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INTRODUCTION

Poverty, conservation, and governance

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This chapter introduces a broad overview of why current policies for wild resources may be delivering the wrong outcomes. A general hypothesis for a different approach is offered. You will learn:

1. That poverty and biodiversity are intertwined.
2. That humans are the only species that trades and makes rules.
3. The definition of wild resources or wild life and how this differs from domestic plants and animals.
4. That weak institutions and market failure affect wild resources.
5. About the management of wild resources as public goods, and why this might not be the best system.
6. That no one owns wild resources, and that they are being replaced globally by domestic plants and animals because people do own these.
7. That economic progress depends on security of person and property, and on markets and democracy. Do we need to apply these same ideas to wild resources?
8. That institutions have never been specifically designed to govern wild resources, and therefore that we may need to design new economic rules for them.
9. That one new strategy is the sustainable governance approach which depends on the price-proprietorship hypothesis.
10. A quick definition of sustainability.
11. A brief outline of CBNRM.

The challenge

We face the pivotal conundrum that the world's most spectacular animals live with the world's poorest people. This means that we cannot conserve global biodiversity without also taking on the challenge of enabling rural people and communities to take up their rights as citizens of humanity and as custodians of this biodiversity. The facts that bombard us daily, including recent dire reports that we have wiped out 60% of mammals, birds, fish, and reptiles since 1970 (WWF, 2018), suggest that the way we govern the interface between man and nature is not working well. These are the facts in front of our nose, and we should not delude ourselves by doing more of the same.

I have been fortunate to work with some exceptional initiatives and people who have addressed these complex challenges in public protected areas, on private land, and in rural communities in southern Africa. In working diligently to discern the facts through actionable science and evidence-based decision-making, these initiatives have, over the past seven decades, developed and tested a new paradigm of wildlife management. These new paradigms – the sustainable governance approach and community-based natural resource management – are based on the democratisation and promotion of the wildlife economy on private and community land respectively. The use of wildlife, and its democratisation, are both controversial. Nonetheless, they have rolled back the inevitability of wildlife decline and have led me into the fields of wildlife economy and governance, an arena often clouded in confusion and disagreement. This book is an attempt to analyse and share these lessons. While the specifics are local, the emerging principles are global and can be adapted to different wild resources and communities elsewhere in the world. My central argument is that wild life is no longer a public resource best managed through public agencies. Tackling the dual challenge of conservation and the upliftment of rural society will require an institutional and economic approach. We need new rules, or institutions, to govern wild life on a crowded planet if we intend to reverse the bleeding.

The success of *Homo sapiens* lies ultimately in the ability to cooperate in bands, clans, tribes, nations, and as a global civilisation. We are bound together in common enterprise through uniquely human myths, norms, and rules (Harari, 2014; North, 1990). As the only species with the ability to trade, we have created enormous wealth through innovation, specialisation, and trade (Smith, 1776). We are, indeed, economic man. But our success lies in the making, following, and enforcing of the rules that shape and enable this collective power. This book is about these formal and informal rules that structure human behaviour – known as institutions (North, 1990). We will not solve the intertwined problem of poverty and environmental loss by denying the power of the global economic system. The question is, rather, can we reshape the rules that govern our interactions with nature to get better outcomes for us all?

The biological rules of natural selection and evolution, unfortunately, do not apply to institutions. Institutions often become stuck in unhealthy configurations, held in a state of non-evolution by the people who are benefiting from the status quo, for decades, centuries, and even millennia (North, 1990), sometimes to the point of collapse (Diamond, 2005). As a species, we do not always get these rules right, as evidenced by the violence and inequity in the world, but nonetheless we seem, slowly, to be moving in the right direction (Fukuyama, 1992; Pinker, 2012). However, at the interface of environment and poverty in forests and drylands, we are patently getting the rules wrong: these systems and the plants, wildlife, and fish they support are depleted, while the people living in them are disproportionately vulnerable to

violence, hunger, and deprivation. The United Nations reports that in drylands alone the forces driving environmental degradation create social instability and even violence, and may force as many as 700 million people to migrate to new homes (IPBES, 2018). This will, inevitably, disrupt the stability of the planet as we know it, and is the direction in which we will continue to travel, until we change the current rules and norms.

In this book I hypothesise that wild resources, and the people who depend upon them, are locked in institutional configurations that evolved on the frontier of the industrial revolution, were designed for a different age, and are no longer fit for purpose. Only by governing wild life and wild spaces differently, by aligning economic rules and forces in new ways, can we address the wicked problem of poverty and environmental decline. The hope that public ownership and management could control how wild species are used on the private and community lands that make up 85% of the land area outside protected areas is widely misplaced. The long hand of the law cannot possibly reach out into all the places where it needs to protect wildlife, and is ineffective where it is not welcomed (Wade, 1987). Neither will it be welcomed until the people who live with wildlife, and their age-old livelihood practices of hunting and gathering, are legitimised (and modernised) and they have a genuine seat at the rule-making table from which they have been so long excluded. Without this, we cannot overcome the deep resentment and resistance (Scott, 1985) that outsiders have caused when they impose foreign environmental norms on millions of rural people. The imperiousness of conservation policy continues to this day; somehow species like elephants and rhinos are so important that, in deciding their future, we do not need to listen to the opinions and wisdom of the local people and farmers that live with them.

Daniel Kahneman (2011) suggests that we solve problems in two different ways. Usually by thinking fast, emotionally, and repeating the patterns that we know. And occasionally, by thinking slow, carefully analysing systems, and inventing truly innovative solutions. My plea, in this book, is to think slow; to have an intelligent (slow) conversation, not an ideological one, and to open-mindedly consider that the solution to the problems that we share may be very different from our current norms and practices, and require very different models, principles, skills, and approaches.

We have all, at some stage in our lives, played or witnessed a game where unclear and poor rules have led to conflicts and arguments, turning something that should be fun into a mess. When rules are fair, and clear, by contrast, there is a lot of fun to be had, and you can focus on the game and not the rules or the politics and conflicts surrounding the rules. This book, essentially, is about rules and how they shape the relationship between man, nature, and the economy.

The study of rules, or institutions, is called new institutionalism, or institutional economics. It is gaining currency as an explanation for the difference between affluent and vulnerable societies (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012), and some of the best known economic historians use the theory of institutions to explain why some societies prosper and others do not (North & Thomas, 1973). Historically, prosperous societies are rare. Living in an age of unprecedented freedom and prosperity, it is easy for us to forget that, until very recently, the conditions of life for most humans were bleak. The European Dark Ages, for example, lasted nearly a thousand years after the collapse of the Roman Empire, a period in which human populations, ravaged by war, famine, and disease, hardly grew. Then, at a critical juncture around the time of the Glorious Revolution in England, a series of transformations occurred. These included the Enlightenment, the Scientific Revolution, and the Industrial

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Revolution. The governance of society was radically altered when the rights of man replaced the divine right of kings, and when the purpose of property was transformed to protect individuals rather than as a means of extraction by the ruling elite. ‘Warre of every man upon every man’ (Hobbes, 1651) was superseded by security of person and property, and the way political systems and the economy functioned was revolutionised. This was the time of Adam Smith. Great wealth was created as value was added to raw materials through the economic processes of specialisation, diversification, and exchange.

The Industrial Revolution led to the colonisation of much of the planet by Western society and ignited the flames of environmental destruction, which is where our story starts. Paradoxically, the response to environmental destruction was, in institutional terms, almost the exact opposite of the conditions that led to prosperity. The future of wild resources were placed in the hands of the state, not the people. Wildlife, writ large, became a public good, not the property of the local people who had lived with it since time immemorial. Indeed, wildlife governance failed to adopt the principles of ownership, self-governance, specialisation, diversification, and exchange upon which prosperity was being built. Rather, leaders like Roosevelt suggested that wildlife was destroyed by human ‘greed’. As powerful bureaucrats, they took the future of wildlife into their own hand and nationalised it, banning commercial uses and taking wildlife out of the marketplace. This laid the foundation for conservation ideology for more than a hundred years. My hypothesis is that the underlying problem was incorrectly analysed. It was not human greed and markets. Rather, it was the lack of enlightened rules and local controls for channelling and controlling this ‘greed’.

This era also saw the birth of national parks, an idea that has stood the test of time. Parks are an example of effective public management that is well aligned with the needs of society. Parks work – provided of course that the considerable benefits they provide to society are recognised in sustainable funding and quality management, and where public management is accountable to society.

However, governing wildlife as a public good on private or community land outside parks is an idea that has failed, and has failed catastrophically. The pressures of demography and a global economy shine an ever harsher light on the underlying deficiencies of the misfit between public goods on non-public land. Wild life and wild spaces are being replaced at an unrelenting scale by domestic species and farming, even when this farming is hardly viable, does little to reduce poverty, and is environmentally hazardous (Chapter 3). Wild species are also threatened by over-exploitation in the absence of institutions to protect them. Looking back, has taking wildlife out of the economy, and placing it under public management, been a mistake? Do we need to take the hard-headed approach of leveraging the high value of wildlife to pay for and protect itself? And if we do, can we achieve two things at once – reduce poverty by conserving biodiversity and using it wisely?

The interconnected problems of poverty, demography, and environmental loss

Demographic growth is fastest in rural areas where people are poor and women are disempowered. Urban slums in Africa, Latin America, and Asia have absorbed some of this demographic growth. However, this pressure is beginning to overwhelm agriculturally marginal forests and drylands, where livelihood options fade as desperate people cut down

and burn habitats and scabble to harvest wild resources like forests, forest products, fisheries, and wildlife. The poorest people on the planet are living with, or expanding into, our remaining intact habitats, creating unprecedented threats to global biodiversity and ecosystem services. Yet, despite high environmental opportunity costs, these people and communities are in no way getting rich. They are hamstrung from using wild resources legally or efficiently, so are forced to depend ever more on low-value agriculture and low-value uses of wild resources. They have become locked in a reinforcing cycle of poverty, demographic growth, and environmental loss.

Wild resources and wildlife: a brief analysis

Throughout this book I use the terms ‘wild resources’, ‘wild life’ (two words), ‘wild spaces’, ‘forests’, and ‘drylands’, interchangeably, to represent indigenous forests, wildlife, fisheries, rangelands, non-timber forest products and other non-domestic species that occur in largely intact habitats in forests, drylands, mountainous areas, and even the high altitude tundra. The important point is that wild resources and wild life have similar economic characteristics, but differ fundamentally from domestic plants and animals, and from habitats that have been converted into simple agricultural systems or plantations (Chapter 3).

Wild resources are not public goods, although they have been managed as such since the progressive era began in the early 1900s. Being largely excludable and subtractable – terms elucidated in Chapter 5 – they are usually private goods with some common-pool attributes that also provide global values. This introduces the root of the problem. There is a serious mismatch between the private and common-pool nature of wild resources and the public systems governing them.

It also turns out (Chapter 6) that wild resources and intact habitats may be economically more valuable than many of the domestic species that are replacing them, especially outside the sweet spot for farming. Losing species that have so much value does not make economic sense. Are these losses a direct consequence of governance failures and therefore avoidable? Wild resources are certainly more difficult to govern because they are complex and fugitive. However, lumping most forests, wildlife, and fisheries as public goods, rather than more correctly as private or collective goods, has ultimately under-valued them and made governance even more difficult. Moreover, they are part of complex systems – and complex systems are not suited to centralised systems of management or, for that matter, to agricultural simplification.

Centralisation, the mistrust of the abilities and aspirations of local people, and the emasculation of long-acting systems for governing local commons, was exacerbated by the authoritarian colonial state and the post-colonial one-party socialist state. These inclinations continue to be reinforced by the acceptance that the public management of local wild resources is normal. Moreover, people have expanded into marginal areas in large numbers only in very recent times, overwhelming the capacity of resources, but also the capacity of society to evolve new rules for governing these resources. Central systems are slow to evolve, but the local systems that might have done so have been rendered impotent. Many forests and dryland people, especially in Africa and America, have been traumatised by slavery, colonial subjugation, socialism, state capture, and conflict. Their social capital has been greatly diminished, they have lost their rights to land and resources (Chapter 4), and urbanisation and the modern economy has further disrupted community and family structures. At a time of great need these social ecological systems have been deprived of

their adaptive capacity, and the ability and resourcefulness of people and communities to solve their own problems (Wall, 2017).

I am personally sympathetic to E. O. Wilson's (2016) call that half the earth should be set aside for wildlife and wild spaces. Where I differ is the means of getting there, and who we intend as the beneficiaries of this half-earth. I refer to this half as 'ungoverned spaces', because the rules in use are so bad that the problems of demography, poverty, and environmental decline feed voraciously on each other. As a conservationist, I am appalled by the loss of wild species and even more so by the damage to ecosystem processes. As an economist my horror is with the wastefulness and inefficiencies of the system. As a human, I am empathetic to the hardship and unfulfilled dreams and potentials of the people who live there.

It is neither possible, nor moral, to simply remove poor people from these environments in search of the 'greater good'. The case for 'alternative livelihoods', as currently conceived, is even worse. Tweaking domestic production systems is extremely difficult, and doing so will only further displace wild species. Surely, the alternative to the unsustainable use of wildlife is the sustainable use of wildlife, combined with the educational opportunities to enable people to seek lives away from the drudgery of marginal agriculture. Thus the pathway to half-earth may not lie in stopping the use of wild species and spaces, or in declaring them public protected areas. It may lie, alternatively, in deliberately governing and using them in better and more sustainable ways, while empowering local people as the custodians and primary beneficiaries of ecosystems that are rightfully theirs.

Sustainability: more, from less, for more, forever

There may be much overlap between the quest for sustainable development and the dreams of half-earth. As a proponent of the concept of sustainability I define it with the succinct ditty, 'more, from less, for more, forever'. This includes three fundamental ideas. First is the notion of economic efficiency and dematerialisation; the quest to generate more output from less input, or better livelihoods from a smaller ecological footprint. Second is the pursuit of economic justice, ensuring that more and poorer people benefit as much as the rich do. Finally, we need to maintain and expand the stock of environmental capital, living only off the flows that can be harvested sustainably.

We misidentify the problem when we blame it on the use of wild resources. After all, we evolved as hunter-gatherers, using, and deeply in touch with, our environment. Indeed it is the urban critics, supposedly so connected, that are disconnected from the realities of rural lives and environments, or their own environmental footprints. More correctly, the problem is with use that is inefficient, inhumane, distant, and unaccountable, and that harms the capital stock. Unfortunately the rules that we currently apply guide us towards a wild life economy characterised as 'less from more'. Not only are wild resources over-utilised, with a huge environmental footprint, but this use is economically inefficient, favouring low-value, wasteful uses, and leaving people hardly better off. The nub of the problem is that priceless wild resources (Costanza et al., 1997) are made worthless to the people who live with them, or are extracted to fuel the modern economy without reinvesting in the resource base or benefiting local people.

This situation is avoidable. Both wild resources and rural communities are the victims of weak institutions and the process of 'de-institutionalisation' (Chapter 4). Weak institutions allow colonial states, predatory elites, and the modern economy to profit by extracting

resources from rural people and environments without paying the full cost of them, thereby de-capitalising wild spaces. ‘Rent seeking’ and ‘free-riding’ disproportionately enrich those in power, providing the incentive for perpetuating failing configurations of rules in the global modern economy.

The institutions for governing wild resources are so egregious that we waste resources while over-utilising them. We are far away from the boundary at which conservation and development are optimised. Consequently, conservation and development are only a zero-sum game when we ignore the role of institutions. With institutional reform, it is quite possible to have a lot more of both. My argument is that carefully crafted ‘re-institutionalisation’ can conserve wild resources by making their use more efficient and profitable. By placing the control of wild resources democratically in the hands of landholders and communities, wild resources can provide a foundation for local livelihoods. If wildlife contributes meaningfully to the livelihoods of local people, they will not be able to afford to replace it with domestic species, or over-utilise it (Child, 1995).

Two hypotheses: price-proprietorship and face-to-face governance

This leads to the central hypotheses of this book. The first half develops what I have called the ‘proprietorship-price hypothesis’. This suggests that better conservation-livelihood outcomes arise where people fully own wild life as individuals or groups (proprietorship) and can utilise it to best advantage including through global markets (price). The goal is to maximise the value of wildlife to the people who live with it. If wildlife contributes meaningfully to livelihoods, people will not be able to afford to lose it in their battle for survival (Child, 1995). This bold hypothesis lies at the core of the ‘sustainable governance approach’ (Chapter 10) which is controversial, at least to people who have normalised the public nature of wildlife (especially if they live in urban rather than rural areas).

The second half is about community-based natural resource management, or CBNRM. The core principle is that we need to entrust the people who live with wildlife to make the rules to govern it, by empowering the whole community – not just the elite – through deep, informed democracy. This is the same message that runs through the work of Elinor Ostrom (Wall, 2017). Finally, in complex systems we need constantly to adapt, by monitoring, learning, and problem-solving our way to a better future. Thinking slow, with judgements based on evidence rather than ideology, will bring us to our goals more surely than thinking fast.

Before we specifically address CBNRM we need to confront some of the assumptions that hamstring conservation, and to present and clarify some theory. Thus, Chapter 2 traces the institutional history of humankind. I identify the Glorious Revolution of England as the tipping point in the emergence of a society that is prosperous and fair, and wonder if this has important lessons for our cause. Chapter 3 reviews the impact of humans on the planet and highlights the institutional differences in the way we govern wild and domestic species. I suggest that the loss of intact forests and drylands is caused by low-value agriculture and exploitation, because the institutions for governing wild species are missing. Wild economies may well be more suited to complex ecosystems than simplified agricultural ones, and current outcomes may be neither economically wise nor ecologically sustainable. Our challenge is to develop new economic institutions for owning, using, and trading wild species, so that the high economic value of wild species is translated into land use outcomes – a sustainable economy

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built on high-value, wild, and intact ecosystems, not ecosystems converted to low-value domestic species. Transformation will require new economic institutions for owning, using, and trading wild species.

Chapter 4 suggests that we should not take the governance systems for wild species as given. The governance of wild resources has already progressed rapidly through several stages and is changing, but it may need to change a lot more. The underlying challenge is that the forests and drylands of the tropics have become ‘ungoverned spaces’ with severe weaknesses in their governing institutions, for reasons described in this chapter.

The next two chapters tackle the classification of wild resources in terms of their governance and economic characteristics. Being excludable and rival to a significant extent, most wild resources are, if we are to be accurate, private or common-pool goods. The result is an institutional misfit between the characteristics of wild resources and the historical norm of public management (Chapter 5). This institutional misfit may well be causing conservation to malfunction at the very time we need it most. Public ownership has undermined local resourcefulness, responsibility, and rule-making. Additionally, wild resources have been excluded from competing in the market on an even playing field (Chapter 6). Consequently, they have become exceedingly vulnerable to replacement by domestic species and to over-exploitation under open access conditions, especially where the public capacity to finance and protect wild species declines.

To understand the misalignment at the heart of the governance of wild resources, we illustrate how and when, historically, wild resources came to be publically governed (Chapter 7). Public governance of wild resources arose in the much emptier world of the late 1800s and early 1900s. It was a response to the threat of over-exploitation in the absence of rule at the frontier of the Industrial Revolution. Wild species were effectively nationalised by a few powerful conservationists in the era of progressive governance and colonial expansion. The world is now much fuller, and the threats are different and more intense. These threats usually take two forms – over-exploitation on the one hand, and neglect, under-investment, and replacement on the other. Over-exploitation was the catalyst for contemporary public management, and it still occurs where rights to resources are ill-defined and unprotected, including the rising scourge of the illegal wildlife trade. Nonetheless, the greater threat is habitat replacement, mainly by poor people desperately seeking a living in environments that can hardly support them (IPBES, 2018; Ripple et al., 2015). Our responses are informed almost entirely by the old challenge of over-exploitation, but the world is different now, and these responses accelerate the threat of habitat loss. We have failed to develop governance regimes that can manage both threats simultaneously.

The public management of wild resources on non-public land greatly under-prices wild species and, predictably, is not succeeding. Yet, such is the hegemony of the Rooseveltian and colonial public conservation governance model, that examples of economic approaches to wildlife conservation are rare. An important outlier is the wildlife economy in southern Africa, where the recovery of wildlife lends considerable credibility to an alternative approach based on reintegrating wildlife into the global economy under private and community ownership.

Therefore in Chapter 8 we begin to assemble the tools to simultaneously address the challenges of habitat replacement and over-exploitation. This learns from the practical policy reforms that led to the substantial recovery of wildlife over large parts of southern Africa. These policy reforms sought to get the economics of wild resources right, by reframing the rules for the wildlife economy. They maximised the value of wildlife and ensured that these values were internalised by landholders in the marketplace, so that they

make the right choices about land use and switched to wildlife. Economics was perceived, broadly, as living wisely on a planet with limits and scarcities, where values are not only financial, but include altruism, a sense of ownership and responsibility, and cooperation and concern for the planet and the fellow species that occupy it.

Chapter 8 provides an example of how thinking differently about the governance of wildlife led to massive rewilding of land and economic growth. This is supported by Chapter 9, which describes some of the economic tools used to understand and promote the wildlife economy, and Chapter 10, which conceptualises the institutional lessons for governing wild resources and scale as the ‘sustainable governance approach’. Given the high value of many wild resources and ecosystem services, this is highly likely to advantage natural systems compared to systems modified by farming and over-use to a much larger extent than is the case today.

The second half of the book discusses the theory and practice of transferring the sustainable governance approach to the rural communities that occupy most drylands and forests through CBNRM. Private conservation justifies the valorisation and ownership of wildlife by landholders. CBNRM is a (large) sub-set of the sustainable governance approach that addresses the governance of wild resources by rural communities. With communities (rather than individual landholders) acting as production units, it takes on the additional challenge of governance inside these communities.

CBNRM emerged spontaneously for forests, fisheries, and wildlife, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, under various labels after the 1970s (Chapter 13). By and large, CBNRM has not lived up to its promise. There is a compelling and convincing theoretical case for CBNRM (Kellert et al., 2000), but seldom has it been ‘done properly’ in practice. Like Ostrom, I believe that there are enough examples to show, with confidence, that CBNRM works. Like Ostrom, I believe that the essence of CBNRM is deep democracy and entrusting wild resources to local people provided they adhere to democratic structures for self-governance (Wall, 2017). However, on the back of such excellent scholarship, my goal extends beyond studying systems that are already in place, towards proposing how to build and manage new ones.

There is, as yet, no clear understanding of what CBNRM is. Scholarship has teased out many of the aspects of it in great detail, but it has never developed a comprehensive model to link these together, with the largest gaps being economics and the valorisation of wild resources, the importance of scale, and the significance of inclusive governance. I have used my own experiences managing CBNRM programmes in CAMPFIRE, Zambia, and southern Africa in general to inductively address these gaps. CAMPFIRE (Chapter 11) illustrates how an understanding of CBNRM emerged through bold policy experiments and adaptive management over several decades. Chapter 12 digs down into the challenge of micro-governance (or deep democracy; Wall, 2017). I use the experience of CBNRM in the Luangwa Valley in Zambia to quantify the contrast between participatory and representational governance. I then broaden this analysis to southern Africa to test if these differences are as profound as they seem to be.

This adds a second hypothesis to the proprietorship-price hypothesis of the sustainable governance approach: that face-to-face inclusive governance is profoundly different to representational forms of governance, and lies at the very core of CBNRM. Wall (2017) suggests that this was the essence of Ostrom’s thinking, which was radical, and that Ostrom believed ‘that the more power people had to make decisions that affected their lives the better

such decisions were likely to be'. CBNRM that ignores these insights pays large opportunity costs in terms of informed participation, equitable benefit sharing, elite capture, and the development of the trust and cooperation necessary for successful human endeavour. With this empirical background, in Chapter 13 I review the literature and history of CBNRM in broad terms and propose an operational model based on proprietorship, price, and inclusive micro-governance. The theoretical case for micro-governance is explained in Chapter 14, both in terms of what happens within the community and the external framing of these conditions.

'Doing CBNRM properly' requires the proper application of both the sustainable governance approach and of participatory governance within the community. Thus, CBNRM has four foundational conditions: the devolution of rights for wild resources to communities; maximising prices for wild resource; inclusive, face-to-face governance; and attention to the need to build local systems and capacities through adaptive learning. Chapter 15 provides practical advice for implementing CBNRM, while Chapter 16 elaborates on practical tools for establishing inclusive governance. Both these chapters emphasise the co-construction of knowledge and systems through the active participation of communities and the polyvalent layers of governance that service or constrain them. CBNRM is not about doing things for communities; it is about unlocking the capacities and capabilities of communities to do things for themselves.

A description of the institutional history of the current age of prosperity (Chapter 2) may seem out of place in a book about the contemporary challenges of wild life and communities. However, I have found that understanding where we have come from as a species, and the deep characteristics of our minds and the rules we depend upon for cooperation, to be immeasurably useful for interpreting some of the problems we face today. The emphasis on the Glorious Revolution that enabled humankind to step into the light of prosperity and self-fulfilment (Pinker, 2012; Sen, 1999) hints at the enormous power of the new principles it introduced – the primacy of individual rights over the divine right of kings, the wisdom of individual and collective self-determination, security of person and property, and the protection of these rights through inclusive governance. It is not coincidental that these very same principles are embedded in the sustainable governance approach and CBNRM: the right to self-governance, the application of the principles of proprietorship and price to wild resources, and the importance of inclusive governance, informed participation, and equitable benefit sharing at the local level.

CBNRM is unashamedly an economic approach to conservation and development. However, before we denigrate it with ideological terms like neoliberalism or commodification, we need to be clear about what kind of economics we are talking about. Laissez-faire capitalism certainly deserves little credibility, as the powerful make rules to benefit themselves, causing inequity and environmental harm. By contrast, allowing local people and wild resources to compete fairly and justly in the global economy is a very different matter. It is preventing them from doing so that is unjust, inequitable, and counter-productive.