Spatiality and ‘Borderlessness’ in Transfrontier Conservation Areas

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Abstract

This article offers a critique of transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs) by focusing on the conception of borders in the proposition of these areas. It claims that the conception of borders as fences that should be removed masks the actual process of bordering that accompanies the creation of TFCAs in different socio-economic and ecological settings. Using the local realities in southern Tanzania where the borders of neither the state nor the protected areas are marked by physical fences, this paper demonstrates how proponents of TFCAs engender new borders that affect the livelihoods of local residents. The assumption that TFCAs follow natural borders is problematic, in that borders are a human creation that are also spatially bounding. This paper draws on conceptual insights from border studies to engage with narratives in transfrontier conservation. Empirically, it uses the experience of the ongoing process of establishing the Selous–Niassa wildlife corridor, which is a cog in the creation of the Selous– Niassa TFCA across Tanzania–Mozambique border.

Keywords

Borders; transfrontier conservation; Selous–Niassa; Tanzania