

# [Book review] Transfrontier Conservation Areas: People Living on the Edge

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## **Transfrontier Conservation Areas: People Living on the Edge**

**J.A. Andersson, M. De Garinne-Wichatitsky, D.H.M. Cumming, V. Dzingirai, K.E. Giller (Eds).** Routledge, ISBN 978-0-415-50778-3, 216 pp.

Organised into ten chapters this edited volume attempts to synthesise current debates around Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) in Southern Africa. It begins by outlining the historical 'fortress conservation' approach to conservation and argues, as many others elsewhere have, that the TFCA approach has made little progress beyond this in terms of its purported sustainable development goals. People remain marginalised on the 'edge' not only geographically in terms of proximity to park boundaries but in terms of the policy process and the resources they have access to. The remainder of the volume is an attempt to understand the dynamics of this edge environment.

Drawing mainly on empirical studies of the larger TFCAs encompassing South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, chapters three to six provide a fascinating insight into the social, political and economic processes which have shaped the edge environment. Anderson and Cumming show how the edge boundaries were historically shaped by more than just conservation agendas – capitalist expansion, animal disease transmission and the racial politics of land tenure were all critical to the process. Dzingirai et al outline how the edge in South Africa and Zimbabwe, in particular, became a labour reserve and dumping ground for resettled people. Building on this, Giller et al demonstrate how across a range of essentially similar agro-ecological areas in different countries, the legacy of segregation and resettlement in conjunction with access to water, war, migration and HIV-AIDS, has resulted in great variation in population densities along the edge as well as in the livelihoods people practice. All of these current and historical drivers have helped to create the realities which presently face local people living in these edge areas.

Chapters seven and eight move on to explore the relationships between people and wildlife that exist around the edge. Murwira et al draw on ecological theory to understand movements across the edge of parks in terms of resource gradients. Focusing mainly on Zimbabwe they show how predators are attracted into communal areas adjacent to the parks by the high densities of livestock. Likewise elephants are also drawn into communal areas by the presence of grain crops, particularly around harvest time. Conversely, there is a considerable movement of livestock into parks during the dry season when forage resources in communal areas are depleted. De Garinne-Wichatitsky et al use the platform provided by this work to explore the consequences of these movements for people and show that damage to crops and predation of livestock can have a significant impact on local livelihoods, particularly where cattle are lost, as many households have herd sizes of five or fewer animals. Disease transmission between wildlife and livestock represents another problem for herders in edge areas, particularly in countries such as Zimbabwe, where fences tend to be porous, veterinary support ineffective and

people rely heavily on livestock for their livelihoods. The authors also outline some of the positive benefits of these interactions, the most immediate being access to wildlife meat either legally or illegally as well as grazing access. Their call for TFCA management arrangements that place greater emphasis on direct benefits to local farmers is developed by Cumming et al in their exploration of the opportunities for developing ecosystem services. Using case studies from South Africa and Zimbabwe, Cumming et al show that the potential of ecosystem services, although hardly explored, is considerable and advocate a combination of wildlife and livestock to maximise both ecological and economic benefits. They present TFCAs as complex Social-Ecological Systems (SES) and suggest that SES frameworks such as those advanced by Ostrom and collaborators should increasingly be used to inform TFCA design – a call which is repeated in the concluding chapter on the future direction for TFCAs. Perhaps sensibly, given the enormous complexities inherent, the recommendations from this final chapter are limited to highlighting key areas where more needs to be done and emphasising a greater role for local people in TFCA design, planning and management.

Overall, the main strength of the book lies in its detailed and thorough analysis of the complexities facing TFCA planners in these edge environments, which to date have received relatively little research attention. However, for a volume purporting to deal with Southern Africa, it does suffer from a slightly narrow geographical focus in that most of the material is drawn from South Africa and Zimbabwe. I would like to have seen more material from countries such as Mozambique, where people are likely being pushed even more towards the edge of existence around national parks. Another minor criticism is that I found some of the figures are difficult to interpret in black and white, particularly those presenting satellite images. Nevertheless, it will appeal not only to those with research and teaching interests around people and conservation, but also practitioners. The depth of case study material will also make it a useful resource for students in the field of environment and development.

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