



Contextualizing Delegated Public-Private Partnerships in Conservation: Evidence from Zambia, Malawi, And Rwanda

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Published Online: 21 July 2025	The purpose of this study is to provide a detailed examination of the effectiveness of Delegated Public-Private Partnership (DPPP) models in the conservation of state-protected areas in the countries of Zambia, Malawi, and Rwanda. It triangulates twenty years of archival biodiversity and financial data with interviews and focus group discussions from Liuwa Plain National Park, Majete Wildlife Reserve, and Akagera National Park. This is accomplished by drawing on a convergent parallel mixed-methods methodology. There are still obstacles to be faced with regard to the local economic advantages, the engagement of stakeholders, and the coordination of political efforts, despite the fact that the model has been shown to be successful in increasing biodiversity and tourism revenue. The paper provides a critical analysis of the first conceptual framework that served as the basis for the implementation of DPPP. It reveals the framework's shortcomings in terms of addressing contextual feasibility, power asymmetries, and revenue variability. A redesigned Contextualized Adaptive Governance DPPP Model is offered as a response to this issue. This model places an emphasis on feasibility studies, revenue realism, participatory co-governance, and hybrid financing. The research makes a theoretical contribution to the literature on public-private partnerships (PPPs) and a practical contribution to conservation policy. It advocates for a more balanced and inclusive approach to the management of protected areas in Africa.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Delegated public-private partnerships (DPPPs) are becoming increasingly dominant in the management of conservation landscapes across Africa. These partnerships allow private actors to 'assume operational authority over protected areas that are held by the state. The African Parks Network (APN), a prominent non-governmental organization (NGO) in the field of conservation, introduced this approach to a number of African nations. Nevertheless, despite its widespread adoption, there are still concerns over its efficiency, long-term viability, and inclusion in a variety of ecological and political settings. In this study, the application of the DPPP model in three different national parks the Liuwa Plain National Park in Zambia, the Majete Wildlife Reserve in Malawi, and the Akagera National Park in Rwanda is evaluated. The outcomes are investigated across five interconnected dimensions, which are as follows: the conservation of biodiversity, the creation of money, the development of local economies, the engagement of stakeholders, and the coordination of political and

institutional efforts. In this study, the basic conceptual framework that underpins the model is analyzed and critiqued, and a modification that is empirically grounded and proposed is the Contextualized Adaptive Governance DPPP Model. This version is intended to solve the deficiencies that have been discovered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conservation Trends Worldwide Public-private partnerships

Conservation governance models like Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are employed worldwide, especially where state capacities are inadequate or neoliberal reforms have favored outsourcing public tasks. PPPs have managed national parks, biodiversity corridors, and ecotourism in the US and Australia (Eagles, 2008; Moore & Weiler, 2010). Many models stress efficiency, cost recovery, and professional management. Concessionaire partnerships under the National Park Service in the U.S. provide outsourced service provision with government control (More, 2005).

Australian state governments, Indigenous communities, and private operators co-manage protected areas (Bauman & Smyth, 2007). Conservation PPPs in India, Nepal, and Indonesia commonly use eco-tourism as an income source and experiment with community involvement (Wells, 1992; Baral & Heinen, 2007). Critics say many global PPPs over-commercialize conservation, impair accountability, and marginalize local perspectives (Buscher & Fletcher, 2015; Adams, 2019). PPPs can also lead to “green grabbing” of land under the pretense of conservation (Fairhead et al., 2012). Global PPPs have improved conservation measures, but transferability is restricted. Studies emphasise context-sensitive governance that recognises each landscape's socio-political realities (Lockwood, 2010; Berkes, 2018).

2.2 Insights from Sub-Saharan Africa

PPPs in conservation have grown in sub-Saharan Africa due to chronic underfunding, poor institutional performance, and biodiversity threats. African Parks Network (APN), Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS), and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) maintain national parks and wildlife reserves for African governments under long-term delegated management contracts. The state owns these Delegated PPPs (DPPPs), but NGOs or private actors have complete operational control. APN-managed Zakouma National Park in Chad and Garamba in the DRC demonstrate species recovery and security. However, Twyman (2000) and Clements et al. (2010) raised equality, community exclusion, and donor dependency problems. Azzuri et al. (2014) note that fragmented policy contexts and ambiguous mandates can hinder DPPPP implementation in Africa.

African DPPPs struggle with insufficient legal frameworks, overreliance on ecotourism, and limited community co-governance despite ecological advantages. Environmental partnerships can be exploitative without formalized participation and local benefit-sharing, according to Scholte et al. (2022) and Ribot (2002).

2.3 Nationwide Evidence: Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda

Zambia has huge protected areas with high biodiversity but minimal tourism revenue and complicated governance. Liuwa Plain National Park, maintained by APN since 2003, has stable wildebeest herds and increasing patrols. Chomba et al. (2016) found land disputes, minimal benefit-sharing, and government agency overlap.

DPPPP flagship Majete Wildlife Reserve is in Malawi. Rewilded under APN management, biodiversity was restored and tourism increased (APN, 2021). Local critics often criticize top-down approaches. Banda & Gossage (2020) observe that local governance institutions and women's engagement are poor despite infrastructure and security gains.

In contrast, Rwanda has a coordinated and clear policy structure. APN has administered Akagera National Park since 2010, making it practically self-sufficient in biodiversity and revenue (REMA, 2020). Local legitimacy has increased with revenue-sharing laws and community projects.

Twagiramungu et al. (2023) say Rwanda's model works because of political will, legislative clarity, and government engagement. Despite differences, all three countries lack ecological gains and inclusive government. Limited feasibility evaluations, imprecise benefit-sharing mechanisms, and poor local stakeholder empowerment imply that even successful DPPPPs are vulnerable when context is ignored.

2.4 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The initial conceptual framework was based on the assumption that a DPPPP model, which is defined by professional management, community participation, money creation, and political support, would uniformly guarantee success in conservation efforts. The typology of public-private partnerships developed by Brinkerhoff (2002) and the concepts of collective governance developed by Ostrom (1990) were both taken into consideration extensively.

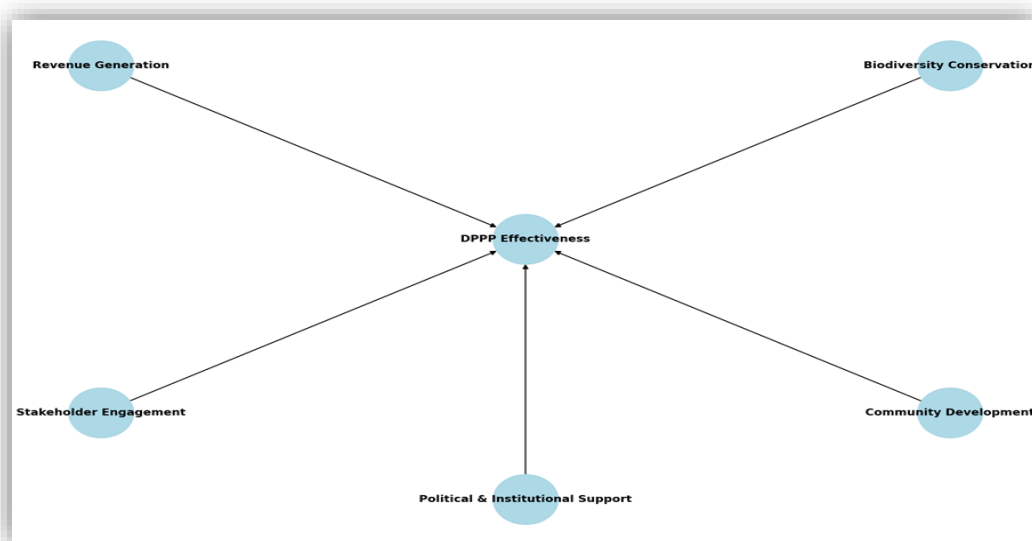


Figure 1: Initial Conceptual Framework of DPPPP Effectiveness

There were, however, some conceptual flaws that were shown by the empirical evidence. Some of these include an excessive reliance on tourism as a source of revenue, the failure to conduct feasibility studies prior to the turnover of park ownership, an inadequate number of tools for community empowerment, and unrealistic assumptions regarding the political will of different jurisdictions. The revised model that was proposed in this study, which was given the name the Contextualized Adaptive Governance DPPP Model (CAG-DPPP), advocates for six interconnected components. These components are as follows: pre-engagement due diligence, revenue realism, participatory co-governance, community empowerment, strategic alignment, and hybrid financing. This approach is consistent with the adaptive governance theory (Berkes, 2018) and acknowledges the complexity of socio-ecological systems in the context of African conservation.

2.4 Research Gaps and Study Justification

Three major gaps persist in the research despite countless case studies and programmatic reviews:

(a) Limited Comparative, Mixed-Methods Research:

Most studies are qualitative or quantitative and focus on a single country or park. There is little research integrating long-term financial and biodiversity data with community-level perspectives across national contexts (Berkes, 2018; Emerton et al., 2006).

(b) Neglecting Political and Institutional Contexts:

Conservation models often stress technical capacity as the main factor. The political economics, institutional mandates, and power dynamics are crucial to effective conservation partnerships, according to Agrawal & Gibson (1999) and Lockwood (2010).

(c) Lack of Adaptive Governance Theory in PPPs:

Technocratic frameworks should be replaced with participatory, context-sensitive models (Folke et al., 2005; Ostrom, 2009). This shift is rarely stated in DPPP studies.

This work solves these gaps by reporting empirical findings from three DPPP case studies Liuwa (Zambia), Majete (Malawi), and Akagera (Rwanda) and establishing the CAG-DPPP model. This paradigm addresses literary issues by including feasibility evaluations, revenue realism, participatory co-governance, and hybrid financing into DPPP design and evaluation.

3. METHODOLOGY

Convergent parallel mixed-methods was used in a pragmatic philosophical paradigm, led by selected layers of Saunders' Research Onion (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019). To explore the efficacy of DPPP models in conservation across varied African contexts, quantitative and qualitative data were integrated. A comparative multiple-case research strategy focused on Akagera (Rwanda), Majete (Malawi), and Liuwa (Zambia).

3.1 Methodology and Philosophy

In line with the pragmatic paradigm, the study emphasized practical problem-solving over epistemic loyalty. Pragmatism integrates positivist (quantitative) and interpretivist (qualitative) methodologies to study how DPPPs work in different political, ecological, and institutional contexts (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The inquiry logic used abductive reasoning to deepen understanding and create a new conceptual model by iterating between theory and empirical facts.

3.2 Research Strategy

A convergent parallel mixed-methods strategy was chosen to gather and analyse qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Given the study's combined goals of quantitative ecological and financial outcomes and qualitative stakeholder experiences, power dynamics, and governance practices, this approach seemed appropriate.

The multiple-case study technique was used to examine and compare three national settings where African Parks Network (APN) manages protected areas under DPPP arrangements. Within-case analysis and cross-case synthesis were possible since each case represented a constrained system (Yin, 2018).

3.3 Case Selection and Study Setting

Akagera National Park (Rwanda), Majete Wildlife Reserve (Malawi), and Liuwa Plain National Park (Zambia) were chosen for their natural diversity, tourism development, governance capacity, and policy environment. APN has managed all parks for over a decade, offering a good time frame for evaluating results and trends.

3.4 Data Acquisition

African Parks' yearly reports, financial statements, biodiversity monitoring reports, and national statistics from 2003 to 2023 provided quantitative data. Trends in species populations, tourism revenue, budgets, and donations were considered. Focus group talks and semi-structured interviews collected qualitative data. Park managers, government officials, donors, and APN personnel were interviewed 48 times. Nine FGDs were held with community people in villages near the three parks. Perceptions of biodiversity change, benefit-sharing, governance effectiveness, and political dynamics were examined.

3.5 Sample Plan

Diverse opinions were included via stratified purposive selection. Interviewees were park managers, policymakers, or community representatives. To promote open discourse, FGD participants were grouped by geography and gender when available. Data saturation, when no new themes appeared during analysis, defined sample size.

3.6 Data Analysis Methods

Descriptive statistics were used to track animal numbers, tourism earnings, donor dependency, and operating budgets. This assessed ecological and economical efficiency at the three DPPP sites.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process was used to transcribe and evaluate qualitative data using thematic analysis. Key themes were mapped against the study's conceptual framework and objectives to examine stakeholder participation, governance quality, and institutional issues.

3.7 Ethical considerations

The study followed informed consent, voluntary participation, and answer confidentiality guidelines. Conservation agencies and institutional review boards in each country approved. Translators were used for local language fieldwork to ensure clarity and inclusion.

4. KEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides a systematic synthesis of the study's empirical findings, organized around the five core objectives that guided the research: biodiversity conservation, revenue generation and financial sustainability, local economic development, stakeholder engagement and governance, and political-institutional dynamics. The discussion includes both

quantitative trends and qualitative insights gleaned from archival data, interviews, and focus group discussions in Akagera (Rwanda), Majete (Malawi), and Liuwa (Zambia). Using a convergent parallel mixed-methods approach, the research identifies areas of convergence, divergence, and complementarity between numerical indicators and lived experiences, resulting in a comprehensive evaluation of the success of the Delegated Public-Private Partnership (DPPP). The findings are contextualized within larger theoretical and empirical disputes, allowing for critical reflection on the assumptions behind the initial conceptual framework and driving later model refinement.

4.1 Biodiversity Conservation

Within each of the three parks, the results of the DPPP model regarding biodiversity were overwhelmingly satisfactory. While Majete was effective in reintroducing apex predators like lions and black rhinos, Akagera observed a rebound of elephant numbers, which increased from less than fifty to more than one hundred and twenty between the years of 2010 and 2023. Despite the fact that wildebeest populations in Liuwa remained constant, the region was plagued by persistent human-wildlife conflict as a result of seasonal migrations.

Table 1: Biodiversity Recovery Trends (2003–2023)

Park	Key Species Tracked	Population 2003	Population 2023	Notable Interventions
Akagera (Rwanda)	Elephants, Lions	Elephants <50	Elephants >120	Reintroductions, patrols
Majete (Malawi)	Rhinos, Lions, Antelopes	Rhinos 0	Rhinos >30	Species rewilding, fencing
Liuwa (Zambia)	Wildebeest, Hyena	Wildebeest ~15,000	Wildebeest ~45,000	Community scouts, migrations

These findings provide credence to the claims made by Hatchwell (2014) and Zoysa (2020) that public-private partnerships (PPPs) that are handled by professionals can result in environmental benefits. The lack of community compensation schemes and ongoing dispute in Liuwa, on the other hand, are a reflection of Buscher et al. (2012)'s criticism that the effectiveness of conservation efforts must be socially ingrained in order to be significant.

4.2 Revenue Generation and Financial Sustainability

The results of the financial endeavors were somewhat unique. Through tourism income that exceeded \$4.9 million by the

year 2023, Akagera was able to achieve self-sufficiency at a rate of over 95%. Although it was at lower levels, Majete followed a trend that was nearly identical. Liuwa, on the other hand, continued to be significantly dependent on donors, despite the fact that it had invested \$35 million, even though it generated less than \$200,000 in revenue from tourists in 2023.

The chart below compares tourism revenue generation across the three parks, highlighting Akagera's superior performance due to its advanced ecotourism infrastructure

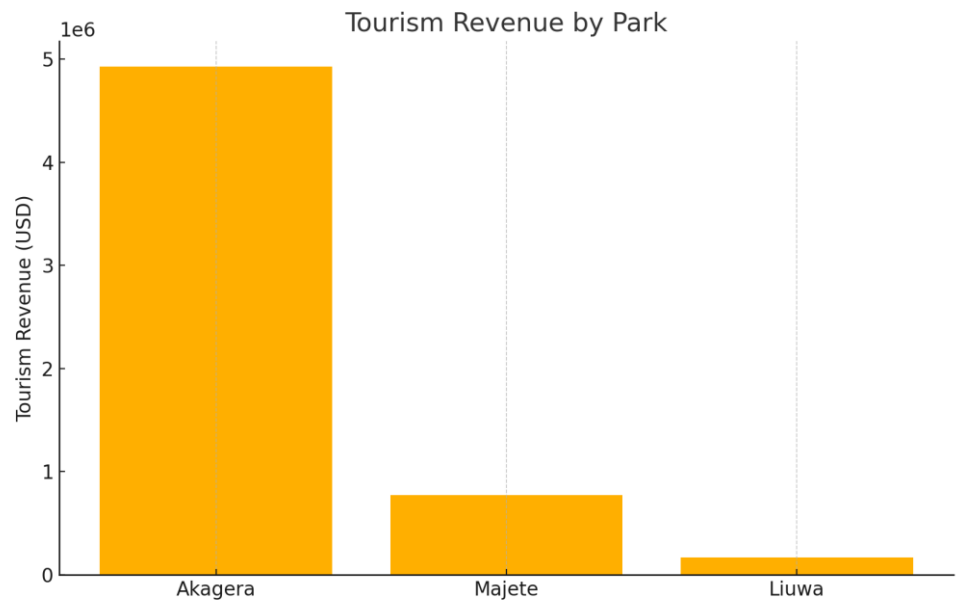


Figure 2: Tourism revenue by Park

Eagles et al. (2009) stressed the need of revenue realism, and this disparity highlights the necessity of revenue realism. The lack of performance by Liuwa indicates that there was a failure in the pre-engagement feasibility evaluation, which was a significant omission in the initial framework. Dasgupta et al. (2020), who argue for differential models of funding in

marginal ecosystems, are supported by their findings, which further support their argument. This chart shows the percentage of each park’s budget that is dependent on donor funding, with Liuwa remaining the most reliant.

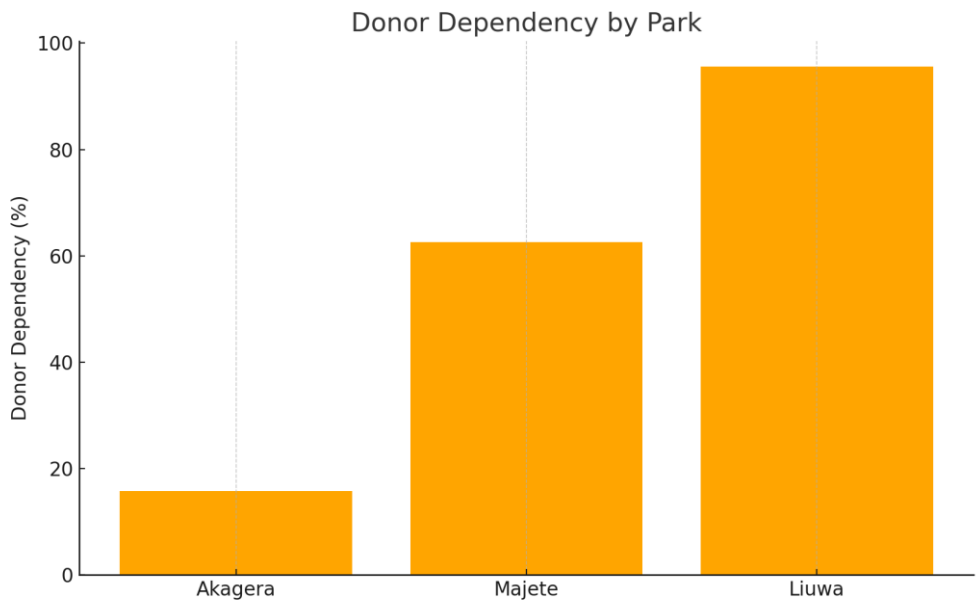


Figure 3: Donor dependency by Park

4.3 Local Economic Development

The benefits to the community were obvious but not uniform. Through several livelihood projects, Akagera provided assistance to more than 9,800 households. Employment in Majete expanded from forty to more than three hundred

locals. Complaints of gender exclusion and restricted reach were voiced in response to Liuwa's attempts, which were characterized as being more modest and inconsistently perceived. The current study indicated that unclear benefit-sharing methods typically reinforced marginalization, which

is similar to the problems stated by Brockington et al. (2008) and Twagiramungu et al. (2023). Even while Snyman (2014) advocates that public-private partnerships (PPPs) can provide value for communities if they are grounded in rights-based approaches, the present study had the opposite finding.

4.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Governance

Local committees and structured engagement platforms were institutionalized in Akagera, which was the region with the highest level of participatory governance effectiveness. The level of consultation in Majete was regarded as moderate, however in Liuwa, the approach was described as top-down, with local groups feeling "informed but not consulted."

These findings are consistent with the thesis that Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2011) made, which said that symbolic inclusion is insufficient in the absence of institutionalized co-decision-making. As Scholte et al. (2022) suggest, legitimacy in governance is established when impacted actors have the ability to influence decisions rather than simply hearing about them.

4.5 Political and Institutional Dynamics

With Rwanda's centralized governance and conservation-oriented policies, including a mandatory 10% revenue-sharing policy, Akagera was able to reap the benefits of these institutions. On the other hand, Zambia and Malawi were plagued by overlapping institutional missions, enforcement that was inadequate, and poor coordination between different government agencies. The caution that Warner and Sullivan (2004) issued regarding fragmented institutional setups in public-private partnerships is reinforced by these results. In addition, they confirm the findings of Auzzir et al. (2014), which state that political stability and regulatory clarity are essential factors that contribute to the success of public-private partnerships (PPPs).

5. PROPOSED REVISED DPPP MODEL

Based on the shortcomings of the initial framework and empirical evidence, the study proposes the Contextualized Adaptive Governance DPPP Model (CAG-DPPP).

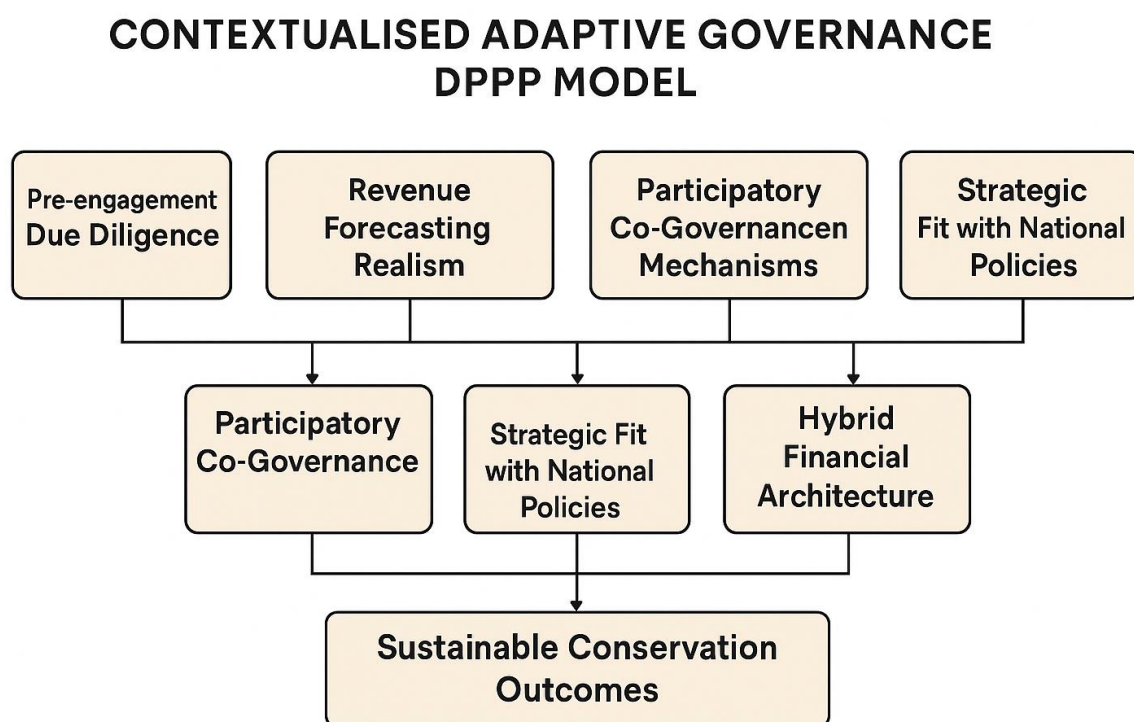


Figure 4: Revised Contextualized Adaptive Governance DPPP Model

To overcome the conceptual and practical limitations found in the original framework, this revised model presents a multidimensional and context-responsive approach to Delegated Public-Private Partnerships (DPPPs) in conservation. Rather than assuming a direct relationship between the presence of five pillars and conservation success, this adaptive governance framework has six interdependent components that reflect both practical realities and theoretical advances.

1. **Pre-engagement Due Diligence** functions as a fundamental gatekeeping process, necessitating a

thorough evaluation of ecological integrity, tourism market viability, institutional risk, and local political circumstances before commencing a DPPP agreement. This addresses results indicating that certain parks, such as Liuwa, engaged in public-private partnerships despite persistent tourism constraints and infrastructural impediments. Büscher and Fletcher (2015) have articulated comparable arguments, warning against conservation efforts motivated exclusively by ideological beliefs rather than empirical viability.

This component coincides with the demand for practical feasibility evaluations (Sachedina, 2010).

2. **Revenue Realism** confronts the excessive optimism inherent in some conservation public-private partnerships by promoting financial forecasts grounded in longitudinal revenue patterns and diversified funding sources. Liuwa's consistently low tourism revenue highlights the necessity of moderating expectations and integrating supplementary income sources, including trust funds and donor assistance (World Bank, 2018). This methodology signifies a wider transition in conservation financing literature towards hybrid systems that diminish reliance on unstable tourism markets (Emerton et al., 2006; Huwyler et al., 2014). Moreover, it reinforces the idea that ecological value does not necessarily equate to economic viability without substantial initial investments (Coad et al., 2015).
3. **Participatory Co-Governance** enhances local stakeholder engagement from just token consultation to legally acknowledged shared authority. Empirical research from Majete and Akagera indicates that conservation outcomes enhance when community members possess formalized positions in governance, including Village Natural Resource Committees and advisory boards. This pillar is based on Ostrom's (2009) seminal research on collective action, highlighting that institutions persist when communities possess a genuine interest in decision-making processes. This also indicates a transition in governance literature from hierarchical models to networked co-management frameworks (Lockwood, 2010; Berkes, 2018).
4. **Community Empowerment** transcends participatory rhetoric by promoting systems that confer enforceable rights and tangible duties to local residents. Communities should be regarded not only as beneficiaries but also as rightful stewards of conserved areas. Data from Rwanda's benefit-sharing and revenue redistribution model indicates that well-defined community entitlements enhance legitimacy and decrease poaching (Mutanga et al., 2017). Ribot (2002) contends that genuine empowerment necessitates delegated authority rather than merely participatory methods. This principle aligns with the wider equity dialogue in conservation, which critiques methods that externalize advantages while internalizing liabilities (Martin et al., 2019).
5. **Strategic Alignment** guarantees that DPPP activities are integrated into national development and conservation strategies rather than being

isolated. Without alignment, initiatives frequently replicate or contradict current government programs, resulting in inefficiency and discord. In Zambia, conflicting responsibilities between the Department of National Parks and other agencies resulted in governance gaps that obstructed collaboration at the park level. Strategic coherence is often advocated in environmental governance literature (Young, 2002; IUCN, 2021) and is increasingly regarded as essential for multi-actor conservation initiatives (Armitage et al., 2009).

6. **Hybrid Financing** recognizes that conservation results frequently necessitate sustained and varied financial backing. The strategy integrates a combination of revenue streams—such as tourism earnings, donor contributions, public subsidies, and conservation trust funds—to mitigate market volatility and guarantee sustainability. This is especially crucial in vulnerable or isolated environments where tourism alone cannot support operations. Researchers such as Redford et al. (2015) and Adams (2019) have underscored the necessity for stable and fair finance solutions that do not excessively depend on commodified nature. The African Parks Network's concept, while somewhat effective, exemplifies the dangers of financial overreliance in parks such as Liuwa.

This new model provides a significant theoretical contribution by explicitly incorporating equity, legitimacy, and adaptive resilience as fundamental objectives of DPPP performance, rather than considering them as mere by-products of efficient administration. It also contests the prevailing linear PPP models by introducing a hybrid and context-sensitive framework that aligns with intricate socio-ecological reality (Berkes, 2018; Lockwood, 2010). The model enhances Brinkerhoff's (2002) typology of PPPs by including governance functioning, power imbalances, and institutional flexibility. It advances the boundaries of conservation public-private partnership theory by contending that success is not solely dependent on management efforts but also on institutional architecture, stakeholder legitimacy, and the capacity to adapt to local conditions over time (Folke et al., 2005; Agrawal & Lemos, 2007). The Contextualized Adaptive Governance DPPP Model asserts that context is a fundamental predictor of success, rather than a secondary consideration. It necessitates more reflective and iterative methodologies in conservation governance—approaches that are sensitive to the socio-political and ecological context of each location. The model connects theory and practice, providing a diagnostic instrument for scholars and a design framework for policymakers and conservation practitioners.

6. POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

The study's findings highlight the critical need to reconfigure policy and operational procedures among the three main actors in the Delegated Public-Private Partnership (DPPP) model: the African Parks Network (APN), national governments, and donor institutions. The evidence from Akagera, Majete, and Liuwa shows that, while the DPPP model has proven considerable conservation and governance advantages, its success is still dependent on a supportive and flexible policy environment. The implications outlined below are intended to lead institutional reforms and improve the efficacy, equality, and sustainability of DPPP interventions.

6.1 Implications for African Parks Network (APN)

APN, which is the delegated authority in all three case studies, bears both the operational and moral responsibility of ensuring that the outcomes of conservation efforts do not come at the expense of the exclusion of communities or the inability to sustainably manage finances. In the first place, before taking on new park missions, the APN ought to establish comprehensive feasibility assessments that take into account ecological, economical, and sociopolitical criteria. According to Hatchwell (2014) and Igoe and Brockington (2007), this would guarantee that investments are not misaligned in regions that have minimal potential for tourism or conservation. Second, frameworks for benefit-sharing that are standardized and transparent need to be devised and modified to the specific conditions of individual communities. According to Brockington et al. (2008), the absence of codified arrangements has contributed to the development of mistrust and divided expectations in certain places. This is especially true in situations where community involvement has been more transactional than substantive. Third, it is important to create governance structures that are inclusive at the village level. These structures should include explicitly delegated authority and feedback systems. The Community Conservation Committees in Akagera are a good example of how these structures need to go beyond their advising duties and become permanently integrated into the decision-making processes of the community (APN, 2021).

6.2 Implications for Governments of Zambia, Malawi, and Rwanda

Both the political and legal frameworks in which delegated public-private partnerships (PPPs) are anchored have a considerable impact on the effectiveness of these partnerships. Governments need to take aggressive measures to legislate revenue-sharing laws that are legally binding, following the model that Rwanda has established, in which ten percent of park revenue is designated for community development (REMA, 2020). Provisions of this kind in the law give local stakeholders a sense of legitimacy and predictability through their implementation. Furthermore, in order to decrease operational inefficiencies and accountability gaps, it is vital to clarify the roles that are

played by different agencies, notably between wildlife authority and local governments. According to Chomba et al. (2016), ambiguities in jurisdiction and mandates have been a barrier to integrated governance, particularly in Zambia. Last but not least, it is essential to strengthen capacities at the subnational level. According to Agrawal and Gibson (1999) and Lockwood (2010), local authorities and community representatives need to be provided with the financial and institutional resources necessary to actively co-manage protected areas, assess park performance, and mediate conflicts.

6.3 Implications for Donors and Development Partners

The function of donors is not limited to the provision of finances; they also play a catalytic role in establishing the incentives that govern the activities of the DPPP. According to the findings of this study, money should be explicitly linked to performance standards for participatory government and accountability. According to Brinkerhoff (2002), donor disbursements should be used to reward progress in equity, transparency, and inclusion rather than concentrating solely on key performance indicators (KPIs) related to the environment or finances. Instead of focusing solely on infrastructure, investments should be made in community institutions as well. The strengthening of local community-based organizations (CBOs), legal assistance networks, and village governance platforms will enhance legitimacy and resilience at the grassroots level, particularly in situations that are prone to violence. Last but not least, funders are in an excellent position to support regional learning and policy exchange platforms, which will allow for the adaption of best practices across countries and will promote policy harmonization across conservation landscapes that are comparable (Berkes, 2018).

When considered as a whole, these policy and practice implications argue for a move away from technocratic conservation and toward a model of protected area governance that is contextualized, inclusive, and institutionally rooted. Through the incorporation of feasibility, equity, and co-governance at the core of conservation practice, the revised Contextualized Adaptive Governance DPPP model that was developed in this thesis provides a road map for such a shift.

7. CONCLUSION

This study found that while DPPP models, particularly those used by the African Parks Network (APN), have resulted in measurable improvements in biodiversity conservation and financial performance, their success is not universal or automatic. Rather, effectiveness is dependent on a combination of ecological, sociopolitical, and economic elements unique to the local setting. Büscher and Fletcher (2015) observed that success in conservation collaborations is frequently context-dependent, impacted by underlying power dynamics and terrain factors. Similarly, Brockington,

Duffy, and Igoe (2008) warn that PPPs must be built with consideration for local institutional and ecological conditions, or they risk becoming exploitative rather than empowering.

To address these problems, this study suggests the Contextualized Adaptive Governance DPPP (CAG-DPPP) model, which is a modified framework that prioritizes personalized governance techniques based on feasibility assessments, local legitimacy, and financial realism. This model is based on both practical observations and theoretical gaps in typical PPP techniques. While Brinkerhoff's typology (2002) is foundational, it assumes stable institutional capacity across situations. However, as Hatchwell (2014) notes, many African protected areas lack the preconditions required for turnkey PPP implementation, such as tourism viability and institutional robustness conditions that the CAG-DPPP model explicitly tests prior to participation.

The notion of participatory co-governance is central to the updated paradigm, and it redefines communities as empowered stakeholders rather than passive beneficiaries. This viewpoint is consistent with Ostrom's (2009) call for localized, polycentric governance in conservation, in which resource users have an active role in establishing and enforcing laws. It also mirrors the worries expressed by Agrawal and Gibson (1999), who stated that ignoring local political structures and institutional histories can jeopardize conservation outcomes. The CAG-DPPP model tackles these problems by including participatory structures and benefit-sharing mechanisms in its design.

Furthermore, the model's emphasis on hybrid financing mechanisms, which combine donor funding, trust funds, and realistic tourism projections, acknowledges Emerton, Bishop, and Thomas' (2006) criticism that conservation areas are financially vulnerable due to an overreliance on tourism revenues. The concept promotes long-term sustainability by diversifying financing sources, particularly in biologically rich but economically marginal parks such as Liuwa.

Theoretically, this study adds to the growing body of PPP studies by connecting conservation partnerships with adaptive governance theory and socio-ecological systems thinking. According to Berkes (2018), effective conservation requires feedback-rich, flexible governance structures that can respond to dynamic social and ecological variables. Similarly, Folke et al. (2005) argue that adaptive capacity is essential for managing social-ecological systems, particularly in situations where uncertainty and change are constant. The CAG-DPPP model puts these principles into action, providing a practical governance structure that integrates iterative learning, stakeholder inclusion, and contextual adaptation.

In terms of practice, the model provides concrete direction to governments, conservation organizations, and donors. Lockwood's (2010) paradigm for good governance in protected areas recommends that governments in Zambia,

Malawi, and Rwanda establish clear revenue-sharing procedures and define institutional mandates. The concept encourages APN and other comparable implementers to institutionalize pre-engagement due diligence and build participatory frameworks at the village level. Donors, however, are encouraged to go beyond infrastructure investment and invest in community governance ability, echoing Corson's (2011) demand for conservation finance to strengthen local autonomy rather than reinforcing dependency.

Finally, this study confirms that the viability of conservation PPPs in Africa is dependent on contextual calibration rather than replication. The CAG-DPPP paradigm is both a critique and a constructive alternative to traditional models, providing a path that balances ecological effectiveness, financial reality, and social legitimacy. This paradigm, which bases partnerships on adaptable, participatory, and realistic structures, provides a scalable instrument for attaining resilient conservation outcomes across Africa's diverse and dynamic ecosystems.

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