# Scaling-up tourism in East and Southern Africa: the role and impacts of transfrontier conservation areas

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## Abstract

*Tourist destinations that are transfrontier in nature have marked the latest tourism innovation in East and Southern Africa. Owing to the emergence of borderless notion that supports the establishment of transfrontier conservation areas, the industry benefits from supra-national green destinations that increase free movement of tourists and services across state borders. This paper adds to an important literature on scale construction and its spatial implications for transfrontier tourism. It examines how the borderless notion is used to support scaling-up of tourism and the establishment of transfrontier destinations in East and Southern African regions. The main argument of the paper is that scaling processes that promote borderless tourism are necessarily a means of producing space for private projects of actors who are involved in facilitating these processes. The paper draw lessons from the East African Community and Southern African Development Community to demonstrate how these regional blocks are used differently to mobilize political support and legitimacy for 'borderless tourism initiatives'. Subsequently, this discussion shifts towards examining how ecological and economic claims made of borderless destinations are directly associated with creating space for private investments of conservation organizations.*

**Keywords**: Transfrontier tourist destinations, scale, space, East Africa and Southern Africa

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the Presidents of member states of Southern African Development Community (SADC) opened tourist access facilities in countries that share tourist destinations. Symbolically, the opening of borders for tourists was performed in Sendelingsdrift located between South Africa and Namibia, Giriyondo between South Africa and Mozambique and Mata between South Africa and Namibia. Opening of borders in these areas was specifically targeting tourist destinations of the /Ai-/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Conservation Area (TFCA)[i] that straddles the South Africa and Namibia border, the Great Limpopo TFCA between South Africa and Mozambique and Kgalagadi TFCA between South Africa and Namibia. In May 2009, Presidents Ian Khama of Botswana, Hifikepunye Pohamba of Namibia, King Mswati of Swaziland and President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe launched the 'Boundless Southern Africa (BSA)' initiative which aimed at promoting tourism and investment opportunities in TFCAs within the SADC region. The team travelled through seven TFCAs, thirty national parks and nature reserves in nine (SADC) countries. Today, TFCAs are declared a SADC flagship project and BSA as an official brand for unifying and consolidating marketing and investment promotions in all the TFCAs in the region (SADC, 2012).

In East African Community (EAC), the Coalition of the Willing (CoW[ii]), launched the 'Borderless Borders of East Africa' in January 2014 at the popular tourism marketing event of the World Travel Market in London. In this event, the start of a single tourist visa was announced with immediate effect. The borderless notion of tourist destinations as used in the two regions attests to the willingness of states to scale-up shared tourist destinations as a practical means of making tourism a vehicle for regional economic development. It is implied that by removing entry point hurdles, both international and intra-regional tourism will be promoted in areas that are out of state bounds. The question remains on how the borderless destination unfolds under different conditions and the extent to which states are willing to surrender their sovereign powers over space.

The paper is not *per se* about whether or not the removal of borders for tourism will achieve what states envisages nor will it delve into general critiques of nature-based

tourism around which a mass of research and opinion already exists (Büscher and Fletcher, 2015, Butt, 2012, Duffy, 2014). Rather, the paper seeks to contribute to these debates in relation to the process of constructing supra-national tourist destinations that single states have no complete sovereign control. The main argument of this paper is that scaling processes that promote transfrontier tourism are a practical means of producing space. Once a cross-border space is produced, it supports neoliberal projects of those involved in the scaling processes. Where interest of actors have not coalesced to produce and claim that [un]bound space, achieving single tourist destinations is constrained by state interests and sovereign powers over space. In this case, the borderless notion becomes a means of withdrawing the state control over space while legitimating the use of such spaces for private projects. Understanding how scale and space for tourism is constructed is therefore potentially useful in strengthening our engagement with the nature-development debate.

### 1.1 Context and methods

Based on the trends that have emerged over years of the promotion of transfrontier conservation and, as tourism has increasingly dominated nature-development debates, drawing lessons based on the progress made so far in the East and Southern African regions would be a useful beginning for understanding how different political and economic contexts will shape these debates. Although doing so is constrained by the lack of data and the fact that the two regions are in different stages of implementation of their protocols, this paper is precisely an attempt to prepare grounds for useful future reflections. Rather than comparing *per se* the large part of the paper will draw from the SADC region's TFCAs while also reflecting on scaling tendencies of different actors who are involved in conservation and tourism promotions in the East African region. Thus the paper is based on the review of literature and qualitative analysis of secondary data that is available in different forms including national and regional policies and laws, reports of different organizations, agreements and published research materials as well as media reports. Secondary analysis of information was undertaken to understand and explain the context in which scaling processes will increase tourism and its contribution to socio-economic development in the two regions.

The idea of the paper was conceived at the time of heated debates in East Africa where some members of the community were blamed for slow pace of participation in regional projects. In particular, Tanzania had earlier on withdrawn its signature for the Protocol on Environment and Natural Resources Management (2013), which is key to operationalizing the environment chapter of the EAC Treaty (EAC, 1999). The country proceeded to disapprove the 'Borderless Borders of East Africa initiative' which approved a single tourist visa for East Africa in early 2014. Tanzania's decision based on the view that shared resources have revenue and security matters that have not been scrutinized especially with the current security threats that Al Shabab poses to the region. The country's position exerts pressure particularly on the use of shared tourist destinations such as Serengeti-Maasai Mara ecosystem but also complicates travel arrangements for tourists wishing to visit the country through Kenya and vice versa. For example, in July 2013, Tanzania banned Kenyan tourist vans from entering the country (*Arusha Times*, 20/7/2013) while the Kenyan Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) banned Tanzania tour operators and vehicles from picking them up from Jomo Kenyatta Airport in Nairobi (*The East Africa*, 17-23/1/2015). Apparently, Tanzania and Kenya are implementing a bilateral agreement of 1985 that require off-loading of tourists at the borderland. Since there is no any regional agreement signed on shared tourism destinations, the 1985 restrictions are binding. This does not resonate well with the spirit of the announced Borderless Borders initiative.

It is important to note also that, Tanzania is a member of both SADC and EAC. In SADC, state parties signed two protocols that are important for this discussion; Tourism Development (1998) and Wildlife Conservation and Law Enforcement (2003). The former provides for, among other things, the creation of a regional body to market the SADC region as a collective tourism destination while the latter supports the establishment of TFCAs. As it is for the EAC, the protocols envisage a 'univisa' system for international tourists, which would facilitate cross-border movement of international tourists within the whole region[iii]. It is on the basis of the foregoing protocols that the 'Borderless Southern Africa (BSA) initiative' was recently embraced as an official marketing brand for TFCAs. Clearly, therefore, both regional blocks envisage the removal of borders as a mechanism for branding and promoting their regions as single tourist destinations. However, unlike in the SADC region where for the past two decades

TFCAs have actively been established as both a regional conservation and tourism scale, the East African region has not yet engaged in mobilizing the political support and legitimacy for establishing such a scale although states see growth potentials in opening borders for tourists. Precisely, the opening of borders as envisaged in these two contexts differ in terms of the actual operationalization. It is for this reason that I argue that engaging with scale and space construction will shade light on different ways that transfrontier tourism may evolve and the struggles that might arise from the process of opening up access to and use of cross-border regions for tourism.

## 2. CONSTRUCTING SCALE AND SPACE FOR TRANSFRONTIER TOURISM

In re-thinking about the links between scale, nature and development politics, Guyot (2011) raises a question of how frontiers - in all its three meanings as a space along an international border, a region just beyond or at the edge of a countryside and an undeveloped field of research – have currently become a point of convergence for different actors whose interests in cross-border regions have given rise to transfrontier conservation as both a new political space and a field of research. As such, social theorization of this development has raised concerns that transfrontier conservation (and implicitly tourism) and global capitalism have become so intertwined that conservation organizations enable the marketing of nature while both nature and poverty are increasingly becoming the underlying assets of value (Büscher, 2010, Guyot, 2011, Butt, 2012). Other critics point to the ways that boundless spaces of high ecological value deal with the geopolitics of international borders (Fall, 2005, Lunstrum, 2013) and the poor people living on the edges (Andersson et al., 2012). These concerns have made TFCAs and their associated tourism investments a critical site of struggles over the meaning of neoliberalism, landscape and land rights in Africa (Gardner, 2012, Ramutsindela, 2007) hence linking nature protection with internal conflicts, insecurity of both life and resource tenure (Death, 2016, Douglas and Alie, 2014).

Conservation biologists have successfully linked ecology with tourism by arguing that the scale of conservation is an important determinant of ecosystem balance and good conservation practices. Large-scale conservation areas support the presence of charismatic megafauna across borders, which create a spectacle of images leading to the

development of a large heritage tourism industry. Thus the scale of conservation has progressively led to the adoption of tourism plans that respond directly to the theories of environmentalism and sustainable development (Butler, 1991, Baldus et al., 2003). This make scale and cross-border destinations become central to the debates about nature-development debates. However, spatial and temporal scaling has been a conceptual and methodological problem for most disciplines using geographical information (Harvey, 1996, Masson, 2006).

Unlike in the traditional understanding of the scale as a cartographic concept which associate a map distance with the surface of the earth (Sheppard and McMaster, 2004, Marston, 2000), the field of human geography has increasingly associated scale with nested hierarchy of bounded spaces of differing size – province, region, continent - and different levels of analysis – local, regional, national and global – in which the investigation of political processes is set (Delaney and Leitner, 1997). The two notions treats scale as unproblematic, pre-given and fixed hierarchy of bounded spaces (McCarthy, 2005, Marston, 2000, Howitt, 1998), the assumption that for a long time has prevented social scientists from investigating how scales are being continually reorganized. Subsequently, however, literature has grown on scale construction as a fundamental part of the activities that produces space and how the creation of space in turn implies setting of new borders (Perkmann, 2007, Haywarda and Kerley, 2009, Fall, 2005, Newman, 2003). The construction of scale is thus a primary means through which spatial differentiation occurs, so that a region is one scale in the social production of space (Smith and Dennis, 1987, Smith, 2004a, Taylor, 1999, Rangan and Kull, 2009). This makes changing of scale part of the processes of reconfiguring spatial borders and the governance functions associated with them.

Scale making and its spatial implications are reflected in the contemporary practices that have generally shifted nature protection and marketing from a single protected area to harmonizing the management of protected areas that are in close proximity but separated by international borders. Protected areas, communal and private lands across the borders of two or more countries are amalgamated to create large-scale conservation areas. This is typical of scale construction, which as the literature suggests, is a fundamental part of the activities that produce space. However, scale construction is

not restricted to extending geographical coverage but also networks and the flow of funds that sustain conservation projects of different actors (Sachedina, 2010, Exner et al., 2015). We must therefore analyze these networks because they are part of the struggles for control over diverging spaces in the neoliberal world (Smith, 2004b). As such, the contemporary processes of constructing 'valuable landscapes' (as Exner et al., 2015 calls them) have mainly depended on the diversity of actors and their networks that engage with regional and national platforms to support redefinition of scale.

Since the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) made environmental agenda a global mandate, it also provided a general framework that supports spatial planning for supra-national conservation and tourism projects. State parties to CBD agreed to revise and match their national and regional environmental objectives to match those of the international conservation and financial institutions. As the states made commitments through different international conventions (such as the Convention on Migratory Wild Animal Species, which provides for mechanisms to conserve migratory wild animal species and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES), global conservation and financial institutions included in their objectives the support for inter-state and regional projects that implement conservation and development objectives. For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)– which is the principal agency of the United States in extending assistance to developing countries - funded the Biodiversity Conservation Program from 1989 to 2001 (www.usaid.gov/about usaid). One of the major projects of the program was the development of trans-boundary natural resources management (TBNRM), which aimed at assessing processes, opportunities and constraints for international trans-boundary collaboration in Africa. In 1999, USAID and other organizations initiated a strategic alliance of an umbrella organization of United States-based conservation NGOs with projects in Africa. Called an African Biodiversity Collaborative Group (ABCG), the alliance involved African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), Conservation International, World Conservation Society, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and World Resource Institute (WRI) (Ajathi and Krumme, 2002).

Collectively, this alliance and the projects of individual NGOs have produced and reproduced images that shape people's perceptions of human–environmental

relationships (Igoe, 2010) for which large areas of the world are branded as natural and authentic (Brockington et al., 2008, Neumann, 1998, Ramutsindela, 2007). In particular, these images benefit those who use scale to reproduce spectacular unified brands that suit Western-based notions of tourism. McDonald (2010) advices that it is necessary to view this convergence in constructing scale for conservation and tourism as an organized political project. It is for this reason that research must also analyze the agendas of specific actors who pursue and are empowered by different scalar arrangements so as to understand the outcomes of their projects.

## 3. TRANSFRONTIER TOURISM, DIVERSITY OF ACTORS AND THE ROLE OF REGIONAL PLATFORMS

In the context of this discussion, cross-border conservation and tourist destinations in most of Africa have been staged by conservation NGOs and donors whose alliance have shaped regional and national agenda for conservation and development. For example, fitting regional objectives of seeking political integration, peace and security and, more importantly, the alleviation of poverty render scaling processes both politically correct and economically viable hence winning support of both states and regional economic and political platforms. The image of nature that these different actors have produced combine further to powerful effect in the spectacular productions of biodiversity conservation (Igoe, 2010, MacDonald, 2010). Indeed, the projects of different NGOs that embarked on re-defining conservation scales (as Table 1 indicates) enjoyed the political support of regional platforms while also shaping regional agenda for cross-border regions. In the discussion that follows, two of these projects - TFCAs and African Heartlands – are discussed further to demonstrate how their scaling practices led into a significant shift of approach and policies that eventually support the supra-national tourist destinations that states in the two regions consider a vehicle for socio-economic development.

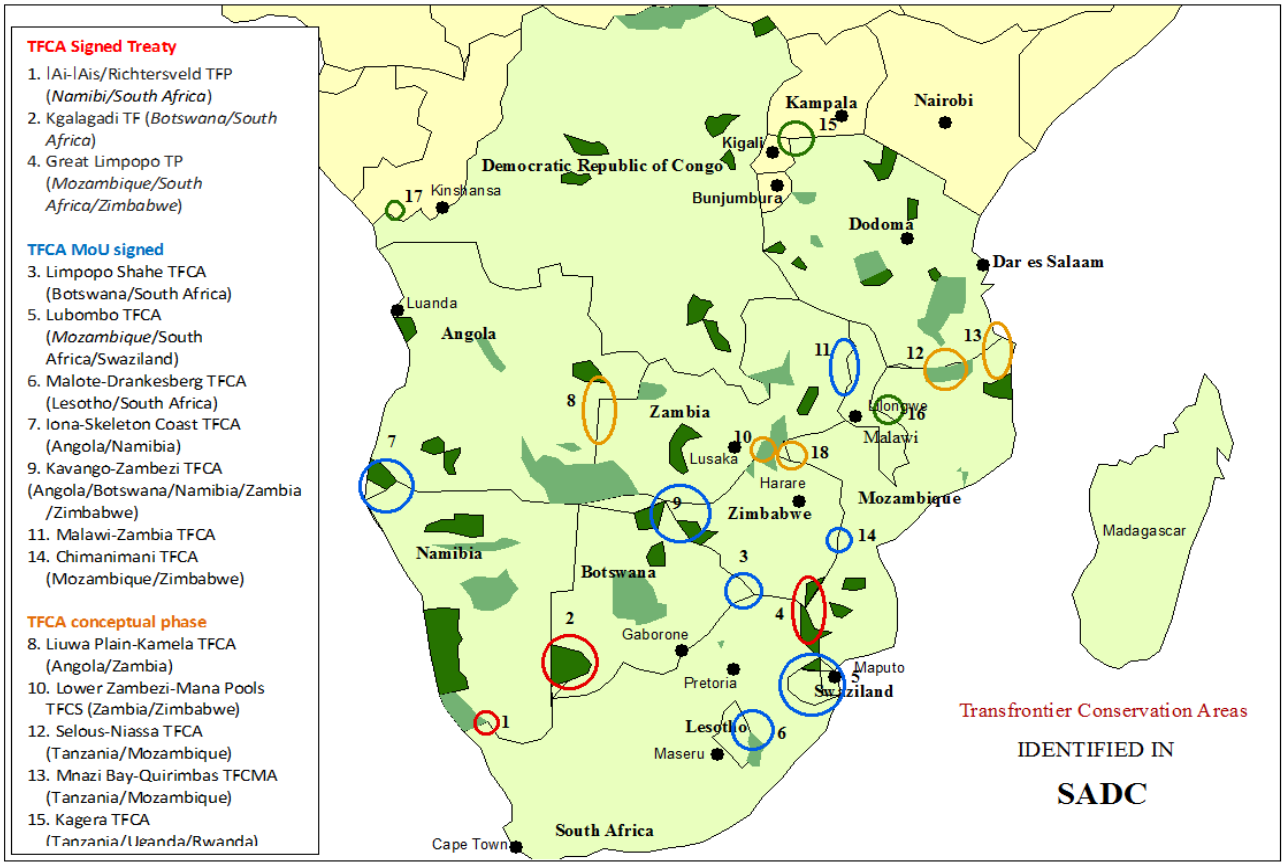
**Table 1: Examples of scaling-up projects in East and Southern Africa**

| Project name | Project proponent | Main objective |
|---|---|---|
| Transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs) | Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) | Restoring ecological connectivity that was disrupted by colonial borders and fences; foster economic integration; and promote peace and cooperation through the encouragement of inter-state collaboration |
| African Heartlands | African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) | Securing large African landscapes of exceptional wildlife and natural values that extends across states, private, and community lands |
| African hotspots | Conservation International (CI) | Protecting areas of high biodiversity concentration |
| Eco-regions | World Wildlife Funds (WWF) | Conserving terrestrial or aquatic areas with distinctive large regional landforms and human activity patterns |
| Living landscapes | Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) | Protect large wild ecosystems integrated within the wider landscapes of human influence |

### 3.1 Peace Parks Foundation and scaling-up tourism in Southern Africa

Peace Parks Foundation (PPF) is known to be the think tank behind the establishment of TFCAs in southern Africa since mid-1990s. The support that PPF gathered from different actors is directly associated with the spatiality of TFCAs, which promises many things; restoration of broken ecosystems, encouraging political integration, peace and security and economic development (through tourism) (PPF, 2012). After the establishment of the first transfrontier park in 1999 - the Kgalagadi transfrontier park (TFP) between Botswana and South Africa followed by the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park (GLTFP) in 2002 - major TFCA projects have been implemented in the SADC region envisaging a total area of over 120 million hectares that encompass protected areas, private and communal lands across international borders (Figure 1). These are the areas that the Presidents of southern African countries toured in 2009 in support of transfrontier tourism.

**Figure 1: Transfrontier Conservation Areas in SADC**




Source: (www.maps.ppf.org.za)

The current SADC development framework adopts TFCAs as a conservation and development model. In 2005, a meeting of SADC Council of Ministers discussed, among other things, a strategy for positioning TFCAs as Africa's premier investment and tourist destination ahead of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. Subsequently in 2007, BSA was established as a special unit and an independent regional marketing brand for TFCAs. In its website, BSA boosts that;

> *'Beyond boundaries we are free to connect to the land, nature, wildlife and to humankind, ourselves, the past and the future. For anyone who has ever said they need more space, this is it!'* (www.boundlesssa.com, accessed 15/10/2015)

With TFCAs as a single tourist destination, the Regional Tourism Organization of Southern Africa (RETOSA) envisages that the region will, by 2020, receive tourists accounting for 52 % of total arrivals in Africa (SADC, 2012). Besides the 2010 FIFA Cup, BSA is also set to initiate a long-term investment in development infrastructure to

increase the number of tourist facilities (hotels and lodges) and improve quality and sophistication of service industry (including transportation, tour operating services as well as visa and payment arrangements) within TFCAs (Boundless southern Africa, 2009, South African Department of Environmental Affairs, 2012). Critical to the current discussion are two issues; first, the fact that BSA activities are anchored on the core idea of spatiality and borderlessness (that also underpins TFCAs) thus making cross-border tourist experiences part of an attractive package. In the words of the CEO of PPF;

'*…once all the SADC TFCAs are established with the necessary infrastructure in place, they will attract eight million visitors per annum….. This is why Boundless Southern Africa was created*' (BSA, 2007: 7).

The second issue relates to the tourism investments that this spatiality generates and how interest of different actors fits. Whereas Lauermann (2011) demonstrate how, in practice, BSA has exclusively been controlled by the networks established by the proponents of TFCAs, Büscher (2010) is more explicit in conceptualizing it through the concept of derivative nature – valuing of nature in monetary terms. He argues that the BSA brand was actually designed as a strategy by the PPF and South Africa's Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) to seize the financial gains that TFCAs were potentially to mobilize through the soccer World Cup in 2010. Indeed, it is not difficult to make projections of how TFCAs can attract tourists to the region; all of the region's most famous attractions - Kruger park, Victoria Falls, Okavango Delta and Fish River Canyon - are enclosed in TFCAs (Büscher, 2012).

Tourism investment within TFCAs are currently linked to 'BoundlessInvest' where issues of finance, foreign exchange, mortgage and property are handled (www.boundlessinvest.com, Lauermann, 2011). By 2008, only one year after the establishment of BSA, TFCAs had a pipeline of 51 bankable investment opportunities ranging from small and medium type lodges to multimillion developments while projects to the value of approximately USD 22 million were negotiated with investors (Boundless southern Africa, 2009, Lunstrum, 2011). In this context, BSA is framed to fit and support investments of a particular network of actors within TFCAs. This link speaks loud about how closely the scale and spatiality of transfrontier conservation is

closely connected to their being potentially sites of lucrative investments accessible to those in the network.

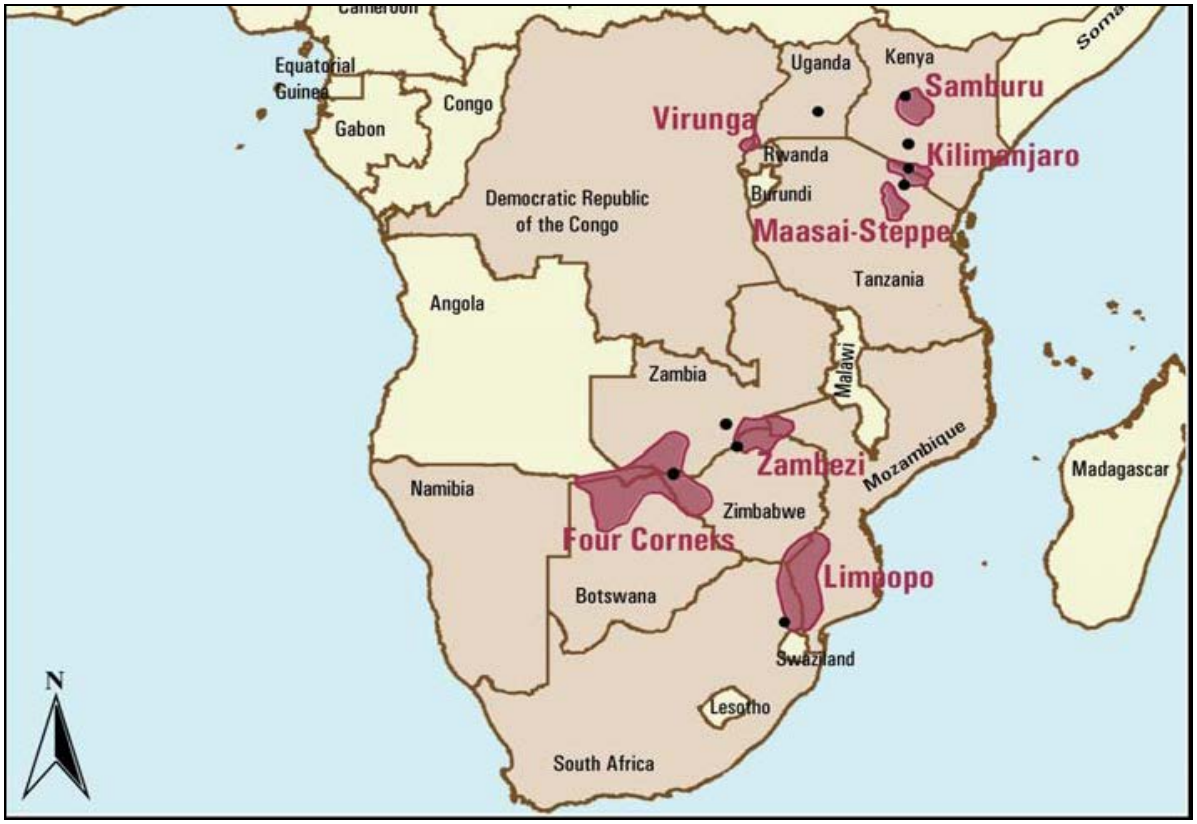
### 3.2 African Wildlife Foundation and scaling-up projects in East Africa

The AWF's Heartland Program - which aims at securing land for wildlife protection - has so far been the major role player in terms of merging pieces of land of different categories to link protected areas that are in proximity to each other and across borders (Henson et al., 2009). Heartlands are defined as large landscapes of exceptional wildlife and natural value extending across states, private, and communal lands (AWF, 2007). The Heartland program is implemented across-borders in both East and Southern Africa. Four of these Heartlands are in East Africa, namely, Maasai Steppe, Kilimanjaro (both across Tanzania-Kenya border) as well as Samburu and Virunga (Figure 2; www.awf.org). As its definition proves, the heartland project is central to constructing a supra-national conservation scale. For example, the Maasai Steppe Heartland involves creating connectivity between Tarangire and Manyara national parks which are part of the large Ngorongoro-Serengeti, and implicitly, connecting with the famous Serengeti-Maasai Mara ecosystem. This ecosystem crosses the Tanzania-Kenya border. So too, the Kilimanjaro Heartland is within the Kilimanjaro- Amboseli ecosystem across Tanzania-Kenya border.

Branding heartlands as 'large landscapes of exceptional wildlife and natural value that extend across states' is by itself an act of scale construction, which legitimize further branding of such areas as borderless tourist destinations. Igoe's (2010) work on spectacle nature describes this branding as a production of images that conceal contiguous scales and interactions. The organization has achieved branding in various ways but the most suitable example in this case is the recent initiative called 'Scaling-up Conservation and Livelihood Efforts in Northern Tanzania (SCALE-TZ)'. Funded by the USAID, the project was launched in Arusha in January 2010. Through the SCALE-TZ project, AWF seeks to deliver transformational conservation and economic impacts in Tarangire-Manyara-Kilimanjaro-Natron ecosystem. This is an expansive project as it operates in both the Maasai Steppe and Kilimanjaro heartlands. The main objective of the project is claimed to be helping local communities to protect the land while

developing tourism and other conservation-friendly businesses. These scale projects have been central to the approach that has successfully re-constructed wildlife corridors and buffer zones that build into expansive wildlife areas across national borders in East Africa.

**Figure 2: The African Heartlands in Southern and Eastern Africa**




**Source**: African Wildlife Foundation, 2007

Currently, heartlands are central to the development of AWF's tourism conservation enterprises. Sachedina (2010) and Van Wijk et al. (2015) examines the progressive evolvement of the organisation's enterprenureship and business model and how tourist commercial ventures reflect the move from the conservation logic that emphasizes nature protection to the development logic that focuses on market logics. As such, the entrepreneurship and business activities are further built into the African Wildlife Capital which is the investment arm of AWF (Van Wijk et al., 2015). As part of tourism enterprise, for example, AWF pioneered a conservancy recently in early 2015. Precisely, the Manyara Conservancy is the first in the country and an enterprise whose principle partner is AWF (Manyara Ranch Conservancy, 2015).

To acquire and control space, the conservancy started off through buying of the government owned ranch, which served also as a grazing area for Maasai communities. The main support for this move was the need to secure the Kwakuchinja wildlife corridor that connects Manyara and Tarangire national parks. The Heartland program legitimized piloting of the organization's business model while at the same time securing and putting this valuable landscape under some sort of its private control. The conservancy is located conveniently at the heart of the Maasai Steppe heartland, which, as described above encompasses all the most famous tourist destinations in the area. AWF manages the conservancy, its wildlife and other legal related issues while the Tanzania Land Conservation Trust is considered the land owner who represents the Maasai communities that surround the area.

The projects of PPF and AWF as discussed here are useful in reflecting on the role that conservation actors have in constructing large scale landscapes, which are branded and packaged as an important tourist product. These projects are also useful in reflecting on the evolution of these activities in different regions. In particular, the East African region has not so far achieved the level and form of transfrontier conservation that is recorded in the SADC region. However, chapters 19 and 20 of the EAC Treaty provide for cooperation on environment and natural resources management with the objective of maximizing benefits from sustainable tourism and wildlife resources (EAC, 1999). So too, Article 12 of the Protocol on Environment and Natural Resources Management require Partner States to develop, harmonize and adopt common policies, laws and strategies for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wildlife resources in and outside protected areas (EAC, 2005). This is reinforced further by the recent Transboundary Ecosystems Management Bill (2010) that provides for the management and regulation of transboundary ecosystems. Section 3(b-d) of the Bill requires that the lost trans-boundary ecosystems be reclaimed and where possible the degradation of natural resources of those ecosystems be reversed. The same section (j) requires the promotion of international cooperation between the EAC and other regional organizations in the management of transboundary ecosystems (EAC, 2010). This policy and legal background is key to legitimizing cross-border conservation activities and

tourism investments in the region. Yet, the member states have not agreed unanimously on how to go about achieving these objectives.

The reason why this legal background has not so far led into a particular regional model of conservation and - by implication a formal transfrontier tourist destination – relates to the fact that key conservation actors did not necessarily have to engage with the EAC to launch their scalar projects. This, in my view, is because; first, the cross-border conservation is not a regional but an international issue of which states have individually endorsed through signing different international agreements. The choice of conservation actors to engage with regional communities may therefore be determined by the internal politics within the region. Hence, approaches are bound to differ from region to region. The approach that the AWF has followed, for example, starts from reworking internal borders but it ends with creating connectivity across state border.

Second, the southern African TFCAs are evolving and spreading up-wards. Already, there are two TFCAs involving three members of the EAC community. These are the Selous-Niassa (across Tanzania-Mozambique border) and Kagera (across Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda border). This demonstrates that, unlike in SADC where Ramutsindela (2007) demonstrates how important the community was as a launching pad for TFCAs, the lack of a regional agreement in the case of EAC does not necessarily hinder the establishment of transfrontier conservation and eventually tourist destinations. From this background, it is evidently clear that although the East African Coalition of the Willing endorsed their Borderless Borders destination, its logic differs from that of PPF and AWF. The latter's logic require the creation of and control of space. Indeed, it is the monopoly over space which is critical to capital flow and its expansion (Harvey, 2001). I argue, therefore, that through their spatial projects, PPF and AWF will have the control of the most landscapes of value and therefore the power to shape how the borderless tourism will evolve in both regions. This prompts the question of whether scaling up tourism is indeed related directly to socio-economic development of countries. As this becomes the subject of the next section, learning experiences are largely drawn from the SADC region, which is relatively advanced in terms of implementing transfrontier conservation and tourism projects.

## 4. TOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT: INSIGHTS FROM TFCAS IN SADC

Critiques have recently emerged that although TFCAs in southern Africa are gaining popularity, it is not necessarily because of the growth in tourist numbers as most would judge. Rather, the popularity is in the power of image created of an extended wilderness where tourists can wonder and experience nature without borders. Although this popularity might have worked from conservation achievements, it is importance to take a greater degree of caution when outlining promises of economic gains from tourism. For the purpose of aiding this discussion, I use three different surveys which were conducted in Kavango-Zambezi (KAZA) TFCA (Suich et al., 2005), the Great Limpopo TFCA (GLTFCA) (Spenceley et al., 2008) and Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP) (Scovronick and Turpie, 2009). These studies were chosen for their merits of statistical information that enabled some comparisons. Whereas the first two focused on taking stock of tourism facilities in TFCAs and how these related to the number of arrivals over time, the third study provides some useful insights for comparing trend of tourism activities and practices during and ten years after the establishment of the KTP. The aim of this comparison was to establish whether there are changes in tourism activities and what socio-economic implications can be noted.

Suich et al. (2005) conducted a baseline survey of tourism activities in 2004 in the KAZA region focusing mainly on generated economic impacts. The survey indicated that the industry had awaken the economy of the KAZA region particularly through the provision of more than 5,500 jobs, 94% of which were filled by local employees who earned more than USD 14 million in wages and salaries by 2004. In addition, about USD 100 million was generated by the accommodation and tour operator sectors. The survey also reports that almost 90% of tourism businesses within KAZA were privately owned and that local owners were earning a relatively small proportion of total turnover generated in the industry. However, many of the sites of high tourism development potentials within the TFCA were still seen on communal land where local entrepreneurs do not have the necessary expertise or financial resources to start a tourism business (Suich et al., 2005). The study proposes that, with the current trend, the tourism industry within the KAZA region could be considered as contributing to economic growth through revenue generation, government tax revenues and job creation but it leaves much to be desired by local entrepreneurs.

The study by Spenceley et al. (2008) aimed at establishing the economic impacts of tourism accommodation and tour operating activities in the GLTFCA. The survey aimed also at establishing levels of local benefits and whether the TFCA had development impacts on tourism. Although the study did not reach the Mozambican side of the park, it involved an estimated 25% of the population of enterprises based in South Africa and Zimbabwean sides of the GLTFP. The result was that the South African enterprises generated USD 85 million from accommodation, and USD 52 million from tours in 2006 while in Zimbabwe, USD 6.8 million was generated from accommodation, and USD 337,000 from tours in the same year (Spenceley et al., 2008: 4). In both countries, the majority of the surveyed facilities were locally owned (82% of accommodation and 50% of tour operations for South Africa and 62% of accommodation facilities and 60% of tour operations for Zimbabwe). Likewise, the majority of employees in the sector were local residents in both countries. However, a great proportion of local employees undertake low rank positions due to the lack of appropriate academic qualifications and skills.

The study concluded that the GLTFCA has significant good results within a short time and that more could be expected in the long term (Spenceley et al., 2008). Nevertheless, recent studies in the same park have raised concerns about limited economic benefits available for local communities, a decade after the establishment of the TFCA (Lunstrum, 2010, Büscher, 2012). More recently studies record planned relocation of over seven thousand people from the Mozambican side of the GLTFCA following the increasing competition for land hence placing profound pressures on rural communities and their abilities to occupy space and access resources (Witter, 2013; Lunstrum, 2015)

Scovronick and Turpie's study of 2009 was on the assessment of tourism performance of the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park (KTP). It provides some useful comparative data for tourism practices and trend for the time around the establishment of the park and the time of survey. Two major conclusions that are of interest to this discussion emerged; first, that since the inauguration of the KTP in 1999, visitor numbers to the park has not grown. Precisely, the proportions of visitors have tended to decrease gradually in a span of ten years. The percentage of total visitors decreased from approximately 1.8 million in 1997/1998 to 1.2 million in 2007/2008 (Scovronick and Turpie, 2009:152). The

percentage of total visitors to the Botswana side of the park increased steeply to approximately 3.5 million in 2000 but decreased to 3.0 million thereafter. Instead of associating tourism with the TFCA, the study associates periodic increases in tourism mainly with the growth in bed numbers which raise average length of stay and total visitor days. The second conclusion is that the increased size of and access to the transfrontier park did not dramatically influence the guests' decision to visit. That is, the change in area coverage of the park does not necessarily increase the diversity of attractions offered. Implicitly, the rate of tourism growth in KTP could be enhanced without the transfrontier arrangement by targeting expansion of park tourist facilities. Scovronick and Turpie's study is complemented by the most recent work by Rattle (2015) who provides further statistical evidence to support that the transfrontier status of the KTP has not resulted into an increase in visitor numbers. The numbers were particularly compared to other non-TFCA destinations such as Addo Elephant National park which showed a far better trend for both visitation and occupancy levels during the same period of the assessment (Rattle, 2015).

The foregoing discussion leads to an interesting observation that scale and spatial practices that thrive on claims of tourism promotion could be an innovative strategy for nature protection but may not be a suitable development strategy in poor countries. There is particularly a growing evidence of massive loss of land by rural communities and the resulting increase in poverty (see for example, Bologna and Spierenburg, 2015, Ramutsindela and Shabangu, 2013, Lunstrum, 2015) leading to the view that TFCAs and other kinds of supra-national destinations are mainly a means to enter into regime of accumulation(Büscher and Fletcher, 2015, Exner et al., 2015). Indeed, tourism was not explicitly part of most NGO's original activity portfolio but there has been a progressive engagement in developing tourism-conservation enterprises that incentivize landowners outside national parks to protect wildlife(Van Wijk et al., 2015).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This paper underscores the value of engaging with scale and space literature in the interrogation of spatial practices of different actors in conservation and tourism development. The aim was to demonstrate how scaling practices of different actors transform and tame space that is of considerable nature and cultural value. In particular, the legitimacy that conservation NGOs draw from changing the scale, political support that they mobilize from regional natural resource governance and the financial muscles they maintain continue to determine how local space is re-organized to pave ways for conservation and tourism enterprises. Contrary to the borderless notion that suggest the removal of borders, the acquisition of land for conservation and private investments in tourism have depended entirely on the re-organization of space, the phenomena that is closely related to the removal of some borders but also production of new set of borders that redefine the newly created space. The latter comes with ultimate control over space by new actors, most vividly with local land users becoming more marginalized.

The borderless notion as used to package and promote tourism in East and Southern Africa gather support from different directions. On the one hand, conservation actors have anchored their different approaches on the global environmental governance that established the basis for large conservation scale over the past decades. Whereas local political contexts have differentiated approaches that these conservation actors take, their interests converge in the re-organization of the local space in which legitimacy and control over resources is drawn. On the other hand, out of political will, states that view tourism as both a source of conservation funds and a vehicle for socio-economic development use the borderless idea to facilitate convenient movement of tourists across borders. In practical terms, however, this does not re-define space and borders; it changes the management of cross-border activities. Yet, the monopoly powers of capitalism is in the creation of space (both abstract and material) and that any transformation that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; it has mainly changed ideological structures, institutions or political apparatuses (Lefebvre, 1990; Harvey 2001). The EAC's approach to borderless tourism is indeed a political commitment that will mainly provide further support for those involved in the actual redefinition of the material space.

The East African region is likely to benefit from the convergence of practical and political processes that create conditions for supporting rather that disapproving the promotion of borderless tourism. These processes are; the involvement of some of its members in establishing TFCAs, the ongoing Heartland projects and the political commitment demonstrated by the Coalition of the Willing Members in promoting the Borderless Borders initiative. The concoction of these processes may also thicken actor networks and complicate mechanisms for benefiting from tourism and natural resources generally thus resulting into both the empowerment of some and disempowerment of others. The premise for the analyses of the impacts of supra-national tourist destinations should consider the role and interests of different actors who engage in scale construction because tourism that is predominately nature based is not immune to the tendencies of capital accumulation. The discussion and examples drawn from AWF and PPF support the view that different actors draw support from all scales to reinforce legitimacy, networks of power, and donor relations (Sachedina, 2010) while also making ecology the object of politics, policy making and political actions (Rangan and Kull, 2009).

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i Defined as "the area or component of a large ecological region that straddles the boundaries of two or more countries, encompassing one or more protected areas as well as multiple resource use areas".

ii The EAC members are Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and lately Rwanda and Burundi. However, recent disagreements on fast tracking of the East African Federation and single currency resulted in the formulation of the COW whose members are Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda

iii Tanzania signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Mozambique in 2007 agreeing to establish the Selous-Niassa TFCA. Ideally, this is a transfrontier tourist destination where tourists from other SADC countries can access using a single entry visa