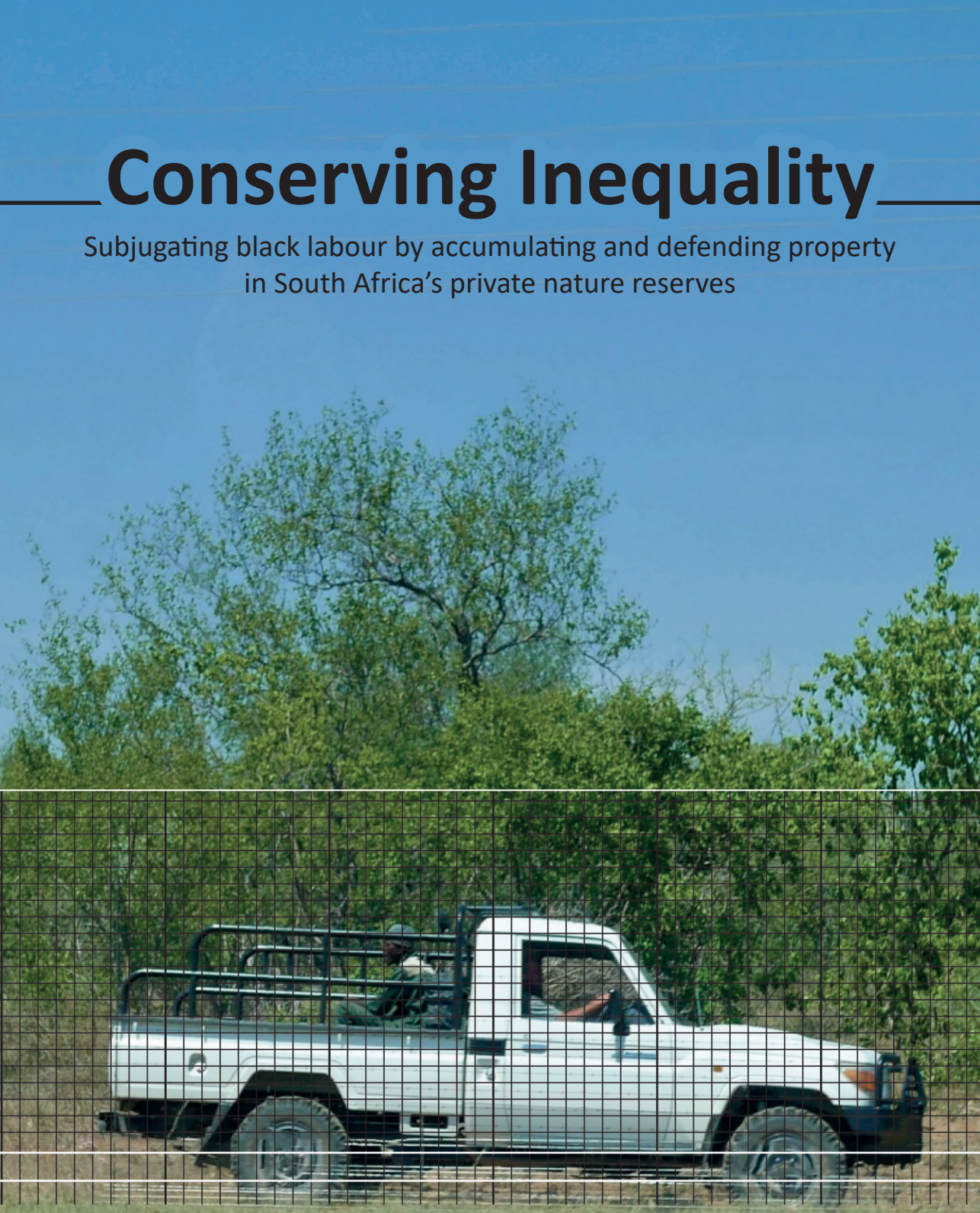
Conserving Inequality

Subjugating black labour by accumulating and defending property in South Africa's private nature reserves



Lerato Thakholi

Propositions

1. Conservation labourers in South Africa's private nature reserves are systematically undervalued and their historically disadvantaged position has become worse. (this thesis)

2. The emerging private wildlife economy in South Africa has made spatial justice very difficult, if not practically impossible to achieve. (this thesis)

3. The socioeconomic disruptions caused by COVID-19 have reinvigorated the importance of Andrew Herod's (1997) conceptualization of labour geographies.

4. Theoretical discussions on the production of space need to pay attention to the politics of belonging.

5. Teaching experience is invaluable for developing a PhD students' skills and confidence, however, it does not pay bills.

6. International universities have a moral responsibility to provide housing for international PhD students.

Propositions belonging to the thesis, entitled

Conserving Inequality: Subjugating black labour by accumulating and defending property in South Africa's private nature reserves

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Conserving Inequality

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Conserving Inequality

Subjugating black labour by accumulating and defending property in South Africa's private nature reserves

Lerato Thakholi

Thesis

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List of Abbreviations

APNR	Associated Private Nature Reserves
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
GLTFCA	Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area
Ha	Hectare
HWE	Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
JPNR	Jejane Private Nature Reserve
KM	Kilometre
KNP	Kruger National Park
KPNR	Klaserie Private Nature Reserve
MSNR	Mohlabetsi South Nature Reserve
NASA	National Archives of South Africa
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
StatsSA	Department of Statistics South Africa
TCL	Transvaal Consolidated Land and Exploration Coy: Ltd

Chapter 1

Introduction

Over the last years, private conservation has been consistently endorsed as central in efforts against biodiversity loss. Though its proponents keep presenting it as something new and ground-breaking, private conservation has deep historical roots, globally and in biodiversity-rich societies like South Africa, where this thesis is based. In South Africa, the interlinkage of private interests and conservation have been woven into the spatial fabric of many rural areas with major and often adverse implications and impacts that transcend private conservation spaces. These interlinkages have further evolved with the development of new private conservation initiatives such as residential 'wildlife estates and indeed a national focus on developing a 'wildlife economy' more generally. Clearly, both new and old private conservation initiatives are complex and multi-dimensional. Yet throughout this complexity, there are two fundamental elements to private conservation that explain its strong influence on regional politics and social relations far beyond the boundaries of private reserves: property and labour. Hence, to understand this influence of private conservation and their impacts, this thesis critically explores the historical and present links between private conservation, property, and labour in South Africa.

Calls to increase private sector involvement in nature conservation come amid mounting concerns about global biodiversity that include habitat loss, species decline, and overexploitation of species – all further compounded by climate change. These concerns are captured succinctly by a major report published by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES, 2019: 10). It states that

> the biosphere, upon which humanity as a whole depends, is being altered to an unparalleled degree across all spatial scales. Biodiversity – the diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems – is declining faster than at any time in human history.

Similarly, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that between 2030-2050 "global warming is likely to reach 1.5°C" (IPCC, 2018: 4) above pre-industrial levels, which will present additional challenges for biodiversity. Collectively, these and many other reports paint a dire picture for biodiversity globally which requires radical, expeditious change in all sectors to lessen the impacts. However, as this thesis will show, the consequences of the private production of conservation require a pause for reflection before touting this as an easy solution to biodiversity loss.

To understand private conservation, scholars have started conceptualizing conservation itself as a mode of production. This is meant to capture the dominant inclination of mainstream conservation to transform the value of natures into capital (Brockington and Scholfield, 2010; Garland, 2008; Kelly, 2011). In practice, this means that conservation, like capital, will create spaces that are necessary for its reproduction (Harvey, 2014). The scholarly interest

in the linkages between the capitalist mode of production and conservation of biodiversity has resulted in a plethora of studies exploring, amongst others, the neoliberalization of conservation (Büscher and Arsel, 2012; Castree, 2008; Massé and Lunstrum, 2016; Wieckardt et al., 2020) which is characterised in general by the spectacularization of nature (Igoe, 2017; Igoe et al., 2010), the proliferation of philanthropy in shaping conservation (Holmes, 2011, 2015; Koot and Fletcher, 2019; Spierenburg and Wels, 2010) and biopolitical modes of governance that foster life at the population scale (Fletcher, 2017; Montes, 2020). Collectively, these studies have concluded that neoliberal conservation, more often than not, fails to deliver on its promises and exposes local people to harm. Furthermore, as Mollett and Kepe (2018: 2) note

> the practice of biodiversity conservation facilitates how elites, states, and inadvertently transnational corporations seize control of land from many communities whose racial and cultural identities and land use practices are already subjugated in national and international development priorities.

The seizure and control of land through conservation often reinforces generations-old spatial injustices, which are at the heart of this thesis. Given that South Africa remains one of the most unequal nations on earth, it is important to dissect processes that create and reproduce spatial inequality and "traps disadvantaged communities in poverty and underdevelopment, creates inefficient cities, and robs poor, rural people of secure livelihoods" (Motlanthe Report, 2017: 81). The thesis contributes to this by investigating the historical, spatial and socio-economic implications of private sector conservation in the northeastern Lowveld region of South Africa (see Figure 1.1).

It explores issues such as racial inequality, alienation of labour, landlessness and the uneven valuation of human and non-human lives which are best understood by centring property and labour. This is because property is the base upon which natures can be transferred into capitalist production, while labour is requisite in any mode of production and is essential for transforming natures into commodities. Moreover, property and labour are key in the private wildlife economy because the success of South Africa's farming industry – a predecessor of the wildlife economy – was contingent on land expropriation, the creation of waged labour and the codification of private property. This violent history resulted in a racialized property regime characterised by power asymmetries between private property and communal property (Ramutsindela and Sinthumule, 2017). Furthermore, in "the context of Southern Africa private property joins together two matrices of power, namely white identity and landownership" (Lenggenhager and Ramutsindela, 2021: 2). Thus, private property, which has become largely normalised and unquestioned in mainstream conservation, is the bedrock upon which white conservation imaginations of 'wild nature' have developed private nature reserves.

Figure 1.1: Map of the Lowveld (red circle) in South Africa (produced in Google Earth).

Despite being co-constitutive with property, labour has received less attention in the analysis of conservation. This could be attributed to the fact that claims about 'wilderness' and 'untouched nature' hardly evoke images of people labouring. Furthermore, conservation is often framed in opposition to extractive forms of industry (Sodikoff, 2009). Labour and property are, however, co-constitutive since transformations in one will invariably affect processes in the other. This is exemplified by the colonial and apartheid evictions which resulted in the creation of waged labour (Wolpe, 1972). The creation and maintenance of conservation spaces will thus affect labour within conservation spaces (Alasow, 2020) and outside of these spaces (Sinthumule, 2018). By conservation labour, I refer to those who work within conservation to produce consumptive and non-consumptive commodities because "to produce a commodity a certain amount of labour must be bestowed upon it" (Marx, 1969: 30).

In sum, the thesis contributes to understanding how the capitalist production of space in conservation intertwines questions of labour and property. It argues that through the reproduction of apartheid geographies and the development of new conditions for capital accumulation, private conservation in the Lowveld exacerbates and conserves inequality. In what follows, I discuss the problem statement and identify knowledge gaps. I then explain the theoretical strands that informed the analysis. Finally, I describe the study site and the thesis outline.

1.1 Problem statement and research question

In this section, I explain how I moved from exploring the implications of wildlife crime on the private wildlife economy to investigating the interrelations between the production of private conservation space, labour, and property.

When I started my PhD in 2016 there were scholarly concerns about the increasing and differentiating forms of violence in response to wildlife crime (Annecke and Masubelele, 2016; Duffy et al., 2019; Massé and Lunstrum, 2016). These responses had been variously conceptualised as green militarization (Lunstrum, 2014), green violence (Büscher and Ramutsindela, 2016) and war by conservation (Duffy, 2016). Most of these studies were conducted in state-run protected areas. Furthermore, there were few studies analysing conservation labour more broadly and the impacts of these interventions on labourers. Perceiving this gap in the literature, I left the Netherlands for South Africa in 2018 for a year of fieldwork with the question: how are the interrelations between green violence and the wildlife economy in the Lowveld region jointly affecting the politics of property and labour? I was interested in property and labour because green violence requires a labour force to implement it. Furthermore, it is fundamentally about protecting property which sits uneasily against the history of racial dispossession under apartheid South Africa, especially in relation to the private ownership over land. Because the wildlife economy is vast and includes tourism, game breeding, meat production, wildlife-based living and conservation, amongst others, I wanted to look explicitly at private conservation spaces in the Lowveld area, in particular around the small town Hoedspruit (Figure 1.2). These spaces include private nature reserves, wildlife ranches and residential wildlife estates. The latter are gated communities stocked with iconic wildlife, sometimes even predators.

However, unlike public reserves that went through a mandatory transformation process (see Maguranyanga, 2009), the private conservation sector was never forced to reflect the demographics of the country and so remains almost exclusively white at the managerial level. Consequently, going into the field, I knew I would be entering a space dominated by white people, some of whom would be important gate keepers. Furthermore, I was attempting to research the impacts of a sensitive criminal activity in a relatively small conservation community that had been plagued with mistrust. The fact that high ranking police officials, military personnel, rangers and lodge managers have been implicated in poaching activities created, if not exacerbated, mistrust within the conservation community. The field was thus rife with tensions. This was compounded by the fact that when I started my fieldwork, the politically sensitive call for 'expropriation of land without compensation' – which could directly affect private nature reserves – had gained some traction in South Africa.

These tensions made it incredibly difficult to access private reserves to do justice to my research question. Some emails to reserve managers and farm owners went unanswered, an observation

stint ended abruptly, and I found it hard to get a foot in the door. While things seemed to be failing on this end, I continued, though a bit dejected, to conduct interviews with labourers in their homes. Three months into the fieldwork, I realized that my focus on green violence deemphasised what my interlocutors had been telling me all along: the major issues were access to water, tarred roads and youth unemployment in their home villages bordering private nature reserves. That is, conservation labourers kept explaining the material conditions of their lives and their families. Wildlife crime and the responses to it, while important, started to become more contextualised at the realization that many labourers enabling private conservation and working to prevent wildlife crime could not get consistent access to clean drinkable water.

Figure 1.2: Hoedspruit tourism map produced by Bushveld Connections.

It is ironic that by failing to get access to 'white spaces', black conservation labourers' plight became clearer to me. This ultimately informed my argument: by constantly highlighting, affirming and rearticulating the threats to nature, including poaching, conservationists can 'invisibilise' spatial injustices. Consequently, the focus of my study changed in such a way that the daily and material lives of conservation labourers took centre stage. My interest in the wildlife economy remained but my attempts to get access to private nature reserves became subdued. Accordingly, the objectives of the research changed from studying wildlife crime and the responses to it to studying the historical and socio-economic implications of private sector involvement in the conservation of biodiversity with a specific focus on property and labour. These issues manifest beyond the private nature reserve fence and thus bring into perview the production of space and consequently spatial justice concerns.

With this aim, the thesis addresses three gaps in political ecology and geography that have critically analysed property and labour in private conservation. The first gap pertains to how historical evictions manifest in contemporary conservation spaces. Studies exploring the history of conservation development have revealed that the creation of many conservation spaces resulted in the eviction of local people (Brooks, 2005; Fairhead et al., 2012; Neumann, 2001; Ybarra, 2012). They offer insights into understanding the implications of conservation development on local people's livelihoods, claim to land and relationship with nature. However, a key concern that warrants deeper scrutiny is how this initial separation of locals from their land is exacerbated. Others have pointed at more evictions (DeMotts, 2017) and militarization (Lunstrum, 2014) as mechanisms of maintaining the separation of indigenous people from their land. In this thesis, I aim to contribute to understanding how conservation maintains this separation by using old tactics such as evictions and less spectacularized mechanisms such as white belonging. To unpack this, I draw from the literature on belonging (Gressier, 2014; Hughes, 2006; Koot et al., 2019) and socioecological fixes (Ekers and Prudham, 2017, 2018). The former is used to unpack how exclusionary forms of white belonging to land can delegitimise black people's claims to land. While the socioecological fixes show how private interests use multiple complex judicial instruments to 'fix' conservation land use in places and thus deepen the separation of black people from land. Both allow me to analyse the interrelations between property and labour in conservation. This discussion is explored in detail in chapter 3 which outlines the contested history of the Lowveld. It is briefly continued in chapters 4 and 5 where I discuss private conservation as a socioecological fix and conservation labour respectively.

The second gap is the lack of systematic critical analysis of labour in the wildlife economy. Even though conservation has been analysed as a form of capital accumulation (Brockington and Scholfield, 2010; Büscher and Arsel, 2012; Igoe, 2017; Kelly, 2011; Koot et al., 2019) there are a few studies that explore labour explicitly within the biodiversity economy (Neimark et al., 2020; Sodikoff, 2009, 2012) and even fewer within the *private* wildlife economy (Alasow,

2020; Ramutsindela, 2015). I contribute to this gap in chapters 3 and 4 where I discuss the subjugation of black labour during colonialism and apartheid and the 'fixing' of black people in conservation landscapes as labourers. The discussion on labour is developed further in chapters 5 and 6 where I conceptualize conservation labour geographies and discuss how black conservation labourers are governed.

The third gap I address emerged out of two observations, the first being the re-legalization of domestic trade in rhino horn in South Africa in 2017. The second was the plethora of interventions against rhino poaching from wildlife farmers and the ecotourism industry which were characterised by fierce lobbying of the state to legalise trade in rhino horn (Collins et al., 2020) and the development of new ecotourism products (Koot, 2021). These observations triggered my interest in the value judgements characteristic of the conservation of biodiversity. That is, when and in which lives do conservationists decide to intervene? By using a biopolitical framework on rhino conservation (Biermann and Mansfield, 2014; Cavanagh, 2018; Fletcher, 2010) I explore how wildlife and labour within the capitalist mode of production are asymmetrically valued. Biopolitical conservation studies have analysed how human and non-human lives have been valued differently and the implications thereof (Cavanagh and Benjaminsen, 2015; Lunstrum, 2018; Nel, 2015). However, an explicit focus on how private conservation values wildlife and conservation labourers' lives differently is lacking. I contribute to this discussion an analysis of how investment in the protection of rhino fosters rhino life while exposing conservation labourers to 'let die' conditions.

To fill these gaps, I asked the question: **How have the interrelations between private conservation, property and labour jointly produced space in the Lowveld, South Africa and how does this impact on the possibilities for spatial justice?**
This main question is subdivided into 3 sub-questions:

1. What are the historical relations between conservation, property and labour and how have these changed over time to produce space in the Lowveld?
2. How has the private wildlife economy co-evolved along with labour and how has this impacted the lives of labourers and broader possibilities for spatial justice?
3. How are interventions against rhino poaching transforming the biopolitics of rhinos and conservation labour?

Collectively, these questions aim to contribute to an understanding of the interrelations between the production of conservation space, property and labour. When analysing the interviews, archival texts and observation notes, my data invoked the spatiality of conservation which warranted a critical appraisal of the impacts of conservation land use beyond the boundary fence. Thus, my theoretical framework aims to further develop how Marxist geographers' conceptualization of space contributes to our thinking on property and

labour. Furthermore, it borrows from feminist Marxist's advancement of social reproduction to develop a comprehensive analysis of the conservation mode of production.

1.2 Theoretical framework

This section explains the key theoretical strands that have informed this thesis. I begin with two processes that are central to the capitalist production of space and how they intertwine concerns about property and labour. These are *primitive accumulation* and *socioecological fixes*. Having discussed the capitalist production of space the framework includes how labour also produces and reproduces the economic geography of capitalism through *labour geographies*. To expand our conception of labour, I turn to Marxist feminists' conceptualization of social reproduction. This is followed, finally, by an explanation of how I engage with *biopolitics* to explore how wildlife and black conservation labour are asymmetrically valued.

1.3 Capitalist production of space

Conservation has become a mode of production. As such, it produces spaces that are integral for its reproduction as capital, including through deagrarianisation (Spierenburg and Brooks, 2014), farm conversions (Brandt and Spierenburg, 2014), and the creation of transfrontier conservation areas (Büscher, 2013; Lunstrum, 2010; Sinthumule, 2016). This thesis abstracts from these symptoms of capitalist production of space to consider two foundational processes, those of primitive accumulation and socioecological fixes. Though this thesis focuses on particular places – such as private nature reserves and residential wildlife estates – as a way of grounding the analysis, the chapters make it clear that the implications of conservation production of space reverberate far beyond the boundary fences and intertwine the politics of belonging and value judgments about which life forms and landscapes to invest in. As Hughes (2005: 157) notes, "the cultural politics of conservation—like the cultural politics of so many forms of administration—makes space".

1.3.1. Primitive accumulation

Building on Lefebvre (1991), Marxist geographers argue that the development and reproduction of capitalism and capitalist social relations are contingent on the production of material geographies that enable capital's growth (Ekers and Prudham, 2017; Harvey, 2014; Smith, 2008; Soja, 1980). Some of these material geographies are produced and reproduced through primitive accumulation. De Angelis (2001: 6), unpacks Marx's conceptualization of primitive accumulation and argues that there are three central issues at hand,

> the first is that the *separation* of producers and means of production is a common character of *both* accumulation and primitive accumulation. The second is that this *separation* is a central category (if not *the* central category)

> of Marx's critique of political economy. The third is that the difference between accumulation and primitive accumulation, not being a substantive one, is a difference in the conditions and forms in which this *separation* is implemented. [italics in original]

These points have spatial implications for the economic geography of conservation and are thus instrumental for this thesis. I begin with De Angelis' second point which relates directly to the central criticism of this thesis, that is, by maintaining the separation between black people and land, conservation reinforces spatial injustice and so 'conserves' inequality in South Africa. The first point is useful for thinking through the history of the development of conservation areas. This history is often marked by evictions from land and dispossession of resources, so much so that Kelly (2011: 683) argues that "we must examine how protected area creation is a particular form of primitive accumulation". This separation of mostly 'indigenous' people from their land is common in contemporary conservation landscapes as well (Büscher, 2009; Hiraldo, 2018). However, instead of just explaining the history of the production of conservation spaces, labour and commodities, this thesis explores contested histories and the qualitative transformations that laid the foundation for private nature reserves including the subjugation of black labour and the transformation of land into private property.

As De Angelis notes in his third point, the difference between accumulation and primitive accumulation has to do with how exactly this separation is maintained. In conservation, violent evictions have systematically been identified as the main mechanism of separating local people from their land and resources both historically (Hitchcock et al., 2011; Ybarra, 2012) and today (DeMotts, 2017). However, given that most states have become democratic after long colonial and apartheid segregations, we have been presented with increasingly sophisticated and even legal ways through which separation is maintained. Chapter 3 investigates white belonging as a mechanism of primitive accumulation. It shows that this particular type of exclusionary white belonging can maintain the separation of black people from their land. Chapter 4 furthermore reveals overlapping judicial instruments which lock conservation land use in place. These complex legal arrangements ensure conservations' existence into perpetuity while simultaneously delegitimizing other claims to land, hence maintaining — even reinforcing — black peoples' separation from land and resources.

Primitive accumulation has implications for labour and property. The former I discuss in detail below; for now, it is important to note that primitive accumulation creates and maintains a labour force with nothing but their labour to sell. Furthermore, it transforms land and wildlife into property, thereby making them legible for accumulation. In addition, it perpetuates a property regime that favours private ownership over land (Ramutsindela and Sinthumule, 2017). These tensions are unpacked through the primitive accumulation lens.

1.3.2. Socioecological fix

The second process central to the production of capitals' material geographies is a socioecological fix (Ekers and Prudham, 2017, 2018). This entails "the ways in which the social relations and material and symbolic conditions of capitalist accumulation are reproduced through investments in landscapes that are simultaneously and always conjoined productions of space and nature" (Ekers and Prudham, 2017: 2). This is a suitable lens for the thesis because evidence from the field pointed to large scale investments in agriculture, ecotourism, and residential development having led to the transformations of nature and social relations. The concept of the socioecological fix was conceptualised by Ekers and Prudham who put Harvey's (2006, 2001) spatial fix in conversation with Smith's (2008) production of nature. The former entails "capitalism's insatiable drive to resolve its inner crisis tendencies by geographical expansion and geographical restructuring" (Harvey, 2001: 24).

In conceptualising the spatial fix, Harvey evokes the multiple connotations of the word 'fix' including first to pin down, that is, to embed capital in (concrete) places through investment in the built environment and second to fix a problem such that it is resolved. I deploy both connotations of 'fix' to understand how new conservation developments such as share blocks within private nature reserves and residential wildlife estates operate as 'quick fixes' which immobilise conservation in space. In addition to these two connotations, a third reference that emerged from my data refers to 'a fixed way of doing things'. In the Lowveld, this entails securing the farm as a site of capitalist production and 'fixing' black peoples' belonging to space contingent on the labour they render.

Fixed capital formation is therefore necessarily a metabolic process, intertwining the production of space and nature (Ekers and Prudham, 2018). This thesis uses the concept to demonstrate how 'sinking' capital in conservation landscapes occurs within the context of persistent apartheid geographies and white imaginations about nature to reproduce spatial injustices.

1.4 Labour geographies

Capital, clearly, does not have a monopoly over the production of space. In this thesis, I explore how black conservation labourers also shape the economic geography of conservation. Labourers, in this thesis, refers to those that sell their *labour-power*, which is a commodity to earn a wage (Marx, 1876). These wages in turn enable workers and their dependents' reproduction (Castree et al., 2004). Furthermore, workers are recognised as more than just *labour-power* but as people who are also gendered, racialised, classed and whose lives extend beyond the workspace.

Despite their pathbreaking analyses, Marxist geographers such as Smith and Harvey, have tended to privilege the capitalist production of space that has left us with a truncated understanding of how workers shape economic landscapes. Perceiving this gap, Herod (1997) suggests labour geography as a way of unpacking how the social actions of workers co-create the geography of capitalism which facilitate their reproduction as labourers or indeed undermine parts of capital. Labour geographies are inherently about the production of space; as Castree (2007: 855) notes, it is "axiomatic that geography matters to workers while workers, conversely, matter to geography". Labour geographies are instrumental for this thesis because they enabled me to explore how conservation labourers produce spaces within the reserves and how their mobility between reserves and villages intertwine these spaces into the same economic geography.

However, the proliferating interest in labour geography (Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011), has tended to neglect other aspects of workers' lives (Herod, 2010) and especially their social reproduction (Castree et al., 2004). It is for this reason that this thesis puts labour geographies in conversation with Marxist feminists' emphasis on social reproduction to explore conservation labour in and beyond the private nature reserve fence.

Marxist feminists have argued that social reproduction is indispensable to the production process. That is: "social-reproductive activity is absolutely necessary to the existence of waged work, the accumulation of surplus value and the functioning of capitalism" (Fraser, 2014: 61). This is a useful approach because it expands our analysis of labourers beyond the workspace to consider workers in their homes and communities where most of their social reproduction occurs. In so doing, the thesis came across 'wives' and in-laws participating in unwaged labour to facilitate conservation labourers work within private nature reserves. Furthermore, it conceptualizes conservation labour geographies in chapter 5 to contribute to an emerging body of work exploring labour in the green economy (Alasow, 2020; Neimark et al., 2020; Ramutsindela, 2015; Sodikoff, 2009).

While most Marxist feminists would agree that reproductive work is gendered (Katz, 2001; Norton and Katz, 2017), Banks (2020) notes that it is also racialised. Coming from a feminist economist perspective, Banks (2020: 344) reconceptualises black women's collective community activism in the US as "unpaid, nonmarket 'work'". She argues that the community is just as important a site of reproduction as the household. This thesis builds on this by using social reproduction along with labour geographies to highlight that through land hoarding (chapter 4), deplorable labour conditions (chapter 5) and asymmetric exposure of labourers to vulnerabilities (chapter 6) conservation ultimately subjugates black labour.

1.5 Biopolitics and environmentality

The section began with the capitalist production of space. Naturally, capitalism does not produce space for nothing but to ensure the production and circulation of people and commodities as cheap and as profitable as possible. This was followed by a discussion about labour which is central in the protection of wildlife and the production of commodities in private nature reserves. Decisions about which forms of 'wildlife' to protect are value laden which has led to the conceptualization of conservation as biopolitical (Biermann and Mansfield, 2014).

Biopolitics was conceptualized by Foucault, (2003, 2008) as a new mode of power that emerged in the nineteenth century. He distinguishes between sovereign power which entails "the right to take life or let live" (Foucault, 2003: 241) and biopower which "manifests as the politics and political economy of supporting certain and asymmetrically valued forms of both human and nonhuman lives within rapidly shifting ecological conditions" (Cavanagh, 2014: 277). This promotion of life occurs at the population level (Cavanagh, 2018) and involves value judgements about which lives deserve intervention and which do not (Biermann and Anderson, 2017; Marcatelli and Büscher, 2019). I use this framework to explore how interventions against rhino poaching expose the value judgements endemic yet hidden in the conservation of rhino. I do this by comparing how rhino and conservation labour have been asymmetrically valued since the poaching crisis took centre stage in South Africa in 2008.

To investigate how biopower is exercised over rhino and conservation labour, I explore various environmentalities which entails "the governing of human [and non-human] behaviour through a variety of modes" (Wieckardt et al., 2020: 3). Following Foucault, Fletcher (2010) identifies four modes of environmentality governing the conservation of biodiversity; sovereign, truth, neoliberal and disciplinary. The latter two are identified as the most prolific in rhino conservation and the governance of conservation labourers. Disciplinary environmentality operates mainly through internalised moral standards targeted at the rational actor (Fletcher, 2010). Neoliberal environmentality, on the other hand, is informed by market principles such as "decentralization, privatization, and price-based market mechanisms" governing natures (Montes, 2020: 304). Ultimately both modes of environmentality are exercised in conservation spaces to foster the lives of wildlife. Approaching this value laden quagmire from a biopolitical framework reveals, ironically, how capital itself is prioritised over the lives of rhino and black conservation labour. Furthermore, it reveals a hierarchy of life inherent in the conservation of biodiversity.

Overall, private conservation's "production, reproduction and reconfiguration of space" (Harvey, 2001: 23) is the canvas upon which this thesis is developed. It explores how capital and labour are intertwined in the production of the historical-economic geographies of

conservation. In addition, the thesis explores how natures are transformed into capitalist commodities and what this tells us about how human and non-human lives are valued. It draws mainly from Marxist geographers' conceptualization of space. The reason for this is simple and guides the theoretical contribution of all chapters, namely that capital plays "a leading role in producing the spaces and places that ground capitalist activity" (Harvey, 2014: 145).

1.6 Field site: Lowveld, South Africa

This research is based on fieldwork carried out in South Africa's Lowveld because the region has one of the highest concentrations of private nature reserves juxtaposed against Bushbuckridge which has some of the highest unemployment rates in South Africa (Figure 1.2). In chapter 2, I explain why I chose the Lowveld and justify the methods used to collect data. For now, I describe the field site.

The Lowveld region is sandwiched between the northern Drakensberg mountains to the West and the Kruger National Park to the East. It traverses the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces and is characterised by sprawling citrus farms and private nature reserves on the north and south-east. Some of these reserves share an unfenced border with Kruger National Park which has arguably contributed to the tourism boom. Management agreements between the latter and private reserves mean that the area is managed based on similar conservation principles. However, private landowners still retain property rights over their land and wildlife. Tourist activities within the reserves include bird watching, photographic safaris, hiking, hunting, and spa treatments. In general, these private nature reserves cater for high-end ecotourism clients from abroad who can enjoy luxury accommodation in lodges or bush camps. The nature reserves lie east of the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve which has the third-largest canyon on earth and the panorama route, home to numerous tourist attractions such as the Three Rondavels (a trio of mountain tops in the area resembling huts). Under normal circumstances, the tourism and nature conservation industry attract thousands of tourist and investors to this area annually. However, the suspension of international travel and lockdowns in response to Covid-19 severely affected the tourism sector including in the Lowveld where many conservation labourers were left destitute.

Most of the nature reserves discussed in this thesis are located around a small town, Hoedspruit, a self-declared 'wildlife haven' that forms the economic hub of the conservation and farming community. The town is also home to six residential wildlife estates. Rent is notoriously high in Hoedspruit, making it near impossible for low-wage earners to live there. The town itself is an outlier by South African standards because it does not have government-funded low-cost housing. As such, most workers commute daily from surrounding villages while a few others live in an informal and semi-formal settlement in the town.

Figure 1.3: Stark land use between Acornhoek and private nature reserves (produced in google earth).

A stone's throw away from the fenced private nature reserves and 30km away from Hoedspruit is the Bushbuckridge municipality which is characterised by many villages including Acornhoek and Green Valley where most interviews were conducted (Figure 1.3). Since the 1920s, people have been forcefully evicted from Hoedspruit and some surrounding reserves to present-day Bushbuckridge municipality, hence the different land uses and population density between the two locales. Overall, socioeconomic statistics paint a desperate health, education, access to water and unemployment picture. The latter stands at 52.1%, well above the national average. Despite this dire situation people make due in the 'informal economy', 84.2% depend on government social grants and 96.8% grow crops to supplement their subsistence (Ragie et al., 2020). Some conservation labourers commute from the Bushbuckridge area to the reserves and Hoedspruit every day for work. The geography of the Lowveld, in particular the land use differences and stark socioeconomic indicators between Bushbuckridge and nature reserves, is central to the arguments I advance.

1.7 Thesis outline

Chapter 2 discusses the methodological approach and justifies the choice of methods and field site in relation to the research question. I also reflect on how my positionality and that of my research assistants affected the knowledge production process.

Chapter 3 is the first of the four empirical chapters[1], it presents the historical context of the Lowveld region vis-à-vis the broader political economy of the area from the 1920s. I focus on white belonging through historical narratives. Unsurprisingly, these histories are studded with white male pioneers who stumbled upon 'empty' 'virgin' land and transformed these marginal landscapes into commercial farms. I use archival data from the National Archives of South Africa

[1] These chapters have been submitted as journal articles, there is therefore some overlap in the methodology and figures used.

and life histories of Mapulana to illuminate the erasures in how private conservation represents the history of the Lowveld on their websites and other promotional material. This chapter shows how some celebrated male protagonists colluded with local authorities to expel black people from land and coerce them into labour tenancy. Furthermore, it shows that white belonging through historical representations denies Mapulana historical presence and consequently any future claim on land. This chapter sets the historical context for the rest of the thesis.

Having discussed the contested history of property making, chapter 4 explores the production of conservation spaces in the contemporary Lowveld. Conventionally, conservationists and development institutions have been credited with the creation of conservation spaces. However, this chapter shows that private developers have also been central in the production of conservation landscapes. The seemingly seamless relationship between private conservation and private developers is best captured in residential wildlife estates and share blocks which I characterise as socioecological fixes *par excellence*. The chapter shows how this alliance 'fixes' conservation land use in place and 'petrifies' black bodies as labourers in conservation spaces. It concludes that this alliance reinforces spatial injustice and ultimately conserves inequality.

Chapter 5 contributes to the nascent body of scholarly work exploring labour in conservation and the green economy more broadly by conceptualizing conservation labour geographies as a way of untangling the interrelations between the production of conservation space and labour. It focuses first on the historical processes that created a labour force during the colonial and apartheid era. This is followed by an analysis of contemporary labour dynamics in private conservation areas. I use the social reproduction lens to comprehend the waged and unwaged labour that facilitates the production of conservation spaces. Ultimately, I demonstrate that studies exploring labour in conservation spaces need to look beyond the fence to capture more comprehensively the labour it takes to produce conservation commodities.

Chapter 6 critically explores how rhino and conservation labour are asymmetrically valued in conservation. Using a biopolitics framework the chapter explores various interventions that were put in place to protect rhino from poachers. While these interventions are meant to protect rhino life the chapter shows that they have actually been more beneficial for private capital. I juxtapose this against the various governmentalities that conservation labour has been subjected to. This reveals that in pursuit of saving rhino conservation exposes conservation labourers to let die conditions. The chapter finally argues that conservation values rhinos more than it does black conservation labour.

Finally, Chapter 7 presents the discussion and conclusion to the thesis by synthesizing the preceding empirical chapters in the context of the argument I advanced in the introduction. It reflects on the theoretical and methodological contributions of the thesis and ends off by considering how these debates can be advanced.


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Chapter 2

Methodology

1st September 2017, the southern hemisphere summer is well under way with temperatures at 26 degrees Celsius. I have been in the field for two weeks now dreading 'putting myself out there'. On this particular day though, someone invited me along to meet a game breeder in the area, I said yes. We drove out of Hoedspruit and 68kms later we arrived in a town with one main street and one petrol station. We turned into the petrol station where we had been instructed to wait for our host for the afternoon. The game breeder arrived in the classic Toyota land cruiser single cab, the quintessential white farmer's car in this area. We stepped out of the car, the invitee extended his hand towards the host, they exchange pleasantries and I was introduced to the host. The front of the car could only accommodate two people, so I was instructed by the host to climb and sit in the open back. As we drove back onto the tar road towards our host's farm, I remember feeling a deep sense of embarrassment and shame because I had been put in my place literally and figuratively.

See, black farm labourers, domestic workers, general workers and gardeners, have for years occupied this position at the back of the baas' (boss in Afrikaans) car (see Figure 5.2). While sitting back there, I thought about the generations of black labourers, male and female clutching onto the roll bars in order to steady themselves, wind coursing through their kinky hair, every waft of dust reminding them that they are black. I thought about the person who had invited me to the meeting, a white male himself occupying 'his position' in front of the pickup truck. To be fair, logistically, the sitting arrangement made perfect sense because I had just been invited to this meeting that very morning. However, the rest of the afternoon with our host was characterized by amazing insights about the wildlife economy interlaced with racist commentary about me and 'my uncle', supposedly a notorious poacher in the area whom I have no relation to whatsoever. This is how I entered the field to do an ethnography of "The implications of wildlife crime on the private wildlife economy".

This edited entry from my journal gives a glimpse of the research 'instrument' (Yin, 2011) who along with everyone else has been "raced, classed, and gendered (and sexed and nationalised)" (Townsend-Bell, 2009: 311). Reflecting on that day, there was something poetic about researching black labour in conservation and taking up that space on my first day of fieldwork. My status as an insider/outsider (Oriola and Haggerty, 2012) coupled with my positionality as a black, South African, middle class, educated woman ultimately determined which doors were opened to me and which remained closed (See also Berry et al., 2017; Bourke et al., 2009). Furthermore, my positionality and that of my research assistants undoubtedly affected how interviewees perceived me and consequently which information was shared with and withheld from me (Curtis, 2019). It is through this lens that I urge you to read this chapter in which I first describe my methodological approach. Secondly, I explain the methods I used to collect data for the 3 sub-questions. This is followed by an explanation of the data analysis process and a reflection on my positionality and that of my research assistants. I conclude by discussing the limitations of the study.

2.1 Ethnography

To study the historical, spatial and socio-economic implications of private sector involvement in the conservation of biodiversity, I carried out ethnographic fieldwork in three phases in the Lowveld region of South Africa over the course of 16 months between 2016-2019. I employed a critical ethnographic approach which "begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain" (Madison, 2019: 8). Critical ethnography is based on the long term observation of the everyday material practices of people and the cultural processes that shape this (Willis and Trondman, 2000). What sets critical ethnography apart from ethnography is the ethical commitment to understanding peoples' material practices within the historically informed structural oppressions (O'reilly, 2012).

After attending the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in Johannesburg in 2016, the first fieldwork phase took place in 2017 for 2 months where I conducted preliminary fieldwork in KwaZulu Natal and the Lowveld, South Africa. At this stage in my proposal writing, there was a general interest in wildlife crime and the responses to it. I took this trip to familiarize myself with the socio-economic context of the areas to fine-tune my research questions. The sheer expanse of the Lowveld landscape coupled with the explicitly visible uneven geography boggled my mind (Figure 2.1). Until this point, I had only read about 'communities' living along the border of Kruger National Park and unconsciously imagined small homesteads. However, the first time I travelled through these communities from Bushbuckridge to Hoedspruit on the R40 highway, I saw village after village, characterized by many mansions in a sea of modest-looking modern homes with maroela, avocado and moringa trees. I saw many minibus taxis ferrying people up and down, I saw shopping malls, shacks, street vendors, bed and breakfasts cast in a landscape with sandy soil. When we exited Acornhoek, the landscape changed dramatically, the hive of activity gave way to kilometres of high electrified fences, thick bushveld, the odd giraffe behind the fence, road signs pointing to this and that lodge and busses on the highway. Finally, we arrived in Hoedspruit. I was intrigued. As explained in the previous chapter, the stark differences in land use raised questions about the spatiality of this region. This required a critical ethnographic approach to understand the historical and contemporary processes that would produce and maintain such an uneven geography.

The next section discusses the methods used to understand how the interrelations between private conservation, property and labour jointly produced space in the Lowveld, South Africa and how this impacts on the possibilities for spatial justice.

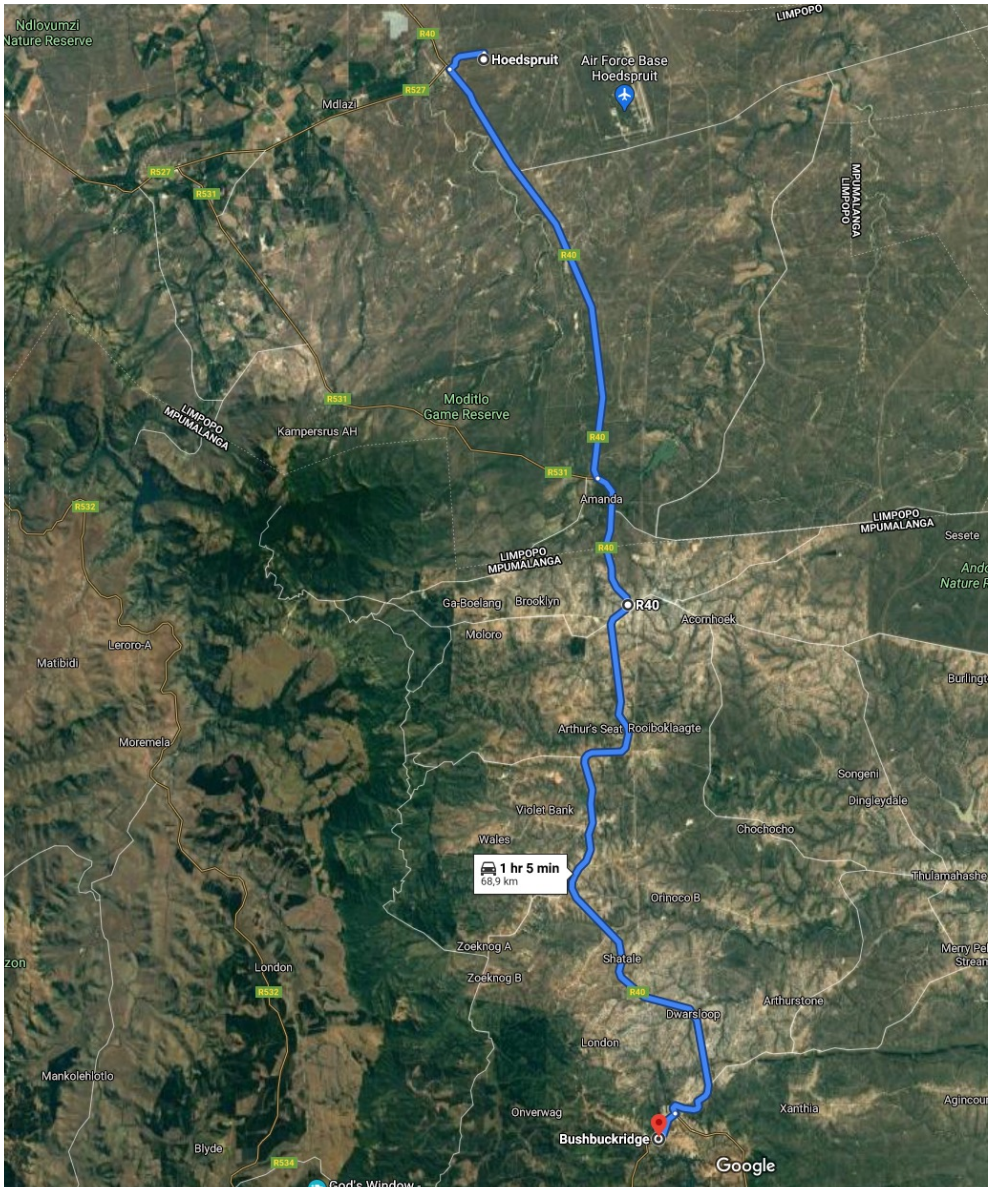

Figure 2.1: Landscape between Bushbuckridge and surrounds and Hoedspruit and surrounds (sourced from google maps).

2.2 Methods

2.2.1. Observation and participant observation

Participant observation and observation were used to collect data for sub-question 2 while observation was used for sub-question 3 which deal with labour and commodification of wildlife respectively. Both methods require spending protracted periods in a place to

"investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting" (Emerson et al., 2001: 352). These methods were deemed appropriate for both sub-questions because they enabled me to get a first-hand account of the lived experiences of labourers and how the private wildlife economy is organised.

Observation

For the 3rd sub-question which was interested in interventions against rhino poaching, I attended three wildlife economy events that would enable me to answer this question. This included the CITES hosted by South Africa between 24 September-5 October 2016 which was attended by delegates from over 100 countries. This was the 'rhino CITES', as the South African government used the opportunity to highlight the then ongoing rhino-poaching crisis. Given that rhino poaching was such a big issue, many actors in the 'rhino space' attended the event to present their positions. For example, building up to the event South African private rhino owners and the government of Swaziland had been pushing hard for the legalization of international trade in rhino horn. Meeting key stakeholders, attending official and side meetings during the conference offered invaluable insights into the politics of rhino poaching and horn commodification which are discussed in chapter 6.

The second event was Wildlife Ranching SA (WRSA) annual conference on 23-24 March 2018. WRSA represents the interests of over 2000 commercial wildlife ranching stakeholders involved in game breeding, tourism, hunting and game products[2]. This makes it one of the biggest of its kind in South Africa. The event was titled 'Expand your game' pointing to the fact that the sector was looking to expand and diversifying its product offering. This was a significant event for stakeholders because in the years preceding this, returns on the live sale of wildlife had plateaued and the industry was looking to expand into game meat. This would require buy-in from the various government departments so many industry players including officials from the Department of Agriculture and Environment were present. During the event, I attended presentations related to the commercialization of game meat, the legalization of rhino horn and discussions about significant policies in the sector. Through this event, I got a first-hand account of some pertinent issues affecting the industry including tensions and policy ambiguities between the Departments of Agriculture and Environment and concerns about 'expropriation of land without compensation'.

The last event was a game auction on 9 June 2018 hosted by Bloodline Africa, an "auction group, consisting of eight different breeders"[3] from different parts of South Africa. Bloodline Africa hosts an annual auction that brings together stakeholders and investors interested and involved mainly in wildlife breeding. In 2018, the event was attended by over 300 stakeholders with 98 lots of 276 animals on auction. Outside the main auction

[2] https://www.wrsa.co.za/ last accessed 18 April 21
[3] Bloodline Africa https://www.bloodlineafrica.com/ last accessed 18 April 21

hall was market-like stalls and children play areas making this a family affair of mostly white attendees. The main attraction of the day, Zeus, a buffalo bull sold for 27.5 million ZAR to resounding applause. This event revealed to me the economic value of wildlife in South Africa and affirmed the racialised nature of the sector and the stark inequality reproduced by the wildlife economy as shown in chapter 4. Conference brochures and presentations were collected and I took notes which were later analysed. Collectively, these events gave me insights to answer the third research sub-question and put me in contact with stakeholders whom I was able to interview later.

In addition to these events, observations were used to answer the second sub-question interested in conservation labourers and their social reproduction. First, living in Hoedspruit for over a year allowed me to appreciate the magnitude of the wildlife economy. A trip to the local supermarket and I would always see nature reserve branded cars, tourists on the roadside markets not to mention the omnipresence of anti-poaching cars and personnel. These observations made me understand the magnitude of the wildlife economy. Furthermore, every other day, I would sit at the Hoedspruit bus stop and observe the labour that arrived in and left Hoedspruit daily. From this vantage point I had many informal conversations with friends, acquaintances and at times strangers. These conversations opened a window into understanding the context within which I was working.

Second, I participated in 8 hours of patrols in private nature reserves because it would give me the best insight for my second and third research questions (Yin, 2011). What I had hoped would be 3 months of observation was cut short because my contact stopped responding to my texts and before this, I had sensed some reluctance and discomfort in having me observe them. Nonetheless, on the few occasions I went on patrol with the team, I was able to chat with some anti-poaching personnel about working in that environment but mainly I just experienced what a patrol entails. From these few experiences, I gathered new insights which would not have been possible with interviews alone. For instance, in addition to the patrols, I was also able to observe a rhino autopsy, travel to Mozambique and observe one of the last simulation exercises for recruits.

Participant observation

The aforementioned observations were coupled with participant observation including a ‘piece job’ washing dishes in private nature reserves and wildlife estates when there were events. These gigs allowed me to experience, though momentarily, working in conservation spaces and through them, I met resident staff. It is during one event that I experienced what it means to be a conservation labourer. On this day, we were serving brunch and lunch to a crew shooting an advert for an international clothing brand in a private nature reserve. We set up a makeshift kitchen in the bush under a gazebo, where crew members could grab their coffee. I was crouched on the ground washing coffee mugs in a plastic basin just behind the

coffee station when a South African crew member walked up to me and asked me kindly to move my basin behind the trailer because "international people won't understand washing dishes in a basin"[4]. I summarily moved my washing station, out of sight, behind the trailer. I had been invisibilised. I entered that space with the consciousness of a researcher, but to the crew, I was *just* labour.

This experience and many others like it helped me "to identify the unexpected and previously unknown –issues, tensions and perceptions which could not have been foreseen through other research routes" (Drury et al., 2011: 20). Furthermore, they inspired me to expand my definition of conservation labour and gave me a glimpse of the life of a conservation labourer (See chapter 5).

In addition to the promotional material I collected at events, I took many fieldwork notes for both observations and participants observations. Initially, I tried to capture as much as I could but over time these invariably became selective as I focused on what I thought was important to the themes I was trying to understand (Emerson et al., 2001). Overall, these notes from conservation events, anti-poaching patrols, the bus stop and nature reserves were instrumental to answering the 2nd and 3rd sub-questions. My fieldwork observations also helped me refine my semi-structured interview guide which I discuss in the next section.

2.2.2. Semi-structured interviews

For 16 months, I 'formally' interviewed 154 people to answer the three sub-questions interested in history, labour, and the wildlife economy. While Table 2.1 roughly depicts people that were interviewed per sub-question, there were many overlaps, for instance, some labourers were also land claim beneficiaries and some game breeders could shed light on labour issues. Semi-structured interviews were used because they can "[shed] light on the personal experiences, interpersonal dynamics and cultural meanings of participants in their social worlds" (Heyl, 2007: 372). For each target group, I prepared a list of themes to cover during the interview. These themes were left open-ended which allowed for the interview to flow organically (Newing, 2011). Some themes were amended when other 'leads' cropped up.

Table 2.1: Number of interviewees per question.

Sub-question 1	Land claimants, elders, municipal workers, estate agents, property developers, tribal council members, communal property association members, informal settlement dwellers	82 people
Sub-question 2	Labourers guides, trackers, antipoaching, cleaners, maintenance, rangers, trainers	50 people
Sub-question 3	Game breeders, national & provincial government officials, conservation NGOs	22 people

[4] Conversation 11 April 2018, Hoedspruit

Informants for the questions dealing with sub-question 1, the history of the development of the wildlife economy in the Lowveld included; land claimants, municipal workers, estate agents and property developers. These people were chosen because their personal history and jobs would have given them an intimate understanding of the history of the Lowveld. For land claimants in particular, I prepared questions in advance relating in general to their family history and the research assistants helped to translate them into Sepedi and Tsonga. The open-ended questions gave respondents enough room to drive the dialogue (Drury et al., 2011). Most of these interviews were recorded with the consent of participants. Later, when I had to change my research focus (See chapter 1), I found listening back to some conversations very instructive. Questions for interviews with municipal workers and estate agents were also prepared in advance, these related to the development and economy of Hoedspruit and the Lowveld area in general. With this group, I simply walked into offices and requested to chat with people in various departments including finance and planning. Because Hoedspruit is a very small town, I invariably ran into some participants in various meetings. This allowed me to follow up on issues that might have been outstanding. These interviews were not recorded because after a few requests I realised people were a bit uncomfortable. Instead, I took notes which were later transcribed.

With regards to sub-question 2, I interviewed 50 private nature reserve labourers because I wanted to learn about how labourers experience working in conservation (McGehee, 2012). Initially, access to private reserves was difficult to secure so I started picking up labourers from the entrance of the reserve at the end of the working day and drove them to Acornhoek, where most labourers come from. This method worked well during preliminary fieldwork, though the twenty-minute drive was not enough to fully engage with people. The mobile introductory interview was therefore used to try and schedule longer interviews with labourers in their homes on weekends. In the second fieldwork phase, I asked friends whom I had made in the previous trip to refer me to conservation labourers. I found that this way people were more willing to speak with me. Furthermore, research assistants also helped secure interviews with labourers. The only criteria used was that someone should be working or have worked in a private nature reserve. Questions for labourers were related to their family history, their work and their lives at home. While I was initially frustrated about the lack of access to private reserves, in hindsight these multiple encounters with labourers and their families in their own homes set my research on a different course. Going to labourers' homes along the same road they took to work, driving past communal taps with water drums lined one after the other and having to reschedule an interview because there was a service delivery protest planted the initial seeds of conceptualizing conservation labour 'beyond the fence' which I work out in chapter 5.

Most interviews for sub-question 3 were conducted in Pretoria and Johannesburg with government officials and game breeders, most of whom I met at the aforementioned

conferences. All the government officials were employed by the Department of Environmental Affairs whereas the breeders ranged from farmers to investors. These interviews were instrumental to understanding and mapping the broader biodiversity economy. Even though I was able to talk to only 22 people in this category the observations at the wildlife economy events discussed in the previous section augmented this data.

Overall, semi-structured interviews helped me get clarification on issues I observed while participating in some activities. In addition, they allowed me to probe issues that were not observable. Coupled with the other methods, semi-structured interviews with 154 people gave me a solid picture of the history of the Lowveld, the work of conservation labourers and the private wildlife economy more broadly.

2.2.3. Life histories

Interviews were coupled with four life histories of Mapulana elders to answer the first sub-question which is interested in history. The life histories occurred in the second and third phase of my fieldwork when I had a better sense of the history of the area through semi-structured interviews. I prepared a few themes for the conversation with the elders but in general participants narrated their story how they wished. Having gotten a sense of politically significant moments in the history of the Lowveld, I made sure to ask participants about these moments if they did not come up organically. Plummer (2011), refers to this as *researched life stories* because these stories are probed from the respondent by the researcher. These narratives "are shaped by an implicit negotiation process between a researcher and a research subject. On the other hand, they are intertwined with broader socio-material relationalities" Lesutis (2018: 514). Some of the socio-material relationalities that manifested themselves explicitly during the life histories were my age and education, and people's disillusionment with the democratic era.

Life histories highlighted the lived experiences of Mapulana elders in ways that archival data from the state never could. This is because in general, black experiences were not documented and preserved in national archives. Life histories also allowed me to connect historical events to contemporary issues from the perspective of the interviewees. These conversations with elders were instructive in contextualizing the broader political economy of the private wildlife economy in sub-question 1.

2.2.4. Archival data

Along with life histories, archival documents from the National Archives of South Africa (NASA) in Pretoria were used to answer the first and second sub-questions. I collected archived documents on particular farms — in the then Pilgrims Rest District — which form part of present-day Hoedspruit town and key private nature reserves. The farms are listed in the *Alphabetical List of Farms in the Province of Transvaal*, compiled in the Surveyor Generals

Office Pretoria. Documents about the key farms I identified were stored in the records of the then Native Affairs Department which documented farm evictions, issuing of *trekpasses*, and terms of residence such as rent and grazing fees. These documents date back to the 1920s. In addition, general information about the construction of roads, lodges and depos were archived by the then Department van Plaaslike, Bestuur, Transvaal (local management). The archive is silent about the lived experiences of subjugated groups (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011) furthermore data in the archive depicts the collector's subjective interpretation of life events (Timothy, 2012) hence I conducted interviews with land claimants and life histories with Mapulana elders. Nonetheless, at the time of collection, the apartheid state probably did not imagine a moment where black people had equal rights, thus I have found some archival documents at NASA instructive in understanding how the apartheid machinery organized land allocations and evictions. In addition to this, I collected archived documents from the Moletele Tribal Council collection which is located at the council offices in Acornhoek. For general information about the political climate during apartheid, I used the online Wits Historical Papers Research Archive where I used key search terms such as labour, Transvaal landowners association and Pilgrims Rest. Over 700 documents were collected from various sources, these were organised chronologically and coded for emerging themes.

2.3 Data analysis

Most interviews were transcribed during fieldwork while others were only transcribed when the fieldwork ended. Listening back to interviews and rereading transcripts refamiliarized me with the data. This was a reiterative process, moving between listening back to interviews, reading archival texts and taking notes to try and make sense of the data. This proved more difficult than I had anticipated, so for a while, I abandoned this process and instead started populating a timeline from the 1920s using archival texts, life histories and promotional material from private nature reserves websites. This helped me get a visual representation of events. I also used maps from the National Archive of South Africa of the then Pilgrims Rest District and started colouring these in to help me visualize evictions and farm conversions. With my maps and timeline in hand, it became easier to start analysing my fieldwork notes and the rest of the data. Three themes stood out in my analysis: history, labour and contemporary property politics. I picked up my initial process and started organizing my data around the emerging themes and highlighting quotes that spoke to those themes (Newing, 2011). The more time I spent immersed in the data the clearer the links became, and chapter 3 exemplifies this triangulation. During data analysis, some gaps in my knowledge became apparent, thus in 2019, I embarked on my last fieldwork trip for 2 months to follow up on outstanding matters.

2.4 Positionality

Critical ethnographers, while documenting the systems of powers that affect people's lives, also need to recognize how their privilege and power affects the knowledge production process (Madison, 2019). Furthermore, as Brandt and Josefsson (2017: 27) note "'doing' ethnography is a deeply personal and relational experience and practice and therefore we can only strengthen our positions by reflecting on who we are and what we do in the field...". This section will do just that. In the early proposal drafts I noted that "while being a black woman could be inhibiting in this white male-dominated sector, it will grant me entry into other spaces a white person might otherwise not be able to access". In hindsight, this played out, but I was naive to think I could explore the implications of wildlife crime on private conservation. This would have required an ethnography with rhino owners and their families and given the circumstances I have explained in the previous chapter, few (if any) rhino owners would allow an outsider to live on their property for fear that they would sell information about the location of rhinos to poaching syndicates.

Despite this drawback, my fieldwork took me into private reserves, wildlife estates, 5-star lodges and conferences where my education and class undoubtedly played a significant role in affording me entry. In these spaces, I had the opportunity to talk to rhino owners, conservationists, farm managers, rangers, anti-poaching personnel and security guards. Like Ibeka (2021: 11) while researching a white-dominated field I was "always confronted with the task of not only demonstrating [I] have the required expertise but also that [I] possess excess forms of western cultural capitals, which then compensate for the 'ostensible disadvantage' arising out of [my] racial identity". Having earlier learnt that Wageningen University had a good reputation in this agricultural landscape I often used this fact to demonstrate my expertise and to come off as 'non-threatening'.

Access into these spaces and being allowed to join an anti-poaching patrol affirmed and debunked my previous concerns about navigating the conservation landscape as a young black woman. I met a handful of white older men who were more than happy to grant me the much-coveted access. Through them I saw a glimpse of the conservation landscape in ways I had never seen before; I went on fieldtrips in the Lowveld and Mozambique, stayed overnight for free in private lodges, and enjoyed many 'braais'. Other white men ranged from being dismissive to overtly racist. Nonetheless, through the kind interlocutors, my understanding of the different facets of the wildlife economy expanded, and I experienced the tourism and anti-poaching sides of the wildlife economy first-hand.

Apart from these 'white spaces', I casually walked into informal settlements, a restituted farm, villages, bus stops and black people's homes. Here, I did not have to justify my presence by evoking my qualifications. I could put my 'racial' guard down although my gender, class

and education were constant reminders that my racial solidarity was not the beginning and end of my interactions: class and gender always played important roles as well. It is during conversations with residents of an informal settlement in Hoedspruit and a Mapulana elder that my privilege became very apparent and the rhino poaching crisis became ever more contextualized.

With regards to the informal settlement in Hoedspruit, one afternoon I walked into the settlement where I was met by a group of young women, some of them my age. Most of these women were from neighbouring villages but due to limited employment opportunities in their villages, they moved to Hoedspruit to work as sex workers. Now and then a few lucky ones did short term contract work on construction sites and landscaping for the local municipality. I did not bat an eye entering the informal settlement, I unconsciously assumed my race and gender would give me some affinity with the women. After exchanging a few pleasant words and explaining my research, one woman asked me knowingly "where do you live"[5]. I knew this question to mean not so much what my address was, but rather in a town notorious for expensive rent: where I fitted in the class hierarchy of Hoedspruit. I tried to be vague for fear that my 'middle-classness' would render a chasm between us but she was persistent. I told her the name of the apartment complex and she simply said "oh". We continued chatting about their lives in Hoedspruit but my relative privilege was apparent, I had been socially demarcated.

My naivety on that day is captured by Johnson-Bailey (1999: 659) who notes that assumptions about easy to build, good rapport between a black women researcher and respondents "discount the intersections of societal barriers omnipresent in a hierarchical world. Certainly, class concerns can cut through gender and racial solidarity and concepts of gender and racial identity can vary among women". Furthermore, I was reminded by Townsend-Bell's (2009) observation that irrespective of the meanings we attach to our various subjectivities one cannot change how others perceive those categories.

In addition to the encounter at the informal settlement, a Mapulana elder once lamented that "our grandparents are lying at the bottom of the [Swadini] dam!"[6]. I had been to the Swadini dam as a tourist many times before to behold this engineering wonder in the Blyderivierspoort nature reserve. Until that point, I had never heard about the forced evictions from the staff or read it on the website nor had I ever seen evidence of earlier settlement. It was as though Mapulana never occupied this space. This encounter coloured my perception of the dam. More importantly, it got me thinking about representations of history which I discuss in chapter 3. A year later, a chance encounter resulted in an impromptu fieldtrip to Swadini and Kampersrus with a Mapulana elder. We drove to various sites where

[5] Informal conversation January 2017, Hoedspruit
[6] Interview, Land claim beneficiary 1 February 2017, Acornhoek

Mapulana used to live before they were evicted in the 1960s; he showed me graveyards now buried under people's homes and covered by manicured lawns in the town of Kampersrus. In hindsight, this fieldtrip made tangible Marxist geographers' conceptualization of the production of space which is central to this thesis.

Finally, apart from the racialised, and classed encounters, out of over seventy interviews with men, 'only' five overtly sexualized me before or during an interview. The rest ranged from indifferent to going out of their way to help me understand the topic. Nonetheless, in the context of femicide in South Africa, these experiences compounded my feelings of vulnerability as a black woman and ultimately 'tamed' my ethnography. On a few occasions, I had to cancel some 'lucrative' follow up interviews and observations because the informants made me feel uncomfortable. Given that I had struggled to get access to some spaces, this was a real blow for my research, but my safety took precedence. Here I borrow from Pumla Gqola's (2015: 78), *Rape: a South African nightmare* where she speaks of the 'female fear factory' which works to "constantly remind women that they are not safe and that their bodies are not entirely theirs". Again, these were just five out of many other splendid encounters, but they reveal, as Schneider et al. (2020: 4) remind us that "the sexual politics of the particular place and time of fieldwork are crucial for unravelling the expectations and norms that shape the conditions under which research is done and positionality is negotiated".

I share these particular encounters as a way of demonstrating how my positionality and subjectivity enabled rich encounters while also limiting some. Furthermore, to demonstrate that it is still important to have people with different subjectivities critically exploring conservation. Not for the banal reason of ticking representation boxes but in recognition that different research 'instruments' will necessarily produce different pieces of knowledge and this can only make our science better. And, in an unequal society such as South Africa having more people representative of the countries diversity along racial, class, sexuality and gender lines would contribute towards transforming this sector.

2.5 Research assistants

During my fieldwork I had the honour of working with four research assistants, one in the first and third phase and two during the second phase. All of them were unemployed and lived in the villages where we were conducting interviews. I was introduced to the first assistant during a visit to the Moletele Tribal Council where I introduced my research and asked for permission to conduct fieldwork in the area. I was given the go-ahead and introduced to Thabo[7], a man in his mid-thirties who had assisted another researcher in the past. I wanted a research assistant for two main reasons: first, while I understand Sepedi, I

[7] Names changed to protect identity

have no command of Tsonga and I thought it prudent to conduct as many interviews in the local language as possible. Second, I wanted to work with someone who understood the social and economic context in ways that as an outsider I would not understand immediately. Thabo and the rest of the assistants are therefore central in what came to be known as 'the field', the social networks that emerged in this space and importantly what was recorded as data (Gupta, 2014). Furthermore, their understanding of the topic came to shape how I viewed the context. As Jenkins (2018: 146) notes, the presence of assistants "shapes who and what information is accessed, their biases affect the research process, and they can influence the researcher's perceptions of, and emotional entanglement, in the field". This is exemplified by the fact that all the research assistants organised most of the interviews which were conducted in Sepedi or Tsonga. Mine was to show up and start the conversation in Sepedi and the assistant would take over when my command of the language ended. Overall, the assistants' guidance in the field opened up homes and spaces in Buffelshoek, Cottondale, Acornhoek, Green Valley and Oaks villages where we interviewed Moletele land claim beneficiaries, communal property association members and conservation labourers.

Jenkins (2018) argues that while the research assistant can help especially an outsider to navigate the local social landscape, they can also close doors in ways that might not be immediately obvious. To illustrate this, I will reflect on two encounters with the research assistant that brought to home the centrality of fieldwork guides in the data production process. The first encounter happened after I met the chief who instructed his male relative to help me navigate my way in the field. I was delighted at this opportunity because I thought this would give me direct access to the chief, furthermore, I thought this would widen the pool of people I had thus far engaged with. For 2/3 days a week over a month, Pitso introduced me to land claimants, in particular elders. One day after such an interview, I got a call from an elder who asked me to come back for more discussions because "you see that one [referring to the chiefs relative] I don't know where he stands". I went back for the discussion and he shared with me what he felt was sensitive information and invited me to go through his personal archive. The narrative on this second encounter had become more nuanced and critical of some aspects of the chieftaincy. This brought home the fact that research assistants positionality and subjectivities will have a bearing on the spaces I can enter and the information I can gather (Turner, 2010). This encounter was very obvious, but I can imagine there might be many other instances where the company I kept had an influence on my research in ways I will never know. Therefore, while much emphasis is placed on the researcher's positionality, it is clear from this account that a research assistants' positionality also affects how people choose to represent themselves during an interview and observations.

The second revealing encounter occurred with the second research assistant, Dipuo, an unemployed mother. On this day, I waited at a designated spot to pick her up and she

showed up with her husband which I thought highly strange. The first interview was deeply uncomfortable, with all three of us staring down at this interviewee. For the rest of the day, her husband stayed in the car or walked about the property. Later when I asked Dipuo why her husband came along she simply responded “Lerato, you know how men are”. I gathered that her husband did not trust that she was leaving home every day to ask people questions about their jobs. Although we continued to interview both men and women after this day, this made me wonder if Dipuo’s domestic situation determined which people we could interview.

There are many other encounters including having to advance payment because an assistant had to travel to a funeral or cancelling an interview due to protest action. All these experiences were reminders that my research was happening in the midst of ‘life’. That is, there was a whole web of historically informed socio-material contexts that were bearing down on my work in ways I will never fully comprehend. The research assistants were as much part of that web as I was. Thus when Townsend-Bell (2009: 313) says “what participants think of the researcher most certainly impacts the types of responses they give” or when Lesutis (2018: 518) says “the positionality of a researcher is important as it might trigger particular forms of self-representation”, I would add to this that the research assistants positionality and what participants think about them will also affect the types of responses one gets (Gupta, 2014; Turner, 2010).

2.6 Limitations

2.6.1. Observation, participant observation

As mentioned already, my hope for a long observation of anti-poaching ended abruptly. Therefore, I do not have an extensive lived experience of anti-poaching. In addition, even though my dish washing job opened up opportunities to experience working in private nature reserves, these experiences remain limited. For instance, I did not experience life in the staff camps nor do I have a first-hand account of ‘on foot’ night patrols. Nonetheless, while my overall direct observation and participant observations have been instructive but few, I found interviews with 50 labourers were able to fill the gaps in data. Furthermore, conversations with various people in the sector including NGOs and ranger trainers gave me different insights into conservation labour.

My request to patrol with another organization in the area was denied. Instead, I was asked by management to email a questionnaire. I compiled one in English and Tsonga trying to cover the history of the respondents and their work in anti-poaching. In hindsight, the questions were too onerous for a questionnaire. Nonetheless, it was distributed by management, filled out by 10 personnel and sent back to me via email. Only the English version was filled out, in English. While I appreciate managements willingness to distribute the questionnaire,

I found it curious that white international masters students that came before and after me were allowed to access the anti-poaching personnel. This made me question whether my race and/or nationality were the reasons I was not granted access. I decided not to use results from the questionnaire because I could not guarantee workers anonymity. Overall, the decision to maintain the anonymity of respondents hinges on the fact that the Lowveld, while big in geographical expanse, is quite small in terms of social networks.

2.6.2. Semi-structured interviews and life histories

Research assistants organised most of the interviews with land claimants and labourers. Initially, we spoke with people that were within the research assistants' social networks and started snowballing from there. Consequently, most labourers and land claimants were within the same social network but because I worked with four research assistants this widened the respondent pool. With regards to labourers, even though all the private reserves along the border of Kruger National Park are represented, we ended up with labourers mainly from the biggest reserves. To mitigate against this, during the last fieldwork phase I conducted semi-structured interviews next to reserves in a different part of the Lowveld, next to Oaks and Willows villages.

In addition to diversity in nature reserves, all labourers come from five villages close to the reserves. This is because, during their 7 days off duty, live-in staff go to their respective homes. This means that staff from further afield as Zimbabwe and other parts of South Africa are not represented in the data. This invariably means that the data set is over-represented by labourers who also experience the reserves as 'neighbours' which affects how they experience working in nature conservation.

Apart from the diversity in reserves and labourers, there were also language limitations. Semi-structured interviews with land claimants and labourers were conducted in Sepedi and Shangaan. The latter I have no command of, while the former I can understand but not enough to sustain a conversation. Consequently, I depended on the research assistants to drive the dialogue and to clarify where I did not understand. The text has thus been through two levels of interpretation and translation.

2.6.3. Archival data

It is widely accepted that archival data is often collected by a dominant group and is thus subjective. It is for this reason that archival data was put in conversation with other data sources. Apart from this, I could not find archival data from NASA on some farms that were central to the analysis. I thus depended on life histories and nature reserves' websites.

P.R.28/1246/20.

The Office of the Sub-Native Commissioner,

Graskop.

6th. September 1920.

The Native Commissioner,

Lydenburg.

re Native Squatters on farms Glen Lyden 37, Madrid 372
Eden 370 & Bedford 366.

I have the honour to inform you that the above four farms have recently been acquired by European farmers who have already taken up occupation thereon. The farms Glen Lyden and Eden fall within the area recommended by the Eastern Transvaal Lands Committee only whereas the remaining two farms do not fall within either the Committees' recommended area or that of the Beaumont Commission. Glen Lyden 371 and Madrid 372 has been purchased by Mr. J.E.D.Travers, Eden 370 by Mr. J.Edgar and Bedford by Messrs Hore, Evans and Burnham The raising of large stock is primarily the object held in view by the above gentlemen. On the 16th. August last at Eden I met the owners concerned together with all the Natives residing upon these farms - Mr. Travers, a copy of whose letter of the 23rd. August is attached, does not wish to retain the native families upon his two farms except as rent payers or in the form of volunteer labour - and in any case he does not require any Native stock owners to remain.
The Native families on Eden are without exception stock owners and Mr. Edgar requires their early removal from the farm, not being prepared to enter into a labour agreement. In regard to the property Bedford a labour agreement was suggested to the Natives squatting thereon by Messrs Hore, Evans & Burnham, but this was refused by the Natives concerned. Thus in the case of the farms Eden & Bedford the whole of the residents thereupon (Natives) are under notice as from the 16th. ultimo to quit. The Natives of Glen Lyden & Madrid being debarred from continuance of occupation on a rent paying basis in view of the ownership of these farms having now changed hands also signified their intention to remove.
Upon the farm Glen Lyden 70 families are resident owning approximately 500 head of large stock and 2,500 sheep and goats. Madrid carries 20 families with 150 cattle and 500 head of small stock. Bedford 40 families 250 head of cattle and 1,500 small stock and Eden 120 rent payers (including 20 widows) approximately 50 families in all, 250 cattle and 1,500 small stock. The Natives affected are Basuthos of the Bapulana section originally springing from the Bapedi of Sekukuniland - They owe tribal allegiance to Chiefs Sitlare and Makgatlishe alias Mlitele, the latter himself a resident upon Bedford. Since the establishment of the Setlari and Makgatlishe tribal sections between 30 & 40 years ago the four farms mentioned and surrounding farms have been occupied by the Natives and regarded as their tribal country. There is therefore considerable dissatisfaction that they should now be called upon to remove in view of their having refused to perform farm labour - the case of the Native residents upon Eden being without the option of labour terms. It was pointed out to Natives to these Natives that upon removal from their present low veld

Chapter 3

White belonging as primitive accumulation in South Africa's private nature reserves

This chapter is under review for publication in Antipode as:
Thakholi L., Koot S. White belonging as primitive accumulation in South Africa's private nature reserves. It has been slightly amended for inclusion into the thesis

Abstract

Evictions and, more recently, a lack of transparency have been shown to be mechanisms of primitive accumulation in conservation. This chapter adds a historical analysis by exploring a seemingly innocuous mechanism of primitive accumulation, namely white belonging in South African private nature reserves. Contemporary articulations of white belonging are replete with stories and images of white male 'pioneers' who, upon arrival in 'empty' lands, were able to create economies out of nothing. Such representations of history 'invisibilizes' black history and legitimizes private conservation. By illuminating the inconsistencies in the empty lands narrative and the legacies of three championed conservation pioneers, the chapter argues that white belonging is a mechanism of primitive accumulation. We highlight evictions, alienation of racialised labour and social reproductive transformations that unfolded historically. Ultimately, we suggest that conservationists need to imagine new ways of belonging because the status quo maintains inequality and reinforces racial and class separation.

Key Words: primitive accumulation, white belonging, black history, conservation, nature reserves, South Africa

3.1 Introduction

South Africa's colonial and apartheid political economies are typical examples of Marx's concept of primitive accumulation, which is "the state-driven process whereby 'unlimited' supplies of cheap labour for capitalist producers were created through the dispossession of African rural communities" (Arrighi et al., 2010: 421). Conventionally, mining and farming have been implicated in these processes that resulted in the expropriation of land from black communities and the creation of surplus labour (Wolpe, 1972). However, as this chapter shows, contemporary conservation on private nature reserves is also reproduced through similar tactics of primitive accumulation. How exactly these mechanisms are reproduced and the implications thereof continue to warrant critical reflection.

Scholars linking conservation to enclosures of land (Büscher, 2009; Lunstrum and Ybarra, 2018; Milgroom and Spierenburg, 2008; Wieckardt et al., 2020) have demonstrated that conservation reproduces private forms of property which reinforce primitive accumulation. Furthermore, evictions (DeMotts, 2017; Sinthumule, 2008) and lack of transparency and legitimacy have been implicated in primitive accumulation (Kicheleri et al., 2021). These processes are captured by Kelly (2011) who explores the mechanisms of primitive accumulation that have been central in the creation of protected areas. She argues that "the creation and maintenance of these areas is a violent, ongoing process that changes not only economic relations, but social and environmental relations as well" (Kelly, 2011: 684). Building on these literatures, we contribute new insights from private nature reserves in the South African Lowveld (Figure 3.1), where we show how contemporary articulations of white belonging, and the 'invisibilization' of black histories (see also Dlamini, 2020) in these articulations, indeed perpetuate and intensify primitive accumulation.

We add a historical analysis to the production of conservation spaces by exploring a more muted, seemingly innocuous mechanism of primitive accumulation, white belonging. Primitive accumulation is an ongoing process of *separating* the producer from the means of subsistence (De Angelis, 2001) whereas belonging "is about emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home'" (Yuval-Davis, 2006: 197). By putting primitive accumulation in conversation with belonging, this chapter argues that white belonging to land in the Lowveld is one of the mechanisms that maintain the separation of black people from the means of subsistence.

White belonging over land and nature — articulated through history — has worked to consistently legitimise conservation land use to the detriment of other interests. As Koot et al. (2019: 347) note, belonging can be used "in processes of exclusion that are shaped, more often than not, by dynamics of neoliberal capitalism". We recognise the heterogeneity of descent, class and political affiliation of white people which will invariably result in diverse ways of belonging through land and nature. This chapter however, concentrates specifically

on white belonging which emerged out of the typical southern African style 'settler farm', where black people and white settlers' lives intertwine on the newly surveyed land (Du Toit, 1993; Van Onselen, 1990, 1992; Rutherford, 2002; Suzman, 2000; Sylvain, 2001). The conditions that led to farm occupations and the paternalistic social relations that developed in these spaces gave rise to different experiences and memories that continue to have an effect today, far beyond farms (Koot, 2016; Sylvain, 2001). The farm as a social construction is central in this analysis because this is where the spatial representation of conquest is rooted.

The chapter is based on 16 months of fieldwork conducted by the first author between 2016-2019 in the Lowveld region between Hoedspruit Town and Bushbuckridge (Figure 3.1). During this time, she conducted four life histories and 150 interviews with Mapulana elders, conservation managers, labourers and government officials. In addition, she collected archival data from the National Archives of South Africa in Pretoria and the Moletele Tribal Council in Acornhoek. We remain cognizant that data in national archives is not collected or stored by the subjugated group (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011), however, correspondence between white farmers and local officials in the early 1900s has proven instrumental in exposing the processes involved in the acquisition of land and the expulsion of black people. The second author also conducted ethnographic research in the area for 5 months between September 2015 and September 2019. He conducted 87 semi-structured interviews, mostly in the tourism sector but also with other interviewees active in nature conservation. We collected historical narratives about private nature reserve on their websites[8] and from promotional materials such as magazines[9]. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 2012; van Dijk, 1993) proved important to gain more insight into the narratives as presented by the private nature reserves. CDA contains an analytical focus "on the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance [...] by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including political, cultural, class, ethnic, racial and gender inequality" (van Dijk, 1993: 249–250) and is thus highly relevant in an analysis of a post-apartheid context in which racial and socio-economic inequality still thrive (Alexander, 2002; Bond, 2014).

[8] Timbavati Private Nature Reserve https://timbavati.co.za/our-history/ Last Accessed 26 February 2021
Klaserie Private Nature Reserve https://www.klaseriereserve.co.za/about.html Last Accessed 26 February 2021
Umbabat Private Nature Reserve http://umbabat.com/overview/history/ Last Accessed 26 February 2021
Thornybush Nature Reserve https://www.thornybush.com/about-us/thornybush-story/ Last Accessed 26 February 2021

[9] Klaserie Chronicle, Anniversary edition_Winter Issue 2019 (hereafter as Klaserie Chronicle, 2019)

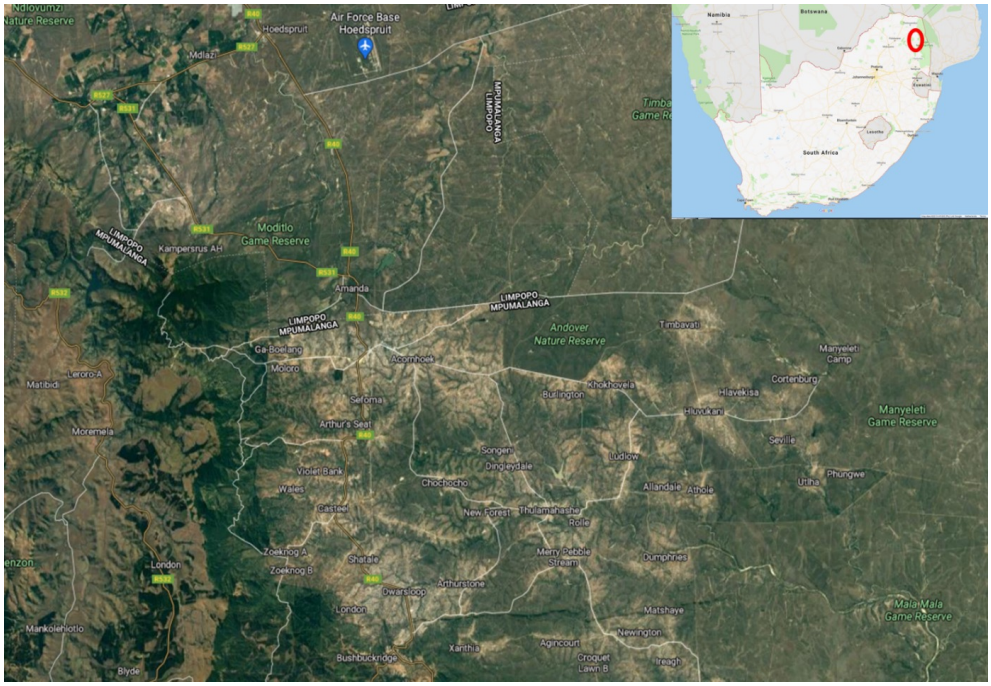

Figure 3.1: Map of the Lowveld Hoedspruit (north), Bushbuckridge (south) Kruger National Park (east) (Google Maps, n.d.).

In what follows, we first discuss belonging as a mechanism of primitive accumulation, after which the chapter outlines the history of the 'empty' Lowveld as presented by private nature reserves. Next, we illuminate the historical presence of black people, thereby highlighting the inconsistencies in the empty land narratives that have become normalised in contemporary conservation. In addition, we highlight erasures in the pedestalization of three conservation heroes. We conclude by discussing the implications this analysis has for contemporary white belonging and the current conservation mode of production.

3.2 Primitive accumulation and belonging

Primitive accumulation was conceptualized by Marx in response to the ahistorical treatment of capital in the mid-19th century, which sought to obscure the violence necessary for the transformation of pre-capitalist modes of production (Roberts, 2008). It entails "... suppression of rights to the commons; commodification of labour-power and the suppression of alternative, indigenous, forms of production and consumption..." (Harvey, 2003: 145). Furthermore, primitive accumulation denotes an inherently *continuous process* (De Angelis, 2001) that is based on privatization and commodification of land and labour (Moyo et al., 2012). It encloses "land, bodies, social structures, or ideas" (Kelly, 2011: 685) and is a crucial part of capitalism's expansion (Sassen, 2010).

Primitive accumulation thus denotes not only transformations in the production process but also the alienation of labour (De Angelis, 2001; Hiraldo, 2018) and changes in relations of social reproduction along gender, class and racial lines (Federici, 2004; Roberts, 2008). This chapter discusses colonialism's and apartheid's primitive accumulation in conservation, which produces and reproduces alienated racialised labourers. Commenting on colonialism more broadly, Bhandar (2018: 8) notes that "prevailing ideas about racial superiority were forged through nascent capitalist ideologies that rendered race contingent on specific forms of labor and property relations". That is, racial violence and domination have always been part of capitalism (see also Mbembe 2017; Singh, 2016). From this, we can infer along with Van Sant et al. (2021: 631) that "settler colonialism and racial capitalism are co-constitutive of environmental politics".

For De Angelis, (2001) *separation* is characteristic of both accumulation proper and primitive accumulation. What sets these two apart is that the latter entails the initial separation, whereas the former entails the maintenance and reproduction of the separation at a larger scale. This maintenance and reproduction, we argue, is partly facilitated by articulations of white belonging in contemporary nature conservation. We borrow from Koot et al. (2019: 346) who state that belonging denotes

> to have a sense of connection; it implies familiarity, comfort and ease, alongside feelings of inclusion, acceptance and safety. The way people belong to place is often informed by political strategies, conscious and unconscious, through which access to various rights and resources are sought and contested.

Notions of belonging often create clear ethnic demarcations between different groups in relation to the defence of land or home, and they can arouse strong emotions and political manipulation (Geschiere and Nyamnjoh, 2000). Belonging thus raises questions about who acquires resources, how they are acquired and how this access is maintained. Based on different modes of belonging (e.g. social practices, institutional arrangements, or routinised discourses) people claim resources and rights to become incorporated in a particular geographical and/or social environment in some instances, initiating the separation so crucial in primitive accumulation.

In southern Africa, belonging has most clearly been articulated in relation to land and the natural environment by indigenous groups and settlers (Gressier, 2015; Hughes, 2010; Koot et al., 2019; Koot, 2015). These articulations emerge out of a history of colonial dispossession and settlement, making land and nature sites of continued contestations in the region. Belonging is therefore political since it is about collective identities that can be used to exclude others (Gressier, 2015; Koot et al., 2019). Hughes (2006) suggests that white belonging is primarily done through empty land narratives that rendered black people invisible and whites

as conquerors and creators of economies 'out of nothing'. Furthermore, long after colonialism, settlers must *keep* asserting their belonging to the land (Hughes, 2010). These representations of memory "are frequently called upon to support the specific kind of conquest and domination associated with colonialism" (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004: 350). Altogether, such spatial representations of memory ultimately work to delegitimise black people's contemporary claims to land while simultaneously affirming conservation land use and maintaining primitive accumulation. In the next section, we unpack these dynamics in the Lowveld, South Africa, by paying particular attention to transformations in land use and the alienation of labour which are central to primitive accumulation.

3.3 Primitive conservation

The private nature reserves discussed in this section are located in South Africa's Lowveld (Figure 3.1). Collectively, they span approximately 158,000 ha of bushveld and they lie close to the town of Hoedspruit (Figure 3.2). Importantly, some share an unfenced border with Kruger National Park. South of these reserves is the Bushbuckridge municipality, which is home to the former Lebowa and Gazankulu Bantustans which were earmarked for exclusive black occupation during apartheid. In this section, we discuss the history of the Lowveld from the early 1900s, starting with nature reserves' representation of history, after which we illuminate erasures in the narratives.

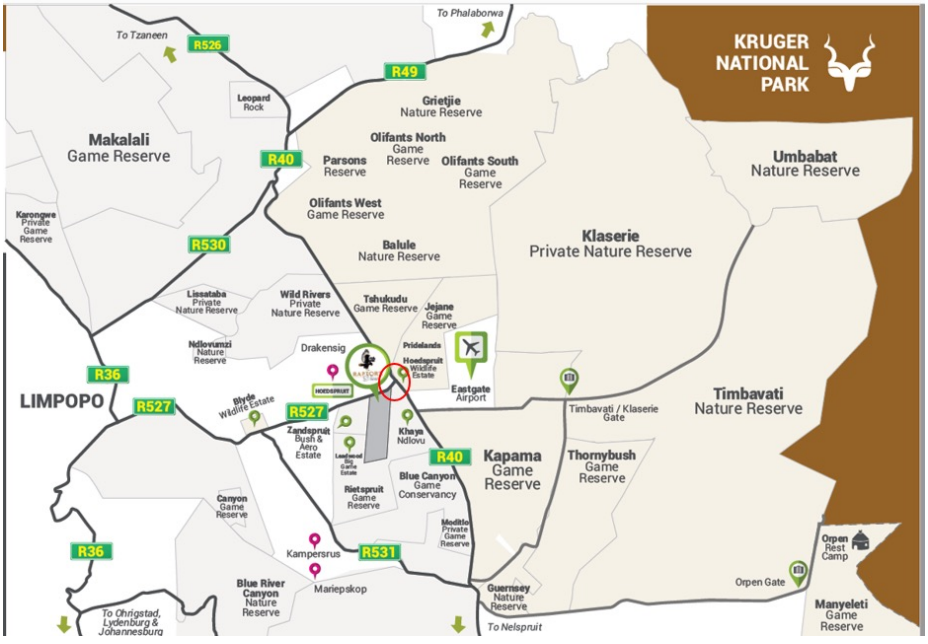

Figure 3.2: Map of Hoedspruit, surrounding nature reserves (source: Raptors View, 2020)[10]

[10] https://raptorsview.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Raptors-View-Area-Map.pdf Last accessed 26 April 2021

3.3.1. Belonging, empty lands narratives and conservation pioneers

According to the Kapama private game reserve Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment,

> the very first official land owner of the farm Hoedspruit was Dawid Johannes Joubert. He arrived in the lowveld in 1844 and settled in the area between the Blyde River and what is now known as the Zandspruit River. In 1848 on the 5th May, he took the opportunity to register the farm for the first time at the land office[11].

This quote also appears, verbatim, on the official Hoedspruit town page[12]. And in the same vein, Timbavati private nature reserve states that

> [h]uman incursion into this part of the Lowveld has always been temporary and brief, from the stone age down to the early 20th century. Large tracts of land in the northern part of the Lowveld were never permanently settled by people. The lands now comprising the Timbavati were barely touched and are still only sparsely inhabited[13].

Likewise, the Klaserie Private Nature Reserve (KPNR) states that in 1938 when the first hunting camp in present-day KPNR was built "the Bushveld farms had nothing on them"[14]. Other reserves in the area, while not evoking notions of emptiness, nonetheless present a 'sanitised' history of the region that begins on arbitrary dates. This includes Umbabat private nature reserve which states that in 1939 a farm was purchased "[...] from South African Townships, Mining and Finance Company"[15]. Similarly, Thornybush private nature reserve starts its account of history in 1955, when it was "fenced and becomes one of the first private nature reserves in the Greater Kruger Park"[16]. These private nature reserves cater mainly for the high-end national and international tourism market and thus their current version of South African history echoes far beyond the country's borders.

The narratives of historically uninhabited lands pivots on the adventures of 'heroic' white pioneers who have played a central role in the preservation of wildlife and the hardships they endured to transform these empty spaces into world-class, nature-based tourism destinations. These 'white saviours of nature' (Abidin et al., 2020), often middle-aged men (and sometimes women), are presented to the reader as visionary, innovative,

[11] Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment: Phase 1 Investigation for the Development of Lodges, Roads and other Tourist Infrastructure in Kapama Private Game Reserve, Maruleng Local Municipality, Mopani District Municipality, Limpopo Province. Prepared by Francois P Coetzee, 45, 2018

[12] Hoedspruit Town Page https://www.hoedspruit.co.za/history-of-hoedspruit#HistoricalActivities Last Accessed 26 February 2021

[13] Timbavati Private Nature Reserve website

[14] Klaserie Private Nature Reserve website

[15] Umbabat Private Nature Reserve http://umbabat.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Roodekrantz-Recollections-1939.pdf Last Accessed 26 February 2021

[16] Thornybush Nature Reserve website

courageous and adventurous. The first of these pioneers, who has a strong presence in the contemporary presentation of the region's history is John Edmund Delacoer Travers (1876-1954) who is named by KPNR as *The unknown legends of the Lowveld* in an article by the same title[17]. Travers, born in South Africa to English parents, served in the Steinaecker's Horse, a volunteer unit that operated during the Anglo-Boer War. Later he became an agent of the Transvaal Estates & Development Company, "the single greatest extractor of rent in cash in the eastern Transvaal, [...] most of whose 6 000 shareholders resided in Britain" (Krikler, 1990: 172). According to the KPNR, Travers used to collect "rental on a commission basis from Shangaan squatters living on the farms owned by the company [..] through [his work] he came to know the area and the local people like the back of his hand"[18].

In the 1920s, Travers would start citrus and cattle farming on Glenlyden and Madrid farms respectively. Together with his wife, he is remembered fondly as hospitable. Travers in particular is memorialised by the KPNR as "a lover of animals and a protector of wildlife [...] at one time he had the largest collection of red duiker outside the Kruger National Park under his protection"[19].

The second and third pioneers are Percy Wood 'pump' Willis (1876-1959) and Ernest Wittingstall (1884-1976), whose histories are strongly interconnected. According to the KPNR website, Willis "was the first to settle permanently in the Bushbuckridge and Acornhoek area after also serving in the Steinaecker's Horse" [20]. Willis' and Wittingstall operated under the name Messers Willis & Coy, an agent of the Transvaal Consolidated Land and Exploration Coy: Ltd (TCL). TCL was a land and speculation company that owned tracts of land in the Lowveld. It was in the business of surveying farms and setting up new irrigation schemes for white settlers (Mather, 1995). As a result of this programme, Willis & Coy owned 18 000 morgen (15420.6 ha) in the Lowveld and 16 trading posts. According to KPNR, around 1914 Willis and Whittingstall "used to hunt the whole area to the Olifants River and on ground belonging to the mining concerns. There was no one there, as it was just bare ground, and used to camp on the farms [...] in the present Klaserie Private Nature Reserve"[21].

[17] Klaserie Chronicle no. 35, March 2016 Unknown Legends of the Lowveld, John Edmund Delacoer Travers 1876-1954. 22-23 (hereafter as Klaserie Chronicle, 2016)
[18] Klaserie Chronicle, 2016, 23
[19] ibid
[20] Klaserie Private Nature Reserve website
[21] ibid

The pair is regarded by the KPNR as "pioneers in the formation of the Klaserie". Moreover

> after a life-time of hunting, he [Willis] left his rifle in favour of a camera, eventually to become one of the best known wildlife photographers in South Africa. Some of his photographs are published in Stevenson-Hamilton's [the first warden of Kruger National Park] book: South African Eden. He also became a valued honorary Game Ranger, and his opinions on wildlife were greatly respected. He also was able to use his pen in support of Stevenson-Hamilton against the many detractors of fauna and flora preservation, whose attacks never ceased until the Sanctuary was finally declared a National Park in 1926[22].

When read together, a coherent master narrative of the Lowveld can be identified, which is presented to tourists and investors on reserve websites and magazines. However, the colonial and apartheid conditions that directly enabled and facilitated these ex-soldiers occupying farms is not discussed. Furthermore, touted as successful farmers and conservationists, the reader is not informed about the people who worked on these farms. These narratives echo similar observations in southern Africa (Hughes, 2010; Hughes, 2006) where land and nature as well as some key figures are central in the construction of white belonging (Gressier 2015; Koot 2015), and whiteness which, Green et al. (2007) suggest, reproduces itself through contemporary knowledge and the construction of a particular history.

This selective use of history and memories resonates with what Fletcher (2012:423) calls 'imperialist amnesia', which is

> a tendency on the part of 'agents of postcolonialism' to either ignore the history of colonial domination in their accounts or to present a sanitized version of colonialism from which evidence of exploitation, persecution, subjugation and genocide has been effectively effaced.

A recurring observation in studies exploring imperialist amnesia is the invisibilization of people of colour. Das and Lowe (2018) argue that this tactic perpetuates racism and disavows enslaved Africans and indigenous peoples of the Americas' contribution to science and as the next section will show, in our case, imperialist amnesia erases historical geographies of black presence (See Bressey, 2009) and labour.

3.3.2. Not so empty? Illuminating the separation

Claims that there was no one in the Lowveld when the first settlers arrived are bolstered by the fact that the first surveyors in the Lowveld, superimposed the system of the *farm* onto the landscape, giving little thought to the people who lived in those spaces at the

[22] Klaserie Chronicle, 2019, 12

time. This process fundamentally transformed *naha* (Sepulana[23] for land) into farms. *Naha* had been a place where Mapulana of Chief Moletele Chiloane, after whom the community and the tribal council[24] is named, lived for over 30 years and could practice their preferred livelihoods. Conversely, 'the farm' became a place of subjugation and resistance in which white settler farmers and black people "share the same space but have different experiences and memories" (Nimako and Willemsen, 2011: 5). Furthermore, once turned into farms, the settlers named these lands after European cities and countries such as Amsterdam, Vienna or Wales, in a move to prime the land for expropriation and commodification.

This practice was not unique to the Lowveld. Speaking of 'imaginative geographies', Saïd (2000: 181) shows that colonising agents invented spaces that paid little attention to the "actuality of the geography and its inhabitants". Nonetheless, the Moletele Tribal Council's account of history not only asserts the names Mapulana gave to their land, but it also documents the rivers, places and mountains that Mapulana called theirs (Table 3.1). This included *Motsoeding* which is now home to the world-famous Blyderivierspoort Nature Reserve which houses the third largest canyon in the world and *Kgapama* which is now part of Kapama game reserve. It goes without saying that these Mapulana names do not follow the cookie-cutter farm boundaries which were superimposed onto the landscape. As such, reference to particular farms in this chapter should be read within this context.

Table 3.1: List of some of the place names in Sepulana.[25]

Name of place in Sepulana	Farm name	Present use/location
Motsoeding	Blyderivierspoort* 595 KT	Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve Aventura Swadini Resort
Matekeng	Glenlyden 424 KT*	Recreational park
Matlebeshane	Bedford 419 KT*	Kampersrus town
Mosehleng	Scotia 248 KT*	Restituted to the Moletele Community
Kgapama	Moria 83 KU*	Portions of which are Kapama game reserve while others are Moditlo wildlife estate
Motsoding	Driehoek 417 KT*	Irrigation farms Tourism resorts
Motlatsedi	Klaserie River	Flows between Thornybush and Kapama Passes through Klaserie nature reserves
Thaba ya Moholoholo	Mariepskop Mountain	Located in the Blyde River Canyon Nature Reserve

These different names show that the representation of the history of the Lowveld by private nature reserves contrasts starkly with what Mapulana remember and what is documented in the archive. We begin with the latter.

[23] Mapulana speak Sepulana
[24] Tribal council refers to a constitutionally recognized traditional leadership body.
[25] Staatkoerant (Gazette), 1 August 2008 No. 31287 Notice 911 of 2008 and Staatkoerant 29 January 2010 No. 32839 Notice 57 of 2010
*Currently claimed by the Moletele community under the Restitution of Land Rights Act, Act No. 22 of 1994.

In their international promotional book, the South African Railways and Harbours Administration noted "often when purchasing a farm a settler will find a certain number of squatters residing on the property acquired [...] the presence of these squatters will be of great value to the newcomer" (SARHA, 1926: 88). This scenario unfolded in the Lowveld in 1920, when 'European' farmers purchased four adjoining farms for cattle and irrigation farming. In a letter from the Sub-Native Commissioner of Graskop to the Native Commissioner of Lydenburg, dated September 1920,[26] the former communicates the desires of the European farmers. The buyers, one of which was Travers whom we discussed in the previous section, wanted to evict Mapulana because some were elderly and had livestock while many others were simply not needed for labour (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Demographics of the four farms purchased in 1920.

Farm name	Number of families	Number of cattle	Number of goats and sheep	Purchased by
Madrid 372*	20	150	500	Travers
Glenlyden 371*	70	500	2500	Travers
Eden 370*	50	250	1500	Edgar
Bedford 366*	40	250	1500	Hore, Evans, Burnham

[26] Letters of the Sub-Native Commissioner Graskop Pilgrim Rest. Natives on Sunlight No.283. File No. 74/323. National Archives of South Africa, Gauteng, Pretoria. 1920-1941 (hereafter cited as Letters, Sub-Native Commissioner Graskop) Currently claimed by the Moletele community

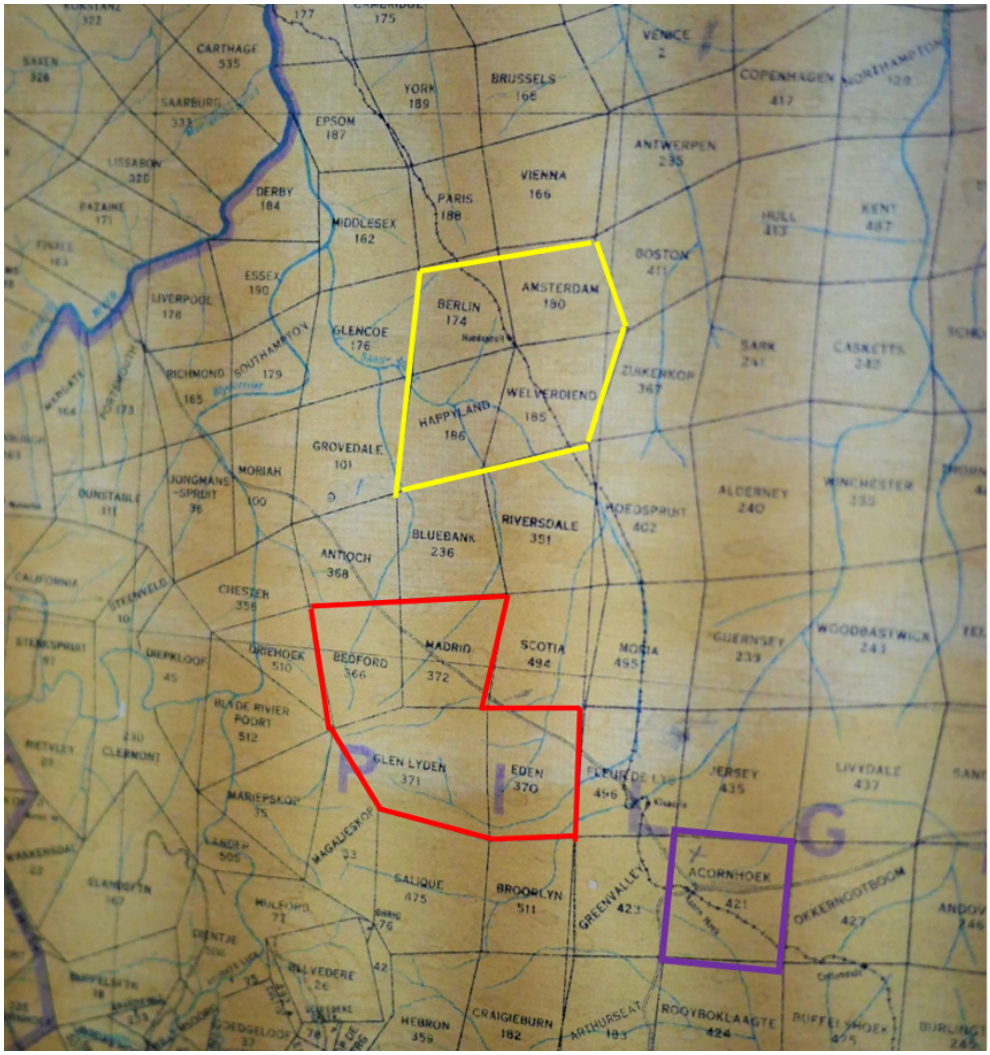

Figure 3.3: Map of purchased farms (red) in relation to Hoedspruit (yellow) and Acornhoek (purple) in the then Pilgrim Rest district.

Regarding these newly acquired farms (Figure 3.3), the Sub-Native Commissioner observed

> The Natives affected are [...] Bapulana [...] They owe tribal allegiance to chief Sitlare and Makgatlishe Alia Mlitele, the latter himself a resident upon Bedford. Since the establishment of the Setlari and Makgatlishe tribal sections between 30 & 40 years ago the four farms mentioned and surrounding farms have been occupied by the Natives and regarded as their tribal country. There is therefore considerable dissatisfaction that they should now be called upon to remove in view of their having refused to perform farm labour[27].

[27] Letters, Sub-Native Commissioner Graskop

Assertions by private nature reserves that the Lowveld was empty and that the lands were barely touched, contradicts the statement by the Sub-Native commissioner who explicitly states that the Mapulana people of chief Moletele had been living in this area for at least 40 years. This statement by the colonial government is essential for dispelling claims by nature reserves that the Lowveld was never occupied permanently. Before these four farms were awarded to the Transvaal Estates and Development Company and later sold to Travers and others, Mapulana people had been able to live free of servitude, ploughing the land and keeping livestock without the imposition of grazing and dipping fees.

As a result of these developments, Mapulana labour tenants[28] and evictees' relationship with their land — including all its material endowments which is essential for reproduction — became mediated institutionally by the apartheid state and (mostly) supportive white farmers. Coupled with ploughing and livestock restrictions, labour tenants' social reproduction was undermined whereas those who were evicted were completely separated from their means of subsistence. These transformations implicate the state in the orchestration of primitive accumulation in the Lowveld (Wolpe, 1972).

In addition to archival sources, life histories from elders also speak of a historical presence of Mapulana in the Lowveld. While most Mapulana remembered evictions commencing in the 1960s, a few elders had a recollection of the early days when the European farmers arrived. For instance, Pule, a Mapulana elder born in 1935 in Bedford (Figure 3.3) to parents who had become labour tenants, remembers that

> when the white people arrived, my parents said, they were told to stop tending their fields and animals and work on the farm for 3 months without pay. After working on Bedford for a while I got my *trekpass [29]* and went to seek work in Pretoria. When I returned in 1970, they had moved them to Scotia [adjoining farm]. The headmen told the white farmers that I had run away so they forced me to herd cattle in my suit and tie. I hated it and left for Johannesburg again[30].

Due to exploitative labour conditions at the farms, fraught with paternalistic social relations, many people, especially men, had to 'choose' between labour tenancy and seeking better paying opportunities elsewhere. However, the push factors such as harsh conditions in mining hostels and the pull of family ties on white-owned farms forced men like Pule to return, if only for a little while. Pule finally built his home in Acornhoek but continued to work in Johannesburg. This echoes Hiraldo's (2018) observation that even after initial separation

[28] Labour tenants had to labour for 3 months without wages in exchange for lodging on white farms
[29] During apartheid, this was a document issued by a farmer to an evicted labour tenant to travel from one place to another. If someone was found without a trekpass, (s)he could be arrested.
[30] Interview with a Mapulana elder 27 04 18-Acornhoek

labourers continue to experience alienation as they attempt to secure subsistence in other sectors such as mining. Furthermore, as Pule's case shows, primitive accumulation is nomadic, stalking the labourer from one region and sector to another.

Expropriation and privatization of the aforementioned farms transformed the "processes and geographies of social reproduction" (Roberts, 2008: 544), while also reinforcing a gendered and racialised division of labour, an issue we expand on below. Some men could work and live (temporarily) 500km away in Johannesburg whereas most women were home bound. Moreover, the social reproduction sphere had to expand in order for families to maintain themselves, not to mention the disruption in family and community ties that occurred when others were evicted.

The dominant narrative that purports the Lowveld was empty when men such as Travers arrived, serves two purposes. First, to deny Mapulana historical geographies of black presence (Bressey, 2009) in the Lowveld, while simultaneously legitimising historical and contemporary white presence. Second, these narratives appeal to historical imaginaries of a wilderness that must be preserved. Read within the current context of calls to curb the sixth mass extinction through habitat protection and species preservation, the private reserves preclude other (current and future) claims to the land, which seem to pale in comparison to concerns about biodiversity loss.

These narratives also gloss over a history of resistance and defiance against white farmers and the state. For instance, Chief Aneas Chiloane, the chief of Mapulana from the early 1950s, was regarded as troublesome by commissioners (Ritchken, 1995). From his tribal council located on Bedford farm (Niehaus, 2002), Aneas "continued to challenge the legitimacy of the white settlers and vehemently opposed their oppressive practices. As a result of his actions, he was resented by many of the white settlers in the area" (Davis, 2014: 95). A close relative remembers that Aneas was eventually

> put in prison because he was defiant, he did not want to be relocated, he wanted to remain with his people. [...] Aneas did not want to move to the released areas[31], his dream was to move Mapulana out of released areas, back onto their land[32].

After his release from prison, Aneas was eventually murdered, allegedly by a family member, and soon after the last residents of Bedford were evicted[33]. Aneas' defiance, the protests of men like Pule who left the farm and the refusal by some families to be evicted remind us that primitive accumulation is often met with resistance (De Angelis, 2001).

[31] Areas set aside for exclusive black occupation under Native Trust and Land Act of 1936
[32] Interview with close relative 14 02 17 – Acornhoek
[33] Interview with Mapulana elder, 01 02 17- Acornhoek

Apart from the four farms mentioned above, another well-documented case relates to six farms that were purchased by The Lands Department from the African and European Investment Company[34]. The department wanted to lease these farms to white settlers. Again, there was a 'native problem', namely, 2,240 people were living on the farms[35]. The Lands Department noted that, because the soils were not good, the lessee would not need many labourers and therefore recommended for the natives to be settled elsewhere.

By 1941,[36] some people had been removed while nineteen families had explicitly refused to move away. Matters came to a head when it was revealed that a white farmer had supported the families in their protest against the Native Affairs office. The farm owner, having a large farm, most of which he did not plough, was earning a decent income by collecting grazing and dipping fees from Mapulana, one of whom had at least one hundred cattle. This practice of keeping 'unproductive' labour just to collect rent was called 'farming natives'[37] which the departments of land shunned because it was considered a waste of productive land (see Mather, 1995).

The six farms have since been consolidated into one farm, bearing the name Guernsey 81KU, portions of which are today part of the Kapama private game reserve and Thornybush nature reserve. In 2010 the Moletele community lodged a claim on sixty-five portions (out of 149 in total) of Guernsey 81KU. In 2003 they also claimed 78,791 ha of land in the Lowveld (Lahiff et al., 2012), some of these farms have already been restituted to the community (Davis, 2014) further confirming Mapulanas historical presence in the Lowveld.

The evictions and privatization of land in the case of the European farmers and the Lands department affected at least 180 families and 2,240 people respectively. Such primitive accumulation wrested land away from the commons into privatized property regimes to move via cattle and irrigation farms finally to conservation as a mode of production. White belonging to land and nature, expressed through historical narratives discussed above, almost completely ignores this history. In the case of these reserves in particular primitive accumulation was not initiated by conservation spaces, because these were initially used for cattle ranching, rather "the process of primitive accumulation – and uneven capitalist development more generally – produced" these spaces (Neumann, 2017: 121). However, conservation has certainly *reproduced* and *maintained* initial separation.

[34] Letters, Sub-Native Commissioner Graskop 25 November 1939
[35] Ibid 26 April 1940
[36] Ibid 6 February 1941
[37] Ibid 23 August 1920

3.4 Conservation pioneers alienating labour

Thus far, we have shown erasures in the empty lands narratives by discussing the separation of Mapulana from their means of subsistence, and the implications thereof. In what follows, we consider the three conservation pioneers we introduced earlier, by discussing how nature reserves have presented them in relation to archival data and life histories.

3.4.1. Travers

As mentioned earlier, Travers is remembered by the KPNR as an unknown legend of the Lowveld. As an agent of the Transvaal Estates & Development Company he used to collect rent from 'squatters' who were in actual fact black people who had been stripped of their land (rights) and transformed into rent payers. Much of these rents ended up in Britain where most of the companies' shareholders resided, exposing that black peoples' "surplus labour, transformed into cash, found its way to Britain [which] is a measure of the ability of even a far-flung bourgeoisie to be predatory upon people far from proletarian in status" (Krikler, 1990: 174). The spatiality of primitive accumulation suggests that primitive accumulation in one place can set the stage for accumulation in another region (De Angelis, 2001), such that livelihood restriction on newly white-owned farms and the imposition of renting and dipping fees facilitated the accumulation of capital in mining towns and commercial farms.

In 1920 Travers purchased two farms, Glenlyden and Madrid (see Table 3.2), where he farmed citrus and bred cattle. These farms had ninety Mapulana families living on them and more than 3,500 livestock. Correspondence between Travers and the Native Commissioner[38] reveals that, while Travers wanted some 'volunteer' labour to work on his farm, he wanted the rest to be evicted unless they would pay rent. However, Travers noted that it would be unjust to evict elderly people because they had livestock and could not be used for labour. He thus proposed retaining them on a rent-paying basis.

True to his word, some Mapulana were retained on Glenlyden and Madrid[39] as labour tenants. Others were evicted while the rest remained on rent-paying terms[40]. The labour tenants' terms of employment were three months of work in exchange for lodging. Thus, while remembered as a legend and lover of animals, Travers was also central in the eviction of Mapulana and the exploitation and alienation of their labour. According to Ritchken (1995), Travers was able to persuade the Moletele chieftainship to accede to labour tenancy because the latter did not want his people to lose the connection with their ancestral land. These alliances between private property land lords and chiefs were common practice, because the chiefs — in exchange for their subjects' labour — were allowed to allocate land and preside over judicial cases (Ritchken, 1995). This symbiotic relationship enabled chiefs

[38] Ibid 6 September 1920
[39] Today, Glenlyden and Madrid are claimed by the Moletele community
[40] Letters, Sub-Native Commissioner Graskop 25 November 1939

to continue to rule over their people, albeit with major restrictions, while farmers were guaranteed a labour-force. When tensions rose in the 1960s, a close relative remembers how chief Aneas threatened to leave the farms and take everyone along with him,[41] which would have severely disrupted the farm's economy.

The Moletele Tribal Council's account of this period states that Travers put "men and widows and unmarried women to work on Glenlyden without pay"[42]. Furthermore, "all men, women, young girls and boys (upon their graduation from initiation schools) were taken to the farm of Mr Travers to provide free labour" (Moletele Bulletin July 2008:2, cited in Davis, 2014). Modise remembers that "if they found that you are going to school, they would kick you out. There used to be a school, they razed it down"[43]. The school in question was probably a Swiss Mission school on an adjoining farm. It was allegedly destroyed because it was keeping children away from working on the farms. The privatization of land and Travers' control over black lives extended beyond the production 'sphere'; by keeping Mapulana children out of school he secured the next generations of workers with nothing but their labour-power to sell.

Traver's collection of red duiker, purported to have been the largest outside of the Kruger National Park[44], does not absolve him from the fact that he operated his farm in slave-like conditions by forcing black men and women into 'volunteer' labour while collecting rent from others and denying children a decent education in order to exploit their labour. If anything, this raises more questions about the enclosure and commodification of land and wildlife. It shines a spotlight on a commercial agricultural economy that marked black people, including children, as exploitable. Overall, this reveals that "the violence of abstraction that transformed land more fully into a commodity over the course of a long transition [...] has a counterpart in racial thinking that figured entire populations in a hierarchy of value with whiteness at its apex" (Bhandar, 2018: 8). From this, we can deduce that Travers' current pedestalization in conservation allows white conservationists to legitimise their connection to land and wildlife by writing out of history the violence he meted against black people.

3.4.2. Willis & Coy

Percy Willis and Ernest Wittingstall are also celebrated as pioneers in the creation of the Klaserie. The pair were agents of the Transvaal Consolidated Land and Exploration Coy: Ltd (TCL) operating under the name 'Willis & Coy'. In 1927, the government transferred 11 farms to TCL in exchange for farms in present-day Kruger National Park[45]. Of the 11 farms,

[41] Interview Close relative 14 February 2017, Acornhoek
[42] Litaba tsa Kgoshi Moletele. Sourced from the Moletele Tribal Council collection. Undated, Acornhoek South Africa
[43] Interview with Mapulana elder, Modise, 31 July 2018, Acornhoek
[44] Unknown Legends of the Lowveld, 23
[45] Letters of the Natives Affairs Department. File no. 80/323. Natives on the properties of the Transvaal Consolidation land and exploration Coy. National Archives of South Africa, Gauteng, Pretoria. 1922-1935 (hereafter cited as Letters, Natives Affairs Department)

10 were located within the released area for exclusive black occupation. In addition to this, TCL acquired nine more farms from the Acornhoek Cotton Syndicate, including present-day Acornhoek. Willis & Coy, acting as agents of TCL, were awarded all these farms some of which had black people living on them. They wanted to continue collecting rent on commission

> at a rate of 2 pounds per annum per adult native with one wife, 10/- [0.5 pound] per annum for each additional wife. 1 per annum for each unmarried male adult, and 1 pound per annum for every unattached widow. With grazing fee per annum of 3/-, 1/- and 6d [penny] in respect of large, medium and small stock[46].

'Farming natives' was thus a lucrative business that enabled agents of TCL and others (e.g. Travers) to collect rent and gain access to labour. Consequently, these organizations would accommodate evicted people on some of their farms, charge them rent while simultaneously using their free labour on their other productive farms. Much like on Travers' farms, people who were considered 'useless' were summarily evicted. Willis and Wittingstall were in a good position because not only could they sell farms to others, they were also farmers themselves which gave them access to copious amounts of black labour. According to the KPNR,[47] they used to farm with cattle, citrus, cotton and tobacco.

Living conditions on TCL farms were difficult. The Secretary of Native Affairs himself noted that TCL's terms of residence were more onerous than those charged by the state. To put it into perspective, TCL charged 2 pounds for one adult male and a wife excluding grazing fees, while the state charged 30 shillings for a male including grazing rights for 10 large and 20 small mammals. The only way Mapulana could afford these newly imposed fees was by participating 'voluntarily' in the economy as labourers. In addition to expensive rents, as more people were being evicted to make space for white aspiring commercial farmers in the Lowveld, the farms released for black occupation, including Acornhoek, were becoming overcrowded. This prompted restrictions on the number of livestock black people could keep and the ploughing area (Niehaus, 1993). Conversely, Willis and Wittingstall, along with other white ex-soldiers, could develop commercial farms and amass the surplus-labour of black people. These men, who have been key in the formation of the KPNR, were thus also central in the subjugation of black people. As agents of TCL, they controlled swaths of land, imposed harsh living conditions for black people and were fingered in many evictions of Mapulana people in the Lowveld.

In this context, the Crookes brothers[48] bought the first farm in present-day KPNR from Willis and Wittingstall in 1936. When they were not out hunting in the Lowveld, the Crookes

[46] Letters, Natives Affairs Department
[47] Klaserie Private Nature Reserve website
[48] The Crookes brothers bought the first farm that makes up present day Klaserie Private Nature Reserve

ran a successful sugar mill in KwaZulu Natal. In their absence, Willis and Wittingstall would take care of the farm. Given that the pair had unlimited access to black labour, it is unsurprising that in 1938 the first camp in present-day KPNR was "built under his [Willis] and Whittingstall's supervision, using mainly female labour"[49]. Another camp was built in 1951 and Whittingstall "organised some locals to build the new wattle and daub huts just as [...] Willis had done [...] years before"[50]. In general, this is how black people feature in the history of conservation in the Lowveld, as unnamed local labour.

Similarly, in the Umbabat Private Nature Reserve, which shares an un-fenced border with KPNR and Kruger National Park, an unknown author remembers that around the early 1940s "it took three days to cut the road 20 miles in the direction of the Olifants River, using a squad of natives and a compass lent to them"[51]. Later in the story, while discussing the construction of a house on the property owned by Vi and her husband, the author states that

> it took Vi and the natives a year to make the cement blocks on the banks of the Tsiri River. Sand from the river was used and cement was brought in by any farmer who wished to exchange it for kraal manure – a 5-ton load of manure for carting in 100 bags of cement. The blocks were transported to the house site in a two wheeled donkey cart and sand and stones were brought up the hill using a wood sleight drawn by a donkey. African women carried pebbles in bowls on their heads to mix with the concrete. [...] The house was finally completed in 1958, built almost entirely by Vi and her labourers[52].

The female labour mentioned could not have been white women because according to the KPNR, the 1950s were also "the first time that women began to visit the camps. Before, amenities were so basic that it was not deemed suitable for the fairer folk"[53]. In contrast, the conditions were deemed good enough for black women to work on site. These narratives while demonstrating a historical black presence in the Lowveld, raise more questions than they answer: Who were these African women? What led to them working in present-day KPNR and Umbabat? Where did they live? And what has changed in contemporary labour conditions? While Willis and Wittingstall were just *two* men who supervised construction, and Vi, just *one* woman, there is a drove of unnamed black men and women — who built camps, houses and carried pebbles — whose names and biographies are unaccounted for when KPNR lists its pioneers and when Umbabat narrates its history. This is where we depart from Neumann (2017) who cautions that a historical analysis of conservation landscapes would reveal that primitive accumulation *leads to* the production of conservation spaces

[49] Klaserie Private Nature Reserve website
[50] Klaserie Chronicle no. 28 June 2014 An Old Timer Remembers The New Beginning, 14 (hereafter as Klaserie Chronicle 2014)
[51] Roodekrantz Recollections (retyped exactly from an original transcript) Angela Rowles (Circa 1980s) http://umbabat.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Roodekrantz-Recollections-1939.pdfsourced 15 02 21
[52] Ibid
[53] Klaserie Chronicle 2014, 14

instead of conservation being an act of primitive accumulation as some scholars have argued. At least in the case of some farms in the KPNR and Umbabat - conservation *did* generate the primitive accumulation of capital by exploiting black labour away from other activities that black people might have otherwise engaged in uncoerced. Furthermore, in line with the broader racist ideology of the time, conservation's primitive accumulation facilitated by Willis and Wittingstall reproduced a racialised and gendered division of labour.

Another Mapulana elder, Thabang, adds to giving us a sense of what life was like under Willis and Wittingstall. Thabang was born in 1929 on Bedford, a farm adjoining Travers' farm (see previous section), but his family soon left due to the labour tenancy arrangement. He remembers that

> in 1940 we arrived here [Acornhoek], there was no farming here, just a wholesale shop. The whites made you pay 25c, when you had chickens you paid with eggs [...] Willis in particular, who was owner of Acornhoek farm confiscated cattle from Mapulana and started selling it. [Later] they kicked us off and sent us to Nelspruit to work the farm of H Hall. He had a big farm. They had cabbage veggies, everything[54].

Claims that during evictions black people were also stripped of their livestock abound. This primitive accumulation entailed "accumulation of labor-power—'dead labor' in the form of stolen goods, and 'living labor' in the form of human beings made available for exploitation..." (Federici 2004: 64).

In the 1940s, Hall and Sons owned at least 8 farms in the Nelspruit area (130km away from Acornhoek). They had disputes with black people over rent, child labour and forced labour tenancy (Thornton, 2002). From Thabang's account and earlier excerpts from the KPNR it is clear that Willis and Wittingstall in their capacity as TCL agents were also labour brokers and thus key in maintaining an exploitative labour regime. Just like Travers, this duo, colluded with the colonial and apartheid state to strip black people, including Mapulana, of their land, livestock and autonomy. We now move to the conclusion by reflecting on white belonging as an important mechanism behind the reproduction and maintenance of primitive accumulation in the conservation mode of production.

[54] Interview Mapulana elder, Thabang 27 April 2018, Acornhoek

3.5 Conclusion

Kelly (2011) argued that analysing the creation *and* maintenance of protected areas through the primitive accumulation lens would shed light on the political economy of conservation. This chapter showed how representations of history by private nature reserves in the Lowveld reveal imperialist amnesia by invisibilising black history in the Lowveld region of South Africa, thereby indeed also maintaining primitive accumulation. We illuminated some of these erasures by documenting state-sanctioned, private industry spearheaded and white farmer actuated expulsions from lands that were expropriated for commercial agriculture and later transformed into private nature reserves. In some reserves, such as the KPNR, conservation is implicated directly in the original primitive accumulation.

The erasure of historical black presence is not unique to the reserves we discussed in this chapter. In the Lowvelds' MalaMala game reserve, Alasow (2020), documents a history of black presence dating back to the 1830s whereas the reserve website[55] narrates the history from the 1920s onwards and features land transactions between whites and the TCL. Curiously, the web page also documents a 'Historic Land Claim Transaction', however, from the website alone, it is unclear why a land claim was lodged to begin with. Similarly, Brooks (2005) traces how the rebranding of the Hluhluwe, in KwaZulu Natal into a 'wild', 'natural' space undermined older historical geographies. Race, as we have shown is often intertwined in the construction of these 'wild' spaces (Brahinsky et al., 2014).

We argue that today, this particular white belonging through land, animals and nature works consciously or unconsciously to annihilate processes that threaten production in the southern African style 'settler farm', and this way reproduces and maintains primitive accumulation. This echoes Bhandar's (2018) observation that property logics that maintain private ownership over land which is inherently racialised, are protected and enforced. Take, for instance, land claims in some of the reserves we mentioned earlier that share an unfenced border with Kruger National Park. Even in the event that some of these claims are legitimate, these lands are unlikely to ever be restituted to the community due to the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding between the Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs and the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (Mollett and Kepe, 2018). White belonging thus works in tandem with and informs political mechanisms such as this to maintain the separation of black people from land to ultimately secure the conservation mode of production.

In addition to land hoarding, conservation continues to generate primitive accumulation through the alienation of black labour in articulations of white belonging. This is achieved through the exploitation of low-wage conservation labourers, some of whom are the

[55] Malamala game reserve https://www.malamala.com/about/history-of-malamala Last Accessed 26 Februay 2021

descendants of evicted Mapulana. In addition, in chapter 5 we show that today, the conservation mode of production syphons the unpaid reproductive labour occurring in labourers' homes and communities while paying labourers barely enough to maintain themselves. Therefore, claims about empty lands and heroic pioneers in some of these nature reserves obscure often abhorrent labour conditions and persisting racialised and gendered divisions of labour. The latter was not worked out in detail in this chapter, and therefore the gendered division of labour in conservation still warrants further critical reflection.

The type of white belonging discussed in this chapter is exclusionary because it maintains inequality and reinforces racial and class fractures in contemporary South Africa. Conservationists thus need to urgently adopt less imperialist amnesiac ways of belonging because the status quo will not contribute to an equitable society. However, Fletcher (2012) cautions that even where colonialism *is* mentioned, this can work to disavow the actual implications by offering a cosmetic account. Nonetheless, amidst the global calls to decolonize institutions, conservation would also do well to reckon with its colonial history because "denying the racism of the past thwarts the connection between past and present—and the ongoing legacy of racialization today" (Hoelscher, 2003). Thus, acknowledging the colonial past and its endurance into the present is a crucial step towards a less racist conservation society.

Chapter 4

Conserving Inequality: how private conservation and property developers 'fix' spatial injustice in South Africa

This chapter is under review for publication in *Environment and Planning E* as:
Thakholi L., Büscher B. Conserving Inequality: how private conservation and property developers 'fix' spatial injustice in South Africa. It has been slightly amended for inclusion into the thesis.

Abstract

In 2016, South Africa launched its National Biodiversity Economy Strategy. This strategy aims to facilitate the development of a 'wildlife economy' as a solution to unemployment, loss of biodiversity and rural development. Central to the strategy is the role of private conservation organizations, who keenly posit their commercial model as the best way to achieve these objectives. This stands in sharp contrast to recent critiques that suggest that private conservation reinforces structural inequality by denying access to land and perpetuating unjust labour conditions. Using ethnographic data from the South African Lowveld region that includes the Kruger National Park, the chapter takes these points further by arguing that a rapidly growing alliance between private conservation and property developers actively conserve inequality by maintaining and even extending spatial injustice in the region. Two popular recent manifestations of this alliance in particular, share block systems that distribute ownership of access to real estate in private reserves and wildlife housing estates, have established new conservation-property linkages that entrench capitalist socioecological fixes. Not only do these initatives lead to further engrained spatial injustice, we conclude that this conservation-property alliance at the centre of the 'wildlife economy' also willingly sacrifices environmental sustainability on the altar of white conservation imaginations and private profit.

Key Words: spatial injustice, socioecological fix, property developer, wildlife estate, South Africa

4.1 Introduction

South Africa has long been a prime global wildlife destination. Home to the most iconic African wildlife species in sizable numbers and enabled by a thriving, modern tourism industry and infrastructure, the country is keen to further develop a 'wildlife economy' that brings in (foreign) investment, revenue, jobs and development. Arguably at the centre of much of this dynamism is a town called 'Hoedspruit', situated 63 km west of Kruger National Park (Figure 4.1). This self-titled 'wildlife haven' is located in the savannah bush of the Lowveld region and boasts the highest concentration of private nature reserves in South Africa. The town is surrounded by 172,000 hectares of private nature reserves that promise Big Five sightings, bush walks, game drives and luxury accommodation with splendid views of the Olifants River and the Little Drakensberg mountain range. In addition, the town is surrounded by residential wildlife estates, a type of gated community with preserved bushveld and wildlife. While there is significant commercial mango and citrus farming in the region, it is the wildlife economy and proximity to Kruger National Park that brings tourists and investors to Hoedspruit.

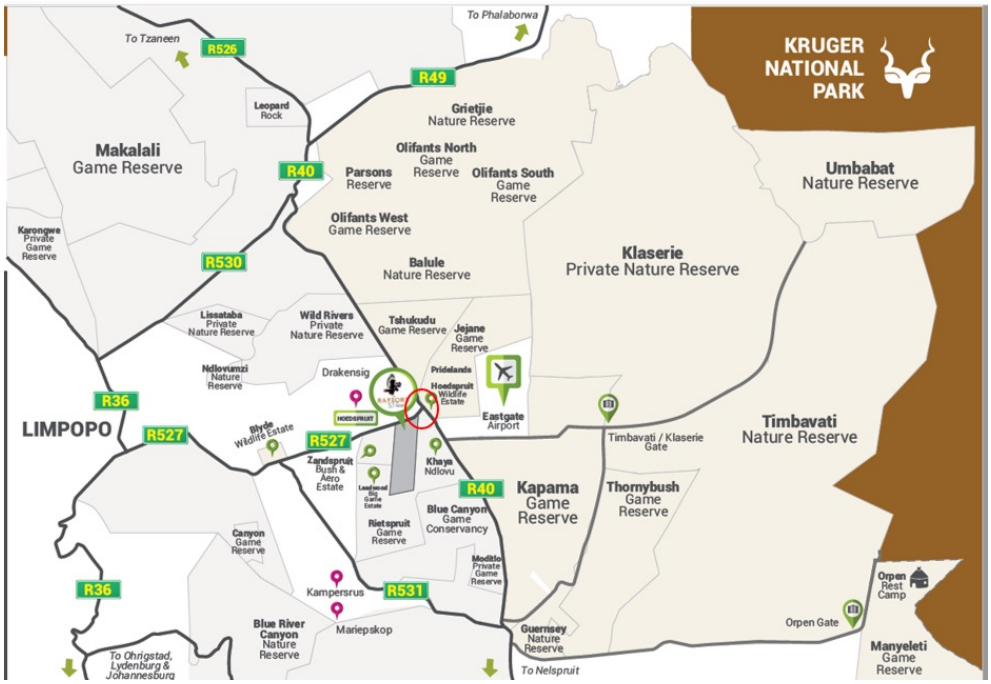

Figure 4.1: Map of Hoedspruit (red), surrounding estates and nature reserves (sourced from Raptors view wildlife Estate website, 2020)[56]

[56] https://raptorsview.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Raptors-View-Area-Map.pdf last accessed 26 April 21

This idyllic description of Hoedspruit and surrounding nature reserves – often found in promotional materials – masks the fact that the town, nature reserves and nearby ex-Bantustans have long been and continue to be fraught with property, labour and social tensions. These have deep historical and apartheid origins (Davis, 2014) that have left a scarred, highly unjust geography under the thin mythical veneer and promise of the wildlife economy. Spatial injustices that combine forced (historical) removal, structural racism, labour and other forms of discrimination and landlessness have never been properly addressed in this region yet are now rendered even more intractable due to the massive property and infrastructural investments resulting from the wildlife economy. The qualitative changes brought by these dynamics, as well as their effects, require urgent analysis. This is because the wildlife economy's façade, a booming luxury ecotourism industry fit with shopping and conference centres, airstrips, private security and telecommunications, has over the last years seen a much less familiar intensification of the alliance between private conservation and property developers. The effects of this alliance, we will show, are not merely the maintaining but a significant deepening of the region's spatial injustice.

While relations between private conservation and property developers go back a long way, their interests have more recently converged in several new conservation-property linkages like wildlife estates and 'share blocks' in private reserves. A share block is an "alternative form of property ownership for people wanting holiday homes on a game reserve in Hoedspruit. This allows property owners access to large traversing areas and shares resources with regards to managing the property. The property owners still have exclusive usage of their houses but it's the land and game drive areas that they share"[57]. Basically, it is about buying shares in a company that owns land in a private nature reserve and in return receiving exclusive access and enjoyment rights to a property on the reserve. A wildlife estate is a type of residential estate where wildlife roams free and where housing developments are combined with undeveloped wilderness areas for game viewing, walks and birding. Currently, six such estates have sprung up in and around Hoedspruit. While bringing significant investment and development dynamics, the implications of these large-scale infrastructural developments and property innovations in conservation spaces are yet to be explored.

The chapter argues that private developer-driven conservation urbanization has been invented and promoted in and around Hoedspruit with the explicit understanding that it would conserve inequality by maintaining and deepening racialised spatial injustice[58]. While

[57] http://www.century21wildlife.co.za/news/13594/hoedspruit-shareblocks/ last accessed 26 February 2021.

[58] Data for this research was collected in the Lowveld region of South Africa over the course of 16 months between 2016-2019. During this time, the first author was based in Hoedspruit and interviewed 150 people including government officials, rangers, guides, hospitality staff, trackers, land claimants, estate agents, residents, general workers and reserve managers. The first author also conducted four life histories with older participants and attended nature conservation meetings and conferences. Along with life histories, archival documents from the National Archives of South Africa in Pretoria were used to understand the history of the Lowveld. The second author has done research in and around the Kruger National Park since 2003 and did 5 research trips of 1-3 weeks in Hoedspruit and vicinity since 2016.

we are not saying that growing inequality has been the main objective of private developer-driven conservation, we do argue that their desire to enhance their wealth while playing into white imaginations of identity, security and love for wildlife would in the South African context always lead to entrenching, even exacerbating, inequality. Private conservationists and property developers are fully aware of this and, as we will show, deliberately strive to ward off attempts to redress spatial injustices. Furthermore, we argue that under the veneer of wilderness is a resource-intensive lifestyle that promotes unsustainable consumption.

To understand how this situation has come about, we investigate the implications of private developer-driven conservation spaces such as wildlife estates and share blocks in nature reserves as capitalist socioecological fixes. This idea is meant to "capture the ways in which the social relations and material and symbolic conditions of capitalist accumulation are reproduced through investments in landscapes that are simultaneously and always conjoined productions of space and nature" (Ekers and Prudham, 2017: 1371). The fix element here is important, as combined forms of white capital and white conservation imaginations get sunk into the land to reproduce complex and overlapping judicial, ownership and property infrastructures. The complexity and 'share' co-dependence of different actors ensures a fixity that creates spatial forms that become (further) entrenched, in that they become (even) more difficult to transform.

We believe these recent dynamics are critical in understanding "the underlying power relations that displace people and that re-entrench severe social inequalities unfolding in the context, and in the name of biodiversity conservation" (Mollett and Kepe, 2018: 1). They are equally critical in understanding "how spatial relations participate in justice claims" (Williams, 2018: 6). In order to connect these two elements – spatial justice and capitalist power relations – we begin the chapter by first building on theorizations of capitalist socioecological fixes and extending these to include spatial justice. This is followed by a history of the development of Hoedspruit to expose the origins of spatial injustice in the region. Next, we focus on how private conservationists and property developers have innovated on older mechanisms through wildlife estates and share blocks to maintain and reinforce white control over land, animals and labour and, in a very concrete way, 'fix' spatial inequalities into the social-ecological landscape. We end by discussing these dynamics within the context of Hoedspruit's overall development to conclude that conserving inequality is not the only perverse effect of the new attempts to combine private conservation and property development: this type of conservation urbanization at the centre of the 'wildlife economy' also willingly sacrifices environmental sustainability on the altars of white conservation imaginations, consumption culture and private profit.

4.2 Socioecological conservation fixes and spatial (in)justice

To understand how conservation-property linkages 'fix' spatial inequalities into social-ecological landscapes, we need to start with a basic tension in Marx's concept of fixed capital, namely that between mobile-immobile or stability-change. According to Harvey (2001: 27) "the category of fixed capital in Marxian theory refers to capital that is embedded in some asset or thing (such as machinery) which is not directly or even indirectly consumed in production (as are raw materials or energy inputs) but which gets used up (and worn out) over several production cycles". These are machines, infrastructures and the like that allow for the circulation of value yet stay within the sphere of production and as such only indirectly produce surplus-value. But there is, of course, a double meaning of 'fixed' here, as Harvey (2001: 27) emphasises:

> Note that the term "fixed" in this case refers to the way capital is locked up and committed to a particular physical form for a certain time-period. But a distinction must be drawn between fixed capital that is mobile and that which is not. Some fixed capital is embedded in the land (primarily in the form of the built environment or more broadly as 'second nature') and therefore fixed in place. This capital is "fixed" in a double sense (tied up in a particular object like a machine and pinned down in place).

Harvey refers to the example of an aeroplane as a form of fixed capital that is highly mobile, but that needs immobile forms of fixed capital (airports) to function. Hence, there is a more central tension here noted by Harvey, namely that for capital to move across space and circulate, it needs fixed capital that is highly immobile, which is precisely why urbanization is so important in the broader geography of global capitalism. But since the ultimate point about fixed capital is its particular use in the production process and not (merely) the tension between mobile and immobile, there is another tension that requires emphasis, namely that "production and consumption are increasingly imprisoned within fixed ways of doing things and increasingly committed to specific lines of production" (Harvey, 2006: 220-221). It is both these connotations to 'fixed' that matter in this chapter: immobilized into space and 'fixed ways of doing things'. These are also central to Harvey's understanding of 'spatial fixes': ways in which spaces get used in order to allow capital to move across space and seek geographical ways out of its contradictions, most especially that of overaccumulation.

In turn, we need to highlight how these fixes relate to broader ideas of shaping landscapes and nature. Here we build on Ekers and Prudham (2017), who take Harvey's concept of the spatial fix further by considering its social and ecological implications. They consider the spatial fix as a metabolic process, such that investment in landscapes following the crisis of over-accumulation should be seen "as an important site where the production of space and the production of nature happen together as differentiated but co-constituted

unities" (2017, 2). In their conceptualization of the socioecological fix, they put Harvey's spatial fix in conversation with Smith's (2010) production of nature to "capture the ways in which the social relations and material and symbolic conditions of capitalist accumulation are reproduced through investments in landscapes that are simultaneously and always conjoined productions of space and nature" (Ekers and Prudham, 2017, 2).

This work further demonstrates that socioecological fixes are often initiated to counter or alleviate environmental degradation, biodiversity loss or fossil fuel consumption (amongst others), but in reality exacerbate pre-existing inequalities, power asymmetries and unsustainable practices (Clay, 2019). In this way, a third connotation to 'fix' important in the chapter emerges, namely that of 'fixing a problem' or, more specifically, a 'quick-fix' that seems to respond to a problem but does not actually engage its root causes. The socioecological fixes we consider in this chapter, wildlife estates[59] and share blocks, are a case in point: they are often posited as solutions to curb environmental degradation by preserving biodiversity. Yet, as we will show, they do so by emphasizing certain (imagined) historic-spatial moments – in this case people-free, abundant wilderness – while ignoring, and thereby 'naturalizing', other historic-spatial processes – in this case those that transformed spatial arrangements into sites for capital accumulation. The result, we show, is spatial injustice. According to Dikeç, spatial injustice should be seen as "the idea that the very production of space, which is inherently a conflictual process, not only manifests various forms of injustice but actually produces and reproduces them (thereby maintaining established social relations of domination and oppression)" (2001: 1788). In the case of conservation, this means building on a long historical pattern of spatial injustice, which have manifested in evictions (Brooks, 2005; Hitchcock et al., 2011; Lunstrum and Ybarra, 2018), increasing antagonisms between nation-states (Trogisch and Fletcher, 2020), undermining land restitution (Ramutsindela, 2015; Ramutsindela and Shabangu, 2018) and the displacement of environmental concerns from one site to another (Deutsch, 2018), amongst others. In the 'quick-fix' marketing of conservation and its benefits for biodiversity, these issues are often ignored or downplayed.

This chapter contributes to this body of work by critically exploring the production of space and nature in exclusive, capital intensive wildlife estates and share blocks in the Lowveld region of South Africa. We privilege the role of private property developers whose decisions about where and when to fix capital has significant implications. In the literature, this has been shown for the built environment in cities (Charney, 2003a, 2003b), tourism destinations (Yrigoy, 2014) but less so for conservation landscapes. The role of property developers in co-creating conservation landscapes has thus far been under appreciated because other actors like NGOs (Brockington and Scholfield, 2010; Chapin, 2004),

[59] Harvey (2006: 205) states that "only instruments of labour actually used *to facilitate the production of surplus value* are classified as fixed capital" [italics added]. By this definition, houses are not fixed capital because they do not produce surplus value. Nonetheless some houses in wildlife estates are used for short term rentals, while some estates even have lodges. Consequently, wildlife estates do produce surplus value.

philanthropists (Holmes, 2015; Koot and Fletcher, 2019) and development banks (Büscher, 2013; Milgroom and Spierenburg, 2008) have often been at the forefront of channelling investment into conservation landscapes. However, as the following sections will show, when South African, Dutch and Danish private property developers invest in new types of conservation landscapes they reproduce racialised spatial injustices which ultimately conserve inequality. In these discussions, the three connotations of 'fix' highlighted in this section will be illustrated empirically.

4.3 Historicizing spatial injustice in Hoedspruit

> "Hoedspruit is today the center of an intensive farming area and comprises approximately 85 farms within a 10-mile radius. The main products of the area are rice, tomatoes, vegetables, citrus and fruits" (BP Southern Africa, 1962)[60]

In 1961 BP Southern Africa injected a fixed capital investment of 44,000 ZAR to establish a petroleum and paraffin depot on a portion of Berlin farm in Hoedspruit. Foreseeing future demand as a result of mining in Phalaborwa and the growth of commercial farming activities along the Blyde River (west of Hoedspruit), BP leased land in Hoedspruit to operate a depot that would supply petroleum products to the region. In addition to BP, Caltex and Shell-operated on the same premises and together sold approximately 100,000 gallons of petroleum per month. Over 55 years later, Hoedspruit and its environment are still a centre of intensive farming and mining, but in terms of what draws attention to the area, the wildlife and nature-based tourism economies have decidedly taken over. In order to understand spatial injustice in the region, it is critical to understand this transition but also how the farming and wildlife sectors have co-evolved.

The establishment of the depot came years after hundreds of Mapulana families had been evicted from surrounding farms to nearby Bantustans: areas legally set aside for exclusive black occupation during apartheid. Hoedspruit and surrounding farms were located outside of Bantustans so black people could not own land legally or reside there permanently. While many were evicted, a few Mapulana were retained on the white-owned farms as labour tenants who worked and in return could live on the farm and keep a few livestock. However, due to mechanization and capital growth, some farmers in the Hoedspruit area replaced labour tenancy with waged labour (Ritchken, 1995). The BP depot thus came at an opportune moment, apart from some labourers and their families, the land had been rid of black people and their livestock, thus creating space for white agriculture. Moreover, state subsidies (Arrighi et al., 2010), cheap labour (Mather, 1995), and water from the Blyde River made farming a lucrative endeavour, holding many promises for white farmers. Less than

a year after operating, BP was already looking to expand the depot indicating the growing need for petroleum and paraffin in the region[60].

As a result of these developments, Hoedspruit and surrounding farms became highly profitable while evictions created overcrowding in the Bantustans (Niehaus et al., 2001). In 1970, the Transvaal Board for the Development of Peri-Urban Areas prescribed the Hoedspruit area under the Bantu (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No. 25 1945 and the Bantu Labour Act No. 67 1964[61] The Bantu Consolidation Act along with amended policies[62] introduced 'influx control' in urban areas to control the number of black people in cities. Unless born in the urban area or a permanent resident, black people could only live in the proclaimed area as labourers upon being issued a permit. The Black/Bantu Labour Act on the other hand stipulated that Africans would only be employed in the city through the state labour bureau.

Both policies, read within the broader context of the segregationist policies of the apartheid regime meant that only white people belonged as full citizens in Hoedspruit. Black people's movement on the other hand was severely monitored and their residence subject to their employment conditions. That is, only when performing labour, could a black body occupy space in Hoedspruit and surrounding white-owned farms. In a very real sense, then, these developments 'fixed' both the spatial base for the growth of capital and social relations in support of the same. These restrictions on movement and residency were compounded by evictions from present-day Hoedspruit (Davis, 2014).

From the 1960s, the above indicated transformation started when some whites residing closer to the Kruger National Park abandoned livestock farming in favour of wildlife ranching. In present-day Kapama private nature reserve, bonsamara cattle were abandoned in favour of game farming due to harsh environmental conditions and predators[63]. Similarly, on Klaserie private nature reserve "after 1930, cattle ranching was attempted but problems with pests, predation and marketing led to most of the area coming under conservation management during the 1970s" (Walker et al., 1987: 385). In the Timbavati reserve, it is stated that land use changes were prompted by a realization that some activities could lead to habitat degradation[64]. Today, it is widely accepted that livestock farming along with hunting decimated wildlife populations and degraded the land (Carruthers, 2008; Kreuter et al., 2010).

[60] Letter from BP Southern Africa to The Provincial Secretary RE; Application under Section 2(d) of ordinance 20 of 1957 as amended 4th December 1962

[61] Government Gazette No. 2962 31 December 1970

[62] The Bantu (urban Areas) Consolidation Act 1945 was repealed by Natives Law Amendment Act of 1952

[63] Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment: Phase 1 Investigation for the Development of Lodges, Roads and other Tourist Infrastructure in Kapama Private Game Reserve, Maruleng Local Municipality, Mopani District Municipality, Limpopo Province. Prepared by Francois P Coetzee,

[64] https://timbavati.co.za/our-history/ Last accesses 05 March 2021

While wildlife reserves cite an appreciation of nature as a catalyst for land use changes, farm conversions have also been attributed to "legislative change that allowed private landowners to utilize and manage wildlife on their land without government permits" (Kreuter et al., 2010: 510). During apartheid, this essentially meant that only whites could utilize and keep wildlife legally. This is reflected in various policies including the Game Ordinance No. 23 of 1949 that prohibited the issuing of hunting permits in areas designated for blacks. Similarly, the Vermin Destruction Ordinance No. 25 of 1949 made clear that only 'Europeans' may create a 'vermin hunting club'. While we cannot ascertain the rate at which these policies were enforced, there are records in the archive of blacks convicted of poaching. Commenting on game protectionism in the Transvaal in the early 1900s, Carruthers (1988:52) notes that "game legislation seems to have provided increased control over rural labour and assisted in its proletarianization". Essentially, whites could legally monetise game whereas blacks were barred from even hunting problem animals, which, as Carruthers notes, contributed to their dependence on waged labour.

In addition to game legislation, international sanctions against the apartheid regime and the withdrawal of state subsidies made livestock farming less lucrative for white commercial farmers (Carruthers, 2008). All these conditions, coupled with the growing tourism industry (Dlamini, 2020) made wildlife farming all the more attractive. The first farm conversions in this area began in the late 1950s with the declaration of a private reserve which was later incorporated into Kapama private game reserve. In the 1960s alone, over ten private nature reserves were gazetted in the area; the size of the reserves ranged from 1,300ha to 52,000ha. The farm conversions were followed by the erection of fences, (re)introduction of wildlife and the construction of lodges to cater for the growing tourism industry.

Through all these changes and although Hoedspruit continued to be the centre of livestock, cash crop and wildlife ranching, it remained nothing more than a *dorpie* (small town). Ultimately, capital investment in the small town, irrigation farms and later private nature reserves was enabled by the apartheid state which resulted in the uneven geography of this region. From this account, it is clear that conservation was not just a beneficiary of a racialized property and labour regime; the emerging wildlife economy of the 1960s was *contingent* on black people being absent from farms yet available for labour, all within a geography rendered suitable for capital accumulation. At the same time, the production of nature *within* these private spaces necessitated investment in tourism development, property infrastructures such as lodges and bush camps and, importantly, infrastructures *outside* of reserves that facilitate tourists' mobility and enjoyment of nature. The socioecological processes that produced the Lowveld landscape and nature have 'fixed' the farm as a site of production, one which is steeped, as the next section will show, in white conservation and property imaginations about pristine wilderness.

4.4 'Fixing' biodiversity (loss) to 'fix' spatial injustices

The co-constitutive relationship between fixed capital and the production of nature is readily apparent in share blocks and wildlife estates, which can be regarded as socioecological fixes par excellence. These private developer and conservation driven developments are part of a suite of initiatives meant to fix biodiversity loss and habitat degradation by investing in large scale residential and tourist developments while simultaneously preserving 'wilderness' areas. We begin with wildlife estates.

Hoedspruit is surrounded by six wildlife estates (~7,300ha): residential estates where wildlife such as ungulates and sometimes – in Big Five estates – predators roam free (Figure 4.1). Typically, a wildlife estate has undeveloped wilderness areas where residents can enjoy game drives, bush walks and bird watching (Table 4.1). The first wildlife estate, Raptors View, was pioneered by a prominent South African property developer in 2000. Shortly after that, more estates were built in the area by Dutch, Belgian and South African developers. Apart from the wildlife, these estates operate in similar manner to 'regular' estates, including security-controlled access, architectural guidelines, levies and homeowners' associations.

Table 4.1: Wildlife estates in and around Hoedspruit

Name of Wildlife Estate	Total Size	Size Wilderness Area (i.e undeveloped game viewing area)	No. of stands	Land claim
Moditlo wildlife estate	3,300ha	1,300ha	450 (approx 1ha each)	Yes[65]
Zandspruit bush and aero estate	1,000ha	650ha	200 (0.4 - 1.5ha each)	yes
Hoedspruit wildlife estate	680ha	unknown	450 (.5ha each)	unknown
Blyde (17km from Hoedspruit)	394ha	unknown	154 (~0.4ha each)	yes[66]
Raptors View	1,000ha	700ha	305 (1 ha each)	Yes[67] 'withdrawn'
Leadwood big game estate	984 ha	unknown	94 (1ha each)	Yes[68] Settled

The estates range from high end to 'affordable'. They offer a range of services and amenities including schools and due to rapid further development of Hoedspruit town are now near shopping centres, a gym and restaurants. Whether they have tarred roads or not, all wildlife estates promote low-density living while some even have tourist lodges. For example, of the 1,000ha in the Dutch developed Zandspruit aero estate, 650ha is an undeveloped

[65] 29 January 2010 Government Gazette 32898 Notice 57
[66] 29 January 2010 Government Gazette 32898 Notice 57
[67] 15 April 2005 Government Gazette No. 27470 Notice 536
[68] 15 April 2005 Government Gazette No. 27470 Notice 536

wilderness area. Due to low-density living and the presence of wildlife, property developers argue that wildlife estates maintain ecological integrity and promote conservation goals. This is captured by the Raptors View website which states that the estate "has a strong focus on conservation. The wildlife and vegetation need to be monitored and decisions made to ensure that this fragile system remains sustainable"[69].

The 'fragile system' in question includes a network of fibre optic cables, sewage infrastructures such as wastewater disposal pipes and a sewage treatment plant. In addition, built into every estate are roads, freshwater pipes, storm water drainages and electricity cables and transformers. Some estates also have artificial dams and wetlands, watering holes, boreholes reservoirs and tanks. Furthermore, some, including Hoedspruit wildlife estate, used to be cattle farms but are now "stocked with a large variety of plains game"[70]. To transform the degraded veld into serviced residential plots necessitated investment in the fixed capital, landscape architects to design the layout, wildlife to stock the estates and, of course, fences to facilitate 'security'. Consequently, when the Hoedspruit wildlife estate architectural guidelines refer to "the natural environment" or "natural habitat of the game" (HWE HOA, 2020: 3) it negates the "past exertions of living labor" (Ekers and Prudham, 2018: 23) and the labour that maintains the modern infrastructure necessary for tourists and residents.

As the previous section showed, the transformation of the Lowveld landscape has been ongoing for a long time. However, what is new about wildlife estates is the seemingly seamless convergence of private developer and conservation interests. Furthermore, what sets this development apart from previous ones is the influx of permanent residents and tourists as a result of amenities and infrastructure such as schools, airports, shopping complexes and lodges which have made living in and visiting 'the bush' possible for families with children, as well. To be clear, we are not suggesting that the development of Hoedspruit town was caused solely by wildlife estates, but one cannot ignore the material changes that would inevitably follow the servicing of 1164 residential stands (of which some are still vacant) within estates. Capital sinking to produce space and fix nature in wildlife estates transformed the *dorpie* with one petrol station into a town with five shopping complexes, two petrol stations, many restaurants, a car rental company and at least three banks.

Not only did the development of residential estates transform the town, but it also reproduced and often even reinforced the apartheid social relations discussed in the previous section. To make this point we zoom into the Dutch-South African developed, Zandspruit bush and aero estate which boasts a 1km runway. According to a public official, a deal to purchase land in what is now Zanspruit fell through when someone outbid the municipality upon learning about plans to develop low-cost housing[71]. This was implicitly corroborated by a

[69] https://raptorsview.co.za/environment/
[70] https://raptorsview.co.za/environment/
[71] Interview, 25 January 2017, Hoedspruit

senior Zandspruit employee who noted that it was 'very fortunate' that the South African developer purchased the land because low-cost housing "would have killed the town", due to a massive influx of poor people, which according to him would have been a 'mess with too many houses, and chaos'[72]. Given South Africa's racialised inequality, poor people in this case essentially means black people. A few other developers, estate agents and residents have echoed similar sentiment about the undesirability of low-cost housing (Koot et al., forthcoming). But some, as the public official noted, have taken it a step further by actively sabotaging any efforts to undo the spatial inequality of Hoedspruit and surrounding areas.

In addition to Zandspruit, another revealing case pertains to Hoedspruit wildlife estate (HWE), the most 'affordable' and most 'densely' populated estate in the area. The estate was developed by Hannes Wessels of Boschpoort Ondernemings (Pty)[73], a since liquidated South African property developer. In 2020, a 2-bedroom house on a 0.5ha stand would cost 2.8 million ZAR on average. This demonstrates that only well-to-do persons could buy into the most affordable estate. Unsurprisingly, most of the HWE residents are white middle to upper-class families who enjoy access control and 24-hour security in the bushveld. The picturesque estate, borders portion 7 of the farm Welverdiend 243KT, home to the Bangu and Mokoena family. As mentioned, during apartheid, some families were evicted to Bantustans in Bushbuckridge while others were retained as farm labourers and labour tenants on commercial white-owned farms. Of the families that were retained, the Bangu and Mokoena have been the most persistent. Their story reveals how property developers and conservation imperatives reproduce spatial injustices.

In 2007, Welverdiend 243KT was sold to Boschpoort Ondernemings (Pty) Ltd of Hannes Wessels, the developer of HWE[74]. Shortly after that, the Bangu and Mokoena received an eviction notice because "Wessels wanted to build lodges"[75]. The families opposed the eviction in court[76]. Meanwhile, as the court proceedings ensued, buffalos were introduced, thus making life untenable and unsafe for them. Finally, in July 2007 the court ordered that the families could be evicted and the structures (Figure 4.2) that Boschpoort built were sufficient. In the court proceeding, Boschpoort argued that the Bangu and Mokoena were moved in order to protect them from buffalo. Conversely, the initial environmental management plan of HWE stated that buffalos "impacted on the carefree movements of residents and their children. The buffalo however were soon relocated to the benefit of the safety of the residents"[77]. The Bangu and Mokoena were not afforded the same courtesy. Rather, in the process of creating space for wildlife and residents of HWE, their property was destroyed, their lives were put in danger and their dignity trampled on.

[72] Participatory observation, (second author), 30 August 2017, Hoedspruit
[73] https://www.engelvoelkers.com/en-za/hoedspruit/hoedspruit-wildlife-estate-information/ Last accessed 06 March 2021
[74] Hannes Wessels -the developer of HWE- through his family trust owned 50% of Boschpoort. See Case Number 83560/17 heard in the high court of South Africa Gauteng Division, Pretoria
[75] Interview Bangu elder 8 February 2017, Hoedspruit
[76] The land claims court of South Africa held at Phalaborwa case number: LCC74/20057
[77] http://www.engelvoelkershoedspruit.co.za/c/hoedspruit-wildlife-estate/1163 last accessed 7 March 2021

Figure 4.2: One of the four structures that were originally built by Boschpoort Ondernemings (Pty) Ltd. (picture by the first author, 2019).

Today, the Mokoena and Bangu live on a fenced-in, 2 ha plot in the corner of Welverdiend, next to HWE. They have one communal tap and have since added corrugated iron and wooden structures to the original units that Wessels built for them. With the remainder of the plot, they built wooden shacks which they rent to people that work as cashiers, gardeners, domestic workers and waitresses in Hoedspruit. Their presence in Hoedspruit echoes the 1970s when Hoedspruit was gazetted under the Bantu areas consolidation act. The act resulted in evictions of black people and their 'petrification' as labourers in Hoedspruit. What sets this eviction apart from earlier evictions is how greenwashed property developments become a judicially sanctioned base upon which to erase black people from space.

In the environmental management plan of HWE[78], it is stated that one of the threats to the estate is

> low-cost housing on neighbouring properties [Bangu and Mokoena plot] resulting in property devaluation, theft, poaching and increased pressure on the water resource. This will in turn have a negative impact on the management of fauna & flora of the estate, causing the estate to bend/change the rules for the sake of investment, and to the detriment of conservation (HWE EMP, 2015: 22).

[78] Hoedspruit Wildlife estate environmental management plan prepared by Bateleur Ecological Services, 2015

The glaring irony here is that over 100 people on Welverdiend share one communal tap while every 2-4 bedroom house or lodge on the HWE has a flush toilet and shower while others have manicured lawns and swimming pools. The lifestyle in HWE and other estates, while masked under the veneer of sustainability is far more resource-intensive than the Mokoena and Bangu settlement. The infrastructure, frequent travel of residents[79], high consumption lifestyles, dependency on coal-fired energy and many SUVs arguably make wildlife estates the opposite of ecofriendly (Büscher et al., forthcoming).

The wildlife estates illustrate that conservation principles (flora and fauna management) and property developer goals (property value, investment) become entangled in the production of space, which conserves forms of inequality through spatial injustice. Read within the historical context discussed in the previous section, the sinking of white capital and white conservation ideologies (Koot et al., forthcoming) into space exposes a contradiction in this ideology. First, the overemphasis on wildlife on the one hand and the disproportionate use of resources on the other. Second, an idealization of a people free environment, which applies to certain people only. The next section shows how this ideology is immobilised in conservation spaces.

4.5 Mooring conservation in place

In this section, we zoom out of wildlife estates to consider the multiple overlapping legal agreements in share blocks to further underscore how capital investment in conservation spaces conserves inequality. There are numerous share blocks around Hoedspruit, mostly on Balule nature reserve and Umbabat private nature reserve, both of which are open to the Kruger National Park (KNP). Share blocks are regulated under the Share Blocks Control Act, 59 of 1980. In a share block scheme, the company owns the immovable property and the shareholders have a right to use an assigned unit and the land. Time spent in a unit is usually determined based on the number of shares one owns. This type of arrangement is ideal for investors and holiday makers because maintenance costs are shared.

Unlike wildlife estates, share blocks in the Lowveld have been in development since the 1980s, beginning with the construction of two share blocks in present-day Umbabat private nature reserve. Both of these were developed by a prominent property developer in Hoedspruit. Share blocks also require similar infrastructural developments as wildlife estates. One conservationist suggested that "the advantage of this type of development is that it is very nodal. So you will have one node where all your bulk services go such as power lines, telephone lines, roads [...] and the rest of the landscape is open wilderness"[80].

[79] Personal observations by both authors. One Raptors View resident interviewed by the second author had at least 30-40 KLM pottery presents that one receives when taking a business class flight with KLM on display, while many other residents regularly, if not weekly, travel to Johannesburg for business.

[80] Interview local conservationist 22 November 2017 Hoedspruit

In addition to this infrastructure, ongoing maintenance of roads, picnic sites and veld clearing facilitate continued capital circulation and the reproduction of nature for the benefit of shareholders and visitors. When perusing through the share block websites it is clear that the main incentive for potential investors is the unfenced Kruger landscape. This is best captured by the N'tsiri share block in Umbabat which states that the share block is a

> 3651 hectare Big Five conservation reserve where wildlife roams freely across the unfenced borders with the Kruger National Park (on our Northern boundary), and the Klaserie and Timbavati Nature Reserves (to the West and South) – in total, an unfenced wilderness area of over 2 million hectares [...] Membership is limited to ensure that visiting N'tsiri remains a truly unique bushveld escape[81].

We argue that being part of the Kruger landscape has given private reserves the legal and financial muscle to 'fix' their investment, land ownership and conservation land use in place. To build up to this argument, it is worth briefly describing some of the legal agreements between and within private nature reserves. We use Jejane private nature reserve, which has 152 shareholders,[82] to illustrate the plethora and complexity of these legal agreements. Jejane Private Nature Reserve (JPNR) (2.070ha) consists of Vienna Game Farm Proprietary Limited, Vienna Game Farm Share Block Proprietary Limited and Jejane Game Farm Share Block Proprietary Limited. A proprietary limited is a private company governed by the Companies Act, No 71 of 2008 of South Africa. JPNR has 47 stands and comprises portions of the farms Vienna 207 KT and Antwerpen 60 KU. JPNR, along with Nyala and Mossco farms, make up Mohlabetsi South Nature Reserve (MSNR) (Figure 4.3) which is located within Balule nature reserve (55.000ha) a constituted voluntary association of 12 regions (including MSNR) governed by a constitution. Balule nature reserve is part of the Associated Private Nature Reserves (APNR) a group of unfenced private nature reserves along the western border of KNP. The APNR not only has a collective management plan, but each reserve within the APNR is also a signatory to the 2018 Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) Co-operative Agreement which aims to "ensure that landowners within the open system are able to continue to enjoy the current use of the land *in perpetuity*, creating a legacy for their families and the region in general"[83] [italics added]. The GLTFCA itself is a treaty binding agreement between South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. This essentially means that portions of the farms Vienna 207 KT and Antwerpen 60 KU have been 'fixed' into conservation land use in perpetuity.

[81] https://www.ntsiri.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Ntsiri_Map_041119.pdf last accessed7 March 2021
[82] https://www.jejane.co.za/about/jejane-today last accessed 7 March 2021
[83] Understanding the greater kruger / gltfca cooperative agreement last accessed 7 March 2021http://www.sanparks.org/assets/docs/news/2019/gltfca-cooperative-agreement.pdf last accessed 7 March 2021

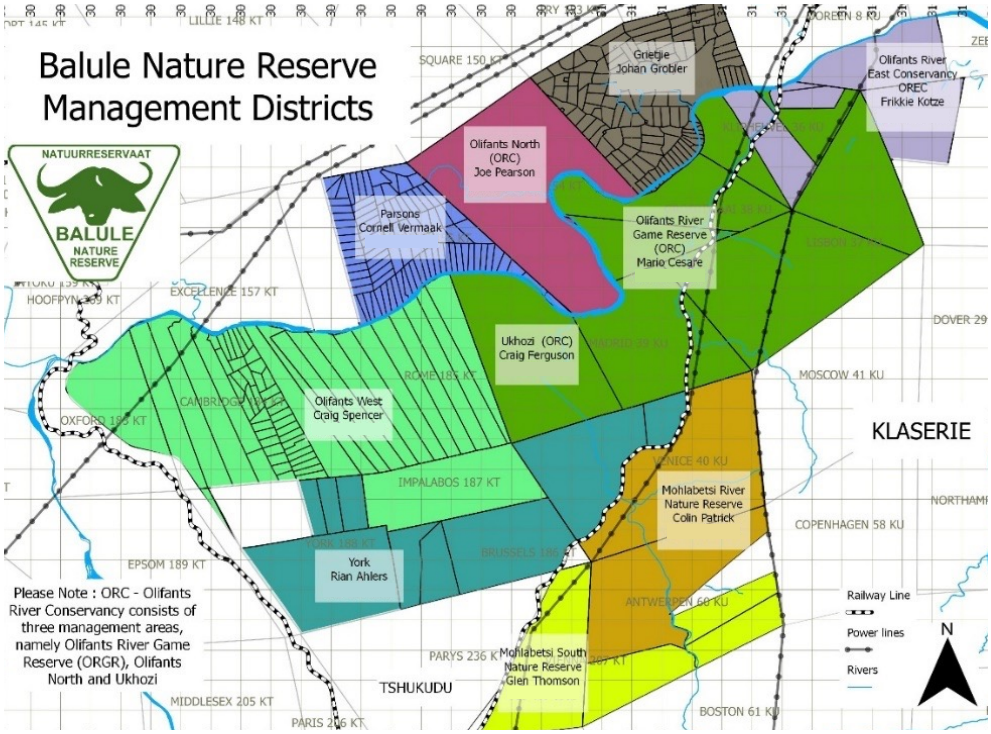

Figure 4.3: Location of Mohlabetsi south nature reserve (yellow) within Balule game reserve[84]

We have used the example of just one share block in Balule nature reserve to illustrate the legal entanglements in the landscape. There are at least six other private nature reserves that are part of the GLTFCA Co-operative Agreement, each of which comprises a mosaic of farms. In addition, some of these, including Umbabat private nature reserve have at least four share blocks inundated in a complex array of arrangements like JPNR. These arrangements are enabled by private property provisions which empower mainly white land owners to dictate how they participate in conservation, if at all (Lenggenhager and Ramutsindela, 2021).

Some of the listed benefits of the co-operative agreement include: value of land and brand associated to KNP, and securing of existing land use through declaration process[85]. Regarding the value of land, from 2003-2007 21ha in parts of Balule went for 600.000 ZAR to 2.200.000 ZAR: "...the reason for the increase in investment value is largely due to rarity and high demand for people wanting to own a part of the Kruger Park"[86]. The co-operative agreement, other legally binding agreements and the value of the land moors conservation-

[84] https://alchetron.com/Balule-Nature-Reserve last accessed 7 March 2021
[85] Understanding the greater kruger/gltfca cooperative agreement last accessed 7 March 2021http://www.sanparks.org/assets/docs/news/2019/gltfca-cooperative-agreement.pdf last accessed 7 March 2021
[86] http://www.century21wildlife.co.za/news/15845/balule-nature-reserve/

as-capital-accumulation in place. To disentangle an individual farm out of the 2 million ha KNP landscape and overlapping judicial infrastructures is near impossible. Therefore, share block purport "to manage [...] sustainable conservation of natural resources..."[87] while simultaneously immobilizing conservation in the Lowveld which ultimately delegitimizes other claims to land. We conclude by discussing the tensions that this analysis opens.

4.6 Conclusion

We explored wildlife estates and share blocks as socioecological fixes by privileging three connotations of 'fix'. First, wildlife estates and share blocks purport to 'fix nature' in response to global environmental degradation. They do this by evoking notions of a historical pristine environment that ought to be 'restored'. In that sense, the 'fix' in the socioecological fix is not only spatial but also temporal, that is, these conservation spaces "are historically and culturally contingent representations of a particular nature aesthetic" (Neumann, 1998: 11). However, parts of the Lowveld landscape were settled permanently by black people before the settlers arrived. Moreover, as this chapter has shown, this region has always been in flux, thus notions of a historical pristine nature, are a fallacy conjured up to maintain white ownership over land. Furthermore, notions of 'wilderness' and 'natural', negates all the infrastructures meant to facilitate the transformations that enable and fix accumulation into space.

In addition to these contradictions, the quick fix presented by conservation and property developers also poses other challenges for biodiversity because some estates including HWE[88] and Raptors[89] overstock wildlife, arguably so that residents and tourists have frequent animal sightings. This practice is known to have adverse impacts on the savannah bushveld and puts pressure on an already dry region. Furthermore, we have observed residents feeding wildlife which is strictly forbidden in all estates because it can habituate animals thus causing injuries. In addition, as the Department of Provincial and Local Government (2007) has noted, luxury residential developments, in a dry area such as the Lowveld, puts high pressure on water services. Finally, the appeal of wildlife estates in Hoedspruit is also based on the accessibility by air via the East Gate airport and many other landing strips within estates and reserves. While the magnitude might be difficult to quantify, the implications of flying into conservation spaces on the environment cannot be ignored. Consequently, it is not likely that estates have a net positive contribution to the environment writ large. After all, conservation-property developers will go to any lengths to enable high-modern, consumption-driven lifestyles and hence willingly sacrifice environmental sustainability on the altar of white conservation imaginations and private profit.

[87] Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate EMP 2015 – Compiled by Bateleur Ecological Services
[88] Hoedspruit Wildlife Estate EMP 2015 – Compiled by Bateleur Ecological Services
[89] Ecological Monitoring: Raptors View compiled by Dr. Mike Peel 2017

This leads logically to the second connotation, which entails fixing to a geographical location. By submerging the farms within share blocks into complex legal arrangements, conservationists-cum-property developers ensure that they immobilize conservation in space and in turn use this to resist land claims. This is evidenced by the opposition of Jejane game farm share block to a land claim[90]. Amongst some of the reasons cited in the land claims court, is the issue of 'restorability', that is, it is contented that the land "cannot be feasibly restored. It is also accepted that some land can only be *restored subject to present land uses*"[91] [italics added]. Read in light of the multiple complex legal arrangements we discussed, it is unsurprising that private land owners are resisting land claims based on feasibility.

Third, we showed that these qualitative transformations are not merely unintended outcomes. Rather, socioecological fixes "secure the conditions and forces of production necessary for facilitating the accumulation of capital" (Ekers and Prudham, 2018: 26). This reveals capitalisms' propensity to continue to inscribe on the black racialised body the mark of exploitable labour. This is not unique to South Africa. In Tanzania and Kenya, Brankamp and Daley (2020, 116) show that "colonial conceptions and management of African bodies as labor has crucially informed postcolonial understandings of belonging and mobility". While they make this observation to analyse contemporary labour migration in East Africa, it is crucial to observe how capitalism and its fixes under democratic states construct black bodies as 'hardy' labour, such that black peoples belonging in space becomes attached to the labour they render to the capitalist class. This affirms earlier observations that capitalism and racism are intricately interwoven and that this manifests in space (Hawthorne, 2019), including conservation landscapes. Taken together, these mechanisms secure white control over land, animals and labour and thus exacerbate inequality. It is for these reasons that we argue that these conservation-property developments 'conserve' spatial injustice.

[90] Case nos: lcc206/2010 concerning certain farms in the Maruleng region Heard in the land claims court of South Africa Held at Randburg 9 July 2020

[91] ibid

Chapter 5

Conservation labour geographies: subsuming regional labour into private conservation spaces in South Africa

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Abstract

Critical scholars have started analysing conservation as a 'mode of production', which entails conservation's inclination to transform the value of nature into capital. This mode of production is underpinned by labour relations that have thus far escaped systematic analysis. To fill this gap, I use Smiths' reading of the capitalist production of space to develop the concept of *conservation labour geographies* which untangles the spatial outcomes of the dialectical relation between the production of conservation space and labour. The concept is concretized through an analysis of the historical development of the private wildlife economy in the Lowveld area of South Africa. Through this case study I argue that private nature reserves subsume communal and state properties -beyond its fence- into exploitative symbiotic conservation labour geographies. I do this by firstly demonstrating that conservation labour geographies are an outcome of the historical production of conservation space because the development of the private wildlife economy in the Lowveld reinforced geographical differentiation by reproducing a spatialized and racialised division of labour. Secondly, I show that these labour geographies are characterised by the unpaid reproductive work of spouses and in-laws, traumatised rangers and a racially segregated landscape within the reserve and between the reserves and the former Bantustans. Finally, I conclude by proposing 'conservation labour geographies' as an analytical tool to unpack the interrelations between labour and the production of conservation spaces.

Key Words: Primitive accumulation, social reproduction, production of space, conservation labour geographies

5.1 Introduction

Questions about labour in conservation have thus far escaped a systematic analysis because nature conservation has often been framed in opposition to extractive forms of industry (Sodikoff, 2009). Consequently, there remains a caveat in our understanding about how conservation labour is produced, how value is created from conservation commodities and the broader implications of conservation land use on labour regimes in rural areas. Perceiving this gap, Neimark et al. (2020) explore precarious labour in the service-based green economy. They argue that local people's labour in the green economy has not received sustained analysis because it is often framed as 'local participation'. Similarly, Carrier (2010, 674) notes that Fairtrade products and eco-tourism have "the general tendency to obscure the people and processes, of which labour-power is a component, that are part of creating an object and of bringing it to market". In their study of the intersection between immigration and environmentalism in the ski resort town of Aspen, USA, Park and Pellow (2011) observe that

> "the luxury goods and services that distinguish Aspen, that make it a "world-class" resort town are possible in large part because of the workers from all over the world [...] In some respects this is a bizarre story of a town that prides itself on being environmentally conscious [...] and simultaneously decry as eyesore the "ugly" trailer homes where low-income immigrants live" (Park and Pellow, 2011, 2).

Together, these studies show that mainstream environmentalism, 'ethical' products and high-end exclusive environmental products and experiences tend to obscure the material and social conditions that bring them into existence. Along with Neimark et al.'s (2020) analysis of precarious labour, Sodikoff's (2009, 2012) analysis of low-wage conservation labour in Madagascar, and Ramutsindela's (2015) exploration of the intersection between labour, philanthropy and land claims in South Africa, I aim to contribute to the growing literature on labour in the conservation of biodiversity. I extend this work, however, to conceptualize *conservation labour geographies* more generally as a way of unpacking labour in the 'conservation mode of production'. The latter entails conservation's inclination to transform the value of nature into capital, while I propose conservation labour geographies as a way of untangling the spatial outcomes of the dialectical relation between the production of conservation space and labour. In addition, I contribute to this body of work by exploring the Lowveld's conservation labour geography. Through this case study, I argue that the unpaid reproductive labour that occurs in homes and communities, is indispensable to the production of conservation commodities in private nature reserves and the conservation mode of production more broadly. Conservation labour refers to workers involved in the production of conservation spaces and commodities including the material (game breeders)

and non-material (marketing) aspects of these spaces. For the scope of this chapter this includes, but is not limited to; rangers, anti-poaching units, tour guides, security guards, maintenance and hospitality staff. Conventionally, the latter has been dealt with in tourism literature (Ivanov, 2020; Cave and Kilic, 2010), however, nature reserves across the world depend on revenue generated from eco-tourism where hospitality staff expend their labour-power to produce conservation commodities such as experiences.

This analysis is premised on the notion that the capitalist production of space intertwines the production of labour. It therefore privileges the production of physical space because, since its inception, conservation in South Africa has been directly producing physical spaces through farm conversions (Brandt and Spierenburg, 2014), the construction of airstrips in nature reserves, the establishment of transfrontier conservation areas (DeMotts, 2017) and wildlife based residential estates. Conservation is also indirectly linked to the development of mega infrastructures -such as the Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport- which ties conservation to the production of space 'beyond the fence'. Unlike extractive industries such as mining, the physical production of conservation space has not created ghastly environmental degradation on site. Nevertheless, researchers have demonstrated that conservation land use significantly affects local peoples livelihoods (Sinthumule, 2016), it has led to evictions in Mozambique (Lunstrum, 2010) and undermined the land restitution process in South Africa (Ramutsindela, 2015). Moreover, as this chapter will show the production of conservation space is dialectically related to the production and reproduction of labour.

This analysis is based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out in the Lowveld region of South Africa over the course of 16 months between 2016-2019. During this time, I was based in Hoedspruit, a small town surrounded by private nature reserves. I interviewed 150 people involved in conservation such as government officials, rangers, guides, hospitality staff, trackers, land claimants and reserve managers. I also conducted four life histories with older participants and attended nature conservation meetings and conferences. Along with life histories, archival documents from the National Archives of South Africa in Pretoria were used to understand the history of the Lowveld. The Lowveld region is sandwiched between the east of the northern Drakensberg mountains (home to the Blyde canyon nature reserve) and the west of Kruger National Park. It traverses the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces and is characterised by sprawling citrus farms and private wildlife reserves on the north end, while the south-east is characterised by burgeoning villages within the Bushbuckridge municipality (Figure 5.1). The geography of this area, in particular the stark land use differences between Bushbuckridge and nature reserves, is central to the argument I advance.

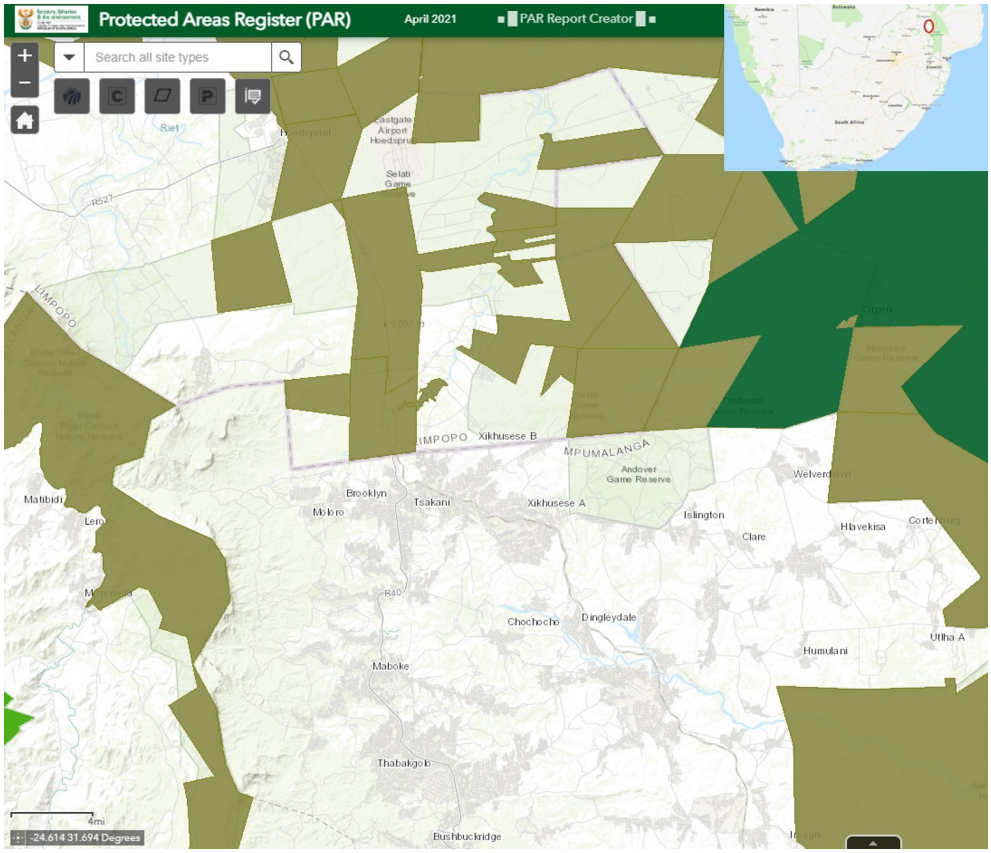

Figure 5.1: Map of the Lowveld: Northern Drakensberg mountains on the west. Kruger National park (dark green), Hoedspruit in the North and Bushbuckridge municipality in the south. Brown depicts nature reserves around Bushbuckridge. (DFFE Protected Area Registry, 2021).

In what follows, I introduce literature on the conservation mode of production, labour geographies and the production of space. The former necessitates an analysis of labour that produces conservation commodities, while the latter two allow us to start developing a conceptualization of conservation labour geographies. Having brought these literatures together, the following section discusses the production of space during the apartheid era and the implications this had on labour. Furthermore, by analysing the social reproduction of labourers, I show that conservation labour relations permeate into neighbouring communities where unpaid family members do the necessary reproductive work to maintain the conservation labourer. By bringing together the historical and the contemporary labour dynamics I argue that the Lowveld's conservation labour geographies are characterised by private nature reserves that subsume properties beyond their fence into symbiotic but exploitative labour relations. I conclude by proposing conservation labour geographies as a way of making sense of the relation between the production of conservation space and the production of labour.

5.2 The production of space in the conservation mode of production

Critical scholars have analysed conservation as a 'mode of production' which entails the transformation of the value of nature into capital through various conservation initiatives and processes (Brockington and Scholfield, 2010). This body of work argues that conservation initiatives and organizations transform various aspects of nature into commodities, thus placing conservation squarely within the broader capitalist mode of production. Kelly (2011), sees this relationship in the early days when people were dispossessed of their land in order to create protected areas. She highlights the relationship "between Marx's concept of primitive accumulation and exclusionary conservation practices, such as the creation of protected areas which enclose land and exclude resident populations" (Kelly, 2011, 684). Short of being a once-off historical event, Kelly also explores the links between public conservation areas and private forms of commodification such as eco-tourism, photographic safaris and privatization of genetic material which are characteristic of primitive accumulation. Garland (2008, 62) advances a similar argument by "suggest[ing] that wildlife conservation be conceived as a particular kind of capitalist production, one which lays claim to the intrinsic, or natural, capital game animals represent, *augments this value through various mediations*, and ultimately transforms it into capital of a more convertible and globally ramifying kind" [italics added]. Garland invites us to view conservation as a productive process where the conservation of wildlife is transformed into commodities through *various mediations*. One such mediation that remains central to the production processes is labour, without which there would be no conservation commodities.

In nature reserves, these commodities include non-consumptive products such as safari drives, bush walks, wildlife education and accommodation, consumptive products such as live sales of wildlife, trophy and meat hunting, taxidermy and breeding. Nature conservation is thus in the business of producing both consumptive and non-consumptive commodities such as experiences, good feelings, animals and trophies. These commodities hinge on conservation Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which make nature legible for capital. These NGOs "work within a broader framework of capitalist endeavour, facilitating economic growth, creating new commodities, promoting and legitimizing visions that require considerable alterations of nature and society" (Brockington and Scholfield, 2010, 570). These visions of nature, Igoe (2017) convincingly shows, are mediated through spectacular images that conceal the conditions of their production while simultaneously these 'select elements of space' come to represent whole societies, ecosystems and people.

Collectively, analysis of conservation as a mode of production has intertwined a myriad of actors, politico-legal institutions, processes and ideologies which ultimately work to transform various natures into commodities for sale on the capitalist market. Consequently, as (Ramutsindela, 2015, 2260) observes there is "a need to know what happens to labour

when capitalism penetrates into conservation areas and infuses new systems of value". The intervention of this chapter is to contribute to this work by centring labour because analysing conservation as a mode of production forces us to critically explore labour in order to better understand what it takes to produce conservations' consumptive and non-consumptive commodities. This is imperative because as Neimark et al. (2020, 2) note "despite their contribution to the creation of financial value, the ever-expanding local labour force [in the environmental service-based economy] often lack formal recognition, conceptualisation and appropriate compensation".

To start unpacking labour, I turn to labour geographies which Herod (1997, 3) suggests is "an effort to see the making of the economic geography of capitalism through the eyes of labour by understanding how workers seek to make space in particular ways, that is to say, how they seek to make the landscape in their own image". At the time, Herod was responding to the neoclassical approach to labour and Marxian approaches to labour in economic geography which he suggests had privileged capitalism in understanding how economic spaces were produced. This, he argues, had led to an under theorization of labour as an active geographical agent. Herod is explicit that highlighting labour as an agent is not to suggest that labour is the main driver of economic geographies, but rather that capital *alone* does not shape economic geographies. The challenge then is to develop an empirically based conception of labour geographies that teases out the tensions between and within capital and labour. To do this one needs to take seriously how space is produced in a capitalist society. To this end, Herod (1997) reflects on Marxist geographers' treatment of the production of space. He argues that the works of Neil Smith, David Harvey and Doreen Massey "are truly pathbreaking in the way in which they have encouraged Anglophonic (and other) Marxist geographers to think about the dynamics of uneven development under capitalism and the relationship between space and accumulation. Yet, they are also somewhat problematic in the way in which they conceive of and/or marginalize the roles of workers in shaping the economic geography of capitalism" (Herod, 1997, 11). Herod refers to this as a geography of labour which he suggests could do well to recognise the centrality of labourers in co-creating space in what he calls labour geography. Heeding Herod's call, labour geographies has developed significantly since then[92] with scholars such as Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011) arguing that labour geographers assessing agency, need to take seriously social relations and structural constraints such as state regulation in order to have a nuanced reading of labour agency. This is an important consideration and speaks to the need to dialectically conceptualise relations between workers' material activities and abstracted labour geographies[93].

[92] For a detailed summary see Castree (2007) who a decade later took stock of the sub-discipline and pointed to several areas where labour geographies could better carve out distinct theoretical contributions.

[93] The scholarly interest in labourers as shapers of their geography is exemplified by the tourism labour geographies special issue published in the *Tourism Geographies* in 2018.

I cannot do justice to the robust literature on conservation mode of production and labour geographies. What I want to do here rather, is to demonstrate how the former can be used to scaffold conservation labour geographies. As mentioned already, labour geographies entail exploring how labourers co-create space. For this reason, I segway into a reading of the *production of space* because labour geography is fundamentally about "the homologous and dialectical relationship between the social and spatial structures arising from the mode of production and concretely expressed in particular social formations" (Soja, 1980, 213), simply how space is produced. Without getting bogged down in the debate on space (Castells, 1977; Harvey, 2014; Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1980), I tease out ideas about space from Marxian geographers that can be analytically useful for conceptualizing conservation labour geographies. I do this cognisant of Herod (1997, 3) cautionary note that workers also "seek to make space in particular ways to ensure their own self-reproduction and, ultimately, survival — even if this is self-reproduction and survival as workers in a capitalist society". Evidently, capital *and* labour are dialectically "space forming and space-contingent" (Soja, 1980, 211), as Herod notes this could be in service of the same goal, that is, capitalisms expansion or they could be diametrically opposed. For the scope of this chapter, I explore how conservation labour and capital produce labour geographies.

My reading of space follows Smith who notes that physical space is a social product, where "the production of space also implies the production of the meaning, concepts, and consciousness of space which are inseparably linked to its physical production" (2008, 107). Smith, along with other scholars, build on Henri Lefebvre (1991) by conceptualizing the idea that the development and reproduction of capitalism and capitalist social relations was contingent on the production of material geographies that would enable capitals growth. Smith proposes a capitalist production of space which is undergirded by the contradiction between "the increased differentiation of space on the one hand, and the equalizing tendency of capital, toward the emancipation from space, on the other**"** (Smith, 2008, 130). While Smith uses this foundation to build the theory of uneven development I turn towards a conceptualization of conservations labour geographies premised on the production of space. Reading space this way is useful because capitalism more broadly produces spaces that are integral for its reproduction (Harvey, 2014). What this means in practice is that in South Africa the land, labour and livelihoods 'questions' "continue to constitute in their social and spatial *interconnections*" (Hart and Sitas, 2004, 30). The next section will thus illustrate that the development of private conservation spaces is homologous with the production of labour and a fundamental shift in the means of production.

In addition, developing conservation labour geographies premised on the idea that space is created socially is useful because conceptualizations of labour need to consider non-wage sources that contribute to the labourer's social reproduction (Scully, 2012) most of which occurs in villages, churches, local taverns and markets. In advancing social reproduction

theory, Marxist feminists have convincingly demonstrated that the reproduction of labourers outside of commodity production *is* central to the production of capital (Bhattacharya, 2017). Fraser (2014) notes that in a capitalist society some of these material social practices such as housework and schooling occur outside of the market in homes and communities. This naturally brings in a spatial element to the analysis of labour which Bhattacharya (2017, 7) proposes could be considered as "two separate but conjoined spaces—spaces of production of value (points of production) and spaces for reproduction of labor power". While these are by no means hard boundaries what I want to highlight is that "material practices are spatial practices" (Norton and Katz, 2017, 7). As such, the second last section discusses conservation labourers' material social practices.

Conservation labour geographies are timely because conservation is often posited as a solution to global environmental degradation. Practically, this means that land will continue to be set aside for conservation while existing conservation spaces are reconfigured to respond to the pressures of wildlife crime, budget cuts and climate change. Conservationists, development practitioners and economists therefore need to seriously reconsider mainstream conservation models which this chapter will show can exacerbate racialised division of labour and inequalities.

5.3 Producing conservation space in the Lowveld

Conservation labour geographies are an outcome of the history of the production of conservation space. This section discusses the development of the private wildlife economy from the 1920s to illustrate how the production of conservation space as we know it today is tied to the creation of labour before and during the apartheid era. This development was nested within the broader racialized segregationist policies resulting in a labour geography that intertwines private property and villages.

The creation of property in South Africa is characterized by primitive accumulation. According to Wolpe (1972) this was an attempt by the white capitalist class to secure labour needs in industrial manufacturing. Wolpe's much-cited work has been instructive in our understanding of the relationship between pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production during apartheid. These modes of production created a labour flux between the Bantustans and industrial manufacturing in the cities, thus binding these locales together. Bantustans refer to areas that were designated exclusively for black people during apartheid. All sectors, including transport, mining and farming, were implicated in the labour politics during this period. However, this section focuses on the labour geographies between the Bantustans and commercial agricultural farms in the Lowveld region in order to conceptualise conservation's labour geographies.

5.3.1. Evictions

From the 1920s there were systematic evictions of black people from their land in the northern Lowveld region as per the provisions of the 1913 Land Act. The Act prohibited black people from purchasing and owning land outside of scheduled native areas (Bantustans) which -at the time- made up only 7% of land in South Africa (Feinberg and Horn, 2009). The Beaumont and Stubbs commissions of 1916 and 1917 respectively, recommended that more land should be set aside for exclusive non-white occupation to augment that which had been gazetted in 1913. The Stubbs Commission further recommended that the area lying between the Northern Drakensberg Mountains and the Kruger Park be set aside for native occupation, this area included land within present-day Bushbuckridge municipality (Desmond, 1971). According to the Stubbs commission, this area was unfit for human occupation due to malaria and water shortages, this however, did not dissuade the state from forcing black people to live in this area. In addition to land restrictions the act also prohibited sharecropping and imposed labour tenancy on white-owned farms (Niehaus et al., 2001).

Consequently, in 1920 when European farmers purchased land on the foothills of present-day *Blyde Canyon Nature Reserve,* they were confronted with what they referred to as a 'native problem'. That is, there were 180 Mapulana[94] families who had been living on these lands for over 40 years. As a result of earlier surveying, much of these lands had already been transformed from *naha* (meaning place in Sepulana) to farm parcels making them legible for capitalist appropriation. The government disregarded pre-existing ownership and use rights and sold these farms to white male individuals, land prospecting companies and mines (Thornton, 2002). According to the archive, the native families had 1150 cattle and 6000 sheep and goats. Over the course of that year correspondence between the Native Commissioner of Lydenburg and the Sub-Native Commissioner of Graskop would reveal how the 'native problem' was solved and more broadly how primitive accumulation laid the ground for agricultural expansion in the Lowveld. In one letter[95], we learn that "a large number of the native residents have accepted farm labour conditions, and those that are not required for labour will remain on these farms on rent paying terms". In addition, elderly natives were deemed "no use for labour" and those that owned stock were unwanted by the new farmer. Stock owners and the elderly, along with those who refused to enter into labour agreements were evicted to Bushbuckridge.

Those that were retained on white-owned commercial farms stayed on as labour tenants who had to work on the farm in exchange for lodging. These early evictions irrevocably transformed the spatial ordering of the Lowveld area such that in the north white-owned agricultural farms established on the land of Mapulana set in motion a new mode of

[94] Mapulana are Northern Sotho people from the northern Lowveld, they speak Sepulana
[95] Letter From Sgd. J.E.D Travers to Mr Hook The Sub-Native Commissioner of Graskop dated 23 August 1920

production. Conversely, Bushbuckridge became a dumping ground for people not needed for their labour. The added pressure on the sparse natural resources resulted in poor crop yields and soil erosion (Niehaus, 2006). The production of space through surveying, evictions, erection of fences and farm infrastructure changed the physical landscape, altered the meanings associated with these lands and disrupted the social organization of Mapulana. The latter was exacerbated by the prerogative of the district to move families where ever there was space irrespective of family ties[96].

Regionally more white people, including British ex-soldiers were moving into the area, this migration was stimulated by the rising prices of citrus, cotton and tobacco (Packard, 2001). This period was followed by more evictions, the 1948 National Party win, the codification of laws such as the Game Ordinance No.23 of 1949 and the Group Areas Act 1950 which further entrenched racial segregation. The 1960s were also characterised by continued evictions of black people into Bushbuckridge which had become a native reserve. A betterment scheme was thus introduced to deal with population pressures and land shortages. This included reorganizing space to create compact households so that more displaced people could be accommodated, as a result, households lost their grazing land and stock limitations were imposed (Niehaus et al., 2001). This led to overcrowding and contestations over land (Ntsebeza, 2003). This production of space was clearly intertwined with the production of nature because evictions coupled with the establishment of the native reserves increased pressures on natural resources resulting in environmental degradation. Niehaus (2006, 529) notes that as a result of these livelihood restrictions "labour migrancy to South Africa's industrial and mining centres now became an imperative for survival".

By 1972 Bushbuckridge was divided into the Gazankulu and Lebowa Bantustans for Tsonga and Pedi people respectively (Pollard et al., 2003) and in 1973 Gazankulu was awarded self-governance (Dlamini, 2020). The Bantustans in "Bushbuckridge became a dumping ground for [...] surplus black farm labour" (Ramutsindela and Simon, 1999, 483). The farms in the Bantustans were owned by the state, private landlords and prospecting companies who expected tenants to pay rent, grazing fees and ploughing fees to the agricultural officer (Mather, 1995; Niehaus, 1993).

Wolpe (1972) argues that the apartheid state deliberately maintained a marginal economy within the Bantustans in order to augment the reproduction of migrant labourers because workers were not paid enough to reproduce themselves. This mobility of labour between capitalist mining and farming enterprises and the Bantustans intertwined these landscapes into exploitative labour geographies. Moreover, as Wolpe (1972) notes, Bantustans economy and subsistence activities though geographically removed and unremunerated, were indispensable to the capitalist mode of production in South Africa. This echoes Smith's

[96] Letter from The Chief native commissioner northern areas to the secretary of native affairs dated 26 April 1940.

proposition that the capitalist production of space invariably creates and depends on spatial differentiation. In the South African context evictions and subsequent developments created an infrastructural and labour deficit in the Bantustans and economic centres respectively. Furthermore, in creating commercial farms, black people were transformed from owners to labourers, tenants and squatters on land that had been theirs (Packard, 2001). This resulted in severe tenure insecurity for labour tenants and farm dwellers[97] in particular because a white farmer could legally evict tenants after giving them 3 months' notice. Consequently, spatial differentiation manifested not just in the physical landscape but also in the socio-economic standing of black people.

These labour arrangements set in motion an apartheid labour regime which Bezuidenhout and Fakier (2006) suggest was characterised, first, by a racial division of labour and second, by a migrant labour system imposed on black labourers in order to deny them permanent residency in the industrial hubs. What is implicit in Bezuidenhout and Fakier's (2006) analysis is that this labour regime was the result of a violent capitalist production of space, itself the manifestation of dialectically intertwined relation between capital and labour. By this I mean while state subsidized commercial farmers (Arrighi et al., 2010) invested in the physical landscape to grow their farms, workers in turn expended their labour to work the farm meanwhile surplus labour in the Bantustans built new homes and farmed under restricted conditions. This labour regime locked private and communal property into a mutually symbiotic relationship which favoured the interests of private property. These evictions fundamentally reorganised the geospatial ordering of the Lowveld.

5.3.2. The establishment of game reserves

As evictions continued in the 1960s, some expropriated farms, including present-day Timbavati private nature reserve, converted from livestock to wildlife ranching. Many of these were gazetted officially as nature reserves in the same period. Carruthers (2008) attributes these farm conversions to: advances in scientific research, the slump of wool and livestock prices globally, development of wildlife policies, rise in stock theft and increasing labour costs. Furthermore, she notes that as a result of international sanctions against the apartheid regime and the withdrawal of state subsidies, livestock farming became less lucrative for white commercial farmers. In the 60s over ten private nature reserves were gazetted around Hoedspruit. This could be attributed to the proclamation of the Nature Conservation Ordinance No. 17 of 1967. These changes were occurring decades after the South African Railways and Harbours corporation, through its Publicity and Travel Department was marketing South Africa globally "as a place of unique flora, unsurpassed sunshine, exotic animals, and picturesque native life" (Dlamini, 2020, 118).

[97] Farm dwellers are people that live on commercial farms on rent paying terms or as families of farm labourers

In November 1965, Blyderivierspoort nature reserve was gazetted[98] and the Mapulana were evicted to Bushbuckridge in one of the most explicit nature reserve inspired evictions. The enclosure and re-introduction of wild animals altered labour needs on farms and placed more restrictions on farm labourers livelihoods and mobility. Evictions demonstrate that land expropriations are usually followed by nefarious policies that further alienate the producer from the means of subsistence. This reaffirms that primitive accumulation is an ongoing process (De Angelis, 2001). In the Lowveld, this included game policies prohibiting non-white people from sitting on the Nature Conservation Advisory Board and Nature Conservation Advisory Committee and the continued criminalization of hunting in the Bantustans[99]. These policies were often justified as environmental protection, however the Transvaal Game Protection Association (18 November, 1903) implies otherwise. In it, it is stated that "the destruction of game by the natives...enables a large number of natives to live on this means who would otherwise have to maintain themselves by labour" (cited in Ramutsindela, 2003, 43).

Taken together, wildlife policies in particular those that limited use rights, served to maintain white ownership over land and wildlife while eroding the material base for labourers' reproduction thus consolidating their need for waged labour. This echoes (Marx, 1876, 633) sentiments that the capitalist process of production "produces not only commodities, not only surplus-value, but it also produces and reproduces the capital relation; on the one side the capitalist, on the other the wage-labourer". Bhandar (2018) takes this a step further and demonstrates how the realization of private property produced racial subjectivities that rendered local peoples inferior social and political subjects. Similarly, the production of conservation space in the Lowveld fundamentally altered the economy which in turn reinforced spatialised and racialised subjectivities in the division of labour. Furthermore, it legally defined who belongs in conservation and how they should belong.

With this brief history, I showed that the wildlife economy cannot be divorced from the broader racialised violent capitalist production of space during the apartheid era. The production of conservation spaces in the Lowveld including the Kruger National Park (Ramutsindela and Shabangu, 2013), Manyeleti game reserve (Mahony and Van Zyl, 2001) and Mala Mala (Alasow, 2020) were predicated on land expropriations, alienation of black farmers from their means of subsistence, labour exploitation, farm conversions and consolidation. These developments were nested within the broader racist capitalist apartheid regime and resulted in the creation of waged labour. It is against this backdrop that I suggest that the making of the economic geography of conservation created a labour geography which I will work out later. For now, it is important to state that the implications of this have been generationally cumulative. This is evidenced by the unchanged racialised

[98] The Province of the Transvaal Official Gazette Vol. 195 No. 3182 dated 24 November 1965

[99] Nature Conservation Ordinance, 1967 published in The Province of the Transvaal Official gazette Vol 203 No. 3306 dated 13 December 1967

spatial differentiation of the Lowveld such that Bushbuckridge, home to evictees is bordered by white-owned nature reserves in the north and east. These evictees and their descendants constitute the labour in private nature reserves today. They live in an area with a crippled public health care system, high unemployment rates and inconsistent access to drinkable water which was flagged in the 1917 Stubbs commission report. It is within this context that the following section discusses the conservation labour geographies between Bushbuckridge and the private nature reserves by privileging the experiences and material practices of black low-wage earners.

5.4 Social reproduction of black conservation labourers

I have shown how conservation labour was produced in the 1900s by privileging capitals' production of conservation space in the central Lowveld. This ultimately intertwined private conservation property and communal land into the same economic landscape. In what follows, I turn to the material and non-material aspects of black conservation labourers in private nature reserves as a way of further demonstrating how private conservation subsumes communal property into its labour geographies. This analysis follows the works of Marxist feminists who argue that a comprehensive analysis of production in a capitalist system needs to take seriously the social sphere that reproduces labourers (Bhattacharya, 2017). Similarly, Norton and Katz (2017, 8) state that capitalism appropriates "nonmonetized or noncapitalist material practices...material social practices and relationships outside of the waged labor–capital relationship". It is these nonmonetized social relations that continue to intertwine private conservation and the ex-Bantustans into a labour geography.

A useful entry point is to read contemporary conservation labour in the Lowveld within the context of the production of conservation space which was discussed in the previous section and within the broader context of unemployment in South Africa. The former speaks to how this labour was created while the latter -as this section will show- helps to highlight how the spatial reach of the conservation mode of production extends beyond the private nature reserve itself. The unemployment rate in South Africa is 29.1%. In the Bushbuckridge municipality, home to the former Lebowa and Gazankulu Bantustans discussed in the previous section, it is a staggering 52.1%[100]. Most labourers that were interviewed for this research come from this area while a few others lived in Ga-Sekororo and Metz. They included rangers, security guards, cleaners, maintenance, gardeners, anti-poaching personnel, trackers, cooks, environmental educators and guides. Their daily tasks and terms of employment varied widely meaning their experiences of working in conservation were diverse. Within this collective, rangers, trackers and anti-poaching were exclusively men, while housekeeping were only women. Furthermore, rangers, trackers and head chefs

[100] Department of Statistics South Africa http://www.statssa.gov.za/?page_id=993&id=bushbuckridge-municipality (Accessed 03 May 2021).

earned the most. Moreover, their subjectivities and positionalities differed especially as it pertained to their role in their families and communities. In spite of this diversity, many commonalities could be drawn.

5.4.1. Conservation labour

Nature reserves have resident staff and staff that commute from Bushbuckridge to the reserve every day. While there are overlaps in many of their experiences, some experiences were unique to each group of labourers. Resident staff live on the reserve for 21 days and in return get seven days off. The hostel-style living arrangements, distance from schools and general inaccessibility of the nature reserves meant that a low-wage workers family could not live with them on the reserve. Consequently, workers spent protracted periods of time away from their family. In the Mala Mala game reserve, Alasow (2020) found that this arrangement afforded employers large control over employees' lives. Similarly, Ramutsindela (2015) finds that labour settlement in the Londolozi game reserve enables employers to monitor labourers while also saving on transport costs. For female staff who do most of the reproductive work this meant employing a caretaker or relying on the goodwill of extended family to care for their children while they were at work.

On the nature reserve, managers and low-wage earners compounds were located on different sites. This essentially meant that black staff and white staff live in separate compounds, as one environmental educator noted "the lower you go on the spectrum the darker it gets"[101]. Low-wage staff shared rooms (2 or 3 people), communal ablution facilities and in some reserves a communal kitchen. Reserve managers on the other hand were sometimes employed as a 'managerial couple' and thus furnished with a family house which includes a private kitchen and ablution facilities. The differences between managers and labourers' quality of life on the reserve is synonymous with racial inequalities across much of South Africa. These inequalities are manifested in the spatiality of most cities where the rich (often white) and poor (often black) are separated by a road, train tracks or an open field. The nature reserve is clearly a microcosm of broader segregationist geography. This echoes Neely and Samura (2011, 1940) who argue that "space is also often a more tangible manifestation of systemic racial inequalities". Some workers, including housekeeping and chefs worked flexible days depending on the presence of overnight guests. In between these gigs, one cleaner manned her own fruit and vegetable stall which her sister or daughter took care of in her absence. Some private chefs on the other hand moved from one reserve or lodge to another with some hiatuses in between. When international travel was suspended as a result of COVID-19, many of these flexible workers were left destitute and unable to access state relief funds due to their lack of contracts.

[101] Interview 10 March 2018, Hoedspruit

I use Lily's[102] story to illustrate the life of a day labourer. Lily, a mother of three, is a permanent employee at a rehabilitation centre which prides itself in having a conservation ethos by re-introducing animals into the wild. She has been working in this facility for two years and prior to this, she held a job at another reserve in the area. Lily has moved from one low-skilled job to another due to her lack of formal education. Every working day she wakes up at 3 am, boils bathing water and packs everyone's lunch. At 4.20 am she leaves her children with her mother in order to catch the 5 am bus to work. At 6 am she is already walking the 2km stretch -in big 5 territory- from the nature reserve gate to the main reception area where she works. Her job includes cleaning the animal pens and maintaining the fence line. With regards to the latter task, the pick-up truck drops each person about 2km transacts from each other, with the purpose of working your way to your colleague. Neither Lily nor her colleagues carry a rifle even though the facility is located on a reserve with predators and big mammals. She earns 3300 ZAR p/m and spends 480 ZAR on a monthly bus ticket. Some working mothers were not as lucky as Lily. With a salary of 3500 p/m ZAR one labourer spent 625 ZAR p/m on transport in addition to 700 ZAR p/m for a nanny.

Lily's story is not unique. On weekdays at 5 am, more than 20 buses transport workers from Acornhoek to private nature reserves and Hoedspruit. She is one of the hundreds of employees that make the daily commute to produce conservation commodities under the aforementioned conditions. Notwithstanding these labour conditions, many labourers 'choose' to remain in their jobs. The reason for this was summed up by a cleaner in a 4-star lodge who stated that "we just stick it out because we do not have other options"[103], similarly a ranger asserts that "the salary is not enough but it is better than nothing"[104]. The low salaries compounded feeling unvalued as conservationists. This is captured by an NGO field worker who lamented that

> "if you look into lodges, black people are working in conservation but they are on the ground...what about up there? Only white people. They are the ones calling the shots and doing all the luxurious things, us, we are down there!"[105].

Very few private reserves have black managers as captured in the previous quote. Managerial positions in lodges and 'scientific' jobs in nature reserves were often occupied by expats and local white people. This mirrors national trends where in spite of being 8% of the national population white people make up 65.6% of top management jobs across all sectors (Department of Labour, 2020). This could be attributed to the fact that private reserves never had to go through a mandatory transformation process as state-owned national parks (See Maguranyanga, 2009). Consequently, private nature reserves and conservation NGOs

[102] Name has been changed to protect identity
[103] Interview 5 July 2019, Acornhoek
[104] Interview 25 July 2019, Hoedspruit
[105] Interview 24 August 2018, Hoedspruit

remain predominantly white at the managerial level. While reflecting on their employment conditions under this racialised division of labour, labourers often stated that "white people still have apartheid"[106]. This was said in reference to the discriminatory treatment black labourers experienced at work. These racial inequalities on game farms and ecotourism facilities have been conceptualised as paternalistic (Brandt and Spierenburg, 2014; Koot, 2016). All these concerns are compounded by the local labour department which has a reputation of not conducting inspections. Furthermore, in cases of disputes about contracts, overtime or salaries employers would subvert the process by not showing up to meetings. These claims could not be corroborated as attempts to meet with representatives of the labour department were declined several times.

In addition to the aforementioned issues, the increase in wildlife crime and the responses to it has necessitated an expanded discussion on labour. While militarised anti-poaching has been critiqued by scholars (Büscher and Ramutsindela, 2016; Lunstrum, 2014), the growing demand for Anti-Poaching Units (APUs) has resulted in employment for many young black men from adjacent communities. In South Africa, where paid work is tied to a sense of dignity (Noble et al., 2008), anti-poaching agencies are playing a crucial role in giving some young men a sense of purpose. This is, however, happening within the context of mounting dead bodies and traumatised labourers (Duffy et al., 2019). Consequently, even though the bulk of the material war on poaching is fought within private nature reserves, the implications permeate into surrounding communities where black APUs and rangers bear the brunt of it when they travel between Bushbuckridge and private reserves. This was made explicit by an APU recruit who notes that relations with his neighbours have soured because they think he goes home to spy on them. He has also been threatened by community members who have lost loved ones at the hands of the APUs. When he is at work his family shoulders this animosity and is unsurprisingly opposed to him working in anti-poaching. At home and unarmed, APUs and rangers spoke about a persistent sense of anxiety over their safety. At work, they felt safe but constantly worried about their families safety. Annecke and Masubelele (2016, 200) capture this in their study on Kruger National Park, they noted that both rangers and their families were shouldering the stress, in spite of not "signing up for the trauma and tension of being on stand-by or in combat". Along with clandestine informant networks in communities, this further demonstrates the novel ways in which conservations' labour geography operates.

Due to the racialised nature of the war on poaching, black rangers were treated with suspicion because they are seen to come from communities that harbour poachers. This was captured by a white trainer while commenting on development in the Bushbuckridge area, he asked rhetorically "there are so many big houses coming up in that area, where does the money come from?"[107]. Comments like this are indicative of the toxic mistrust in the conservation

[106] Interview 07 June 2018, Acornhoek
[107] Interview 08 March 2018, Acornhoek

community. As a result, it has become commonplace to administer polygraph tests on all staff members in private reserves. This has invariably resulted in a heightened sense of job insecurity among staff members. The aforementioned threats, insecurity and constant fear that rangers and their families experience constitute the material reproductive conditions undergirding the conservation mode of production. That a tourist can safely enjoy bird watching on a private nature reserve is enabled by men who have taken arms to protect wildlife at the expense of theirs and their families safety and wellbeing.

5.4.2. Beyond the fence

Collectively, the lived experiences of day staff and resident staff show that as they produce conservation spaces for tourists and residents to enjoy "the most prestigious and best managed game estates in the Hoedspruit area" (Moditlo wildlife estate website, 2020) and "explore our beautiful landscape and wildlife" (Kapama private game reserve website, 2020), they do so within a mode of production that barely enables its workers' reproduction. Furthermore, the experiences of APUs and rangers expose the fact that as they patrol, surveil and track wildlife, they secure and reproduce the space for continued accumulation while the conservation mode of production simultaneously externalizes the psychological costs of the war on poaching to communities. Fundamentally, these material practices show that communal properties and resources are intertwined in conservations labour geography.

This is achieved in two ways, first the degenerating subsistence farming that supplemented labourers' reproduction during apartheid is now augmented by social grants from the state. In Bushbuckridge, Ragie et al. (2020) found that of the 590 households surveyed, 82% accessed social grants. Furthermore, given the centrality of land and natural resources in social reproduction in the Global South (Cousins et al., 2018) most labourers had vegetable gardens while a privileged few also had livestock (See Ragie et al., 2020) in their yards which were inevitably tended by their kin while they are away. Thus, nature reserves pay meagre salaries to workers while simultaneously leeching off the unpaid labour carried out by wives, in-laws and grandparents who remain in the villages. While most of these do not participate in the 'formal economy' some scrape a living as street vendors while others wait outside hardware stores hoping to be picked up for a day's work. The findings also affirm Bezuidenhout and Fakier (2006) who note that entry into the formal job market has not resulted in an equitable share of household work. Rather, women like Lily now suffer a double burden of domestic labour and an eight-hour workday. Within the fence, these social reproductive activities occurring in homes and communities are hidden from scenes such as Figure 5.2 and especially Figure 5.3 which is often accompanied by captions evoking notions of wilderness. In addition to being hidden from the tourists view these material practices remain unaccounted for in the conservation mode of production.

Figure 5.2: Labourer sitting at the back of a pick-up truck.

Figure 5.3: A guide and tracker team on a sunset game drive.

The second aspect which intertwines villages and nature reserves has to do with how this pool of under-skilled workers is replenished. According to Chisholm (2012), the apartheid state established a racially differentiated schooling system aimed at maintaining white domination. Coupled with the eroding public education system in democratic South Africa it is unsurprising that most labourers never finished high school let alone higher education. Statistics South Africa puts the latter at only 7.4% in the Bushbuckridge municipality. Consequently, private nature reserves in the Lowveld can afford to pay workers below what is necessary for their reproduction because lying in wait are 64.6% unemployed youth. Ironically, by reproducing conservation spaces which have strict land use policies, workers inadvertently maintain the unemployment rates in their home communities. As Mbembe (2017, 3) notes "if yesterday's drama of the subject was exploitation by capital, the tragedy of the multitude today is that they are unable to be exploited at all. They are abandoned subjects, relegated to the role of a "superfluous humanity".

Consequently, when asked what the three most pressing issues in their view is, all labourers mentioned road, water and unemployment. Most secondary roads in the Bushbuckridge municipality are not tarred resulting in muddy and slippery conditions when it rains. Furthermore, most people get water from communal taps which run dry occasionally (Figure 5.4), forcing them to pay for water delivery. As mentioned already the unemployment rate in the municipality is very high. As a result, every now and then people take to the streets to demand better services from their local councillors and the state in what has become commonly known as *service delivery protests*[108] (Figure 5.5). Similar protests in other parts of the country have been linked to growing inequality in South Africa as a result of the adoption of neoliberal policies by the ruling government and a general feeling of disappointment in the democratic state (Alexander, 2010). These protests force motorists to take alternative routes while others have resulted in property damage. It is unclear if conservation labourers participated in protests, however what is very apparent here is that within the sphere of reproduction citizens participate in various forms of political action which have spatial

[108] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CF5-sViYzlg Accessed 17 01 2021

implications not just for themselves but the wider region. By looking beyond the fence, workers subjectivities and positionalities as more than just workers becomes clear (See Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011). Furthermore, this exposes the inequalities which find expression in the uneven geography between reserves and villages.

Figure 5.4: Water shortages in Ga-Sekororo village.

Figure 5.5: Aftermath of a service delivery protest.

Apart from protests, workers often noted that due to the size of the reserves and time spent at work, it was often difficult to organize collective action within the reserves. In spite of the fact that some of them had been or were part of a trade union, workers articulated concerns about the effectiveness of the unions. Nonetheless, workers still shaped the economic landscape of conservation in variegated ways across space and time. For instance, some labourers had moved from one reserve to another in search of better facilities, more pay and kinder supervisors. Some reserves had earned themselves a reputation for underpaying staff and overall mean managers, worker thus cautioned job seekers to avoid or at the very least to use these as a stepping stone to better paying reserves. In addition, managers often hired based on employee referrals, this resulted in some employees working together with close kin thus making their 21 days stay at the reserve less lonely. Furthermore, some resident staff contravened the ban on workplace romance. Even though the biophysical environment of nature reserves hindered conservation labourers ability to assert their political agency within the reserve, workers nonetheless were still able to shape their work environment by recommending their kin and having fun outside of work hours. This affirms Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011, 214) assertion that “the potential for worker action should always be seen in relation to the formations of capital, the state, the community and the labour market in which workers are incontrovertibly yet variably embedded”.

A mapping of the conservation labour geographies of the Lowveld has transported us from the private nature reserve which is characterized by a racialized division of labour, and spatial segregation, this mapping takes us onto the bus where on average a day labourer spends 17% of their salary on transport. This cartographic exercise finally brings into view the labourers home where unemployed family members do the necessary reproductive

work including psychological work to maintain the labourer. It reveals elders who are the castaways of conservation land use in the 1960s and now patiently await the land restitution process. Finally, it brings into view an education system that year in and year out churns out youth whose labour-power is becoming increasingly unnecessary for capitalist production. These labour flows intertwine Bushbuckridge and private nature reserves into exploitative symbiotic conservation labour geographies which I work out further in the next section.

5.5 Towards conservation labour geographies

This chapter contributes to the emerging literature that critically analysis workers in the green economy by proposing conservation labour geographies as a way of unpacking questions of labour when the conservation mode of production creates geographical differentiation and expands across landscapes and intensifies production in space. These labour geographies are themselves an outcome of the capital-labour relation which can be diametrically opposed or in service of a similar outcome as workers carve out spaces to reproduce themselves.

Neimark et al. (2020) argued that the eco-precariat's labour is often concealed under the banner of 'local participation' and 'benefit'. I agree and would also add that by expanding the scope of analysis to include workers spaces of reproduction we can uncover a host of hidden people and processes that reproduce precarious labour. I used the notion 'beyond the fence' to capture the dynamic interrelations between conservation spaces and neighbouring villages. I suggest that this approach has methodological implications for labour geographies which would benefit from 'mapping' the social reproduction of labourers to visibilise the un-waged people and unremunerated institutions and processes that maintain the production of low-wage labour. In addition, this would highlight workers multiple subjectivities, revealing that wage labour differs along lines of age, race, class and nationality (Mohandesi and Teitelman, 2017). By considering workers as more than *just* labourers we can employ conservation labour geographies to better grasp where and why workers exert their agency in particular ways (Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011).

Conservation labour geographies are historical. As Ramutsindela's (2015) analysis of labour in the Londolozi game reserve shows, workers compounds, from the 1970s already, were used to guarantee a supply of labour. In addition, these labour geographies are steeped in the material working conditions of labourers. By untangling these interrelations through a reading of the history and social reproduction in the Lowveld, I argue that private nature reserves subsume properties beyond their fence into symbiotic but exploitative labour relations. In practice, this means that the unpaid reproduction of labourers that occurs outside of the reserve is indispensable to creating conservation commodities such as good experiences, accommodation and photographic safaris. At the local level, it is the labourer

-expending their labour-power in the reserve and reproducing themselves in the community- that spatially integrates these differentiated spaces into the same economic geography.

Lastly, I pose some key considerations that conservation labour geographies can help to ground. The first has to do with what Lipsitz (2007) refers to as the 'spatialization of race and the racialization of space'. While it is clear from the Lowveld that the creation of conservation space reinforced a racialised division of labour I did not work this out further. Rather, I unapologetically centred the lives of low-wage, predominantly black labourers who are often rendered invisible by conservationists and whose labour is not valorised in the same way that white conservationists labour is celebrated. There remains a caveat is our understanding of how whiteness intersects with the production of conservation spaces explicitly. Burnett and Milani's (2017) intersectional analysis of three anti-poaching campaign texts is revealing in this regard. They show how race, gender and sexuality are used to legitimise extrajudicial killings in South Africa, thus inscribing into space who belongs and who does not. They suggest that "white masculinity is valorised as "belonging" to Africa through its positioning at the centre of the campaign as the protector of the land, while the violent black poacher is pushed to the deviant periphery, as a threatening force" (2017, 569).

Secondly, while this chapter concentrated on the production end of the labour geographies the next key consideration would involve a reading of the labour geographies on the consumption end. As Büscher and Fletcher (2015, 283) remind us, conservation -unlike other processes that extract and transform natural capital into movable commodities- "seeks to lock resources in place and thus commodify them *in situ* through ostensibly non-consumptive use". An implication of this is that the labourer is not physically disassociated from non-consumptive commodities, in fact a tracker and tourist can behold the same antelope. By dissecting these labour geographies vertically as Hartwick (1998) does with the halo effect of gold we stumble upon intertwined geographical scales which would further illuminate conservation labour.

Lastly, the conservation mode of production is endorsed by many state agencies. This is evidenced by the National Biodiversity Economy Strategy of South Africa's Environmental Affairs Department. In it, the wildlife economy such as ecotourism and breeding are posited as a vehicle through which biodiversity can be conserved, jobs created and wealth generated. Furthermore, most Southern African states have signed treaties for the establishment of cross border conservation areas. A key question here is; how does the production of cross border conservation spaces explicitly intertwine questions of labour migration? Conservation labour geographies can be used to continue untangling these tensions.

Chapter 6

The biopolitics of private conservation: jeopardizing labour and rhino to optimize capital?

This chapter is under review for publication in *Journal of Political Ecology* as:
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Abstract

The conservation of biodiversity has increasingly been analysed as biopolitical. That is, conservation initiatives such as breeding programs and protected areas seek to optimize some nonhuman life forms while exposing others to harm or degradation. Biopolitical conservation studies have looked at how human and non-human lives have been valued differently and the implications thereof. However, an explicit focus on how private conservation values wildlife and conservation labourers' lives differently is lacking. To contribute to this caveat, I explore the responses to rhino poaching in the Lowveld, South Africa. In particular, the chapter uses Foucault's conceptualization of biopolitics to dissect the responses of the eco-tourism and wildlife breeding industries to rhino poaching. Two central arguments are made. First, the chapter argues that these responses hinge on creating new and re-instating old avenues of capital accumulation that ironically prioritize the optimizing of the wildlife economy itself over the rhino lives this economy is meant to conserve. Second and by juxtaposing this to how conservation labour has been governed since the onset of poaching in 2008, I show that private conservation disproportionately exposes black labourers to harm while attempting to protect rhino from poachers. I conclude that private conservationists in South Africa make value judgments to construct a hierarchy of life with whiteness at its apex, rhinos following closely behind, with labourers and finally poachers at the bottom.

Key words; Conservation labour, biopolitics, rhino horn, individuation, environmentality

6.1 Introduction

In South Africa, extinction fears over the last decade centred mainly on rhino. This is exemplified by the chairperson of the Private Rhino Owners Association (PROA) in South Africa who stated in 2016 that

> it is now time to stop talking and carry out bold actions to save one of the most iconic species in the world. If not, the negative impact on our image as a country – the loss of a species and no longer being home to the Big Five – is beyond comprehension[109].

These fears are compounded by the fact that some genetically unique rhino populations in Africa have already gone extinct (Moodley et al., 2017). Consequently, violent interventions conceptualized as war by conservation (Duffy 2016), green militarization (Lunstrum, 2014), green violence (Büscher and Ramutsindela, 2016) and more broadly green wars (Büscher and Fletcher, 2019) have been put in place to secure nature reserves, keep poachers out and maintain viable rhino populations. These life and death decisions about which species to wage 'war' for, are value-laden and therefore not objective (Biermann and Anderson, 2017). As a result of this, conservation of biodiversity has been conceptualized as biopolitical (Cavanagh, 2014; Fletcher, 2010) because it exercises "power to make live and let die" (Foucault, 2003: 241) at a population level. By using a biopolitical lens, this chapter contributes to these analyses by investigating how interventions to protect rhino mask a hierarchy of life inherent in conservation.

Cavanagh (2014:273) identifies three main axes along which biopower has been exercised, these are "between differently 'racialized' populations of humans; second, between asymmetrically valued populations of humans and nonhumans; and, third, between humans, our vital support systems, and various types of emergent biosecurity threats". In conservation research, there have been a plethora of studies primarily exploring the second axe. This includes Lunstrum (2018: 1023), who argues that capital enabled green militarization in Southern Africa shores up state power over landscapes and "flags a biopolitics in which the state is better able to intervene in and act in the name of life and death, that is of protecting rhino life even if this means taking the life of the poacher". Likewise, Cavanagh and Benjaminsen (2015) explore the various ways farmers on Mount Elgon in Uganda resist the biopolitical implications of conservation efforts that infringe on their food security. Protected areas are thus spaces where value judgments are made about which life forms to foster, which to ignore and which to exterminate, so as to 'optimize' life on ecosystem and population levels (Biermann and Anderson, 2017).

[109] https://www.rhinoalive.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/PelhamJones2.pdf last accessed 10 May 2021

This chapter focuses on the biopolitics of conservation along the first two axes that Cavanagh (2014) identifies because they have been the most prevalent in rhino conservation. It does so by dissecting how biopower is employed in conservation because despite the proliferating literature, few studies explore "the different ways in which biopower can be exercised" (Fletcher et al., 2019: 1070). This exercising of biopower is, following Fletcher (2010), often identified as 'environmentality', understood as a mode of environmental governance that can be deployed in the exercise of biopower. Fletcher distinguishes four such environmentalities – truth, sovereign, disciplinary and neoliberal. In this chapter, I focus mainly on the latter two because they are most illuminating for the analysis. Disciplinary environmentality entails the internalization of ethical social norms which individuals adapt to (Fletcher, 2010). Neoliberal environmentality on the other hand is informed by neoliberal market logics including "increasing involvement of private sector actors, displacement of public policy by market mechanisms, uptake of environmental valuation methodologies, and commercialization and privatization of resource management institutions" (Bakker, 2005: 542). The wildlife economy discussed in this chapter exemplifies these modes of governance through the normalization of privatization, commercialization and commodification of natures such as rhino and rhino horn.

Two central foci drive the chapter. First, the chapter discusses interventions that have been initiated to protect rhino from extinction. Rhino poaching in South Africa drastically increased since 2008, making it the biggest conservation issue in the country, accompanied by a suite of interventions to ensure their survival. These include, besides the above-mention 'green militarization' of parks, the legalization of domestic trade in rhino horn, dehorning and the relocation of rhino from South Africa to Botswana. The argument in favour of these interventions is simple: conservation organizations need to employ every tool in their arsenal, including violent force if necessary, to save rhino (and other species) from extinction. I analyse these interventions as biopolitical because they are meant to make rhino live. However, this chapter argues that interventions to protect rhino from extinction ironically and while aiming to foster rhino life, in reality, prioritize the profitability of the wildlife economy through the creation of commodities such as horn and the creation of luxury tourism (Koot, 2021).

Second, the chapter analyses the disciplinary and neoliberal environmentalities governing conservation labour that arise out of and are reinforced by this focus on the profitability of the wildlife economy and its fight against rhino poaching. To dissect this, I borrow from Lorenzini (2021:43) who reminds us that biopolitics "is a politics that structurally relies on the establishment of hierarchies in the value of lives, producing and multiplying vulnerability as a means of governing people", including through labour (Negri, 2008). Through job incentives, polygraphing of labour and interventions such as environmental education, I show how private nature reserves govern their labour force in the interest of protecting

rhino and wildlife. Furthermore, by discussing the socioeconomic conditions in labourer's homes I highlight the 'let die' conditions that black conservation labourers are exposed to. This includes infrequent access to drinkable water and infrastructural decay all of which are necessary for making live. I argue that through non-intervention, black conservation labour is disproportionately exposed to harm.

Comparing rhino to conservation labour might seem crude but the point of this chapter is to show the complex value judgements inherent in conservation. It thus seeks to problematize what has essentially become the norm in South African conservation spaces. That is: by intervening in (protecting) rhino life and not intervening in the lives of black labour, conservation render rhino lives more valuable than black lives. There is, however, a notable contradiction here, because the value most important in practice is not intrinsic but the financial value of rhino. Ironically, this focus on financial value has the – perhaps inadvertent – effect of prioritizing the profitability of private capital through new commodities and consumption over the actual lives of rhino. I will conclude that this contradiction exposes not just an implicit hierarchy of life from whites via rhinos to conservation labour, but also a capitalist conservation industry at odds with itself.

The analysis is based on 15 months of ethnographic research on the private conservation sector, with a particular focus on three events that I attended in South Africa between 2016-2019. First, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) hosted by South Africa between 24 September-5 October 2016. This was the 'rhino CITES', as the South African government used the opportunity to highlight the then ongoing rhino-poaching crisis. Given that rhino poaching was such a big issue, many actors in the 'rhino space' attended the event to present their positions. The event was attended by over 200 delegates from across the world. The second event was Wildlife Ranching SA (WRSA) annual conference on 23-24 March 2018. WRSA represents the interests of over 2000 commercial wildlife ranching stakeholders involved in game breeding, tourism, hunting and game products. This makes it one of the biggest of its kind in South Africa. The event was titled 'Expand your game' pointing to the fact that the sector was looking to expand and diversifying its product offering. The last event was a game auction on 9 June 2018 hosted by Bloodline Africa, an "auction group, consisting of eight different breeders"[110] from different parts of South Africa. Bloodline Africa hosts an annual auction that brings together stakeholders and investors interested and involved mainly in wildlife breeding. In 2018, the event was attended by over 300 stakeholders with 98 lots of 276 animals on auction. Conference brochures and presentations were collected, and I took notes which were later analysed. Altogether, these event ethnographies gave me insights into the private wildlife economies responses to rhino poaching. In addition to the events, I conducted interviews

[110] https://www.bloodlineafrica.com/about-us last accessed May 2021

with 70 people working in the conservation sector such as NGOs, breeders, and general workers in the Lowveld, South Africa.

In what follows, I first outline the conceptual framework which brings together biopolitics and environmentalities. Following, I discuss various interventions against rhino poaching and the multiple environmentalities governing conservation labour. I conclude by arguing that private conservationists in South Africa make value judgments to construct a hierarchy of life with whiteness at its apex, rhinos following closely behind, with labourers and finally poachers at the bottom.

6.2 Biopolitics and environmentality

As mentioned, biopolitics entails continuous value "judgements about what forms of life need to be supported and what forms not" (Büscher, 2018: 150). It is power exercised over populations (Fletcher et al., 2019) such that – in conservation – "individual lives acquire meaning only when they advance the long-term well-being of the broader population or are essential to sustaining key biological processes, especially evolution" (Biermann and Mansfield, 2014: 264). While Foucault (2003, 2008) conceptualized biopower in relation to the governance of people, there has since been a mushrooming of scholarship applying this lens to non-human lives, including in the conservation of biodiversity (Cavanagh and Benjaminsen, 2015).

Conservation of biodiversity is biopolitical because it is preoccupied with "*making nature live"* [emphasis in original] (Bierman and Mansfield, 2014 258). This happens "through habitat protection and the maintenance of viable population numbers of species in the wild, as well as through technologically assisted reproduction, the cryogenic storage of DNA, and the cloning of endangered or even extinct nonhuman species" (Heatherington, 2012: 53). Political ecologists have mobilized Foucault's conceptualization of biopower to study these interventions at various scales and in different constellations within and between human and non-human lives (Cavanagh, 2018). In their review, Biermann and Anderson (2017) aggregate biopolitical conservation along four lines: endangered species management, conservation breeding and genetics, protected areas, and rewilding. They suggest that there is no universal conservation biopolitics, but that there are different, interrelated and competing techniques bearing down on lives in both complementary and contradictory ways. Of interest to this chapter is how interventions against rhino poaching obscure the value judgements informing which life forms are exposed to vulnerabilities and which ones are allowed to flourish.

Conservationists, the state and scientists, but also private capital, regularly make decisions about which human and non-human lives to prioritize and which to let die (Biermann and

Mansfield, 2014). The life-or-death decisions that result are value laden and increasingly infused with market logics – so developing a *neoliberal biopolitics* that is more interested in supporting economic growth than life per se (Fletcher, 2010). Crucial within any biopolitics, including of the neoliberal kind, is the collection of scientific knowledge about species. This knowledge, Chernala (2012) argues, is often used not for altruistic reasons but to improve the *use-value* of species to humankind. In the wildlife economy, this is exemplified by wildlife breeders who rely on bio-information to breed animals with bigger horns or different colours for maximum profits. Breeding thus "involves the biopolitical management of lineages, reproductive practices, and bodily and genetic forms" (Biermann and Anderson, 2017: 5).

In the analysis of conservation as biopolitics, the focus has thus far mainly been on nonhuman lives. Studies that have explored human lives have tended to look at communities living next to newly established protected areas or indeed poachers (Lunstrum, 2018). The people who work in these landscapes are often left out of these analyses. To start thinking through this, I take inspiration from recently published work related to labour during the Covid 19 pandemic. Commenting on how frontline workers and the working poor have been treated during the pandemic, Rose (2021 : 215) states that "the question of who will be made live and who will be let die falls along existing lines of social and political inequality, at multiple geographic scales". Following, the differential exposure to vulnerabilities as a result of rhino poaching is likely to be distributed along pre-existing racialized divisions of labour in conservation. This is because biopolitical power creates a hierarchy in 'the human order', often along racial lines (Lorenzini, 2021).

To analyse how biopower is exercised over wildlife and conservation labour, it is useful to introduce the term environmentality, which above I defined as a mode of environmental governance that can be deployed in the exercise of biopower. Fletcher (2010, 2017), following Foucault, identifies four different environmentalities; disciplinary, neoliberal, sovereign and truth. I focus on disciplinary and neoliberal environmentalities to highlight the contradictions inherent in the governance of rhinos and conservation labour. According to Fletcher (2010 : 173), disciplinary environmentality

> operates principally through the internalisation of social norms and ethical standards to which individuals conform due to fears of deviance and immorality, and which they thus exercise both over themselves and one another, a neoliberal governmentality seeks merely to create external incentive structures within which individuals, understood as self-interested rational actors, can be motivated to exhibit appropriate behaviors through manipulation of incentive.

Neoliberal environmentality in conservation is a mode of governance dominant in what has been termed neoliberal conservation which is characterized by uneven development, privatization, the commodification of natures which cumulatively function to expand capitalisms reach through natures (Büscher and Arsel, 2012; Castree, 2003, 2008). The wildlife economy in South Africa has been characterised by neoliberalization, it is thus logical that the responses to poaching will also be governed by similar principles.

The importance of using the environmentalities approach is that it renders explicit how value decisions are made in practice and with what objective in mind. Hence, it allows us to understand biopolitics in practice, which I will employ to analyse rhino conservation and how modes of environmental governance in response to the threat of poaching creates an implicit (and often very explicit) hierarchy of life.

6.3 Rhino conservation and or versus the wildlife economy?

To suggest that responses against wildlife crime are biopolitical is just the beginning of an analysis to unearth the multiple values informing these interventions. Others have outlined the history of the development of the private wildlife economy (Carruthers, 2008) and rhino conservation (Emsile and Brooks, 1999). What I want to do here is to explore the various interventions and the rationalities they present. To do so, it is important to briefly contextualize wildlife ownership in South Africa. Due to policy provisions, wildlife can be owned privately in South Africa (see Snijders 2015). Though numbers are difficult to ascertain, it is estimated that 49% of white rhinos are privately owned (Emsile et al., 2019) and traded on live sales, trophy hunting, ecotourism and game products (Crookes and Blignaut, 2015). Thus, when poaching numbers sky-rocketed in South Africa in 2008, private rhino owners were also affected. These farmers are part of the broader private wildlife economy which includes breeding, hunting, nature-based tourism and game meat production, to mention a few. Below, I discuss responses from the nature-based tourism sector and wildlife farmers because the latter have in general opted for safari related commodities in response to poaching. Whereas farmers have tended towards the commodification of rhino horn as a solution. Having said that, opinions about the best intervention within sectors also differ widely, with parties often presenting legal arguments such as the 'right' to sustainable utilization, others still evoking the intrinsic value of rhino.

6.3.1. "CITES has highly endangered rhino"

These are the words of a private rhino owner who also stated that "if legalization of trade would happen, I would have nearly unlimited money to protect my rhino"[111]. These statements were uttered in 2017 by a rhino breeder who also expressed discontentment with the Department of Environment's stance on the legalization of trade in rhino. A few decades

[111] Interview rhino breeder, 6 September 2017

back in 1977, the Convention for International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) listed black and white rhinos on appendix I, which prohibited the trade in rhino and their parts globally (Biggs et al., 2013). This was in response to years of poaching that had decimated rhino populations in the wild. Through the Natal Parks board rhino relocation programme, however, rhino numbers increased significantly (’t sas-Rolfes, 1990). Accordingly, in 1994 white rhino were moved to appendix II of CITES, which enabled the export of trophies and the animal to be traded. However, when poaching increased dramatically a decade later, the minister of environment in South Africa placed a moratorium on the domestic trade in rhino horn in 2009. Despite the moratorium, poaching numbers continued to soar such that by 2014 more than 1000 rhinos were being poached annually in South Africa (though the numbers started declining again from 2016 onwards).

Citing the failure of the 1977 CITES ban, private rhino owners in South Africa launched a campaign to legalize trade in rhino horn arguing that the CITES trade ban had inadvertently increased illegal trade. In fact, rhino populations continued to plummet despite CITES (Hübschle, 2016). Rhino owners argue that “a legal trade in rhino horn (in which not a single animal would need to be killed) would enable the government to free up substantial funding for many other conservation priorities as rhinos would have a real value and pay for their security”[112]. The overall sentiment, as expressed above, was that by legally and physically separating rhino from their horns, a rhino would literally pay for its place in the ecosystem. Thus, the South African Private Rhino Owners Association (PROA) organized an international campaign to influence CITES to allow for trade that gained the support of countries like Swaziland. This campaign failed and the international ban remained. However, in 2017, the South African moratorium on domestic trade in rhino horn was lifted and rhino horn was legally re-commodified.

Proponents for legal trade recognized that certain conditions such as curbing laundering and corruption would need to be met to make legal trade viable (Biggs et al., 2013). However, these conditions were not met before South Africa legalized domestic trade. Commenting on the South African constitutional courts decision to legalize trade in 2017, Collins et al., (2020) suggest that the decision fell short because it was not informed by a meaningful transdisciplinary process. Furthermore, echoing the International Rhino Coalition’s (2014) findings, they argue that this could increase the extinction rate of rhinos because legal horn could be laundered into an illegal international market. Hübschle (2017) shows that this is already happening within the private sector because some horn from legal hunts and pseudo-hunts enters the illegal market. She states that

[112] Wildlife Ranching magazine, Rhino Supplement https://www.rhinoalive.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/RS_Mavuso-Msimang-DPS.pdf last accessed 25 May 2021

> to the rogue wildlife professional (used as an umbrella term here), the contestation of the [CITES] ban also relates to the valuation of rhino horn as a highly profitable commodity. *The intrinsic value of the rhino as a wild animal worthy of protection for the common good is secondary in this instance*. In borrowing from the conservation discourse that portrays private ownership of rhinos as a conservation strategy, the rogue wildlife professional legitimizes his or her illegal economic activities in terms of contributing to conservation (Hübschle 2016:292, emphasis added)

Thus, while proponents of legal trade suggest that it will augment security costs and in turn help protect rhino from extinction it seems that the monetary returns from legal trade prioritize the financial value for the private rhino owners over the intrinsic value of rhino themselves. This is affirmed by Eikelboom et al. (2020) who suggest that legalizing trade in horn would have adverse implication for wild rhinos but would benefit private rhino owners through increased revenue. Furthermore, while not advocating for or against trade, Taylor et al., (2017) suggest that legal trade could incentivize more farmers towards the financially lucrative intensive breeding, an implication of this, they suggest could be a decline in wild rhino populations. Having said that, private rhino owners have incurred significant security costs, furthermore, between 2007-2018, there has been a 67% drop in the value of white rhino (Emsile et al., 2019). A common adage became 'a rhino is worth more dead than alive'. In addition, 28% of private rhino owners surveyed sold a percentage of their rhino (Clements et al., 2020). Yet, in an article aptly titled "a new investment frontier", the chairperson of PROA states that "investors in search of new investment frontiers are now in a position to consider the previously illegal and therefore inaccessible market of rhino-horn"[113]. The speculative nature with which the domestic trade in rhino horn has been approached coupled with the fact that much of the institutional shortcomings have not been dealt with, and that there is virtually no consumption of rhino in South Africa, suggests that the legalization of domestic trade in rhino horn serves to amplify private capital, not rhino populations in the wild.

Related to the legalization of domestic trade in rhino is dehorning. Initially hailed as a deterrent the method has since come under fire mainly from rangers, who note that "dehorning does not stop poachers, whatever they get out of the stump might be enough for them"[114]. Furthermore, a warden explains "if poachers track a dehorned rhino, they will kill it just so that don't have to track it the next day"[115]. However, some reserves continue to dehorn suggesting that as a deterrent, the method does work. Either way, a harvested horn is a valuable commodity.

[113] https://www.rhinoalive.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Rhino-files-SP.pdf last accessed 25 May 2021
[114] Interview Ranger Hoedspruit, 23 March 2018
[115] Interview Warden Hoedspruit, 30 May 2018

6.3.2. Rhino relocation

In addition to the legalization of domestic trade in rhino horn, there has been a whole host of interventions from the nature-based tourism sector aimed at curbing poaching. One such example is the private sector organized rhino relocation program from South Africa to Botswana which was meant to expand the rhino range and protect rhinos within Botswana's controversial shoot-to-kill landscape (which has since been abolished). Analysing this initiative which has involved the likes of Hollywood's Uma Thurman, Koot (forthcoming) argues that these types of initiatives "are based on a reductionist articulation of the rhino poaching crisis, de-politicizing it from its socio-economic and historical context while legitimizing privatized, luxurious tourism and pushing exorbitant consumerism as a solution for social and environmental crises". In addition to fostering forms of consumption, a veteran ranger noted that these policies tend to aggravate poachers more than anything else[116], although industry opinions differ widely on this issue.

There are two points to make from this. First, as with the legalization of domestic trade in rhino horn, the relocation program purports to be in the interest of rhino populations. However, as Koot (forthcoming) notes, these initiatives further the economic interests of the private wildlife economy by legitimizing conspicuous consumption. Second, this affirms Fletchers (2010) observation that states and capital can employ multiple environmentalities to 'save', in this case, rhino populations. That is, Botswana's former shoot to kill policy was the epitome of sovereign power, the power to take life. Yet simultaneously, it facilitates a neoliberal environmentality, focused on capital growth within the wildlife economy.

In addition to these, there has been a plethora of activities including running for rhino, golfing for rhino, dancing for rhino and a whole host of rhino-related products, all with the aim of intervening in the rhino-poaching crisis by collecting money for anti-poaching initiatives. While these interventions arguably do not harm rhino physically, they certainly capitalized on the crisis. Whereas rhino farmers and the nature-based tourism industries interventions have been widely different, they are both based on a neoliberal logic that prioritizes the demands and needs of the private wildlife economy over the intrinsic value of rhino. To see how this compares to how black conservation labourers are governed, I zoom into the Lowveld landscape which is the centre of one of the biggest wildlife economies in South Africa. The area has both nature-based tourism and wildlife farming which have participated in some of these interventions.

[116] Interview ranger Hoedspruit, 21 March 2018

6.4 Environmentality and collective labour

The Lowveld landscape is spatially and socio-economically unequal with some sections, especially in the north, dotted by a mosaic of private nature reserves around a small-town called Hoedspruit, in the Maruleng municipality. In the south, there is Acornhoek in Bushbuckridge, which are former apartheid homeland areas. Here, there are many social issues such as high unemployment, lack of water, poor health facilities, while it is also home to many conservation labourers. Some labourers live on the private nature reserves for 21 days and in return get 7 days off. Others still commute from Bushbuckridge to the private nature reserves every day. The respondents quoted below worked in anti-poaching, housekeeping, maintenance and some were rangers. This section compares how black lives, especially labourers and their families, and wildlife, in particular rhino, have been valued. This might appear crude, yet when an antipoaching agent in an interview states that "for the landowner, the lion or rhino or whatever wildlife is more valuable because that's how they make their money" there is urgent cause to flesh out how this materializes in these landscapes. The agent further observed that "for [my] employer, they value my life because again that is how they make their money, through my work"[117]. This comment captures the value judgments central to the conservation of biodiversity. These judgements are concealed by interventions such as those discussed in the previous section. To underscore this, I will illustrate and elaborate on the disciplinary and neoliberal environmentalities governing conservation labourers.

6.4.1. Neoliberal environmentality (Jobs as incentives)

When probed about the implications of rhino poaching, some conservation labourers stated that "the poaching is an issue because guests from far away expect to see the rhino. When we lose the Big Five, we will also lose jobs"[118]. In this sense, labourers suggest that the survival of rhino is directly tied to their employment. Whether the extinction of rhino would crash the South African tourism sector is questionable. However, there is a clear incentive for labourers to ensure that rhino and wildlife more generally are protected because their livelihoods depend on it. Public officials in Bushbuckridge and Maruleng also noted the employment opportunities that private nature reserves offer in areas with 64.6% and 51.2% unemployment rates respectively (StatsSA, 2021). Because conservation labourers come from communities with such high unemployment rates, they would be intimately acquainted with the effects of unemployment. In fact, when pressed upon the most urgent issues in their communities, conservation labourers often mentioned unemployment, suggesting that high unemployment figures were more than just numbers to them. As a guide explained, "poaching affects us because if all the animals are killed then we are out of jobs"[119]. Jobs as incentives are prolific in conservation development, however, as Wieckardt

[117] Interview anti-poaching agent, Acornhoek 14 May 2018
[118] Interview labourer Acornhoek 04 March 2018
[119] Interview guide 19 February 2017

et al. (2020) show, these employment opportunities can exacerbate social stratification in communities by employing people who are already well-positioned to guide.

In the Lowveld, 'jobs as benefits' comes directly from private nature reserves who frequently cite job creation for locals as a benefit. In addition, many often note the socioeconomic challenges in neighbouring communities. One reserve states that

> the majority of our staff come from the surrounding local communities, so we see it as our duty to do our best to make a positive contribution, especially with the needs that are continually evident within such a rural setting[120]

Some of these jobs are permanent while others are temporary bush clearing or construction jobs. As another reserve notes

> The proposed extension [...] will benefit the local communities in terms of employment opportunities and job creation. It is estimated that approximately 65 jobs will be created during the construction phase and 18 jobs during the operational phase. Skills development and training will also be a benefit. 100% of this labour will be sourced from previously disadvantaged individuals from the local communities[121].

With unemployment rates so high, nature reserves do create jobs. However talks about local 'participation' and 'benefits often mask the fact that *conservation also needs* labour, and that this labour is crucial for private capital (Neimark et al., 2020; Thakholi, 2021). That said, it is important to dissect what these jobs entail. As the previous quote suggests, some of these jobs are temporary, while permanent jobs are characterized by poor labour conditions. For instance, I met general workers in a game reserve earning as little as 3000 ZAR, a salary which many respondents were dissatisfied with. This was compounded by difficult working conditions including unpaid overtime, sub-par accommodation and racism in the workplace.

Furthermore, for many, the prospects of getting a promotion are limited as evidenced by some older labourers who had been working in housekeeping and maintenance for over 10 years. Consequently, when a labourer states that "the best promotion I can get from this position is to become a poacher"[122] it is a reminder that conservation does not have a monopoly over the neoliberal biopolitics of rhino conservation. As Hübschle (2016) notes, a ranger can get offered ten times more than their salary to simply point at the location of rhino. Notwithstanding what is clearly a lucrative deal, and despite unfavourable working

[120] https://www.thornybush.com/ last accessed 1 June 2021
[121] http://www.nuleafsa.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Draft-BAR-Kapama.pdf last accessed 1 June 2021
[122] Interview security 16 February 2017

conditions many workers don't become informants, otherwise rhino would be extinct. The simple issue here is that private conservation uses the promise of jobs and other technologies to conserve rhino.

6.4.2. Disciplinary environmentality

In addition to external incentive structures meant to motivate conservation labourers to protect wildlife, private nature reserves use various technologies on workers "to ensure that all the workers are clean"[123] as one ranger elucidated. That is: to ensure that there are no poachers within the organization. These include layered voice analysis for new employees and occasional polygraphing. The latter was implemented after multiple cases of nature reserve employees from casual labourer's to management had been implicated in poaching. Thus, polygraphing was set in place by private game reserves to 'weed out' employees who have participated in or have knowledge of poachers. There are at least two companies, in Hoedspruit offering the service (Figure 6.1). Most conservation labourer's, including housekeeping, maintenance, rangers and anti-poaching agents were subjected to a polygraph test at least twice.

Figure 6.1: Advertisement of a polygraphing company operating from Hoedspruit (Sourced from their Facebook page[124])

[123] Interview ranger 23 March 2018
[124] https://www.facebook.com/626995510696122/photos/a.2420473414681647/3167282570000724/?type=3&theater last accessed 5 June 2021

Labour law in South Africa allows for the use of polygraphing by an employer with the written consent of an employee. However, the results alone cannot be used as grounds for dismissal[125] because they are not conclusive. Despite this, a trainer noted that some rangers had been fired for suspicion of selling information about rhino because "it doesn't necessarily mean that they [a labourer] sent the text, but if they have knowledge of anyone else who did, like a family member, they will fail the test"[126]. Polygraphing, as an employee mentioned "has made the working conditions very hard because we are always stressed. You do not know when you are going to get fired"[127]. This technology has created an environment where workers internalize a sense of insecurity and fear of dismissal which in turn forces them to police not just themselves but the people around them as well.

Many labourers claimed that some colleagues had been fired based on these results. This was vehemently denied by a manager in a private nature reserve who mentioned that the questions posed were direct and if an employee failed the test, they were investigated further. Nonetheless, polygraphing is a disciplinary technology that is used ultimately to ensure that rhinos are not poached while conversely exposing black labourers to the social reproductive risks associated with unemployment. This technology works on the individual labourer who, upon failing the test, can be fired. However, the real target as the ranger above stated is the labour force more generally. That is, the polygraph tests are used on individual labour to ensure that the collective labour force is vitalized in service of protecting rhino and enabling neoliberal conservation. The biopolitical nature of polygraphs is captured by Complete Polygraph Solutions (Figure 6.1) who state that

> once someone is employed, it is advisable for employer's to periodically test their employees. This serves a dual purpose. On the one hand the employees are made aware that their actions are monitored on a regular basis, resulting in hesitance to commit any undesirable acts[128].

There is an inherent contradiction here, which Labban's (2014) analysis on the sovereign power of capitalism helps untangle. He notes that layoffs in oil companies show the contradiction of capital "which exposes certain workers to death at the same time that it seeks to improve the workers' chances of life through safety boards, routines and regulations intended to eliminate hazards, prevent accidents and enforce safety standards" (Labban, 2014: 491). Thus, while the consequences of unemployment exposes some to harm, workers that pass the test though working in an environment saturated with mistrust can continue to protect rhino and meet their social reproductive needs. The biopower of private conservation is therefore expressed in the ability to subject some labourers to

[125] https://www.ccma.org.za/Advice/Information-Sheet last accessed 25 May 2021
[126] Interview 22 November 2018, Hoedspruit
[127] Interview 4 March 2018, Acornhoek
[128] https://apotgiete0.wixsite.com/polygraph/contact last accessed 23 May 2021

unemployment status in order to improve the collective force, save rhino life and uphold the (profitability of the) wildlife economy more generally. However, polygraph tests are new and have been ushered in under exceptional circumstances. As Lorenzini (2021:42) notes, by focusing on extraordinary circumstances, like CoVID-19 "we risk overlooking the fact that disciplinary and biopolitical power mainly functions in an automatic, invisible, and perfectly ordinary way—and that it is most dangerous precisely when we do not notice it". For this reason, I turn to ordinary scenarios that reveal how labourer internalize environmental protection.

The conservation labourers I spoke to hold a range of ideas about environmental protection. However, one that was echoed many times was this notion that "wild animals should be protected because future generations have to see them"[129]. This particular way of framing environmental governance is not endemic to private nature reserves in the Lowveld but has become the norm globally. Thus, by suggesting the importance of rhino for future generations conservation labourers demonstrate the internalized environmental values that have become common place in conservation. This is not to suggest that labourers do not value wildlife, rather given that very few people from labourers' homes have ever set foot in a private nature reserve, it begs the obvious question; for which future generations in particular should wildlife be preserved? Upon further probing it became apparent that labourers' conceptions of environmental problems didn't immediately feature wildlife. Rather, labourers identified lack of access to water, unemployment and bad roads as the most pressing issues in their immediate environments. I will return to this shortly.

An explanation of the plethora of environmental initiatives that private nature reserves host in neighbouring villages might help contextualize why a conservation labourer would frame their response in that manner. At least six private nature reserves along the border of the Kruger National Park close to the communities organize various environmental programs. These include; vegetable gardens, conservation awareness, environmental education, health programs and soccer tournaments. These initiatives target youth, the elderly, school children and orphans. One nature reserve hosts an annual workshop for the children of its employees' notes "by *establishing* a love for nature and conservation from as early an age as possible, *we inspire* these children and their families to *adopt a way of life* that protects their environment"[130] [italics added]. Problematic language aside the reserve has hosted 25,500 participants to these workshops. Under an aptly titled section 'incentives' it lists gifts such as school uniforms and Christmas presents for the local communities. This is just one organization amongst others that run programs in villages that emphasize instilling a supposedly absent love for the environment in locals. By *adopting* this dominant view of the environment conservation would shape the conduct of labourers and their families.

[129] Interview 04 March 2018, Acornhoek
[130] https://www.ecochildren.co.za/our-projects/eco-education/

Reserves run these programs to create Agrawal's (2005:162) conceptualization of "environmental subjects- people who care about the environment". In addition to these programs, Pastor Mpho, a local pastor in Acornhoek, was invited to a workshop in a private reserve, where pastors were told to preach anti-poaching. Following this, Pastor Mpho started to preach anti-poaching to his 25 congregants. In light of all these environmental programs meant to 'establish a love for nature' some conservation labourers are bound to internalize a particular way of thinking about the environment. Hence, environmental education is exemplary of a disciplinary environmentality (Fletcher, 2010).

6.4.3. Letting die

Nature reserves combine disciplinary and neoliberal environmentalities to govern labourers such that they are both incentivized to protect rhino and have internalize moral standards about environmental protection. Both serve to maintain a labour force that is vitalized in service of wildlife and neighbouring communities amenable to *in situ* preservation. However, by looking within and beyond the fence into communities where labourers come from the 'let die' of conservation is revealed. To work this out, I follow Marcatelli & Büscher's (2019, p. 761) reminder that "'letting die' is not about 'killing' people – as some mistakenly understand the concept – but about the *disinvesting or non-intervening* in particular groups of people (or 'forms of life') so that these have structurally less chance of making a living or more chance of seeing their livelihood wither". The 'non-intervening' implicates conservation organizations, local municipalities and the Department of Environment. The latter has spearheaded some interventions discussed in the previous section. However, the department rarely if ever makes mention of the working conditions of conservation labourers. If anything, the department of environment also champions the 'jobs as benefits' without questioning the quality of jobs the sector offers to locals.

In addition, due to the racialized division of labour in conservation, black labourers in general are disproportionately exposed to life eroding circumstances such as subpar housing and even death itself. This is evidenced by one reserve in the Lowveld where low-wage, predominantly black workers are expected to walk a 2km stretch from the main gate to the reception in an area with large mammals and predators. Though the reserve has plenty of game drive cars, twice a day, day staff walk the stretch of road to and from the bus. On one occasion a female labourer would have been attacked by a leopard had a car not driven by[131]. Similarly, in another game reserve, a security guard lamented that

> sometimes we carry guns other times we don't [...] we are not even allowed to shoot at an animal if it charges at you, even if it's about to kill you are not allowed to shoot it. You have to find other ways to escape. Only poachers can be killed, not animal[132].

[131] Personal fieldnotes 20 February 2017
[132] Interview security 18 February 2017, Hoedspruit

In view of the previous section where I pointed to the monetary value of wildlife, it is perhaps unsurprising that private landowners would rather have an employee sustain some injuries as opposed to losing their expensive commodity. This quote also shows the sovereign and neoliberal environmentalities of conservation which works on poachers and labourers respectively. From this, it is evident that racism and biopower are inextricably linked because the former orders human groups based on differential exposure to vulnerability (Lorenzini, 2021).

The vulnerabilities are also observed by labourers who mentioned unemployment, lack of water and bad roads as some of the most pressing issues in their villages. As mentioned already the unemployment rates are very high in Bushbuckridge, well above the (already high) national average. Furthermore, conservation labourers and the communities they come from barely have consistent access to clean drinkable water. Only 8.3 % of residents have piped water in their residence (StatsSA, 2021), the rest depend on communal taps which have an infrequent supply of water. Observing a business opportunity, some wealthier families dug boreholes and now sell water to community members. Others still, who own pickup trucks, run a water delivery service where community members can pay per trip. Water is essential for human reproduction; failure to provide it exposes communities to vulnerability (Marcatelli and Büscher, 2019).

The third concern that labourers mentioned were bad roads. Having driven the Acornhoek main road multiple times, I can attest to the gaping potholes, patches of tar and mud flows when it rains. The non-intervention in infrastructure has far-reaching implications for the community at large. Good infrastructure including road networks is known to attract investors who would in turn provide jobs. Furthermore, businesses and homes along the road tend to flood due to poor or non-existent storm water drainages. The material implications of the municipalities failure to provide this service are far-reaching. Yet across the fence in nature reserves, multiple interventions are set in place to ensure that rhinos are protected, including intervening in the collective labour force.

6.5 Conclusion: making landscapes live

In light of the above considerations, I argue that private conservation makes a hierarchy of life in which rhino are rendered more important than black conservation labour. This hierarchy is informed by market principles because, though rhinos are fiercely protected, the interventions discussed give precedence to the monetary returns of the private wildlife economy over the intrinsic value of rhino themselves. Similarly, the interventions in labourers lives create a workforce that can render just enough labour to keep the wildlife economy functioning while simultaneously disallowing life in the former homelands. This is short-

sighted and indicative of capitalisms contradictions including undermining the material base of accumulation itself (Harvey, 2014).

The disproportionate investment in rhino life compared to other wildlife underscores why claims of intrinsic value are questionable. If all wildlife has intrinsic value conservation would be waging wars for pangolin, the most trafficked mammal. Many conservation organizations are working for pangolins but the interventions pale in comparison to the spectacle that rhino poaching has elicited. The attention on rhino is captured by a ranger who notes "a large part of the emphasis in rhino is because it is part of the megafauna that drives the tourism industry. If this was a duiker in Congo do you think people would be going out armed with bullet proof vests to protect it". The spectacularization of rhino conservation, in which 'humanity must come together' "belies the profound acts of differentiation—both among non-human species, between human populations, and within particular non-human species" (Biermann and Anderson, 2017: 5).

Furthermore, in Southern Africa, it has been argued that whites fashioned a deep connection with 'African' environments which allowed them to disengage from their black neighbours (Hughes, 2010). So, in some sense that conservation values rhino as a commodity more than black lives is not a surprise. What this chapter has shown, however, is that these interventions mask the value judgements that culminate in differential exposure to vulnerabilities. That is, *the choice* to intervene in rhino life even if to extract more profit from it is value laden. In the same vein *the choice* not to intervene in black lives —beyond creating environmental subjects— is also value laden. As shown, private conservation is prepared to wage a war to protect rhino, lobby international celebrities and countries, but fails to simply remunerate black labourers enough to meet their social reproductive needs while simultaneously depending on the unpaid social reproductive activities occurring in villages (Thakholi, 2021). Fundamentally this shows that governance of South Africa's nature is *intertwined* with racism (Kepe, 2009). Conservation of biodiversity, including the wildlife economy has been conceptualized as neoliberal, it is thus logical that racism would be central to this sectors functioning because as many critical race scholars have suggested, capitalism is deeply racialized (Hawthorne, 2019b; Pulido, 2016; Robinson, 1983). The wildlife economy in South Africa is therefore a microcosm of a capitalist order that has always depended on and reinforced human difference consistently along racial lines (Mbembe, 2017).

While this analysis concentrated on human and non-human life forms. At an abstracted level, interventions in some life forms, occupying certain geographical areas will necessarily make those landscapes viable for certain forms of life. Similarly, 'non-intervention' in other life forms occupying other places will render life more difficult, if not untenable in those landscapes. From this, it is clear that biopolitics has spatial implications. This is exemplified by the environmental justice scholarship analysis of environmental racism (Van Sant et al.,

2021) in which "racism is a process that shapes places, and in this case, produces a racially devalued place" (Pulido, 2016: 8). This is consistent with McIntyre and Nast (2011:1466) who put Foucault's (2010) biopolitics in conversation with Mbembe's (2003) necropolitics to argue that the emergence of capitalism, from the separation of producers from their means of subsistence, was inscribed with "racially *ontologized* hierarchies of space, which permitted the hyperexploitation of certain (colorized) bodies and lands, but not others" [italics in original]. Biopolitics is thus spatial, as this chapter has shown, sectors that are not as visually striking as mines also make value judgements about life that manifest in space.


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Chapter 7

Conclusion

The size of the private wildlife economy in South Africa is difficult to ascertain due to fragmented and old data and self-congratulatory industry reporting (Snijders, 2015). That said, a number that has been cited — though questioned (Snijders, 2015) — is that 16.8% of the country's land mass is used for game farming (DEA, 2016). In the Maruleng Municipality where most of the nature reserves featured in this thesis are located, conservation accounts for at least 20% of land use[133]. When I first arrived in the Lowveld, I jokingly said that Hoedspruit and its surroundings felt like South Africa on steroids, five years later, I can conclusively state that this region is a microcosm of broader socio-economic relations in South Africa. Regionally, the Lowveld private nature reserves are often viewed as exemplary in conservation due in part to the legal agreements discussed in chapter 4. Furthermore, its location right along the Kruger National Park boundary makes this a destination of choice for many international tourists. For these reasons, what happens in this region reverberates far beyond South Africa.

Considering this, the thesis offered a sobering account of private sector involvement in the conservation of biodiversity. It showed that, though touted as a solution to global biodiversity loss, the intertwined relationship between private conservation, property and labour warrants a pause for reflection. By focusing on labour and property, I was able to identify processes, ideas and institutions involved in the reproduction of inequality in conservation spaces. Private conservation, therefore, needs to critically reflect on the tensions investigated in this thesis because the status quo 'conserves' socio-economic and racial inequality. These concerns lead to the following research question:

How have the interrelations between private conservation, property and labour jointly produced space in the Lowveld, South Africa and how does this impact on the possibilities for spatial justice?

This main question is subdivided into 3 sub-questions:

1. What are the historical relations between conservation, property and labour and how have these changed over time to produce space in the Lowveld?
2. How has the private wildlife economy co-evolved along with labour and how has this impacted the lives of labourers and broader possibilities for spatial justice?
3. How are interventions against rhino poaching transforming the biopolitics of rhinos and conservation labour?

[133] I used the Protected Area Database of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. This is likely an underestimate because the database shows mainly nature reserves that have been gazetted officially.

To answer these questions, I conducted 16 months of fieldwork in the Lowveld region where I employed a mixed-methods approach. I participated in observations by doing casual jobs in nature reserves, patrolling with an anti-poaching unit and attending conservation events. In addition, I conducted 154 semi-structured interviews with conservation labours, elders, conservationists and government officials. This was coupled with archival data from the National Archives of South Africa, the Wits Historical Papers Research Archive and the Moletele tribal council archive where I collected over 700 archival documents. To augment the archival data, I conducted four life histories with elders.

When analysing the data chronologically, it was clear that the Lowveld had undergone significant spatial changes since the 1900s. To make sense of these changes I found Marxist geographers' conceptualization of the capitalist *production of space* (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1980) instrumental because it allowed me to understand the processes that led to the uneven geography of the Lowveld. In particular, I drew from Neil Smith's (2008) *Uneven Development Nature: Capital and the Production of Space* where he works out systematically how capital produces spaces. In it, he states that "while the emphasis here is on the direct physical production of space, the production of space also implies the production of the meaning, concepts, and consciousness of space which are inseparably linked to its physical production" (Smith, 2008: 107). Similarly, while much of the focus was on analysing the physical production of conservation spaces, I have equally engaged with the meanings attached to spaces, the subjectivities created in space and the power dynamics at play within and beyond these spaces.

With this foundation, I was able to explore how conservation, as a mode of production produces space in the Lowveld. I analysed belonging as a mechanism of primitive accumulation which is inherently a continuous process (De Angelis, 2001). Furthermore, drawing from Ekers and Prudham (2017, 2018) who advance Smith's work, the thesis explores how conservation produces space and nature in contemporary times. Following this, I borrowed from Herod (1997) who also advances Marxist geographers' work on space by analysing how labour produces the economic geography of capitalism. Lastly, I used a biopolitics framework to understand how certain landscapes allow some lives to 'live' while others are 'let die', and how this fundamentally has spatial implications.

In this concluding chapter, I will first outline the key findings from the empirical chapters and how they contribute to answering the sub-questions. Second, by reflecting on the concluding remarks in the four preceding empirical chapters, I discuss the overall conclusion that; conservation in the Lowveld region conserves and exacerbates inequality. Following this, is a discussion about the theoretical and methodological contribution of the thesis. I end by considering how these debates can be developed further.

7.1 Overview of chapters

Chapter 3 answered the first and second sub-questions which are interested in the history of the development of the private wildlife economy and labour respectively. It showed that history still matters deeply. Notably, in South Africa, the deeply uneven and persistent history is materialised in the uneven and troubled spatiality of the country. Using archival data, some of which has never been used before, the thesis has been able to implicate three conservation pioneers in the subjugation of black labour during colonialism and apartheid. This was necessary to demonstrate how historical narratives of conquest are used by contemporary white conservationists to invisibilise black history. I showed that these (all male) pioneers did not arrive on empty lands as often stated on reserve's websites. Rather, some took over newly surveyed lands now called 'farms' which were occupied by Mapulana families. These men wanted to commence commercial agricultural activities and so needed just enough labour. Those not deemed useful for labour were evicted, while others who could pay rent and grazing fees were retained. The latter, it turned out, was a lucrative source of income.

Using life histories, the chapter illuminates a historical black presence. This was done because the archive, though useful, rarely documents the lived experiences of subjugated groups. Chapter 3 thus documents a rich historical black presence that is unfeatured on private nature reserve websites. This is not surprising because private conservation has not reckoned with its history. The chapter finally showed that white belonging invisibilises black histories and delegitimises black peoples' claims to land and is thus a form of primitive accumulation. Furthermore, it shows that claims of 'wilderness' obscure the contemporary labour issues which are discussed in chapter 5.

Chapter 4 explored contemporary land politics in conservation by focusing on property and labour. It thus answered the first sub-question by considering how relations between conservation, property and labour have changed over time. The chapter used Ekers and Prudham's (2017) concept of socioecological fix, which is a way of analysing the production of space as a necessarily metabolic process. That is, capital investment in landscapes intertwines the production of space and nature. The chapter analysed the Lowveld's wildlife estates and share blocks in private nature reserves as socioecological fixes. It showed the socioecological implications of the seemingly seamless relationship between property developers and conservationists. The chapter argued that these new type of conservation spaces deepen spatial injustice.

It did this by identifying three connotations of 'fixed' that are at play. First, these developments purport to 'fix' nature in time by evoking a historically pristine wilderness that ought to be recreated or protected. However, as chapter 3 and 4 show, the Lowveld has always been

in flux and at various moments permanently settled by people. The second connotation of fixed refers to pinning down to a location or place. This is exemplified by overlapping complex legally binding arrangements between state and private reserves which secure conservation land use in perpetuity. The last connotation of fixed refers to securing the conditions for capital accumulation, including the necessary social relations. In the Lowveld, I identified the 'fixing' of black bodies in these landscapes as labourers. That is, through evictions, conservationists-cum-property developers ensure that black people's presence in Hoedspruit is tied to their employment, as it was during apartheid.

Chapter 5 conceptualised conservation labour geographies by applying Smith's (2008) production of space and Herod's (1997) labour geographies. Empirically, I discussed the history of the development of the private wildlife economy which intertwines the production of labour. I showed that the creation of commercial farms which later converted to private nature reserves was central in the creation of surplus labour in the Lowveld. Furthermore, the chapter historicised the uneven geography of the Lowveld to show the production of conservation spaces affects areas far beyond the boundary fence. Following this, I explored the social reproduction of conservation. Through this discussion, it becomes apparent that conservation pays low salaries, is characterised by a racialised division of labour and sub-par accommodation. In addition, there is a whole host of reproductive activities occurring in communities and villages which are central in maintaining labourers. These include the unwaged care work of mainly female family members, subsistence farming and government grants which augment labourers salaries. The latter alone would not be enough to sustain workers. Based on these empirical findings I conceptualise conservation labour geographies as a way of unpacking the dialectical relationship between labour and the production of conservation spaces. The chapter thus answered the second sub-question.

Chapter 6 used a biopolitics framework to answer the third sub-question. It analysed the conservation of rhino as biopolitical because the interventions that were set in place in response to rhino poaching aimed to protect rhino species at the population level. These interventions include the legalization of domestic trade in rhino horn in South Africa and the rhino relocation program from South Africa to Botswana. These interventions purport to be in the best interest of rhino populations, however, I showed that they more likely further the economic interests of the private wildlife economy by legitimizing conspicuous consumption and fragmenting rhino. I compared this to how labourers are governed in the context of the responses to rhino poaching. By analysing the disciplinary and neoliberal modes of governing labour I showed that private conservation exposes individual black conservation labour to disproportionate vulnerabilities while simultaneously attempting to vitalize collective labour to conserve nature. In addition to this, I looked 'beyond the fence' into conservation labourers' homes to outline the 'let die' conditions that conservation labour and their families are exposed to. By not intervening in conservation labourers lives

but intervening in rhinos' lives, I argued that conservation creates a hierarchy of life with rhinos at the top, conservation labour next and poachers at the bottom.

7.2 Conserving inequality

Together these chapters show that the production of private conservation not only conserves socioeconomic and racial inequality but actively and consistently *reproduces* it. There are many ways that this is done though the thesis concentrated on three themes; consistent subjugation of labour, property hoarding and jeopardizing wildlife for the private wildlife economy.

First, to build up to an argument that conservation conserves inequality through labour it was important to explore the history of conservation labour, that is, under what conditions were people turned into labour, how is this labour maintained and what are the current labour conditions. Chapters 3 and 5 demonstrated that key individuals and the state were both central in the expulsion of Mapulana from their land which necessitated that they seek waged labour. A parallel system of labour tenancy also meant that black people were forced to render their labour in exchange for lodging. However, many could not be absorbed into agricultural production and so ended up in the Bantustans as surplus labour. When farm conversions from livestock to cattle ensued in the 1960s, conservation plugged into this apartheid labour regime and arguably exacerbated it due to reduced mobility on farms.

Since the dawn of democracy in 1994, much has changed with regards to labour, but the thesis shows that some metabolic processes have remained unchanged. Chapter 4 shows that, while the colonial and apartheid periods created people in need of waged labour and attached their belonging to the labour they provided (see also Brankamp and Daley, 2020), the democratic era has seen a 'fixing' of black people as labour only. That is, only when rendering labour can black people legitimately occupy space in Hoedspruit and its surroundings. This is exemplified by evictions that occurred during the democratic era and purposefully thwarting plans to provide low-cost housing in Hoedspruit. The glaring contradiction here is that labour is a necessity. So, while conservation shows disdain for black labour, in practice it still *needs* (cheap) black labour. These conditions are not so much an outcome as they are a necessity for the current conservation mode of production.

Related to being fixed as labour was an exploration of the labour conditions in contemporary private nature reserves. Private nature reserves are characterised by racialised division of labour, racial prejudice in the workspace, the policing of labour and the exposure of black labour to 'let die' conditions. In addition to this, conservation depends on the unpaid reproductive work that occurs in homes and communities. Such that, without the families of conservation labourers participating in the informal economy, farming for subsistence

and doing the care work in homes, conservation labourers would not be able to show up for work. Thus, conservation, because it too is a mode of production, leeches off unwaged labour. The flip side is that black labourers are often not valorised in the same way that white labourers are. It is for these reasons that I argue that conservation conserves inequality because the generational cumulative effect of the aforementioned conditions is that conservation labourers' children will also one day vie for menial jobs even if they are not treated with dignity.

Secondly, the labour conditions are embossed in the uneven geography of the Lowveld, which is not an outcome per se but a precondition of the capitalist mode of production. Conservation reproduces and reinforces this uneven geography and ultimately inequality through property hoarding. To build up to that point I delved into the history of the production of conservation spaces from the early 1900s. Chapter 3, 4 and 5 outline this history from; settlement and evictions by British ex-soldiers, the establishment of commercial agriculture and finally conversions from livestock to game farming in the 1960s. These developments resulted in a racialised uneven geography such that Hoedspruit and its surroundings were predominantly privately owned by whites while 30kms to the South of this, present-day Bushbuckridge municipality was teeming with villages.

Since 1994, private conservation has been consistently maintaining and fortifying this status quo. This is achieved through exclusionary forms of white belonging which is characterised by empty lands narratives and 'pioneers'. Commenting on similar processes in Papua New Guinea, West (2016: 60) states that "this erasure of people from sea and landscapes, leads to the fantasy of these sites as empty and therefore open to transformation by outsiders". Similarly, white belonging denies Mapulana a historical presence. Coupled with legal agreements that ensure conservation land use in *perpetuity*, these processes lock land in conservation to the exclusion of other claims to land. As a result of these processes, I argue that conservation reproduces and even strengthens spatial inequality in the Lowveld. This is best illustrated by a memorandum dated 21st March 1927 and collected by the South African institute of race relations[134]. The memorandum was commenting on the socioecological conditions of the area in present-day Lowveld that had been set aside for black people, including Mapulana. The memorandum states

> "much of the land within the released area, or within any area which could be set aside as a released area, is entirely raw and unbroken, and considerable tracts are quite unfit to support human life" (pg 3)
>
> Further that "this area is not too well watered and is largely quite unbroken country and subject to malaria and other difficulties" (pg 6)

[134] Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation, Collection Number: AD1715, Historical Papers Research Archive, Johannesburg

Despite these scathing comments many evictees have managed to eke out a living in the Lowveld. However, 94 years later, the soil is still poor, population density is high as a result of the evictions, grazing areas are few while others are degraded, thus making it difficult to support life. Furthermore, Bushbuckridge still has chronic water shortages which often result in residents taking to the streets to demand services. These conditions are maintained in part by the conservation industry which hoards land.

Thirdly, in addition to labour and property, the thesis shows that private conservation does not have an inherent net positive effect on biodiversity. If anything, some initiatives such as wildlife residential estates discussed in chapter 4 promote luxury living which has adverse impacts on the environment. Furthermore, as chapter 6 showed, wildlife species, which are essentially commodities are sometimes jeopardised to increase private capital in the wildlife economy. Thus, private capital though alleging to protect nature is not entirely good for the environment. I did not work this out fully in the thesis but there is certainly scope to critically probe the 'actual' impact of private-nature reserves on the socio-ecology in future research.

In addition, through a historical analysis, the thesis shows that there is no pristine environment to return to, as often purported by conservation. At least not in the Lowveld and I would argue most of South Africa. The country has been in flux with communities such Swazis and Mapulana moving in and out of the Lowveld, settling permanently in some parts and participating in land-based livelihoods. Thus, an attempt to 'fix' landscapes to an imagined historical moment is simply ahistorical.

Ultimately, I have shown that the subjugation of labour, property hoarding and jeopardizing wildlife for the private wildlife economy works to conserve inequality.

7.3 Theoretical and methodological contributions

7.3.1. Theoretical contributions

Smith's (2008) production of space has been a thread that runs through every chapter, some more explicitly than others. I found Smith's theory both captivating and instrumental in helping me think through how spaces *become* in a capitalist society. I am also inspired by Ekers and Prudham (2017, 2018) who put Smith in conversation with Harvey's (2001) spatial fix to conceptualize the socioecological fix. In addition to this, I found Herod's (1997) conceptualization of labour geographies instrumental in thinking through how labour and capital produce the economic geography of capitalism. As Schoenberger (2004) notes, while Harvey paved a way for critically analysing how capitalism deals with over accumulation through the spatial fix, there is still need to revisit the concept and unpack how it plays out in different historical moments and various spatial contexts. Likewise, as Ekers and Prudham

and Herod have shown, Smith's conceptualization of the capitalist production of space can be developed further. Among others through an engagement with Marxist feminist as it highlights the spatiality of capitalism which extends far beyond the workspace but penetrates homes and communities.

I take a cue from these Marxist geographers to think through how capitalist production of space intertwines belonging and biopolitics. These links will not be worked out fully here as the thesis only attempted to broach them, and so open them up for future exploration and investigation. Hence, chapter 3 points to the fact that belonging is spatial while chapter 6 suggests that biopolitics has spatial implications. Regarding the former, Koot et al. (2019: 346) suggest that "the way people belong to place is often informed by *political strategies*, conscious and unconscious, through which access to various rights and resources are sought and contested" [italics added]. Thus, when people have a particular attachment or connection to land and resources, they will invariably employ political strategies to shape it in ways that speak to their ideals. In this thesis, I looked at exclusionary forms of white belonging to land and placed this squarely within the political economy of conservation. The emphasis on land was insightful, however, it has left us with a truncated understanding of different ways of belonging and how they manifest in space. Furthermore, in South Africa, there is a paucity of work exploring how other racialised groups belong. Thus, future research could extend these discussions by critically analysing different modes of belonging and how they intertwine the capitalist production of space.

Secondly, Marcatelli and Büscher (2019: 761) remind us that 'letting die' of biopower "is not about 'killing' people – as some mistakenly understand the concept – but about the disinvesting or non-intervening in particular groups of people (or 'forms of life')" to the point where their lives can literally be imperilled. Likewise, landscapes can be governed by intervening through foreign direct investment, electrified fences, restocking of wildlife, cheap labour and infrastructural development, amongst others. Conversely, some landscapes are 'let die' through non-intervention, such as allowing infrastructural decay or simply not investing in water, electricity and health infrastructure which are necessary for fostering life. Biopolitics is therefore spatial, as I showed in chapter 6. This opens up interesting research avenues for geographers who have explored the co-constitutive nature of racism and space (Lipsitz, 2007; Neely and Samura, 2011) and explicitly the geographies of racial capitalism (Hawthorne, 2019).

The environmental racism scholarship has taken up these landscape debates and used biopolitics as a framework (Mansfield, 2012). However, biopolitical power functions primarily in 'mundane' ways and "it is most dangerous precisely when we do not notice it" (Lorenzini, 2021: 42). Therefore, from an equity perspective and certainly for a critical scholarship it is necessary to continue using a biopolitics framework to dissect industries or sectors that are

not only visually striking and overtly hazardous as refineries or sewage treatment plants. Thus, an engagement between geographies of racial capitalism and biopolitics could provide invaluable insights.

The capitalist production of space as it intersects with belonging and biopolitics are important threads which emerged from the thesis. While not worked out fully here, there is scope to develop these debates further.

7.3.2. Methodological contributions

In addition to theoretical reflections, there are three notes on the methodology that can be taken from the thesis. The first pertains to the positionality of the researcher which is critical in qualitative research because, as the adage goes, the researcher is an 'instrument' (Yin, 2011). My positionality as a black South African woman informed my research questions, the spaces I could enter during fieldwork, those I avoided and the choices about which theories to engage with. I borrow from Finney (2014: 16) who states that "the differences we bring to any discussion about the environment can only expand what we know and how we choose to stand in relation to each other". Thus, conservation researchers who represent diversity along racial, gender and class lines, can only enrich science.

Second, and related to my positionality, one of the benefits of struggling to get access to private nature reserves was that the thesis was able to investigate the production of conservation spaces, within and beyond the fence. This allowed me to explore the interconnections between private nature reserves and villages. While many scholars have explored the implications of conservation on local communities, what I am calling for here is an integrated analysis that views these locales as part of the same economic geographies because as I have demonstrated in this thesis, transformations in one place will affect the other. I used this methodological approach to study mainly physical spaces. That said, I recognise possibilities of extending this to account for questions beyond property and labour such as belonging which can certainly be explored further especially in relation to black peoples belonging to land. Furthermore, looking beyond the fence in the conservation mode of production opens the spaces for exploring 'vertical' relations (see Hartwick, 1998) such as migrant conservation labourers, the value chain of conservation commodities and as Hübschle (2017) shows, the transnational flow of rhino horn.

Third, there is much to gain from using archives to make sense of history in political ecology. Not because the archive, especially national repositories, hold objective truths. In fact, the South African National Archive reflects mostly colonial and apartheid records (Ngoepe, 2019) and excludes black voices (McEwan, 2003). Rather, when colonial and apartheid states were orchestrating land dispossessions, genocides and enslavement, they probably did not conceive of a world where black women would have equal rights. So, they wrote freely

and collected with abandonment, and this is certainly true for the apartheid state. National archives can therefore be very instrumental for shedding light on historical processes. In addition to public archives, Jacob Dlamini's (2020) recent work shows the depth and richness that exists in personal archives as well. Through his book*, Safari Nation: a social history of the Kruger National Park*, Dlamini uses various personal archives of South Africans to show a historical black presence yet unseen. His work ought to be built on to continue showing 'histories of presence'.

It thus pained me when some young black people celebrated the burning of the Special Collections of the University of Cape Town in April 2021 under the guise that it cannot be used for a decolonial project. This to me demonstrated an unfortunate misunderstanding about the place of archives in contemporary societies. This thesis, especially chapter 3, is a testament to how archival texts can be analysed critically to help shed light on a dark past. Furthermore, there are many communities in South Africa, who have used life histories along with archives to get their land back, including the Moletele community who are featured in this thesis. That said, I implore geographers and political ecologist especially in South Africa to keep searching the archives and analysing texts critically in order to shed light on what is often euphemistically termed a 'tumultuous' history because we have barely scratched the surface of what happened when a 33-year-old Dutchman arrived on our shores in 1652.

Archives can — dare I say *should* — be used along with life histories to make spaces for those people whose voices are not echoed in national archives. Revealing my own academic bias, I must admit to having been pleasantly surprised at the richness of stories and depth of detail that elders shared which I could later 'triangulate'. Archival data and life histories can thus be used for a decolonial project.

7.4 Recommendations for future research

The thesis touched on some pertinent themes that deserve to be worked out further. The first pertains to the normalization of private property. It is evident from this thesis that private property is not inherent to societies, it was created. Bhandar's (2018, 4) exposition is testament to this and takes this further by arguing that colonialism "produced a racial regime of ownership that persists into the present, creating a conceptual apparatus in which justifications for private property ownership remain bound to a concept of the human that is thoroughly racial in its makeup". There is a need, therefore, to not only challenge the normalization of private property but also to reimagine new ways of organising land, water, fauna and flora.

In addition, while extending the field of labour geographies, there are some pertinent questions that the thesis could not explore concerning conservation labour. One that continues to bug

me is the question of value. That is, how is value produced in conservation spaces. For instance, from a critical Marxist perspective what would the conservation labour theory of value entail in 2021? This is a puzzling question for the following reasons: Conservation labourers produce non-consumptive products such as good feelings which cannot be quantified; Much of the work in conservation especially as it pertains to research is funded by public institutions and is immaterial labour; As this thesis has shown many of the social reproductive activities are externalised to neighbouring communities; and last, conservation depends on donors for financial support and equipment.

These are a few of the considerations which complicate the 'true value' of conservation commodities. This is where I find the work of feminist Marxist and feminist geographers instructive. The formers' advancement of social reproduction as the thesis has shown, can pave the way to start exploring these questions. While initial conceptions of social reproduction tended to focus on the household, recent work has expanded this to incorporate analysis of the implications of global capitalism on the environment (Di Chiro, 2008). Bakker (2007: 547) notes this shift as an "intensifying contradiction between the global reach and power of capital [...] and the erosion of the conditions of social reproduction, including the biosphere, of the majority of the world's population under neoliberalism". There are clear synergies between social reproduction and the current debates around the neoliberalization of nature which warrant an intersectional analysis to

> illuminate how intersecting axes of power and inequality operate to our collective and individual disadvantage and how these very tools, these ways of knowing, may also constitute structures of knowledge production that can themselves be the object of intersectional critique (Cho et al., 2013: 797).

Feminist geographers are already engaging with the spatiality of intersectionality (Kobayashi and Peake, 1994; Mollett and Faria, 2018) and can thus advance a political ecology of labour that takes seriously the production of space and the co-constitutive relationship between production and reproduction within neoliberal capitalism.

In addition to expanding the labour question, conservation and humanitarianism engender strikingly similar patterns of neoliberal capitalism, ahistorical treatment of phenomena and do-good Hollywood celebrities. While dissecting the role of celebrities in the commodification of humanitarianism, Daley (2013: 377) argues that celebrities

> play an intermediary role, making market relations and its effects acceptable at the core through consumption and at the periphery via humanitarian intervention. Central to this process is how humanitarian crises are framed by these Western cultural elites – often in opposition to African agency

> and progressive social movements. Crises are decontextualised and non-consumerist and radical political agenda are represented as flawed.

Replace humanitarianism with conservation and this reflection continues to ring true. In fact, research on philanthrocapitalism in conservation (Holmes, 2015; Koot, 2021) has engaged extensively with similar themes. Furthermore, themes such as spectacularization (Igoe, 2017; Kapoor, 2013) and voluntourism (Brondo, 2015; Mostafanezhad, 2014) have captivated both fields. However, humanitarianism and conservation while clearly appraising similar dynamics have thus far been developing alongside each other save for a few exceptions (Shellabarger et al., 2012). On the ground, however, conservation and humanitarian organizations have been partnering with each other. Furthermore, we see the same celebrities moving from one humanitarian crises to the next rhino poaching scene, cameras in tow. These fields could contribute to each other and advance an understanding of neoliberal capitalism more broadly.

In conclusion, the thesis has demonstrated repeatedly that the current private conservation model is unjust and reproduces social and spatial inequalities. Conservation in South Africa – but also in many other places – thus needs to fundamentally transform. However, it is clearly not enough to simply hire black people in managerial positions. Rather the whole sector needs to change such that it does not reproduce apartheid-like inequalities but indeed addresses, alleviates and moves beyond them. A first step towards reconciling this sector with a just agenda would be to consider the thorny yet crucial land question. That is, because conservation hoards property, there ought to be intentional efforts to share land and wildlife. Secondly, the labour question which can be addressed more expeditiously needs to be tackled. One way of doing this is to start treating black workers with dignity by providing good accommodation, paying workers living wages and creating healthy working environments. While the land question requires immense creativity and care it is the contention of this thesis that the labour issues can be tackled by every individual employer.

Summary

Globally, private conservation is increasingly posited as one of the key solutions to curb biodiversity loss. In South Africa, where wildlife can be privately owned, the wildlife economy including private conservation has been endorsed by the state as a solution to unemployment, loss of biodiversity and rural development. However, private conservation has a long history that intertwines capital, labour and property. These interlinkages have evolved with the development of new types of private conservation initiatives such as wildlife residential estates. Furthermore, these initiatives are an amalgamation of value laden decisions which essentially invest in some life forms while disallowing the advancement of others.

Calls to increase private sector involvement in conservation come after a wake of research that has conceptualised conservation as a mode of production in South Africa and globally. This entails the dominant inclination of mainstream conservation to transform the value of natures into capital. The thesis aims to contribute to this by investigating the link between private conservation, property and labour in the context of capitalist production of space.

With this aim, the thesis addresses three gaps in political ecology and geography literatures. The first gap pertains to how historical evictions manifest in contemporary conservation spaces. The second gap is the lack of systematic critical analysis of labour in the wildlife economy. The third has to do with what conservations interventions in some life forms can tell us about the biopolitics of neoliberal conservation. To fill these gaps, I asked the question: **How are the interrelations between the private wildlife economy, property and labour in the Lowveld, South Africa, jointly producing space?**

To ground this discussion, the thesis draws mainly from Marxist geographers' conceptualization of space. The reason for this is simple and guides the theoretical contribution of all chapters, namely that "capital and the capitalist state play a leading role in producing the spaces and places that ground capitalist activity" (Harvey, 2014: 145). Consequently, because conservation is also a mode of production, it too will produce spaces that are integral for its reproduction.

The analysis is based on 16 months of ethnographic research between 2016-2019 in the Lowveld, South Africa. This region was chosen because it has the highest concentration of private nature reserves juxtaposed against an area with high unemployment rates, poor infrastructure and an inconsistent supply of water. The spatial ordering of this region is critical to this analysis. The fieldwork was divided into three phases; the exploratory phase, long fieldwork and the reconnaissance. During the latter two, I lived in a small town, Hoedspruit surrounded by private nature reserves where I employed a mixed-methods approach. I participated in observations by doing casual jobs in nature reserves, patrolling with an anti-poaching unit and attending conservation events. In addition, I conducted 154 semi-structured interviews with conservation labourers, elders, conservationists and government

officials. This was coupled with archival data from the National Archives of South Africa, the Wits Historical Papers Research Archive and the Moletele tribal council archive where I collected over 700 archival documents. To augment the archival data, I conducted four life histories with elders.

Chapter 3 is the first of the four empirical chapters to explore how the interrelations between the private wildlife economy, property and labour in the Lowveld, South Africa, jointly produce space. It dissects the history of the Lowveld as presented on private nature reserves websites. This version of history is characterised by the empty lands narratives and white male pioneers who transformed 'virgin' lands into bustling economies. Using life histories and archival material I show that these men did not arrive in empty lands, instead, Mapulana had settled in this area for over 40 years. Furthermore, that these conservation heroes, in collaboration with the apartheid state were central in subjugating Mapulana and alienating their labour. The chapter argues that this white belonging that erases historical black presence is a mechanism of primitive accumulation because it maintains the continued separation of Mapulana from their land.

Chapter 4 discusses contemporary property and labour politics in the Lowveld. It uses Ekers and Prudham's (2017, 2018) conceptualization of the socioecological fix which puts Harvey's spatial fix in conversation with Smith's production of nature to suggest that the spatial fix is a metabolic process intertwining the production of space and nature. The chapter analysis two conservation initiatives: share blocks in private nature reserves and residential wildlife estate as spatial fixes. It illustrates that a rapidly growing alliance between private conservation and property developers actively conserve inequality by maintaining and even extending spatial injustice in the region. It highlights three connotations of fix that are at play within these conservation spaces. The first refers to a 'quick fix', that is these initiatives purport to 'fix' nature by evoking a historically pristine wilderness that ought to be recreated or protected. The second connotation of fixed refers to pinning down to a location and immobilising conservation in place. This is exemplified by overlapping, judicial arrangements between state and private reserves which secure conservation land use in perpetuity. The last connotation of fixed refers to social relations, that is, conservation aims to secure the necessary conditions for capital accumulation including the fixing of black bodies as 'just' labour.

Chapter 5 explores conservation labour in private nature reserves in the Lowveld. First, I outline a history characterised by primitive accumulation which separated Mapulana from their means of subsistence and forced them into waged labour. Following this historical analysis, I discuss the work of conservation labourers in private nature reserves and their social reproduction in villages. I suggest that private conservation leeches off the reproductive work occurring in homes and villages. The chapter conceptualises conservation

labour geographies as a way of unpacking questions of labour when the conservation mode of production creates geographical differentiation and expands across landscapes and intensifies production in space.

Chapter 6 compared the ways in which private conservation intervenes (or not) in rhino and conservation labours lives. It uses a biopolitical framework to show that interventions against rhino poaching might undermine the survival of rhino while simultaneously bolstering the private wildlife economy. It juxtaposes this against the way conservation labour has been governed during the responses to rhino poaching. In addition, it explores socio-economic issues including unemployment and poor infrastructure in conservation labourers villages to suggests that these conditions 'let die' the people inhabiting these landscapes. Ultimately, I argue that value judgements to not intervene in the lives of labour exposes the hierarchy of life inherent in conservation. This hierarchy is informed by market principles because, though rhinos are fiercely protected, the interventions discussed give precedence to capital accumulation over the intrinsic value of rhino themselves. Similarly, the interventions in labourers lives create a workforce that can render just enough labour to keep the wildlife economy functioning while simultaneously disallowing life in the former homelands.

The concluding chapter outlines the overall argument of the thesis which is; the production of private conservation spaces not only conserves socio-economic and racial inequality but actively and consistently *reproduces* it. There are many ways that this is done though the thesis concentrated on three themes; consistent subjugation of black labour, property hoarding and sacrificing wildlife for the private wildlife economy. In addition, the chapter sets out recommendations for future research.

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Short Biography

Short Biography

Lerato Thakholi was born on 26 June 1991. When she was 4 years old her parents took her to kindergarten and 26 years later Lerato has finally decided to end her career as a student. Prior to this, in 2009 she finished her learning at Brebner High School, Bloemfontein and went off to the University of Cape Town to begin studying towards a BSc. After 2 years of pipets, and math equations, Lerato realized that her dream to become an astronaut no longer resonated with her interests. A game changer in her career, was the 3rd year geography module 'capitalism, conservation and politics' during which Lerato's passion for land, nature and people was ignited. In 2014 she enrolled for a masters by dissertation in the Environment and Geographical Science Department at the University of Cape Town. Her research focused on the property politics in the Mapungubwe and Maluti Drakensburg Transfronier Conservation Areas.

After completing a masters degree funded by the Graça Machel Trust through Canon Collins Educational and Legal Assistance Trust, Lerato went on to pursue her PhD at Wageningen University in 2016. Her research continued to critically explore the politics of nature conservation with a keen eye on property and labour.

Currently, she lectures in the Sociology of Development and Change at Wageningen University while also working on a new Oak Foundation funded project which seeks to set in motion a more just conservation landscape in Southern Africa.

Lerato Thakholi
Wageningen School of Social Sciences (WASS)
Completed Training and Supervision Plan

Name of the learning activity	Department/Institute	Year	ECTS*
A) Project related competences			
CERES PhD training course	CERES	2016	8
Political ecologies of conflict capitalism and contestation- summer school	WASS	2016	3
Racism eurocentrism and political struggles -summer school	CES-Coimbra, Portugal	2016	1.5
Research Proposal	WASS	2016	6
Short course ethnographic documentary	Granada centre, Uni Manchester	2017	3
VIDI Political Ecology Reading Group (Critique of Black Reason, Capitalism in the Web of Life, The Nature of Spectacle)	SDC	2016-2019	0.75
Fieldwork in conflict and post conflict societies	WUR	2016	2
Book Review	Conflicts in Conservation	2017	1
B) General research related competences			
Introduction course	WASS	2016	1
'Invisibilized conservationists: Exploring low-wage labour in South Africa's private nature reserves'	EASA conference, Amsterdam	2019	1
'Conservations Hidden Figures; exploring invisibilised labourers in South Africa's private nature reserves'	Seminar at the University of Bern	2019	1
'Creating low-wage conservation labour'	ECAS Conference, Edinburgh	2019	1
'Low-Wage Labours in South Africa's Private Reserves: Reflection from the field'	WASS PhD Day	2019	0.5
'Conservation Labour Geographies: subsuming regional labour into private conservation spaces in South Africa'	POLLEN Conference, Online	2020	1
' Conserving Inequality how private conservation subverts spatial justice in South Africa'	Wild Ideas Dialogues on human-wildlife interactions in a changing world, Online	2021	1
C) Career related competences/personal development			
Co-organised a panel at a conference. New surplus populations in Africa: ruptures and continuities in rural transitions	ECAS Conference, Edinburgh	2019	0.5
WASS PhD Council Representative	WASS		1.5
SDC CSPS PhD representative	WUR	2019	0.5
Teaching course SDC-33306 and SDC22808	WUR	2019	4
CSPS and WCGS writing retreat 2019	WASS	2019	1
Brain-friendly working	WGS	2018	0.4
Total			**39.65**

*One credit according to ECTS is on average equivalent to 28 hours of study load

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