

A group of anti-poaching rangers in a savanna landscape. The rangers are wearing dark uniforms and caps, and are standing in a line, looking towards the right. The background is a savanna landscape with tall grass and trees. The image is used as a background for the slide.

# Taking stock ahead of CITES CoP18: Rhinos, poaching and local communities

Dr Annette Hübschle  
Global Risk Governance Programme  
University of Cape Town  
SANBI Postdoctoral Fellow: Wildlife ranching economy

# Structure of my talk

- Quick biographical background
- Key findings from my PhD research
- Research design, methods and ethics for community research
- Why do people support/participate in poaching economies?
- Impact of anti-poaching measures
- Considerations for CITES CoP18

# Background

- 20 years of applied policy research on organized crime in southern and East Africa
- PhD on the illicit rhino horn economy - 'A game of horns'
- Study on money laundering typologies of poaching, wildlife trafficking and related financial flows
- A study of illegal and legal wildlife economies, associated markets, their leverage points and enrolments
- Local community foundational research on community and conservation officials' attitudes and perceptions towards protected areas & community crime perceptions
- Ongoing SANBI-sponsored postdoctoral research into the wildlife ranching industry in South Africa
- Project on Rural African Futures: Wildlife crime in KAZA
- Baseline study on wildlife poisoning in the GLTP
- Upcoming ERC grant on 'follow the thing' - wildlife, fossils, antiquities
- Upcoming project on the craft of resilience: New harmscapes of the 21<sup>st</sup> century - climate change and cyber-security

## Point of departure

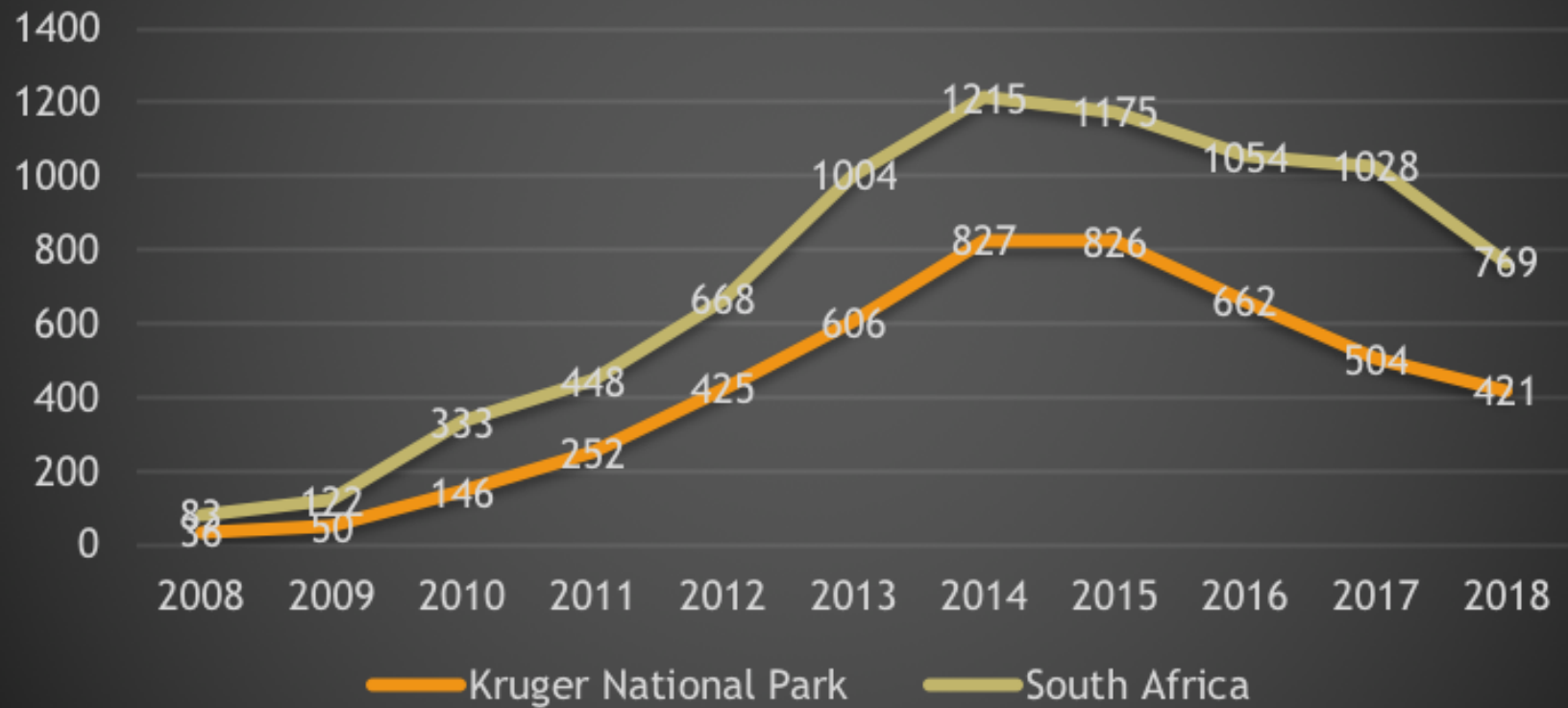
The map of power does not lie behind the barrel of a gun but in the good fortunes of local people footing the costs of living with or near dangerous wildlife.

# Research design and methodology

- Qualitative, largely ethnographic research
- Snowballing and purposive sampling
- Interviews, focus groups, participant observation, oral histories, review of court documents & police reports, policies
- Research sites in Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe
- Participation in high-level policy and law enforcement meetings
- Systematic analysis of CBNRM programmes
- Data analysis using principles of grounded theory and NVivo software
- Triangulation, fact checking and verification
- Ethical guidelines & security protocol - positionality?

# Rhino poaching statistics

## Unnatural rhino mortalities 2008-2018



# Rhino poaching and local communities

- Communities in the limelight as some poachers and helpers are community members
- Notion of criminalized communities & false economies - “cleaning the park from the outside”
- ”War on poaching” & “poacher as terrorist” narratives
- Human rights abuses - illegal searches of people, homes, road blocks
- Disappearances of community members - extrajudicial killings
- Arrests and deaths of community members - growing pool of widows
- Winning heart and minds campaigns - community projects aimed at intelligence extraction (wolves in sheep skins)
- Informants, spooks, journalists and alternative facts



Images: Hübschle & Anderson

# Why do people poach?

- “I’m shooting for the money” (Poacher, Cubo village)
- “You know I wasn't born to hunt a rhino. In the village, we hunt the small animals. You know the guys in the villages, they don't hunt the big animals. They want fresh meat, they only hunt for the day. Normally, they keep big animals safe. There is no fridge. And the land used to be free long ago, now the land is not free. I can't just go anywhere, otherwise the guy will start fighting with me. And he will say this is my land and we will start fighting. Government can stop this thing; they just must give people jobs. Crime is everywhere and the police is shooting us all.” (Convicted poacher, SA correctional centre, 2013)
- “We are using rhino horn to free ourselves.” (Kingpin, Massingir)
- “Get rich young or die trying” (poacher, Mavodze)



# Participation in illegal wildlife economies

Individuals	Community
Emasculation, stress, disempowerment and anger of young people	Structural violence, generational pain of dispossession, racism and impoverishment, reliving of painful past ('war on poaching')
Hunting as a rite of passage & historic use	Perception of unfair land use; loss of hunting rights, natural resource use and access rights; expansion of conservation areas with questionable resettlement schemes
Poaching for the 'cooking pot & pocket book' - notable generation gap: individualistic anomic vs family & community welfare	Unhappiness with rules, income distribution, elite capture, entry of 'outsiders' thus dilution of individual benefits
Social upward mobility: social welfare, community development and political leadership	Social embeddedness of poachers in some communities where poachers and organizers deliver public services
Direct or indirect recruitment by TNOCs	Provision of support services
Expansion/diversification of criminal bouquet: car theft, armed robberies, CITs	Human-wildlife conflict - Question of compensation

# Perceptions: Black lives matter less than wildlife



- “The rhino has its own doctor, its own policeman, its own helicopter, its own land and there are rangers that protect it. We don’t have these things. If the rhino goes extinct tomorrow, maybe we can finally get these things.” (focus group, 2017)
- “Some of the white people here treat them like their friends. They value the rhino more than black human beings.” (trafficking intermediary, 2013)
- “...there is a big campaign and a huge investment in saving the rhino. People have statues of them everywhere, they even organize marathons where they “run to save the rhino”. This tells you, right here in South Africa, a country with a majority of blacks, that black people are worth less than rhinos.” (Julius Malema, 2016)

Image: Brent Stirton, National Geographic

# Participation in licit economies



## Lessons learnt:

- community conservancies in Namibia
- CAMPFIRE project sites
- International initiatives (CITES Rural Communities Working Group, the IWT conferences)
- Private sector initiatives (Black Mambas, Akashinga, Phinda)
- Nepal's rhino protection programme
- Social impact bonds
- Zwelethemba participatory community model of peace-making and peace-building
- Legalizing rhino horn trade?

Image: Adrian Steirn, Alliance Earth

Factors that encourage participation in illegal wildlife economies	Factors that encourage participation in legal wildlife economies
<b>1. Regulatory framework and governance</b>	
Conservation laws and regulations reinforce apartheid and colonial boundaries, mentalities and governance systems.	Land claims are settled, land and natural-resource user rights are restored or negotiated, and access to cultural and natural heritage sites, especially ancestral sites, is restored.
Top-down conservation processes: fortress conservation, control-command, and fences and fines methodologies.	Participatory and community-led conservation processes and protected area management lead to fair and equitable natural-resource management and the benefits are shared.
Assumption of the universal application of Western 'best practice' models.	Local communities have ownership over programming that affects their social worlds.
Conservation strategies and plans are developed with limited or no inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge systems and values.	Indigenous and local knowledge systems are used, acknowledged and paid for (not appropriated).
Lack of transformation in conservation authorities and associated entities (e.g. tourism and hunting).	'Learning by doing' approach to encourage community ownership, management or co-management, and social and economic upward mobility.
Community empowerment and benefits are devolved to elites.	Community structures are accountable, equitable and participatory, and the benefits are direct.
Local elites who had benefited from colonial or apartheid dispensations see their old patronage networks threatened by new community projects.	The voices of the most marginalized community members – women and youths – are amplified and listened to.
Distrust of the state, park authorities and external actors.	High levels of trust in governance structures, park authorities and external actors.
Political interference and patronage networks.	Decentralized decision making that matches local contexts.

Factors that encourage participation in illegal wildlife economies	Factors that encourage participation in legal wildlife economies
<b>2. Socio-economic factors</b>	
Intra- and inter-community conflicts.	Inclusive broad-based economic transformation and community empowerment, including women and youths.
High levels of socio-economic differentiation at community level.	Low levels of socio-economic differentiation and high levels of entrepreneurship (no elite capture).
Poor resource to population ratios lead to competition and conflict over access to land, resources and benefits.	Living standards and levels of inclusive economic transformation are at similar levels in the neighbourhood/at district level.
Perception that conservation areas and wildlife serve the interests of the rich.	Flow of benefits from conservation are directed and channeled to communities.
Human–wildlife conflict is not addressed.	Coexistence is achieved: Protected areas, wildlife and conservation authorities benefit communities. Compensation is paid for losses and remedial responses are implemented.

# Embedded markets



# Design principles for community-orientated conservation outcomes

- Communities are fulcrum institutions
- Render live rhinos more valuable than dead ones to local communities
- Change the way we think about poaching and anti-poaching strategies
- Establish inclusive, not exclusive, institutions
- Regulatory interventions should entail positive outcomes for local communities
- Change the flow of money from interventions that support anti-poaching to interventions that support communities
- Conservation institutions should be accountable to local people, and vice versa
- Harness the spirit of ubuntu

# Considerations for CITES CoP18

- Whose voices are being heard at CITES - e.g. non-state entities?
  - Dominant representation of Western conservation NGOs and AR
- Mainstream community voices: Rural Communities Committee
- Powerful lobby groups are supporting tendentious research projects that ostensibly show that SU does not benefit communities and conservation
- Trophy hunting brigade not only framed as NRA fiends but also shooting themselves into the foot through active campaigning that reflects the former
- Legalization a hard sell if the old guard are the most prominent beneficiaries
- Scientific assessments important but bring in the socio-ecological lens
  - Local communities carry the cost of living with wildlife



THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE  
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL  
ORGANIZED CRIME

# ENDING WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING

*Local communities  
as change agents*

Annette Hübschle with  
Clifford Shearing

August 2018

Available for free download:

<http://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/TGIATOC-Wildlife-Trafficking-Report-WEB-4.pdf>

Many thanks for listening

Annette Hübschle, PhD

Email: [annette.hubschle@uct.ac.za](mailto:annette.hubschle@uct.ac.za)

# Defining communities

- Concept has checkered past: White people as individuals vs black people in communal containers
- Land very crucial: people were tied to specific locations and local customary authorities
- Communities made up of individuals from culturally diverse backgrounds, differing social strata and political affiliations, as well as different geographies
- Communities are important constituencies in democratic decision-making
- “a group of people who are tied to a specific location at a specific point in time”

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." ~ African Proverb



Credit: Mzilikazi wa Afrika