

## Landscape Dynamics in Caprivi, Namibia

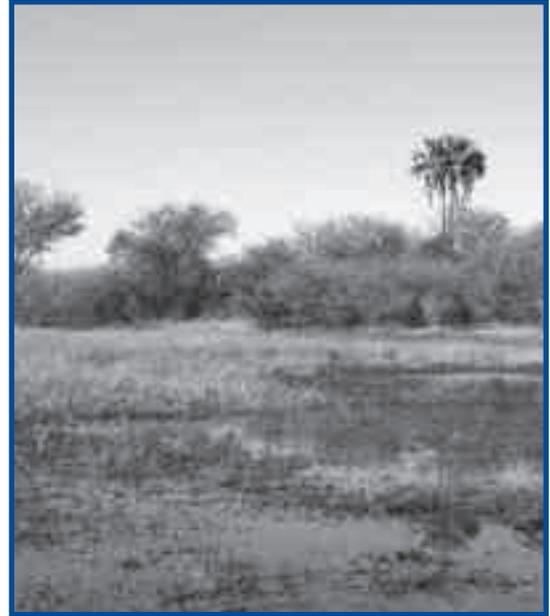
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Over the summer I spent another field season in Caprivi, Namibia, with a focus on understanding how and why different land-use decisions are made, what the most important natural resources are for communities, and how these resources are spatially distributed across communal lands. The region is a semi-arid savanna with average rainfall between 600-800 mm annually and is the most undeveloped part of Namibia due to history of regional conflict, warfare, and isolation from the rest of country.

My dissertation research takes an interdisciplinary approach by combining oral land-use histories with a more quantitative examination of landscape patterns using satellite images and precipitation datasets. This summer I focused on collecting additional environmental history data (through interviews and focus group discussions) and land-cover data that will facilitate the identification and quantification of different spatial and temporal patterns on the satellite imagery.

The work from this summer feeds into a larger, collaborative effort that involves other UF graduate students and professors, partners at African universities, and within

local communities. The collaborative spirit emanated through the efforts of the UF graduate students based in Caprivi sharing a vehicle, time, and space to work with local communities, collect data, and also provide feedback products. The most important data collection for my own research involved firstly the focus group discussions and key informant interviews to gather perceptions on different land-uses and how different areas have changed over time. The other component demanded treks through the thorniest, densest woody vegetation that could be found in the communal lands. After strenuous debate and consideration we were able to narrow down a very scientific



definition of what constitutes dense shrub cover which I strongly believe would hold up under peer review.

Like all field seasons uncertainties existed, time was of the essence, and the speed of things moved at its own pace. But productiveness prevailed, experiences were gained, friendships strengthened and I hope to find myself back in the region next year.

*Andrea Gaughan is a doctoral student in the Department of Geography and a recipient of funding from the NSF-funded IGERT program on Adaptive Management, Water, Watersheds, and Wetlands. Her research was supported by a summer 2008 CAS pre-dissertation travel award and a WFT travel award.*