Martin Reinhardt Nielsen – Master thesis ideas, 2016

General interests: Wildlife management. bushmeat hunting, poaching (ivory and rhino horn), rural household livelihoods, poverty dynamics, choice experiments, contingent evaluation.

Project homepage: http://africanbioservices.eu/

Thesis suggestions

1. Community based socioeconomic monitoring. Considerable effort has gone into investigating whether communities in developing countries can accurately measure and monitor natural resources, including carbon stocks. In comparison communities ability to validly access socioeconomic differences and impacts of for instance conservation interventions have rarely been examined. Similarly, Bayesian belief networks and fuzzy logic modelling as only started to be used for to evaluate management processes with livelihoods implications for rural communities in developing countries. Validating the reliability of community generated quantitative socioeconomic information and models would provide the communities with an acknowledged basis for arguing compensation with governments, protected area managers and NGOs and a chance to make informed decisions before entering into Payment for Environmental Services contracts and REDD+ projects. The project could be developed from scratch or use existing data available from communities in Northern Vietnam or East Kalimantan Borneo in Indonesia.
2. Is illegal hunting determined by the opportunity costs of hunting? A general and unspecified assumption in the bushmeat literature is that hunting is determined by the opportunity costs and that if people had other income they would abstain from hunting illegally. However, this has rarely been examined empirically. This project proposes using existing detailed household income (incl. both cash and subsistence income) and other socioeconomic information to test this assumption using a time series and random coefficients model approach.
3. Poachers or public servants? Poaching is quickly decimating wildlife populations in developing countries despite integrated conservation and development projects and decentralization placing management rights and responsibilities in the hands of the lowest administrative levels. However, who are in reality best at managing wildlife resources – the hunters that depends on this resource for their livelihoods or the village executive officers in community based conservation projects that often has been revealed as community elite groups and accused of mismanagement and embezzlement. This project proposes a game theoretical approach comparing wildlife utilization games played by groups of bushmeat hunters to groups of village leaders to evaluate sustainability of resource management decisions. The project will exploit previous collaborations with bushmeat hunters in Tanzania as a basis for sampling.