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Social dimensions of crane and wetland conservation in African rural landscapes: insights from Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe

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Propositions

1) Theoretical frameworks are fundamental to conservation planning but without thorough actor-based analyses of human-wildlife interactions in the field, conservation actions will miss out on real threats and opportunities. (This thesis)

2) Community leaders, rooted in traditional community development and political systems, can champion crane conservation efforts in Africa. (This thesis)

3) In Africa, state-enforced policies and regulations are amplified in the conservation planning discourse, yet the informal locally enforced institutions are what contributes most to tangible crane and wetland conservation impacts. (This thesis)

4) If treated with respect and fairness, individual landowners or community groups in Africa will be willing to maintain unconverted patches of wetlands to protect breeding habitats for cranes. (This thesis)

5) Species and habitat custodianship are often supposed to generate tangible economic benefits for local landowners but that is not the case in crane and wetland conservation in Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe. (This thesis)

6) Alternative livelihood options, meant to alleviate pressure on habitats, give local conservation efforts a human face but linking these options to concrete conservation actions is necessary and difficult. (Wright *et al*. 2015, https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12607)

7) Conservation practice should be less based upon anecdote and theory and more on systematic appraisal of evidence. (Sutherland *et al*. 2004, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tree.2004.03.018)

8) Community-based conservation projects can evoke a new species conservation ethic in the community, shifting attitudes and social norms and prompting people to take pride in protecting species and habitats. (Van der Ploeg *et al*. 2011, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-263X.2011.00181.x)

9) As community-based approaches gain recognition in Africa, national governments and wildlife authorities are willing to devolve wildlife management responsibilities to local communities. (Galvin *et al*. 2018, https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-10217-230339)

10) One result of development in Africa is that people get richer but become less autonomous.

11) When we consider global problems such as corona, climate and biodiversity, the only thing we do not have under control is, in fact, ourselves: our shortness of sight, breath and love stands in the way of solutions, not some lack of control over nature. We control nature wonderfully.

12) The fact that traditional knowledge and value systems are increasingly gaining attention in conservation and development shows that a better future often lies in the past.