

INSTITUTIONS, GOVERNANCE, AND THE PERFORMANCE OF PROTECTED AREAS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

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As population growth and economic development in Africa has placed increasing pressure on savanna and forest habitats, wildlife populations are becoming increasingly confined to protected areas (PAs) set aside by governments under statutory obligations. On private and communal land surrounding statutory PAs, where individual and collective land-use decisions are exposed to market forces, wildlife often fails to “pay its way” and habitat is converted for agricultural use. Paradoxically, this outcome can be observed even when the economic development that ultimately threatens wildlife in a park’s buffer zones is partially driven by wildlife-based tourism hosted by the very same park. At the regional scale as well, thriving wildlife-based industries in some countries contrast sharply with languishing returns from this land use in others. Though geographic, demographic, and cultural factors are to some degree relevant in explaining these patterns, my dissertation topic addresses the more significant and amenable role of legal institutions and resource governance structures in mediating market forces in highly divergent ways. That is, how do laws that assign ownership between the landholder and the state over a resource such as wildlife, and contractual arrangements between communities, the private sector, and the government for managing the resource, constrain or enhance the economic value generated by PAs on public, private, and communal land?

Since the Fall of 2015 I’ve been investigating these questions in the Luangwa Valley of Zambia and in the Greater Kruger Area of South Africa by undertaking financial and economic analyses of wildlife-based land uses. The principal methodology is based on economic impact analysis (EIA), which draws primarily on spending data from resource users, governments, and the private sector to measure locally captured value generated



from an activity in terms of income, jobs, and value added. Economic impact analyses are becoming increasingly common of national parks, though they are not often aligned in scale with local areas, and their application to non-statutory PAs, where the stakes for rural communities are arguably higher, is rare. In South Africa I am extending an EIA of Kruger NP to the network of private reserves surrounding the park, which is expected to have an even greater impact on a per-sq. km. basis. In Zambia I was joined in June by my adviser, Brian Child, and a team of almost 20 others for a workshop where the EIA approach was simplified and developed into a manual that can be followed by park managers to monitor the economic value of their parks and demonstrate how government funds for park management create an enabling environment for the generation of additional value. The approach was piloted at South Luangwa NP, where despite a high dependence by the local population on economic opportunities from tourism, wildlife populations in the buffer zones are dwindling. I plan to wrap up my research by examining the model of wildlife management in the buffer zones, and the transaction costs

hindering the adoption of an alternative model.

Alex Chidakel is a PhD candidate in the School of Natural Resources and Environment. This project has most recently been funded by the School of Natural Resources and Environment and the United Nations Development Programme. Earlier funding was received from the Center for African Studies and the Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development.