Bursting the bubble:

A case study on the effects of the current rhino poaching crisis on tourism – and vice versa – in the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve, South Africa

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Abstract

2017 marks the fourth year in a row that over a thousand rhinos were illegally killed in South Africa; showing the continuous critical state of the current rhino poaching crisis. While the current rhino poaching crisis has gained much scholarly attention in the last decade, its potential links to tourism has not. Drawing on field research conducted in the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve in South Africa – including semi-structured interviews, participant observation and a questionnaire survey – this thesis explores the effects of rhino poaching on tourism and vice versa. It is found that the chances of tourists encountering a rhino carcass as a result of commercial poaching whilst on a game drive are increasing, bringing about different responses in tourism actors responsible for the management of the wildlife tourism experience. As some are actively trying to hide the matter in order to shield the tourists from this unpleasant sight, others encourage its influence in bursting the "tourist bubble"; understood here as socially constructed tourism destinations or experiences abstracted from their contexts. It is argued that the sight of a rhino killed due to commercial poaching, more than any other by-product of the current rhino poaching crisis, leads to the bursting of the tourist bubble. Although the sight of a rhino carcass under normal circumstances would be seen as an ordinary part of nature, even the embodiment of 'wilderness', the same sight as a consequence of commercial poaching forces tourists to acknowledge that their perceived 'authentic' tourist experience is false. Furthermore, it leads to a revaluation of the rhino itself, as the rhino changes from the "Other" into inhabitants of a more-than-animal world.

Keywords: rhino poaching; wildlife tourism; authenticity; tourist bubble

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Abbreviations

APU   -   Anti-Poaching Unit

EZKNW   -   Ezemvelo KwaZulu Natal Wildlife

KZN   -   KwaZulu Natal

HiP   -   Hluhluwe Imfolozi

IPZ   -   Intensive Protection Zone

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1. Introduction

Imagine yourself on a game drive in South Africa. What do you see? In all likelihood you are thinking of vast open plains abound with wildlife. With any luck you will encounter a predator on the hunt, witness it killing its prey, like you have just stepped into a nature documentary. Or you are fortunate enough to encounter all of the big 5, including the elusive leopard and the endangered rhino. Consider the following excerpt taken from my field notes[1]:

> The safari vehicle stops again when we spot five rhinos right along the road. Amongst them, a mother and her calf. The tourists are obviously impressed by the size of the animals. Amongst questions about how much a rhino can weigh (about 2 tonnes according to the tour guide) one of the tourist can be heard saying repeatedly about a rhino closest to road: "ohh, that's a big one, that's a big boy!". For a while we are all quiet except for the clicking of camera's. After everyone is satisfied with the pictures taken we are ready to continue driving, hoping to spot some other animals as well. "That's enough rhinos for now", we say jokingly to each other.
> It is somewhat later into the game drive when we drive past the scene of the crime. Just that very morning two rhinos, a mother and her calf, were killed by poachers. Had this been a morning game drive we would have seen the rhino carcasses. Now, in the evening, all that remains are two large blood stains as a reminder of what has happened. The trees are full of vultures, waiting to eat from the carcasses that have been placed just out of sight. For a moment the mood amongst the tourists changes. How can people kill these innocent animals? Who were these poachers and have they been caught? These questions remain on the tourists minds.

This particular game drive began like any other. The tourists were exited, enjoying the scenery and spotting wild animals. However, what made this game drive remarkable was the poaching incident that happened that very morning. An occurrence that could potentially increase as the current rhino poaching crisis continues to intensify.

1.1 Problem statement

According to Akella and Allan (2011), wildlife crime has grown exponentially in the last decade. It is estimated to be a $20 billion dollar industry and part of the top five largest illicit economies of the world, only surpassed by illegal drugs, and human and firearms trafficking (Akella & Allen, 2011; Kurland, Pires, McFann & Moreto, 2017; Welch, 2017). One of the animal species that has particularly been affected by the illegal wildlife trade is the rhinoceros, which is primarily sought after for its horn. Since 2007/2008, rhino poaching has surged, especially in South Africa. The current value of rhino horn is estimated to be around US$65.000/kilogram (Massé & Lunstrum, 2016), and the main demand comes from Vietnam and China, making it a transnational issue. Statistics show that the number of rhinos killed by poaching was highest in 2014, totalling 1.215. Recently, the South African Department of

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[1] Field notes of an evening game drive on the 13th of March 2017.

Environmental Affairs announced that 1.028 rhino were poached in 2017 (Save the Rhino, n.d.). Although this is the third year in a row that rhino poaching has declined in South Africa, the death toll remains high with on average three rhinos killed each day.

South Africa is home to about 79% of rhinos in the world. Since 2010 the country has suffered 88% of all rhino poaching, creating an enormous pressure to fight rhino poaching (Emslie et al., 2016). In an effort to protect the rhino, military actors, techniques, technologies, and partnerships are commonly employed; a development which is being referred to in literature as 'green militarization' (Lunstrum, 2014). As poachers make use of new technological innovations, anti-poaching units are forced to meet them, leading to an arms race. In response, protected areas are increasingly being 'fortified'. Consequently, the escalation of rhino poaching has created dangerous landscapes where people are willing to engage in deadly violence (Duffy, 2014). It is these same dangerous landscapes that tourists are visiting with a desire to see wildlife.

On a very basic level, poaching and wildlife tourism in South Africa are connected by the fact that both depend on wildlife. According to Griffiths (2017), a great source of income for South Africa is generated by wildlife tourism. Tourism, more generally, plays a large role in the economy of the country. The total contribution of travel and tourism to the GDP of South Africa was 9.4% in 2015 and was expected to rise by 3.0% in 2016. Furthermore, in the same year the tourism sector's contribution to the total employment of the country was 9.9% (1,554,000 jobs) (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2016). That one of the primary factors attracting foreign tourists to South Africa is its scenery and wildlife, is evidenced by the fact that at least 45% of those visiting South Africa's from abroad visit a nature or wildlife reserve whilst in the country (Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007). To offer wildlife tourism a prerequisite is the presence of wildlife. The rhino, being one of the larger species and part of the big 5, is an animal many tourists wish to see. Regrettably, it is this species that is endangered due to commercial poaching.

The effects of rhino poaching on tourism are often only discussed as a subpart of a larger study on the effects of the current rhino poaching crisis. Griffiths (2017) made the point that, with millions of tourists travelling to South Africa to partake in wildlife viewing, the disappearance of one of the iconic big 5 animals may have dire consequences for the economy. In a study particularly focused on the economic consequences of poaching in relation to tourism, albeit elephant instead of rhino poaching, Naidoo, Fisher, Manica and Balmford (2016) state that a diminished wildlife density due to poaching will lead to less tourism. That commercial poaching will negatively influence visitation numbers, and consequently lead to a decrease in tourism revenue, remains speculation at this point in time[2]. Furthermore, it says little about the present state relationship between rhino poaching and tourism. On this front, Griffiths (2015) remarks how no tourists have, as of yet, been caught in the crossfires of poaching, and considers

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[2] Naidoo et al. (2016, p. 1) used "Bayesian statistical modelling of tourist visits to protected areas, to quantify the lost economic benefits that poached elephants would have delivered to African countries via tourism". This research contains methodological limitations. By their own saying, the analysis was "limited by the amount, quality and spatial resolution of data on the nature-based tourism sector" (p. 6). Additionally, they remark on the steeper increase of elephant poaching than previously documented, the consequent increasing anti-poaching costs, and the differences between Africa's protected areas, limiting the generalisability of the results.

it only a matter of time before this will occur. Citing Wyatt (2013), she goes on to say that tourists may become frightened due to the violence involved in poaching incidents (Griffiths, 2015; Griffiths 2017).

What has been lacking in research about the rhino poaching crisis, which has up until now mainly focused on the ecological and social implications, is an examination of how it potentially affects the tourist experience. There has currently only been one previous study conducted by Lubbe, du Preez, Douglas and Fairer-Wessels on this topic, which was published in 2017. Using a questionnaire, Lubbe et al. (2017) examined tourists' opinions on the issue of rhino poaching and the effects of specific rhino poaching scenarios on their experience. They concluded that rhino poaching and anti-poaching measures do impact tourism in the short term and could affect future visitation to game reserves.

Although the relationship between rhino poaching and tourism has as of yet not had much scholarly attention, research that does exist largely indicates that rhino poaching has a negative effect on tourism. With tourism being an important contributor to the country's GDP and providing revenue for the conservation of protected areas, a decline due to rhino poaching could actually have severe consequences; proving that it is an important subject to be further examined.

1.2 Research objective

This research is a response to this research gap; a lack of understanding of the ways in which rhino poaching and tourism affect one another at the present time. Accordingly, this research examines the links between rhino poaching and tourism and what these signify. It does so by looking at a specific area, namely the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve in South Africa. To better understand the potential relationship between rhino poaching and tourism the following research question has been developed:

> *How does poaching in the context of the current rhino poaching crisis affect tourism – and vice versa – in the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve in South Africa?*

Due to the exploratory nature of this research, the central research question has purposely been kept broad. Not limiting itself to only researching the potential of one affecting the other, but understanding that there could be a complex double-sided relationship. Moreover, it does not exclude the possibility that the two, in fact, have little impact on each other at all.

In addition to the main research question, four sub-research questions have been developed, which are as follows:

> 1) What is the level of awareness of visitors to the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve regarding rhino poaching?

Assuming that the awareness people have, or the lack thereof, about the current rhino poaching crisis and its occurrence at the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve will be telling for the impact rhino poaching has on tourism.

2) How have strategies to fight rhino poaching within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve affected tourism dynamics?

This sub-research question is created with the supposition that not only the poaching of rhino itself, but the anti-poaching measures employed to protect the rhino could have an impact on tourism.

3) In what ways and by who is information about rhino poaching within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve produced or hidden?

Following up on the first sub-research question, this question looks at how tourists are made aware, or not, about the rhino poaching crisis. In addition to trying to identify which actors take responsibility for the dissemination of information, attention will be paid to the ways in which they do so, or don't do so, and the kind of discourses used in the production of this information.

4) What are the perceptions of actors associated with Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve towards the effect of tourism on rhino poaching?

Lastly, this sub-research question is added to specifically investigate whether or not tourism can have an impact on rhino poaching as well. To explore whether a double-sided relationship exists between rhino poaching and tourism.

1.3 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of 6 chapters. In chapter 2 the theoretical framework that serves as the underpinning of this research is introduced. This chapter talks about wildlife tourism, the "tourist bubble" and the current rhino poaching crisis. Chapter 3 describes the methodologies employed for data gathering and analysis. Furthermore, it presents this research as a case study and touches upon issues of positionality and ethics. The following chapter, 4, provides context to facilitate the understanding of the results which are presented in chapter 5. Last of all, this thesis concludes with a combined discussion and conclusion in chapter 6.

2. Theoretical framework

In this chapter the theoretical underpinning of this thesis is presented. It thereby lays the foundation for understanding the results of the research. This chapter will begin by reviewing some of the main theories regarding the underlying motives for travel and discuss how the tourism industry has reframed (natural) tourist spaces into "tourist bubbles" in order to satisfy the consumer. Consequently, the focus is brought to a particular segment of tourism, namely, wildlife tourism. Using a conceptual framework presented by Higginbottom (2004), important factors and stakeholders in the management of wildlife tourism will be discussed. What follows is a more detailed exploration of the current rhino poaching crisis and theories referred to in literature as 'green militarisation' and 'green violence'. The chapter concludes by considering violence in tourism and conservation, and the discourses used in their justification.

2.1 The search for authenticity and the "Other" in wildlife tourism

Modern tourism can be studied from various perspectives as it is "an ecological, economic, and political system that is complex and global" (Cohen, 1984, p. 382). This research considers tourism as the act of travelling from one place to another, the engagement in activities at the destination, and the corresponding motivations for travel in the first place (Tribe, 1997). The latter, what drives people to travel, particularly when it comes to wildlife tourism, is the focus of this section.

Tourists are a heterogeneous group of people each with their own wants and needs. Cohen (1979, p. 180) states that " '*the* tourist' does not exist as a type". Despite this heterogeneity, scholars, including Cohen, have tried to identify the underlying motivations for travel. Cohen (1979) argues that, modern tourists have an interest in, or appreciation for, experiencing something novel and strange. According to MacCannell (1973), one of the main reasons for people to travel is to search for the "authentic". These notions, that tourists travel in search of novelty or authenticity, relate to each other. MacCannell (1973) argues that the authenticity that tourists are searching for has disappeared in their modernized societies, hence, it is something unfamiliar to them. Thus, tourists are searching for something that is different from their modernised societies. Their reasons for doing so is to find relief from the pressures of everyday life. According to Arnegger (2014, p. 1), "western tourists tend to travel essentially for one reason: to briefly escape the social reality and living conditions of their industrialized cities". In a nutshell, tourism is founded on a desire to 'escape' modern life and its obligations, and on a longing for unique and 'authentic' experiences.

According to Shutt (2014), authenticity has been defined in literature as: traditional culture, that which is genuine, the real thing, or the unique. In addition, Cole (2007, p. 944) states that "authenticity is a Western cultural notion associated with the past 'primitive Other' articulated in opposition to modernity". Nature-based tourism, offers authenticity in the form of 'getting back in touch with nature' (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008). Nature is in opposition to modernity as much of today's populations live in urban areas devoid of nature. In wildlife tourism, a subset of nature-based tourism, it is the wild animal that is associated with authenticity. Animals are

not unfamiliar to the modern tourist, as animals are a part of the everyday lives of people in industrialised societies. However, animals in industrialised societies are primarily seen as pets and food. It is the 'wild' animal that is considered to be the embodiment of nature (Mullin, 1999), and that is associated with "Otherness" (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2001). According to Curtin (2005), wild animals are perceived as the "Other", simply due to the fact that they are not like us. Although wild animals are 'inside' human culture as we recognize, categorize, and describe them, they are 'outside' human society due to the fact that direct encounters with wild animals are a rarity for most urban humans (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2001). In safari tourism, the wild animal is frequently reframed into to the "primitive Other" (Cole, 2007), as romantic discourses place them in prehistoric times (Norton, 1996). Through the use of these romantic discourses the wild animal is abstracted from its context and becomes a symbol of authentic wilderness (Curtin, 2008). Consequently, encountering a wild animal in its natural settings is valued as an authentic experience of "Otherness" by tourists (Cohen, 2009).

2.2 Introducing the "tourist bubble"

Tourist spaces are frequently reformed because of the need for efficiency within the tourism industry. Each destination has its own set of "things to see" or "attractions" for tourists. Some of these attractions are based on natural elements while others are artificially constructed. However, even the 'genuine' attractions are often manipulated in such a way to make them more suitable for mass tourism. Such attractions are "supplied with facilities, reconstructed, landscaped, cleansed of unsuitable elements, staged, managed, and otherwise organized" (Cohen, 1972, p. 170). Liska and Ritzer (2002) argue that modernity has made it so that the tourism industry, amongst others, has to be efficient, predictable and controllable. The standardized tour package for the mass tourist is seen as the perfect example of McDonaldization (i.e. the factory-like supply of a standardized consumer good). Thus, tourists spaces are reformed in such ways that they may be easily consumed by the mass tourist.

Additionally, the social construction of tourist spaces occurs to provide tourists with an 'authentic' experience. MacCannel (1973) argues that tourist spaces have a front stage and a back stage. The back stage represents the true authenticity that tourists are looking for, while the front stage supplies tourists with a performed or staged authenticity. MacCannel (1973) claims that the majority of the tourists become entrapped in the front stage of a tourism destination and will therefore never satisfy their craving for authenticity. Tourists are deprived in their goal of finding true authenticity because their experiences are based on social constructions. In contrast, Cohen (1972) suggests that a glimpse of authenticity through the front stage might be enough to satisfy the mass tourist. According to the scholar, there are limits to amount of novelty and strangeness a tourist can endure. He argues that a complete abandonment of the tourists' native culture in favour of complete immersion in a new and alien environment can be experienced as unpleasant and even threatening. In order to be able to enjoy the novelty of the tourist destination, tourists needs something to remind them of home. This may be familiar food, newspapers, living quarters, or being surrounded by other people from their native country. Tourists are willing to explore the novelty of the macro environment of a strange place if they can do so from the security of a familiar micro environment. In order

to maintain visitor satisfaction the tourist industry has to create tourist spaces where the mass tourists can enjoy the novelty of the destination without experiencing any physical discomfort.

To sum up, whether or not the tourists makes a conscious choice to stay in a familiar micro-environment, are forced into it because of standardization processes within the tourism industry, or are the victim of staged authenticity, the crux of the matter is that mass tourists are often kept separate from the reality of the places they visit. Cohen (1972) was the first tourism scholar to describe the, what he called, "environmental bubble". Cohen (1972) describes how the modern tourist not so much abandons his familiar environment for a new one, as he is being transported to foreign soil in an environmental bubble of his native culture. From the safety of these environmental bubbles – the often well-trotted paths equipped with familiar means of transportation, hotels and food – the tourists are able to observe the novelty of the foreign country. This environmental bubble has later been redefined in literature as the "tourist bubble". According to Büscher and Fletcher (2016) there is another element to the tourist bubble, which is that, within the bubble, the normal rules do not apply. They argue that the tourist bubble is created as a capitalist relief mechanism; it is the result of the commoditization of travel. Within the tourist bubble, the tourist is shielded from forms of structural violence and protected from disturbances of mundane or political issues. In this thesis the "tourist bubble" is understood as a tourist space or experience that, through its social construction, is abstracted from its context.

2.3 Managing the wildlife tourism experience

According to Bulbeck (2012), tourists desire wilderness areas that are simultaneously 'pristine and unaltered by humans' and accessible to humans; a conflicting desire as the very presence of the tourist shows the staged nature of the experience. Indeed, Curtin and Kragh (2014) similarly state that tourists think of nature as unbound and wild and that this perception can negatively be affected when the tourist experience is too heavily mediated or controlled. Evidently, there is a fine line between providing tourists with an authentic experience and the facilities they need in order to access the natural area. Moreover, Shutt (2014) argues that there are many competing and conflicting interests in natural areas. The relationship between the experiential needs of the consumer and product management must be understood to be able to ensure sustainable use of the natural resources. There are many stakeholders involved in the development and sustainability of wildlife tourism. Governments are often responsible for ensuring resources for conservation and proper legislative protection, while the everyday conservation practices are the responsibility of the habitat managers. Additional stakeholders may play an important role, such as community groups, tour operators and even the tourists themselves (Valentine & Birtles, 2004).

According to Higginbottom (2004) the visitor-wildlife encounter is at the core of the wildlife tourism experience. She defines wildlife tourism as, "tourism based on encounters with non-domesticated (non-human) animals" (p. 2). Such encounters may be with animals in their natural environment or in captivity. Included in wildlife tourism is wildlife-watching tourism, captive-wildlife tourism, hunting tourism and fishing tourism. The visitor-wildlife encounter

is shaped by the interaction between a variety of elements/stakeholders: the wildlife and associated habitat; the visitor; the tour operator; and the setting. A framework presented by Higginbottom (2004; adapted from Higginbottom, Northrope & Green, 2001) shows the interaction between these components that result in the visitor-wildlife experience.
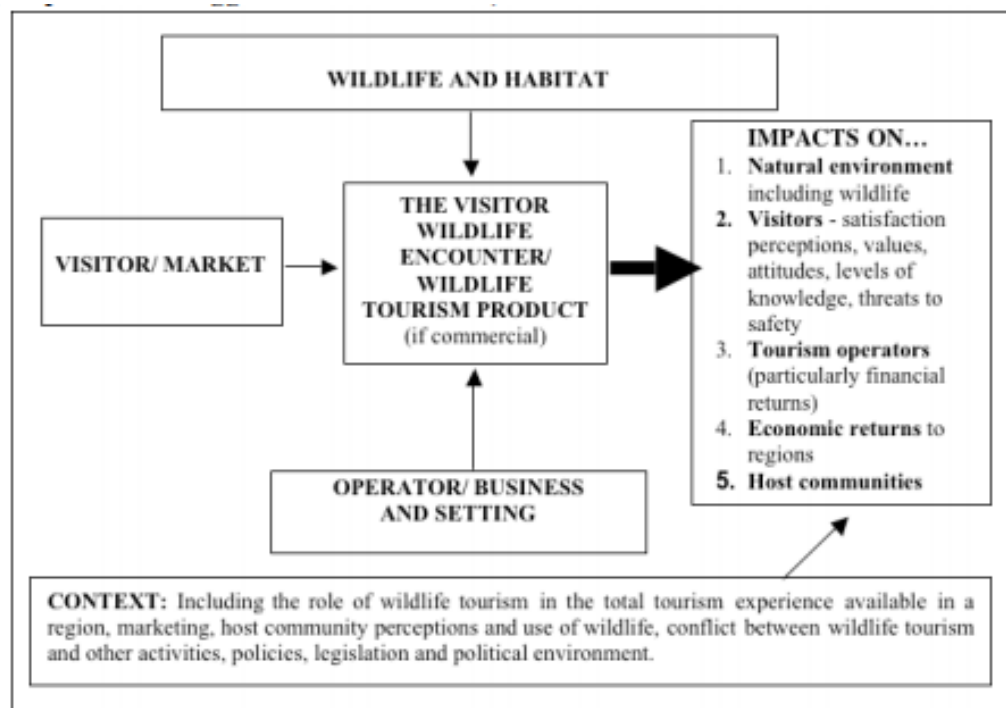
figure 1: Framework of the wildlife tourism experience (Higginbottom, 2004)

The elements presented in this framework are interdependent and influenced by the wider context in which the experience takes place. Additionally, the framework shows that the wildlife tourism product could potentially have an impact on the natural resource base, the visitor, the economy (from the level of the individual business to that of the country as a whole), and the host community.

The most crucial element of the wildlife tourism experience is the presence of animals, and the natural areas in which they reside. As explained above, these natural areas are frequently constructed. Cohen (2009) argues that tourists spaces can be categorized by the extent to which they are physically or symbolically separated from the ordinary flow of life of the destination. He categorizes national parks and wildlife sanctuaries as semi-natural settings, due to the spaces being bounded and managed but allowing for the free roaming of animals within these boundaries. Park management of natural areas perform a dual role as they are simultaneously responsible for the management of biodiversity conservation and recreational development. Moscardo and Saltzer (2004) argue that tourism demand needs to be understood in order to plan for appropriate tourism infrastructure and services, to be able to provide quality experiences, and to minimize the possible negative effects of tourism.

When it comes to wildlife-watching there appears to be a preference amongst tourists for viewing the wildlife in their natural environments. Based on a comparison of several studies,

Moscardo and Saltzer (2004) argue that there are six factors that influence the satisfaction of wildlife-watching tourists: "the variety of animals seen; particular features of the animals; being able to get close to the wildlife; seeing large, rare or new species; the natural setting itself; and being able to learn about the wildlife or the setting" (p. 179). When it comes to the popularity of certain species, Curtin (2005) argues that size, beauty, charisma, accessibility, and likeness to humans are important factors. The latter, is a result of our anthropomorphic view with which we transpose human societal values onto animals. Cohen (2009) supposes there are two forms of interests in animals. On the one hand there is the Otherness, while on the other hand the apparent similarity to humans. Tourists are potentially more attracted to species that display behaviour similar to humans (e.g. familial structures, cuteness and sociability) (Curtin, 2005). According to Curtin (2009) an additional dimension to wildlife tourism is its ability to restore the tourists' mental well-being to a state of equilibrium. Curtin and Kragh (2014) reaffirm this by stating that wildlife tourism has the potential to instil an emotional connection to nature, lead to a revitalisation of the human spirit and a greater environmental awareness.

How the visitor-wildlife encounter is interpreted and perceived by the tourist is largely influenced by the presence of a tour guide. Tour guides act as the intermediaries between tourists and an unfamiliar environment (Min, 2011). According to Reisinger and Steiner (2006), tourists come to a better understanding of a destination and its culture through the interpretive work of the tour guide. The tour guide "transforms a tour into an experience" (Ap & Wong, 2001, p. 551). Moreover, Zerva and Nijkamp (2016), describe tour guides as key actors who encapsulate the essence of a place and make it non-threatening for the visitors. They move between frontstage and backstage tourism settings and are often the only local actor with who tourists personally interact at the destination. According to Moscardo, Woods and Saltzer (2004), tour guides serve an additional role in educating tourists about minimal impact behaviour.

In short, wildlife tourism is influenced by aspects such as the type of animal encountered, the habitat in which it resides, characteristics of the visitor, and the tourists' interpretation of the encounter based on information provided by tour operators and/or park management. Several stakeholders are responsible for the management of wildlife tourism, of which, park management, tour guides, and the tourists themselves were particularly highlighted here.

2.4 Rhino poaching and green militarisation

In general, the greatest proportion of biodiversity can be found in tropical regions. The eastern and southern African countries are popular destinations when it comes to mammal watching tourism. What makes these countries so popular is their richness in species (250 – 300 species) coupled with environments that allow relatively easy watching (Valentine & Birtles, 2004). Research published in *Conservation Biology* has shown that conflict more often than not takes place in countries containing biodiversity hotspots. In fact, data about major conflicts between 1950 and 2000 indicates that over 90% of conflicts occur in countries with biodiversity hotspots and that more than 80% actually takes place within the hotspot areas (Duffy, 2014). The war

on poaching is one of the conflicts surrounding biodiversity that holds conservationists' concern. Generally speaking poaching can be defined as "the hunting of any animal not permitted by the state or private owner" (Duffy, 2014, p. 10). Often it is divided into either subsistence poaching or commercial poaching. Subsistence poaching relies on technologies such as traps and snares, concerns small game and as the name suggests is necessary to support life. Commercial poaching on the other hand typically targets financially valuable species and uses different technologies to hunt, such as firearms (Duffy, 2014).

The most well-known animal species endangered by commercial poaching are probably the elephant and the rhino. In the case of the rhino, the part that is sought after is the horn. Rhino horn is exceeding gold and cocaine in price having now increased to over US$65,000/kilogram (Massé & Lunstrum, 2016). The increase in rhino poaching can be attributed to the relatively new affluence of Asia. The largest market for rhino horn today is Vietnam and China. Vietnam has only fairly recently seen an increase in demand after a prominent politician claimed to have been cured from cancer because of intake of rhino horn. Duffy, John, Büscher and Brockington (2015) suggest that the demand in Vietnam is most probably caused by a mix of a rising of incomes, historical health practices, emerging cultural norms, conspicuous consumption, and state level corruption.

Illegal wildlife trade has led to the loss of close to 6000 rhinos in South Africa since 2008 Hübschle (2016). It is largely still unclear which people partake in poaching and what their motives are. According to Hübschle (2016), the common assumption is that illegal poaching follows transnational organized crime, opportunity structures and/or is the result of endemic poverty affecting people living close to protected areas. The focus here thus lies mostly on the socioeconomic drivers of rhino poaching. As Duffy, John, Büscher and Brockington (2016) argue, only by studying illegal wildlife hunting within its complex historical, social and political context can we come to a richer understanding of the motivations for poaching. Understanding the motivations for illegal wildlife hunting might in turn also lead to a better understanding of how to stop it.

One of the most commonly used approaches in many of the protected areas in Africa right now, is to fight poaching using military force. This "use of military and paramilitary actors, techniques, technologies, and partnerships in the pursuit of conservation" is conceptualised as 'green militarization' (Lunstrum, 2014, p. 817). Green militarization is justified with arguments that military approaches are the only effective ways to protect threatened species from the recent and rapid rise of highly organized poaching. However, there has also been much critique. Increasing military style protection creates dangerous landscapes where people enter into conservation areas willing to engage in deadly violence. Indeed, to respond to wildlife crime with military violence will likely create a cycle of militarization. What follows is an arms race where both sides continue to use more and more sophisticated weaponry (Duffy, 2014). Park guards have access to increasingly advanced surveillance equipment and arms and are routinely trained by private security companies and foreign military instructors. In some cases national armed forces are also involved in protected areas. Green militarization is increasingly associated with violent rationalities and practices such as 'shoot-on-sight' and 'shoot-to-kill' policies, property destruction, threats, evictions, displacements, patrolling,

surveillance and the construction of informant networks (Marijnen & Verweijen, 2016). According to Marijnen and Verweijen (2016) green militarisation is enabled by various discursive techniques. Securitization, framing social phenomena as 'security matters', legitimises militarized approaches as they 'neutralise' security threats.

2.5 Tourism as a conservation mechanism or perpetuating violence?

Tourism has long been linked to conservation, especially segments of tourism like nature-based tourism, eco-tourism, and sustainable tourism. According to Spenceley and Goodwin (2007, p. 255), "international programmes and national policies around the world have identified tourism as an appropriate mechanism for sustainable development, poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation". Considering the current rhino poaching crisis, the implication is made that tourism could play a role in fighting poaching by financing biodiversity conservation or through poverty alleviation. However, there is mounting critique that would suggests otherwise. Including the fact that tourism itself generates structural violence (i.e. inequality and waste) (Büscher and Fletcher, 2016).

Protected areas often encourage nature-based tourism as it justifies their existence (Balmford et al., 2009). However, in essence, nature-based tourism puts pressure on the very resources on which it relies. Not only can nature-based tourism lead to environmental degradation, it can also have negative impacts on local livelihoods as it alters the social fabric of local communities, and in some cases isolates them from the protected areas (Kuenzi & McNeely, 2008). The latter, is certainly true when tourism development is expanded using conservation as its justification. Büscher and Davidov (2015) argue that eco-tourism, which claims to be specifically concerned with responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people, frequently leads to 'green' displacements as local communities are being evicted from their lands for conservation purposes. Additionally, Büscher and Fletcher (2016) claim that tourism is a capitalist industry existing in, and producing, uneven economic and social development.

2.6 Discourses advocating violence in conservation

Violence is present in both tourism and conservation practices. However, while the (structural) violence generated by tourism is hidden from the tourist within the tourist bubble, violence in the conservation of the rhino is increasingly being advocated, namely, in peoples' support for green militarisation. Büscher (2018, p. 162; see also Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2015) defines this "dramatic increase in symbolic, discursive, social and other forms of violence that accompanies the global surge in wildlife crime" as 'green' violence. One dimension of this 'green' violence, is discursive violence. Discourse is understood as "the development of a collective and patterned mode of thinking and communication aimed at shaping worldviews and influencing human behaviour" (Büscher & Ramutsindela, 2015, p. 19).

Securitization as a discursive techniques used for the justification of green militarisation has already been presented in the previous section. Marijnen and Verweijen (2016) state that there

are four additional discursive techniques; moral boundary-drawing, spectacularization, marketization, and multiple-win rhetoric. Moral boundary-drawing has to do with the 'othering' of certain population groups. In this case that is the poacher as the 'Other'. Spectacularization and marketization result in green militarization being presented in ready-made packages, holding spectacular stories and drawing on selected hero/villain/victim narratives which fail to mention the general socio-political context.

According to Büscher and Ramutsindela (2015) discourses and ways of thinking about poachers are increasingly being developed through online social media platforms. On these social media platforms, violence against poachers is frequently advocated. The violent outcry against poachers have created a 'space of exception' where the poacher's right to life no longer applies. Lunstrum (2017) calls the relation between conservation and violence that emerges through these social media platforms deeply concerning. Similarly, she describes how poachers are dehumanised and abandoned. At the same time, the rhino is invited into a more-than-animal world. Lunstrum (2017, p. 140) states that "the relation between poacher and rhino is a dialectical relation of abandonment and belonging".

2.7 Concluding remarks

This chapter has served as the foundation for the rest of the thesis. In summary, it has started by presenting an overview of the main theories on motivation for travel. Arguing that, in general and even in wildlife tourism, tourists travel in order to escape from the daily pressures of modernized society. This could otherwise be defined as travelling with a desire for 'authenticity'. Authenticity in wildlife tourism is achieved through the social construction of the wild animal as the "Other". Subsequently, I have introduced the "tourism bubble" by explaining how the tourism industry has reacted to these motives for travel by socially constructing tourist spaces into standardized and staged spaces that are abstracted from their context. The tourist are then able to explore the novelty of the destination from their protective and familiar 'bubbles'. Following this, a conceptualisation of the wildlife tourism experience was presented. This framework has illustrated that there are various stakeholders responsible for the wildlife tourism experience. After having introduced the vital theories regarding tourism, the focus was then brought to the existing literature on the current rhino poaching crisis, including an explanation of green militarisation. Literature on rhino poaching and tourism was then brought together by debating tourism as a mechanism for conservation. It has demonstrated that tourism itself generates (structural) violence. Finally, the increasing appeal for violence in conservation, particularly as seen in discursive justifications for green militarisation, was discussed.

Later chapters (4 and 5) will explore how the theories presented here relate to, and come together within, the case study. First, the methodology of this research will be presented in the following chapter.

3. Methodology

Before presenting the findings of this research, this following chapter provides an overview of how the research was conducted. First, it explains the choice for a case study design and introduces the study setting. Second, I elaborate on the methods that were used to gather the data and, consequently, how this data was analysed. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a reflection on the limitations of the methodological choices that were made and some important ethical considerations of this research.

3.1 Research design and setting

3.1.1 A case study design

The objective of this research was to explore whether there is a relationship between tourism and rhino poaching, and if so, to describe the workings of this relationship. Previous literature on the relationship between tourism and rhino poaching is scarce and therefore this research has acted as a pioneer study. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, a qualitative case study design was selected. According to Baxter and Jack (2008, p. 544), the "qualitative case study is an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources". The inclusion of the contextual conditions in the study of a phenomenon is one of the main advantages of conducting a case study. Additionally, including multiple data sources ensures that the case is explored from multiple perspectives, which leads to a broader understanding of the phenomenon. For this research, the 'phenomenon' under study is the relationship between tourism and rhino poaching, specifically within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. The research question could not have been answered by taking away the broader socio-political context in which this phenomenon takes place. Furthermore, as rhino poaching is, for the most part, very specific to South Africa, studying the case elsewhere would not have been possible. Consequently, it was crucial to study the case in its natural environment. In conclusion, the holistic approach of the case study methodology, namely, the examination of the social context in which the case is embedded and the inclusion of multiple data sources, made it the perfect research design for this thesis.

3.1.2 Study setting

The Hluhluwe-Imfolozi game reserve is a fusion of the Hluhluwe game reserve in the north and Imfolozi game reserves in the south. The area spans 96,453 hectares, making it the largest reserve in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa (Brooks, 2000). By 1895, around the time when the Zulu kingdom was conquered and came to be under the direct British imperial control, Hluhluwe-Imfolozi received formal protection as a game sanctuary. The Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve is the oldest national park of Africa and the only park in the province of KwaZulu-Natal were all of the Big 5 animals are present, causing it to be particularly popular among tourists.

Figure 2: Map of the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve

As stated, this research could only have been conducted in a place where tourism and rhino poaching both exist. There were several reasons for selecting the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. First, a practical reason for choosing to do my fieldwork in Hluhluwe Imfolozi was the relatively small size of the park and relatively high density of rhinos. Second, the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve proved to be a particularly interesting case when it comes to rhino poaching because of its history with conserving rhinos. In addition to holding the title for oldest game reserve in Africa, the park is arguably most famous for saving the population of rhinos at the turn of the last century. Hluhluwe Imfolozi was the location for the conservation project known as operation rhino; a successful decades-long project to re-establish breeding herds in game reserves all over Africa led by conservationist Ian Player. Lastly, a surge in rhino poaching in KwaZulu Natal in recent years made this area further interesting for this study.

3.1.3 Accessing the field

After selecting the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve as basis for my research, the next step was to gain access to the field. In total, I conducted two months of fieldwork, from half of January to half of March 2017, in and around the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. During these two months of fieldwork, I stayed in three separate locations (see figure 3)
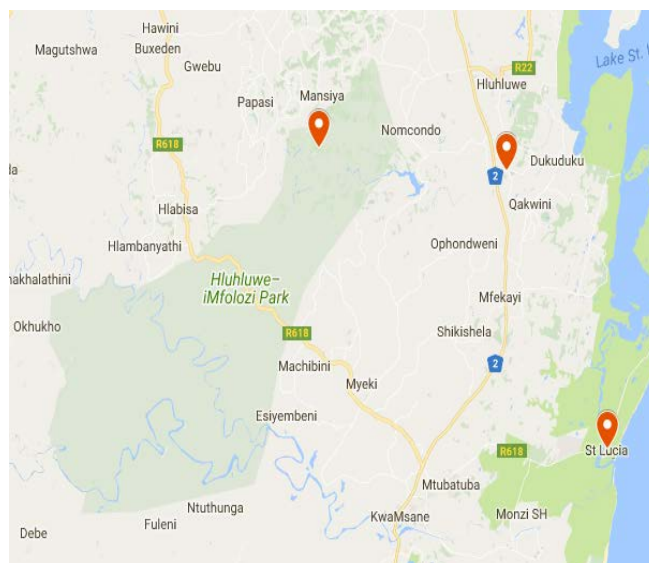
Figure 3: Indication of research base

While waiting on official permission from the board of Ezemvelo KwaZulu Natal Wildlife (EKZNW)[3] to conduct research inside of the park I was able to start my research from St. Lucia. This town lies about 50 kilometres from Hluhluwe Imfolozi and served as a good starting point due to the presence of several tour operators that offer tours to the nearby park. From St. Lucia I was able to familiarize myself with the area and map out which actors I wanted to reach out to for an interview. Most of the interviews I did with tour operators and tour guides took place during this first month. Additionally, a shorter amount of time of this first month was spend at an accommodation on the edge of Hluhluwe town. Hluhluwe is a town north of St. Lucia and about 25 kilometres from Memorial gate. Similar to St. Lucia, my time here was spend familiarizing myself with the area and contacting tour operators and tour guides for interviews. The third location from which the research was conducted was the research centre inside of the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. Staying inside the park in my second month helped me to observe tourists, conduct my questionnaire survey, and interview with staff members.

3.2 The data collection methods

The design, otherwise described as the blueprint or structure of the research, largely determines how data is to be collected and analysed (Gable, 1994). For this particular research a case study design was chosen. Case study research mostly makes use of data collection methods which emphasize qualitative analysis. Although, qualitative and quantitative methods are sometimes kept separate to avoid compromising the legitimacy of combining positivist and interpretive approaches, there is large scholarly support for combining methods (Gable, 1994). According to Johansson (2007) a major feature of case study methodology is the triangulation of methods

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[3] Ezemvelo KwaZulu Natal Wildlife is the provincial parastatal organisation responsible for land management and conservation of protected areas (Aylward and Lutz, 2003).

and, additionally, of data sources. The inclusion of multiple data sources promotes a better understanding of the case and enhances the credibility of the data (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Accordingly, this research has made sure to include multiple data sources and use different data collection methods.

3.2.1 Informal and semi-structured interviews

Informal interviewing is a beneficial method when the researcher is at the beginning of their fieldwork and is still settling in. Even at later stages of the ethnographic fieldwork it is an effective tool to build greater rapport (Bernard, 2017). Accordingly, at several points during the fieldwork I had conversations with people relating to the research topic that I do not count as semi-structured interviews. The reasons for this being that these conversations were not scheduled ahead of time, were often of relatively short duration, and were not recorded. Nevertheless, these informal interviews are worth mentioning as they oftentimes helped uncover new topics of interest throughout my fieldwork time. Informal interviews took place with tourists at accommodations I was staying at, with tourists and tour guides whilst conducting the questionnaire survey and during game drives, and with people working inside the park.

One of the main methods used for this research, was that of in-depth semi-structured interviewing. Semi-structured interviews are "conversational and informal in tone" allowing for "an open response in the participants' own words" (Clifford, Cope, Gillespie & French, 2016, p. 105). Although the interviewer generally prepares a list of predetermined questions, this list does not have to be followed as strictly as with structured interviews. Thus, the strength of the semi-structured interview is in its flexibility and exploration of what the research participant deems important. Accordingly, before each interview I would prepare an interview guide with topics I wished to discuss, however, the order of the questions and the amount of focus on a particular topic was dependent on the responses of the interviewee.

Conducting interviews can be a time consuming and the researchers is dependent on the availability of its research participants. According to Bernard (2017, p. 154) "there is growing evidence that 10-20 knowledgeable people are enough to uncover and understand the core categories in any well-defined cultural domain or study of lived experience". A total of 21 people were interviewed during my time in the field (see appendix 1), with interviews ranging from half an hour to one and a half hours in time. The research participants were selected by purposive sampling, otherwise known as judgement sampling (Tongco, 2007), meaning that they were selected based on the knowledge they may possess about the research topic and therefore acted as key informants. Additionally, some research participants were approached on recommendation of other key informants using the snowball sampling method. The key informants that were interviewed were: tour operators and tour guides, EKZNW management and staff, resort management and staff, and community representatives. Key informants were met at agreed upon places, often public cafés, places of work or at home, and the interviews were recorded on a mobile phone with permission of the interviewee.

3.2.2 Participant observation

In addition to semi-structured interviews I participated in wildlife tourism myself by joining six guided safari tours in the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve (see appendix 2). The method utilised here is that of participant observation, which, according to Kawulich (2005) is a useful method as it allows for a systematic description of behaviours in the social setting chosen for study. The aim of participating in these guided safari tours was to experience what it is like to go on a safari in the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve, to observe whether rhino poaching or measures taken to prevent rhino poaching are visible to tourists, and to observe tourists and tour guides. While participating in these guided safari tours I presented myself as a tourist. Field notes were written down afterwards. Another form of participant observation took place purely by being inside the park. Information was gathered by driving through the park on my own and talking with people while conducting my survey.

3.2.3 Questionnaire survey

Typically, the data collection methods employed in a qualitative case study design are participant observation and in-depth interviewing. In this research I additionally conducted a questionnaire survey. Questionnaire surveys are frequently used for gathering information about the characteristics, behaviours and/or attitudes of a population. It can be beneficial in social science in order to study conditions, relationships and behaviour. Furthermore, the survey method can enrich the generalisability of the research Clifford et al. (2016). Following the three steps to developing a good questionnaire proposed by Clifford et al. (2016), I will here give an overview of the survey design, the survey strategy and the survey respondents.

For this research the choice was made for a survey design that included both fixed response questions and open-ended questions (see appendix 3). The fixed-response questions provided data on the demographics of the respondents, while the open-ended questions offered detailed insights about the experiences and attitudes of the tourists regarding rhino poaching. The advantage of including open ended questions in this questionnaire was that respondents were not constrained in their answers. An additional important step in the questionnaire construction is pilot-testing. The questionnaire used in this research was tested by people staying in my hostel in St. Lucia, and, according to their feedback, small changes were made to the formulation of certain sentences in order to improve the clarity of the questionnaire.

The survey strategy that was made use of was a self-administered questionnaire, meaning they were filled out by the respondents on their own. In only a few cases the respondents had requested to be asked the questions out loud, whereby the questionnaire turned into more of a face-to-face structured interview. The questionnaires were distributed at different places at different times. Determining which place and time would result in the most response included a trial and error process. First attempts included handing out questionnaires at the Nyalazi gate and leaving questionnaires at the reception of Mpila Camp. Both of these attempts were quickly found to be unrewarding as they did not deliver a high response rate. Ultimately, the picnic area at Mpila Camp and the terrace of Hilltop Resort proved to be most fruitful and this is where the majority of the questionnaires were conducted.

Lastly, the respondents for this survey were tourists on guided and self-drive safari within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. According to Clifford et al. (2016) there is no single answer to deciding on the sample size. Sample size is determined by the purpose of the survey and the amount of time and money available. In addition Clifford et al. (2016) state that the benefits of larger samples begins to level off at sample sizes of 150 - 200 as the improvements in precisions begins to decrease. A total of 160 people participated in the questionnaire survey of this research. The sampling method used was convenience sampling, as the sample consisted of "participants who are easily accessible to the researcher" (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016, p. 2). The only criteria participants had to adhere to was that they were visiting the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve for tourism purposes.

3.3 Analysis of the data

The semi-structured interviews and field observations were fully written out during and after the fieldwork and transcribed for analytical purposes. For the analysis of this data the inductive thematic analysis approach as presented by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used. The themes and patterns within the data were identified in an inductive way, meaning that, no pre-existing coding frame was used and that the themes identified strongly linked to the data themselves. However, as Braun and Clarke (2006) state, the data gathered by the researcher does not exist in an epistemological vacuum and researcher themselves are not free of their theoretical commitments. An extensive literature review was conducted to get a better understanding of the research problem and to make the interview guide. By asking interviewees questions based on theories found in existing literature, certain themes would inevitably resurface within the data.

As is most commonly done, the analysis of the data started by open coding. At first the text document was carefully read; second, important sections and phrases were marked; and third, these marked sections were assigned a code. As I was interested in any mention made of a possible relationship between tourism and rhino poaching, I coded diversely without trying to find any pre-determined codes based on themes from previous research. After some time and reflection, at which point I realised I wanted to focus my thesis on event I had witnessed during my fieldwork, I returned to the data and created categories using axial coding (Clifford et al., 2016). The data from the questionnaire survey was entered into Excel. Here the quantitative part of the questionnaire, that is, the fixed questions, could be analysed resulting in mainly descriptive statistics. Answers from the open ended questions were seen as qualitative data and therefore similarly analysed as the interviews and observations by thematic coding.

3.4 Limitations

It is important to know how the data was obtained as it influences the results of the research and, consequently, the conclusions drawn from them. However, not only the research methods have to be presented, but a reflection of their limitations is also needed. Each research method has its limits, however, making use of multiple data collection methods and data sources increases the credibility of the data (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and can be used to overcome some

of these limitations. Triangulation of data collection methods was achieved by conducting semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and a questionnaire survey. Additionally, triangulation of data sources was achieved by including different actors.

That being said, the limitation that I do want to highlight here has to do with the data sources. Chosen data sources included: park management and staff, tour operators and guides and the tourists themselves. These actors, according to Higginbottom's (2004) framework, can each play a role in the management of the wildlife tourism experience. In addition, as park management and staff, and tour operators and tour guides are intimately acquainted with the park and its surroundings they could shed light on the recent developments regarding rhino poaching and tourism. However, a group that is largely excluded from this research are the local communities, simply because gaining access to this group was too difficult. In an attempt to get some insights into this group, other knowledgeable actors were approached, such as, two former community conservation officers. Furthermore, most of the included actors were approached via snowball sampling. A limitation of this method is that respondents are limited to a certain network and, therefore, the sample is likely to contain a bias. Reaching my research participants in this way was time consuming and was more successful towards the end of my fieldwork time.

This brings me to the last reflection I want to make on the limitation of this research which is that, due to limited time and resources, I was only able to scratch the surface. In total I had two months to conduct my fieldwork. I was very fortunate to be able to travel together with my supervisor and seven other researchers, including professors and students, during the first four days of my fieldwork period. During this time several interviews were conducted and I was able to familiarize myself with the area. Nonetheless, a large part of the first month was still spend finding good locations from which my research could be conducted and building contacts. Official permission from the board of EKZNW to conduct my research inside the park came on the 12th of February 2017, right in the middle of my fieldwork period. It was in the second month that the ball really started to roll and in my very last week that I witnessed the rhino carcass at Maphumulo road, an event on which most of my findings are centred around. In previous interviews occasional mention was made that a rhino carcass could be stumbled upon during a game drive. However, I initially disregarded this, thinking it was only a rare occurrence, and did not always ask further questions. Listening back to these interviews I wish I had had the time to return to these interviewees to ask them to elaborate. In conclusion, more time in the field could have resulted in an even deeper understanding of the issue under study.

3.5 Reflection on positionality and ethics

In addition to the limitations, it is important to reflect on the positionality of the researcher. According to England (1994), the researcher is not a dematerialized or disembodied entity; rather, we are all formed by our own personal histories and lived experiences. Consequently, our personal background plays a role in how we perceive and interpret things. Me, being a white, European, female has surely influenced my research. Besides determining the way I

interpret things, my positionality has played a role in gaining access to certain people. In addition to not speaking the language of the locals and the spatial vastness of the communities, getting information on the thoughts and perceptions of people from the local communities directly from the source was difficult as an 'outsider'. Instead, I have relied on information gained from community representatives, such as a former community conservation officer. On the other hand, being a Western researcher made it easy for me to make use of the tourist facilities and speak with tourism related actors.

Most of the people approached for my research were willing to help me. Only with staff member of the park, I found that some were initially hesitant as they expressed the need for permission of their managers or due to the sensitivity of the topic. As I gained official approval for my research from EKZNW, and by approaching people on the recommendation of previous interviewees, it became easier to gain access to this interest group. I was also only after getting permission from EKZNW that I conducted my questionnaire survey inside the park. To inform participants of the questionnaire survey about my research, the questionnaire contained a small introduction paragraph at the top of the page. Moreover, people had the opportunity to personally ask questions relating to my research, as I was handing out the questionnaires myself. When doing participant observation, my aim was to take part of the activities as a 'tourists' and not to influence other participants with my presence. Consequently, I tried to present myself as just another tourist. For ethical reasons, I informed people about my research at the end of each game drive.

Although race and culture were not at the core of my research, I would be neglectful if I did not reflect on it at all. Apartheid officially ended in 1990, however, issues of race are still highly relevant in South Africa. Additionally, race is entangled in rhino poaching and the conservation of rhino, not only at the present time but historically as well. As one of the tour operators/guides[4] interviewed said about educating local people on the importance of rhino conservation in South Africa:

> *Here we are, as mostly white people from this country, again trying to tell another race what to do and tell them it is for their benefit. (Tour operator/guide 4, St. Lucia,* 01/02/2017*)*

As a researcher, I was mainly there to observe. However, me being a white person and an 'outsider' coming to study this sensitive issue required me to handle the situation with care. As Milner (2007) argues, a researcher cannot change their race, nor should they have to. Instead researchers "should be actively engaged, thoughtful, and forthright regarding tensions that can surface when conducting research where issues of race and culture are concerned" (p. 388). In any interview, regardless of any sensitive issues having been discussed or not, I would always begin by explaining my research and stating my intentions, assuring people that I would handle what they told me with care, and guarantee them that they would remain anonymous.

Lastly, I end this reflection by remarking that a researchers' positionality is not only important within the field but through all aspects of a research. In addition to influencing how a research

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[4] In many cases the tour operator would act as guide as well. Therefore, they will be referred to as tour operators/guides in this thesis.

is conducted, it may also influence how the research is written, as "it is the researcher who ultimately chooses which quotes (and, therefore, whose "voices") to include" (England, 1994, p. 250).

4. Context

Tourism and rhino poaching, although both global in nature, are very dependent on the environment in which they exist. Not just the physiological environment, but also the political, social, and economic environment. As this research is based on a case study design, an important next step is to provide a more in-depth introduction of the study area in relation to the main concepts under study. Therefore, this following chapter can be seen as a contextual chapter. First, a description of the history of the area as it pertains to tourism and (rhino) poaching is given. Second, is a look at how Hluhluwe Imfolozi has been physically and symbolically constructed as a tourism destination, and what the typical tourist experience entails. Third, is an overview of some of the latest developments of rhino poaching within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve.

4.1 Historical context

According to Brooks (2000, p. 64) " 'natural' spaces such as game reserves need to be placed back in history: to be located in their political and historical context." Although natural spaces are often considered to be 'timeless' spaces outside the human world, the opposite is true. Natural spaces are much more than that; they are spaces created by human practices with rich cultural histories (Brooks, 2005). In fact, human presence within the area currently known as the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve has been traced back as far as the stone and iron age (Te Beest, Owen-Smith, Porter & Freely, 2017). The aim here, is to present a short overview of the history of the area as it pertains to tourism and (rhino) poaching.

During the early 1800's, the area of the current Hluhluwe Imfolozi reserve was first subjected to hunting by the native Zulu's under King Shaka's rule. It is believed that the killing of wild animals in King Shaka's royal hunting ground was restricted to occasional ceremonial hunts. It was during King Shaka's rule that European settlers entered the area via Port Natal (now known as Durban). Trading in wildlife products was already ongoing by that time, however, increased even further by the introduction of firearms, leading to the near extinction of several species in the area (Te Beest et al., 2017). Not only the wildlife was affected, but the native Africans as well, as the European settlers created privileged access to wildlife for themselves and physically excluded local communities from the area (Neumann, 2004).

Additionally, the area was affected by nagana, a cattle disease caused by blood parasites (Trypanosoma), transmitted from infected ungulates to cattle by Tsetse flies. For a long time it was thought that the best solution to this problem was to reduce the wildlife that formed a reservoir for cattle diseases. Therefore, by a game law of 1893, Zulu residents were officially allowed to hunt game in their areas. Only two years later, in 1895, concern for the disappearance of wildlife in the area prompted the establishment of 'game reserves', which

prohibited the hunting of wild animals. These game reserves would continue to be contested, mainly by the local white farmers who retained their own concerns regarding cattle diseases. A more effective solution was found at the beginning of the 20th century, when technological developments made aerial spraying with insecticides possible. However, this approach called for the removal of people from the infected areas. It was during this same time that investment in tourism in the area began to pay off (Te Beest et al., 2017).

While having received protection as a game sanctuary in 1895, it was not until the 1930's that the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve became the focus of the Natal provincial authority to market an exotic Zululand to tourists. It was during this time that there was a shift, internationally, in leisure practices and attitudes towards wildlife. The increasing industrialization in South Africa created a new demand for a romantic ideology of African nature. Instead of trophy sport hunting, people became increasingly interested in undertaking passive forms of wildlife tourism, such as wildlife viewing. As Brooks (2005) argues, with the mounting social pressures experienced by white urban workers, people turned to "primitive" spaces to which they could for escape on holiday. Or put differently, the changes in society due to the industrialisation made people long for a sense of authenticity; a demand that is still common in mass tourism today. Consequently, the emergence of nature-based tourism reshaped the colonial Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve as a modern recreational space of nature. The management of the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve as a tourist destination meant that there was a need for a more systematic exercise of spatial controls over its landscape (Brooks, 2005).

For the purpose of further tourism development, plans were made to consolidate the Hluhluwe and Imfolozi game reserves. This meant incorporating the land in-between, known as the 'Corridor' and inhabited by local Zulu residents. Although contested by the Zululand Farmers Union, the decision was ultimately made in favour of adding the Corridor to the reserve (Brooks, 2005). The consequence for local Zulu's was a gradual dispossession and exclusion. According to Brooks (2005), the majority of the local residents felt like they had been 'tricked' into leaving their land, because the removal was presented as part of the anti-nagana campaign and as a temporary measure. Thus, under the guise of environmental green agendas the 'grabbing' of the land between Hluhluwe and Imfolozi was justified. According to Brooks (2005, p. 232), " the restrictions on people's access to reserve land, is a key feature of the historical geography of the reserve from 1939".

The early years of the 20th century were a tumulus time for the area, as it was at this time as well that the discovery of the last surviving population of the southern white rhino within the Imfolozi section was made. It is speculated that the numbers of rhinos inside the park had dropped as low as 20 or 30 in total (Aylward & Lutz, 2003; Emslie & Brooks, 1999). What followed was a successful decades-long project, known as operation rhino and led by conservationist Ian Player, to re-establish breeding herds in reserves all over Africa. By the 1960's, the Natal Parks Board[5] had developed and improved white rhino immobilisation,

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[5] In 1947, the provincial parastatal organisation responsible for land management and conservation of the protected areas in KwaZulu Natal was formed under the name Natal Parks Board (Aylward and Lutz, 2003). This organisation is currently known as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

capture, and translocation techniques with which it was possible to start to repopulate rhino in other parts of Africa. As a result 4.350 southern white rhino were relocated by 1996, and today all southern white rhino originate from the population that was found in Imfolozi (Emslie & Brooks, 1999).

What this historical overview shows is that neither hunting wild animals, nor tourism, is new to the study area. In fact, it was trophy hunting by white European settlers that almost led to the disappearance of a number of species in the area at the end of the nineteenth century. Consequently, the game reserves were established to protect the wild animals. For local Zulu residents these changes in the utilization of the park, and the rules regarding accessibility to the park, have had large consequences. For many it meant displacement and a loss of livelihood. These past developments remain relevant today, as they continue to influence people, relationships and the area. For example, there are several land claims that are presently being negotiated between the local communities and the park. Additionally, the history of the area has effects on present-day tourism within the park.

4.2 Hluhluwe Imfolozi as a tourism destination

The Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve as a tourism destination is very much shaped by its past. It is when driving to the park, particularly from Mtubatuba towards the Nyalazi gate, that the differences between the park and the surrounding areas are most contrastingly obvious. Especially, when the lack of local people residing inside the park is noticed. As I wrote in my field notes[6]:

> *We leave St. Lucia very early in the morning. It is about an hour to the Nyalzi gate of the Hluhluwe Imfolozi park and in the beginning it is still dark and dewy outside. Slowly, it becomes more light outside. After we pass the many eucalyptus plantations and reach Mtubatuba it starts to get more busy and noisy on the road. We have to stop at least once for some goats who roam freely along the road and we pass children who are walking along the road to get to school. Left and right one can see houses scattered in the landscape and at some point a large coal mine is visible in the distance. All of this changes the minute we pass the fences of the park. It becomes quiet again and all that remains to be seen is an empty green landscape.*

For most tourists, this lack of local people inside the park is perceived as normal. According to Brooks (2005) the presence of local people inside the park is now reduced to certain roles, such as that of 'game guard' or 'local safari tour guide'. The physical removal of local people from the park has reverberated into symbolical/discursive displacement, as the impression is made that the park is pristine and always has been. In my own experience, not much about the history of the park is related to the tourists. When it is, it is to show some of the signs of Stone Age settlements or the remaining original hunting pits of the Zulu Kings. The removal of local people under the guise of exterminating nagana disease is not discussed. According to Brooks (2000) the only way in which the (human) history of the park resurfaces is through

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[6] Field notes of a full-day game drive on the 4th of February, 2017.

romanticized discourses. This is not a new notion as Norton (1996) already described how romantic discourses, inherited from colonial contact with Africa, has characterised East African nature as primordial with its landscape unchanged and frozen in time. Brooks (2000) claims that the same occurs at Hluhluwe Imfolozi, where tourists experience the game reserve as a space outside of time, removed from history and society. Paradoxically, Bullbeck (2012) remarks on how the presence of the tourists themselves makes it impossible for a tourism destination to be truly authentic.

The presence of tourists inside the park demands that certain physical changes be made to the landscape. Liska and Ritzer (2002) argue that natural tourist attractions are frequently subjected to manipulation in order to make it suitable for mass tourism. The Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve is no exception. The park has one asphalted road that runs from Mpila Camp all the way to Memorial gate which allows tourists to move within the park. From this road the tourists are able to view wildlife while safely ensconced in their vehicle. In addition, there are several dirt roads that increase movability and create more wildlife viewing opportunities. Other structures created to increase wildlife viewing opportunities include watering holes, look-outs, and hides. Furthermore, accommodations are built within the game reserve that range from resorts, bush-camps and lodges. The three largest accommodations are Hilltop Resort, Mpila Camp, and Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge. Mpila and Hilltop are both owned by EKZNW, while Rhino Ridge is a public-private partnership between the local communities and Isibindi Africa Lodges. The accommodations each have their own characteristics that sets them apart from the other. Mpila Camp is a self-catering venue where people can stay in either cottages or tents. The Hilltop resort is more luxurious; it offers both self-catering and non-self-catering chalets, and has a restaurant and swimming pool that guests can make use of. However, Rhino Ridge Safari Lodge is certainly the most luxurious, containing a swimming pool and spa, and offering exclusive activities to their guests. Another option that is available to tourists that wish to visit the park, is to stay outside of the park and partake in a day visit. Accommodations in the area are plentiful and may include hotels, bed and breakfasts, campsites, holiday apartments, and guesthouses. Most accommodations can be found in areas surrounding game reserves and along the N2 (Aylward & Lutz, 2003). Clearly, not only Hluhluwe Imfolozi but the areas around it have been influenced by tourism development as well. The many tourists facilities described here demonstrate how Hluhluwe Imfolozi has been physically constructed to increase efficiency. Additionally, these tourists facilities demonstrate the existence of a familiar Western micro-environment. The three main accommodations within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve each, to some degree, contain features of both stereotypical African imagery and Western-style comforts. On the one hand, they are made exotic with safari pictures and set-up animals as decoration, and a barbeque where tourists can experience a typical South African braai. On the other hand, Western-style facilities and services, such as, the swimming pool and spa, or the availability of familiar foods such as Fish & Chips at the Hilltop Resort restaurant, create a comfortable micro-environment.

The organised game drive, is another example of where tourists can sit back and enjoy the novelty of the place without experiencing any discomfort. It is a pre-packaged experience ready for tourist consumption. Although there are certain elements of uncertainty (e.g. the movement and consequent visibility of animals is largely uncontrollable), the organised game drive itself

is very much controlled and standardized. Tourists are transported to the park and enter when the park opens it gates. After about an hour's drive there is a brief stop for breakfast, which includes a typical Western-style spread of yogurt, muffins, fruit, tea and coffee. Later in the day, at lunch time, another stop is made to have a typical South African braai. Most time is spend in search of wild animals. While, as said, animal movement cannot be controlled it can to some extend be predicted. Therefore, a stop is usually made at a hide overlooking a watering hole. Furthermore, as tour guides know that one of the most desired wild animals are the big cats, they have created a WhatsApp group solely for the purpose of informing each other about sightings. Salazar (2006) similarly describes how tour guides in Tanzania contact each other through radio, exchanging the location of big 5 species. In this way tour guides are able to monitor and control the amount of wildlife that is shown to the tourists during a game drive. When actually seeing a wild animal the same standard information is often repeated (i.e. the size of the animal, the danger of the animals, the structure of the population, its habits etc.). These examples show that the organised safari tour is not unique. However, to the tourists, this is typically not evident. Tourists find themselves in a tourist bubble, wherein they experience the seemingly authentic whilst simultaneously being surrounded by familiar Western-style comforts.

4.3 Rhino poaching at the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve

A brief review of the literature on the current rhino poaching crisis has already been given in the theoretical framework of this thesis. Therefore, the aim of this section is to take a closer look at the rhino poaching crisis as it pertains to the study area (the Hluhluwe Imfolozi gamer reserve, or the province of KwaZulu-Natal if specific information about the park is unavailable). That being said, some limits are needed, as examining rhino poaching at Hluhluwe Imfolozi and its surroundings could be a thesis on its own. This section will be specifically discuss the recent developments of rhino poaching in the study, the challenges that follow it, and the securitization of the park in response.

While rhino poaching statistics for the whole of South Africa have shown a slight decrease, the amount of rhinos poached in KwaZulu Natal have continuously risen since 2008. In 2008, a total of 14 rhinos were reported to have been killed for their horn. Last year, 2017, had the highest numbers yet with 222 poached rhinos (Poaching Facts, n.d.). A deliberate choice by the authorities has been made to not divulge specific numbers per game reserve, but rather, to speak only about the province as a whole. Therefore, it is unclear how many rhinos have been killed in Hluhluwe Imfolozi over the years. However, with the park containing the highest density of rhinos in the area it can easily be imagined that the threat of poaching is particularly high. That this is indeed the case was made clear by many of the interviewees.

The increase of rhino poaching in KwaZulu Natal is largely believed to be a result of Kruger National Park upscaling their security measures (Carnie, 2016). As the poachers are aware that the risks are getting higher, with less chances of success, at Kruger National Park, they have switched their attention towards KwaZulu Natal. That Hluhluwe Imfolozi in particular draws

many poachers can be attributed to the high density of rhino that exist in the park. As one tour operator/guide commented:

> *There are more concentrated rhinoceros here than there are anywhere else so where would you expect is going to be a hotspot? This is a hotspot obviously. (Tour operator/guide 5, Hluhluwe (town), 04/02/2017)*

Additionally, the Hluhluwe Imfolozi is of relatively small size, with 96,453 hectares (e.g. when comparing it to the 19,485 square kilometres of Kruger National Park). The combination of these two factors, the small area and large density of rhinos, lowers the risk and increases the chances of success. Described by another tour operator/guide as following:

> *It is not difficult to poach rhino there. It is not like Kruger park where you go in and you search and you search, or you need inside information to find rhino. In Imfolozi you can basically just go in anywhere along the fence and keep on walking and you're bound to find rhino. (Tour operator/guide 2, St. Lucia, 28/01/2017)*

While the high chances of encountering rhino may be beneficial for tourism, this poses a real threat when it comes to poaching. In relation to rhinos being easily found within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve, the veterinarian of KwaZulu Natal pointed out that the drought of the previous year forced rhino populations to move towards the edges of the park in search of food, making it even easier for poachers to find rhinos and make a quick escape:

> *Especially last year, what happened was that we were in a drought. You found that the grass was really localised. Unfortunately what happened was that it was mainly on the outsides of the reserve. So big concentrations of rhino moved right on the fence line because of food. And it was so easy, you could watch them from your house outside. (KwaZulu Natal veterinarian, St. Lucia, 07/03/2017)*

Regardless of the reason, many of the key informants reported to have noticed an increase in rhino poaching. Additionally, these key informants – EKZNW staff members, resort management, tour operators and guides – all reported to have noticed changes on a professional level due to rhino poaching in the last decade. For EKZNW staff this change entails, amongst others, the amount of time and money that goes into anti-poaching efforts. From the park management who have to make tough decisions related to conservation, to the people working in the field who endanger their lives on a daily basis to fight rhino poaching. Another person whose work has been affected on an almost everyday basis is the EKZNW veterinarian. The KwaZulu-Natal police have requested a veterinarian to be at the crime scene for reconstruction and examination of the post-mortem. Therefore, visiting crime-scenes now makes up a large part of his job. As the KwaZulu Natal veterinarian related, it affects his job in the smallest ways. Including, for example, the equipment he carries with him:

> *In the old days you would carry your surgical kit and dart kit. Those things you would need to capture and blindfold and things like that. Now it's like DNA kits, knives, axes and metal detectors. It has just changed everything. (KwaZulu Natal veterinarian, St. Lucia, 07/03/2017)*

Just the mention of crime scenes, DNA kits, knives and axes demonstrates how the atmosphere has changed. This was also felt when talking to one of the section rangers. He started working in the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve in 2000. The kind of poaching he had to deal with then consisted primarily of subsistence poaching. This has now changed to commercial poaching. He commented:

> *Since I've started here things have drastically changed. It used to be just snaring for meat. […] No rhino poaching and very rare cases of guns. Firearms were just not involved in the whole situation. That has obviously changed now. Now firearms are a big part of what's happening. (Section ranger, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 14/03/2017).*

The addition of firearms to poaching has created an increasingly violent atmosphere. The danger is that it creates an arms race (Duffy, 2014) as the park tries to meet the poachers head on with the use of military force (Lunstrum, 2014). The Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve has indeed increased on its security due to rhino poaching. According to the EKZNW park manager (Pietermaritzburg, 19/01/2017), Hluhluwe Imfolozi is currently an intensive rhino protection zone (IPZ). Emslie and Brooks (1999, p. 15) define an IPZ as an "unfenced area on private or communal land, or within a larger State-run protected area, where law enforcement staff are deployed at a moderate to high density (ideally one field ranger between 10 and 30km^2) specifically to protect rhino". Its key principle is the concentration of anti-poaching efforts to a specific area. In order to protect the rhinos military surveillance technologies and tactics are deployed. EKZNW works together with the Zululand Anti-Poaching Wing (ZAP- Wing), who contribute to the anti-poaching operations through aerial surveillance support. On the ground, rangers and special anti-poaching unit (APU) teams patrol the park on a daily basis on the look-out for suspicious activities. Furthermore, in an effort to monitor and control who enters and exits the park a private security company has been hired to perform vehicle searches. On occasion, detection dogs will be used as well. Although, South Africa forbids rangers to 'shoot-on-sight', this does not decrease the violent atmosphere that is present within the park.

4.3 Concluding remarks

The main purpose of this chapter has been to shows how tourism development and the current rhino poaching crisis have separately impacted the study area. Historically, with the changing rules and regulations relating to the use and accessibility of the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve, and presently, by the construction of the tourist bubble and the employment of green militarisation in an effort to fight rhino poaching.

Neither tourism nor (rhino) poaching are new to the study area. This chapter has explained how severe hunting by the European settlers led to the near extinction of several species, including the rhino, near the end of the 19th century. In response, the Hluhluwe and Imfolozi game reserves were established. Consequent tourism development and conservation efforts led to the displacement of local residents from the area currently known as the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. In the following section I argued that this displacement, both physical and symbolical, has resulted in the social construction of the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve into an area that is conceived as pristine and authentic. Additionally, I presented how tourist facilities and

services within the park are standardized and create a familiar Western micro-environment, sustaining the tourist bubble. Lastly, recent developments of the current rhino poaching crisis within Hluhluwe Imfolozi and the surrounding area were described; including a noticed increase in rhino poaching and green militarisation in the study area.

What remains is an exploration of how, and to what end, rhino poaching and tourism come together within the study area. This will be presented in the following chapter.

5. Findings

This chapter presents the main findings of this thesis. The first section will address the awareness amongst tourists regarding rhino poaching within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. Second, is a description of the tourists' encounter with the poached rhino and the responses of park management and tour guides to this event. Third, is an explanation of how this encounter can lead to the bursting of the tourist bubble. Finally, the change from the rhino as the "Other" to a more-than-animal being as a result of this broken bubble is clarified.

5.1 Tourist awareness regarding rhino poaching within Hluhluwe Imfolozi

> *Unless people know of the problem they will not be interested in helping you. (EKZNW park manager, Pietermaritzburg, 19/01/2017)*

Public awareness regarding conservation issues can enhance support for effective environmental management (Lawhon, n.d.). The majority of the informants of this research believe that raising public awareness about the current rhino poaching crisis is the first step in gaining support for anti-poaching activities. This support may show itself through donations, lobbying or reporting on suspicious activities within the park. Tourists that participated in the questionnaire likewise envisioned awareness to be a powerful tool in fighting rhino poaching. When asked about their opinions on the potential role of tourism in anti-poaching efforts, raising awareness, providing money for conservation (through entrance fees as well as donations) and being the eyes and ears of the park were the predominant answers given. According to Lubbe et al, (2017, p. 3) "information remains an essential tool to effectively combat poaching by creating awareness". In order to understand the level of awareness amongst tourists regarding rhino poaching it is important to assess how this conservation issue is represented to the public and by whom.

According to Lawhon (n.d.) an environmental issue with which the public has little direct experience, such as rhino poaching, relies heavily on media coverage. Rhino poaching continuous to make international headlines with single significant occurrences; such as the rhino poached in France's Thoiry Zoo[7] and the death of the last male northern white rhino[8]. The majority of international tourists have a general knowledge about rhino poaching even before travelling to South Africa for holiday. This is confirmed in the study of Lubbe et al. (2017), by the tour guides interviewed, analysis of the questionnaire survey and informal conversations with tourists. At the destination level, there are two primary ways in which tourists can become aware of rhino poaching. One, is through the information communicated to them by actors in possession of expert knowledge. The other, is through first-hand experiences.

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[7] In March 2017 a four-year-old rhino was shot to death at Thoiry Zoo, in the suburbs west of Paris (Actman, 2017).

[8] On the 19th of March 2018, the world's last male northern white rhino, named Sudan, died (Berlinger, 2018).

5.1.1 The transmission of expert knowledge

The main actors responsible for shaping awareness regarding rhino poaching are park management and tour guides. These actors are in the position to decide what tourists are told or not told about the current rhino poaching crisis and its occurrence within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. The park management, EKZNW, tries to raise public awareness with the use of information posters and flyers placed at central points within the park (see figures 4 and 5). My own observations included a brochure stand at the reception of Niyalazi gate, a large billboard next to the main entrance of Hilltop resort and a poster inside Bhejane hide.

Figure 4: Information poster 1   Figure 5: Information poster 2

That the main aim of raising public awareness is to encourage people to contribute to the cause is clear by the discourse that is used. Words such as the *"slaughter"* of *"our"* rhino seem to be used to ignite feelings of empathy and responsibility.

The tour guide is another important source of information for the tourist. It is the tour guide that possesses expert knowledge about the park and its wildlife and is able to transmit this information to the tourist during the game drive. Indeed, according to Min (2011) the tour guides main purpose is interpretation. The six tour guides interviewed during my fieldwork each claimed to inform tourists about the rhino poaching crisis during game drives through the park. As one tour guide stated:

> *I'll normally stop at the first rhino and just give them general information about the rhino. And by the second or third we stop at a rhino I'll say: "alright guys it is now time to talk about this. Let's talk about rhino poaching and what's happening in Africa". (Tour operator/guide 2, St. Lucia, 28/01/2017)*

General information about the rhino frequently included the difference between the white and black rhino, the origin of the names and their inclusion as a big 5 animal. During five from the six game drives I joined, rhino poaching was indeed discussed. My observation was that, just as the quote states, rhino poaching was most often discussed on the second or third sighting, or when prompted by questions from the tourists. Information that was then communicated to the tourists usually consisted of an estimation of the amount of poached rhinos or a discussion of the possible solution to the current rhino poaching crisis. In general, tourists seemed to be easily

satisfied with the information provided to them and the topic did not become the focus of conversations during the game drive.

Information from these actors, EKZNW and the tour guides, can play an influential role in forming the tourists' perception concerning the current rhino poaching crisis. These actors control the narrative regarding this issue; with this power comes responsibility. The same tour operator/guide from the previous quote, expressed his concern that tour guides can struggle to provide tourists with the most current and accurate information due to the limited access they have to this information themselves:

> *That could be a dangerous platform. Because now, if your tour guides do not have the right information then your tourists get the wrong information. I would say that it is very important for tour guides to have the right statistics and the right information to convey to the tourists. That's where the problem comes in, this information is not just freely available. Unfortunately in South Africa, at this stage with our park authorities and tourism, somehow there is a gap. A communication gap between these two. (Tour operator/guide 2, St. Lucia, 28/01/2017)*

In particular, he is referencing information regarding the number of rhino that have been poached inside Hluhluwe Imfolozi. This information is not distributed by EKZNW for security reasons. The main argument of this tour operator/guide is that relaying the "right" information is crucial. Likewise, The EKZNW park manager interviewed talked about the importance of tourists getting their information from them, and not through third parties such as people on social media. Section 5.2.2 will elaborate on how these actors go about determining what the "right" information is when tourist are confronted with the sight of a poached rhino, and how this affects the tourist experience.

5.1.2 First-hand experiences with aspects of the current rhino poaching crisis

The other way in which tourists can become aware of rhino poaching within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve is through first-hand experiences. Specifically, tourists' experiences with the increased anti-poaching security measures and their encounters with rhinos within the park. The main security measures that have been put into place as a direct result of the rhino poaching crisis include: employing a APU team, ground and aerial patrols, and vehicle checks. The recent research of Lubbe et al, (2017) indicates that these anti-poaching activities can be noticed by, and affect, tourists visiting the park. They concluded that being exposed to helicopters flying overhead, vehicles being searched in camps and roadblocks throughout the park negatively affect certain visitor categories. Results from the questionnaire survey conducted in this research shows that aerial surveillance was most noticed by tourists with 17%, followed by 14% of the tourists seeing rangers patrolling and 12% having experienced vehicle checks[9] (based on 160 respondents).

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[9] The relatively low percentage of tourists noticing vehicle checks is remarkable as this was the main security measure interviewees identified as potentially disturbing the tourists' experience. It is likely the result of (1) registered safari vehicles not being checked at the gate and (2) the questionnaire having taken place in the middle of the day when vehicle checks when exiting the park had yet to happen.

It is the vehicle checks that were most often mentioned by the interviewees as the security measure with the most potential of affecting the tourist. In order to regulate who enter and exits the park, all visitors are required to register their vehicles at the gate. Additionally, security officers may ask to look inside a vehicle. One EKZNW park manager and one of the resort managers expressed mild concern that the vehicle checks could be experienced as an invasion of privacy by the tourists:

> *Because of the rhino poaching we changed our gate protocols and security interventions. So we are getting guys frustrated at the gate because now there are a lot of things being checked. […] Some of the guys appreciate it, because they know that something is being done. Some of them feel that it is intruding. (EKZNW park manager, Pietermaritzburg, 19/01/2017)*

> *&*

> *Some people don't like it, they feel like it is an invasion of their privacy. You can have four people eating the same meal and three will say it was fantastic but one will say "it was the worst meal I've ever had". That's people and you've got to accept that. […] But you don't want to be obtrusive or intrusive with a person on holiday. You want to be subtle. (Resort manager 2, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 11/03/2017)*

It is interesting to note how, in the second quote, specific reference is made of a person "on holiday". Vehicle checks may be found bothersome in any scenario, yet, it is this scenario that requests special caution. The holiday is supposed to offer a relaxed experience without any disturbances. For people working within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve the changes over time due to the increased security, and its effects on tourism, are recognisable. As one of the resort managers said: "it limits our guests activity to the point that we can't do night drives anymore" (Resort manager 3, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 15/03/2017). Whether or not such restrictions are experienced by the tourist is debatable. A large percentage of the tourists, 57%, reported not to have noticed anything relating to rhino poaching for the duration of their game drive at all. As the two quotes regarding the vehicle checks illustrate, for some tourists the security measures can be found bothersome, while for others it can be seen as a sign that the park is serious in their anti-poaching efforts.

On a different note, encounters with rhinos inside the park, or lack thereof, could potentially give tourists insight into the rhino poaching crisis. Several of the tour guides interviewed reported to have noticed a stark decrease in the amount of rhino encounters during a game drive. However, for the first-time visitor this is often not noticeable. As a tour operator/guide from St. Lucia explained:

> *A lot of tourists come to SA for the first time. They just want to see a rhino, any rhino. They are not sure about the numbers of rhino, or the percentage of rhinos, that we would have seen two years ago on a game drive. Now we drive through a reserve and they see two or four rhinos. And they think "wow, we didn't see that many rhinos in any other park before". But we, the tour guides, would have seen 35, 45, or even 55 rhinos two, three years ago. So, you know, what are guests expectations? They go to a*

park wanting to see rhino, they see a rhino and they are happy. (Tour operator/guide 4, St. Lucia, 01/02/2017)

For many tourists the changes over time due to the current rhino poaching crisis are not evident simply because they do not know any better. There seems to be a difference between a general awareness regarding the current rhino poaching crisis and first-hand experiences of it currently taking place within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. Furthermore, even if they notice the information signs, the security measures or even that they did not encounter that many rhinos during their game drive, these things only comprise a small part of their overall holiday experience within the park. In the following sections of this chapter I will argue that there is one side-effect of the current rhino poaching crisis that does have a significant impact on the tourist experience, namely, the encounter between tourists and a poached rhino.

5.2 Encountering rhino carcasses and controlling the sight

The escalation of the rhino poaching crisis in KwaZulu Natal has increased the chances of tourists encountering poached rhinos within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. According to the section ranger: "a lot of the times in the past, especially in this section, tourists have been the first to pick up on a poached rhino" (section ranger, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 14/03/2017). That encounters with a rhino carcass are becoming more frequent was confirmed by several of the tour guides interviewed. As one tour operator/guide said: "this year is the first year that it has been that blatant and open" (Tour operator/guide 1, St. Lucia, 27/01/2017). Another tour operator/guide shared with me his experience with a poaching incident that involved nine rhinos. He encountered the fallout the very next day while on a game drive with tourists:

> *In one night, nine rhinos had been poached. The next morning I was in the park doing a game drive and there where vultures all over. And I was like, what the hell is going on here? Rhino kill here, rhino kill there, another one across that side […]. (Tour operator/guide 5, Hluhluwe (town), 12/02/2017).*

Not only tour guides, but other informants made similar statements regarding tourists coming across rhino carcasses inside the park. As one of the resort managers commented:

> *It [rhino poaching] absolutely has a direct effect on the lodge. Simply from the point of view that our guests go out for a walk and they come across a poached rhino. Or our guests from a game drive come across a rhino carcass. It is heart-breaking. It affects our guests and it affects us. (Resort manager 3, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 15/03/2017)*

The frequency with which rhino poaching incidents occur within the park, and the visibility of the consequences to tourists, was evidenced to me during the time of my stay within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. It was during this time that three separate rhino poaching incidents took place. The first, occurred on the 28th of February 2017. While conducting my questionnaire at Mpila camp a tour guide I had previously interviewed shared with me a message he had received in a WhatsApp group chat (tour operator/guide 2, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 28/02/2017). In this message another tour guide reported to have seen a suspicious person wearing a black shirt walking in the bushes. Later that afternoon it was brought to my attention

that there had been a rhino poaching incident near the corridor of the park and that the poachers had escaped. About a week later I was notified of a second rhino poaching incident. This news was first relayed to me by two master students I had befriended in the research centre. When driving around the park for their own research purposes they had encountered a lion eating from a rhino carcass near one of the main resorts of the park. That this rhino had died due to poaching was confirmed when I spoke with the resort manager a few days later:

> *We had two here within the last week. One, I think, was about three days ago and the other one was about three days before that. The one definitely was [visible to tourists]. In fact, when you drove up here you would have passed a quarry area, driving back it would be on your left hand side. The one was right there. Completely visible and right close to the road. Which just shows how brazen they are. (Resort manager 3, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 15/03/2017)*

In the span of about two weeks there had been two rhino poaching incidents within the park, with at least one leaving rhino carcasses visible to tourists. However, it was the third rhino poaching incident of which I was able to witness the fallout myself, and which I will discuss in more detail below.

5.2.1 The rhino poaching incident on Maphumulo road
In the early hours of the morning on the 13th of March 2017 two rhinos, a mother and her calf, were poached inside the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. They were discovered lying along Maphumulo road, near Memorial gate (see figure 6).

Figure 6: Location of rhino carcasses   *Figure 7: Investigation of the crime scene*

Field rangers, having heard the gunshots, were quick to respond and a pursuit of the poachers commenced. At the crime scene, the location where the two rhinos were discovered, law enforcement officers crowded around to investigate the scene and collect evidence to use in court (see figure 7). When I myself drove by the crime scene around noon that day the veterinarian was just finishing performing an on-site post-mortem exam. At a regular crime scene investigation the surrounding area is often closed off to secure and protect the scene from contamination. In this case, with the rhino carcasses located along the main road from the Memorial gate to Hilltop resort, this was not possible. Closing this part of the road would have significantly impacted traffic in this section of the park. Consequently, the crime scene was unavoidable for tourists driving along this road from the early morning until well into the afternoon. The pictures below (figures 7 and 8) were taken from the main road at around 12 o'clock, driving right past the crime scene, and show what was visible to the tourists.

Figure 7: First rhino carcass as seen from the main road

Figure 8: Second rhino carcass as seen from the main road

The following day, I had an interview planned with a section ranger of the park. When talking about this particular incident, he commented:

> *The big thing is now, that those rhinos have obviously died right on a tourist road. You know, to try and close of an entire road is impossible. And because of short staff, by the time we could even look at that scene it was already 11 o'clock in the morning. Because we were in hot pursuit and stuff like that. So there is no hiding what is going on there. Ideally you don't want tourists to see that kind of thing. But you can't hide it if it's so blatant like it was. (Section ranger, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 14/03/2017)*

In this instance the rhinos were poached so early in the morning and in such a central location that the incident could not be contained. Indeed, many cases were tourists are the first to stumble across a crime scene cannot be controlled due to the unpredictability of rhino poaching itself. However, what happens after these rhino carcasses have been discovered can, to some extent, be controlled.

5.2.2 The differing responses to managing the tourists' encounter with the rhino carcass

According to Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) management methods for control of the tourist experience can be divided into physical and intellectual control. Physical control refers to tangible separation of the tourists from the animal and intellectual control refers to the amount of expert knowledge transmitted by the guide or other interpretation mechanisms. Tourists' experience with encountering poached rhinos can likewise be managed. According to a resort manager, interviewed just two days after the poaching incident at Maphumulo road described above, park management will separate the tourist from the poached rhino by physically removing the carcasses from sight:

> *[…] he [one of the forensic guys] will drag the animal behind a group of trees. But sometimes you can see the carcasses from the roads, if they are far away they will leave them. Because then the vultures will go there and it's good for people to see. But if it is right on the road they will move it away. It is barbaric, the way they cut the horn off. I mean some of them are really terrible. (Resort manager 2, Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve, 11/03/2017)*

Although it was a very busy crime scene earlier in the day, by late afternoon almost all traces of the poaching incident were gone. The law enforcement officers had all left and the two rhino carcasses were removed from alongside the road and relocated some 50 to 100 meters away in the tall grass. However, being aware of the situation and looking very closely, one was still be able to see the tips of the feet of one of the rhino carcasses from the road (see figure 9).

Figure 9: The relocation of the rhino carcass

The second actor that can manage tourists' experiences though physical control is the tour guide. The tour guide, being the driver of the safari vehicle, determines the movability of the tourists within the park. In encounters with exciting animals the tour guide may move closer to the animal; decreasing the physical separation between tourist and animal in order to increase satisfaction with the encounter. When it comes to managing tourists' experience with

encountering poached rhinos, there does not seem to be one agreed upon tactic amongst tour guides. One tour guide remarked how he does not believe tourists want to know about rhino poaching inside the park. According to him, tourists are happy to be kept ignorant. Something he actively takes part in by deliberately avoiding the site of a poached rhino:

We make sure the tourists don't see it. If I know there is a rhino carcass somewhere, I deliberately do not go there. Of course we will tell the tourists about rhino poaching because awareness is important. But we will not show it. (Tour guide 6, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 24/02/2017)

Later on during our conversation he mentioned that, in some cases, he would go to the site. However, only if he thought that there would be a chance of encountering predators eating from the rhino carcass:

There are sometimes carcasses but we avoid it. Or if we do go there it is because we know there are, for example, hyena's in the area. We will then tell the tourists it has died of natural causes. (Tour guide 6, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 24/02/2017)

By doing so, this tour guides is hiding the fact that the rhino has died due to poaching. As argued, park management and tour guides play an important role in shaping the tourists' awareness. The amount of expert knowledge transmitted by the guide, the intellectual control, influences tourists interpretation of the situation. In this case, no expert knowledge was communicated, as the tour guide knew what had really happened but did not inform the tourists. Not all actors however, strive to hide such facts from the tourists. In contrast to the tour guide mentioned above, who admitted to deliberately avoiding a crime scene, another tour guide told me he would take tourists to see the rhino carcasses; as it is a good way to start conversations and raise awareness about this important issue that South Africa is facing. There is a grey area in which tour guides struggle to find the "right" information to relay to the tourists. Some act from a belief that the tourist is in need of protection from the sight, while others see the situation as an educational opportunity. The section ranger phrased it best, in that, only when the tourists become aware of the problem they can start thinking about supporting the cause and an appeal on them can be made:

I also believe now that trying to hide something like that, which is happening all the time, from people is probably not the right message. Because if you think that everything is hunky-dory and are not seeing what is happening how are you going to lobby […]. Now all of a sudden you're seeing that yes, there are hundreds of rhinos but now you are seeing all these ones that are dying as well. You say "woef ok well, I need to, let me sit back and think about this". (Section ranger, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 14/03/2017)

Despite efforts of some actors to conceal rhino poaching incidents from tourists, by removing the rhino carcass from sight or deliberately not going near the crime scene, not all encounters can be contained. As seen in the observed case, the incident was unavoidable until at least 12 o'clock in the afternoon, and although relocated, when looking closely one of the rhino carcasses was still visible in the distance. Moreover, while people on guided tours may be diverted from such a site, tourists driving through the park with their own vehicle may still

stumble upon the scene. However, actors that do not shy away from showing these rhino carcasses to the tourists, believe that the sight of a poached rhino can act as a catalyst for raising awareness regarding the current rhino poaching crisis, as it opens peoples' eyes to the problem South Africa is dealing with.

5.3 Bursting of the "bubble" and changing belongingness

Shielding tourists from the sight of a poached rhino is done in order to keep the tourist bubble intact. The notion is that the typical tourist wants a "normal" and "peaceful" holiday experience. Tourists visiting the game reserve are most comfortable inside their own 'bubble' and do not wish for anything to disturb it. According to the EKZNW park manager, the sight of a rhino that has died due to poaching is exactly the kind of thing that could have a detrimental effect on to the holiday experience:

> *It is not what the tourists want, poaching like what happened at Maphumulo. They like to see rhinos in their natural habitat. Fit and strong. It makes them happy, not a crime scene. So it does affect tourism. It might affect the tourism experience, it might affect perceptions, it might affect a lot of things. People feel sorry for the animals. And people only take holidays to relax and become happy, not to become sorry and miserable and emotional, no. (EKZNW park manager, Durban, 17/03/2017)*

What this disturbance of the tourist bubble entails is described in the following section.

5.3.1 Coming face-to-face with reality

That the sight of a rhino carcass could potentially disturb the tourist bubble is interesting. Under normal circumstances, encountering a carcass of any animal during a game drive would be considered an exciting moment as it might mean a predator is nearby and one could witness it feeding from the carcass. I'm reminded of a tour guide who proudly showed me some pictures he took on his mobile phone of a lion and its kill during our interview. Even though human presence was visible in the picture, as the kill took place right on the tarred road and another safari vehicle was visible in the background of the picture, the act itself that was captured in this picture perfectly represents the idea of 'wilderness'. In this setting, the death of an animal is considered as natural. It is simply nature running its course and would have happened even if tourists were not present to witness it. In contrast, the sight of a poached rhino cannot be seen as natural. The shocking element to tourists that encounter such a sight is the human factor in the occurrence. When witnessing a rhino carcass in this context it is undeniable that the animals died due to human interferences. That the sight of a rhino carcass can have different significances has also been demonstrated by the tour guide quoted above, who admitted to only taking tourists to the site if predators were nearby. The presence of other animals, particularly predators, can return the sight of poached rhinos into an appearance of authentic wilderness. Therefore, it is in the brief period of time, where the site of the rhino poaching incident is called the crime scene, that tourists are confronted with the reality of what this dead rhino represents; one aspect of the illegal wildlife trade industry. The sight of a rhino carcass opens their eyes to the wider context. Or as the section ranger describes it, it gives tourist a glimpse of reality by opening a small window to look through:

Maybe it is important that people see what's going on. If tourists from oversea see: "wow look at these dead rhinos alongside the road, what's this story about", you know. Now they realise, wow rhino poaching is actually happening. There is a war going on. And from a tourists perspective you don't really think about it, you don't really realise what's happening behind the scenes. As I was saying to other people, this is just a window, looking through a window, a small little thing looking at those carcasses and thinking, "wow, what's going on here", "wow, it's the scene of the crime", "wow, that's crazy, this is weird, this happens far away, it doesn't happen where we can see it". But it does! Unfortunately. Definitely opens up a window. (Section ranger, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 14/03/2017)

As the quote illustrates, tourists may have a general awareness about the current rhino poaching crisis but not realise, and certainly not expect, that it is actually happening in their holiday destinations. The tourists are usually kept in the front stage, where a staged authenticity, the idea of wilderness, is preserved. They are not told about the socio-political, environmental or even economic problems the area is facing. It is through the sight of a poached rhino that they are shown what is happening 'behind the scenes'; the true reality referred to by MacCannel (1973) as the back stage. By becoming aware of the broader context, the tourist bubble is broken. People coming to the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve to find escape from their predominantly capitalist societies are confronted by a global crisis that is very much fuelled by capitalist forces. The peaceful bubble in which they travel, wherein they have the Western comforts without the struggles and are able to enjoy the 'exotic' and 'authentic', is broken. No longer can the Hluhluwe Imfolozi park be seen as a truly authentic and pristine natural environment. The presence of people and modern societies' influences on the area can no longer be denied. Again the section ranger describes this tension between the tourist bubble and the reality best by saying:

You might have someone from Holland saying I am not going back to HiP you go there and just see dead rhinos, it's disturbing, I don't like it, I'm leaving. My response as a manager is "cheers goodbye". If you don't want to see the reality of what's going on – we don't deliberately want to go around and put stuff like that besides the roads, it just happens - well then, go back to your fairy-tale land, you know what I mean. This is Africa and this is what is happening right now at the moment, this is our struggle. (Section ranger, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 14/03/2017)

In this quote, he refers almost mockingly to a "fairy-tale land", in which the tourist hides from the reality of what is currently taking place in South Africa regarding rhino poaching. Within this fairy-tale land, or the "tourist bubble", the tourist is able to pretend that everything is perfect and does not experience any discomforts. However, the tourists cannot stay within this fairy-tale land. As the section ranger goes on to say: "this is Africa". The sight of poached rhinos enlightens tourists about the struggle that Africa is currently facing.

5.3.2 From the "Other" to the more-than-animal

Rhino poaching is not a part of the peaceful holiday experience that tourists envision. The moment that the tourists is faced with reality, or the moment that the tourist bubble burst, was therefore described by the conservation manager as a shock:

> *For foreign tourists it is something that they hear not so often. And so when they come to grips with it, it is sort of like having a knock [claps hands], Like a knock on them. Because they are not used to it, they are not staying with that pressure. […] For foreign tourists, they come in, they experience it, and it haunts them when they go away. (Conservation manager, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 16/03/2017)*

He claims that the experience stays with the tourist. But how do tourists interpret this experience and the newfound understanding of reality that comes with it? I argue that, the bursting of the tourist bubble due to the encounter with a poached rhino results in the reappraisal of how the rhino is defined.

To support this argument, I refer to the recent study of Lunstrum (2017). Examining extreme forms of conservation-related violence on social media platforms, she concluded that a dialectical relation of abandonment and belonging, concerning the poacher and the rhino, is formed. She describes how the poacher is dehumanised and enters a realm beyond human protection, while the rhino is brought into a more-than-animal world in which they are deserving of protection. The latter, the change from the rhino as a non-human being into a more-than-animal being was observed in how tourists make sense of the sight of a poached rhino.

Before the tourists' encounter with the poached rhino, and the subsequent bursting of the bubble, the rhino, just as any other wild animal, is considered to be the embodiment of "Otherness" (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2001). As explained in the previous section, being confronted with a poached rhino forces the tourist to acknowledge the socio-political influences in the occurrence. This, consequently, leads to a realisation that the rhino cannot be taken out of its context. It is when considering the rhino as a part of the wider context that the "Otherness" is abandoned and the rhino becomes part of the more-than-animal world.

How this change, from a non-human being to a more-than-animal being, results from the experience of encountering a poached rhino was best revealed in my conversation with the conservation manager. He argued that it is the sight of the poached rhino in particular that create feelings of empathy for the rhino and causes tourists to change their perceptions of the animal. According to the conservation manager, tourists expressed great sadness about the poached rhino encountered on Maphumulo road:

> *Like the current incident that happened on Maphumulo […] where rhino were shot and then fell on the road. And before we could remove it, we couldn't remove it before the post-mortem, the tourists saw it. A big bus passed there and the rhino was lying with its legs in the air and it was terrible. It was something that they were talking about from there up to Hilltop. They were talking about it, and some were crying. (Conservation manager, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 16/03/2017)*

That people were emotional and talking about it for the rest of the day, was observed when conducting the questionnaire survey in the afternoon and during the game drive that very night. Tourists demonstrated feelings of shock, sadness and even anger. Later on in the interview, the conservation manager commented:

> *When an animal is being affected like the rhino is now, people stop viewing it as just an animal but start seeing it as something that is part of their life. Tourists tend to adopt certain animals or parks. […] I think it comes now with the pressure that the rhinos are under that people sympathise with rhinos. So rhinos and tourism are intertwined now. (Conservation manager, Hluhluwe Imfolozi, 16/03/2017)*

The sympathy with the rhino is so strong that, according to the conservation manager, the animal becomes a "part of their life". Tourists become emotionally connected to the rhino. Increasingly, tourists associate the word "our" with the rhino. This was especially noticeable amongst domestic tourists, who expressed anger towards poachers by holding them responsible for the loss of "our" South African national heritage. According to Lunstrum (2017, p. 140), "the rhino is elevated into the realm of belonging, particularly to that of the nation". The use of the word "our" in relation to the rhino was also seen in the information posters displayed by EKZNW (see figures 4 and 5). Seeing the rhino as the embodiment of South African national heritage, associates the animal as a ward of the nation and thus further incites the need to protect them.

As explained in the previous section, the sight of a rhino carcass can be interpreted in two ways. One, representing 'wilderness' when the rhino has died from natural causes (including having been killed by another predator); and second, as a representation of the current rhino poaching crisis when the rhino has died due to commercial poaching. In the first case, the rhino remains the "Other", while in the second case, it leads to a revaluation of the rhino into a more-than-animal being. Thus, as the encounter with a poached rhino leads to the bursting of the bubble, the newfound understanding of the context causes tourists to change their perceptions of the rhino.

5.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter has started with a description of the awareness of tourists about the current rhino poaching crisis and the effects of anti-poaching measures on tourism, following the first two sub-research questions. The findings have shown that, although tourists are aware of rhino poaching in general, the changes in the study area caused by rhino poaching (e.g. the diminishing chances of encountering a rhino) are not noticed by most tourists. Furthermore, the majority seemed not to have noticed the anti-poaching measures deployed for the protection of the rhino. Yet, I argue that there is one occurrence which has the potential to truly impact the tourists experience; the sight of a rhino that has died due to commercial poaching. Using the experience of encountering two rhino carcasses along the main road in the Hluhluwe section of the park, a description is given on how it is perceived to impact the tourists' experience. A common assumption made by the actors responsible for the management of the wildlife tourism experience is that, as it is not a pleasant sight to see, tourists should be shielded from the sight

of the rhino carcasses. I then answer the third sub-research question, by arguing that there are two possible ways in which the main actors (park management and tour guides) react to such an incident. One, is shielding tourists from the sight by relocating the rhino carcasses or deliberately avoiding the site all together. The other, is to allow for the encounter to take place. Some actors expressed their belief that tourists should be shown the rhino carcasses as it enlightens the tourists about the effects of the current rhino poaching crisis on South Africa. The belief that tourism can aid the fight against rhino poaching by raising awareness thereby answers the last sub-research question. The last two sections of this chapter talked about how encountering a poached rhino can lead to the bursting of the "bubble" and how this changes the way in which the rhino is perceived by the tourist. I have argued that this particular sight forces tourists acknowledge the broader context and causes a shift in the perception of the rhino from the "Other" to a more-than-animal being.

6. Discussion and conclusion

The objective of this research has been to understand the links between the current rhino poaching crisis and tourism. This research has mainly been an exploratory research. First, because previous literature on the relationship between the two is scarce. And second, because the central research question, *"How does poaching in the context of the current rhino poaching crisis affect tourism – and vice versa – in the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve in South Africa?",* was purposely kept broad. The research took place in the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve. A total of two months was spend there and the data gathering methods included semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and a questionnaire survey. A summary of the main findings of this research are presented below.

6.1 Summarizing the findings

First, I have examined tourism within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve using Cohen's (1972) theory of the "environmental bubble" (otherwise known in this thesis under the name: "tourist bubble"). I have argued that the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve is a socially constructed space abstracted from its context. Therefore, people visiting the park do so in a tourist bubble. The tourist bubble is created to answer to the tourists' wants, and consequently, to increase satisfaction with the tourist experience. The main underlying motive for travel is a desire to 'escape' from modernised society and experience something 'authentic' (Arnegger, 2014; Cohen, 1979; MacCannell, 1973). In wildlife tourism, authenticity is found in the wild animal as the embodiment of "Otherness" (Beardsworth & Bryman, 2001). However, such authenticity is socially constructed. Physical and symbolical displacement of local residents from the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve has created an image of a pristine wilderness (Brooks, 2000). Furthermore, the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve as a tourism destination, is a space that has incorporated aspects of a familiar micro-environment, and that has gone through processes of standardization to increase efficiency. Tourists move within this staged 'wilderness' with the comfort of familiar Western style transportation, hotels and food at hand, and often under the direction of tour guides that can move between the front and back stage of the destination. The most important feature of the tourist bubble is that it abstracts the tourist space or experience from its context. Inside the tourist bubble, tourists can completely submerge themselves in the 'authentic' experience; focussing on their encounter with the wild animal and forgetting, for a moment, the pressures of their own Western societies, or even the society in which Hluhluwe Imfolozi itself exists.

Secondly, I have argued that this tourist bubble is disturbed by the presence of rhino poaching in the park; more specifically, by the encounter between the tourist and a poached rhino. Findings were presented that show that the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve has recently seen an increase in rhino poaching; most likely as poachers have shifted their attention due to the increased security at Kruger National Park. Many of the informants remarked how, in consequence of this rise in rhino poaching, the chances of tourists stumbling upon rhino carcasses throughout the park have increased. I have claimed that the sight of rhinos that have

been killed due to commercial poaching bursts the bubble in which the tourists travel. Bursting the bubble, means that the tourist becomes aware of the wider context that influences the tourism destination and, consequently, the tourist experience. The reason that this particular sight leads to the bubble bursting is because it speaks of human influences in the death of the animal. As the bubble bursts the tourist is pulled out of the familiar and comfortable micro-environment and forced to face the unfamiliar macro-environment. As the section ranger aptly put it, a window is opened through which the tourists are shown a glimpse of reality. This reality is that the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve is not without its influences from the society in which it exists. Ironically, the unfamiliar macro-environment that the tourists are confronted with is not that different from what they know and are trying to escape from in the first place. As people try to find escape from their predominantly capitalist societies they are confronted with a global crisis that is very much fuelled by capitalist forces.

Thirdly, I want to highlight the tension that exists between sustaining the tourist bubble for the protection of the tourist and allowing the bubble to burst in order to raise awareness. I have identified two actor groups, namely, park management and tour guides, who have significant control over the management of the wildlife tourism experience. This control, which according to Reynolds and Braithwaite (2001) can be divided into physical and intellectual control, has been applied in managing the tourists' encounter with the poached rhino. Sustaining the tourist bubble is accomplished through the relocation of the rhino carcass from sight by park management, the avoidance of the crime scene by tour guides, or as tourists interpret the sight incorrectly based on the information communicated to them by the tour guides (e.g. tour guides saying the rhino died from natural causes). On the other hand, informants talked about allowing the bubble to burst as through awareness support for anti-poaching efforts can be gained.

Finally, I have argued that, when the bubble bursts, the way in which the rhino is thought of by the tourists changes from the "Other" into a more-than-animal being. Hereby I refer to the recent research from Lunstrum (2017); who, when examining extreme forms of conservation-related violence on social media platforms, stated that as poachers are being dehumanized and ejected from the human world, the rhino gains new belonging in a more-than-animal world. It is when the bubble bursts, when the tourist becomes aware of the wider context including the current rhino poaching crisis, that the rhino seizes to be the "Other". Following this, it is the emotional attachment to the animal, exacerbated as tourists are so close-by, that makes tourists give new meaning to the rhino in the form them being a part of the nation and a more-them-animal world.

6.2 A brief discussion

As said, the central research question had a broad scope. There are still other links between rhino poaching and tourism to be examined. However, the answer to the central research question that this thesis has offered is that rhino poaching affects the tourism experience by bursting the tourist bubble. Here follows a short discussion on the contribution of the main findings of this thesis to existing conservation debates.

The bursting of the tourist bubble has extensive consequences. The main ideas that informants themselves expressed is that it could have a negative effect on visitor satisfaction but a positive effect on raising awareness. For the latter, I argue that it is important to look at what kind of awareness is raised. It was demonstrated that, at the moment, there is not one collectively agreed upon way to deal with this situation amid the two actor groups (park management and tour guides). The danger of the conflicting views on whether or not the tourist bubble should be sustained and the corresponding actions or inactions of these actors responsible for managing the wildlife tourism experience is that the tourist might be left drawing its own conclusions and taking the wrong message home. Currently, the main belief is that a raised awareness will translate into increasing support for anti-poaching efforts. Certainly, as the rhino enters the more-than-animal world, as argued in this thesis, the plea for protection of the animal increases. However, I argue that such a development should be considered with caution. Lunstrum (2017) argues that while the rhino gains new belonging, the poacher is abandoned, resulting in the encouragement of extreme violence against poachers. She calls the emerging relation between conservation and violence "deeply concerning" (Lunstrum, 2017, p. 134). Thus, the tourists changing view of the rhino as a consequence of the bubble bursting matters as it could potentially lead to a further rationalization of green militarisation and green violence.

This thesis has contributed to the general understanding of the relationship between rhino poaching and tourism. Thereby serving an academic purpose of filling the existing research gap. Secondly, this thesis can contribute to future policy development, especially as it has demonstrates that some form of collective approach is needed in managing tourists' encounter with a poached rhino.

6.3 Recommendations

There is still much to be explored about the relationship between rhino poaching and tourism. As said in the limitations, this research has only been able to scratch the surface. Furthermore, the choice was made to mainly focus this research on the impact of rhino poaching on the tourism experience. Yet, many other aspects still need further examination. For example, as this research was unable to include the view of the local communities I refrained from talking about tourism as a solution to the rhino poaching crisis by creating labour opportunities, a research topic Koot (2017) is exploring. Lastly, as this has been a case study the results could be specific to this study area. Therefore, it would be interesting to see whether similar findings are found when the research is repeated in other areas.

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Appendix 1 – Overview of semi-structured interviews

	Function	Gender	Nationality	Date	Location of interview
1	Tour operator/guide 1	Male	South African	27/01/2017	St. Lucia
2	Tour operator/guide 2	Male	South African	28/01/2017	St. Lucia
3	Tour guide 3	Male	South African	31/01/2017	St. Lucia
4	Tour operator/guide 4	Male	South African	01/02/2017	St. Lucia
5	Tour operator/guide 5	Male	South African	04/02/2017	Hluhluwe (town)
	Tour guide 6[10] *(informal interview)*	Male	South African	24/02/2017	Hluhluwe Imfolozi
6	Resort manager 1	Female	South African	17/01/2017	Hluhluwe Imfolozi
7	Resort manager 2	Male	South African	11/03/2017	Hluhluwe Imfolozi
8	Resort manager 3	Female	South African	15/03/2017	Hluhluwe Imfolozi
9	Resort receptionist	Female	South African	15/01/2017	St. Lucia
10	Local small business owner (tourism related)	Male	South African	23/01/2017	Kula village
11	Tourists	Male & Female	Portuguese & Mozambique	04/02/2017	St. Lucia
12	EKZNW park manager	Male	South African	19/01/2017 17/03/2017	Pietermaritzburg & Durban
13	EKZNW finance employee	Male	South African	19/01/2017	Pietermaritzburg
14	EKZNW conservation manager	Male	South African	16/03/2017	Hluhluwe Imfolozi
15	Section ranger	Male	South African	14/03/2017	Hluhluwe Imfolozi
16	KwaZulu Natal veterinarian	Male	South African	07/03/2017	St. Lucia
17	Centenary centre employee	Male	South African	17/01/2017	Hluhluwe Imfolozi
18	Former EKZNW community conservation officer [1]	Male	South African	16/01/2017 17/02/2017	Mtubatuba
19	Former EKZNW community conservation officer [2]	Male	South African	15/01/2017 23/01/2017	Kula village
20	Trustee community land claims	Male	South African	18/01/2017	Mtubatuba
21	Inkosi	Male	South African	16/01/2017	Local community

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[10] Included in this table as this particular tour guide is mentioned in the result chapter of this thesis. However, as I did not have an actual semi-structured interview with this tour guide, the tour guide is not included in the total count of the semi-structured interviews conducted in this research.

Appendix 2 – Overview of participant observation

Date	Tour operator	Type	Park section	Tourists
04/02/2017	Monzi safaris	Full day safari 5:00 – 15:00	Imfolozi	1. South African, Indian/female 2. South African, Indian/female 3. South African, Indian/male 4. Portuguese/male 5. Portuguese/male 6. Portuguese/female 7. Portuguese/female
18/02/2017	Heritage tours and safaris	Full day safari 5:00 – 15:00	Imfolozi	1. Japanese/male 2. Japanese/male 3. Japanese/female 4. Japanese/female 5. Danish/female
02/03/2017	Hilltop resort safaris	Mid-day safari 10:00 – 13:00	Hluhluwe	1. Brazilian/female 2. Brazilian/female 3. Brazilian/male 4. German/male 5. German/female
09/03/2017	Heritage tours and safaris	Full day safari 5:00 – 15:00	Imfolozi	1. Hungarian/male 2. Hungarian/male 3. Canadian/female 4. Canadian/male
11/03/2017	Hilltop resort safaris	Evening safari 17:00 – 20:00	Hluhluwe	1. German/male 2. German/male 3. German/female 4. French/male 5. French/female 6. Danish/male 7. Danish/female
13/03/2017	Hilltop resort safaris	Evening safari 17:00 – 20:00	Hluhluwe	1. French/female 2. German/male 3. Canadian/male 4. South African/male 5. South African/female 6. Unknown/female 7. Unknown/female

Appendix 3 – Questionnaire

Dear Sir, Madam,
Thank you for your willingness to cooperate in this study. The survey is part of a master thesis for Wageningen University in the Netherlands, which aims to understand the effects of rhino poaching on tourism – and vice versa. Participation in this survey is completely **voluntary**. All of your responses will be **anonymous** and will be used for academic research purposes only. The questionnaire will take about 5 minutes to complete.

1. What is your age?
……… years old

2. What is your gender?
□ Male   □ Female

3. What is your nationality?
……………………………………………………………………………………………

4**. What was your transportation mode through the park?**
□ Self-drive (own vehicle)   □ Safari tour (safari vehicle)

5a. Did you notice anything related to rhino poaching and/or anti-poaching within the Hluhluwe Imfolozi game reserve during your visit? *(Multiple answers possible)*
□ Yes, vehicle checks   □ Yes, helicopters/drones
□ Yes, detection dogs   □ Yes, rangers patrolling
□ Yes, information signs   □ Yes, poached rhino carcasses
□ Yes, suspicious activities   □ Yes, other:……………………………
□ No, I didn't notice anything during my visit   □ I don't know

5b. If yes, were you bothered by what you noticed related to rhino poaching and/or anti-poaching?
□ Yes, I was bothered. Mostly by:………………………………………………………
□ No, I wasn't bothered

6. What do you find most shocking about the rhino poaching crisis?
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………

7a. Do you think tourism can play a role in rhino poaching and/or in anti-poaching?
□ Yes, I think tourism can play a role in both rhino poaching and in anti-poaching
□ Yes, I think tourism can play a role in rhino poaching
□ Yes, I think tourism can play a role in anti-poaching
□ No, I don't think tourism can play any role in either rhino poaching or in anti-poaching

7b. If yes, please explain how you think tourism can play a role in rhino poaching and/or in anti-poaching:
……………………………………………………………………………………………

………

………

………

………

………

8. I would choose to visit a park with rhino over a park without rhino:

Disagree	Slightly disagree	Neutral	Slightly agree	Agree
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐