Humans, Other Beings and the Environment

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Harurwa (Edible Stinkbugs) and Environmental Conservation in Southeastern Zimbabwe

By

Munyaradzi Mawere

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AGRITEX	Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services
AOA	Actor Oriented Approach
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resources Management
ACCORD	African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes
ANT	Actor Network Theory
CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CEAD	Centre for Environment and Development
CLA	Communal Lands Act
DA	District Administrator
DAO	District Administration Office
DEO	District Education Officer
ECM	Environment Conservation Monitor
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
EISA	Energy Independence and Security Act
EMA	Environmental Management Agency
GNU	Government of National Unity
GZNM	Great Zimbabwe National Monument
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPC	Independent Corrupt Practices Commission
IKS	Indigenous Knowledge System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LAA	Land Apportionment Act
LDC	Local District Council
MDC	Movement for Democratic Party
MDC-T	Movement for Democratic Party—Tsvangirai Faction
MDC-M	Movement for Democratic Party—Mutambara Faction
MLG	Minister of Local Government
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NMMZ	National Museums and Monuments of Zimbabwe
NRM	Natural Resource Management
OoP	Office of the President

OCBNRM	Organic Community-Based Natural Resource Management
PCAA	Provincial Councils and Administration Act
PM	Prime Minister
RDCA	Rural District Councils Act
RDDC	Rural District Development Committee
SA	South Africa
SDC	School Development Committee
STS	Science and Technology Studies
TCA	Thematic Content Analysis
TLA	Traditional Leaders Act
UCT	University of Cape Town
US$	United States Dollar
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
VIDCO	Village Development Committee
WADCO	Ward Development Committee
WC	Ward Committee
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
ZANU (PF)	Zimbabwe African National Union—Patriotic Front
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
Z$	Zimbabwean Dollar
ZDID	Zimbabwe Department for International Development
ZNEPS	Zimbabwe National Environment Policy and Strategies
ZNLWVA	Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association
ZPWMA	Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police
ZTV	Zimbabwe Television

LEGAL INSTRUMENTS CITED

Communal Lands Act (1982)

Energy Independence and Security Act (2007)

Provincial Councils and Administration Act Number 12 (Revised edition of 1996)

Rural District Council Act (Revised edition of 1996)

Traditional Leaders Act Chapter 29: 17, Number 25 (1998)

The Constitution of Zimbabwe (2012)

GLOSSARY OF SHONA TERMS

Birareharurwa/ Harurwabira	Harurwa ceremony
Chikaranga	Tradition
Chipembenene (Pl. zvipembenene)	A family of winged forest insects to which Harurwa belong.
Chivanhu	A philosophy or way of life of a particular group of people with codes, norms and values such as peace, harmony and love for each other (including for other beings in the environment).
Dare	Traditional court of law.
Dhongi	Literally means "donkey," but is also used derogatorily as a word for humans whose behaviour and personal conduct are beyond societal expectations, or to distinguish a person with *unhu* and one without.
Gokovonho	A long stick used in Harurwa harvesting to shake the branches of tall trees.
Harurwa (*Pl.* Harurwa)	*Encosternum delegorguei* Spinola/edible stinkbug.
Harurwadzebandauko	Some amount (not specified in quantity) of Harurwa paid as a token of appreciation by harvesters/catchers to Harurwa administrators and policemen after everycatch. These Harurwa serve as food and "wages" for the Harurwa administrators and policemen who look after the Jiri during Harurwa season.
Imbayoushe	Ruling family.
Imbwa	Dog (also used derogatorily to refer to humans whose behaviour is beyond societal expectations).
Jengetaivhu (*Pl*. vanajengetaivhu)	Environment Conservation Monitor.
Jiri	Grove/sacred forest.
Kudzikabango	To construct *musasa*.
Kufukurahapwa	In Shona, it literally means revealing family secrets to the outside. It also means tampering with sacred places.
Kugumha	To shake trees with stones during harvesting to make Harurwa fall on the ground.
Kuparadzamusasa	Burning down the *musasa* to mark the end of the Harurwa season.

Kumemamunda	Appreciating the field.
Mapa	Caves where ancestral chiefs were buried.
Maputi	Roasted meali cobs.
Mhondoro	Ancestral lions who in Shona culture are understood as senior ancestors.
Mhepo	A Shona word for spirit (normally a badone). It could also be used to refer to wind.
Mudzimu (*Pl* .vadzimu)	A Shona word for ancestor.
Munhu (*Pl.* vanhu)	A Shona word for human being, normally that with *unhu*.
Muntu	A Bantu-African word for person.
Musasa	Camp where Harurwa policemen and Harurwa administrators live during Harurwa season. It is constructed yearly at the centre of the Jiri.
Mutoro	A big tree at the centre of the Jiri where the last harvest of Harurwa in a season(normally at the end of August or early-mid September) is done.
Mutupo	Totem/a particular animal or plant species that a group of people of the same origin are not allowed to eat. It is the identity mark of a particular ethnic group.
Mwari	God. Also known as the Creator or Supreme Being.
Mweya	A Shona word for the soul/spirit of a human being. It could also be used to refer to wind or air.
Ngozi	Avenging spirit.
Njere	A Shona word for intelligence.
Njuzu	A Shona word for mermaid/half-fish and half-human being.
Pikiti	Harurwa guarding in the Jiri whereby Harurwa policemen will be patrolling the Jiri to check if there are no people who are harvesting Harurwa illegally or against the set practices.
Svikiro (*Pl.* masvikiro)	Spirit mediums.
Tsikadzechi	Duma Customs and values of the Duma people.
Tsimera Nemeso	Nemeso's well/spring.
Tswanda	Small baskets used during Harurwa harvesting (and also for other domestic purposes).
Unhu	The ethics of *chivanhu*.
Vakweguru	Literally "old people" or "village elders"; also used as a word of respect for women and men past a certain age who are custodians of culture and tradition.
Varumedzo	Norumedzo people.

PREFACE

This book critically examines the possibilities for the mutual, symbiotic coexistence of human beings, biological organisms, particularly forest insects, and natural forests in the Norumedzo Area of southeastern rural Zimbabwe. Based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in the aforementioned region between December 2011 and mid-December 2012, the book interrogates the enlightenment modernist paradigmatic oppositions, such as science versus indigenous knowledge and nature versus culture, and as such forms part of a major epistemological shift in anthropology towards rethinking the binaries created by modern enlightenment thought that have for so long served to confine anthropological attention to the social. This book advances the argument that modernist divides/binaries are artificial and impede the understanding of environmentalities, especially of the relationships between social "actors" in any given space, given that mutual relationships and interactions between humans and other beings, as well as between diverse epistemologies, are an effective proxy of nurturing "sustainable" conservation.

The book demonstrates how some aspects of the emerging body of literature in the posthumanities and relational ontologies can work to grasp the collaborative interactional space for different social "actors" in the environment, through which knowledge communities can be extended. Given that the posthumanities approach advanced in this work focuses attention on relationships among people, animals, ancestors and things, it rethinks the enlightenment modernist division of the world into subjects and objects; that is, into humans and things. Rethinking those divisions enables fresh conversations between the (Western) sciences and other knowledge forms, especially indigenous epistemologies. In this book, the rethinking of those divides is facilitated by an anthropological exploration of the social interconnectedness and mutual interdependence of rural Zimbabweans, forest insects known as edible stinkbugs (Harurwa in the vernacular), and the natural forests which, in fact, are critical to understanding the eco-systemic knowledges upon which livelihoods of many rural Zimbabweans are hinged.

Finally, this book is a detailed ethnographic analysis highlighting the continuum among humans, wild insects and environmental conservation outcomes in a typical rural setting in modern-day Zimbabwe. As such, it

raises critical questions for conservation sciences and environmental anthropology, and, unlike much of the scholarship on Zimbabwe's conservation discourses, it examines the interdependence of humans and the different kinds of beings in the cosmos, demonstrating the extent of the relevance and application of the Norumedzo conservation case study, particularly for issues of addressing conservational problems and asymmetrical relations between humans and other beings in other scenarios in Zimbabwe and beyond. Drawing together scholarship on posthumanities, relational ontologies and African cosmology, the book argues for collaborative practices between humans and other actors in the environment in order to rethink the division between Western scientific conservation epistemologies and (African) indigenous conservation epistemologies, with a view toward enabling the realisation of collective conservation goals.

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE RESEARCH AGENDA: AN INTRODUCTION

> For us who were born and grew up here, Harurwa is our life. Our forefathers, parents and ourselves today have always depended on Harurwa. With Harurwa we manage to send our children to school, to buy our groceries and even big things like goats and herds of cattle. In fact, Harurwa is our gold here and I wonder how we will live if Harurwa go extinct. I, therefore, wish to urge traditional leadership here to keep on enforcing traditional restrictions and beliefs about Harurwa and the Jiri.
>
> —Mrs Mugumisi, May 2012

This book seeks to illustrate the complex interconnections between humans, forests, ancestors and other beings[1] (such as Harurwa) that participate, in different ways, in the conservation of forests in the Norumedzo Communal Area of southeastern Zimbabwe. The study was motivated by my observation that the Zimbabwean state, through its Environmental Management Agency, emphasises a mono-conservation methodology (adopted from Western modernist science) instead of promoting multiple conservation methodologies (including indigenous conservation methods) in its conservation projects. Besides this, the book was motivated by my observation that works on conservation have mainly

[1] I prefer the term "other beings" to Bruno Latour (1987; 1993; 2005) and others' (i.e Callon 1986) "nonhuman," because there are some "creatures"/entities that are difficult to classify as either humans or nonhumans, as they are part human and part nonhuman. Vampires and werewolves (see Kosek 2010, 672), for example, are part human, part nonhuman beings that result from the contagion of the battlefields. So are entities in the Norumedzo area such as *vadzimu* [ancestors], *mhondoro* [lion spirits] and *njuzu* [mermaids/half-fish, half-human creatures] that, according to my interlocutors in the Norumedzo, are not purely human. Neither are they purely nonhumans, but are simply referred to as *zvisikwa zvaMwari* [other beings created by God]. As such, throughout this book I use the terms "humans" and "other beings," the latter referring to all those entities that cannot be classified as humans, both in part or in totality.

been dominated with literature on externally initiated and controlled Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), which I think is too narrow a view to capture the complexity of relationships between people and other beings. During fieldwork, I could see there were a great many connections between what was happening in forestry conservation in the Norumedzo and what I had read around posthumanities literature on the relationships between humans and other species. Put differently, my field observations together with the literature on posthumanism, influenced me to critically explore the possibilities for the mutual co-existence of human beings, biological organisms (a unique species of insects known as Harurwa[2]) and other beings in this given environment, the Norumedzo Communal Area in Ward 15 of Bikita District, Masvingo Province in the southeastern region of rural Zimbabwe.

To unravel the complex nuances and subtleties between humans, insects, forests and the state, this book examines economic flows, the social interactions, networks and relationships between humans and Harurwa, particularly on how human relationships with the Harurwa help conserve the ecosystem in southeastern Zimbabwe. Unpacking the networks between humans, forests and insects, Harurwa are useful in rethinking the modernistic divisions between humans and other beings, knowledge and belief, the natural and the social, as well as strategies for sustainable environmental management. This book thus allows for critical epistemological reflections as it questions the familiar. In anthropological theory, questioning the familiar is important as it allows us to understand the deep structural tensions and contradictions in knowledge and open up new epistemic positions. On this note, this book quests to expose to the twilight zone the different ways in which forest insects could benefit environmental conservation in Zimbabwe. The book also examines how multiple conservation knowledges, including locally generated knowledge, could be legitimised and harnessed for environmental good. Furthermore, the book deploys in practice "symmetrical anthropology" (Latour 1993; 2007) an anthropology that practically moves beyond the nature/culture divide and is open-ended. This is achieved by advancing a "new" engagement zone perspective to conservation knowledge, an approach that moves beyond the Western modernist division of the world into nature and culture while promoting social relations between humans and other beings. More importantly, the book seeks to bring to light the environmental practices of the local indigenous people in relation to their natural

[2] Harurwa are forest insects known as edible stinkbugs (*Encosternum delegorguei* spinola).

environments, thereby closing theoretical and research gaps around issues of conservation. The study has been largely shaped by my initial observations and experiences during fieldwork in the Norumedzo Communal Area. A good example of such experiences and observations is the one l had during my initial days of research in the Norumedzo, which I elaborate below.

Before entering the Norumedzo Jiri, I could not believe that in southeastern Zimbabwe there are vast forests that are still being conserved through traditional restrictions, sacred controls and collective community participation (see also Mukamuri 1995b). Contrary to what is generally recorded in literature on community resource management, where collective community participation is generally initiated by external agents or the state (Murphree 1991; Katerere 1999; Marongwe 2004), participation in the Norumedzo is initiated by the local people themselves. Furthermore, it is conservation between and by the locals and other beings, such as Harurwa, *mhondoro* [lion ancestors/senior ancestors] and *vadzimu* [ancestors]. I was perplexed by what I saw in the Jiri. It was indeed a different world altogether, a protected forest of approximately 7 km^2. As I will describe here, the Norumedzo Jiri is a "sacred" forest that is revered by the Norumedzo people [Varumedzo] of southeastern Zimbabwe. The Jiri is famed for Harurwa (edible stinkbugs), which are a delicacy in the area and beyond, and whose origin is explained in a myth about the forebears of the Norumedzo people (also known as VaDuma/the Duma people) of the *Moyo* [heart] totem (see also Maredza 1985).

On May 10, 2012, the time when I was collecting data for this book in the Norumedzo, I visited one old villager, Sekuru Vakai (not his real name). Sekuru Vakai was in his early 80s, but was still strong and energetic. As one of the senior members of the Norumedzo Communal Area (NCA), I wanted to ask him about the origins of the Norumedzo Forest (commonly known as the Norumedzo Jiri) and what motivated forestry conservation in the area. At around 10 am, I arrived at Sekuru Vakai's homestead. The old man was there! He was seated behind his grass-thatched bedroom in the sun as winter had already started. After going through greeting formalities, we discussed some general issues about the Norumedzo and Harurwa. I could see from our conversation that Sekuru Vakai had a wealth of knowledge blended with charm and wit. He had many stories about Harurwa, the Jiri[3] and people in the

[3] Jiri is a sacred forest that is normally reserved and revered for its richness in non-timber products or some other spiritually powerful beings believed to inhabit the forest. The Norumedzo Jiri, for instance, is a sacred forest reserved by the Norumedzo people (Varumedzo) of southeastern Zimbabwe for a unique species of

Norumedzo—stories he could narrate vividly and in a manner that satiates the thirst of any listener. When I asked him about what had motivated forest conservation in the Jiri, Sekuru Vakai explained:

> It is because of Harurwa that today we have the flourishing Norumedzo Jiri. If there were no Harurwa around here, I am sure there could have been serious deforestation going on as we find in other places where there are no Harurwa or such other beings that participate in forest conservation in the way Harurwa do. You know Harurwa are a source of livelihood in this area, and they live in trees. That is why our ancestors set aside the Jiri for the Harurwa to flourish. You see Harurwa are good partners in conservation—if there were no Harurwa there could have been no Jiri in this area.

Motivated by my conversation with Sekuru Vakai, I became primarily interested in examining the complex relationships between people and other beings and also how these relationships influence conservation practices in the Norumedzo Communal Area.

With this thrust, this book forms part of a shift in Anthropology to rethink the ways in which the binary of nature and culture has served to confine anthropological attention to the social or the study of humans alone. Arguing that such a divide is artificial and impedes understanding of environmentalities, I make reference to the emerging body of literature in the posthumanities (also known as posthumanism) (Haraway 1991; 2003; 2007; Lien & Law 2010; Bostrom 2003; Simon 2003; Nayar 2009; Wolfe 2010; Raffles 2010) that seeks to focus attention on the relationships between people, animals, the state and things.

Posthumanities/posthumanism is one of the most contentious and often misconstrued concepts, such that discourses surrounding it are not homogeneous as they present a series of often contradictory ideas. In addition, the term "posthumanities" itself is highly contested, with one of the foremost scholars associated with it, Manuel de Landa (1991), decrying it as "very silly." Similarly, Wolfe (2010, xi) writes: "post-humanism generates different and even irreconcilable definitions." Posthumanism, thus, has been understood, for example, as a critique of the humanities—an anthropocentric, imperial discipline that not only privileges the human over other forms of life, and also some kinds of humanity such as the white male and heterosexual (Nayar 2009, 1), but also follows possible life paths and relations which would sooner or later require growing into posthuman persons or automated organisms

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insects known as harurwa, and also for the spiritual beliefs associated with the forest.

(Bostrom 2003). More specifically, and as is understood in this study, posthumanities is a perspective that: "investigates the many ways that the human has been entangled in complex relationships with animals, the environment, and technology for which theoretical and ethical understandings of humanism are no longer adequate" (Nayar 2009, 6). In view of this understanding, Bostrom (2003, 5) warns that posthumanism: "does not denote just anything that happens to come after the human era, nor does it have anything to do with the 'posthumous.' In particular, posthumanism does *not* imply that there are no humans anymore" (also see Wolfe 2010, xiv). The posthuman, like the cyborg which is a hybrid of machine and organism, questions, for instance, the salient line between humans and robots (Haraway 1991, 150), as its identity is linked to both humans and machines (Hayles 1999). This is because posthumanities begin by meshing the human-individual with the nonhuman-collective (Nayar 2009). The major advantage of posthumanism, especially as can be applied to conservation as that in Norumedzo, is threefold: it enables dialogue between different conservational knowledge forms—what I shall call "multiple conservation knowledges"; it encourages "good" relations between humans and other actors (Nayar 2009; Haraway 2003, 2007; Raffles 2010) or other beings in the world they share; and it resists the Western enlightenment modernist (hereafter referred to as Western modernist) divide between nature and culture. This means that, as far as conservation in Norumedzo is concerned, there is much to be celebrated in posthumanism. I am, however, mindful of the fact that posthumanism is a highly contested perspective and with major criticisms that, if unregulated (e.g. in the case of technology used to modify human nature), it (posthumanism) may threaten and erode the essence of humanity (Simon 2003) and do away with human institutions (such as legal institutions), leading to chaos (Bostron 2003). Posthumanism might be degrading in itself, so that, by becoming posthuman and equating ourselves with other beings such as animals, we might be harming ourselves or undermining our dignity as human beings (Bostrom 2005).

In view of these criticisms that could be levelled against posthumanism, I want to point out to my readers that I do not take posthumanism as given, but test its key aspects and variants as enunciated by Haraway and Wolfe. I aim to demonstrate posthumanism as a critique of modernist ontologies opens a way to rethink the critical humanities. It does not purport to describe the world as it is for all, but to open up different ways of thinking about the world, in this case my field situation, the Norumedzo. In this light, where the variants of posthumanism are dissonant with my ethnographic material, I apply those theories or ideas

that help in analysing the data without deforming it. Also, where possible I suggest how posthumanism can be enhanced by what I have gathered[4] in the field, and ideas and theories from African scholars (such as *ubuntu* and critical border thinking), so as to render it more apt in conservation in contexts such as Norumedzo. For example, in explaining the relationships between humans and other beings existence in Norumedzo such as *zvisikwa* ["things" or other beings created by God], *vanhu* [humans], *vadzimu* [ancestors/living-dead] or *Mwari* [God/Creator], one could find it difficult or rather impossible to apply some aspects of posthumanism as enunciated by its prominent advocates such as Donna Haraway and Cary Wolfe. In *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003, 14, emphasis mine), for instance, Haraway details that: "generally speaking, one does not eat one's companion species (nor get eaten by them)," and humans should see themselves as equal beings to their companions such as sheepdogs simply because: "the dog's judgment may sometimes be better than the human's on the job" (39). Of course, I should emphasise that Haraway's argument here refers to relationships between humans and pets that live with humans, which are indeed different from those with the Harurwa, and could be interpreted to mean advocating for equality between humans and other beings, such as Harurwa.

Similar to Haraway's argument above is Cary Wolfe's. In espousing his posthumanism, Wolfe (2003; 2010) rejects speciesism, which he considers as the systematic discrimination against another based solely on a generic characteristic, in this case, species. While Wolfe's rejection of speciesism could be interpreted by others as a failure to recognise that species can be defined by reproductive potential, which in fact does not rule out co-existence among different species, he in fact advocates co-existence between human and the nonhuman others. Wolfe, in his *What is Posthumanism?* (2010), makes the idea of "postanthropocentrism" a key focus of posthumanist thinking; that is, a rethinking of the human with its nonhuman others (which for him include animals, machines, objects and systems). He says: "the distinction between human and animal should be of no use in drawing them" (98), given that animals also suffer the same way as humans do. Wolfe, like Haraway, is against the divide between humans and "nonhumans," such as animals. They also support Peter Singer's (1975) argument that the principle of equal consideration of interests cannot be limited to humans or nonhuman animals because both suffer pain. This means that Haraway's and Wolfe's posthumanism, like

[4] Note that where a particular chapter has called for more detailed ethnographic data or theoretical analysis than I provide here, I do so in the relevant chapter itself, as is done in chapters three, four and five.

Latour's (2005) Actor Network Theory (ANT), though it can be applauded for refusing the imposed Western constructs of binaries such as nature/culture, advocates flat ontologies or the equal biovalue of species-human equality with all other beings.

It is my contention that, in the Norumedzo, such a position as explained above is problematic. In fact, my engagement with the Varumedzo (Norumedzo people, as they call themselves) over the twelve-and-a-half months of my fieldwork (between December 2011 and December 2012) revealed that there is a hierarchy in the order of "things"—*zvisikwa*, *vanhu*, *vadzimu* and *Mwari*, in this order. In the Varumedzo worldview, though zvisikwa can be understood as companions of humans in the sense that they live in the community with the people (even in trees at home and the Jiri), the former——zvisikwa—are not considered equals to humans, and also can be eaten by humans; otherwise it would have been impossible for humans to eat zvisikwa such as Harurwa. If we keep in mind the value of prolonged observations, we can appreciate the significance of Placide Tempels's observations—though they are arguably considered ethnological rather than ethnographic—who lived with, researched and wrote about the indigenous Africans of West Africa for an extended period. Writing of the indigenous people of Congo, Tempels (1959, 61), a Belgian missionary in the Belgian Congo, notes that: "in Africa a hierarchical ordering of forces exists. Forces are situated within the hierarchy according to the strength of their vitality/*vital force.*" My observations (in Norumedzo) and Tempels's (in West Africa) thus mean that Haraway's and Wolfe's use of the term "posthumanism" cannot be universally applied to all societies such as those in Africa, as a close study of the Varumedzo about their attitude to and relations with other beings will show that it is a misnomer. Put differently, although posthumanism is an attempt to develop a new philosophy of being in the world it is not universally held, and indeed, even while Norumedzo thinking on Harurwa differs from modernist assumptions, it is also not the same as (or reducible to) the views of posthumanism. This is because the Varumedzo do not believe that they are equal beings to zvisikwa, vadzimu, mhondoro [lion spirits] or Mwari. Rather, they believe that they are closely related (in terms of their socialisation) with the aforementioned beings but are not equals, though each of these beings' dignity and worth are highly considered in the enmeshed web of relationships. Similar observations have also been made elsewhere in Africa (Tempels 1959; Opoku 1978; Mbiti 1969; 1975; Bourdillon 1987; Chivaura 2006; Bhebhe 1979). Bourdillon (1987), for example, pointed out that the *mhondoro* spirit is a revered Shona territorial spirit that is believed to have dominion over a

very big area and whose anger can result in misfortune or even death of the perpetrator. The point is, the Varumedzo relate with other beings in a manner such that neither undermine their own dignity as human beings (as some aspects of posthumanism would advocate), nor that of the other beings. I argue, therefore, that the Wolfe's and Haraway's equating humans with zvisikwa such as animals or Harurwa is opprobrious, or rather degrading. Yet, this is not to say that other beings such as zvisikwa are disregarded, as the study of morality or ethics—what is good or bad—in the Norumedzo is also extended to relationships with other beings through the ethics of *hunhu*/*ubuntu*, such that torturing or ill-treating (and so on) the latter is never permissible within the Varumedzo.

Also worth noting in Haraway's and Wolfe's posthumanism is their querying or troubling of the ready acceptance of the world as divided into modernistic categories, such as humans and non-humans. I found this querying fascinating and quite germane to what is happening in Norumedzo. In Norumedzo, the modernistic classification of "things" into humans and nonhumans is rendered problematic, given that there are some beings like vadzimu, njuzu [mermaids/half human half fish creatures], mhondoro and Mwari, among others, that the Varumedzo consider as neither human nor nonhuman. Also, in Norumedzo these beings are not considered as terrestrial beings per se, but as beings in the "world beyond" (Mawere 2010; 2011b), which can mingle, comingle, associate and disassociate with humans and other terrestrial beings (Teffo & Roux 2002). These beings thus escape the purview of the modernistic classification of things as humans and nonhumans. For this reason, in Norumedzo the referred-to beings are called by their names (i.e. njuzu, mhondoro etc.) and are not classified as humans or nonhumans, as this has profound implications in that it blurs their specificities or their different ways of being in the world.

Based on my fieldwork, I observed the interconnections and relationships between humans, zvisikwa (such as Harurwa) and other beings that have moved past the world of humans (such as vadzimu). I reiterate that zvisikwa, vanhu, vadzimu and Mwari are socially connected to each other. Besides, all zvisikwa are "well" considered by vanhu, but not as equal beings. Otherwise, it could have been impossible for people to eat animal meat or Harurwa, as this would be interpreted as cannibalism. According to the Varumedzo cosmology, this connection and hierarchical order allows vanhu to relate to some of the zvisikwa both as resources and companions/partners in the world they share, and not as equal beings. More so, these orders, connections and relations between vanhu and other beings are maintained or regulated by "local" institutions and belief

systems, such as taboos, to ensure sustainability (Sheridan & Nyamweru 2008).

Given that some key aspects of posthumanism, as elaborated above, could be rendered inapplicable in some circles of environmental conservation such as that of the Norumedzo, I seek an explanation that can cover for the inapplicable aspects (in contexts such as the Norumedzo) in Ingold (2011) and Fairhead & Leach's (2005) conceptions of meshworks and social networks, respectively. These concepts also explore some aspects of posthumanism that include connections and lines of life. By meshworks, Ingold means entangled lines of life, growth and movement (63). On the other hand, Fairhead & Leach understand social networks as the webs of relationships among people that span familial bonds and voluntary associations. While I find Ingold's and Fairhead & Leach's conceptualisations of meshworks and social networks important moves in attempting to explain connections between humans and other beings, I find them limiting in that they confine relationships only to the living and humans. The conceptualisations fail to capture and explain interconnections and relationships between humans and other beings that can hardly be considered as fully human or living. In Norumedzo, for example, there are some relations between vanhu and other beings that can hardly be considered as fully human, such as njuzu, vadzimu and Mwari. In fact, while there is no doubt that in Norumedzo humans are interconnected and relate with other beings in many different ways, for the Varumedzo it is an oversimplification to equate humans with all other beings. Thus, my experience during fieldwork suggests that oversimplifying the relationships between humans and other beings occludes the networks and somehow "permeable" interconnectedness that exist between the Varumedzo and other beings. For scholars such as Nyamnjoh, oversimplifying relations between humans and other beings is tantamount to: "resist[ing] opening up one's mind to life-worlds unfolding themselves through the interplay between everyday practice and the manifold actions and messages of humans, ancestors and non-human agents in sites of emerging meaning-production" (2012, 63).

To overcome the limitations of Ingold's and Fairhead & Leach's respective network perspectives of meshworks and social networks, as well as the highlighted possible downsides of a posthumanities perspective in general (as it applies to conservation in Norumedzo), I propose, in my analysis of the connections and relationships between humans and other beings, a network perspective I will tentatively call the "engagement zones theory." Also, I will draw upon other African theorists (e.g. Ramose 1999; Marongwe 2004; Chivaura 2006) and African-based theories such as

ubuntu/hunhu in buttressing my proposed perspective, which, if my fieldwork is anything to go by, can enhance posthumanism by lending it those aspects that it may have not taken aboard. Ubuntu is a multifaceted philosophical system—a philosophy of humanness concerned with the reinforcement of unity, social cohesion, oneness, solidarity and peace for the good life of everyone and everything (Ramose 1999; Chivaura 2006), living or otherwise. Ubuntu, thus, is a philosophy of humanness based on the recognition of the continuous oneness and wholeness of the living, the living-dead and the unborn.

To elaborate on my proposed perspective of engagement zones theory, I underscore that by engagement zones I mean points or zones where different beings or actors interact, associate, disassociate, connect, disconnect, meet and part, freely or otherwise. They are like "political grounds" or playing grounds where opponents play to win each other, and associates (say from the same team) meet to sharpen their skills or to work for the common goal, whatever it might be (for example, sustainable conservation). In such zones, therefore, antagonisms or cooperation, merging, integrations or disconnections, and symmetries or asymmetries are normally experienced. This means that in such playing grounds, as in any game where rules are important, referees are also present to regulate the game. I should underline that the referees, in the case of Norumedzo, could be institutions—formal or informal, and philosophies such as hunhu/ubuntu—that regulate different actors' behaviour and actions. In this sense, engagement zones may be either productive and helpful or counter-productive and destructive, depending on how participants relate with each other. This perspective is motivated by my observations in Norumedzo where, as explained above, relationships and interconnectedness are not only limited to the so-called "living" and humans, but extend to other beings conceived as living, nonliving or otherwise. These beings include njuzu, mhondoro, vadzimu, Mwari and others.

In proposing the engagement zones perspective (which I expand further in chapter three), I seek to advance the posthumanities initiative of going beyond Western modernist divisions of the world into culture and nature (but without altering the different actors'—humans and other beings— essences and social relationships in any way). Culture and nature are categories that I think are Western modernist constructs, given that both humans and other beings can possibly meet in engagement zones in a productive or counter-productive way, depending on how they relate, especially in issues of conservation. In my view, divisions of the world into nature and culture, and subject and object, without a proper

understanding of how different beings relate and interact, limits our understanding of the world. As Mbembe (1997) argues, understanding the visible is hardly complete without investigating other [possible] beings in the world, such as the invisible and even the nonbeing. We misunderstand the world if: "we consider the obverse and the reverse of the world as two opposite sides, with the former partaking of a 'being there' (real presence) and the latter as 'being elsewhere' or a 'non-being' (irremediable absence) or, worse, of the order of unreality" (Mbembe 1997, 152). The world is more than the modernistic binaries have made it out to be.

In view of Mbembe's assertion above, the engagement zones perspective I propose in this book privileges fluidity, interdependence, negotiability, creativity, conviviality and co-existence without making the "co-existentees" mere copies of each other, but as variables which unite (or disconnect) and at the same time distinguish themselves from many others central to popular ontologies in Africa (see also Nyamnjoh 2012). Engagement zones thus also privilege endogeny. As given by Hountondji (1997, 18), endogeny (or endogenous) is not necessarily static, and can be dynamic given that there can be no absolute interiority nor an absolutely first origin. This understanding is germane to what happens in the Norumedzo Jiri where participants of all kinds come in and out, eat, mingle and relate; hence my perspective tentatively known as the engagement zones theory. As highlighted above, the perspective goes beyond Ingold's meshworks as well as Fairhead & Leach's social networks, which are limited to humans and life without acknowledging the possibilities for death. It also counters the widespread Western enlightenment modernistic divisions of the world by seeking productive conviviality, crossing, mingling and creative negotiation of different actors and knowledge forms. This means that the engagement zones perspective recognises that social actors have some freedom to act, though they are also constrained by social structures in one way or another.

Motivated by my fieldwork data in Norumedzo around networks and connections (between variables such as Harurwa, vanhu, vadzimu, mhondoro, Mwari, state and the forest), and by my proposed perspective of engagement zones, I reiterate that I will only apply some key aspects of posthumanism where I think they help in replaying or undoing modernistic "artificial" divides, such as those of nature and culture. Further, the key aspects of posthumanism, as enunciated by Haraway and Wolfe, will be applied where I see the aspects enabling fresh conversations between different or multiple conservation knowledges—conversations that do not promote epistemological imperialism or restrictive ways of knowing and frivolous dismissal of other ways of knowing. In my view, such

conversations will allow a "paradigm shift" in conservation and resource management, being informed by each one's experiences and perspectives (also see Ki-Zerbo 1992), while simultaneously striving to move away from the state-centred costly management approach to "local actors" participatory management, which is less costly and directly benefits the communities who own and manage the resources in the areas they live.

It is of utmost importance to underscore that undoing the modernistic divides, especially in the area of conservation, is critical in avoiding what Chimamanda Adichie (2009) calls "the danger of a single story." That is, a narrow view of the world (in this case of conservation) based on unsubstantiated prejudices. As Adichie (2009, 5) warns us: "a single story creates stereotypes. And the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story" by rejecting all other possible ways of telling the same story. It is on this level, I argue, that avoiding the danger of a single story would entail advocacy of multiple conservation knowledges, as opposed to the current "mono conservation knowledge" that privileges modernist epistemologies being used by the Zimbabwean government (since the colonial era) in its national conservation projects.

Relying on the idea of a "single story" of conservation where science is considered the sole provider of conservation knowledge, the Zimbabwean government has in many parts of the country initiated externally driven, community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) under its Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) related activities. This is opposed to organic, community-based natural resource management (OCBNRM) (Katerere 1999; Marongwe 2004), which is conservation that considers local communities' traditional practices as deployed in the past, particularly in the pre-colonial era, and still practised elsewhere by some local communities. That said, and using a case study of the Norumedzo Jiri (Norumedzo Grove) in the Bikita District of southeastern Zimbabwe (see the maps given in chapter two), this study has ethnographically examined the status and role of formal and informal local-level institutions. This is within the framework of what some scholars (Bonger 1999; Murombedzi 1994; Madzudzo 2002) have described as community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), as used in the Southern African context with reference to outside-led interventions to foster, influence and inform sustainable conservation in rural areas. Thus, the approach of CBNRM is central to postcolonial governance, and hence is also examined in relation to conservation in the Norumedzo Communal Area of Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe.

The status and role of CBNRM within the framework of conservation in rural communities (such as Norumedzo) as driven by the "local" people themselves, is examined in view of the fact that the theme of sustainable natural resource use through local community participation has been on the international agenda since the first global environmental conference in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. This conference presented a gloomy picture of resource degradation, especially in the so-called developing countries, comprising increasing desertification, soil erosion and declining biodiversity in terrestrial and aquatic resources, attributing it to the exclusion of local communities in resource management and the state-centred approach to common pool resource management (Madzudzo 2002). The deliberations of this conference came as a formidable challenge to those conservationists who believed that sustainable conservation could only be achieved through formal science and not initiatives from the "local" or rural communities. The term sustainability (of natural resources) re-emerged in the late 1980s as key to environmental studies and was referred to by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the abilities of future generations.

Since this work also focuses on the contribution of forest insects, in particular Harurwa, in forest protection, emphasis is placed on exploring relationships between various actors in conservation in rural areas. An exploration of these relationships and an anthropological examination of the mutual interdependence of rural Zimbabweans, edible forest insects (particularly Harurwa), and the natural forests are critical to understanding the ecosystemic knowledges upon which the livelihoods of many rural Zimbabweans are hinged. To this end, the present study attempts to show, using data from the Norumedzo, how in Zimbabwe a group of edible insects is as much a sociopolitical entity as it is a participant in forest protection. This study thus begins to imagine an analytic framing of conservation in which these insects, Harurwa, might be recognised as forest conservation participants in a postcolonial Zimbabwean state. I should underscore, however, that while the study engages with network theories (posthumanism and, later in chapter four, relational ontology) that, in fact, have the same foundational basis, the objective is not to legitimise but to enhance them in such a way that they become relevant to contexts such as Norumedzo. As has already been highlighted (and is expanded on in chapter 4four), the study critiques the aforementioned theories before proposing an alternative network perspective (which I have tentatively called the engagement zones perspective). This perspective has the merit of privileging conviviality, fluidity, co-existence and

interdependence between humans and other beings, which makes it more relevant and applicable in contexts such as Norumedzo.

Background to environment conservation and insects debates in Zimbabwe

The contribution of some insects, such as Harurwa and bees, *ishwa*/*Macrotermes spp.* and mopane worms/*amacimbi*/*madora*, among others, to human lives and the natural environment cannot be underestimated (Kosek 2010). Talking of honeybees, for example—besides honey and beeswax, over one-third of the current global agriculture production depends on the honeybee for pollination (Cox-Foster & van Engelsdorp 2009; Kosek 2010). Yet, the contribution of insects' relations with vanhu, trees and many other beings in the world, as well as the importance of social networks, informal institutions and social interactions in forest conservation, have been under-researched. This has been the case with Harurwa in the unique Norumedzo grove commonly known as the Norumedzo Jiri in southeastern Zimbabwe. Notwithstanding the preponderance of sustaining a richly diverse biodiversity and balanced natural ecosystem, much of the mainstream literature on the insects known as Harurwa has foregrounded their economic, nutritional and medicinal value. To this end, the focus of that literature in Zimbabwe and the southern African region has paid special attention to the Harurwa's history (Maredza 1985; Nyathi 2005), scientific description (Faure 1944; Imms et al. 1977; Makuku 1993a; 1993b; Picker et al. 2004), medicinal properties (Teffo 2006; Chidavaenzi 2010), nutritional value (Ramos-Elorduy 1997; Teffo 2006; Teffo et al. 2007; Dzerefos et al. 2009), and economic significance (Maredza 1985; Makuku 1993a; 1993b; Teffo 2006; Teffo et al. 2007; Dzerefos & Rider 2010; Chidavaenzi 2010). While these studies are important in furnishing us with data on insects, they are incomplete insofar as they neglect the role of insects in forest conservation, hence their limitations. The contribution of some insects such as Harurwa as participants in forest conservation has not been seriously considered, and the contribution of Harurwa in forest conservation has therefore been under-researched and/or undermined.

In Zimbabwe, this under-researching of Harurwa has contributed to a limited grasp of ways of thinking about the forest, conservation knowledges, other beings and what exactly triggered the environmental conservation problems in the country. Thus, while many scholars (Katerere, Hill & Moyo 2001; Mukamuri 1995a; Mawere 2012) agree that Zimbabwe is currently facing immense problems of environmental

degradation, the real cause underlying the environmental problems has remained debatable. This has been aggravated by the fact that Zimbabwe is experiencing a number of environmental conservation problems in addition to its economic and political problems since the turn of the millennium. With the formation of the opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change party, in 1999 there have been serious incidences of political violence and human rights abuses, perpetrated mostly by the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) (Raftopoulos 2009; Coltart 2008). The violence and abuses led to the country suffering targeted sanctions in the form of travelling bans and isolation from the international community, especially the Western block, resulting in socioeconomic and political turmoil. In the face of this, the country's environmental conservation has also been negatively affected and made to struggle to ensure sustainable exploitation of resources and environmental sustainability.

The field of sustainability, though debatable across disciplines, falls under the broad category of sustainable development, which in itself can be conceptually broken down into three constituent but overlapping parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability and social-political sustainability (NISER 2009). This means that sustainable development does not focus solely on environmental issues or on one of the aforementioned parts. More broadly, sustainable development policies encompass three general policy areas: economic, environmental and social (NISER 2009). In support of this, several United Nations texts, especially the 2005 World Summit Outcome document, refer to the "interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars" of sustainable development as economic, social development and environmental protection. I argue that considering conservation in some rural communities such as Norumedzo, these pillars need to not only be balanced but also re-thought in terms of relationships, not as categories in the modernistic sense.

My argument above is proffered in view of the realisation that balancing the conservation of resources with the needs for development has always been problematic in the southern African region and particularly in Zimbabwe, especially after the national independence in 1980, due to a number of factors. As such, there have been serious contestations in environmental conservation in Zimbabwe, before and even after national independence, on the root causes of the environmental problems in the country, with some scholars arguing that overpopulation and practices of the local people triggered environmental degradation (Aylen 1941; Bowyer-Bower 1996). Aylen (1941), for example, claims that during precolonial times and in the earlier part of the colonial period,

there was little detrimental impact on the environment by human land use in Zimbabwe. This is attributed to the extensive and fallow land-use practices that provided well for the relatively low population densities, as well as the practice of indigenous soil conservation. For Bowyer-Bower (1996), the Western awareness since the twentieth century, through science, of the causes and effects of land degradation from inappropriate land use and management, and the need for and use of appropriate monitoring techniques and conservation measures, kept environmental degradation levels in Zimbabwe fairly low. For him, it is in fact during the twentieth century that land-use guidelines for environmental protection were legislated such that a formal management infrastructure for their research, implementation and support through extension services remained considerable.

Other scholars (Moyo et al. 1991; Ribot 1999; Mandondo 2000; Phimister 1974; Mackenzie 1970; Iliffe 1990; Masaka 2011; Mukamuri 1995a; Hanlon et al. 2013) blame Western science and colonialism for the country's conservation problems. In this vein, Moyo et al. (1991), for instance, argue that during precolonial times and the earlier part of the colonial period, land was neither a scarce resource nor under threat of environmental degradation. Instead, they argue, increasing colonial settlement and control led to inequality of access to the natural resources. Moyo et al. are thus against Aylen's (1941) view that, during precolonial times and the earlier part of the colonial period, there was little detrimental impact on the environment by human land use in Zimbabwe because of the extensive, nomadic and fallow land-use practices that provided well for the relatively low population densities. To support their argument, Moyo et al. refer to the Land Apportionment Act of the 1930s that took away most of the fertile communal land from the majority and converted it into commercial farms for the minorities in the government of the time. Hanlon et al. (2013) also make reference to the negative impact of the Land Apportionment Act of the 1930s in Zimbabwe for both the environment and people when they note that: "as more *indigenous Africans* were pushed into the poor half of the land designated for Africans, overcrowding became so bad that it led to land degradation" (2, emphasis mine). This means that, with an annual population growth rate in excess of 3.5% (IUCN 1988) and shrinking access to land, conservation methods by the "local" people including fallow and extensive grazing became impractical in these communal areas, and hence land degradation set in.

Masaka similarly argues that the twin sisters of colonialism and Western science are to blame for the conservation problems in Zimbabwe: "the colonisation of Zimbabwe and the rest of the African continent was