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Considering the 'other' in wildlife crime mitigation: A South African strategy case study

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Abstract

Actors' worldviews are critical when developing strategies; not every actor holds the same problem perception and solution. This is the case with wildlife trafficking. Not only does the state have an interest in safeguarding South Africa's wildlife, but other non-state actors, such as conservation interest groups, are also participants. These are some of the 'visible' actors with 'power'. There also exists 'invisible' actors seemingly without 'power', such as the local communities living around conservation areas, and the wildlife itself. Poachers and crime syndicates, on the other hand, poach wildlife, such as rhino, and are 'drivers' of wildlife trafficking and trade. In this article, a methodology towards a deeper understanding of actors' causal mechanism perspectives is presented. This methodology highlights the interplay between agential, ideational, material, and structural causal mechanisms and their operationalisation. Linear cause and effect relations are not the only causal types. An alternative approach, that can assist researchers and policy makers, as well as practitioners, to develop more nuanced strategies than those derived from linear causality, is advocated. The case study used in the research was the National Integrated Strategy to Combat Wildlife Trafficking. The authors' intention is to show that the 'othered' influences the perspectives of the powerful and that the 'othered' is an important component to consider when developing policies and strategies.