How conservation creates disturbance feedbacks by promoting social and economic diversity across scales.

Timothy Baird*1

1Virginia Tech [Blacksburg] – Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Blacksburg, VA 24061-0002, United States

Abstract

The relationship between disturbance and diversity is evident in both economic and ecological contexts, but how the two are related in linked social/ecological systems is less well understood. By focusing on parks and protected areas as centers of uncertainty, upheaval and disturbance, this study examines the effect of proximity to Tarangire National Park (TNP) on forms of social and economic diversity across scales in northern Tanzania. Drawing on extensive fieldwork, this study focuses on household livelihood diversification and community infrastructural development as adaptive responses to constraints and opportunities associated with proximity to TNP. Hypotheses here are that household economic activities and support for community development are more diverse in communities near the park compared to communities far from the park. To test this hypothesis, I conducted semi-structured group interviews (n=64) and a structured household survey (n=216) within 6 communities in Simanjiro District, Tanzania. Content analysis and multivariate statistics are used to analyze the resulting data. The findings provide support for the hypotheses that economic forms of diversity are greater in communities near TNP compared to distant communities. These outcomes can be seen as both consequences of, and drivers of, disturbance in the SES and may help to illustrate how diversity and disturbance are integral to one another and correspondingly how managing disturbance feedbacks may cultivate innovation.

The paper is committed to the proposed session entitled: Disturbance, Crisis, and Creative Construction.

Keywords: Disturbance, Development, Conservation, Diversity, Africa

*Speaker