

“This Hunting Concession will Kill All of Us”. A Case Study of the Privatization of a Hunting Zone in the Periphery of the “W” National Park, Burkina Faso.

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Since the major wildlife management reform of 1997, the national government of Burkina Faso has been attributing numerous hunting concessions to private operators of Burkinabe nationality. On the one hand, farming and grazing land has increasingly been converted into wildlife reserves. On the other hand, the former, mainly French, owners of already existing hunting zones have become hunter guides, working in the shadow of the new Burkinabe concessionaries. For the current Burkinabe government it is crucial that the hunting concessionary is a Burkinabe person in order to keep the revenues of wildlife tourism in the hands of Burkinabe people. In exchange for a just repartition of the revenues among the concessionary, the state and the local communities, these private owners are granted usufructuary rights in terms of wildlife exploitation to the state owned hunting zones. As such, the government is signing up with global environmental and developmental politics, aiming at sustainable development for the benefits of local communities.

Based on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork, my paper scrutinizes the outcomes of the privatization in wildlife conservation as lived by the residents around the hunting concession of Tapoa Jerma (Burkina Faso). This hunting concession is merged as a buffer zone to the transnational park W, which is managed by the state forestry services with large-scale funds of the European Union. In 1997, dozens of villages have been forcefully removed from the zone. Since then, herders and farmers are severely restricted in their access to land and its natural resources through efficient policing by foresters and their auxiliaries from the local communities. Supplementary to this surveillance by state servants, the concessionary has employed private wildlife guards - mainly men from the capital - to survey his zone against poachers and cattle herders. Because of this private surveillance, foresters lose authority and control over the management of the wildlife reserves, and residents earn less with the wildlife tourism and conservation than before the privatisation, in contrast to what is foreseen in the current wildlife policy. Summarized, my paper deals with the complex interrelations between state servants, their local auxiliaries, private wildlife guards from the capital, the concessionary, and herders and farmers; relations of jealousy and ethnic rivalry that the policies concerning hunting concessions have brought about.