



Conservation Geographies in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Politics of National Parks, Community Conservation and Peace Parks

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Abstract

Sub-Saharan Africa has been the location of intense conservation planning since the colonial era. Under the auspices of wilderness protection, colonial authorities established national parks largely for the purpose of hunting and tourism while forcibly evicting indigenous populations. Concerns about the ethical and economic impacts of protected areas have generated interest in community conservation initiatives that attempt to include local participation in natural resource management. In recent years, the anticipated loss of biodiversity, coupled with the integration of ecological concepts into planning processes, has generated interest in larger-scale initiatives that maximize protected habitat. Central to this shift are transboundary conservation areas, or Peace Parks, that involve protected territory that supersedes national political borders. This study provides a review of national parks, community conservation, and Peace Parks, in order to understand the development politics and governance challenges of global conservation. Although these approaches are not mutually exclusive, the study asserts that they represent major trajectories to conservation planning in Sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the developing world. In considering the histories of these models in Sub-Saharan Africa, I argue that conservation planners often prioritize economic and ecological factors over the political circumstances that influence the effectiveness of these approaches. The study concludes by suggesting that an analysis of these three models provides a lens to examine ongoing debates regarding the employ of conservation as an economic development strategy and the challenges to environmental governance in the 21st century.

Introduction

Sub-Saharan Africa has been the location of intense conservation planning since the colonial era. Under the auspices of wilderness protection, colonial authorities established national parks largely for the purpose of hunting and tourism while forcibly evicting indigenous populations (Adams and McShane 1992; Adams and Mulligan 2003; Anderson and Grove 1987; Beinart 1989; Carruthers 1995; Grove 1992, 1995; King 2007; Neumann 1998; Schroeder 1999). The establishment of the Yellowstone National Park in the USA marked the beginning of a movement that would attempt to merge nature conservation with economic development, while also reinforcing a separation of humans and nature (Cronon 1997; Neumann 1998). Yellowstone was a grand experiment of its time: created in 1872 as the first national park in the world, it was placed under the management of the federal government with the goal of generating investment and tourism into the American West. The boundaries of the park were drawn around the geological features of the area, including the hot springs and geysers that were believed would attract tourists to the region (Nash 1967; Sellars 1997). Far from solely protecting ecosystems and wildlife, Yellowstone became the site of aggressive management of natural landscapes.

In his masterful history of the US national park system, Sellars (1997) explains that the national parks service (NPS) eliminated predator species, including wolves and coyotes, introduced various species such as rainbow trout, and practiced fire suppression. Additionally, the establishment of Yellowstone and other national parks was facilitated through the forced displacement of Native American populations that had depended upon these territories for their survival (Burnham 2000; Neumann 2004a). These strategies were intended to create a landscape that Stephen T. Mather, the first Director of the NPS, described as 'prolific with game' grazing in 'undisturbed majesty and serenity' (Sellars 1997, 70). The grand Yellowstone experiment, therefore, involved particular ideas of what constituted 'nature' and what types of landscapes should be protected (Cronon 1997). Although national parks are often seen as nature operating outside the sphere of human activity, in fact their establishment and ongoing management remains highly political.

The important point here is that Yellowstone would prove not to be an anachronism but the beginning of a conservation approach that would spread globally. Because of colonialism and the rise of sustainable development, national parks would be established around the world, thereby reinforcing a separation of human populations from nature while being justified as a means of generating economic development. Although colonialism was central to the creation of national parks in parts of Sub-Saharan Africa (Adams and Mulligan 2003), the decolonization of the developing world has further expanded conservation planning. The rise of sustainable development as a guiding paradigm for global conservation, coupled with increasing concerns about biodiversity loss, has generated a growth of national parks and protected areas around the world. As evidence of this, between 1900 and 1949, fewer than 600 protected areas were established worldwide but between 1950 and 1999 the number grew to nearly 3000, of which 1300 were established just in the 1970s (Reid and Miller 1989; cited in Ghimire 1994). The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has divided protected areas into eight separate management domains: scientific reserve/strict nature reserve; national park; national monument/national landmark; managed nature reserve/wildlife sanctuary; protected landscape; resource reserve; natural biotic area/anthropological reserve; and multiple-use management area/managed resource (IUCN 1985, cited in IIED 1994, 10). At the end of the 20th century, more than 25,000 protected areas had been established globally (McNeely et al. 1994; cited in Sayre et al. 1998) and approximately 5% of the land surface of the planet had been placed under some form of protection (Sayre et al. 1998). More recently, the 2003 United Nations List of Protected Areas listed more than 100,000 protected areas that made up roughly 11.5% of the planet's land surface (IUCN and UNEP 2003).

More than 40 years after the independence of much of Sub-Saharan Africa, what should we make of these conservation geographies? How effective have they been in protecting wildlife and natural landscapes, and do they support economic development? What are the most effective, and ethical, ways to conserve nature in the 21st century? These questions have guided decades of research by natural and social scientists concerned with the protection of biodiversity and generation of economic benefits for human populations. As has been pointed out elsewhere, a central challenge to global conservation is that the regions believed to have the highest rates of biodiversity coincide with human populations that show some of the highest rates of socio-economic poverty. Concerns have been raised, therefore, about the myriad of ways in which national parks disenfranchise people from territory and natural resources to which they have had traditional access (Adams 2001; Adams and Mulligan 2003; Brockington 2002; Neumann 1998; Zerner 2000). Often labeled 'fortress conservation', national parks have been criticized for

separating often economically impoverished populations from wildlife to benefit external conservation agendas. As with the separation of Native Americans from territory that became Yellowstone, indigenous Africans were excluded from these territories to the detriment of their social, cultural, and economic needs. This has understandably provoked resentment against conservation and made natural resource management more difficult to effectively implement.

One outcome of these critiques has been the embrace of community conservation strategies that attempt to integrate local livelihood needs and decision making within natural resource management. This has dovetailed with the ascendancy of sustainable development in supporting conservation approaches that are more participatory in their implementation and management. Community conservation is not without critiques, as a number of authors have challenged the viability of the approach, asserting that it does not support economic development for local populations or effective conservation outcomes. In evaluating integrated conservation and development projects (ICDPs), McShane (2003, 2) suggests that their popularity resulted in their advancing from

an untested idea attracting seed money to 'best practice' for biodiversity conservation...Successes have been few and far between, and today an expanding barrage of mostly critical literature has fuelled concern among organizations implementing and financing ICDPs.

Recent writing has evaluated a 'new protectionism' in international conservation circles that seemingly downplays the needs of local populations for the purposes of biodiversity protection (Chapin 2004; King 2007; McShane 2003; Wilshusen et al. 2003). A centerpiece of this shift is a move toward larger-scale areas that emphasize ecological priorities over socio-economic considerations or political borders (Chapin 2004). The recent growth of transboundary conservation projects, or Peace Parks, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, has raised questions about the future of participatory conservation and the most effective ways to protect biodiversity in the 21st century (Duffy 1997; King and Wilcox 2008; Ramutsindela 2007; Wolmer 2003).

The intention of this study is to provide a review of the development politics and governance challenges to three conservation models: the national park, community conservation, and transboundary conservation. These approaches should not be seen as mutually exclusive; transboundary conservation, for example, has emerged out of pre-existing national parks, and community conservation is often advocated around and through other types of protected areas; however, these three models represent major trajectories to conservation planning in Sub-Saharan Africa and other parts of the developing world. In attending to the development politics and governance dimensions of global conservation, I concentrate upon three key themes: (i) how conservation projects come to be established and maintained through the language of economic development; (ii) how control and access to land and natural resources is determined by particular stakeholders at the expense of others; and (iii) which actors have the power to create and manage conservation areas. In order to accomplish this, the study begins with a review of national parks in Sub-Saharan Africa concentrating upon the social dimensions associated with their establishment and ongoing maintenance. A review is then provided of the growth of community conservation, which emerged partly as a response to concerns about how national parks restrict decision-making power and access to territory for indigenous populations (Adams 2001; King 2007). The third section of the study considers the growth of transboundary conservation, or Peace Parks, to understand its increasing popularity within conservation circles. Although transboundary conservation is often represented as an ideal path for economic development and international collaboration, it has the potential to

restrict livelihood opportunities and decision-making power for indigenous populations. In considering the histories of national parks, community conservation, and Peace Parks in Sub-Saharan Africa, I argue that, irrespective of the approach or its ecological justification, conservation practice remains highly political. The benefit of reviewing these conservation models together is that it helps demonstrate that conservation planners often prioritize economic and ecological factors over the political circumstances that influence the effectiveness of these strategies. The study concludes by suggesting that an analysis of these three models provides a lens to examine ongoing debates regarding the employ of conservation as an economic development strategy and the challenges to environmental governance in the 21st century.

The National Park: From Colonial Game Parks to Development Projects

The establishment of national parks in Sub-Saharan Africa involves a lengthy history, beginning with colonialism and the identification of natural landscapes and populations as exotic tokens for management and recreation by colonial planners. Some of the earliest national parks, including the Kruger in South Africa, have their origins in European expansion on the continent, which had irrevocable impacts for local control of natural resources and territory (Carruthers 1995). Drawing upon the work of Richard Grove (1992, 1995), Adams (2003) cautions viewing colonialism or conservation planning within Africa in uniform terms, although he asserts these processes did have striking similarities throughout the colonial world. African conservation followed a Western trajectory with Yellowstone serving as a model for park planning in various locations (Neumann 1995, 1998; Adams and Mulligan 2003). Neumann (1995) expands on this idea and explains that national parks in Africa were founded on Western, romantic, and idealized notions of nature operating separately from the domain of human activity. As he (1995, 153) states:

Through colonialism, the English landscape tradition was transported to East Africa. In colonial Tanzania, British efforts to preserve nature in national parks coincided with efforts to intensify agricultural production in the territory; to develop nature rather than preserve it. These two processes, preservation and development, were spatially segregated, reflecting as it were a particular way of seeing the landscape.

In his richly detailed book on the subject, Neumann (1998) argues that colonial administrators in East Africa drew associations between rural England, particularly the Enclosure of the commons and the Black Act, with the way property rights were forcibly created in Africa. As a result, the rights of common access to land and natural resources, in Africa or England, were an arena of social conflict with the introduction of individual private property rights into agrarian societies. Access to territory and wildlife, which had traditionally been open to local populations, became terrains upon which social conflict played out between colonial authorities and indigenous groups. As with Yellowstone, embedded in these practices were particular notions about what constituted nature. Anderson and Grove (1987) explain that Europeans perceived of Africa as an Eden for colonial control, rather than a complex and changing environment in which people had to depend upon for survival. The writings of Elspeth Huxley (1959), Ernest Hemingway (1936) and Karen Blixen (1937) exemplify the view that Africa was the setting to find a lost harmony with the natural world. As Anderson and Grove (1987, 4) state, ‘much of conservation thinking in Africa, as defined and exercised by Europeans, has therefore been directed to sustaining an image of Africa which forms a part of a European mythology’.

The transition to the postcolonial era has resulted in expanded, rather than reduced, control of local landscapes and peoples by external actors. Natural landscapes within Sub-Saharan Africa are routinely presented as threatened, which necessitates intervention by conservation planners (Adams and McShane 1992; Anderson and Grove 1987; Neumann 1995; Peluso 1993; Schroeder 1999; Schroeder and Neumann 1995). Geographic research on the expansion of conservation within Africa has tended to focus on the role of the state in classifying and controlling natural resources and territory. In order to regulate conservation and local livelihoods, states assert that the construction of national parks is part of the 'national interest', which requires the seizure of privately held land for public benefit. In addressing the politics of conservation and natural resource access, Peluso (1993) suggests that power struggles between state and society are played out constantly in the process of access, allocation, and control of resources. Specifically, states can coerce conservation when resources are extremely valuable, when the state's legitimate control of the resource is questioned or challenged by other resource users, and when coercion is considered either the last resort or the easiest means of establishing control over people and territory. Neumann (2004a) argues that the construction of national parks and other protected areas serves as a mechanism for state formation because they allow states to express control over societies and space. As he (Neumann 2004a, 202) explains,

...the process of mapping, bounding, containing and controlling nature and citizenry are what make a state a state. States come into being through these claims and the assertion of control over territory, resources, and people.

The growth of sustainable development has played a central role in the expansion of national parks throughout the developing world, as these spaces are presented as key areas of biodiversity protection that can simultaneously generate economic development through investment and tourism (Adams 2001; King 2007). Sustainable development, which is commonly defined as '[meeting] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) 1987, 43), has emphasized that local economic development can occur in conjunction with nature preservation (King 2004). Nature-based tourism, or ecotourism, represents a fast growing sector of the tourism industry, and 'is at the core of many Third World nations' economic development strategies and conservation efforts' (Honey 1999, 7). The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that protects the environment and supports the well-being of local populations. This involves the following principles: minimized impact, development of environmental and cultural awareness, generation of financial benefits for conservation, and the support of human rights and democratic movements (Honey 1999). National parks in Kenya, Botswana, South Africa, Tanzania, and other African countries are seen as a central component in meeting the dual goals of nature preservation while supporting economic development through ecotourism.

Yet even as national parks are packaged as an economic strategy for developing economies, questions remain about the political and ethical dimensions of separating people from territory to which they have had traditional access. Even for those of us deeply concerned about biodiversity loss and the 'wildlife wars' (Leakey 2001) that play out across the African continent, must the needs of poor people be set aside to protect non-human species? For wildlife wars these are, as the drive to protect wildlife have prompted shoot-on-site orders within a number of African national parks and contributed to a militarization of protected areas (Duffy 2000; Neumann 2004b). Other scholarship

challenges the supposed economic benefits of protected areas, at least in terms of the outcomes for the people living on the frontlines of conservation. What should be said to the Maasai herder in Tanzania who is forcibly evicted from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area while luxury game lodges are built along the rim of the Ngorongoro Crater? Or to the residents of one of the former South African bantustans living next to the Kruger National Park, a park that expanded through the forcible eviction of previous generations? The political, economic, and ethical dimensions of national parks have prompted much debate within the academic and policy communities, and led a push for conservation models that are more participatory in their implementation and management. As the next section details, interest in community conservation expanded from the 1980s onwards with various agencies working to balance biodiversity protection with attempts to distribute benefits to the people directly impacted by nature preservation.

Community Conservation: Is Participatory Conservation Possible?

Concerns about the ethical and economic impacts of protected areas have generated interest in community conservation initiatives that attempt to include local participation in natural resource management. This has been reinforced by sustainable development theory that suggests that economic development and natural resource conservation are compatible goals. The publication of the World Conservation Strategy in 1980 built upon emerging debates in sustainable development through its insistence that conservation and development must be linked (Adams 2001). As Adams (2001, 68) outlines, the World Conservation Strategy argued that ‘conflict between conservation and development could be avoided if conservation and development are integrated at every stage of planning’. In a review of community conservation in Africa, Hulme and Murphree (2001, 13) define the approach as ‘those principles and practices that argue that conservation goals should be pursued by strategies that emphasize the role of local residents in decision-making about natural resources’. They suggest that this includes community-based conservation, community wildlife management, collaborative management, community-based natural resource management, and integrated conservation and development programs. Barrow and Murphree (2001) argue that community conservation include three major types: protected area outreach, collaborative management, and community-based conservation. Protected area outreach involves traditional conservation models but involves outreach to local communities through education and local planning. Collaborative management attempts to create agreements between local communities and conservation authorities to negotiate access to resources that are under some form of statutory authority. Finally, community-based conservation works toward the sustainable management of natural resources through the devolution of management control to local communities.

Two examples of community conservation that have received a great deal of research and popular attention are extractive reserves and the Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) in Zimbabwe. Extractive reserves are areas that have been removed from use from cattle ranchers, loggers and mining interests, while allowing indigenous populations to collect resources for livelihood production. Extractive reserves grew out of the *seringueiro* (rubber tapper) movement in Brazil and have become popularized as a conservation and development model (Allegretti 1990; Brown et al. 1995; Brown and Rosendo 2000; Ghimire and Pimbert 1997; Hecht and Cockburn 1989; Nepstad and Schwartzman 1992). The CAMPFIRE program was established in 1989 to allow private property holders to claim ownership of the wildlife on their land. The program was designed by the government’s Department of National

Parks and Wildlife Management (DNPWM) to decentralize management authority and decision-making of common property resources (CPRs) to local communities with the intention of generating incentives to participate in resource conservation (Martin 1986; cited in Murombedzi 1991). Interest in CAMPFIRE has prompted other African governments, including Botswana and South Africa, to pursue decentralized conservation strategies in recent decades.

There have been a number of challenges to the community conservation model in the academic and policy literatures, ranging from its potentially uncertain economic and ecological benefits (Oates 1999; Terborgh 1999; Wilshusen et al. 2003), inequities in power and distribution of resources (Castro and Neilsen 2001; Songorwa 1999), and questions about the ethical and political dimensions of decentralizing the responsibility for natural resource management to local communities (Murombedzi 2003). Although advocates of national parks have been rightly critiqued for romantic depictions of nature, some advocates of community conservation have been challenged for overly romantic depictions of communities. As Agrawal and Gibson (1999, 633) argue,

the vision of small, integrated communities using locally evolved norms and rules to manage resources sustainably and equitably is powerful. But because it views community as a unified, organic whole, this vision fails to attend to differences within communities, and ignore how these differences affect resource management outcomes.

In practice, community conservation involves local politics and struggles over resource access that can be quite significant, and often exclusionary because of socio-economic class, ethnicity, or gender. Even though community conservation implies at least tacit participation by community members within decision-making processes, this by no means erases existing conflicts or tensions. Pimbert and Pretty (1997) assert that many of these strategies fail to engage local people and Castro and Neilsen (2001) demonstrate that passive participation with locals can exacerbate power imbalances or underlying social conflicts. Hecht (2004) and Ribot (2001) argue that local management can be usurped by elites and that communities might lack the organizational structure to effectively manage conservation programs.

King (2007) evaluates a community-based ecotourism project in South Africa and finds significant intra-community variation in the distribution of benefits and local perceptions about the effectiveness of the reserve. Residents who have resided in the community for a longer time have more established connections that facilitate receipt of benefits from the project, including employment and opportunities for resource collection. These individuals, however, were more likely to view the reserve in negative terms due to their livelihood needs. Younger residents, and newly arrived members of the community, were more inclined to perceive of the project as a development opportunity and wanted to see it expand in the future. These views were enhanced by the fact that these residents were less likely to depend upon the collection of natural resources that were restricted by the existence of the reserve. This case study demonstrates that the concept of community can mask social divisions that play out in terms of livelihood, household history, geographic location, and gender. Other concerns have been raised about the political and ethical dimensions of transferring management authority for natural resource management onto local populations. Botswana, for example, received praise for decentralizing conservation to local wildlife trusts; however, the implementation of this program has been questioned (Blaikie 2006). And in considering Zimbabwe's CAMPFIRE program, Murombedzi (2003) argues that the decentralization of wildlife management actually extends, rather than reduces, state control over decision making and land use planning. These cases

demonstrate that the implementation of community conservation remains highly political and that the economic and ecological benefits of participatory models must be carefully evaluated.

Transboundary Conservation: Peace Parks in Southern Africa

Recent assessments of global biodiversity have raised concern about the anticipated loss of species in the 21st century. In a widely read study, Myers et al. (2000) identified 25 biodiversity 'hot spots' that showed both high rates of species endemism and habitat transformation. The bulk of these hot spots were centered in tropical rainforests because of the high rates of biodiversity; however, another feature of the areas is that they were drawn irrespective of political borders. Rebutting the traditional national park model, hot spots were identified as ecological units that deserved immediate attention from conservation agencies. Hot spots have become a guiding framework for global biodiversity conservation, as evidenced by the statements from major conservation institutions and writing on the subject (Chapin 2004; Kareiva and Marvier 2003). In a polemical review of the three largest non-governmental organizations, World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and Conservation International, Mac Chapin (2004) suggests that ecology is superseding politics in shaping global conservation. Guided by science and new technologies, such as remote sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Chapin asserts that larger-scale projects, including hot spots and ecoregions, have become the dominant paradigm. The concept of bioregionalism has also been utilized in asserting that the boundaries of protected areas should be drawn around the ecosystems that require protection rather than political boundaries between countries (Ramutsindela 2007; Wolmer 2003). Drawing from deep ecology and environmental theory, bioregionalism is a philosophy of human-land interactions that is guided by a place-based approach that emphasizes bioregions rather than economic systems (Sale 2000). National political economies are also downplayed in favor of the integration of social and ecological systems at the local level.

Efforts to define conservation areas through ecological, rather than political, boundaries have contributed to the growth of transfrontier, or transboundary, conservation (Magome and Murombedzi 2003; Ramutsindela 2007; Spenceley 2006; Westing 1998; Wolmer 2003). Transboundary conservation involves protected areas that combine territory from more than one country and are often drawn around existing national parks located adjacent to political borders. Because they involve some degree of joint management, these areas are also known as 'Peace Parks' (Ali 2007; Duffy 1997, 2001), largely due to their promotion by non-state organizations such as the Peace Parks Foundation in Southern Africa (cf. Ramutsindela 2007). The first Peace Park was created in 1932 through the merger of the Glacier National Park in the USA with Canada's Waterton Lakes National Park. As with Yellowstone, this did not produce a rapid growth of transboundary conservation areas initially; however, this has changed in recent decades. As evidence of this, it was estimated that by 2001 there were 169 transboundary projects in 113 countries involving a total of 667 individual protected areas (van der Linde et al. 2001; cited in Magome and Murombedzi 2003). The Peace Park concept has gained traction in international conservation circles and Southern Africa has been the location of many of these efforts. The first transboundary conservation area in Southern Africa was the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, which was created in 2000 through the merger of territory in Botswana and South Africa. Following that initiative, other areas have been established including the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park, the Ais-Ais/Richtersveld

Transfrontier Park, and the Limpopo–Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area (Ramutsindela 2007). In 2006, the governments of Namibia, Angola, Zambia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe signed a memorandum of understanding to create the Kavango–Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area. This agreement was lauded by the Peace Parks Foundation in connecting ‘the largest contiguous wilderness, wetland and wildlife area in the Southern African region’ (Peace Parks Foundation 2009a).

There are a number of strategies that have been utilized by advocates of Peace Parks to receive the participation of African governments. First, minimizing political borders for the sake of biodiversity conservation is powerful and makes a certain amount of ecological sense. Political borders involve long-standing histories that are often arbitrary in their construction and serve little purpose in bounding conservation areas. Ecosystems operate across and through political borders, and as evidenced by the history of Yellowstone, the boundaries of national parks have often been established to benefit economic tourism rather than ecosystem functioning. The employ of bioregionalism in natural resource management is compelling because it reifies ecosystems and non-human species while avoiding the messy politics that impede upon biodiversity conservation. But as King and Wilcox (2008) assert, labeling these areas as ecological, rather than social, does not erase the political factors that shape their creation and maintenance. As evidence of this, the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park was announced in 2000 through the merger of the Kruger National Park in South Africa with the Gonarezhou National Park in Zimbabwe and the Limpopo National Park in Mozambique. The Kruger is the centerpiece of the initiative, and as previously mentioned, its establishment involved the forced displacement of indigenous communities (Carruthers 1995). Additionally, the current political instability in Zimbabwe and an ongoing resettlement process of 7000 people, out of 27,000, from the Limpopo National Park have drawn international attention to the initiative (Spenceley 2006). Political borders also remain tangible in regulating the movement of human populations either for tourism or other means. Ramutsindela (2007, 33) points out that the ‘attempts to change the functions of borders on ecological grounds for purposes of peace is misplaced, because the origins and functions of borders are inextricably linked to national, regional and international complexes’. National governments remain understandably protective of borders in regulating human movement, illicit activities and capital flows. The potential for transboundary conservation initiatives across highly regulated borders, such as the border between the USA and Mexico, has been questioned in the literature (King and Wilcox 2008).

A second justification for Peace Parks is their stated potential for supporting peace-building between partnering countries. The Peace Parks Foundation, and other agencies supporting these initiatives, has been quick to assert that transboundary conservation can serve as a mechanism for international collaboration. As the Peace Parks Foundation (2009b) states:

Peace parks epitomise harmony between humans and nature by using resources to create prosperity. When this happens, peace usually prevails, as economic stability is a cornerstone of peace. Furthermore, the joint management of natural resources entails the protection of these resources, which, in turn, creates job opportunities for the people living in these areas.

Others have lauded the promise of Peace Parks to mitigate long-standing conflicts between India and Pakistan in Kashmir (Ali 2002) or between Peru and Ecuador (Ali 2007). Conservation as peace-building is a powerful narrative for who could be against that? But given the preceding discussion about how national parks and community conservation can generate conflict between social actors, perhaps it is unwise to downplay

the political nature of conservation. Most of the transfrontier projects being promoted in Southern Africa are being established by combining preexisting *national parks* that have been the site of resource conflicts between social actors (Honey 1999; Tapela and Omara-Ojunga 1999; Slater 2002; Magome and Murombedzi 2003). Establishing larger protected areas that cross national borders does not erase these circumstances, and has 'the potential to exacerbate, rather than reduce, conflicts between various stakeholders' (King and Wilcox 2008, 229).

Third, much as national parks and community conservation are justified through sustainable development language, transboundary conservation is promoted as a way of generating economic development through tourism and the promotion of incentives to manage wildlife (Peace Parks Foundation 2009b; Ramutsindela 2007; Wolmer 2003). Yet research has shown that transboundary conservation is being promoted at the expense of community conservation because the latter was no longer seen as 'the fresh and exciting argument to use to draw in support from global and local funders' (Duffy 2006, 101). It also remains unclear as to the tangible economic benefits that local communities receive from participating in these initiatives (Spenceley 2006). Finally, transboundary conservation is presented as a new form of global environmental governance, which in an era of international challenges, ranging from climate change to economic development, seemingly necessitates a multi-lateral framework to govern society and nature. Transfrontier conservation in Southern Africa is being facilitated through 'partnerships and networks of global, local, public and private actors that engage with the state, where the state is defined as one interest group amongst many others and may not even be the most important actor' (Duffy 2006, 98). Duffy (2006) problematizes this, however, in showing that the confluence of stakeholders involved in promoting and managing these areas presents a challenge to global environmental governance. As with national parks and community conservation, Peace Parks are advanced by emphasizing their economic and ecological benefits, yet their establishment and maintenance remain highly political.

Conclusions

The intention of this study was to provide a review of three conservation models being practiced within Sub-Saharan Africa: the national park, community conservation, and Peace Parks. My goal was to trace out the development politics and governance dimensions of global conservation by addressing three key themes: (i) how conservation projects come to be established and maintained through the language of economic development; (ii) how control and access to land and natural resources is determined by particular stakeholders at the expense of others; and (iii) which actors have the power to create and manage conservation areas. Yellowstone established a precedent that remains with mainstream conservation planning: separating humans from protected areas while justifying conservation practice through economic development. Since the colonial era, African landscapes and resources have been controlled by external powers and national governments, often at the expense of indigenous populations. The rise of ecological crisis scenarios, taken together with the popularity of sustainable development, has expanded, rather than reduced, external control of African landscapes in the postcolonial era. Yet concerns about the impacts of national parks upon local populations have contributed to the popularity of community conservation, which attempts to balance local livelihoods with national and international conservation goals. Although advocates of community conservation have been effective in asserting the need for local control of natural resources and territory, there has been less attention to issues of participation and social conflict that arise through

these projects. While community conservation offers a potential alternative to national parks and protected areas that exclude local knowledge and livelihood needs, the implementation and management of these initiatives are equally political. This is also the case with transboundary conservation, which even in emphasizing ecological priorities over politics cannot obscure the social dimensions of these initiatives. In considering the histories of these models in Sub-Saharan Africa, I argue that conservation planners often prioritize economic and ecological factors over the political circumstances that influence the effectiveness of these approaches. The effectiveness of conservation in the 21st century will require a renewed engagement with research that demonstrates its political dimensions in order to ensure that the protection of biodiversity occurs in conjunction with meeting the social, cultural, and economic needs of people directly impacted by conservation planning.

Short Biography

Brian King is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at the Pennsylvania State University. He received his MA and PhD in Geography from the University of Colorado, with a concentration upon development studies. The majority of his research has been completed in South Africa, with particular attention to understanding how the democratic transition is reshaping demographic patterns, livelihood decision-making, and the institutions of environmental governance. This work has been published in various journals, including *Geoforum*, *Environment and Planning A*, *Geographical Review*, *The Geographical Journal*, and *Area*. More recently, his research is focusing upon the variability of flooding in the Okavango Delta, Botswana, and political economies of HIV/AIDS. His forthcoming publication in *Progress in Human Geography* considers the contributions of political ecology to research on the social and environmental dimensions of human health.

Note

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