

Junior Fellowship for Steven Matema: Sustainable Transfrontier Conservation Areas? Exploring linkages between natural resources management, livelihood management and socio-political dynamics in the Chimanimani TFCA

Initiative: Wissen für morgen – Kooperative Forschungsvorhaben im subsaharischen Afrika (beendet)

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Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) are prominent in Southern Africa, and growing, because of their promise to restore the integrity of transnational ecosystems and alleviate poverty in local communities. Analyses of TFCAs tend to question their potential to socio-economically uplift local communities but rarely consider the effects of social and political dynamics on geo-biophysical properties and dynamics of ecosystems. To enhance the success of TFCAs a holistic analysis of socio-ecological couplings is needed. The project aim is to establish preconditions for successful implementation of TFCAs, using the Chimanimani TFCA in the Zimbabwe/Mozambique borderland as a case study. Its Afromontane ecosystem characterised by protected areas with endemic fauna and flora species, and Zimbabwe's only lowland tropical moist forest, exists adjacent other potentially competing land uses and livelihood strategies: agropastoralism, commercial timber plantations and artisanal gold mining. Accelerated stateled/spontaneous (re)settlement and slowing rural to urban migration, are recent phenomena. Within this milieu, conflict is likely with implications for natural resources, and livelihood management. Using surveys and participatory methodologies informed by a political ecology sensitive to material dynamics and multifunctionality in landscapes, the project seeks to explore linkages between the spatial-temporal, socio-economic and political dimensions of land-use in Chimanimani and identify (in)compatibilities between diverse land use types, and sociopolitical interests.

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