benefits include; increasing human wellbeing by reducing local people's uncertainty and supporting land improving investment, reducing conflicts, and promoting local support for conservation efforts (Uwayezu and de Vries, 2019).

Also, it is very important to provide more opportunities to engage local people in the decision making process as change drivers and not as passive consultees. To do so requires developing a clearer vision on communication and negotiation with local people and measures of accountability of management authorities. A legal basis for the development of community council as part of the management authority would also be an important starting point for developing more interactive forms of co-management. By this way, the management of the WGPA could be a stimulating field for the application of democracy (Héritier, 2010), but other measures should be taken into consideration to eliminate the possibility of a particularly powerful actor or group of actors to dominate the decision making.

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