

Call for Papers

Decolonization and the Politics of Wildlife in Africa

International Conference
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Conveners:

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The establishment of European colonial rule on the African continent not only involved the colonization of nature, but essentially meant colonization through nature. Imperial politics of resource extraction, hunting, and conservation forged the upsetting and renegotiation of existing human ecologies and were often accompanied by the strict separation of the spheres of »nature«/»wilderness« on the one hand, and »culture« on the other. But in how far did decolonization across Africa south of the Sahara equally affect the sphere of ecology and relationships between humans and wildlife? What continuities and what changes can we observe in the transcontinental governance of wildlife and its concepts, practices, and actors? What role did animals play in all this and in how far did decolonization affect wildlife and individual species? Have Africa's wild animals ever been decolonized?

This conference seeks to address these questions in a trans- and multidisciplinary perspective. It aims to bring together senior and junior specialists in African and global environmental history, human-animal studies, human geography, political ecology, and the various conservation and wildlife sciences. Scholars based at African academic institutions are particularly encouraged to apply. We are interested in receiving proposals focusing on the transitional decades of late colonial rule and early independence. Ideally, but not exclusively they should address one or several of the following themes and topics:

Comparative and Entangled Perspectives on Decolonization and State Politics of Wildlife

Wildlife conservation and safari tourism were of varying importance to late colonial economies across Africa. We invite papers that trace the differing impact of decolonization upon the sectors of wildlife conservation and tourism and look at relevant policies and concepts, both in a comparative perspective and with a view to transfers and exchanges between African states. In which states did wildlife conservation become the nucleus of green, environmental

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state-building, and why? To what extent was wildlife used for strategic nation-branding as a green, conservationist state at the international level? And in what ways were wildlife policies in African states south of the Sahara interrelated? What role did, for example, the massive extension of protected areas in Tanzania during the 1960s, or the hunting ban introduced in Kenya in 1977 play for the wildlife policies in neighboring countries? Did these events attract emulation, or, rather, did they force other policies south of the Sahara to develop alternative strategies of utilizing wildlife as a resource? And what differences can be observed between states formerly under colonial rule, and those few countries that had escaped direct governance through European powers?

Transcontinental Governance and the »Africanization« of Wildlife Sectors

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the conservation of wildlife in countries south of the Sahara was subject to structures of transcontinental governance in which conservationist advocacy groups located in Europe and North America and centralized state administrations largely determined the politics and geographies of hunting and wildlife. Therefore, the »Africanization« of wildlife policies became an imperative issue of nature politics in many African states after independence. We are interested in actual shifts in participation and responsibility not only in management, but in conservation more broadly. Did postcolonial policies of »Africanization« also entail greater inclusion and if so, in how far did these efforts draw upon policies that predated decolonization, e.g. the establishment of Controlled Areas for wildlife management aimed at greater community involvement in Kenya since the 1950s? What did »Africanization« mean in concrete terms, in what ways was it implemented in practical politics, in how far was it used as a rhetorical strategy to make international conservation agencies act comply with government agendas? Did African governments use wildlife to strategically attract outside expertise and funding to strengthen their wildlife sectors, and how did international organizations adapt their strategies, practices and framings of wildlife to changing political circumstances after decolonization? Who were the local counterparts and supporters of these organizations, and in how far did policies and framings of wildlife change with the increasing presence not only of conservationist organizations, but those specifically dedicated to animal welfare?

Wildlife Sciences and the Management of Protected Areas

Decolonization was accompanied by substantial and externally funded institution building to strengthen wildlife conservation. The 1960s witnessed, for example, the establishment of the Serengeti Research Institute as well as the

colleges of wildlife management in Mweka (Tanzania) and Garoua (Cameroon). We are interested in the management and agendas of such institutions and their impact upon park and wildlife management across Africa, as well as in the role of science in the understanding of wildlife and the management of protected areas more broadly. What sciences came to develop an interest in Africa's fauna and what role did the differing perspectives of e.g. ethology and wildlife ecology play in the evolution of conservation biology? Did veterinarians, a major voice in colonial controversies over tsetse and the possible coexistence of livestock and wildlife, retain their say in wildlife-related debates after decolonization? And in how far did science drive the management of protected areas or were it, vice versa, management requirements that dictated the agenda of science in parks? And did the evolution of conservation biology take different paths, for example, in internationally isolated South Africa under Apartheid compared to e.g. wildlife sectors with a greater openness to international science, such as in Eastern Africa?

Tourism, Hunting, Agriculture:

Material Encounters between Humans and Wild Animals

Decolonization ran parallel to international developments that had considerable ramifications for the interaction between humans and wildlife. Among these were planning, the rise of the »scientific expert«, and a boom in long-distance tourism. The latter rendered the merely visual consumption of wildlife an attractive economic alternative to the consumptive utilization of wildlife by trophy hunting or the trade in tusks and horns. We are interested in papers that analyze the changing understandings of wildlife and individual animal species in the differing regimes of consumptive and non-consumptive tourism, and papers that focus on the corporeal encounter between humans and animals as mediated through hunting, safari, science, but also everyday coexistence in separated but shared local ecologies. How did both touristification and scientization of wildlife impact upon the possibilities of encountering them, and how did touristic and scientific frames of understanding wildlife shape these encounters? We are also interested in papers addressing the relationship, the conflicts and the arrangements between tourist requirements of seemingly authentic »wilderness«, the necessities of management intervention and the ecologies of non-disturbance required for continuous scientific monitoring.

Wildlife in Film and Popular Science

Bernhard Grzimek's SERENGETI SHALL NOT DIE, James Hill's film about Joy and George Adamson's intimate story with orphaned lioness Elsa (BORN FREE), and the wildlife documentaries by Armand and Michaela Denis are just

the most famous examples of film and book productions dealing with Africa's wildlife in the 1950s and 1960s. They were accompanied by a flurry of popular science books by expatriate wildlife researchers such as Jane Goodall, Ian Douglas-Hamilton, or George B. Schaller, who understood their science as applied conservation, blurred the boundaries between scientific analysis and popularizing description, and capitalized on a previously unknown intimacy with and individualization of the species under their study. In what ways was this development related to decolonization? Did these films and books have any reception in African countries and if so, what were they? What role did developments in scientific disciplines play, and in how far can these cultural productions be read as a means how Western scientists and audiences re-negotiated their relationship to Africa's wildlife, and to Africa via wildlife? And what does the heretofore unknown degree of individualization and naming of animal personalities mean for human-wildlife relationships more broadly?

African Perspectives on Wildlife in Local and Global Perspectives

Finally, we invite papers that address decidedly African perspectives on wildlife and wildlife policies in their local and global contexts. How were such perspectives expressed e.g. in literature or oral histories? And how distinctive were these perspectives when compared to wildlife policies during and after decolonization e.g. in Asia? Is it possible to conceive of Africa south of the Sahara as a variety of a green, African modernity in which the larger fauna was not colonized away, as in most other continents, but, quite the opposite, became a contested and conflicting motor and driving force for tourism- and nature-based ecological modernization policies essentially built upon wildlife?

Please send a proposal of no more than 500 words and a brief CV to both conveners (gissibl@ieg-mainz.de, schuermann@uni-kassel.de).

The deadline for submission is February, 28 2017. Participants will be notified by the middle of March.

The conference will be held in English and focus on the discussion of pre-circulated papers of about 5,000 to 6,000 words (due by September 3, 2017).

Cost of travel and accommodation will be covered.

