

Human-Wildlife Conflict mitigation in CBNRM: Stakes driving decision-making

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Community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) is currently advertised as a sound alternative to overcome the crucial shortcomings inherent to fortress conservation. This approach would fill the social, political and historical gaps unaddressed when tackling nature from an exclusively protectionist perspective. Nonetheless, ever-increasing voices, from the academics and in the field, start to question the actual efficiency of this new narrative in meeting its goals towards both biodiversity conservation and social development. Addressed from a political ecology perspective, the present work focuses on the stakes surrounding decision-making in conservancies in Namibia, country referred to as a model for its CBNRM program. As a frame, the recurrent conservation issue of human-wildlife conflict (HWC), described as a proxy of wider social conflicts, will be addressed. The results of this research offer an overview of the multitude of stakes involved when issues regarding resource management are tackled. They reveal that decision-making, despite the new conservation narrative describing it as community-based, is a multi-scalar process that overcomes conservancies' boundaries to unveil national and international influences. Indeed, indirectly involved external stakeholders affect and compromise the governance in communities, since their interests weigh more in the balance than those of the local population. These outcomes lead to question the actual potential that CBNRM initiatives can achieve regarding communities' empowerment, when entangled within a capitalist frame.

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