

**Thomas Lekan**

**Saving the Serengeti: Tourism, the Cold War, and the Paradox of German Nature Conservation in Postcolonial Africa, 1950–1985**

My book manuscript, *Saving the Serengeti: Tourism, the Cold War, and the Paradox of German Nature Conservation in Postcolonial Africa, 1950–1985*, investigates the blind spots and unintended consequences of German and European wildlife conservation and nature tourism after World War II. By examining the popular-science publications, documentary films, television programs, conservation campaigns, and diplomatic correspondence of the Zoological Society—and its charismatic leader, media star Bernhard Grzimek—*Saving the Serengeti* offers a critical lens for analyzing how the unresolved longings of Germany's short colonial period, the tensions of decolonization and the Cold War, and the rise of West Germans as the “world champions of travel” after 1960 shaped West German environmental politics at home and abroad in the decades between the Nazis and the Greens. Grzimek transformed the Society from a small band of animal lovers into one of the most important non-governmental organizations in global conservation by convincing Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere to set aside depopulated areas of territory as national parks, including several game reserves first imposed by colonial administrators in German East Africa. Through these efforts, Grzimek saved the habitat of millions of endangered wild animals and created an income stream for newly independent African nations such as Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda, yet the transformation of the Serengeti and other reserves into national parks came at a price: the dislocation of pastoralists, increasing tension between farmers and wild animals along park borders, the loss of vernacular environmental knowledge critical to grassland ungulates, and a tendency for affluent Western tourists to “love nature to death.”

The book is currently under contract with Oxford University Press and is scheduled to appear in 2014. In addition to the Rachel Carson Center, the project has received generous fellowship support from several institutions, including the American Council for Learned Societies, the German Historical Institute in Washington, DC, Princeton University's Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, and the National Humanities Center.