Chapter 7
False Legitimacies: The Rhetoric of Economic Opportunities in the Expansion of Conservation Areas in Southern Africa

Sarah A. Bologna and Marja Spierenburg

Abstract The trend to expand conservation areas by creating linking corridors or transfrontier conservation areas has become increasingly prevalent in southern Africa over the last 20 years. In the marketing of these initiatives as the way forward in conservation, strong emphasis is placed on the economic opportunities they allegedly generate for local communities. In addition, many ecologists and conservationists stress the ecological logic of linking conservation areas to allow for the migration of species. Using the example of Madikwe Game Reserve, in South Africa's North West Province—where a proposed 'Heritage Park' initiative aims to create a conservation corridor connecting Madikwe and Pilanesberg game reserves, and eventually to extend the park across the border into Botswana—we explore influences and pressures that fuel and justify this expansionist trend, and discuss the complex repercussions arising from such policies. The chapter focuses on the rhetoric of economic opportunities and poverty alleviation and the perceived logic, on the part of many ecologists and conservationists, that wildlife corridors and the expansion of protected areas are the way forward for conservation. We raise a number of ecological and economic contradictions and we argue that a focus on expansion not only further marginalizes local populations but can also be seen as a way to avoid dealing with the management of wildlife (over)populations.

Keywords Transfrontier conservation areas • Community conservation • Nature conservation and the private sector • Game reserves • Economic benefit flows • Land reform • South Africa

S.A. Bologna (✉)
Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Stellenbosch University, 7602 Matieland, South Africa
e-mail: sabologna@gmail.com

M. Spierenburg
Department of Organization Sciences, VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
e-mail: m.j.spierenburg@vu.nl

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7.1 Introduction

The trend to expand conservation areas by creating linking corridors and/or transfrontier conservation areas has become increasingly prevalent in southern Africa over the last 20 years (see Hanks and Myburgh, this volume; Brockington et al. 2008). Ecologists and conservationists tend to stress the ecological rationality of linking conservation areas to allow for the migration of species. In promoting these initiatives as the way forward in conservation, strong emphasis is also placed on the economic opportunities they allegedly generate, especially for neighboring communities. A 'People and Parks' or community-conservation approach thus provides important social justifications for transfrontier initiatives that, ironically, often dispossess local populations.

Many authors have argued that this social justification has become a necessity since community-based conservation became discursively dominant in the mid-1980s (see Adams and Hulme 2001; Brockington et al. 2008; Draper et al. 2004). Since the Brundtland report of 1987, which for the first time firmly linked environment and development concerns in policy recommendations, nature conservation has increasingly sought salvation in these so-called people-centred approaches (Adams and Hulme 2001; Hutton et al. 2005). Emphasis is placed on the need for local communities to benefit economically from nature conservation and on securing their support and involvement and including them in conservation processes. Community-public-private partnerships are promoted as the most efficacious vehicle for local economic development (Faikir 2001) and have been widely and enthusiastically adopted by the private sector not least, we argue, because they help legitimise "conservation through consumption" and the ever increasing commodification of nature (see also Brockington et al. 2008).

However, a growing body of critique has demonstrated that this community-based approach to conservation can also be highly problematic (Dressler et al. 2010; Bologna 2008a, b). The critique questions whether the duel aims of nature conservation and community development can be fulfilled under a single banner, and one argument is that nature conservation objectives become compromised in the process. Other critiques have focused on the lack of benefits accruing to local residents, some suggesting that the dominant role assumed by the private sector allows it to gain control over resources hitherto inaccessible to it—at the expense of local residents' rights of access to natural resources (Dzingirai 2003; Hutton et al. 2005; Brockington et al. 2008). The marketing of conservation areas as 'pristine wilderness' devoid of human influence and presence helps render them inaccessible to local residents.

Such inaccessibility is compounded by transfrontier conservation areas (TFCAs), where 'borderless' zones are created that are accessible to entrepreneurs and tourists but, in general, not to local communities. These areas also reduce the role of local government institutions and the state—even if nation states are necessarily critical in their establishment (Brockington et al. 2008). While proponents of TFCA developments still, on the whole, claim adherence to community-based conservation, critics have argued that such expansions actually (further) reduce possibilities for

local residents to participate in their management (Brockington et al. 2008; Spierenburg et al. 2008).

In this chapter we explore influences and pressures that fuel and justify the expansion of conservation areas across regional and international boundaries, and discuss the complex repercussions arising from such policies. Drawing on the example of Madikwe Game Reserve, in South Africa's North West Province, we address the complex and paradoxical operation of power driving the potent agendas of conservation and sustainable development. We discuss, too, plans that are being developed to merge Madikwe with Pilanesberg, and eventually extend Madikwe as a 'Heritage Park' across the border into Botswana.[1]

Madikwe Game Reserve was founded in 1991, 3 years before the capitulation of apartheid. It was established on a tract of land that was a piece of 'white' South African farmland comprising 28 farms, separating two of the six fragmented areas that comprised the then Bophuthatswana homeland. The reasons provided for its establishment were mainly economic: from the outset the goal was to generate benefits for the neighboring homeland residents as well as for the state. Targeted communities were promised economic benefits through a share in the profits from the Reserve, channeled through a community trust fund (Turner 2013). As we will show, however, benefits have been slow to materialize.

By 1994, with what was now the North West Parks and Tourism Board (NWP&TB) managing the Reserve, the massive translocation of wildlife (known as Operation Phoenix) was complete and the first lodges had started to operate. Apartheid was officially over. Soon after, the land reform program was introduced and some communities lodged land claims on parts of the Reserve. Where they have been successful, agreements have been reached whereby the claimants will not move back onto the land.

This chapter focuses on local land rights and community participation, the rhetoric of economic opportunities and poverty alleviation, and the belief (on the part of many ecologists and conservationists) that the creation of wildlife corridors and the expansion of protected areas is the way forward for managing wildlife populations. The claim that the expansion of conservation areas will result in increased economic benefits for local residents is firmly rooted in neo-liberal discourse on nature conservation. We argue, however, that the adoption of a neo-liberal economic approach by the South African state, and the concomitant pressure on conservation authorities to market their goods and services to generate funding for conservation, clashes with the state's intention to transform nature conservation in South Africa into a sector that is inclusive of local residents.

The chapter is based on a year of fieldwork that the first author conducted in 2000 for her doctoral thesis. During this period she also undertook a socioeconomic survey commissioned by the NWP&TB to determine the impact of Madikwe Game Reserve on the residents of three adjacent villages: Molatedi, Supingstad and Lekgophung. In addition to a questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews were held with residents, reserve staff, lodge owners and employees, and NGO staff and

[1] See http://www.parksnorthwest.co.za/madikwe/conservation.html, consulted on May 29, 2013.

Table 7.1 Overview of the main incidents in the development of Madikwe Game Reserve

Year	Main event
1977	'Independent' Bophuthatswana homeland established
1980–1990	Appropriation of commercial farms, land handed over to the Bophuthatswana Land Allocation Board. Part of Homeland consolidation program. Land to be handed over to emerging farmers
1991	Publication of a report by Settlement Planning Services (Setplan), which recommended the establishment of a game reserve on the appropriated farms
1991	Establishment of the Madikwe Game Reserve
1994	Mangope deposed; First democratic elections in South Africa; beginning of the reintegration of Bophuthatswana back into the Republic of South Africa
1994	Operation Phoenix to stock the Madikwe Game Reserve with wildlife
1994–1998	First lodges built
1998	Funding acquired by NWP&TB from DfID (UK) for the Madikwe Initiative for an initial 2 year period. The project is managed by the NGO Mafisa and focuses mainly on three villages: Supingstad, Lekgophung and Molatedi
2002	Concept plan for launching a Heritage Park (Heritage Park idea first suggested in 1999)
2005	Heritage Park MOU signed; Steering Committee and Heritage Park Company formed

project members. Over the intervening decade the first author has kept in touch with many of the original key respondents, and has also cultivated new ones. The most recent data derive from a joint fieldtrip conducted by both authors in October 2010, during which interviews were held with Reserve and lodge staff and with local residents, including those who had been part of the focus of a development intervention, started in 1998, known as the Madikwe Initiative. In order to protect respondents' identities, we refer to our interviews as 'Int. continuous number'. The chronology of Madikwe Game Reserve and its main institutional features are presented in Tables 7.1 and 7.2 respectively.

7.2 The Establishment of the Madikwe Game Reserve

Madikwe Game Reserve was established in 1991, in the midst of the extreme political turmoil that marked the transition to democracy in South Africa. It was established in what is now South Africa's North West Province but was then still the Bophuthatswana homeland, ruled by the Mangope Administration.

Land rights of the mainly Tswana-speaking local population had been severely curtailed by the settlement of white farmers and colonial legislation, particularly the 1913 Land Act and the 1936 Trust and Land Act. In 1948 the Afrikaner-dominated National Party, with its infamous policy of separate development came into power. Once in office the apartheid government passed a string of legislation which further differentiated black from white land and black from white administrative systems. Included were the Population Registration Act of 1950, whereby all South Africans were classified into 'racial' groups; the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951; the Natives

Table 7.2 Main features of the institutional arrangement of Madikwe Game Reserve

Feature	Description
Main focus	1. To generate economic benefits for the 'local community';
	2. Biodiversity conservation
Actors involved	NWP&TB; Mafisa Research and Planning and other NGOs/service providers; DfiD as donor; local residents; district councils; various villages; local government-linked committees
Legal entity	The land is state-owned and managed by the NWP&TB, a government agency
Ownership	All the land is owned by the government apart from one portion granted to a community through a land restitution claim, which the community has agreed to leave under NWP&TB management. The lodges are private sector owned apart from two community-owned ones
Management	The NWP&TB manages the Reserve. The Madikwe Initiative was managed by the NGO Mafisa
Sources of finance	DfID funded the Madikwe Initiative. The Reserve is run as a business, generating profit through its conservation activities and lodge concession fees and so on. The lodges are private sector investments
Contribution to conservation	Restoration of degraded farm land, reintroduction of wildlife—hence wildlife habitat was expanded. The NWP&TB manages the Reserve's conservation activities which include bush clearing, drift building, fence and road maintenance etc. The NWP&TB Department Ecological Services looks after the wildlife
Contribution to livelihood	Where possible the NWP&TB uses local entrepreneurs, e.g. for fence maintenance, drift building and bush clearing. Such local inclusiveness is however not guaranteed—contracts are awarded to the most competitive tenders. Lodges use local services (e.g. wage employment, firewood, refuse collection, recycling, laundry service) and suppliers (e.g. vegetables, poultry) where possible, but these often do not meet required standards

Resettlement Act of 1954; and the Promotion of Black Self-Government Act of 1959. This policy of segregation culminated in the creation of ten 'homelands', and in December 1977 Bophuthatswana, comprising those parts of the former Crown Colony of the British Bechuanaland that were considered as black-occupied in terms of the 1913 Land Act, and scheduled for black occupation under the 1936 Trust and Land Act, became the second homeland to be granted 'independence'.[2] Chief Lucas Mangope became president.

On 12 March 1994, some 6 weeks before the proposed date for the first post-apartheid election on 27 April, after much resistance and violent conflict, Mangope was finally deposed. In time, the Bophuthatswana homeland was divided between two of post-apartheid South Africa's nine new provinces, the North West Province and the Free State Province. Madikwe Game Reserve and the villages that were the original focus of its development initiatives are located in North West Province.

There was nothing inevitable about Madikwe's genesis: by chance, two ecologists flew over the area in the late 1980s and remarked its potential for wildlife conservation (Int. 1). Invisible from above was the illogical jigsaw of apartheid

[2]This 'independence' was not internationally recognized.

geography. The tract of land was a piece of 'white' South African farmland comprising 28 farms separating two of the six fragmented areas that comprised the then Bophuthatswana homeland. As such it was suited to South Africa's Homeland Consolidation Programme's objective to create corridors linking together some of the disparate lobes of Bophuthatswana territory. Between 1980 and 1990 the land was expropriated and handed over to the Bophuthatswana Land Allocation Board for formal distribution to 'emerging' black farmers. But, with prompting from the ecologists who had seen the potential for a game reserve, an independent survey was conducted by Settlement Planning Services (Setplan) which recommended the establishment of a game reserve as the most efficacious and potentially lucrative use for the land, described as prone to drought, overgrazed and degraded by cattle ranching (Setplan 1991: 8).

Setplan recommended the game reserve option for four main reasons. First, once fully established, Setplan predicted, the game reserve would be able to generate in excess of 1,200 jobs compared with just 80 from the ranching option. The cost per job opportunity for the cattle ranching option would be in the region of R150,000 (some €15,000), while that of the game park would be nearer to R25,000 (approx. €2,500). Second, the spin-off effects of the game reserve on the local economy, through linkages and multipliers, would be much higher than from cattle ranching. Third, the local economy, already highly dependent on agriculture, would be significantly diversified and improved. And fourth, the net income accruing to the government through taxes would be significantly increased (Setplan 1991).

While the Mangope administration overall was authoritarian and oppressive, the Bophuthatswana Parks Board, according to a former member, had a reputation for being progressive in its approach to conservation management. The Board had at its core a group of what one former member described as "forward thinking, liberal men" (Int. 2). The Board's members believed that successful conservation schemes needed to be relevant in the emerging economic context in which they were implemented. The interventions they initiated were thus redolent with the rhetoric of community-based conservation, particularly in the case of Madikwe:

> Madikwe Game Reserve is arguably one of the first game reserves in southern Africa to be established for wildlife conservation purely on socio-economic grounds… The approach to conservation that has been adopted at Madikwe puts the needs of people before that of wildlife and conservation. (Davies et al. 1997)

Such reasoning reflected a major departure from earlier national park ideology which held that preservation and conservation were ends in themselves and had justified the establishment of game parks at the cost of dispossessing and relocating black South Africans. This ideology had in the past also influenced earlier actions of the Bophuthatswana Parks Board; in 1979 the Pilane were forcibly removed in order for Pilanesberg National Park to be created—often referred to as Madikwe's sister park. Carruthers' view is uncompromising:

> It would be inaccurate to think of the Pilanesberg National Park as a conserved natural area: it is more of a forced removal, land reclamation and game stocking project…. [Pilanesberg] owed its very origins to the 'homelands' policy of the nationalist [apartheid] government of

> the 1960s.... Even at the early planning stage, opposition to the scheme was intense from the Pilane clan [sic] who had inhabited the crater for many years.... It thus had a difficult birth at a time when paramilitary wildlife management and anti-human ecology was powerful in national park dogma. (Carruthers 1997: 9)

But Madikwe is ideologically innocent of this sort of anti-people ecology, established instead with the express aim of bringing economic development to an area that had largely been denied access to both (Davies 1997). The final Setplan report states that the research found "a game park would be acceptable to the local communities and arrangements can be made to grant local herbalists controlled access to the park for the collection of specimens" (Setplan 1991: 17). The Parks Board emphasised the consultation process it initiated with what it termed the local community and, from its conception, described Madikwe Game Reserve as a partnership between three main stakeholders: the state, the private sector and the 'local community'. The Board has repeatedly stressed that its driving concern is not conservation, but to bring economic development to the 'local community'. According to a general manager:

> Our focus from the government is to improve the quality of life, financially and socially, of the people in the area and we use conservation, as we would have used mining or agricultural practices…as the most efficient way to address our main objective, which is economic development. But if conservation management is not up to standard we will not achieve this. So conservation is not secondary but nor is it an end in itself. It is a strategy to achieve economic development. (Int. 3)

7.3 A Spluttering Engine

Despite the good intentions behind the establishment of Madikwe, creating income generating opportunities for the surrounding residents was not an easy task. By 1993, 2 years after its foundation, the Reserve had not yet begun to realize its regional or local economic objectives. Apart from a minimum of employment—fewer than 90 jobs[3] in the three adjacent villages from a combined population of about 10,000 people—villagers experienced few benefits from the presence of the Reserve. Stocking the reserve with wildlife had been a priority: Operation Phoenix had involved the translocation of 8,057 individual animals belonging to 25 different

[3] This figure includes employees who do not originally come from the area, but who had secured employment in the Reserve and were renting accommodation in one of the three villages and so fell within the NWP&TB's employment targeting zone. Excluded in the figure are people who come from other villages, such as Obakeng on the far side of Molatedi, which are also in close proximity to the Reserve and should therefore be considered 'local', but are not part of the 'local community' (Molatedi, Supingstad and Lekgophung) as defined by the Madikwe Initiative. Because of the 'local community' designation, the populations of those three villages were targeted by the community liaison officer for employment opportunities, and thus most employees in the Reserve were from these villages.

species into the Reserve and remains heralded as South Africa's largest translocation of game. The rapid and politically conspicuous development of the Reserve meant that local villagers, as the Parks Board later acknowledged, were largely 'left out' (Davies 1997).

In response the Parks Board began approaching donor agencies for funding for community development and empowerment interventions. In 1998 it secured from the British Department for International Development (DfID) a sum of UK£ 410,000 which, with currency fluctuations and the weakening of the Rand, became R6.4 million (approx. €640,000). This was to be used to fund an Initiative that would be independent of the Board and aimed at maximizing the Reserve's economic impact on the local economy. Because DfID required a well-defined area, limited in size, in which to implement capacity building projects, the main developmental drive of the Reserve came, perhaps by default, to focus on the villages of Supingstad and Lekgophung to the west and Molatedi to the east, rather than encompassing all the settlements in the area.

The NWP&TB invited tenders from independent agencies to manage this Initiative and the NGO Mafisa Research and Planning (hereafter Mafisa), which had experience with 'people and parks' initiatives, was awarded the contract. The Initiative became known as the Madikwe Initiative and, according to Mafisa's directors, had three key areas of focus:

> The first is centred on the understanding that if the communities surrounding Madikwe are to benefit from its existence then they need to hold some ownership stake in commercial lodges in the Reserve. Secondly, tourism creates jobs and it is important that people from the surrounding villages are suitably trained to take up senior wage employment in the lodges. And thirdly, tourism in the Reserve as well as the daily operations of the Reserve itself may create many opportunities for entrepreneurship and small business development in areas such as lodge maintenance, the provision of bricks, bush clearing, construction, the provision of fresh produce to the lodges…. Local entrepreneurs need to be trained and their businesses supported so that they can enter into business contracts with the lodges and the park in these areas. (Koch and Massyn 1999)

The Madikwe Initiative faced multiple difficulties from the start, not least because after the first three commercial lodges had been built, the Reserve's development stagnated largely because of pending land claims. These claims made issuing new private sector lodge concessions problematic. Hence, the 'economic engine' was not managing to power the area as projected, and emerging small businesses set up by Mafisa found themselves without the expected thriving market to sustain them (Int. 4). At the same time, the government's restructuring of local government exacerbated governance problems in the villages. Furthermore, an ill-defined conception of the respective roles of the three 'stakeholders' continued to hamper the Madikwe Initiative. The roles of the Board (to manage the Reserve) and the private sector (to build and run lodges and bring in tourists and money) were clear. But the role of the villages and their residents was sketchy at best and clearly inequitable as we show in the next section.

7.4 Community-Public-Private Partnerships: What Is a Community?

The NWP&TB was proud of its "pioneering approach to people-based wildlife conservation" and NWP&TB employees spoke often of how community development, rather than conservation, was the primary objective of Madikwe Game Reserve. "The local community," stressed the park warden of Madikwe during an interview (Int. 5), "is a major stakeholder in the Madikwe project."

From the start the NWP&TB conceptualized the three villages' residents as constituting a 'community'—a single, coherent, bounded social entity with shared values that could be labeled a 'stakeholder' in terms of a people-centred conservation and development model. This conceptualization had its roots in a socio-economic policy drawn up by an independent consultancy firm commissioned by what was then the Bophuthatswana Parks Board. The policy reportedly recommended that the Board should deal with democratic, representative committees rather than with traditional leaders because of the risk of powerful individuals appropriating the profits (Int. 1). Nothing was done until 1994 when, acting on this recommendation, the new NWP&TB created Community Development Organisations (CDOs) in each of the three villages. It then grouped the CDOs together under a single CDO forum.

The Board had intended the CDOs to be democratic, representative committees, comprising people who represented all socio-economic and political categories and sectors within each village, through which the Board would be able to access majority views and priorities in the villages. In practice, however, the CDOs were heavily aligned with the chiefs and tribal authorities and, rather than operating as neutral bodies, they came into conflict with other (local government) committees already present in the villages, and created serious rifts and divides. The CDOs were formally disbanded within 4 years, following the recommendations of a survey (Magome and Sentle 1998).

By the time the Madikwe Initiative became active in the villages in 1998, district councils had been set up under the Municipal Structures Act of that same year. Mafisa's policy, in line with DfID's, was to liaise with the newly formed, ANC-linked, 'democratic' district councils rather than solely with village-based structures, which included a variety of civic organizations. Such a liaison strategy played out in diverse ways in each village. In Lekgophung it was least problematic as at the time the village was represented by a Reconstruction and Development Programme forum which cooperated both with the traditional structures and the district council. The majority of respondents (90 % in the 2000 survey) stated that the Reconstruction and Development Programmed forum was the successful and legitimate committee representing the village, a finding supported by in-depth interviews and conversations.

In Molatedi, however, Mafisa's liaison strategy created complex and often insurmountable problems resulting in those villagers more aligned with the chiefs and traditional authorities becoming alienated from the development projects driven by the Madikwe Initiative. And in Supingstad the village became excluded to a large

extent because an impasse was reached with the chief who was perceived to be autocratic. Indeed, in both Molatedi and Supingstad, relations between the chieftaincies and the Madikwe Initiative agents were tense, in part defined by conflicts that were rooted in the apartheid history, with which the chiefs and tribal authorities were associated—Supingstad's chief had been a minister in the Mangope administration. This situation was further complicated by the post-apartheid government's ambiguous stance towards traditional authorities (see Ntsebeza 2005).

The residents of these three villages did not have any right to legal ownership of land or resources in Madikwe Game Reserve. The land and infrastructure was state-owned and, apart from two community-owned lodges opened in 2004 and 2006 for Lekgophung and Molatedi respectively, the lodges with their infrastructure were private sector owned through lease agreements (Davies 1997). Three other villages have lodged land claims in the Reserve and these villages have now been included by the NWP&TB in the generic category of 'the community as stakeholder'.

In each of the villages, the post-apartheid government-initiated processes of 'restructuring social relations' has fuelled debates centering on chiefs, tribal authorities, local government, empowerment, power and equal rights. None of the villages was a static, closed, 'traditional' society.[4] Mafisa itself was highly critical of the NWP&TB's attitude towards 'the community' as a stakeholder:

> The evidence from southern Africa suggests that the 'C' in Community Wildlife Management does not exist as an entity. It is nebulous, fluid and elusive, and often a figment of the imagination of project managers and donors seeking quick fixes. A common belief amongst donors and project managers is that it saves time to group people together, because of the simplicity of 'working with' fewer groups. Our findings suggest the opposite: if the groupings within a community and the differences between groups, are not well understood and taken into account, then conflicts emerge which are difficult to heal. (Koch and Massyn 1999: 16)

Yet it should be noted that in the same report the 'success' of what is known as the Makuleke claim (with which Mafisa also worked) on part of the Kruger National Park was attributed to its members' ability to combine all their governance structures into a single Community Property Association apparently effectively and democratically representing a seemingly socially cohesive group of people.[5] This type of contradiction is not unusual within the conservation-development arena. For example, in their critique of community-based conservation initiatives, drawing on their experiences in east Africa and Zimbabwe respectively, Barrow and Murphree argue that "effective community conservation involves collective action, effectively organized" (2001: 35) and stress the need for communities to form what they call an 'organizational vehicle'. Indeed, many agencies will only work in areas where such a vehicle is already present.

[4] That the 2000 survey found that over 70 % of employed people across the villages were migrant labourers working in metropolitan areas such as Johannesburg, Soweto and Rustenburg is a clear indication that endogenous discourse is far from unexposed to outside influence.

[5] For critical analyses of the Makuleke 'success story' see Spierenburg et al. (2006, 2008) and Robins and Van der Waal (2008).

There is an uncomfortable contradiction in highlighting and decrying notions of community for their falseness while at the same time calling for democratic, representative bodies as a central requirement to effective conservation-development interventions.

The analysis presented by the Mafisa directors and their calls for more fluid definitions of the local, encompassing notions of complexity and diversity, did not lead to a change in how the villages were conceptualized and approached. Nor did the Mafisa-implemented Madikwe Initiative itself appear to be influenced by the critique. Projects were top-down, tightly controlled interventions. In interview after interview project respondents stressed the dependent, unsustainable aspects of the projects: "we are unable to do things for ourselves" (Int. 6); "Mafisa is very important. Once they are no longer here I am not able to say what may happen" (Int. 7); "we are dependent on the Reserve, we are dependent on Mafisa, and we are always dependent on funding" (Int. 8). Through these kinds of comments, terms such as development, upliftment, empowerment and participation became discursively bankrupt, condemned by respondents' commentaries to a growing wasteland of failed promises.

7.5 Unfulfilled Promises and Exclusion

When the Madikwe Initiative began in 1998 it had been expected that lodge concessions would develop rapidly in the Reserve. The Initiative was to provide training to prepare local residents for jobs in spin-off businesses such as brick making and construction and providing services to the lodges including a theatre and a film group. There was also an internship program where eight young people were trained in all aspects of lodge management. Molatedi and Lekgophung each built a community lodge in the Reserve, owned by a village community trust in each village. The lodges have 45 year lease agreements, at commercial rates, and are operated by a private sector company. It is planned that 10 % of profits will be channeled into the respective village community trust fund once start-up costs have been repaid.

By 2011, the twentieth anniversary of the Reserve, 31 lodges were open and receiving guests. Employment had risen accordingly (as had migration to the area) to just over 630 positions. Approximately 68 % of employees were from the local area, albeit largely in the more menial jobs: an employment and procurement survey conducted in 2006 showed that only 18 % of senior staff positions, including in the two community-owned lodges, were held by people residing in the three villages (Turner 2009). These figures continue to fall well short of the 1,200 jobs projected by the 1991 Setplan survey.

The expected spin-off activities have also fallen short of expectations. The two local entrepreneurs who have really been benefitting from the Reserve had been successful business people before the advent of the Madikwe Initiative; they were now providing services such as laundry, firewood, refuse collection and fence maintenance. The small business projects established under the Madikwe Initiative have

largely faded away. The garden projects repeatedly fail to meet the standards and consistency in production volumes necessary to supply to the lodges, as did the poultry project in Lekgophung and the CSIR-sponsored tannery project.

Also influencing perceptions of unfulfilled expectations in the villages is that the proposed community trust fund, which was to channel 40 % of Madikwe's profits into the three original villages, has still not become a reality and it is unlikely it ever will. Even if the community trust fund did materialize, the proceeds would now need to be shared by six villages instead of the three the NWP&TB had originally targeted, to include the villages that have won land claims on parts of Madikwe.

One of the reasons why, 20 years after the establishment of Madikwe, the community trust fund still has not become a reality is that most of the profits have been used for the maintenance of the Reserve itself, and to subsidize Pilanesberg National Park, Madikwe's 'sister' park, also managed by the NWP&TB, which is operating at a loss (Int. 9). Provincial conservation authorities such as the NWP&TB are struggling to obtain enough funding from central government (Ramutsindela and Shabangu 2013). Indeed, the trend of promoting a lean(er) state with more private sector involvement in public service delivery has been embraced in South Africa, and has resulted in a growing number of alliances between tourism businesses and provincial conservation authorities. To maintain the conservation function of parks and reserves operating at a loss, cross-subsidizing is becoming increasingly common. The pressure on provincial conservation authorities to generate funding for their conservation mandate further reduces the likelihood of local communities realizing a share of the financial benefits of conservation (see also Ramutsindela and Shabangu 2013).

Yet, to the majority of respondents in the villages, the Reserve represents more than the possibility of economic development and immediate employment opportunities. It stands for the conservation of South Africa's natural heritage, a heritage which many villagers wanted to identify with and experience first-hand. But this was a possibility largely denied them, partly because of the way nature is being marketed in the tourism sector and partly because of an entrenched idea on the part of policy makers that village residents should confine their interest to the economic benefits of conservation.

Thus, within the Madikwe project there is a paradox. The project's main objective is to stimulate a depressed rural economy, to develop a cohort of previously marginalized villages, and their residents, to the point where they can function productively in a national (and increasingly global) market economy. The method of generating revenue is ecotourism, which is dependent on wildlife conservation. As the managing agency, the NWP&TB's first aim, therefore, is to attract tourists. To this end the Reserve is marketed as an area of wilderness, a place to retreat from the unrelenting pace of urban life. One Parks Board brochure reads: "The great, sun-drenched plains of Africa, pristine bushveld still populated by its original wildlife… This sounds like an ecotourist's fantasy—but it is in fact what the North West Province offers to vacationers, busy people in search of weekend relaxation…" (NWP&TB 1999). In effect, Madikwe is marketed as a sanctuary from modernity. It is represented as a tangible manifestation of a nostalgic longing for the (mythical)

purity of a bygone edenic past. Yet, Madikwe is a constructed landscape: it was developed on land so overgrazed and degraded that it was no longer deemed economical for agriculture. The social construction, marketing and commodification of 'pristine landscapes' and the impacts it has on excluding local residents, while beyond the scope of this chapter, is critical and urgent and is the subject of salient critiques (see, for example, Cosgrove 1984; Daniels and Cosgrove 1988; Brockington et al. 2008; Brooks et al. 2011; Bologna 2008b).

One of the most pervasive and consistent fieldwork findings was that villagers whole-heartedly embraced the ideology of conservation: over 95 % of respondents in the 2000 survey stressed that it is essential to protect wildlife and that nature conservation is of paramount importance. Statements such as the following were common: "Nature needs protection from people who kill it unnecessarily"; "There are many people who do not know about wildlife and nature things, so if we do not protect it, our children can never hear of these things"; "Wildlife beautifies nature; without it, we have nothing"; "We need wildlife for our hearts and our souls".

Villagers cared about the concrete role Madikwe was playing in conserving South Africa's natural heritage for present and future generations. They were drawn to the ideology of conservation in complex and various ways, according to a variety of interests and concerns, ranging from the bioethical to the preservation of resources, from the notion of heritage, to psychological and spiritual investments. Few (less than 5 %) were critical of Madikwe's conservation operations and, of those, most comments were about loss of local autonomy rather than censuring of actual practices. For example: "They [the development agents] claim that bush clearing is empowerment, but to me it is not. We have been doing this all our lives. We grew up clearing the bush and we were not even taught it—we just copied our fathers".

Respondents looked to the Reserve just as tourists did. But, despite conservation and ecological objectives undoubtedly being the central attraction for all those who have access to the Reserve (ecologists, rangers, NWP&TB personnel, lodge management and tourists), according to the NWP&TB rhetoric, economic profit and rural development are its primary concerns—not conservation. Villagers were denied access to the Reserve largely because the NWP&TB and its private sector partners found exclusive tourism to be the most effective way of generating sufficient income to realize profit.

Yet one of the biggest areas of contention between park authorities and villagers, raised by nearly every respondent in each of the three villages, was that the Reserve was inaccessible to them. The inaccessibility was the single greatest factor contributing to their disillusionment with Madikwe and the way it was run. As one young mother said: "What is very discouraging is that this game reserve is very near our village, but most of us don't know it at all. We have never even been to visit there" (Bologna 2000). Another villager said: "How can they say it is a partnership when we are not even allowed to go there?" (Bologna 2000).

Recently, however, some lodges have been organizing excursions into the Reserve for local school children, often in the form of a 'CSR' project for which they ask donations from their guests (Int. 9, 10; 11, 12).

7.6 Expanding Madikwe and Creating a Heritage Park

Plans have been launched to create a corridor linking Madikwe Game Reserve to Pilanesberg National Park. A further link to include Magaliesberg has also been discussed, as well as expansion into neighboring Botswana. On the NWP&TB website, the plan is presented as follows:

> Another exciting development on the cards for North West Province in the development of the 'Heritage Park' conservation corridor that will join Madikwe and Pilanesberg. The proposed conservation estate will allow a bigger migration space for animals, creating a prime eco-tourism destination. The initiative is a 20-year project culminating in linking up with Limpopo province and Botswana.[6]

The first motivation presented for the corridor is thus ecological—"a bigger migration space for animals". However, interviews with a conservation manager and some lodge managers/owners in October 2010 suggested underlying reasons for the need for migration space. For example, an important part of the income of Madikwe (apart from the concession fees paid by the lodges) stems from the sale of wildlife to private ranches. But proposed changes in legislation regarding the transport of certain wildlife species have led to the decrease in demand for these species. On a national level, demand has also been affected negatively by public pressure to ban certain forms of hunting, such as the so-called 'canned lion hunts' which involves hunting lions in small enclosed spaces (see Snijders 2012).

Culling legislation has further contributed to wildlife management problems and Madikwe has been unable to keep its elephant and lion population in check. The ever growing numbers are deterring neighboring farmers from dropping their boundary fences with Madikwe and in areas where fence maintenance has been weak there have been reports of lions breaking out of the Reserve to look for food on nearby farms (Int. 10). The escalating elephant population has been a problem in Madikwe from the start, but as most private wildlife reserves have also reached their saturation point with elephants, selling the surplus has become increasingly difficult. Plans to cull herds in other national parks in South Africa have led to such severe protests from animal rights movements (see Venter et al. 2008) that conservationists' hands are tied. The creation of a corridor might provide a solution to this overpopulation problem, but it would only be a temporary solution.

Other publicly prominent reasons for the expansions can be found in the importance attributed to tourism. According to the NWP&TB:

> A recent study done by the Japanese government identified five key sites in Sun City, Pilanesberg and Madikwe as 'areas with the most tourism potential'. The market from nearby Gaborone [capital of Botswana] is also key to the Madikwe area, visitors often pop over the border for the weekend.[7]

The argument that bigger conservation areas will attract more tourists is repeatedly flagged, not least by organizations such as the Peace Parks Foundation, the

[6] See http://www.parksnorthwest.co.za/madikwe/conservation.html

[7] See http://www.parksnorthwest.co.za/madikwe/conservation.html

main promoter of transfrontier conservation in southern Africa.[8] Yet, there is no evidence that this anticipated increase in tourism will occur, or that local communities will benefit from these expansions. Meanwhile, lodge owners and Reserve managers indicated in 2010 that Madikwe had reached a point of saturation in terms of tourism facilities. When asked whether new community lodges would be established to cater for the needs of the communities that have lodged land claims Madikwe's park warden replied:

> We have two community lodges, but there are already 31 lodges in the park. And already there is a lot of competition between them. I don't think the Board will support more community lodges. Most lodges don't break even. But the problem is, all the communities want lodges (Int. 9).

The expansion of Madikwe is likely to further jeopardize community control over land. In the brochure promoting the Heritage Park published by NWP&TB, the Communal Areas located in the area between Madikwe and Pilanesberg are defined as "state owned land held in trust for local communities" (NWP&TB n.d.: 2). This statement indicates a lack of state recognized community ownership in these areas. While there are arguments that the loss of access to land and other natural resources will be compensated by income from the additional tourists which it is alleged the Heritage Park will attract, we have shown that local communities have not received the predicted economic benefits from Madikwe as it is, despite it being established for socio-economic rather than conservation reasons in the first place. The statement seems indicative of a general trend in community-based natural resource management to shift away from a rights-based approach focusing on communities' rights of access to natural resources to an approach in which job opportunities and spin-off entrepreneurial activities are defined as the main benefits from community-conservation.

In the meantime the project has been stalled by complicated negotiations with private land owners in the proposed corridor. Their land rights are more secure than those of the residents of the Communal Areas.

7.7 Discussion and Conclusion

South Africa's post-apartheid reintegration into global markets and favor was heavily influenced by an international focus on sustainable development. This was in a context of positivist political aspirations conducive to a rhetoric sponsoring the marriage of ecological, commercial and developmental interests. But we have seen notable contradictions underlying popular assumptions about protected areas and the role of conservation. These contradictions highlight how those interests are not, as the rhetoric suggests, a logical route to a sustainable future. As Escobar says: "the entire sustainable development movement is an attempt at resignifying nature, resources, the Earth, human life itself, on a scale perhaps not witnessed since the rise of empirical sciences and their reconstruction of nature…" (1995: 59).

[8] See http://www.peaceparks.org

This resignifying is prominent in the Madikwe story, which features ecotourism as the route to 'making conservation pay'. The NWP&TB presents a powerfully appealing vision of its "pioneering approach to people-based wildlife conservation" (Davies 1997: 2) which is to put "the needs of people before that of wildlife and conservation" (Davies 1997: 2). Its definition of 'needs' is purely economic and developmental and, in terms of this paradigm, conservation is solely the means of turning a profit. Within the 'three-way partnership' of the Madikwe project, the role of the NWP&TB was to manage the Reserve and the private-sector to bring in the profit through ecotourism activities. Yet, the 'local community' never had a clearly defined role, and promises of development and access remained elusive to most community members.

Madikwe is a culturally constructed landscape, a representation of an imagined wilderness in which people do not feature. But its founding logic constitutes a powerful paradox: that through ecotourism its 'pristine wilderness' will modernize villages, that conservation will fuel the 'economic engine' to drive development in the area. A consequence of such an emphasis on development is that conservation has become sidelined in the rhetoric of the NWP&TB. At the same time, the purely economic value the Board places on its conservation operations legitimizes denying access to the rural poor, because creating a sense of exclusivity has a higher value for ecotourism operations. Yet, like the tourists, villagers wanted to experience Madikwe's 'nature' first hand and this, more than any other fieldwork finding, illuminated the massive contradictions in a concept that in the name of development and democracy so successfully excludes a local and impoverished majority while securing access for a privileged minority.

While challenging the logic that reserves protected areas as the domain of a wealthy minority, local appropriation of conservation as an ideology, and of 'nature' as an ideal, simultaneously strengthens its universal appeal. In so doing it further entrenches a hegemonic faith in the naturalness of nature, of the sanctity of conserved areas. It echoes the sentiment that Igoe et al. remark, that "mainstream conservation has always presented protected areas as having a value that transcends all things" (2010: 495). It is this value that enables the commoditization of nature.

So persuasive is the ideology that claims an ability to fulfill two such diametrically opposed aims as biodiversity conservation and rural development that it still dominates global development discourse. The Madikwe story illustrates how a developmental approach shaped by this hegemony failed to accommodate the multilayered social, political and historical complexities of local lived realities of the Madikwe project's intended beneficiaries, the residents of Supingstad, Lekgophung and Molatedi. The DfID-funded Madikwe Initiative, instigated by the NWP&TB, constituted a pre-designed developmental model that was the product of global development discourse, shaped by capitalist agendas and not by village-based priorities. Village residents were collectively reduced to little more than a component of the model. They were cast as 'the local community' and, from the start, could only ever be the 'weak leg' of the partnership, while the Initiative could never really be much more than a palliative analgesic, and a temporary one at that.

Overall, economic benefits accruing to the neighbouring communities have fallen far short of Madikwe's initial projections and this is exacerbated when the NWP&TB uses Madikwe profits to fund other parks under its management—a

strategy that has also been adopted by other provincial conservation authorities in South Africa (Ramutsindela and Shabangu 2013).

The plans to extend the conservation area by linking Madikwe with Pilanesberg National Park and eventually also the Limpopo Province and Botswana are justified, indeed commended, because of the same conservation-development rhetoric, based on the questionable assumption that larger, preferably transboundary, conservation areas will attract more tourism. These renewed promises disregard existing problems both with conservation practices and community development strategies, problems that are likely to be exacerbated by this new initiative.

Interviews

Int. 1: Interview with North-West Parks & Tourism Board Resource Economist, 11 June 2007; conducted by Sarah Bologna (SAB).
Int. 2: Interview with a former member of the Bophuthatswana parks Board, June 2007; conducted by SAB.
Int. 3: Interview with the general manager, Protected Areas Management, NWP&TB, 25 July 2000; Mmabatho, conducted by SAB.
Int. 4: Interview with a director of Mafisa, 7 June 2007; conducted by SAB.
Int. 5: Interview with the Park Warden of Madikwe Game Reserve, 4 April 2000; conducted by SAB.
Int. 6: Interview with a (community) theatre group member, 25 September 2000; conducted by SAB.
Int. 7: Interview with a herbicide operator participating in the Bush Clearing Project, 14 September 2000; conducted by SAB.
Int. 8: Interview with a bush clearing contractor in Lekgophung, 26 August 2000; conducted by SAB.
Int. 9: Interview with the Park Warden of Madikwe Game Reserve, October 2010; conducted by SAB and Marja Spierenburg (MJS).
Int. 10: Interview with lodge owner, October 2010; conducted by SAB and MJS.
Int. 11: Interview with lodge manager, October 2010; conducted by SAB and MJS.
Int. 12: Interview with school teacher, October 2010; conducted by SAB and MJS.

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