



# Wildlife trade policy:

The causes and  
consequences of  
conflicting stances

# Background and research question

## Background

Poaching threatens charismatic African megafauna

Trade restrictions proposed as a solution

Conflicting policy stances on trade restrictions

## Research question

What are the

**(1) causes** and

**(2) consequences**

of this policy conflict?

# Theoretical approach and methods

Pragmatist philosophical grounding

Interdisciplinary approach applying institutional theory

Frameworks drawn from political science & institutional economics

## **Part 1 methods:**

participant observation (policy processes, CITES meetings); document analysis; thematic analysis; institutional analysis

## **Part 2 methods:**

institutional analysis of data (qualitative and quantitative) using process tracing and natural experiments

# Results and conclusions: Part 1

Conflict driven by conflicting ideas:

- Cognitive ideas (causal links; scientific evidence)

- Normative ideas (values and ethics; emotion)

- Overarching policy narratives

Three narratives:

- Global Control

- Decentralized Conservation

- Animal Protection

Only two policy frames under CITES:

- Prohibitionism (App I)

- Sustainable use (App II)

- **Polarization!**

# Results and conclusions: Part 2

For African rhino conservation (over time and space):

Institutional diversity improves outcomes

(all successful rhino range states involve non-state actors)

Decentralization outperforms centralization

(most decentralization measure improved performance and vice versa)

There are stronger incentives for centralization/trade prohibition

In CITES, the precautionary principle is interpreted as trade restrictive

The CITES dual listing system is problematic and should be reviewed

Future research:

Social-ecological systems approaches to wildlife trade policy

Institutional arrangements, especially property rights