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Wetland Park“

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2. Introduction

The past decade has seen an increase in public awareness of the rapid environmental changes happening around the world. In January 2020 the Australian wildfires caught the attention of citizens around the world and illuminated what has been known for decades: that the climate is undergoing monumental climatic changes and urgent action is required. The cost to human and animal lives, as well as the destruction of ecosystems is no longer being contained to scientific projections but is terrifyingly apparent across the world.

In November 2019, Saudi Aramco, a petroleum and natural gas company and the world's biggest climate polluter, announced that it would trade publicly on the stock market and grow even larger (Ambrose and Collinson 2019). A Guardian newspaper investigation series, 'The Polluters', discovered that Aramco has contributed more than 59 billion tonnes of CO₂ since 1965, which is a third more than any of its competitors. With this listing on the stock exchange, the estimates of future output are only upward, meaning that it will account for almost 5% of the remaining 1.5C carbon budget (Watts, Ambrose, and Vaughn 2019).

These are the sorts of staggering figures that make it difficult to comprehend how positive change can be implemented in the fight to reduce carbon emissions. These are now clearly understood scientific, objective facts. The scientific community is clear. Any credible, non-industry funded, dissidents in the scientific community who dispute that humans are driving climate change are few and far between. Yet, despite these scientific facts, despite the upward and indisputable trend of global temperatures over decades, despite record temperatures tumbling on a monthly basis, despite 2019 becoming a breakthrough year for a global movement and discussion about climate change spearheaded by a global youth movement led by Greta Thunberg, despite mass movements on the streets of countries worldwide; despite all of this, the issue remains clouded by human ideology and industry greed. Politics in the USA and Brazil have led to the denouncement of climate change as a hoax and the burning of the lungs of the earth, The Amazon, for massive agro-business and petroleum companies.

In the face of this global crisis, where does a South African national park hugging the Indian Ocean fit into all of this? How does it fit into this unfolding global nightmare? On the face of

it, iSimangaliso Wetland Park (IWP) would appear to be the antithesis and antidote to these major climate issues. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that prides itself on environmental conservation. It is a site of restoration and regeneration, allowing the biosphere to exist devoid of human intervention and, by extension, destruction.

This paper explores this dichotomy of nature restoration and human economic development by examining the park not only in its current form but the trajectory of development in the country to understand what social and historical forces shaped its creation and led to its inception as a protected area.

This paper sketches out a brief history of conservation, both generally across the world and more specifically in South Africa, as well as a more narrowly focused examination of the case of IWP and the research that has been produced on the area in the 20 years that it has existed in its current guise. In order to understand the current policies and practices being pursued in South Africa and IWP, it is imperative that the historical factors that led to the modern situation be examined. South African history is fraught with oppression and tragic stories of the majority being kicked off their land in the pursuit of profit and resource extraction. IWP appears to buck that trend, from an environmental standpoint. It was established in 1999 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site to fend off mining extractors and to allow the biosphere to be protected. However, this is merely one aspect of the park. How have the local people been affected during this transition period and is a strategy favouring the demarcation of land for human processes decided upon by conservation agencies the correct path forward? This paper looks at the successes and failures of the park's policies so far.

2.1. Background to the study

This paper is the result of research work and a field practice that occurred in May/June 2016 with a group of 8 postgraduate researchers and two professors (Manuela Zips-Mairitsch and Werner Zips) from the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Vienna. The overarching research aim from that trip was to discover how the IWP was being managed and, more specifically, if it was achieving the stated aim of being a ‘park for the people’ and how that looked on the ground. The work we conducted there has been documented in both digital and paper format already. A documentary entitled ‘*Jewel of the Elephant Coast*’ (*Juwel der Elefantenküste - Afrikas Wunderland Isimangaliso*) was co-produced by ORF and/3sat and Werner Zips in 2015, shortly after we had returned from South Africa. It was based on footage and information received during our stay and from a previous trip.

In addition, *Bewildering Borders: The Economy of Conservation in Africa*, was published in 2019 and contains contributions about that fieldwork from 5 of the postgraduate researchers, as well as Manuela Zips-Mairitsch and Werner Zips. The contributions of the researchers (Bergthaler, Böhm, Cassidy, Kelleher, Sterkl) to this book about iSimangaliso focused mostly on the local social system – what were the relationships between the people and the park, and less on the conservation strategies. In the many spirited conversations that we had before, during, and after the fieldwork, there was a very significant agreement on the situation on the ground. Our findings were consistent with some of the most in-depth social science in the area (Nustad 2015, Hansen 2013, Büscher 2013, Büscher et al. 2014), which is that the local communities are, by and large, not receiving the benefits they were promised. The situation as we found it on the ground suggested as much and IWP’s tendency to continue the deprivation of resources from historically disadvantaged people was tempered by the good, decent, hard-working folk we met from the park. However, there was also a collective realisation that good intentions from local employees did not translate to better outcomes.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the creation of IWP and the victory of the grassroots movement that brought it to fruition. Now seems a reasonable time to pose questions about the viability of the park in its current guise. Our professors (Zips and Zips-Mairitsch 2019:28) have posited that it is “premature” to give a final verdict on IWP. However, this misses the point that

that many neoliberal critics (this paper included) make: that the IWP is embedded within a system that will never deliver a positive outcome for the majority. It is wedded to capital principles and mechanisms that favour profit-generating formulas and will belch out those that do not adhere to it.

That is what this paper will examine: the historical foundation of conservation, the steps it has taken globally, as well as in South Africa, with the aim of situating IWP in the sea of activity that began over a century ago and, while it has undergone transformations, remains steadfastly attached to global events and institutions beyond its own small sphere. In addition, viewing the conservation policies of IWP through a neoliberal lens adds value (please excuse the choice of metaphor) to understanding IWP's place in the world.



Image 1: Research group from the University of Vienna on the first day of fieldwork



Image 2: Research group on the final evening together. A bit older and (hopefully) a bit wiser

3. Research design and methodology

3.1. Research question

My initial broad research question was: *What is the effect of the ISimangaliso Wetland Park on the local people?*

More specifically, I wanted to understand the benefits received and/or restrictions imposed on the local communities in the area. This gave birth to a sprawling array of sub questions that were filtered down to:

1. *How conservation emerged as a concept, developed over time and what is the current state of the conservation movement, specifically in South Africa*
2. *What the role of the South African government is in the conservation of nature, how they view the environment and business.*
3. *What is happening on the ground in, and around iSimangaliso. How people are living, what land they are using and what benefits they are receiving, or what restrictions are they having imposed on them by the park authorities?*

Related hypotheses for the first three questions were the following:

- a. The history of conservation unfolded as a means to control power and wealth for a powerful minority and not for benevolent ecological or social reasons. This has not changed in recent years even though the justifications and governance structures have changed.
- b. The history of South Africa, running parallel to the development of conservation, was one of racial suppression and land grabbing. The fall of apartheid and the rise of the Rainbow Nation, contrary to popular opinion, has not been a major force for equality in the country, especially from a land tenure perspective. Neoliberal free market practices are king.
- c. ISimangaliso is situated at the confluence of these dual historical developments; the

modern nation state of South Africa and 21st Century conservation. It models itself as a mediator of the two, but it is, in fact, designed to work with a free-market system and is beholden to fulfil this role first and foremost. It adheres to a business-friendly model that view ‘pristine’ nature as a gateway to international tourism and ecotourism as a viable strategy for local livelihoods.

The aim of this study was to address the initial research questions, by gathering data that either supports or refutes the formulated hypotheses. Another goal was to document the daily lives and interactions of people in the areas that I would visit in iSimangaliso. The fieldwork period would be short (2 weeks) but enough to provide an impression and realistic appraisal of the perspectives on the area from other researchers who have visited the area. Visiting the area and speaking to local people would provide important data but also give insight and reference points to check against other the writings of other researchers, which would otherwise be much harder and more abstract without the benefit of actually seeing the place in person.

3.2. Research design

Susan C. Weller identifies three ways of studying and analysing humans; observations, interviews, and records (2000, 365). Although somewhat general, this sums up neatly the three forms of data that were drawn upon in this research, although they each received different levels of use. In order to collect informant-based data, primary data was carried out by utilising different forms of interviews, as well as participant observation, while secondary data was gathered from published articles by researchers, as well as websites, official records, business plans and projections, and the minutes of meetings found online.

According to Susan C. Weller, the less information there is, the more open-ended and unstructured methods are to be used (2000, 365). As there is still a lack of research on the area of iSimangaliso and, in conjunction with a desire to allow participants to speak freely and openly in conversation, this form of interviewing, in combination with semi-structured interviews, was primarily adhered to in the field, particularly with people not working for the park. Generally, these forms of interviews are considered as solely qualitative. However, as H. Russel Bernard points out: “participant observation gets you in the door” in the sense that being in the area will invariably open up opportunities but it also allows for the adoption of quantitative methods as a result of gaining access, with methods like direct observation or questionnaires (Bernard 2011, 258). Relying on a single method is risky and inferior to a more expansive research method that has multiple methods is more effective (Weller 2000:365). As a result, this research attempted to incorporate participant observation, along with interviews and deep secondary research.

Additionally, although the major research questions were the overarching aim, there was a necessity in the field to be light on my feet as many respondents had very little interest or knowledge about iSimangaliso. The carefully curated and created questions that been formed in discussion groups in preparation went out the window and the conversation had to be allowed to naturally flow elsewhere, otherwise the respondent would have lost interest entirely in continuing. As Weller points out, it was important to be cognisant of not exclusively discussing or asking about my own favoured topics as risked missing out on what the respondent viewed as interesting or important (Weller 2000, 366).

3.3. Fieldwork sites

Our fieldwork lasted for two weeks and we stayed primarily at St. Lucia. We moved between a camping site here and a lodge, with beds and infrastructure. Initially I had intended on staying with the rest of the group at the camping site for the first two nights as well. However, I contracted food poisoning in Durban and required a bedroom and close access to a bathroom. The food poisoning put me out of commission for the best part of two days and was a frustrating start to the trip. On the other hand, it also allowed me some free time to myself, separate to the rest of the group. I made short trips to the closest shops and cafes for plain crackers, cold drinks, and ice pops to stay hydrated. At this much slower pace, I was able to discover little intricacies about the town that became impossible once I joined back up with the group. I had a chance to have one-on-one conversations with people in the shops, cafes, and lodge without the pressure of two or three other people standing around nearby, making the other person feel affected by their presence, one way or another. There is a big difference between easing into a conversation with one person and speaking with three or four strangers all at once for the first time. It also gave me a chance to test out some of the local slang I had picked up in Durban, to see if it was also used up further north.

‘How’s it bru’, I would say in greeting to a man when I would enter somewhere or meet for the first time. ‘Howsit’, they would invariably reply. A ubiquitous reply could then be employed as a response to almost any statement thereafter: “Isit?”; “I had a good day today” would be replied to with “Isit?” and I incorporated this into my own responses, as I had to great effect in Durban.

We never stayed with people in their houses. We stayed in two lodges and a number of smattering of campsites dotted around the park. This allowed us flexibility to travel around and see more of the park. One downside to this was that we were there in ‘low season’ and found many of the regular tourist places empty, and interactions with people were harder to come by. On the other hand, we got to witness the sheer beauty of the land and the draw and attraction of the many different ecosystems, from the coastal forests to the empty, massive beaches.

3.4. Fieldwork roles

Fieldwork was primarily conducted in the Eastern and Western shores of IWP, the town of St. Lucia, and in the Greater Dukuduku area. Dukuduku is made up of the contentious Dukuduku forest as well as Ezwenelisha and the Khula village, where we stayed for two nights in Venyane, the cultural Zulu village. As noted elsewhere, we did not travel unnoticed. As a convoy of three large, expensive vehicles comprising of mainly white Europeans in a fairly rural area, we were recognised pretty quickly and became familiar with some of the locals, wherever we stayed for longer than a day or so.

While I personally, and our group as a whole made some close contacts and developed some relationships, there were a myriad of different actors who didn't trust us or were wary of our agenda in the area. As tourists are common in this area, it was not out of place for us to be there, but we soon established a rapport with the locals, especially in St. Lucia, about our research project and what we were doing there. We also bounced ideas off the waiters and staff we became acquainted with by seeing them every day. St. Lucia has only so many restaurants and shops and we quickly exhausted them all, ending up in the same places every day. This was also helpful and informative as we got to see some of the incredible long hours some of the staff worked at the restaurants.

We were served breakfast near the crack of dawn one morning by a waitress and we had an evening drink in the same restaurant over 12 hours later and she was the one serving us. Initially the staff were polite and friendly but reserved about discussing their life or their opinions about the area. Once they saw us returning day after day and we built up some friendliness, they were more willing to open up about their thoughts on the area. The parochial nature of the small-town lifestyle exposed itself in these interactions as our gender roles became an important factor in the field at this point. The female wait staff did not feel comfortable, nor felt it was good to be seen chatting to the men in our group outside of the professional relationship we had. They wanted to meet some of the girls outside of their work hours for an informal interview.

Another issue arose here as the places to go were severely limited. The town of St. Lucia has one main street with the majority of restaurants and bars, and a strong slingshot would take a rock from one end to the other of that street. The dilemma of meeting the girls in another

restaurant brought some trepidation in the women who wanted to chat. Everyone knows each other in the area so they were worried about being eavesdropped by other people and staff in another bar. As also noted by Aardenburg during her research in the area, this has a lot to do with “local perceptions of power relations”, in with their employers or the Izinduna (‘headmen’).

The financial aspect of the fieldwork played a role for us as students. It would be difficult to justify not providing some remuneration to the local people we spoke with at length, especially outside of their place of work, intruding on their personal time and demanding personal information from them for, essentially, our own benefit. Many expressed an appreciation for what we were doing and said they were happy to offer up their time but we always provided local individuals with money for their time. There were some brief discussions about offering goods, like food instead but, ultimately, we settled on money as most, if not all, expressed at one point or another a need for more money. We never gave money to business owners or park employees.

The fluidity of ethics in the field was more difficult that we had even anticipated beforehand. It was difficult to not feel emotional when being guided around Dukuduku by a local and hearing about how they were living in a ‘dark zone’, where they were feeling pressurised by local governance structures, and seeing how many of the staff who worked in St. Lucia were treated by their employers. We met four business owners who all treated their staff atrociously, on one level or another – whether by the hours they demanded or by what they paid them. Hearing the staff speak about having to travel by foot late at night to get home because they were told to stay late, and then speaking with their employers was not easy to do in an objective way. In many instances it was possible to disengage from the ‘morality’ of the people’s opinions, but this was an area where we could have, as a team, been more effective at applying a more level-headed approach.

Another incident in this vein happened in a bar in St. Lucia brought up an interesting discussion between a fellow researcher and myself. In June 2016, Ireland played South Africa in an international rugby match in South Africa. A bar in St. Lucia was showing the match on a big screen so he and I ambled down to watch it. The bar has a large, open plan central room. One wall is covered in windows and faces out onto the expanse of the Indian Ocean. We settled into seats in the middle of the room with a good view of the screen. There were about a dozen other

people there watching the game; none wore jerseys, but frenzied shouts bellowed out and the air was thick with tension as the game progressed, as Ireland were winning.

Just as the game was kicking off, a couple walked in the door to the left of us. We recognised them from the lodge we had stayed in at Kosi Bay. We invited them to come and sit down with us. They were a white couple, both originally from South Africa. They were traveling with two other couples, but they were not interested in watching the match. They had remembered I was Irish and were getting a kick out of the friendly rivalry. The bar is located on the far reaches of the continent, so it was funny to them to have an Irish fan there with them. They were pleasant enough to begin with, but the shared common interest of the rugby match allowed for an even easier, relaxed conversation. We could allow ourselves to fix our gaze on the screen and not worry about an intense ‘interview’ setting. They were aware of what we were doing in the area based on our previous, brief encounter a few days earlier. We discovered that they were all retired now and enjoying the freedom of time to travel peacefully. They were driving around in camper vans together.

We began to delve into their careers and lives before they retired. The man had owned a factory manufacturing machine parts for different industries and the woman had been a secretary and then a housewife when she had children. The conversation naturally drifted to the social situation at the time and the apartheid system. The man was a lot more vocal than his wife and he became more intense as he discussed the races in South Africa. He would fix his gaze on me and structure sentences in a way that was unapologetic and, sometimes, in a manner that asked me to be complicit in his opinions or arguments. I sensed my research partner tense up at this point and he became less and less involved in the conversation as an active participant. Instead, he was listening intently and involuntarily breathing out deeply or sighing at things he heard. This altered the dynamic somewhat between the man and myself. He began to monopolise the conversation and his wife said very little then. I took the position of trying to understand the background and cultural setting that the couple had grown up in and why they held these beliefs. In a way, experiences like this reaffirmed the stance taken by some anthropologists that ethnography and participant observation, in particular, means “getting close to people and making them feel comfortable enough with your presence so that you can observe and record information about their lives” (Bernard 2011, 256). This maxim certainly applied here as things

became much tighter and constricted when the man sensed that my research partner was feeling uneasy about the situation.

They were very anti-ANC and felt that they were being oppressed by this new government and that they were the minorities now. I had heard similar sentiments in Durban from Afrikaaners and was slow to dismiss this as racist ramblings and was curious to find out what exactly was creating this fear and anxiety. I was struck by the importance of remaining open to the conversation but also being cognisant of the fact that having the conversation was not tantamount to agreeing with his opinions. My research partner said he had felt sick of the man's descriptions of Zulu people; had casually dismissed them as lazy and subhuman and so he did not want to engage with them.

This was a lot easier to deal with than the employers in St. Lucia whose employees I knew and saw how badly they were being treated. I attempted to achieve the same level of objectivity and intellectual distance when speaking to them, but it was always a little bit emotionally charged. This was also partly down to the fact that these business owners were willing orators and often revelled in performing long anecdotes, rather than having a more structured conversation. This resulted in a louder, slightly more abrasive interaction. These interactions also took place at their place of business, in view of their employees. The employer-employee relationship was very strongly established and there was an element of performance for their benefit too. One of the business owners delighted in telling me that he employed twice the number of people he needed and paid them half the wage they should receive because he was generous and was employing more people.

3.5. Sampling

Structured sampling was not a possibility for this research project due to time, financial, and logistical constraints. With limited opportunities to travel extensively and restricted access to the upper echelons of the management structure of IWP I resorted to incorporating a form purposive, or judgement sampling, which means choosing cases or informants not randomly, but intentionally (Bernard 2011, 143). In this case, it meant speaking with as many members of Ezemvelo or IWPA as possible, lodge and business owners, workers in the tourist industry, as well as locals who lived in the area in order to gain as many perspectives as possible. Getting as many voices heard was crucial to painting a more detailed picture of what people think of the park there.

The practical implementation of this purposive sampling strategy ultimately was couched in a frame of convenience sampling. With limited time in the field, I was in the business of attempting to talk to whoever would strike up a conversation with me, whoever's attention I was able to "grab" (Bernard 2011, 147). My interview strategy took this form with every respondent outside of the official pre-arranged interviews set up by our professor with the park ahead of time. It also allowed a lot of freedom and flexibility to spontaneously get referred to a friend of theirs or get brought somewhere else to speak with someone who may know what I wanted to know. This didn't always happen but was very useful when it did. It required a lightness on the feet to respond to these in real-time. These spontaneous and impromptu arrangements were important for building my own confidence in the field, as relying solely on the interviews arranged by our professor would have felt like a bit of a personal loss. This was also evident within the group dynamic of us as researchers. In the first few days, in particular, there was a competitive-type atmosphere amongst us. Everyone was keen to break free of the group and get information on their own.

This form of information gathering also requires patience and a certain amount of stoicism about the type of data being collected. As these are not formally curated interviews, there was no guarantee that the person will have knowledge or interest in the exact area I was interested in - namely IWP. Sometimes having no knowledge of the parks policies was actually more information to store anyway as it demonstrated a certain group members ignorance of the

situation and it could be queried why they didn't have this. When someone really had no interest in IWP, I would steer the conversation towards their experiences of living in the area in general or their opinion about South Africa as a whole. Sometimes the information said little about IWP but there was always some insight that could be gleamed; how a white Afrikaaner felt he was being treated and represented in the media; how a single mother was coping in a demanding job; what a tourist in the area liked about the area. These all built up a collage of images, ideas and experiences that minutely find their way into the research.

3.6. Interviews

3.6.1. Setting up interviews

The initial interviews we conducted with staff of IWP or Ezemvelo staff had mostly been pre-arranged by our professor through his pre-established contacts. The staff members we spoke with were very generous with their time and helpful but in many respects, it felt very much like a PR exercise when we asked any probing questions. Despite the geographical vastness of the park, it is unpopulated by design and the hinterlands are sparsely located so those working or moving around in the area are well-known to everyone else. With time to reflect we experienced what Elizabeth Aardenburg, a researcher in the IWP area, describes as “how certain power relations ‘sit’” in this area and it was wise to tread carefully” (2017, 33). We fulfilled our duties to the best of our abilities and the park was aware that we were there as students researching the park. They did ask for our movements, and schedules. Whether real or imagined, there was always a fear when we arrived at the gates of the park for entry that we may be turned back and denied access if we started to ask the ‘wrong’ questions.

There is a constant tension inherent in conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Objectivity and personal biases, despite what the literature may suggest in some quarters, is not realistic. At least, not in this exploratory two-week period that we had in IWP. I witnessed first-hand how each of my ten companions interacted with various people in South Africa in different ways, depending on multiple factors – from their gender, their upbringing and background, to their understanding of the region based on their research and reading beforehand. As a result, there is an obvious reason to be sceptical, or wary, of using qualitative data to understand what is

happening in the area. The importance of statistical data and the use of macro, cross-cultural studies are very important at establishing the trends both internationally, and locally. Drawing from a wealth of studies that contain elements of both quantitative and qualitative methods would be ideal to understanding the context of IWP. However, there are still too few studies on the area. In addition, I fall into the camp of appreciating the thoughts of local stakeholders in the area being investigated. Sidney Mintz once advocated the use of indigenous knowledge to understand the area being studied. He lamented the lack of time or respect given to respectfully listening to the opinions or ideas of local people. He asserted that asking a local person about what they know about builds a rapport and they begin “to trust you because you show respect for his knowledge. No one ever shows respect for his knowledge” and so this ability to draw upon local knowledge is “what anthropology’s strength is, and if you want to give that up and spend your time reading Foucault, be my guest” (Mintz 2013, YouTube).

With that in mind, this research utilized many informal and semi-structured interviews carried out in the field. In the two weeks our research group was there, we conducted over 50 interviews and also had access to over 30 interviews conducted by Werner and Manuela Zips in a previous fieldwork trip to the park.

As we were a group of 9, we could disperse during the day and speak with different people and observe different parts of the park. By coming together in the evening, we could swap stories and pool our knowledge, creating a sort of mosaic of understanding through the eyes of the other researchers. As we were a mixture of both male and female, this was highly beneficial as access was restricted to certain people based on gender. In addition to these chats and discussions in the field, we had a follow up seminar the semester after the fieldtrip that most of the participants took part in. The use of recording devices was also very beneficial as it negated some personal biases from the recounting of the interviews or observations that each researcher had. Navigating the research area with multiple research partners also allowed us to utilise different methods and get creative because, as Russell Bernard expresses it, “anthropologists have been prodigious inventors, consumers, and adapters of research methods” (2011, 2).

In addition to fieldwork methods I examined the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in which conservation theories and agreements were formulated. The scope of the ethnography was too brief to make close social bonds or form relationships in the field that could,

on their own, account for the situation in the park. As summed up by Bruner, viewing tourism “solely within the frame of interaction among the various actors is too narrow” and it has to be understood “in its larger political and economic context and mediating between the global and the local” (Bruner 2005, 12).

In this paper, further analysis of the park’s tourist scope will be pursued through policy meeting minutes and documents, as well as relevant research. This adds to a greater understanding of the local practice that was discovered from the many interviews and interactions from the research project field work.

3.6.2. Expert interviews

Experts in the field are useful in many ways. We went on a game reserve walk, as well as a drive. On both occasions we were in situations that could easily become dangerous very quickly. Being surrounded by predators like lions or getting charged by an elephant or hippo was a very real possibility if we didn’t listen to our guides. Pat, our walk guide, and Zane, our game drive guide, were both incredibly knowledgeable and informed, with years of experience. In addition to their ability to keep us safe, they also had a wealth of knowledge about the flora and fauna and the people in the area. It was clear that we had to listen to their advice when it came to safety. In fact, Zane told us that he no longer carried a rifle with him anymore. It is allowed and some parks encourage their guides to. However, after an experience where a tourist did not listen to his instructions and left the vehicle, he was forced to fatally shoot an advancing lion. This sort of expert advice carries with it very real, very black-and-white ramifications.

In the social sciences, expert interviews are often called upon to help bolster the knowledge in the field with an ‘insider’ of the field. It has advantages and disadvantages to place too much weight on this expertise, however, and this advice from Margarete Sandelowski is prescient when reflecting on the over-reliance on expert opinions:

“Researchers must be judicious in their claims to expert validation, and experts must move researchers away from a preoccupation with validation toward craftsmanship and accountability to diverse communities” (Sandelowski 1999, 467)

It was valuable to bear this in mind throughout the process of researching IWP and talking with people in the field. We spoke with employees in the park, as well as tour guides and business owners, each had their own unique perspective. We also had a storage of recorded interviews that our professor gave us access to from previous trips to the area. This included the CEO of the park, Andrew Zaloumis, who has been campaigning and working in the area for decades.

Paradoxically, with regard to IWP, depending on what the question is, there are either a select few experts or a large number of experts. The only real way to find this out is to go there and discover that many communities are spread out, as there is currently very little statistical data about their views.

Expert knowledge in the field regarding IWP came almost exclusively from park employees and so bias possibility must be taken into account with their responses.

3.6.3. Interview formats

In addition to the techniques used during the interviews – narrative interviews, open-ended questions, and so forth – there was a massive variance in the *types* of interviews and interactions that we had in the field. As technology as improved, ethnographers of all subjects have been able to make use of recording equipment and do away with traditional methods of only using notebooks or pens and pads. These were used as well, but I took a camera with me to document interviews and the surroundings. Our professor is a prolific documentary film maker, so we also got to watch his process of making a film in the field.

The addition of a camera increased the number of interviews formats we had available to us. Informal interviews varied from no recording to a phone placed on the table recording everything. This is fairly unobtrusive and quickly forgotten by the respondent. The camera, however, took some getting used to and added a totally different dimension to the interviews. It played a big role in how the respondents acted and how they answered questions. They were very aware of the camera and felt nervous and self-conscious speaking into it, especially initially. It was important to put them at ease and try to make them feel comfortable. Two other key aspects played into this atmosphere of unease for the respondent. First, the camera I had brought was a large, clunky piece of equipment from the department of anthropology in Vienna.

It was free for me to use and it was a high-quality device, so I was happy with it. In retrospect it was too large and required a massive tripod to keep it stable, as it was very tiring to hold for large periods of time. It was also very inconspicuous and created a very “official” atmosphere. I have subsequently used a good quality phone camera and external microphone to record interviews. It is far less intrusive and much easier to handle.

The second aspect that led to an alien dynamic for the respondents was that, given the size of the camera, many of the other researchers wanted to be involved in the interview process. For one of the interviews, three researchers sat at the table with two respondents, while I managed the camera. Only one person asked questions though, so the dynamic was a bit stale. Before the interview, we had spent a few hours chatting in the butterfly hut and walking around their land. This was very relaxed, and I got a lot of insightful answers from these talks. This dynamic changed a bit once the camera was set up and it became more of a formal environment. This was an important moment to learn that it is essential to control the interview space if it is going to be as formal as a recorded interview and to have autonomy about the set-up, format, and questions.

We also conducted highly stylised interviews as a group. We elected one member of our research team to ask some questions that we drafted together to a Sangoma of a local community. This was done in front of many members of his family and with many friends sitting around. The questions were asked and answered through an interpreter. The sun was setting, and we had a glorious ‘golden hour’ glow to the set. This produced some useful information but was too ‘tight’ to really produce a good flow of information. It was, again, very useful to do as we discovered ways of selecting an idea place to shoot, having a good backdrop, utilising natural light and acoustics.



Image 3: An informal, Impromptu interview conducted with a Khula village resident



Image 4: An interview conducted at the Butterfly hut compound



Image 5: Golden hour bathes our interview in glorious orange hues



Image 6: Dennis, a local bout tour guide, was a wealth of information

These types of interviews were conducted in very different ways, and they produced very different results. Images 4 and 5 were very formally orchestrated interviews, with input from all

members of the research group. This required teamwork and compromise on some of the questions. With time restrictions, this led to a narrow focus on some research topics at the expense of others, which was a disadvantage for some members of the team. The interview subjects were also much ‘tighter’ and didn’t respond as freely and as openly as they might have. This isn’t a reflection just of the format, but more on the inexperience of our team in such situations.

Image 3 was an unscheduled interview that came about when a local approached us and started talking to us. We offered him a cigarette and found a shaded area to relax. He did not want to be filmed but was ok with being tape recorded. He spoke very openly and freely, with no restrictions on his opinions.

Image 6 is taken from a boat tour we took with a local guide, Dennis. He was an expert on all nature topics and was also very informed about local community politics. I filmed him briefly but during the tour he had a duty to fulfil so it was not possible to veer the conversation in all directions for a long time. He was very used to speaking to people so spoke the same on-camera as off-camera.



Image 7: I left the driving to Dennis and tried to steer the fieldwork in the right direction

3.7. Research methods in practice

These research methods and experiences were distilled across a number of interactions that took place at the Veyane cultural centre in the village of Khula.

3.7.1. Veyane Cultural Centre – Insider/Outsider

We drove down a long, narrow stretch of dusty road in our massive white SUV's in the evening, as a glowing orange orb was slowly nestling itself behind the houses in the distance. The air was still and heavy with the heat of the day. The first vehicle bumped and bounced along the road in front of us on the uneven and potholed road. Outside of our truck people who walking on the road, or standing outside their houses, looked in at us curiously. Finally, we slowed and turned left into a small clearing outside of a house. There was a main building, which seemed to be the house, and a large, detached brick shed of some description. We all jumped out and our professor entered the open door of the house. We milled about outside, taking in the surroundings. This was the end of the road. The last house along this 'lane'. There was a ditch that melted the road away and was filled with bushes, overgrowth and discarded branches. We could see a number of half-finished homes under construction; one was back up the lane we had driven down, and two others were down beyond the ditch. Further down there was another dusty road but we couldn't reach it from where we were without making enemies with some angry looking briars and thorns. We had passed a number of houses along the road, but we had moved quick enough to sort of blur the passing world and curious spectator away.

Our professor returned to the cars. We would have to leave and return the following day. The Sangoma we had come to meet was not available at that moment. Rather than driving back up the road, several of us decided to walk back to where we were staying. Along the way we bumped into a few of the local characters and inhabitants. We made small chit-chat about who we were and continued along the road. This dusty lane led almost directly to the camp where we were staying and at an intersection between the two, there was a small restaurant. A few men sat and stood around, eating and talking inside of a small garden in front of the building. We waved and exchanged greetings. This would end up being an important exchange later in that evening.

A few hours later, after we had eaten dinner in the camp, it was time to either go to bed, or find something else to do. Our professor had told us we shouldn't wander outside of the camp after dark. The tour guide earlier in the day had said the same thing. The place was surrounded with a high wall and fitted with barbed wire on it. There was a gate manned with a security guard, while another patrolled the perimeter. Despite all of this, darkness fell relatively early in the evening and I felt that we had nothing to gain by simply staying put inside of an area we had already seen. Two of us decided to venture outside the confines of our secluded island. In the distance, somewhere down the road, we could hear the din of a bar; laughs and shouts danced over our walls, mocking our seclusion. I had experienced this same siege mentality in the confined, gated communities in Durban and understood that it was part of the local life in South Africa. There were many valid, rational and reasonable reasons to listen to the advice we had received to stay put but I had also experienced a lot of hospitality and found most people to be interested in talking. I had encountered similar warnings and precautions in Durban but had managed to avoid any hassle or problems there. Emboldened by this, we made the decision to wander down.

"Where are you going?" We were at the gate of the compound and the furrowed brows of the security guard were digging into his glasses. It wasn't as if he was stopping us from leaving, but his expression was definitely one of concern.

"Oh, just going for a walk". Christian, one of my fellow students, and companion for the night, declared confidently. It was a desperate attempt, thinking on his feet in an awkward exchange.

The lines on the security guard's face slackened and he looked at us with the expression of a man who had heard every excuse and reason in the book. Behind him, and beyond the gate, was the main road. It ran parallel to the compound. To the left and right you could see the road leading away from us. There was nothing on the road and the dim, amber streetlights were sparsely placed. Pockets of darkness consumed the road between the glares raining down from the poles. There wasn't a soul to be seen on the streets and little to fix your view upon beyond the houses that were dotted along the road. Clearly, we weren't going for a stroll. Honesty was going to have to be the order of the day.

"We can hear the sound from the Shebeen below. We want to go check it out." The guard

continued to look at us with a fixed, worried expression. “People who stay here don’t usually go down there.”

I was getting accustomed to hearing this at that point. We were constantly being told about people from the camp, associated with the camp, paid by the camp, that we shouldn’t stray from it. Nonetheless, “Yeah, but we’re just gonna go down and have a look.”

The guard pursed his lips together, then clicked his tongue and let out sigh. He turned and unlocked the gate. The clang of the metal closing behind us had barely faded before doubt crept into our minds. Did we want to go there now? The bar was around 500 metres down the road. The muffled sound of music and chatter grew louder by the step. As we approached the main door, light and movement could be seen through the window.

Technically, Shebeens generally refer to illicit establishments, places that are not supposed to act as bars. Nonetheless, in cities they often operate in much the same way that Speakeasys did in Prohibition-era USA, or also refer to late night shops that illegally sell spirits after hours. I was brought to one in the dead of the night in Durban, on the way to a house party. We were pelting along the barren streets of the city in a taxi, with no concern for traffic lights. After a certain hour in the evening, motorists apparently stop following the rule of law regarding traffic light. It is often too dangerous in certain parts of the city to slow or stop, as it may lead to a carjacking. At one intersection we saw a homeless person on their knees in the middle of the road. They were holding up a cardboard sign above their head with some message written on it. We were close to 80KPH when we whizzed past. Unaccustomed to this intense assault on the senses, I felt worried for the homeless person. The two Durban natives I was with told me that it was common for people to pose as homeless people and scam unsuspecting good Samaritans who stopped to help.

This particular brand of Shebeen we were approaching a couple of kilometres north appeared to be a little more brazen in its advertising. The rural isolation of this area meant it could be heard from kilometres away. It seemed as though *Shebeen* was also just a name used to refer to a late-night alcohol establishment because we had encountered some police officers earlier in the day, so they would have to be aware of this place. Either way, we were headed in. That interaction with the police officer had been a little unsettling. Four of us students were walking to a local

school in the glorious afternoon sunshine when we happened upon a group of policemen on the road. The road was only really one car lane wide, so we greeted the men as we were passing. The man in front responded cheerfully but then his tone shifted and asked us who we were and what we were doing. One of the girls responded and told him we were students studying the area and he asked us a strange question: if we had any money. I laughed and pulled the old, broke-man joke act – putting my hand into my pocket and re-emerging with the whole pocket turned inside-out, indicating that I was penniless. “We are poor students, we wish we had money, ha ha ha”. We moved on but there was an edge to the brief interaction.

The front door of the Shebeen was locked and it had frosted glass so we couldn’t make out anything inside except for dull lights, so we made our way around to the side. At the back of the building, a porch had been built at the back door. It occupied a large space, enough to accommodate a pool table, space to play around it, and a table and chairs. People took notice of us the moment we came into sight. There were at least a dozen people outside of the bar. Steps led up to the porch and as we made it to the top, we were immediately set upon by three very friendly women. Two of them hugged us but I could feel the woman who hugged me patting my pockets as she did so. I looked over at Christian and saw more clearly the hands of the woman gliding across his pockets, searching for bulges. My admirer asked for a drink, but I politely declined. They moved away from us and we didn’t get a chance to engage with them again whilst we were there. We noticed that they were the only three women there, though, and that they frequently made trips to the toilet with some of the men there. We asked the other men about them, but we only received knowing looks, smiles and laughs from most in return. One of the men, a mountain of a man who offered us protection should anything go awry, warned us not to approach them. He wouldn’t specify why.

We made our way in through the back door. The bar space was in the shape of a large rectangle. Upon entering, we were at the base of one width and the room opened up in front of us. At the far end, where the front door was, stood the bar. A barman stood behind the counter. We began making our way up there. It was a buzzing, lively, hub with tables strewn around the room that were mostly full. To the right of us a semi-alcove had been built into the wall, with comfortable looking couches populated by some very large men. Facing these couches was a white wall, where a projector was beaming the 90’s Hollywood movie “Face Off, starring John Travolta

and Nicholas Cage. However, the main speakers of the bar were blaring some sort of dance-rap infused mix of music, so sound of the movie was muted. Undeterred, a number of these men cradled beer bottles and looked at the screen.

As we made our way along the side of the room towards the bar, we felt we were being watched by a large chunk of the people there. Undeniably, we stuck out. We were the only two white people and very clearly not from the area. Besides the colour of our skin and the clothes we wore, this was a very rural area, and everybody seemed to know each other. About two-thirds of the way up the room, I heard someone shout in our direction. A flicker of movement in my peripheral vision alerted me to the possibility, and probability, that it was directed towards us. I tensed up a little, but we continued to move forward. Despite our cavalier and casual attitude to the advice we had been given to not leave the compound, we were very aware of the potential risk factors at play. If he shouted at us again, I was going to have to address it and direct my attention his way. Avoiding it was only going to lead to aggravation. Sure enough, a moment later, he shouted our way again. A metre or so closer, he was no longer in my peripherals but essentially outside my field of vision. I turned my head to his direction and looked at him. Sitting at a round table in front of the bar was the man shouting at us. I locked eyes with him and saw, to my surprise, that he was getting to his feet and wearing a smile. I recognised his face. I took in his face and then his clothes. We drew closer to his table and saw that he was wearing a green workers uniform. Above his left breast pocket, the words ISIMANGALISO were printed. We had seen general labourers wearing these around the park; people who removed alien plant species or worked the land had been wearing them. I was confused about why he was calling us over so animatedly and excitedly though.

We greeted warmly. He stood and hugged us and introduced us to his friends. Neither seemed as excited to see us as he was, though. It was then, as we desperately searched his face for clues as to who he was, and we glanced at each other from the corners of our eyes to see if the other had a moment of recognition, that he declared that he was Shaka, one of the Zulu warriors who had performed for us earlier in the day. Ahh! When he had performed earlier, he had been dressed in traditional Zulu clothing and head dress, so we were totally thrown to see him now in a totally different uniform. We all laughed and turned to get drinks at the bar. Shaka looked like he was nursing a bottle running low so we offered to freshen up his drink, and he smiled

and said he would take another Castle. One of his friends came up beside us and gave a handshake. He then declared “I would like a drink”. The firmness of this ‘request’ left no doubt as to who would be paying for it. I signalled to the barman for another bottle.

We stood at the bar a while, chatting with Shaka. It turned out that he did, indeed, have two jobs. He worked at both Veyane as a “Zulu Warrior” and inside the park as a general labourer, fixing fences and tending to whatever may be required to do on any given day. It was interesting to see him clock off his day job (of Zulu warrior), which consisted of the garments typically associated with the traditional Zulu warriors: an umqhele (warrior's headband), amambatha over the shoulders, ibheshu (a semi-trouser) attached around the waist, umcedo (underwear) to cover the genitalia, and imbadada for his foot. Now he was sitting in a modern bar, decked out in modern western clothes, with a mobile phone sitting in front of him on the table. Of course, the Zulu job is merely an act, but this public vs. private separation was interesting to see up close. The façade of the Zulu tradition continuing in this area was immediately stripped away and shown to be purely spectacle for incoming tourists.

This is not unlike wearing Lederhosen at a ‘traditional’ Austrian bar, as I was required to do while working in a bar in Vienna, or a Kilt in Scotland, or any other number of local traditions used in tourism. However, Shaka told us that we were the first tourists that he had ever seen down in the Shebeen, or outside of the cultural village generally, after dark. All groups generally arrive, stay in the cultural village, then use vehicles to drive to other tourist hot spots. Any and all outside excursions on foot outside of the village are generally short and nearly always with an interpreter or local who works at Veyane. This was sad, but not surprising, to hear. Given the amount of warnings we had received, it was very likely that most foreign tourists would stay close to guided tours.

We met a variety of local characters that evening. Once we had settled in at the bar with Shaka, we began to attract attention from nearly everyone else at the bar. Many came up to ask us what we were doing there. There was never a sense of threat, just curiosity. The barman, however, told us to “be careful”. We went out to the back porch for a cigarette and soon were dispersing cigarettes to everyone it seemed. We were told time and time again that they never saw other tourists here and it was interesting to see “whites” in the bar. Many of the men were unemployed, but in various stages of unemployment. Many had insecure working conditions as labourers in

construction. They might be on a job for a week or two, then have nothing for a month. Many of the men mentioned that there was nothing to do around this area and that many men drank a lot of alcohol as there was not many jobs or possibilities for them.

When asked their opinion of iSimangaliso and the management of the park, most had very little to say. It was quite difficult to find common ground with them about what “iSimangaliso” was. Many did not view it as an entity in and of itself. They were confused by questions about what they thought iSimangaliso’s management could do for the local area and people. Even Shaka seemed unsure about what we were asking him about. When asked about the management of the park and whether he thought it benefitted local people, he responded that he thought it “was good”. When we continued to talk about the park and how it operated though, it seemed like the park was an irrelevance to their lives. When the men spoke of jobs, they talked more about the local Imkhosa, Phillip Mkwanazi, and the government. They didn’t view the park as an organisation that could offer them any jobs and when asked about the information that they had received from the park about ecotourism or jobs, they responded with complete ignorance of what we were talking about. IWL has stated that they brought action days and info days to local areas and villages to inform people about the role of the park for the area. However, in the case of these men, there appeared to be no knowledge at all about the agenda of the park, or these information days themselves.

A group of three men approached us from inside the bar, wearing large grins. We were afforded warm welcomes from them. They were three of the men that we had seen in the restaurant along the road to the Sangoma. Such was the rural, small, nature of this place, we had already struck up a few very superficial contacts. They were happy to see us and expressed their surprise that we were there.

Midway through one of the conversations I was having with a group out the back, I felt a presence approach from behind me, from the bar. A giant of a man loomed over me. He was one of the men who has been sitting on the far side of the room, watching the noiseless movie being projected onto the wall. He came over to let us know that if there was any trouble, not to worry, he would look after us. That was it. He laid a reassuring hand on my shoulder, turned and was gone. Despite his generous offer, it was never needed.

Eventually, the barman came and told us it was time for us to leave. The bar was not closing and no one else seemed to be leaving but there was a look in his eyes and tone to his voice that made it clear that it was best if we left. Even though we had spent an evening here and engaged in the same activities that these local men did, I could never completely “hang out, do all the everyday things that everyone else does, [or] become inconspicuous by sheer tenaciousness” that Malinowski made the case for (Bernard 2011, 259). We bade our goodbyes, which took a few minutes; everyone we had spoken with wanted a handshake and goodbye. Then we sidled away and headed back up the road to the cultural village again. The glow of the amber lights seemed a little warmer on that brief walk back, our steps lighter. We spoke briefly at the gate with the guard and asked why he thought most of the tourists didn’t go outside the compound to explore the local hangouts that much. He said he wasn’t sure but that it wasn’t that safe.

The next day we had our re-arranged appointment with the Sangoma down at her home early in the day. We decided to walk down. We passed by all the places we had the previous evening, but this time we saw them in full focus. We bumped into some of the men we had met the previous night as we walked down. Some were again outside the restaurant, lingering on the steps or sitting in plastic garden chairs under the protective shade of the tree in the garden. Further down, we saw two of the men working on the construction of a building. We barked jokes over to each other as we passed by the outside wall.

This time, with a little more leisure time along the road, we noticed a tiny junction along the way. The road split to the left and the right. We took the road to the right but in the centre was a small, one storey building. The orange and white paint on the exterior walls was faded and peeling at the edges. It was a small, local store. The interior was modestly decorated and arranged. There were only a few shelves in the centre of the floor, and they were not all fully stocked. A middle-aged man sat behind the counter reading a newspaper. He nodded and smiled at us when we entered. This store was truly, from a tourist in the area’s perspective, in the middle of nowhere. We bought some water and continued our leisurely pace down to the Sangoma’s home. We arrived to the sound of children’s laughter and were reunited with the rest of our group.

There was one main building that was clearly the house and then another, rounded building separate from the house, around the back. We were ushered into this building and asked to take

our shoes off. Rugs were splayed out across the floor. We all sat with our backs to the wall and ended up in a semi-circle. Soon the Sangoma arrived and performed her ritual for us, shaking and moving around the room. She was swaddled in cloths and her head was also wrapped with a traditional red garment. After the initial performative gesture, we asked questions through the intermediary of a translator from Veyane. We were then invited to sit before the Sangoma and have our fortunes told to us. I was beckoned forward and required to lay a token before the Sangoma. Some South African Rand was produced and laid down before here. I knelt in front of the Sangoma and awaited my fate. The Sangoma knelt with her forehead on the ground and I discovered, through the interpreter, that I was to do well in my exams and meet my wife in South Africa.

After having my fate told to me, myself and Christian went outside to get some fresh air. The back door of the house was open and the source of the laughter I had heard earlier became clear – two young boys were playing in the house. They made a gun sign and shot at us. I feigned pain and returned fire. They shrieked out laughter and disappeared from sight. Then, a man appeared from the road. We struck up conversation with him and sat in the shade of a tree. It turned out he was one of these perpetually unemployed men of the area, constantly roving from construction site to construction site for work. He complained bitterly about the Inkhosa and the lack of opportunities for work. Much like many of the men we had met the night before, he did not seem particularly keen to talk about iSimangaliso and could not be drawn into discussion about it.

Once again, we had encountered a local resident who had a very loose definition of iSimangaliso and its standing in the area. This is not surprising considering Xaba concluded that the vast majority of local people had little involvement or knowledge of the parks plans or operations. Of the name change 20 years ago, Xaba concluded that “most actors were not informed nor consulted about the proposed name change hence they did not participate in the process” (Xaba 2009, 84).

3.7.2. Experiences of “Authenticity”

These experiences in and around Veyane illustrated the shifting nature of “authenticity” and the interplay between tourists and the place and people there. Many western tourists seek escape in a realer, more authentic reality in either a simpler past, or a simpler, “purer” present located in an exotic, far-away culture (MacCannell 1976, 3). The rise of mass markets of consumer culture, as well as the proliferation of extremely cheap air travel have combined to open previously exotic locations for a greater number of people, and the demand for “real” experiences reside in ecotourist locations that celebrate closer, more “personal” experiences with the environment and the local people there – creating what are described as “personal” and “authentic” experiences (Hüncke and Koot 2012, 674). Our experiences at the Veyane cultural village, as well as with the Sangoma were wrapped up in “touristic commodification” packages that seek to provide a service and a particular image of the area and, through these exchanges between us, the tourist, and they, the local actor, Büscher et al. argue that the entire exchange becomes “inauthentic” (2018, 40) because of the expectations of both parties seeking to have a very particular experience and become entangled in tourism images of the area.

This paper utilises an approach to “authenticity” in the ecotourism sphere along the same lines as Büscher et al. (2018); that authenticity cannot be viewed “as static but as flexible” and argues that authenticity or inauthenticity are ultimately perceptions and that the tourist spaces are regarded in an inauthentic way may, over time, become accepted or seen as authentic. The perception of *authentic* is constantly evolving and changing and varies from person to person due to myriad reasons and is ultimately a state of perception on behalf of the observer.

Curiously, the performances that we paid for in Veyane and that were very clearly performed realities showcased for tourists received little serious attention as “real” experiences amongst our research group. However, the time we spent in the bar speaking with the local people, or the hours we spent with the local healer searching for herbs in a nearby forest were self-classified as having been “realer” and not reliant on a script and had less of a performative quality to them. The men who played the Zulu warriors also told us in conversations that they had learned over the years what tourists liked and didn’t like. So, like anybody trying to get better at their job, they tailored and tweaked the experience to better suit the wants and desires of the clients who turned up. Whilst we managed to “peek behind the curtain” at the Veyane cultural village, many

tourists who arrive there do not and this creates an “ecotourism bubble” that obfuscates the actual context and reality of the place and idealises and romanticises it, placing an emphasis on the aspects people may find most intriguing (Carrier and Macleod, 2005).

This illustrates how, in practical terms, authenticity which lauded and championed as a core element of these tourist experiences, is constantly re-invented and subject to refitting in response to the market forces that control its meaning and value (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2009).



Image 8: Our interaction here with the police was unsettling



Image 9: A normal road in Khula village



Image 10: A local shop located close to Veyane Cultural centre, Khula village



Image 11: Clothes line in Khula village



Image 12: Local fruit and vegetable sellers on the side of the road in Khula village



Image 13: 'Zulu warrior' drinking locally brewed beer



Image 14: Vayane Cultural Center, our house for the night



Image 15: Vayane Cultural Center, performance



Image 16: Vayane Cultural Center, performance

4. Limitations, challenges, and lessons learned in the field.

As nine students in the field, we were presented with many opportunities and challenges in the field. We had spent some time together in the pre-trip period exchanging ideas in seminars and met up socially a couple of times to get to know each other a little better. Nonetheless, once we all arrived in South Africa, we spent basically every waking moment together – we slept in the same lodges or camped together in tents under the stars. This, in one way, brought us very close together and formed bonds that, as individuals, were a great experience. It allowed us to form of a sense of togetherness and communal experience that was enriching and has lasted long beyond the fieldwork.

With regards to our research in the field, there were both positives and negatives to being part of a team of anthropologists. We were able to split up into smaller numbers and go to different areas, before coming back together later in the day and sharing our collected information or interviews. On good days, this amounted to 6 times the amount of data that we could have collected as individuals. We were also able to bounce ideas off one another and assess what impact our own ideologies, beliefs or prejudices were impacting our experience of what was happening around us. Having this sort of checks and balances system was very beneficial for staying focused.

Some of the challenges we faced as a group in the field were practical ones; we shared resources – cars, cameras, other equipment. We had two vehicles for 9 people so there had to be compromises on who could use it, and when. This dictated the scope and breadth of our research on any given day. As iSimangaliso and its hinterlands cover such a vast area, this meant limiting our research area so the majority could have access to the vehicles. One person driving away for four hours wasn't a logistically sound idea. This issue could be easily avoided with more vehicles, but we were students on a limited budget, so we confined to what we had.

Being part of a large group can also be a hindrance to ethnography as you can hardly arrive inconspicuously. We turned up in two gleaming white, rented SUV vehicles, as well as our professor's off-road jeep. We had to consider the impression we were imparting on those we came into contact with in these impoverished areas who saw us arrive this way, and account for

it in our interactions with them.

In contrast, I had arrived alone to Durban a week previously and, within a day, was “embedded” into several local social groups, volunteering with a local charity and meeting grassroots activists. This was also possible on a much smaller scale in St. Lucia, the tiny coastal village we stayed for several nights. I met the owner of a lodge and chatted to him one-on-one for a while. He offered to introduce me to others and, once he learned I was there with a group, invited the rest, too. These group interviews were a totally different dynamic to much more intimate or ‘private’ conversations that happened on an individual basis.

Whilst the camaraderie we experienced through being together every day was ultimately a positive experience, it brought with it some of its own problems. As we were all relatively unknown to one another and our “downtime” was spent in each other’s company, we expended a lot of energy attempting to simultaneously understand the dynamic of our group, get to know one another and establish our own relationships, both individually and collectively. It was useful to have two experienced professors and researchers with us as it allowed us, as students, to adopt a non-hierarchical structure within our sub-group of students. There was no need to worry about who would “lead” the group, or act in a certain position, as we were all freed up to focus instead on what we wanted to do ourselves. All of us students were coming from a central European university and were educated and employed in western countries our entire lives, so this sense of structure helped us to work as independently as possible. This was also clarified and expressed by many of the students because it was a point of discussion on several occasions between us students, either over breakfast, or driving between places. We wanted to be completely flexible and capable of following any possible idea that arose in the field.

At the beginning of the field trip there were a tangle of palpable emotions within the group – excitement, nervousness, and a giddiness to proceed. As we slowly began our fieldwork, some of the anxiety people were feeling expressed itself through this desire to be freed from the shackles of a very linear “educational” structure. The students didn’t just want to be told where to go, who to talk to, and what way they should go about finding out answers to their questions. It was quite an independently minded group, which helped to foster a group mentality of independently finding out answers, even as part of a group. This was reinforced by our first potential ‘clash’ with our professor. On the first weekend of our fieldwork he had set up

interviews at a tourist lodge situated a few hours away from our base. Our group of students were more interested in discovering more about a different set of villages, in the complete opposite direction. There was some slight apprehension that perhaps this would cause some friction and the professor would oppose this idea, despite there being no evidence to suggest that in the trip so far. Even though we were all there as researchers, thousands of kilometres from home, surrounded by roaming alligators and hippos in the village we were staying, there remained the fixed relations of university in many ways. There was still a slight sense that the professor set the tone and we, as students, had to follow it. However, after a very brief discussion at the dinner table, we were vigorously encouraged to go where we wanted by both professors. This independence was required to approach the research as openly as possible and has been reinforced by discussions with students from other fieldwork practices who felt that they were too constricted in their research fields and not able to freely pursue their own topics or questions.

Every attempt was taken in the preparatory phase, during the research project itself, and in the post-site, research, writing and editing phases to gain as clear a picture about the subject as possible. As this was a masters thesis though, there were many learning experiences that demonstrated the many limitations that research can face. A written document is a living, breathing organism and this paper is no exception. I relied heavily on the work of people who have gone before me and, in South Africa, on luck, good fortune, and the willingness of people I met to share their stories and perspectives.

A minor factor was the academic requirements that limited the fieldwork timescale. I spent 15 days in total in South Africa, with 10 of these in and around St. Lucia. We travelled during the University term and other classes required that I did not miss more than two classes. As a result, there was a slight time pressure to return within 14-16 days in order to meet those commitments. It illuminated the pressure on researchers – there are always time and financial constrictions that need to be worked around. This was not a major one but certainly impacted the flexibility of the project. We set out a list of areas we wanted to visit and were unable to dally in one place, even if we met interesting respondents there, because there was the constant pressure to see the next place. This blends into another limitation of researching an area as vast as iSimangaliso – there is simply so much to see.

There are also a lot of unquantifiable people and actions in the area that show how there is a

huge amount of classism, racism, and power at play. Months, if not years would be required to get a foothold in the local social scene to understand what is happening amongst the people here. We witnessed first-hand, from people working in the tourism industry who are supposed to be on their best behaviour in front of rich, white, tourists, despicable behaviour towards employees or 'subordinates'. The owner of one expensive lodge in St. Lucia told us that he hired twice as many staff members as he needed and paid them all half the wages they should earn. He justified this as a means of bringing more people into the labour market. Such an argument could be potentially argued in cold logic on paper. The swaggering nature of his bravado, the way he instructed his employees and mocked them, the leering nature of his general behaviour and comments up-close, totally eroded any semblance of benevolence in his argument. However, again, this is merely the interpretation of a bunch of western students about the actions of a business owner in a deeply divided country, with a recent history of bloodshed and prejudice.

There was also an unshakeable anxiety of trying to squeeze as much ethnography as possible into a tight timeframe. Given the resources and cost involved in undertaking the fieldtrip, there was a sense of urgency and a responsibility to 'get things done' very quickly. Each positive interaction was heralded as a major success, every wasted opportunity seen as a failure, at least initially. With hindsight, every interaction was ultimately informative in one way or another.

Another issue we had to contend with was that we often struck up interviews with tourism businesses, tour operators or lodge owners during their working hours and they would have to stop the interview to attend to some work. Once they returned, rapport had to be re-established and a lot of time was lost on these sorts of moments. It was also undeniably jarring to deal with white business owners who treated their black staff members so badly. Not only did we witness their behaviour in public, but we also heard accounts from the staff members themselves about how poorly they were treated and how it made them feel.

4.1. Fieldwork relationship dynamics

One of the effects of spending a large part of our time in and around IWP was that we were in an almost exclusively tourist area and most of the people who worked in the area served the tourism industry in one way or another. The local Africans we met were therefore embedded in this local social system and brought many challenges and effects. We could still learn a lot and discuss different topics, but IWP was always in the background of conversations, one way or another. This limited the types of conversations available with local African residents.

I spent close to a week in Durban, a city south of IWP, to meet locals and get a different perspective on how South Africa operates in today's world. A few incidents illustrated the stark contrast between the dream ideal of what South Africa represents today and the reality of what was happening on the ground there.

An immediate first impression in Durban was the physical space and how securitised it all was. I was staying in the south of the city amongst all of the gated communities that exist there, so row after row after row of houses had large walls around their perimeter. These walls had pictures of fierce looking dogs, emboldened with the words "Beware of the dog", barbed wires were strewn across the top of the walls and security cameras were ubiquitous.

In addition, advertisements for private security and quasi-vigilante groups were splayed all over the walls, even at bus stops. One particular bus stop was entirely covered by a picture of a man in riot gear armed with a powerful looking weapon and had a well-protected Jeep. The advertisement stated that they were looking out for the citizens of that community. I spoke with the people who ran the bed and breakfast I was staying in, local business owners, taxi drivers, people working in restaurants, and people I met along the street and I asked them about this heightened security and whether or not it was really necessary to have this level of fear. Did the threat of violence hang so heavily in the air to require these walls? All of them, in one way or another, said that they were required and the few who were themselves sceptical made the point that once one person in the community did, the rest were sort of obligated to follow suit, as you wouldn't want to be the only one left out unprotected. They also pointed out that once you securitise a space, you need to continue to upgrade the security as the walls and barbed wire paradoxically present the image of something that needs protecting – that there is something

valuable inside.

When I arrived at my bed and breakfast in Durban, I met young black guy behind the counter, and he checked me in. As I was checking in, I noticed that he was reading a book. It looked like a textbook of some sort, so I inquired what it was about. It turned out that it was a biology book that he was studying biology at the PhD level and this was his part-time student job on the side. He was interested in my studies and I asked him about what he thought of the area and the security, whether it was dangerous or not. He said that it was somewhat dangerous and that I should be careful at night and he stressed that I should never go out on my own at night. I left for the day and thanked him for checking me in. I didn't see him until later that evening when I returned from the city. He was in the sitting room which had a sort of semi lounge/bar setup and he asked if I wanted a drink, and I accepted. He went to the fridge to get me a beer. I asked him what he recommended as they were all South African brands. He began listing off the names and offered me his preference.

At this point I hadn't met anyone else who was a guest in the bed and breakfast. I had seen evidence of another person in the room I was staying; they had some clothes strewn across their bed but they weren't around at that time. As I was receiving my recommendation for a beer, this mystery guest revealed himself. "Ayy Bru, Ay, ayyy, you don't call it that Bru", a voice called out from the corner of the lounge.

I hadn't noticed him sitting in an armchair in the corner. He got up and began making his way across the room towards us. The B&B worker shot me a pained smile with a half eye-roll. "What are you calling it that for, Bru, your people don't call it that."

The B&B worker just kept a smile on his face and sort of kind of shrugged as the other man continued. "Now I know your people don't call it Castle, Bru." At this point, I looked between the two men and asked what he meant, what was he talking about. The B&B guest interjected before anything else could be said: "He is Zulu, Bru. His people have their own names for these beers, they don't call them the same names".

The B&B worker played off the incident and gave me a beer. The other man said he would join me for one and went upstairs to get his money. When he left, I turned to the man who worked

in the B&B and asked him what had just happened. I had sensed some tension between the two men, that the white man staying in the B&B was being hostile and aggressive towards the other man. He was in an awkward position with me as I was a guest at the B&B and I could see he didn't want to speak badly about another guest to me. He said that it was normal, he was used to it. He also said, ah this guy, he is just Afrikaaner my friend, no worries. He left to go to another room and the other man came back into the lounge area to have a beer with me. He introduced himself at last, as Leandru.

We sat and we had a beer and it turned out he was from Johannesburg and he was now in Durban to work with his uncle as a mechanic in his car repair shop around the corner. I was curious about his take on what had happened about the beer, but I didn't want to immediately bring it up. I said I was going to have dinner around the corner, and he invited himself along. I didn't mind this as it felt like an organic way to learn about different aspects of Durban from also observing his interactions with people we met. On the way there he expressed some disturbing opinions about the Zulu and Xhosa people and denigrated their ways and traditions. He was very adamant that they were 'backward' in their ways. At the door of the restaurant we were greeted by a black waiter and he offered us a table on the terrace outside. Leandru immediately asked how much a beer cost. The waiter was a little taken aback and told us the amount. It was the standard price I had seen around town but Leandru began complaining and saying it was a disgrace. I said the price seemed normal and the waiter also commented the same. Leandru persisted and then there was an awkward pause when he stopped complaining and realised he had to either leave or stop talking. He chose to stop.

As we were being seated, I decided to test a theory I had formulated from my visit to the city that day. In every café or shop I was in, I noticed that the public WIFI was impossible to connect to. When I asked for a code or help, I was told that the 'internet is broken', which I had found to be a unique and funny way of expressing it. After it happened more than twice, I wondered if it was a common tactic. As I was not all that bothered about connecting to the internet, I made a small game of asking for it to see the response. Sure enough, as we were being seated, I asked and received the classic "Oh so sorry Bru, the internet is broken." I had already internally chuckled and move past the remark when Leandru started up.

We had barely sat down and he was arguing again with the waiter, telling him it was a disgrace.

There was a vitriol to his diatribe that made me defuse the situation. Leandru's phone was sitting on the table and it was an old 'dumb' phone with no internet connection. It was a clunky, chunky, brick of a phone. I said, "what do you care anyway, you have a weapon for a phone." The waiter cracked up and gave me a high 5.

Despite having arrived with Leandru, it felt necessary to try to distance myself from Leandru and his behaviour towards the waiter and I hoped this had gone some way to helping him see that I did not share his obviously shallowly hidden prejudices. This was an interesting moment in the field because it forced me to confront some behaviour of someone I was with. It got to a point where there was no logical reason pretending to not care what he was saying or doing and instead make it clear I had a different point of view. This approach worked quite well, especially with Leandru because he seemed to have an inability to sit still with a thought and would blunder forward with the next unfiltered comment or idea. When we finished our meals and paid, I noticed that he did not leave a tip. As we left, I made an excuse to go to the bathroom and found the waiter inside. I pulled him aside and asked if this behaviour was normal. I apologized that I had been there and said I didn't want him to feel uncomfortable. He shrugged regarding Leandru's behaviour and just said "It happens like this every day Bru. Every single day."

This common surface-level friction popped up everywhere while I was in Durban. Taxi drivers had a very dark sense of humour about expressing their lived experiences. Whenever I asked them if they were from Durban, they would invariably all respond with a laugh and say: "yeah I'm from Durban - born, bred, and battered." After the second or third time of hearing this, I would query them about why they said it that way. They would chuckle and say to me "Bru, that's just the way it is here." I asked them why it was tough on them and every time it would eventually come around to them being black as the reason. It was implicit in the joke they made but I wanted to make sure that was their intent.

Every taxi driver I had in Durban was black and I took a lot of taxis because, compared to Europe, they are ridiculously cheap. Also, I was staying outside of the city and the public transport outside the city centre itself was quite poor. There was one great service I used frequently in the city. This was the "public bus": basically, a massive van that operated with a flat fare and took you to your exact destination. You had to catch the attention of a passenger in the van and flag them down. They would then shout at the driver to stop. The side door would

slide open allowing me to clamber in. Inside was always full and you may have to wait a while to be taken the direction you needed. It was very cheap and a great way to get talking to locals as it was a little cosier than a regular public transport bus.

This initial culture shock of the open hostility between white and black people in public spaces took a little getting used to. As a result of hanging around with Leandru for a few hours each day I was privy to experiencing it up close on many occasions. I also met other white South Africans and observed their interactions when they were being friendly and, more often than not, they confronted the elephant in the room. They would joke in a friendly way with each other about their races, not unlike people from different parts of Austria making fun of each other's accents, or Irish people 'slagging' each other as a friendly way to break the ice.

I discovered in these first few days that race was almost always on the table, either openly or covertly. When my fellow researchers arrived later in the week, the evening before we left for IWP, I noticed that look of surprise and shock that I was felt on my first day. That experience in Durban helped to shape a different understanding for me of how two people were communicating. We all had dinner together after they arrived, and they witnessed a white man and a black man having a 'heated' conversation. They interpreted it as the white man being racist, but I had met the white man at the weekend and attended a party with him. They were actually just joking around, but it was difficult to distinguish the jokes from an argument or petty resentment, like Leandru had displayed. These experiences played an important role in developing an understanding of what the racial dynamics were of two people communicating in South Africa and I would not have got that if I had not spent those days in uncomfortable situations asking those questions.

If undertaking fieldwork outside of the place you live, it is important to research the area thoroughly and try to contextualise it as much as possible. I would add another point to that, especially for university fieldwork projects (where financially viable): get to the site early, alone. This allows the researcher time to establish their own connections and get an insight into the language and relationship dynamics at play.

4.2. Social inequality in Durban

In Durban I met a Scottish girl by the name of Laura who told me that she was working for a charity in the city as a volunteer for the summer. The next day I said I'd go along with her to one of the centres the charity helped with. The charity she was working with was called The Jabulani Project (TJP), which means celebration in South Africa. We took a drive to a homeless shelter on the sloping hills outside of Durban that was run by two priests. It was a sanctuary for homeless people. Despite being quite a large complex, it was quite cramped inside because they were housing easily 100 people in there. As I was not familiar with the centre or the work of the charity, I mainly listened and observed. We went to a back room and the priests spoke at length about the desperate need for more housing for people and the bare bones they were running the centre on. They provided food and shelter to people there.

I also volunteered to accompany her on one of her morning walks in the city with a local activist. This ended up happening after the fieldwork had taken place, but before I returned to Europe. On the morning that I met her, we met at 7 am in the city centre, close to an area very well-known for the homeless on the street.

Early the next morning I went with Laura to meet a local rapper and youth worker named Silhe who worked with young homeless boys in the area to get them to do something productive on a Saturday morning. I wasn't exactly sure what we would be doing but I took the chance to go along. Silhe was a tall, round shouldered, bulky man with dreadlocks flowing from under his beanie hat and a big toothy grin. He was carrying a big sports bag over one of his shoulders, which contained footballs and basketballs. He told me that we would be going down to the local basketball court to play with the boys for an hour and a half before going to the local YMCA where there was an unused room that we could use so that the boys could make some music for an hour or two. This would give them a couple of hours to do something impactful in their lives.

First, however, he said we had to round up the boys. We walked the streets and he obviously knew where the boys were and sometimes, we would see boys walking together in the distance, or on the street and Silhe would call out to them. They recognized him and would respond. He told them that practice would be on the courts and our that was it. Often, they shouted back OK, but some didn't respond at all. At one point, as we were walking along, he stopped at an empty

car parked on the street and knocked on the passenger door, which confused me. However, after a moment, the back door slowly opened up and through a tiny crack I saw the bleary eyes of a dishevelled young boy's face looking out at us. Silhe told him when practice was, and we continued on. Silhe explained that some people left their doors unlocked so that young boys could crawl in and have somewhere safe to sleep during the night.

When we finally got down to the courts there were around 20 boys who had come to partake in the practice. Some of them weren't wearing shoes and some of them looked like they hadn't had a shower in a week. Most had a very hungry look in their eyes. As the boys were playing, I stood at the side of the court and watched. There was a young boy who was also standing there and as the practice and games continued, he never made a move to play. I asked him why he didn't want to play or if he was not interested. As I spoke to him, he turned his whole body to look at me. Previously, he had been sidelong to me so I could only see half of his face. When he turned to talk to me, I saw dried blood on the side of his face. And then I noticed that on some of his t-shirts, shorts, and shoes there were bloodstains. He said that he usually played but today he couldn't because last night he had been 'poked'. I didn't know what this meant so I asked him, and he explained to me another classic morbid South African euphemism used for some violent act. Being poked is a street term used when somebody comes along with a broken glass bottle and stabs it into a sleeping homeless person. Horrified by this information and terrified he might be infected, I urged him to come with me to a doctor. He nodded his head furiously to this suggestion and said he wouldn't go to the hospital because he was scared to go. I didn't know what he meant so I asked him what he meant but he wouldn't say. Laura told me to leave it be and not interfere.

After the basketball and football activities, Laura and I accompanied Silhe to a supermarket where we bought bread, cheese, ham, and soft drinks. We then went to the YMCA and there was a room waiting for us to use. We squeezed in with the boys who were waiting there for us. Silhe took out a laptop and some recording equipment from his bag and started to make some beats and raps with the boys. The boys lit up during this and were full of energy and creativity. As this went on, I made white bread sandwiches with ham and cheese for the boys. For some, this would be their only meal of the day, maybe for a few days. They hungrily took their two allotted sandwiches and gorged on them when they got a chance. We stayed there for two hours

and when the boys they took the saved songs on their cheap phones (the ones who had phones, that is).

Later that afternoon, I met the founder of TJP – a Scottish man named Neal who had come to Durban many years before as a teacher and had found the place enchanting and tragic so he decided to try and develop partnership schemes to help out in the young homeless in particular. We walked around the city for a few hours together as he checked up on local spots that he knew to see how things were going. It had been a few months since he had been there personally, so he wanted to make sure that there was no interference or change to the operations in place. He's quite well known because he frequently visits and there's a lot of work being done by them in the inner city.

We walked from place to place meeting various people on the street, from shop owners who recognized him and said hello to different charity workers he knew. At one point we went to a five-storey building right in the inner city that looked quite decrepit and run-down. Some of the windows were cracked or smashed in. It looked like it had been abandoned for some time. When we reached the front door, a young man appeared at the other side of the glass panel door and Neal spoke with him briefly. It turned out that this building had been used by TJP under an agreement with the owner to allow young boys sleep there. However, apparently the actual deed owner of the building had decided to end this agreement and he had kicked out all of the young boys and kept only young girls now. There appeared to be a dispute of the ownership and the atmosphere was tense. Under the previous agreement, it wasn't necessarily regulated but it was still a roof over their head, and it was provided some degree of shelter. Nonetheless, inside, rules of the street still played out. It was dangerous for young boys there. Some had taken their chances living rough outside anyway.

The next person we met on our walk was a politician running for office of the local area. We met him in the back of a police van, and he said he needed 24/7 protection in the lead up to the election. He spoke about wanting to help the young boys and would do all he could when/if he got elected. Neal expressed his doubt about these promises to be privately afterwards.

During our walk I asked Neal about the young boy I had met who had been 'poked' and why he was so reluctant to go to the hospital, what he was so afraid of. He explained that, through

experience, the boys have developed a fear of authorities – be it the police or with ambulances, or with anybody who they see as an authority figure. The reason is that they can be locked up and that they held unless they pay money to be released. Slightly incredulous I asked him if this would really apply to a young boy who was clearly suffering. He told me that he regularly has to go to police stations to pay fines on behalf of the boys to get them released when their only ‘crime’ was to be the victim of some violence perpetrated against them. Neal explained that the boys saw no difference between the corrupt police officers who beat them and other, potentially upstanding police officers and the risk of being handed over to the police at the hospital was too high to risk it.

Although not directly related to IWP, these experiences in Durban illuminated a lot about contemporary South African society that I would otherwise never have seen in IWP or its surroundings. There is poverty there too, for sure. However, the dwellings and settlements we visited there were often too small to produce the levels of inequality witness in Durban. In addition, I spoke with some long-term social activists in the field there – both Neal and Silhe have been working closely on the streets for decades and I picked their brains about what they thought about South Africa and the development of the state. It was beneficial to have some outside contact with experts outside of IWP too, so it was not just a bubble and microcosm of the country that was viewed.



Image 17: The boys practice their football skills while Laura watches on



Image 18: Inside the "music lab" at the YMCA

5. Literature Review

Given that IWP is tucked away on the eastern coast of South Africa, it has understandably occupied only a smattering of international social science research. Coupled with the fact that it is relatively young, it hasn't yet had time to be studied by a wide range of international researchers. Despite that, there is still a steadily growing body of work on the area, especially. There is an abundance of critical data from the work of Melissa Hansen (2016, 2017), Knut Nustad (2015), Cheryl Walker (2008) Elizabeth Aardenburg (2017), and Bram Büscher (2013, 2018). These researchers have established themselves as a core group in the study of the area and have been in discussion together, critiquing and honing each other's work. Although they share many of the same conclusions about the area, they have not all just reinforced their opinions on the park in an empty vacuum chamber. It is not an insider's club where they all just share the same opinion. In fact, this is evidenced by Aardenburg's response to critique of her work by her supervisor, Thomas Cousins, who had been an early champion of her ideas and a fervent supporter of this approach:

“I submitted a research proposal, which to my surprise was criticised by Dr Cousins after iSimangaliso staff had requested his expert opinion on it. I was disappointed and confused, but counted my losses and set out for the research” (Aardenburg 2017, 33)

Aardenburg spent 3 months conducting fieldwork at IWP, focusing on two opposing ongoing land claims between the Mbuyazi (Bhangazi) tribe, and the nearby Mpukonyoni Tribal Authority. Their conflicting stories and realities illustrate the stark difference alive in South Africa; the Bhangazi people had been forcibly removed during apartheid era governments, severely rupturing their ability to live a life of self-sufficiency any longer. The Mpukonyonji people, meanwhile, attempted to take advantage of the benefits the land promised through natural resources along with foreign investment through companies and tourism. The analysis interweaves international failures with the local affairs to examine the government's handling of the case. Aardenburg uses 'rewilding' and 'indigeneity' as key theoretical lenses to focus the study.

5.1.Land Reform

Given the centrality of land ownership and reform to IWP and the policies there, the most important scholars and economic overviews have been provided by Lyne and Darroch (2003), Lyne (2014) the Centre for Development and Enterprise (Beinart and Delius, 2019), Mbatha and Muchara (2015), and Mbatha (2017). Overwhelmingly, their analyses have pointed to failed policies on the part of the South African governments. The *Natives Land Act of 1913* is agreed upon as the foundation of policies for Apartheid that “ensured that 87% of land was owned by white people with the only 13% in the hands of black people” (Mbatha 2017, 3).

There have been three primary tools used to achieve the land policies over the past two and a half decades. These have been:

1. Land restitution under the Restitution of Land Rights Act (22) 1994 – Initially a cut-off date of 1998 was set for claimants to receive land that they had lost after the 1913 Act (Neves 2006, 200). This was later extended due to a lack of claims and inconsistency with the process (Mbatha and Muchura 2015, 6)
2. Land redistribution was conceived to radically upset the racial differences in land ownership and provide the poorest with an opportunity to own and use the land. The government offered grants so that the land could be used and zoned for specific purposes
3. Land tenure reform was sought through legislation that would offer farm workers or poor tenants living on the land of the wealthy of the country. However, this has been notoriously tricky and unsuccessful because the owners of the land have a stake in not losing it and the complicated systems in charge of governing the communal lands (Lyne and Darroch, 2003; Mbatha et al. 2010; Mbatha and Muchura 2015).

The land restitution policies have failed to materialise for a whole host of reasons of reasons and land prices could not be agreed upon, as we all land which had been set aside for commercial use having little to no productivity output (Mbatha 2017). Backlogs and delays have characterised the process with only 12,623 household having benefitted from around 268, 306 hectares by 2000, which accounted 1% of the land available for redistribution (Mbatha 2017, 3). A spike in applications in the intervening years has led to serious delays and led the CDE to

describe the progress as “two decades of unrealistic targets, unmet deadlines, administrative failures, and too many unsuccessful projects” (Beinart and Delius, 2019, 1). William Beinart and Peter Delius, writing a report for the CDE about the next steps for land reform in the country claim that, as of march 2018, around 19,000 land claims stills are still being processed in South Africa and will take 43 years to be concluded, at the cost of R30 billion (Beinart and Delius, 2019, 3).

Governance structures and livelihoods of local people are two intersecting and fundamental aspects to understanding IWP. There is a dearth of research on the ways that multiple, overlapping governance structures collaborate or compete against one another in a rural setting. This is especially true of South Africa (Mbatha 2011; 2019; Scoones 2009; Sowman et. al 2014, Sowman 2015; Wynberg and Hauck 2014).

5.2. Neoliberal Conservation

There is a wide array of authors and books that discuss the effects and power of neoliberal conservation and this paper will draw upon a few key insights provided by several contemporary authors. The first major point is that the belief in neoliberal conservation as the saviour of environmental issues is couched in a worldview that believes wholly in the free market and sees humans as motivated primarily, and almost exclusively, by financial rewards and incentives. Therefore, markets are the ultimate and ideal way to evaluate and govern human actions (Fletcher 2010). This belief has seeped into the largest environmental conservation organisations who pin their hope on the idea that this will create new conservation spaces and frontiers (Chapin 2004, Igoe and Brockington 2007). This form of (neoliberal) conservation then pragmatically operates as a system that routinely, and violently, dispossesses people of their lands and situates humans as separate from their environment, creating a barrier that can only be viewed or entered into under commodified terms, so that they can take part in the global economy (Nustad 2015). In addition to destroying traditional livelihoods and homes, this dispossession is often destructive and threatening to the environment, not a conservational benefit.

Critically, while there have been attempts to analyse the effects of neoliberal policies in

environmental conservation settings, they have been largely limited by a lack of understanding or situating the programs within a global world-system perspective. However, the global economic crisis that began around 2007 elucidated the inherent contradictions of capitalist accumulation and sent the system scrambling for new modes of accumulation. It activated, or emphasised, new critical voices in the charge against environmental degradation and violent capital investments. Büscher and Fletcher (2014), analysed these new methods of change and coined one interesting avenue ‘Accumulation by Conservation’ (AbC) – an attempt to create a new “sustainable” model of accumulation for the future. Buzzwords like environmental services, the Green Economy, and The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity have characterised the ways that public, private and non-governmental sectors are trying to foster a newer version of environmentalism with long-term financial aims. While many of these arguments are emotionally evocative and intellectually seductive, most are a continuation, and slight tweaking, of policies developed to exist within the capitalist model, not challenge it. Büscher and Fletcher argue that AbC is a malignant force as it makes the same argument as previous incarnations of ‘new’ and ‘radical’ claims – that capitalism can solve these issues with the same mechanisms that created them in the first place.

5.3. Tourism and Ecotourism

A number of illuminating university postdoctoral papers have emerged with iSimangaliso as their focus, particularly with regard to tourism and ecotourism. The iSimangaliso Craft Program, which is lauded as a great provider of local jobs to the rural area was explored by Nicola Ayana Robertson in 2014. Nerosha Govender, a board member and head of research in IWP, assessed the shifts in tourism in 2013. As a staff member of the park, Govender has a unique perspective on both the global trends and what is happening at the park. Govender notes that “tourism is constantly evolving as part of global capitalism and will continue to shape tourism” in IWP (Govender 2013, iii). Xaba examined the extent of public participation in the public policy decision-making, using the name change to IWP as a case study. Interestingly, in a wide-ranging examination of the communities around the park, Xaba concludes that “most actors were not informed nor consulted about the proposed name change hence they did not participate in the process” (Xaba 2009, 84). This lack of consultation is a key trend amongst researchers who have examined iSimangaliso. One of the key questions that we asked residents that we encountered

in and around the park was what they thought about the impact IWP had on their life. We often had to reformulate and explain what we meant as they were unaware of the parks promises or the proposed benefits. This is also expressed as a concern by Knut (2015) and Hansen (2013) from the times that they conducted fieldwork in the area, which strikes right at the heart of land reform and land tenure.

Both McShane et al. (2010) and Dahlberg and Burlando (2009) discuss ‘trade-offs’ and the importance of transparent discussions regarding their implementation. Either conservation-for-all or conservation with economic development (for some) will be prioritised, and an honest discussion about this allows us to have a clearer picture of what is happening in IWP. These ‘trade-offs’ follow a similar line of argument to others like the ‘Half-earth’ argument. Proponents of this idea agree that “human activity is the driving force” behind the current wave of mass extinctions and violent climate change (Wilson 2016, 55). The crux of the motivation behind this driver of human activity is a demand and desire for goods and ‘things’, as opposed to needs. The natural world is unable to keep up with replenishing itself as “we continue to whimsically destroy Earth’s living environment” (Wilson 2016, 51). The basic tenet of the half-earth plan is to bring science, technology, and a global grassroots movement together to keep 50% of the earth conserved and protected.

Another similar project named *Nature Needs Half* declares their aim to be the prevention of the sixth mass extinction by conserving and protecting 50% of the 846 ecoregions around the world that they have identified. In addition to the conservation work, they argue that it requires “finding leaders and organizations around the world willing to align existing efforts around protecting and interconnecting nature in their region” (natureneedshalf.org). It is here where efforts really become entangled in international governance structures are geopolitics. It would require international agreements and institutional oversight at a scale never before seen and comparable only to UNESCO and other global organizations that currently try to combat universal problems in different social and cultural settings.

A primary criticism of this capital-driven logic is that it has an inherent contradiction – the very mechanisms that have produced these environmental problems can solve them (Arsal and Büscher 2012), despite the fact that the onus is on the economic system to perpetually grow on a finite amount of resources (O’Connor 1998). Many well-meaning, and some less well-

meaning, strategies have emerged as solutions; A popular one is that human behaviours that emit large amounts of carbon emissions can be offset with carbon taxes, or utilize some form of carbon market. Closely linked to this school of thought is the rise of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) initiative, which aims to reverse deforestation by connecting forest conservation with carbon markets (Angelsen et al. 2009); Ecotourism markets, which often market themselves as an attractive and practical solution to socio-economic problems in impoverished areas (Fletcher and Neves 2012). These forms of ‘markets’ are strategies borne out of both a need to redress the problems in society but also an entrepreneurial spirit to create some sort of commodifiable industry that can operate in the same way that the industries that created the problem operate. This is what Büscher and Fletcher refer to as the “increasing convergence of neoliberal capitalism and environmental conservation” (2014, 2). They opened a new space of analysis and discussion about the rationale and logic behind utilizing and “capitalizing” on conservation as a market.

The origins of protected areas have emptied many ink bottles and consumed the thoughts of many researchers. The three main periods generally agreed upon as the starting point are; the land enclosures in Great Britain throughout the 1700s and 1800s (Igoe 2004,); the German conservation of forests and the American model, which is centred on the journey out west and the establishment of the Yellowstone National Park (Nash 2001). Founded in 1872, Yellowstone was presented and sold as an untouched, pristine place of awe. Tourists, artists and scientists flocked there and with them came investment. The indigenous people who were kicked off their land to make way for this wonder are left out of the magnificent story, however (Adams and McShane 1996: xvi). African conservation emerged in part because of those ‘test’ cases which were then transplanted in their own form by colonial expeditions that ran through the continent (Beinart and Coates 1995, Brockington et. al 2008, Neumann 1998).

When colonial powers began intensively hunting and killing animals in South Africa, they began a chain reaction that would lead to the restriction of hunting for the colonial elites only. Colonial game laws were implemented to prevent and prohibit local communities from killing traditional sources of food, effectively attacking their way of life and wildlife heritage (Adams and McShane 1996). The hunting was supplemented by the rise of an animal market; goods from killed animals started to be traded around the world (MacKenzie 1988). The elites manufactured

and redefined the nature of human and animal relations to suit their needs and allow them to continue hunting to their hearts content, while prohibiting local communities from hunting at all. They changed human-animal relationships from one of “utility” (for practical reasons – meat, ivory) to one of “sport” (Nustad 2015, 22). Not only were local prohibited from hunting as it became the activity solely for Whites to engage in but these communities also faced strict and harsh punishments for protecting their lands or crops should they kill an encroaching animals which was designated a protected species. Colonial powers formalised these rules even further and went as far as to make it legal to have hunters “shot on sight” should they encroach on protected land or kill a protected animal species (Adams and McShane 1996, 234).

Additionally, the establishment and maintenance of commodified wilderness has been listed as an important factor in the process of ‘green grabbing’. Wild areas are seen as an increasingly rare and much desired commodity (Brockington et. al 2008). As a result, ecotourism has taken off and expanded which has had previously unpredicted effects and it has taken time for research and the on-the-ground situations to become clearer. The global drivers include a growing market for tourism and, more specifically, wilderness tourism. In South Africa, as in other parts of the world, these processes are reshaping spaces, creating new forms of enclosure, privatising nature and turning it into a commodity (Zoomers 2010).

More broadly, the work of authors Noam Chomsky, Eric Wolff, Susan George, Sidney Mintz, John Pilger, Phillipe Bourgois and many others also significantly influenced the approach of this work. Some because of the way that they approach writing about history from a counter-view to the historical record of the powerful that hides the poor and ordinary people, others because of their fine ethnographic writing skills that inserted them into the story as a way to also bring the reader in, and others because their scientific reasoning and fact-checking is solid even though they acknowledge their subjective point of view. Bourgois’ work with the poor in New York (2003) particularly inspired the ethnographic descriptions of the homeless children in Durban.

6. Conservation – An Overview

How should co-management arrangements be established for lands and waters where one set of relationships to land – the aboriginal – have been built around the normative values of equity, cooperation and reciprocity that is expressed in terms of local authority and common property access arrangements while the other set of relationships to land – those regulated by the state – have been built around the normative values of competition, exclusive rights to property/resources, and centralized management authority?

(Chapeskie 1995: 44, quoted in Rodon 2003: 131)

6.1. Early years of conservation

The ‘New Imperialism’ period (1870-1914) was a hectic period in European and African history and is widely acknowledged as the time period when international conservation began to see its roots form and spread out across the world. European colonial powers, in a brief sojourn from chopping each other up, took time from their busy schedules to slice and dice Africa up as they saw fit instead. The Scramble for Africa led to the Berlin Conference in 1884, where they decided how to split and shape the countries of the continent for European domination. The land was quickly separated, and boundaries were established between European, and white lands, and communal African lands. The decimation of game led to an outcry amongst the wealthy European hunters, who had created the situation themselves (Carruthers 2013, 16)

Yellowstone in the USA became the yard stick around the globe as a response to the decimation of animals and was imported to Africa. It became the accepted face of nature conservation. In the early years of colonial dominance in the area, the “plundering of nature” was commonplace (Adams 2003, 29).

1900 was milestone year because a group of European countries constructed some of the very first conservation policies at the London Convention. The convention was signed in May 1900 and aimed to prevent the “uncontrolled massacre of wild animals and ensuring the conservation of diverse wild animal species” (IUCN 2004, 3). While the Convention was never ratified and so was never enacted, it had important lingering effects. Article II (5) of the provision tabled the

idea of creating “reserves”, formally attempting to establish boundaries between (certain) humans and nature which would begin the process of displacing indigenous people from their lands and dispossessing them of traditional hunting grounds (IUCN 2004, 3). The groundwork for later reserves and this line of thinking had been laid down by the work at this Convention. The enlightened few were now emboldened and soon to be empowered to protect nature from those they saw as weak and incapable of doing so. This signalled a legitimisation of the power and authority of the ruling elite, whilst also simultaneously requiring the need for large-scale, international institutional arrangements which consequently overruled and made any structural arrangements from below irrelevant and essentially powerless. As a result of these mechanisms then operating from the top-down, “these global networks of influence bind states to those institutions, designating local conservation actors as citizens of a distant metropole” (Kelleher 2019, 207).

Around the turn of the 20th Century, there was an increase in scientific research on the effect of human processes on the environment (Grove 1989). The classification and analysis of species grew quickly from this point onwards. Around the time of the deliberations of the 1900 Convention, environmental disasters - prolonged and catastrophic droughts, and soil erosion led to an increased research determining the links between human behaviour and processes and environmental change (Grove 1989). A significant amount of research aimed at understanding nature systematically was devoted to these changes of the environment and included the study and collection of plants species and nearly all manner of animals (Bruton and Cooper 1980, 432). Darwin and Humboldt gained popularity, as did the credibility of scientific method. There was an increased interest in the origins of life and speciesism. This led to the bringing of Western ideologies and schools of thought to colonial outposts and a romanticising and re-conceptualising of the African landscape as an object of aestheticism. In this century there was also the establishment of associations like The Royal Geographical Society in 1826 and The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in 1891 which formalised a broad and extensive exploration for foreign items (Bruton 2013, 336).

These institutions and formalised organisations created disciplines like biology and ecology that became accepted and legitimised. They also had many hobbyists getting involved, all of which coalesced into a new vocabulary, bringing forth ideas and concepts like conservation and the

protection of ecologies. With a strong foothold in the accepted society, the next step was the protection of colonial environments as they were an extension of the colony and so the pursuit of these aims in the outback of Africa became legitimised as a rational attempt to protect the biodiversity there.

In 1933, after a brief pause to civilise each other's neighbours, the European powers of the day turned their attention once more to the preservation of nature, or the control of the African continent. The 1933 London Convention became a seminal meeting when a second attempt at an international conservation treaty was attempted and this time it was enacted, following on from an international congress that had been held in Paris two years earlier centred around international conservation. It entered into law on January 14, 1936 and it "was the first binding legal instrument to provide for the creation of protected areas in Africa such as national parks and nature reserves" (IUCN 2004, 3). Interestingly, the IUCN describes the aim of this Convention – preserving the 'right' type of animals and wild game for trophy hunters - as "utilitarian" and completely erases or omits the reasons why these hunters felt the need to protect their wild game. A major aspect of this text was the inclusion of several articles that explicitly identified the types of animals that could be killed, and the manner in which they were legally allowed to do so. A further article placed fees on the killing of a trophy animal and created strict guidelines around license fees. This allowed the confiscation of trophy animals from those that did not possess the correct certificate or firearms. In conjunction to this, another article was drafted, which forbade the use of poisoned weapons, nets or enclosures, essentially prohibiting indigenous people from hunting, as they were unable to hold certificates or firearms, and their traditional methods of hunting were now prohibited.

After another brief recess so that the Europeans could have a civilized disagreement in the 1940s, the gang convened once again in 1953 in Bukavu in order to review the commitments and real-world experiences they had discovered since the signing of the agreement. This never came to pass as decolonization struggles began to take off across the African continent and interrupted this particular process.

The emergence of independence movements across Africa led to the demand for a new nature conservation treaty in the 1961 Arusha Manifesto (Ogundere, 1972, 261). This sparked a movement that included major international actors and culminated in a request for a revision of

the London Convention. In July 1968, the Algiers Convention resulted in the expansion of conservation beyond the previous ‘utilitarian’ objectives. While the London convention is hailed as the first international legal text focused on nature conservation, the Algiers Convention built upon this and “innovated approaches for the conservation of nature”, and has been lauded, in some quarters, as “a precursor to modern international wildlife law” as it demanded common responsibility and action amongst African states (IUCN 2004, 4). However, the adjustments made at subsequent conventions to London were a minor moving of the chairs around. The international networks of power and tying of local interests to larger, global demands remained.

While it was argued that land was being set aside for conservation and the protection of the ecosystem, there were far less benevolent reasons afoot. It was also completely impractical in its creation, as it was an idea transported from areas laden with industrial production and dense urban populations. It has been described as such:

“Colonial natural resource management policies were, and post-colonial policies to a greater or lesser extent continue to be, reflections of the European ideologies of the colonial masters who saw Africa as the bounteous and pristine cradle of humanity” (Murombezi 1998, 2)

The land delineation plan tabled at the 1933 London Convention was inspired by both the Yellowstone park in the USA and models used by the royal family elites in the UK. Issues existed within this land ownership system in the UK and the favouring of a tiny portion of the population for access to crown land was problematic to begin with. However, transporting this idea, on a much grander scale to a pre-industrial country, where massive swathes of land have no human settlement and what human populations, they do serve are subsistence farmers operating with no notion of property law, was fraught with difficulties and complications. The London Convention and other international meetings were a global formalisation of what had been occurring in South Africa due to hunting restrictions. In fact, these European policies totally erased the functioning systems in place at the time in Africa and eradicated and systematically deconstructed the living situations there.

Global efforts to formally address these issues intensified in 1972 with the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment or Stockholm Convention, which was followed by the creation of several international conventions on flora and fauna, most notably the Convention

on Biological Diversity (Convention on Biological Diversity, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992). The many layers and forms of governance that sit atop and intersect one another in international and national conservation is aptly summed up by Kelleher as a “Russian doll of sorts, a tale within a tale, within a tale” (2019, 203).

Towards the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s the major conservation agencies began to shift their focus to designing projects and programs in conjunction with local communities. This move was backed by their donors also. As often happens, a popular idea suddenly became the yardstick which every other organisation judged itself against and also started to support this method. The programs that appeared in the following years fell under a number of different guises and names; “community-based conservation”, “sustainable development and use”, “grassroots conservation”, “devolution of resource rights to local communities”, and “integrated conservation and development programs” (ICDPs) (Chapin 2003, 20).

These early variations and changes to ICDPs soon found themselves dismissed as failures and critiqued as unworkable because they were built on the foundation and false assumption that local communities were inherent stewards of nature (Redford and Sanderson 2000). Market-based conservation programs emerged from this as an attempt to make the most out of local natural resources. The logic was that the benefits of conservation could be spread out through the conservation of the land and the principles of the free market would dictate the incentives for individuals to participate, and benefit, from this system (Adams and Hutton 2007).

Conservation as both a theoretical idea and as a practical, tangible entity out in the world encompasses such a wide and diverse range of definitions and includes so many stakeholders and participants that it has fragmented into myriad forms throughout the years. As new scientific evidence has emerged and different strategies have been attempted, many factions and schools of thought have emerged and split away from one another. As a result, conservation is difficult to pin down, in exact terms. Depending on the organisation, or group defining it, it can take on a whole range of differing ideas. There are some theoretical, intellectual reasons for these differences and there are many more polluted and financially motivated reasons.

Conservation exists out in the world, stripped of its dictionary meaning and imbued with the realities of millions of dollars in sponsorship from all kinds of political and corporate entities.

As Chapin put it, the natural alliance between conservation agencies “disappeared” and priorities began shifting from engaging with local communities to focusing on “large-scale conservation strategies and the importance of science rather than social realities” (2003, 18). Running parallel to these changes in focus, and perhaps driven by it and used as a justification to focus solely on scientific data, it was noted by many observers within conservation that more and more reports of “difficult indigenous peoples” began to pop up and they were slowly labelled as untrustworthy stewards of the environment and they could not be trusted to look after the natural world around them.

This is not to demean the importance of scientific knowledge, or underplay its importance, but it is essential to contextualise it and understand how it functions in the place that it is studying, and the social forces with an agenda either in the research, or in benefitting from industry in the area. Science is essential. Scientific evidence is essential for diagnosing and tracking environmental changes but must be handled with care when attempting to forge solutions. It is not strictly a scientific vs. non-scientific argument, despite the desire of many stakeholders to make it appear that way. Ecotourism and conservation are such inexact practices that they require a multitude of context-specific approaches and cannot possibly rely on a single strategy for all cases.

Back in 2003, the way that NGOs were dealing with local indigenous groups was starting to become a more widely discussed problem. One of the major talking points concerned establishing protected natural areas, especially when communities were evicted from their land to make way for it (Chapin, 2003, 18). Investigations into the work of NGO’s in 2003 found that they had two initial key observations about them: the first was that they had become very wealthy and powerful quickly, and secondly that they were promoting “global approaches to conservation "that have evoked a number of questions-and complaints-from local communities, national NGOs and human rights activists." (Campbell 2004).

Up until the mid-1980s, conservationists and indigenous people had very little contact or interaction with each other. The Wildlands and Human Needs program at WWF was one of the first to place local, rural communities as a central aspect of the projects. Prior to this, the staff there focused on purely scientific methods like biology and had little to no experience working with communities. Next came the *Two Agendas* plea in 1989, from the Coordinating Body of

Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA), which brought together practical solutions for on-the-ground action, community involvement and addressed environmental concerns.

By the turn of the millennium, it had become clear to industry insiders that there was a problem with funding and finances, and they were concerned about the direction of conservation efforts. In June 2003, members of some of the most prominent foundations involved in biodiversity conservation convened in South Dakota, at a meeting of the Consultative Group on Biodiversity. It emerged from frank discussions that the three largest non-profit conservation organizations – the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Conservation International (CI), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), were facing accusations of abusive and exclusionary behaviour towards local, indigenous people in the areas that they were bringing conservation projects into. The result of these discussions was the commencement of two studies into: 1. the financial practices of the three firms and 2. the treatment of indigenous communities by these conservationists (Chapin 2003). Two initial observations were provided to the researchers of these studies: one was that these groups had become very wealthy and powerful in a short period of time, and the second was that they were advocating and pursuing global approaches to conservation which “evoked a number of questions -and complaints - from local communities, national NGOs and human rights activists” (Chapin 2003, 17).

I experienced the same perspectives and opinions when working on a project for Engineers Without Borders in the Gambia. It was a project designed around bringing a sustainable water-gathering device to a village where an Austrian woman’s marital family was from. The main planning group never wanted to solicit the advice or ideas of the local villagers who would be directly affected by this new technology and many disparaging remarks were made regarding their ability to manage or understand the situation. Not only was this detrimental to our understanding of the social and economic reality we were facing on the ground, but it was profoundly illogical as, by avoiding consultation with local people, the project was reinforcing the same oppressive attitudes and power dynamics that it purported to be tearing down to help the village. This is the sort of cold logic that comprises the arguments made for ecotourism around the globe, created in a lot of cases in nice, well air-conditioned offices, filled with good intentions but far removed from the realities of ordinary life for millions of people around the

world.

While this example in The Gambia was simply the result of well-intentioned ideas being very badly misplaced, as well as bad management, many authors have illuminated the industries based around ‘disaster capitalism’ (Klein, 2007), the ‘slow violence’ that environmentalism wreaks on the poor (Nixon, 2011), and the ‘economic hitmen’ that orchestrate disastrous large-scale environmental projects in poor countries at the behest of wealthy corporations, which generate huge sums of money for the companies, but cripple and destroy the local people and the environment.

6.2. Conservation in South Africa

Towards the end of the 19th Century the western world was beginning to forge a dichotomous relationship with nature. Romanticism was becoming a much-lauded school of thought. Artists were encouraged, and even compelled in some places, to spend time in ‘untouched’ nature. The rapid industrialisation of cities had led to a counter movement against machines and human created structures. Partly to sate the appetite of romanticists in Europe, and partly to generate funding for their expeditions to Africa, myths of “wild Africa” were formed from the stories emanating back from merchants and travellers to Africa that were rich with evocative imagery of exotic and dangerous landscapes (Adams and McShane 1996, 8). The exploits of these hunters into the interior of Africa in pursuit of game, as it receded, made them famous. This separation of a human world and an untouched, wild natural world was the kernel of thought that would form “ontologies” about the world. These ontologies place humanity on one side and nature on the other. This, Nustad states, “is a mindset that is hard to shake” (2015, 18). People had been capable of viewing other people as subhuman for centuries. The empires of Europe had become masters of the practise and their social classes reflected that. The political and economic reasons for delineating separate spaces for different ‘classes’ of people in South Africa never had anything to do with the ‘official’, ‘logical’ reasons given at the time. Instead, the reasons were rooted in far more logical, material needs. By the 1890s, the pressures on game in the areas of the Cape, Natal, the Orange Free State and the South African Republic were so demanding that it stimulated the first necessity for conservation (MacKenzie 1988, 86).

The removal of people from their homes and land is not a problem of the distant, historical past.

It is not confined to a time of shifting perceptions about nature and the emergence of capital R, Romanticism. It continues to the present moment around the world, daily. In South Africa it continues remorselessly in the present. I witnessed it first-hand both on the streets of Durban and with communities claiming to be abandoned at IWP. Forced removals are documented as happening in IWP as recently as the 1970s and multiple land tenure lawsuits have taken place since. In the nearby Hluhluwe-Umfolozi park, people were removed in the 1990s. When we spoke with locals near IWP, their eyes often said more than their words. They skirted around the issue, but the message was clear – this is South Africa. Nothing is certain. This ceaseless intrusion into African affairs by external governments and organisations is described by Robert Nelson as having “often served Western interests and goals much more than the interests of ordinary Africans” and that “under the banner” of helping African states, Africans instead “in the last half century have been subjected to a new form of environmental colonialism (Nelson 2003, 1). This environmental colonialism has been described as “slow violence” by Rob Nixon (2011). because of the way it slowly robs people of their futures and chokes the life from them.

The conservation ‘industry’, as such, began booming from the mid-19th Century onwards. The WWF was founded in Switzerland in 1961 and growth started to expand massively in the 1980s. The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International both had similar growth trajectories – from the mid-1980s onwards (Chapin 2003, 18). The emphasis on working closely with indigenous communities was eroded with this large-scale growth and was replaced with “large-scale conservation strategies and the importance of science, rather than social realities, in determining their agendas” (Chapin 2003, 18).

Reports began to emerge from across the world – from South Africa, to Mexico that clashes between conservation groups and local, indigenous people. In large part, these clashes were the result of disagreements “over the establishment of protected natural areas, which, according to the human inhabitants of those areas, often infringe on their rights” whilst when indigenous people have been evicted from this land, “conservationists frequently seem to be behind the evictions” (2003, 18).

This shows that the often cliché lambasting of “western interference” into the concerns or daily lives of people in so-called undeveloped countries, even with “good intentions” leads to issues. It is still the imposition of ideologies on a native population, telling them what they think is the

correct, or proper way of conducting their affairs. The reports and journals of missionaries and colonialists often contained passages that supported and justified their actions, no matter how brutal, by suggesting that they carried with them a superior knowledge or understanding of the world. How much has this really changed – an outside force deciding for the local people is never anything less than contradictory.

In the 1970s and 1980s conservationist groups and indigenous groups had limited interaction with one another. This changed with the WWF program *Wildland and Human Needs*, which received funds from the U.S Agency for International Development and focused on small communities. Then, in 1989, another important moment occurred internationally when the Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Amazon Basin (COICA) addressed environmental groups. They had a call to arms for a protection of the Amazon. They pleaded for the cessation of the destruction of the Amazon, which was facing huge destruction at the time. 30 years on, it continues to face increased destruction. COICA pleaded that environmental groups include them in their planning and “vision of the Amazonian Biosphere”. Their exclusion was a major reason why the conservationist’s programs were not effective. They reached out for mutual co-operation between indigenous organizations and environmental ones “on all your programs and campaigns which affect our homelands”. This, Chapin claims, came at the time “as a revelation to many conservationists” (2003, 19).

This plea from COICA was called *Two Agendas* and led to a great deal of discussion and debate within conservation internationally. It produced co-management programs as well as new terms and ideas such as participatory management and partnerships. These ideas, in themselves, were not new. Home rule, for example was a governance strategy in Britain – allowing certain countries the ability to govern their domestic policies to an extent, but always pleading allegiance to the Crown, or requiring permission for important decisions. This idea had just come full circle and started to find a home in the conservation realm.

Sustainable development emerged as a term and workable concept in the late 1980s as conservation organizations created programs to work with local communities. Also, importantly, private foundations and donors back this plan. This “soon became a bandwagon onto which many organizations jumped” (Chapin 2003, 6). The terms and programs that emerged in this time were not co-created but were the result of the organizations planning.

Chapin describes the attempts that followed as “with a few exceptions, a string of failures” (Chapin 2003, 19), while Allen describes them as being “failures” (Allen 2018, 244).

In 1992, at the 4th World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas, more formal declarations and policies were formulated to value the knowledge and importance of indigenous people. This resulted in the 1996 dual IUCN and WWF “Principles and Guidelines on Indigenous and Traditional Peoples and Protected Areas (IUCN, WCPA, and WWF 1996). From the outset of the document, they are treated as partners, at best. International organizations seemingly operating as equally important partners in countries around the world. It formulated the need for co-management, which had started to become the mode of thinking which conservation organizations favoured.

These schemes and projects deemed to be such major failures for many reasons. They were the result of conservationist planning, with little input from indigenous communities, had very few experienced workers on the ground and didn’t foster relationships with the people they were working with (Chapin 2003). Others have argued that these projects were founded on a faulty and romantic notion – that indigenous people are somehow stewards of the land, but are not (Allen 2018). Instead, indigenous groups have cultivated this image of the “noble ecological savage” because it is useful at “rallying support for their struggle for land rights” (Redford and Sanderson 2000, 1363)

The projects mainly failed, organisationally, because there was a dearth of knowledge about the land, how to properly use it, and how to market or sell the resources that came from it. Additionally, the new reforms and ideas conservationists brought to these local communities were not widely welcomed. The urban-style education programs gathered little support or interest and the local communities had no experience or desire to establish and run parks.

Pressure from donors and a lack of progress led to a real erosion of relations between the large conservation organizations and local communities. Chapin details a number of conversations he had with senior officials at some of the largest groups, and they are quite revealing. The director of the WWF in Latin America told him that they “don’t have the capacity to work with indigenous people”, while a CI biologist in Brazil outright stated that “quite frankly, I don’t care what the Indians want. We have to work to conserve the biodiversity” (2003, 20). These attitudes

are not isolated to these incidents though and reflect what many of the park officials in iSimangaliso told us during our time there. Any groups, or communities that have a history of resistance to the park, like in the Dukuduku forest, were dismissed as being pests, looking to damage the park and not interested in conservation attempts. They needed to be removed and kept away from the pristine area as IWP needed to be safeguarded from their detrimental and harmful actions. They were unwilling to engage in any discussion about what these people's concerns were and whether they had a legitimate case. As there were ongoing legal cases between IWP and community boards from this area, it is understandable that they would want to distance themselves from any comments that may harm their own case. However, in the discussions we had tiptoeing around this issue, these same attitudes cropped up and became apparent: any group of people not totally on board with the park's vision of conservation had to be alienated and removed.

This logic is flawed in many ways. The assertion that indigenous people do not have the best interests of nature in mind so must not have control of the land in any sort of collective agreement supposed that the group with the power to decide who owns the land, does have those best interests at heart. All it takes, in the case of nationalised power, is a shift in a national election for a new government to come in and decide that what they want to do is sign agreements with mining companies and drill holes into the ground, or for large swathes of rainforests to be sliced down for crop growth, like in the Amazon. In the case of conservationist intervention there is a power dynamic between local communities and the organizations that is often unspoken or omitted from coverage of the area.

6.2.1. Money

There was a noticeable shift in the money going into conservation groups in the 1990s. Between the mid-90s and the early 2000s, there was a drop in donations by about 50%, while the three major conservation organizations already mentioned – the WWF, TNC and CI – saw their funding increase in the same period. Their growth was reflected in a massive surge in work in underdeveloped countries between 1998 and 2000. Their spending almost doubled from \$240 million to nearly \$500 million. That growth during a wider trend of decline in the rest of the industry has been attributed to a change in fundraising strategy. In the 1980's and 90s, donations

were provided from mainly private foundations and single donors. This changed in the early 2000s and private corporations, as well as bilateral agencies increased their donations, creating a more varied influx of capital (Chapin 2003, 21).

Also, around the turn of the century, the 9/11 attacks in the USA affected the aid that the USA provided globally. Nearly all of federal funding and grants were redirected away from most non profit projects to anti-terrorism. This led to increased pressure on projects waiting for that money to “comply with global norms... and to prioritise the demands of the global scale over the local norms” (Balboa 2018, 116). This emphasises the importance that global events have on local projects across the globe. Projects occurring in remote villages seemingly separated from the centres of finance and ‘development’ can have ongoing programs uprooted or altered due to events on the other side of the world. It is also illustrates the fragile and delicate nature of conservation attempts.

However, even before September 2001, the largest conservation organisations had already been receiving and changing their funding structures. They began placing a larger emphasis on “large-scale conservation” that provided an all-in-one, completely encompassing solution to the myriad problems occurring on the ground. This new wave of thought had many strands of argument but Norman Myers, and other researchers described the overall method as attempting to “identify ‘hotspots’, or areas featuring exceptional concentrations of endemic species and experiencing exceptional loss of habitat” and to then provide solutions to these threats (Myers et al. 2000, 853). In their ecological assessment of these hotspots, they focused on species, and not human populations. They did note, however, that human populations and ecological processes were “important manifestations of biodiversity” but focusing energy and attention instead on the defined ‘hotspots’ “would go far to stem the mass extinction of species that is now underway” (2000, 853). Even amongst these vast, technical, impressive studies, there was a very considered decision to not examine the role of human populations in the study. While it was also recommended by these researchers that these factors should be considered in other studies, the projects and thinking at that time trended towards this ‘hotspot’ idea. In fact, the idea had gained popularity in 1988, when Myers advanced the idea in a paper published in the *Environmentalist*. As Myers et. al noted, in those 10 years “some \$400 million has been invested” by NGOs and the “traditional scattergun approach” of conservation had to be offset by a “silver bullet strategy

in the form of hotspots with their emphasis on cost-effective measures” (2000, 857).

This large-scale approach also coincided with a surge in technology that supported an argument about preserving areas around the world because they are inter-connected with the rest of the globe. That paper ends with a call to arms for more funding, arguing that \$500 million annually would offer protection of these hotspots. The reality of this sort of conservation is that it does require an army of people and constant research, but it also highlighted the potential for profit and money creation. In addition, funding and donations require not only development plans and management structures, but results. There are only so many times one can return to the well to ask for funding without providing tangible *evidence* of what this money is doing to protect the area. When the sole objective of the so-called silver bullet method is to focus on species other than humans, and the biosphere, these become the tangible objects of analysis and proof of conservation work done with the money.

The silver bullet ideology leaves out the context of the people and communities living there. Nicola Robertson studied craft programs that operated in IWP. Those that were successful and worked well for the participants fit into their lives. Robertson advised the government and organizations involved to “consider the contexts of craft producers and develop appropriate interventions aligned to the social and economic outcomes that people pursue” (Robertson 2014, i).

At the macro level Thomas McShane points out that, as conservation organizations are essentially competing for funds in an open market, “conservation organizations find themselves making claims based on little more than theory” which results in slick marketing and morally strong arguments but, behind the scenes, it is about “how to get the funds before someone else does” (2003, 2).

An important development of NGOS and the conservation movement has been the influence of the largest NGOs swaying opinion and policy of smaller, local NGOs. Chapin refers these larger organizations “gatekeepers” of the funds and resources (2004, 26). Donors find themselves with a large amount of influence and leverage over the NGOs they supply money to as, as previously discussed, the organizations must compete with one another for the funds and so they adopt positions and strategies that will best suit the donors they are looking to accept money from.

Their motivations for such charitable donations vary and are open to speculation – for tax avoidance, great public relations, or for political control.

This whole picture is also clouded by the fact that some of the largest contributors and donors in the past few decades have been massive corporations responsible for huge pollution, resource depletion and ecological destruction – companies like Exxon and Shell. In fact, these major corporations have set up institutes and foundations to explore and research environmental studies and used this to safeguard themselves and disseminate false information about both climate change, and their role in it. Exxon and Mobil merged in 1999 and created charitable foundations that could apply to tax-exempt status. Papers uncovered by investigative reporters found that it had used its “tax-exempt grants to shape American laws and regulations on issues ranging from the climate crisis to toxic chemicals – with the explicit goal of benefiting Mobil” (Kelly 2019). They used this foundation to pour funds into “counterpoints to so-called ‘public interest groups’”, gain early access to scientific research and strongarm policy makers behind the scenes. Recipients of grants from these foundations included universities, well-respected academies and environmental researchers. Mobil also lobbied the Environmental Law Institute, which offers environmental law research and education to lawyers and judges. They wrote this about the strategy:

“Institute publications are widely read in the environmental community and are helpful in communicating industry’s concerns to such organizations,” the entry says. “Mobil Foundation grants will enhance environmental organizations’ views of Mobil, enable us to reach through ELI activities many groups that we do not communicate with, and enable Mobil to participate in their dialogue groups.” (Kelly, 2019)

The blatant arrogance and disregard for scientific research is clear in these companies’ dealings. Their practices indicate a desire to do whatever is necessary to increase profits or further their agendas. These papers, from a quarter of a century, show that oil companies were actively fighting and lobbying against scientific research a. being carried out, and b. when it was, being buried and not widely disseminated. The fact that climate change is still a “debate” shows how successful these companies have been. It is also hugely frustrating for researchers or anybody attempting to look at objective facts and show that there is interference on the ground from rich, powerful lobbyists or stakeholders in the area. No matter how many times companies show themselves to be corrupt and motivated only by the pursuits of profits, the burden of proof is

always placed at the feet of individuals to prove this. A quarter of a century ago ExxonMobil were already splashing cash in the environmental industry, cosying up with the best and brightest, offering grants to blunt their criticisms, welcoming them into positions in their foundations that would swerve their research away from critical analysis of their business practices or the costs of their actions on the planet. They were also simultaneously partnering with the most prestigious universities and offering them money to allow their voice to be perceived as legitimate as any scientific research reporting to the contrary.

What do US universities or major research grants have to do with independent, humane and transparent organisations though? Well the UN does not rise above such criticisms either. John J Wise was a vice-president at Mobil. It was his job to seek out and approve grants like the ones mentioned above. By the turn of the century, Wise was a member of the board of trustees at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution (which received over \$200,000 from Mobil) and a part of UN efforts to study climate change. In addition to these wonder career advances, Wise co-authored two UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reports, serving as a lead author on one. The burning of natural gas, an ExxonMobil product, instead of coal was recommended to combat climate change in one chapter of these reports (Ross 2016).

ExxonMobil and other major international firms, beyond committing their own crimes, changed the rules of the game. Suddenly, this explosion of cash created new ways of receiving donations, or funds. They contained unwritten strings attached, but it was a great revenue stream and, like low-cost airlines, once one organization started to benefit from their generosity, others had to follow suit and a race to the bottom followed. The lack of experience, failed projects on the ground in many areas and the new *silver bullet* strategy thinking created a toxic cocktail of conditions that played into the hands of a free market ideology developing in conservation practice.

In 2016, a long-term *Greenpeace* and *Guardian* investigation unearthed evidence about how the British government was using aid money to back drilling in UNESCO World Heritage sites in Africa (McCleaghan, Clarke, and Carter 2016, Ross 2016). One such project that the government backed was drilling for oil at Lake Malawi, in Malawi. Cynically, the money came from the *Africa Prosperity Fund*, which listed “clean energy and tackling climate change” amongst its objectives but, perhaps more importantly, the *fund* also expects to “capture and leverage

strategic opportunities for UK trade and investment” and it is essential that “UK economic interests should be a demonstrable focus of projects.” (Mccleaghan, Clarke, and Carter 2016). Justifying their position in Malawi, the UK government claimed that:

“The UK plays a leading role in supporting Africa to make the most of its oil and gas resources, providing vital foreign investment to encourage economic development. “By fostering sustainable economic growth in Malawi, including exploring opportunities in oil and gas, we will help eradicate poverty, create jobs, increase revenue and reduce dependency on aid. This is firmly in the interests of Malawi and the UK.” (Mccleaghan, Clarke, and Carter 2016)

The usual buzzwords of *sustainable economic growth* are present, of course. This really stretches the limits of what sustainable means and leads to all sorts of scandalous declarations being made that have no basis in scientific or legal arguments, yet they are made anyway. For example, the UK company with the right to drill at the lake, Sunstream, conducted an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in 2014 and shared it with local residents. In it, they downplayed the risk of an oil spill and actually emphasised the benefits of a spill, should it occur. They claimed that “hydrocarbon spills actually stimulate phytoplankton growth” (Ross 2016).

In this instance, UNESCO has no remit to stop or influence the decision to allow drilling, should it occur. They must rely on relationships fostered with both the local people and the government. When a UNESCO national park is run in such a way that it locks out local communities as viable stakeholders, and engages in neoliberal policies, it is a recipe for disaster as more profitable solutions can always become available. Seen most sickening in this case, with the possible drilling for oil and potential for destruction of the ecosystem. Worse still, should the drilling go ahead, the local people will not be the ones to benefit but they will be the ones who lose out on precious land, resources and will pick up the bill for human and environmental costs.

We have seen that from the ‘inception’ of conservation as a movement, or at least from a time when it began to comprise of organised groups, that it has been a fragmented group of interests vying for power and chasing multiple goals. Powerful industry actors, seeking to protect their investments, have not only attempted to obfuscate the real science on topics, but they have successfully greenwashed ideas out of the mainstream media for decades, they have spied on and paid off key researchers, they have set up and generously donated to respectable foundations

that publicly endorse their ideas in the scientific community, and they have fostered industry ties so powerful that reports written by bodies like the UN contain their executives as lead authors. Unfortunately, it takes time for these stories to emerge into the public sphere and, when they do, it is often many years later. At this point, they can be shrugged off as irrelevant now, that steps have been taken to change this radical behaviour. When they are identified in the present moment, they are dismissed and discredited by these same powerful actors and because these industries are now so indistinguishable from independent researchers, it is almost impossible for the public at large to separate fact from fiction.

In addition to these efforts to penetrate the conservation movement at every level, major companies have also successfully altered the machinery of how these projects and organisations function. They are not solely responsible for this, but they have been a key player in nudging them towards a free market, neoliberal approach to conservation.

Yet, as we have seen with IMF and World Bank policies for years, these large instruments of change or governance change in name each decade, but rarely in their end use or purpose. The structural adjustment policies of the 1980s gave way to the “new” austerity programs. This was merely a repackaging of the same stale economic ideas that enriched a small elite minority and enslaved the population with debt repayments. Undoubtedly there are successes in the IMF and World Bank’s catalogues, and they can be happy about some of their projects. Surely there are kind and decent folk working there who believe they are making a difference in people’s lives. However, it plays out like a Shakespearean tragedy as everyone does their job and has their hands tied by what is dictated to them by the market. It plays out much the same in the world of conservation. There are successes and with the right lens and perspective, things are improving. However, the same inability to attack the structural ineptitude of the system that it exists within prevents real change from occurring and these projects constantly exist in a state of precarious flux.

The trend of conservation towards profit maximisation is the by-product of allowing a so-called “free market” system operate in lieu of regulated checks and balances. As Arundhati Roy pointed out the link between the boom of NGOs in India in the late 1980s and the opening up of the market and economy to neoliberalism (Roy 2016, 333). Roy argues that this merging was not coincidental but, rather, a prerequisite condition imposed by agencies like the IMF and the

World Bank, who were implementing *structural adjustment* policies in India at the time (this word went out of fashion as the policies crippled countries as is now affectionately known as *austerity*). The government was required to divert funds away from areas deemed surplus to requirements. Without fail, these areas tend to be those requiring the most pressing state intervention and guidance – rural development, agriculture, energy, transport, and so on. Roy describes the state “as abdicating its traditional role” and in the vacuum created, NGOs filled in some of the gaps (2016, 334). This brings with it two major issues; the amount of money from NGOs is a fraction of what a well-run state project could provide; and the major NGOs were funded by the very agencies imposing the structural adjustments in the first place. As Roy sums up the situation, these benevolent organizations may not all be one singular agency, but “they are certainly part of the same loose, political formation that oversees the neoliberal project and demands the slash in government spending in the first place” (2016:334). It is incredibly hard to discern the positive, legitimate NGOs and organizations in an entangled solar system full of international organizations wrapped up in money laundering, shell companies created by foreign governments to provide a mask for black operations, or those that are simply benefiting from a disaster. However, NGOs are, ultimately, “accountable to their funders, not to the people they work among” and act as a great indicator for how bad an economy is – “the greater the devastation caused by neoliberalism, the greater the outbreak of NGOs” (Roy 2016: 334).

7. The story of iSimangaliso

The IWP was recognised on the World Heritage List in 1999 and declared a National Park by the government of South Africa in November 2000. The area has a very long history of inhabitancy, with evidence of settlements stretching back as far as the Stone Ages. The records kept by Portuguese travellers shows that they were in the region by the mid-16th Century and the British arrived a few hundred years later, in the 19th Century. An apartheid government was established in 1948 and it legalised institutional racism, with many minorities forcibly removed from their land now recognised as IWP. Myriad factors were at play for these removals – forestry, military testing sites, conservation – but all resulted in the cruel uprooting of significant areas for local people (Walker 2008).

IWP has forged a strong connection with the cornerstones of positive modern South African pursuits, as well as taking a central role in the restoration of nature conservation as part of a national policy agenda and identity. Many of the post-Apartheid goals that the country has strived for are exemplified by both the aims and the achievements of IWP. The creation and existence of the park owes a debt to the key political resistance and anti-Apartheid figures who inspired not only South Africans, but people the world over – iconic people like Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu campaigned on behalf of IWP. Their support, along with the grassroots movement that led the charge, allowed IWP to be saved in favour of mining companies that sought to use the area to exploit the natural resources there. This connection with the revolutionary political class has allowed IWP to present itself, understandably, as a symbol of the new ‘Rainbow Nation’ – a place that seeks to restore the country back to a former, stronger state and one that protects, conserves and helps to build new hope and beginnings in South Africa.

Riding on the crest of the euphoric wave of optimism that followed South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994, there was a lot of legislative work done that promised there was a new era of equality dawning in the country. The Constitution is often cited as one of the greatest human rights achievements of the 20th Century as it declared a previously divided people as equal for the first time. Every citizen was promised a clean and safe environment to live in. It was hoped that with a figurehead like Nelson Mandela and a new, equal system of governance

that a lifetime of enshrined constitutional racism would disappear and change would arise.

Similarly, the park espouses a management programme that is inclusive of everybody and operates as a democratic and participatory conservation programme. What appears to be happening is an intersection of governance structures and conflicting interest groups that confuses locals and ultimately locks out unrepresented communities from engaging in any meaningful way with how the land they live in and around is used and managed. There are benefits and success stories within the park and the programmes it has designed. These are smaller in number than they should be and are predicated on a system of rewarding certain actors and alienating a large number.

7.1. Critical voices on South African “transformation”

Despite the perceived and celebrated aspects of South Africa’s transformation from apartheid state to democratic nation, alternative narratives have exposed the complicated nature of life in South Africa both during the transition and today. John Pilger, expelled and banned from the country for 27 years during apartheid because of his negative journalism at the time, provides a lucid examination of the policies and state of the country, while John J. Williams also illuminates the consolidation of power by economic elites that has occurred, rather than an opening up of political and economic spaces for everybody. Taking this perspective as an entrance point to viewing the formation of the “Rainbow Nation” allows an understanding that there wasn’t a massive transformation towards recognizing the most marginalized in society, despite the beautiful and noble statements to the opposite. This structural upheaval that was promised and never occurred and is a useful parallel narrative for the processes occurring in IWP.

John Pilger, reflecting on twenty years of democracy in the country in 2014, describes how mounting international pressure and the 1985 stock market crash in Johannesburg led the chairman of the Anglo-American Corporation, Gavin Reilly, and the ANC president, Oliver Tambo to organise a meeting together, along with other liberation leaders in Zambia. Reilly stated that:

“A "transition" from apartheid to a black-governed electoral democracy was possible only if "order" and "stability" were guaranteed. This was liberal code for a capitalist state in which social and economic democracy would never be a priority” (Pilger 2014)

This code was understood by those within the political sphere in South Africa. Long before the actual fall of the regime, negotiations were taking place to ensure a stable economic platform for political change to occur. Mandela himself detailed the long discussions and negotiations he had with members of the government and army that took place while he was still in prison. This process took place because the government in power realised the necessity of a peaceful transition process. Not only would this help internationally but would also be the smoothest way of moving forward domestically. In 1986, a state of emergency was announced in South Africa and talks between the ANC and the government were not only at a standstill but going backwards. The government had dropped bombs on ANC centres and the ANC was advising the people of South Africa to make the country “ungovernable” (Mandela 1994, 630). As a result, Mandela recalled, “the time seemed inauspicious for negotiations” (1994, 631). Nonetheless Mandela pressed for talks and met with the Minister for Justice, Kobie Coetsee. He was allowed to leave the prison and brought to meet him at his home in Cape town. For the first time, Mandela could envisage a change coming. He wrote of that meeting:

“I was greatly encouraged. I sensed the government was anxious to overcome the impasse in the country, that they were now convinced they had to depart from their old positions. In ghostly outline, I saw the beginnings of a compromise.” (1994, 632)

Although things did not immediately take effect after this meeting, Mandela was slowly brought into the fold by the government at the time. They were slowly changing tact and realising they needed to resolve the unrest in the country. The tactic with Mandela was to slowly allow him increased freedom to the outside world. He was brought on excursions around Cape Town, allowed to drink tea on the beach and so on. Mandela acknowledges himself that these little adventures had a more important role than keeping him happy:

“Much as I enjoyed these little adventures, I well knew that the authorities had a motive other than keeping me diverted. I sensed that they wanted to acclimatize me to life in South Africa and perhaps at the same time, get me so used to the pleasures of small freedoms that I might be willing to compromise in order to have complete freedom.” (1994, 635)

The situation in South Africa at that time was critical. Parts of the country were on the verge of armed combat at any moment. The government resolutely refused to speak with the ANC because they would not negotiate with a group that they believed to be terrorists that advocated violence. Quietly, and secretly, a group was created to meet with Mandela and begin talks. This group contained senior officials in the government, including Coetsee, and had the blessing of the President. Mandela was in a difficult position here as he was speaking directly with the government and had restricted access to his fellow ANC members, who were getting restless about his isolation and anxious about what he was discussing with the government. In those secret meetings, many key points were addressed such as armed violence and the ANC's relationship with the communists. Another central point was the ANC's approach to business and nationalisation. Mandela states that he advocated to them "was not a blueprint for socialism but for African-style capitalism" (1994, 642).

As the talks continued, the situation in South Africa continued to deteriorate. A state of emergency was announced by the government in both 1987 and 1988, with many international companies choosing to leave the country, with many trading partners imposing sanctions on the country. Fittingly, John Battersby, writing in *The New York Times*, declared that these sanctions had "forced Pretoria to pay a high price for apartheid" (Battersby 1988).

Sanctions had been present in South Africa since as early as 1954, when India formally severed diplomatic ties. In 1959 the Boycott South Africa movement was formed by exiled ANC members. The International Olympic Committee banned South Africa from the 1964 Olympics after Jan de Klerk, the interior minister, declared that there would be no racial integration in the team and they didn't compete in the Olympics again until the end of apartheid. While bank loans and other corporate divestments occurred in the 1970s, it was in the 1980s that major developments began to hurt the South African economy as a reaction to the 1984 Constitution that excluded blacks completely. This led to the townships revolting and widespread violence.

While government trade sanctions did take place, it has been argued that "international economic actions against South Africa that were most damaging were taken by private actors, not governments" (Levy 1999, 2). Levy goes on to claim that the demise of apartheid had three core reasons: "the effectiveness of the political opposition of the black majority; the inefficiency and growing economic cost of the apartheid system; and the fall of the Soviet Union" (Levy

1999, 4). One of the most comprehensive examinations of the effects of sanctions is from Hufbauer, Schott and Elliott (1990) who conclude that they have an effectiveness rate of about 1 in 3. The fallout from international affairs certainly affected South Africa but not always in ways related directly to a disapproval of apartheid. The international oil crisis of 1973 affected the entire world and in South Africa, with a rapidly growing manufacture industry, one of the chain reactions to labour shortages was the need for black workers in white areas. Considering one of the main tenets of the apartheid system was a separation of blacks and whites, this was “a dramatic undermining of the rationale of apartheid” and merely “the first in a series of reforms in which the employment restrictions were relaxed” (Levy 1999, 4). Even at the time, the powerful in South Africa recognised this and warned that “jobs could not ultimately be shared with blacks without sharing power as well” (Waldmeir 1997, 26).

The panic and unrest in international markets has been attributed to Chase bank when it “prompted an international crisis in confidence when it stopped rolling over loans” to its customers in South Africa. A revealing statement from a Chase bank executive illuminates the motivation of the bank to divest from South Africa:

“We felt that the risk attached to political unrest and economic instability became too high for our investors. We decided to withdraw. It was never the intention to facilitate change in South Africa, the decision was taken purely on account of what was in the interest of Chase and its assets.” (Waldmeir 1997, 56).

President Botha tried to quell the unrest in August of 1985 with a speech announcing reforms. However, his speech was a failure and the crisis intensified. Another major blow happened in October of 1986 when the U.S Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) which drastically reduced lending to South Africa and also sanctioned major imports like coal and uranium. Throughout this period, however, the social situation for blacks in South Africa did not improve. Instead, it worsened; In 1988 any political activities by non-white groups or by trade unions was prohibited (AF Press Clips 1988, 17). The year before, in 1987, the Nationalists won a strong majority in a general election and the opposition had been replaced by a far-right Conservatives party that belittled the government for its leniency on blacks. As Mandela noted: “even though violence was still pervasive, the National Party had never been stronger” (Mandela 1994, 645).

The effectiveness of the sanctions is up for debate. Even though the U.S had introduced the CAAA, Elliot and Hufbauer argue that the sanctions had been “applied piecemeal over a number of years, often half-heartedly” and the major sanctions had not been effective as “administrative enforcement was reportedly weak” (Hufbauer and Elliot n.d.). It certainly had a strong psychological element and was very useful for the ANC for attracting symbolic support for their cause to end systematic apartheid as “to lift sanctions now would be to run the risk of aborting the process toward ending apartheid” (Hufbauer, Schott, and Elliot 1990, 233). Indeed, Mandela echoed this point in an exchange with John Pilger many years later, when president of South Africa. When challenged about being willing to deal with any nation, regardless of their internal policies, he replied that he was. When it was put to him that had other nations taken that attitude to South Africa in the 1980s that apartheid might have lasted much longer, he replied:

“There is a real fundamental difference with apartheid. There is no country anywhere in the world where discrimination and oppression is part of the legal system. The real resentment of the world and why South Africa was regarded as enforcing an evil system is the fact racism was entrenched in the constitution of the country and its laws” (Pilger 1998, min 36)

Nelson Mandela sat down for this interview with Pilger in 1998 for his documentary *Apartheid Did Not Die*, and Pilger further challenged Mandela about the fact that less than 1% of agricultural land had been returned to South Africans, with incentives instead enshrined in law to protect and encourage business opportunities for companies that benefited from the apartheid regime. Mandela responded by saying that:

“The best way to introduce transformation is to do so without dislocating any aspect of our public life. We do not want to challenge big business in a way where they can take fright and take away their money. We are changing the whole economic aspect of the country, but it has to be done skilfully by discussions with stakeholders. And where we’re unable to agree, we push on” (Pilger 1998, min 41)

Pilger, reflecting later about this statement, argues that this meant that the “prime movers were those who had profited from apartheid” (Pilger 2014). It was the business and military class who had enforced the draconian and destructive policies of the previous decades that remained in power. There were some token efforts to display a change in system but ultimately those who held economic wealth retained it. There are undoubtedly huge challenges and threats that arise with confronting power on such a massive scale, particularly in the South African context at that

point, with such a long history of subjugation and oppression. However, Pilger takes a strong stance on the failures of this ‘transition’, describing the change in this way: “economic apartheid has replaced legal apartheid with the same consequences for the same people, yet it is greeted as one of the greatest achievements in world history” (Pilger 2014). It is his contention that the poorest, the most vulnerable, and the voiceless were left out of the major decision-making processes. Mandela had responded to Pilger’s question about a share in the national wealth and land by arguing that black people were now in the board rooms of companies and responsible for decisions affecting billions of dollars. Undoubtedly small fractions of black people now have the opportunity to become fabulously wealthy, but this tokenism wealth is the result of following the same free-market principles that, ultimately, retain the same social structure. Looking back on the interview years later, Pilger declared that Mandela was “was extraordinary man” and that, at the time, he had “celebrated” Mandela’s release (Pilger 2017). He said that at that Mandela was “being treated like a saint by all kinds of people for all kinds of reasons” (ibid). The white population, Pilger argues, had celebrated Mandela because he had allowed them to get away “scot-free.” He was their “ticket because he had made South Africa respectable again” (ibid). “Privatisation is the fundamental policy of the ANC.” “I was seen as being disrespectful to Mandela by even challenging him” (ibid)

John J. Williams, a scholar of South African history, advanced Pilger’s assessment of the status quo being retained in South Africa:

“Exclusionary planning practices did not end with the birth of democratic South Africa in 1994. On the contrary, it would appear that the affluent members of society, still mostly so-called ‘white’—in terms of chapter 7 of the South African constitution, subsections 152a-e—often invoke the provisions made for public participation in the affairs of local government to maintain their privileges” (Williams 2009,18)

The problems facing both those who genuinely wanted to create change at the top and those at the bottom who need it is that South Africa adopted a large bureaucratic approach. By negotiating terms with wealthy business owners and influential people, there was an engagement in a very particular type of discourse and governance structure. Williams elaborates on this problem by indicating the ways that certain actors gain preferential treatment:

“In a society undergoing transition to democracy, planning is often problematic as the planning bureaucrats do not necessarily respond proactively to the basic requirements of democratic practices such as transparency, meaningful community participation and social justice” (Williams 2009, 10)

These considerations require painstaking work with communities. It means setting aside huge swathes of time, energy and resources to find out what is needed on the ground, across the country. This sentiment will be important to keep in mind as we navigate the governance structures in IWP.

7.2. The ‘Story’ and aims of IWP

South Africa has a long history of conquest from external forces, which forged a deeply racist and divided country. The post-Apartheid years have led to politically anyway, a seeking of peace and reconciliation which has been cloned and mirrored in many ways by the process that led to the creation of IWP. The area of, and around IWP, has had a tumultuous and destructive past, with countless families forcibly removed from their homes and land. The inspirational people that spearheaded change and possibility around the time of the end of Apartheid - Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu were vital for the nation as symbolic figures and the IWP similarly drew upon symbols of change. The former CEO Andrew Zaloumis was instrumental in the activist movement that led to the victory over corporate interests in the early to mid-1990s. The area IWP sits on has been long mooted as a rich source of natural resources and international companies have been vying to tear into it for decades. The battle to keep them out and establish IWP instead was achieved through the tireless work of a groundswell of activists, citizens and public figures. They petitioned the government to protect the land and their victory paved the way for the park to be created and sustained, allowing the park to be considered a symbolic victory fathered by social and environmental activism.

Andrew Zaloumis has not only been a spokesman for the park and its importance, but also a leading expert in conservation. His roots in the park are deep and, in his own words, he described himself as having previously been a “long-haired” activist who laboured for decades on behalf of environmental rights (interview with Mairitsch-Zips and Zips 2014). Over the years he rose to become the most important figure in the organisation of the park. On to become the senior management figure of the park and was pragmatic about the history and trajectory of the park.

He described the area as having had a “nasty history” and its creation and sustainability made it a “very special park” because it had been rescued and then endorsed by Nelson Mandela. This lent it an aura and symbolic importance, with it being viewed as a “peace park”. The park is located in a massively impoverished area of the country (the second poorest region) and, as such, Zaloumis makes the case for the park to offer local people an “opportunity” for jobs as well as allow the “views, ideas and opinions” of people who live in the area to matter. He claims that the park needs to place their desires of the locals at the centre of park policy and practice for it to operate in the way they want it to. This supports the aim of the park to provide local people with the chance to lift themselves from poverty as actors in the park’s management, which is why he emphasises that IWP is “unique” and “original”. This supposed originality is what is so striking about the park and marks it out as different to other park strategies. However, in the same breath, Zaloumis also explains that originality is essential to maintaining status as a UNESCO site (ibid). This provides an insight into the motivations of the park management – they must adhere to UNESCO guidelines. So, while being original for the sake of the people in the area is a wonderful sentiment, being original is a fundamental demand of being a UNESCO site, which mean the retention of global significance and potential revenue.

In 2015, Zaloumis gave a speech to the WWF and emphasised the importance of IWP. It was, he argued, a “symbolic landscape” against which the structural racism and conflicts that have ravaged the country could be viewed. Zaloumis also pointed out that colonial conquest of the land across generations had been focused on seeing the land as a resource to be exploited, which had led to the “decimation of game, the destruction of swamp forest, the drying up of lakes, the expansion of conservation-incompatible land uses such as military bases” (WWF 2015). This approach had not ended there though and had continued until the 1990s because the “apartheid regime carried out forced removals of local populations to expand commercial plantations and establish a missile testing ground” (ibid). A modern problem endangering the survival of the park, he noted, was the interests of mining companies that wanted access to the resources and would tear the park apart to get at them. It was in this light that Zaloumis acknowledged the pragmatic approach that the park had to take in order to tackle the real problems the park was facing from corporate interests:

“In truth, however, iSimangaliso will always be a work in progress as our society changes and economies shift. The already limited livelihood choices available to iSimangaliso’s 640 000 people will become fewer as economies tighten, unsustainable practices continue and the impacts of climate change begin to be felt. The prognosis is not good, not just for iSimangaliso, but for the globe if our natural resources continue to remain “economically invisible”” (WWF 2015)

Whilst Zaloumis was a steadfast champion of the park and defender of its policies, he was also quick to acknowledge real-world shortcomings of the area that many critics of the area also do. His ability to see the reality of the situation as it is gave him a shrewd insight but also led to tough decisions. In the face of global financial crises striking the country and potentially wiping out the park, IWP had to be insulated from too thin a cushion of monetary survival. In this light, it is interesting to observe his remarks on the priority of the park. Despite the impressive claims of the official park statements, Zaloumis states that the benefits it offers to local people are “limited, if you want to retain it as a park” (interview with Mairitsch-Zips and Zips 2014). These limited benefits are funnelled based on decisions of priority and Zaloumis himself stated that conservation was the priority.

Viewing these prioritisations in conservation has gained some traction in research with McShane et al. (2011) and Dahlberg and Burlando (2009) noting that these decisions are labelled as ‘hard-choices’ or ‘trade-offs’. Called this way, they can both be viewed as a more transparent and honest way of examining the strategies and policies of the park. At some point, there came a time for conservation-for-all or conservation with economic development (for some) to be prioritised and it is with this understanding that the decisions and policies of IWP can be understood more clearly.

McShane et. al (2011) applied a cross-cultural and comparative analysis by examining various different conservation management strategies and contexts. They concluded that “the record of such approaches is decidedly mixed” and that, in fact, the evidence indicates that “trade-offs can and do occur between different conservation objectives” (2011, 966). Disappointingly, on the part of all stakeholders involved, McShane et al. point out that political pressure to avoid discussing potential negatives or downsides leads to this positive re-affirmation of the win-win project, even when “conservation practitioners are themselves quite aware of the potential downsides of a given scenario or proposal” (2011, 967). So, instead of discussing policies or

approaches as win-win, theorists have championed using the notion of *hard choices* as an “antidote” to win-win thinking because it “implies acknowledging not only the gains but also the losses” of conservation (2011, 968). The authors sum up the problem of win-win strategies as such:

“Win-win scenarios, where both natural resources are conserved and human well-being is improved in specific places over time, have been difficult, if not almost impossible, to realize. Compromise, contestation and conflict are more often the norm. Often hard choices need to be made between different kinds of conservation, and between conservation and human well-being, and these should be explicitly acknowledged. Not to do so leads to unrealized expectations and ultimately unresolved conflict.” (2011, 970)

7.2.1. Hard Choices at IWP

However, even if these compromises and complications are acknowledged, there is still a gap between this stated intellectual knowledge and the practice of the conservation institution. In the case of IWP, this is best seen from the perspective provided by the former CEO, Andrew Zaloumis.

Zaloumis, as we have seen, was a devoted activist in the area for many years and was involved in the representation of the views of those who were marginalised. In his interviews and speeches, he marries an understanding of the plight of the people in poverty with a sceptical and critical view about the economic realities of running a national park with ties to transnational organisations and myriad stakeholders. His discussion about the business side of the park is illuminating. He explained that the park has grown beyond being a “start-up organisation” and now that it is globally recognised must continue to “adapt” and be “innovating” to remain relevant internationally (interview with Mairitsch-Zips and Zips 2014). In order to keep pace, the park has followed the lead of business models predicated on free-market principles. This has meant the park has focused on attracting private sector actors. This creates a contradiction and tension in the park policy and messaging as it cannot continue to champion grassroots, local community workers and attract private businesses at the going market rate. This leads to ‘hard choices’ being made.

The admiration and love for the park in the country was best summed up by Nelson Mandela, when he stated that:

“iSimangaliso Wetland Park must be the only place on the globe where the oldest land mammal and the world’s biggest terrestrial mammal share an ecosystem with the world’s oldest fish and the world’s biggest marine mammal” (South Africa Net n.d, online)

The love of the park has a clear supporting narrative; victory was seized from the jaws of defeat from the traditional enemies of the people – foreign ‘invaders’ – who were looking to exploit the natural resources and land at the expense of the nation. The country was emerging from a disastrous history and hope stretched out in front of them. The sweat and desire of activists ad won out and IWP was endorsed by the hero of the day, Nelson Mandela. This victory was massive, and vital. That it was created at the expense of foreign mining interests is an incredible achievement.

Keeping these interests at bay, who are still vying to get into the park, is one of the reasons why the park has sought to pursue international tourism as a revenue route. It keeps it in the spotlight and provides capital to insulate it from financial ruin and collapse. The economic ‘realities’ the park exists in were well understood and described by Andrew Zaloumis, who made it clear that he doesn’t consider the park to be currently ‘winning’ but is instead in a key moment in its history where the current generation act as stewards of the land, creating the foundations for future generations to implement further important changes. Nonetheless, these understandable arguments are incompatible with the notion of providing benefits to the local people as a key part of the park strategy.

7.3. Trade-offs in the pursuit of dual aims

As outlined by Zaloumis, as well as scholars in the field, priorities are eventually required from an organisation when deciding on whether to favour conservation or benefits for people in a dual aim approach. Without a structure in place to address the needs of both aims, these ‘hard choices’ have to be made and bed towards being made in favour *of* conservation and at the

expense *of* benefits for local people. In the case of IWP, the difficulty of making the decisions of how these ‘trade offs’ should be skewed is simplified by the relationships it has with different governance structures involved with ‘overseeing’ their operation. Below are documents that There are a number of documents that illustrate the ‘laissez-faire’ attitude of the government with regard to the decisions that IWP makes, as well as the importance placed on conservation by UNESCO. The two coincide to create a perfect storm situation that heavily incentivizes an emphasis on conservation and little oversight to detract from doing so.

7.3.1. Corporate Charter

IWP produces a business strategy every half decade (iSimangaliso Corporate Charter 2011-2015) which sets out the direction the park is going in and the goals it is looking to achieve in that time, as well as potential problems or issues. Inside, it is compiled and presented as a collection of stats and goals couched in neo-liberal jargon. The dual aims of the park are proudly proclaimed – to “preserve and protect the park” and “empower historically disadvantaged adjacent communities” (2011, 23). In addition to this, though, the park is identified as a “product” with the aim of fostering “an appropriate business environment and reduce risk for tourism.” It is within this broader context that it identifies ways of providing local people with benefits. Insight into the procurement of business-favourable policies is provided:

“iSimangaliso’s approach is to strategically influence critical areas through lobbying, alignment with Government’s key goals and programmes, and ensuring the delivery of economic benefits and empowerment where challenges are beyond its sphere of control.” (2011, 11)

Undoubtedly the park is obligated to deal with the realities of economics and politics but is this lobbying being fulfilled on behalf of those who already have the prestige and social standing to support it. So, ultimately, what ends are met by adopting this method if it is not helping to advance the causes of the poorest in the area. As already outlined by Andrew Zaloumis, there are “limited” benefits to be gained from the park and this is worth bearing in mind when viewing the aims set out by the park in the Corporate Charter:

- to run a “lean, cost-efficient system”

- to maintain “a minimum and appropriate number of full-time staff” to fulfil a very particular set of jobs predicated on Western-style instruments of power and governance
- the “outsourcing” of all “specialist professional services” and most “non-core operational services”. This is not focusing on including local people in this job market. (2011, 34)

The statistics and business approach of this charter lend itself to the pursuit of increasing growth and profits on an annual basis in order to continuously stimulate growth. This completely leaves out the humans in the region, however. Roy argues that the compilation of statistics and numbers of the park leads to an analysis contained “within a shallow framework more or less shorn of a political or historical context” and, furthermore, that these organisations are not beholden to the local people as “NGOs are accountable to their founders, not to the people they work among,” which would seem to support the argument that “greater the devastation caused by neoliberalism, the greater the outbreak of NGOs” (2016, 334). The Charter is done to appease a business strategy, one that is heavily skewed in favour of numerically-sound ideas; ones that can expand through the creation of revenue-generating products and devices.

With regard to tourism, the Charter is transparent that “iSimangaliso’s role, with respect to tourism development, is to guide the development of the product, create an appropriate business environment and reduce risk for tourism” (2011, 2). The importance of this strategy depends on what perspective it is viewed from. Members of the Dukuduku community that we spoke to would challenge the benefits they have seen from this strategy. They are currently in dispute with the park and have a land claim in progress. They pose a so-called ‘risk for tourism’ because they exhibit behaviour of potential dissidence or hostility towards the park because of the way they feel they are being treated.

A counter perspective to these communities was provided by a high-ranking security official of IWP that we spoke to. Despite initially championing a peaceful approach to protesting communities, going as far as quoting His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, as well as drawing upon his many years of interaction with people in a security role, he quickly relented. When pressed on how Dukuduku should be dealt with, he ultimately exclaimed that they should be thrown “off the land” (group interview, 2015). Seen as detrimental to ‘development’ in the area because of their reluctance to accept iSimangaliso’s terms, his views demonstrated the mind-set of the private security that police the park and protect its interests. These nuanced, conflicting points

of view are not contained in the corporate charter, nor are they visible in other institutional documents that track and record the park's operation. Undoubtedly, the security job at IWP is a difficult one, one that is fraught with danger from rifle-toting poachers and regulating a space the size of a small country is not an easy task. However, the immediate call for violence against a dissident but peaceful community was curious.

In addition to this IWP-produced business document, there are other documents which demonstrate how: a. the park is incentivized to favour conservation efforts and b. how the government provides little oversight of the IWP operation and governance. The first is an IUCN World Heritage Outlook conservation assessment from January 2015 and the second is a briefing conducted by Terri Castis, on behalf of IWP, in 2016 in front of a parliament meeting group.

7.3.2. IUCN World Heritage Outlook Report

IWP is currently graded as a 2 - "good with some concerns" - in the 4-grade scale of the IUCN and the scope of the job that the management team undertakes is illuminated throughout this document. The core of this report is an assessment of how the park is faring in a number of key areas identified by the IUCN as important for the maintenance of the site. It is laden with text and utilises a rating system to assess how 'effective' the park is complying. It focuses heavily on conservation of the natural world and environmental concerns, with a much smaller and narrower focus on human problems. The superficiality of the reporting on the social issues is summed up by the assessment that:

"The socio-political context is a challenge, however significant progress has been made to ensure participation in decision making and the resolution of land claims, as well as economic and other benefits for local communities." (IUCN 2015, 2)

The report does not dig any deeper than this and the 'significant progress' is debatable, as many scholars have pointed out. Sunde and Moenieba Isaacs, writing about Marine Protected Areas in and around the park, claim that "to date, none of the parks has developed databases to monitor the impacts on the livelihoods of these communities" (Sunde and Isaacs 2008, 14) which makes it difficult to understand how 'significant progress' has been achieved when the mechanisms for

studying the situation have not even been instituted yet.

The following images are examples of the assessment criteria focus contained in the report. There is a heavy emphasis for the majority of the report on environment-only issues and only a cursory nod towards the social problems.

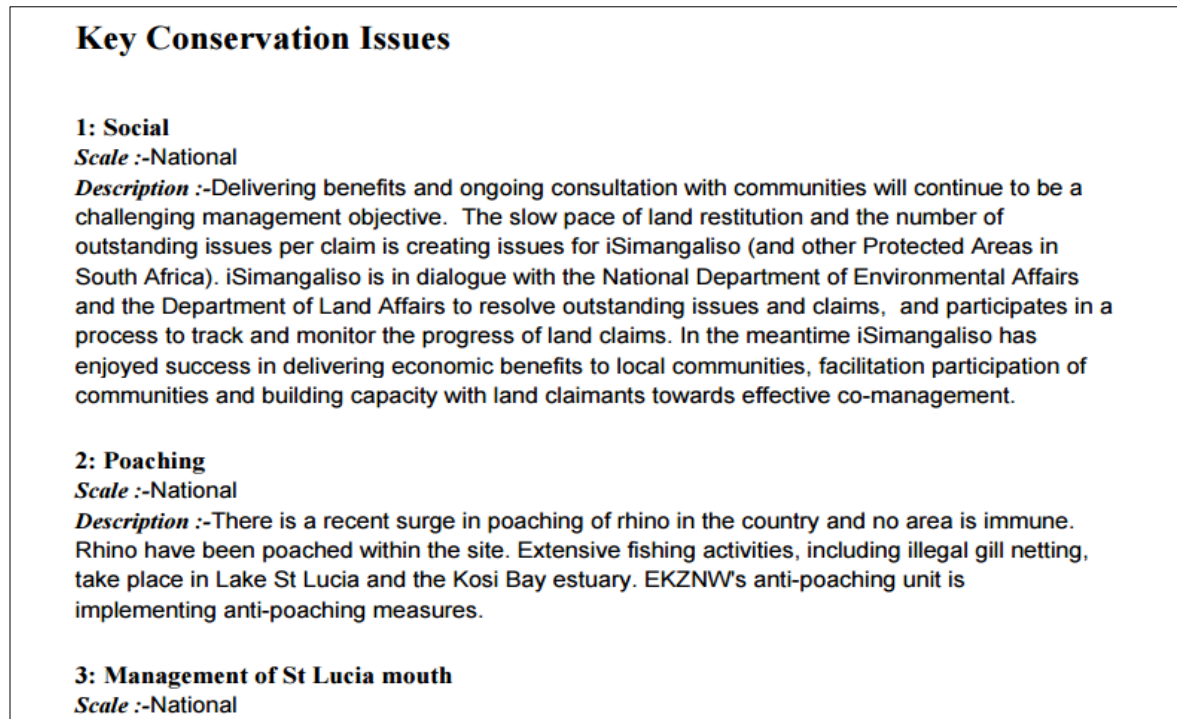


Image 19: Institutional requirements that the park must follow. A heavy emphasis is placed on the environment, with little on social responsibilities

3: Relationships with local people (including stakeholder relationships, participatory management, rights, and access to benefits and equity)

Protection Rating:-Effective

Justification :-The socio-political context at iSimangaliso is complex; made more so by the current land restitution process where 14 claims have been made against the site before it was listed as a world heritage site. There are 620 000 people living in the greater iSimangaliso area which, is the second poorest province in South Africa, with the high service delivery backlogs. Considerable effort and resources are allocated to the management and maintenance of relationships with communities. Significant achievements have been made to date with regards to participation of local communities in decision-making and the implementation of programmes that deliver tangible benefits to local communities. This does not mean that everyone supports conservation and the world heritage site. The experience of the loss of land under apartheid (and the concomitant suffering and anger towards the Park is within the living memory of the many claimants. However, the iSimangaliso Authority has the capacity and resources to maintain ongoing relationships with communities (Consultation with park authority, 2014) and thus, through this process strengthening resilience of the Park.

4: Research

Protection Rating:-Highly Effective

Justification :-There are currently 171 research project registered with the iSimangaliso Authority, which are being undertaken by researchers and post-graduate students from both South Africa and other countries (Consultation with park authority, 2014).

Research is approved on the basis of its contribution to management of the site, and to science in general. Research findings are fed into management decisions, and the iSimangaliso Authority commissions research required to assist with management of the site.

5: Tourism and visitation management

Image 20: The sparse information on social conditions contained in the report

The IUCN report is one example of the institutional requirements that IWP is involved in maintaining and adhering to. As Andrew Zaloumis explained, the park is reliant on the support and back of these international organisations and there is a strong emphasis on staying original and unique. In addition to this originality, they have to stay on top of all sort of reporting criteria and checklists. Placating these organisations is essential in the current model, as it allows the park to receive funding and encourage tourism and business ventures Govender Nerosha explained to our research group in 2015 that finding funding was a full-time job and multiple applications to all sorts of agencies was necessary (Fieldwork interview, 2015). This takes a toll on their time and energy, as they need to continuously seek funding, so losing an existing pull-factor is not on their agenda. However, with this heavy emphasis on adhering to this style of business and conservation prioritization, how are the local people being dealt with, and what instruments are being used to assess this?

7.4.Land Claims Sharing Model: iSimangaliso Wetland Park Authority Briefing

Some light is shed on the level of local people's involvement by observing an environmental affairs committee meeting, chaired by Mr P. Mapulane of the ANC, on August 30, 2016. with Terri Castis represented IWPA and, along with South African National Parks (SANParks), there were presentations about their strategies and models for community involvement and land claims. Officially, IWP was declared as "an authority accountable for the government mandate" in respect to settling land claims (Environment, Forestry and Fisheries 2016). The goal of this meeting was for the government to get an explanation and update on how local people in and around the parks were being treated – what the models the parks had for dealing with them.

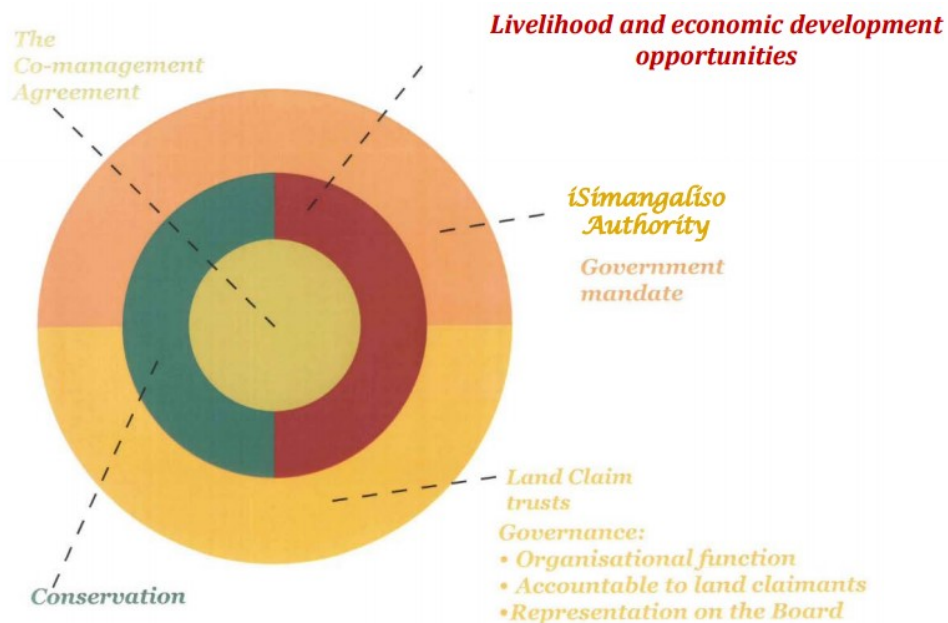
Castis outlined iSimangaliso's co-management strategies, presenting them as agreements that emphasised an equal distribution between conservation and economic opportunities for claimants. The claimants have both responsibilities and opportunities under this scheme; they have to put forward candidates for their boards and assume responsibility for the implementation of both local and co-management plans, as well as the investment of money on behalf of landowners. In return they receive access to resources, boards members to represent them, and income from a variety of programs and economic development opportunities (IWPA 2016, 10-12)

The Thonga Beach Lodge was presented as a case study, which is a partnership that splits the income and tourist concessions. A quick mention of problems in this agreement was noted, specifically around settling issues of the "payment of money under existing settlement agreements" (2016, 12). Whilst it is noted that some questions were asked in response to this presentation, the general consensus was positive from the committee member and it ends by stating that:

"The Chairperson felt the Committee received, from the briefings, a sense of the role national parks were playing in the communities where they were located. The information received would be taken and at this point, the Committee was pleased with the role national parks were playing especially in the communities in which they were located. He liked the concept of a wildlife economy where communities and emerging entrepreneurs were able to participate." (SANParks/IWPA 2016 meeting minutes)

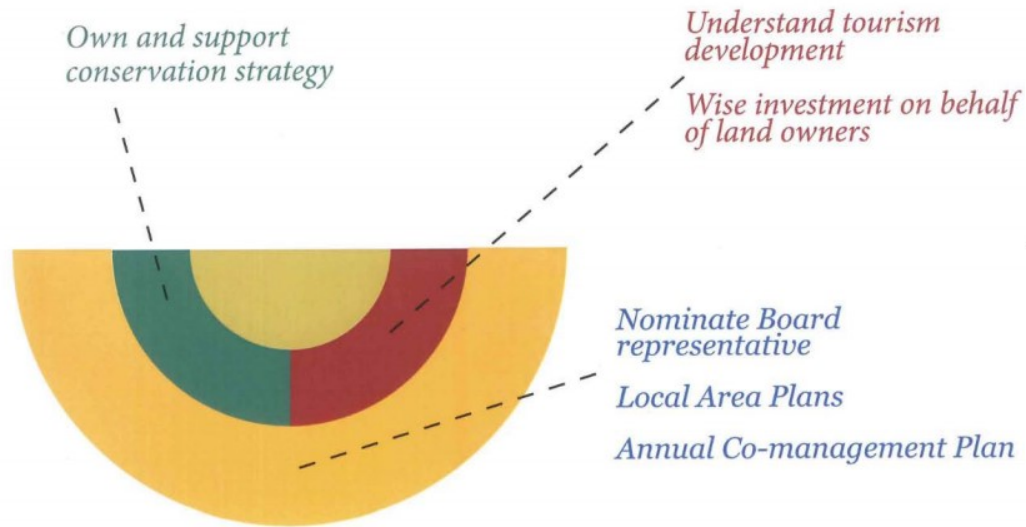
This presentation and the exchanges in the follow-up illustrate how the park authorities disseminate information to the government and the apparatus in which they do so. There was no critical reaction on behalf of the state, which shows that the park is free to run their agreements with local with no oversight. In essence, they have the power to self-regulate, which is problematic when there is no mention of the real shortcoming their programs have thrown up with local participants and communities. In contrast to the punishing reports examining each facet of the environmental protection, there is very little insight on the running of the land claims models from the national level. As we have already seen that the IUCN and other environmental organisations and stakeholders are focused on the natural world, the last possible fallback and bastion of social protection – the state – provides no oversight.

The slideshow that Castis presented has been made available for public record and it shows how iSimangaliso recognises co-management agreements:

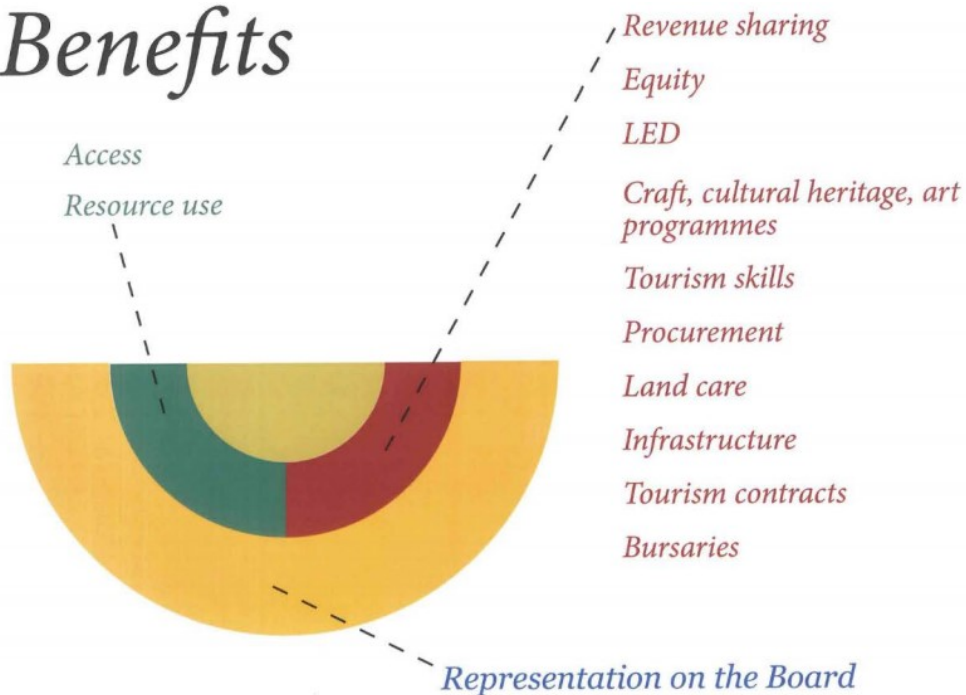


An equal emphasis between the claimants and IWPA is placed on conservation and the economic opportunities in this graph. The responsibilities and benefits for the claimants are then laid out:

Responsibilities (Trusts)



Benefits



There is quite a lot of depth to these benefits and responsibilities, which vary from one area to the next. After these slides, Castis provided an example of such an agreement. Thonga Beach Lodge is shown as one of three equity partnerships:

- Revenue sharing
- Equity partnerships: Thonga Beach Lodge, Rocktail Bay Beach Camp, Mabibi Camp – equity from 17.5 to 60%.
- Tourism activity concessions



Yet there are issues with Thonga that have been highlighted by researchers in the region. Despite having equity, and a ‘stake’ in the lodge, the local people have stated that they were unaware of this and have not received any money or benefits from this agreement. Castis herself referred briefly to some of the challenges that exist in these agreements, particularly regarding the “payment of money under existing settlement agreements in question”¹. This is not expanded upon. The minutes’ note that there were some brief explanatory follow-up responses from Ms. Castis about some questions committee members had. However, in general, the report concludes that:

“The Chairperson felt the Committee received, from the briefings, a sense of the role national parks were playing in the communities where they were located. The information received would be taken and at this point, the Committee was pleased with the role national parks were playing especially in the communities in which they were located. He liked the concept of a wildlife economy where communities and emerging entrepreneurs were able to participate” (SANParks/IWPA 2016 meeting minutes)

This briefing demonstrates the way that information about disputes is passed on from the authorities of the park to the governmental structure they answer to. It is relatively uncritical

and does not highlight the same issues that have been reported by researchers on the ground in these areas. In the next chapter, I will discuss researchers who have looked at how the decision-making processes occurring at these levels is not reaching the local communities.

8. Accounts from the ground

8.1. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) shorn of history

Sunde and Isaacs examined five MPAs in South Africa, including two in IWP - St Lucia MPA and the Maputaland MPA. In their 2008 study entitled *Marine Conservation and Coastal Communities: Who Carries the Costs?* they provide a comprehensive and scathing review about the treatment of small-scale fishers in these areas. The same characteristics are visible across the MPAs inside and outside IWP showing that this 'new' approach is falling into the same patterns as the rest of the country and is not offering a diversified approach. Where Ms. Castis says that there are uncertainties about the management of money amongst the people in land claim areas, they are explicit.

An important feature of IWP noted by the authors is the different competing and conflicting agencies and management groups that exist in tandem, or in opposition, to each other:

“The overlapping areas of jurisdiction between iSimangaliso and EKZNW, albeit for different functions, create considerable confusion, and there appears to be competing perspectives when it comes to issues related to research processes and protocols as they pertain to the fishing communities” (2008, 23)

The government set about trying to redress this issue, but progress has been stagnated from the outset. Marginalised communities were immediately pushed away as the government “adopted a more neoliberal stance by overlooking community participation in the redistribution of rights, and promoting a large, commercially and export-oriented macroeconomic strategy” (2008, 15). Across the board, the creation of management systems from the 1970's onwards began to limit the amount of fishing small-scale fishers could engage in. Even though subsistence fishers were finally recognised legally, the western instruments of control and power – permits and bureaucracy - have worked to decrease the number of individual fishers who can obtain legal rights to fish. Sunde and Isaacs use the expression “squeezed at all sides” (2008, 21) to describe the helplessness that the fishers feel in this situation. Local authorities are allowing tourist enterprises to set up in these historic fishing zones but are restricting the small and local fishers.

The major problem is that the fishers, whether they have legal rights and permits to fish, can

“participate in the management of the lagoon, and there is no effective mechanism for consultation” (2008, 21). This leads to confusion amongst the small-scale fishers as they have no access to information, except for what may be disseminated to them. Sitting atop this is the fact that the forums and groups that do advocate for an inclusive understanding of different groups needs end up disproportionately representing some views ahead of others, as expressed by Sunde and Isaacs:

“The discourse on rights has become distorted so that the park authorities appear to believe that their task is to balance the rights of different user groups—that is, to ensure that the ‘rights’ of the wealthy elite to holiday and enjoy a range of water sports are protected, at the expense of the poor fishers who depend on their use of the resource for their livelihoods. (2008, 21)

This creates major issues for small-scale fishers because the dominant discourse has become about what can be brought to the area in terms of economic opportunities. A tourist lodge taking in rich tourists promises jobs for the construction of such a place and revenue beyond this initial start-up phase as well. Alongside this is the absurd management decisions to restrict subsistence fishers’ ability to fish because they are overexploiting the stocks. Nobody is arguing for fish to be overfished but the hypocrisy lies in the fact that recreational fishing has no restrictions placed on it. Thus, the full brunt of these policies is being felt by the most vulnerable: those who need to fish to make a living.

The Thonga Beach Lodge is a prime example of a tourist enterprise overriding local fisher’s rights. They are not allowed any types of vessels, not even canoes. So, even beyond their own subsistence fishing, they are removed from engaging in alternative livelihood strategies. They would like to offer canoe rides for tourists, but this is regulated so that the Lodge has exclusive access to this. The local community has repeatedly expressed that they feel no benefits and have attempted to bring it to the attention of the authorities. A somewhat disturbing revelation discovered by the authors is that the Mabibi community “through the Mabibi Community Trust, owns a 68 per cent share in the R6.5-mn (US\$870,000) Thonga Beach Lodge and a 51 per cent share in the campsite” (2008, 27). Despite this, there has been no trickle down in the allocation of these funds; no infrastructure has been built or benefits directly seen by the locals. This illustrates the lack of understanding and information available for the local group and highlights the need for an “institutional mechanism” (2008, 27) for funds to be dispersed and concerns can

be aired and discussed.

The management and regulations of marine areas is demonstrably flawed. In four of the five areas that Sunde and Isaacs examined, people admitted to fishing illegally in order to survive. At the same time, within a stones-throw distance, large vessels are given unrestricted access to fish because they represent business and economic opportunity. As well as the continued restriction on fishing as a viable source of income or as a livelihood strategy, no alternatives are being offered to those affected. Sunde and Isaacs describe the transition from a top-down management policy that was in place during the apartheid era to a more participatory system as a “narrow, instrumental approach” because it does not seek to challenge the existing power structures. Instead, committees and governance systems are built to accommodate the “instrumental needs of orderly use, monitoring and compliance within communities” (2008, 38).

The experience of small-scale fishers in MPAs, both inside and outside IWP, is unfortunately an all-too-familiar scene of exploitation and marginalisation. An economic ideology underpins the discourse that promotes actors that promise jobs and revenue but there is a more complex weaving of interest groups that seek to look after themselves. No proper groups or committees have genuinely expressed the needs and desires of the local groups adequately and, so, they have not only not been given access to resources and opportunities, but they have gradually had rights removed. Sunde and Isaacs sum up the situation by describing how the “current approach to community participation in the governance of MPA resources tends to be instrumental rather than empowering” (2008, 41). This lies at the heart of the problem and must be addressed if local workers and communities can be lifted from restrictive areas of impoverishment.

8.2. The marginalised communities

As already outlined, there is a complex weaving of agencies and historical factors at play in the South Africa. Knut Nustad places land reform within a “nexus, where identities, social relations, rights and environments are intertwined” (Nustad 2015, 20). Attfield, Hattingh and Matshabaphala. Similarly compare the relationships between stakeholders as existing within:

“A complex triangular relationship between the concepts of land reform, sustainable livelihoods and sustainable development, entailing different areas and levels of necessary conceptual linkages, while at the same time revealing an array of contingent causal linkages” (2004, 2)

The nuances of the institutions and actors involved in governing is neatly described by Hansen, when explaining how IWP has been “produced from national ambitions for the conservation of ecological World Heritage – and the recognition that arises out of that – as well as for regional and national modernisation and economic growth strategies” (2014, 47). This recognition and these complex linkages have led to an emphasis on a model and system that favours a growth and income, which has been unequal in its dispersal in the region.

We have seen already that IWP has to answer and meet with an array of national governance groups and deal with international watchdogs. However, the continued duplication of previous structures marginalising people persist in the pursuit of conservation and this has revealed the inequity of ‘trickle-down’ and shown benefits not reaching all stakeholders at anywhere near even amounts. As Hansen notes, conservation is an “inherently political process, and the goals are often not achieved” (Hansen 2014, 159) and so, the ‘*hard choices*’ about what stakeholders to appease becomes a political process. Those with power and clout to lobby have tended to get preferential treatment and ultimately, in this new incarnation of IWP, “the imposition of new rules of governance for conservation management in the IWP also constrains the economic and social development activities of – and opportunities for – local users and inhabitants” (2014, 49).

For IWP this has a long history, stretching back to the formal proclamation of the park, when, since then, ‘new rules for conservation management have been imposed upon local users and inhabitants’ (Hansen 2014, 49) based on a model that restricts access. Rationally, an area cannot be protected without imposing restrictions. However, the aim in the area goes beyond a purist desire for conservation of an area to create a pristine, untouched land. However, advocating for this approach and excluding voices from these areas is the antithesis to the stated aims of the park. There does not have to be a heavy cost for the preservation of IWP, and it can avoid preserving existing class and social systems, as argued by Anand and Sen:

‘this goal of sustainability – increasingly recognized to be legitimate – would make little sense if the present life opportunities that are to be “sustained” in the future were miserable and indigent. Sustaining deprivation cannot be our goal, nor should we deny the less privileged today the attention that we bestow on generations of the future’ (2000, 2030)

Rather than maintaining this status quo, introducing strategies to create sustainable livelihoods has been presented as a solution. Attfield, Hattingh and Matshabaphala, agree that “without sustainable livelihoods, sustainable development could not as much as begin to be introduced into any society” (2004, 408) while Knut Nustad draws upon history to condemn conservation as “merely the latest incarnation of a long series of arguments used to justify” the dispossession of land from local communities (2015, 146) and the current co-management models are an superficial attempt to placate a need for settlements because the claimants never received ownership, but merely permission to live there. Echoing the arguments made by John Pilger about the country at large, Hansen discovered a people facing the same structural barriers and impediments to progress. One interviewee claimed that “it’s a new South Africa, but we are still living like in Apartheid times” (Hansen 2014, 121).

The lack of awareness in local communities was illustrated by A.T Nzama, who spoke with community members in the IWP area and concluded that “it is evident that there is still a need for more awareness programmes” (Nzama 2009, 40). A major issue in the region is sparse consultation occurring with the inhabitants of the land. The problem is twofold; local voices are not heard nor are their cultural practices understood, so there is no engagement with what they would want. The emphasis of dealing with leaders of communities, when any are dealt with at all, creates problems of their own, as traditional authority leaders in the area have lied to their communities and profited in their stead (Nustad 2015, 130).

8.2.1. The fracturing of local communities

To finish, it is worth looking at an example of a land claim close to IWP which shows conflict at the local community level. Frode Sundnes, writing in 2013, describes the main contentious issues surrounding a land claim of the Dukuduku forest. Sundnes describes the struggle as one about “different interpretations of what constitutes authority and community” (2013, 69). The history and complexity of the case illustrates the tensions existing amongst populations living

in disputed territories and the complex and confusing array of different actors and agencies involves in the land restitution process. The site has a long and complex history of land demarcation. Many people have been thrown off the land in the pursuit of resources. Thus, there has been many people seeking to reinstate themselves as the rightful owners of the land. They set up homes in the forest, becoming defined as illegal squatters and sought to remain in the area.

In the early 1990's, seven forest dwellers were arrested, and homes were demolished. This led to the forest becoming a battleground where violent confrontations took place. Along with the physical altercations between dwellers of the area and authorities, there were negotiations taking place. These sought to appease all the different groups involved by relocating the forest dwellers. The different groups included "the forest industry, conservation authorities, environmental lobby groups, commercial farmers, and the forest dwellers" (2013, 74). A township called Khula was created as a solution: the forest dwellers would be relocated in this space north of the forest. This was not completely accepted by the people living in the forest and split the group into two groups. 500 people left with Caiphus Mkhwanazi, a relative of the traditional authority, Inkosi Mkhwanazi. Each group resented the position of the other, seeing their stance as a betrayal. This split illuminates the complex human relations occurring below the formal authority structures at the national and regional levels. Even amongst those who left, some kept their plots in the forest, "while moving to Khula to hedge their bets as the outcome of the events was highly unpredictable" (2013, 76).

Those who remained behind decided to sell spaces to newcomers to fund their legal fees. The purchasers of these pockets did not have the same historical ties to the land that previous settlers had. They had wide-ranging reasons for moving to the area so it's difficult to imagine that they all shared a unified stance on why they were in the forest. However, Sundnes argues that the pressure put on the forest dwellers united them:

"[...] repeated intimidation and harassment exercised by conservation and forestry authorities, a sense of community has increasingly been mobilised around the struggle for continued inhabitation of the forest" (2013, 76)

The divisions and unification of people at the local level becomes increasingly difficult to

discern and from interviews with forest dwellers, Sundnes found that there was a lot of bitterness and resentment amongst the dwellers relating to historic treatment with the traditional authority. One is quoted as saying that “the land was sold by the Mkhwanazis to the white people” (ibid, 78) and the belief persists that they profited from this demarcation of land, leaving the people kicked off the land alienated and having to fend for themselves wherever they could. This meant that the forest dwellers saw themselves “freed from subjugation under the traditional authority” (ibid, 79). Further fissures in unity occurred even between land claimants in the forest. Despite wanting every member to be recognised equally, those who had historically been attached to the land felt they should comprise the leadership community because “they are in a better position to enter into negotiations and have a history of removal and a sound knowledge of the boundaries” (ibid, 82). Sundnes says that this displays a prevalence to contest issues of authority and leadership as opposed to land use and access.

This inability to tackle land ownership has allowed the traditional authority to re-enter the picture, with its “reclamation of authority and jurisdiction over the forest” (Sundnes 2013, 83). Worryingly for the forest dwellers, the traditional authority has “undermined the land claimants’ legitimacy in all stages in the evolution of the land claim” (ibid, 83). Frustratingly for the claimants, their *Vezobala Committee*, formed when the others left for the Khula village, visibly demonstrates the type of messy and muddy differences within the group. Their leader, or councillor, battled for years against the authorities and became the central hub through which outside interactions flowed. He was then appointed by the local authorities in 2009 to “induna for Dukuduku under the Mkhwanazi traditional authority”, essentially placing control of the area under stewardship of the traditional authority figures and not the Dukuduku Land Claims Committee (ibid, 81). Sundnes summarises the situation as follows:

“At Dukuduku, the claimants perceive themselves as having, through the land claim, been liberated from a traditional authority not protecting them in the past. Now, however, they are witnessing the strengthening of the very same authority’s power over the forest and its re-entry into the struggle over it, through the appointment of a community leader opposed to the claim as the *induna* for the forest. An important factor in these developments has been the ability to define *the struggle* itself” (ibid, 84).

Undoubtedly the prevalence of neoliberal policies in the construction of tourist enterprises and the ‘paying off’ of traditional authorities is a malevolent force in IWP. However, the case of

Dukuduku illuminates the complex interactions of local groups and how they can tear communities apart. Deeply entrenched historical divisions and resentment led to shifts in allegiance. The value the forest-dwelling claimants placed on authority over land access has ultimately displayed a lack of awareness and knowledge about their legal rights and harmed the claim. It is absolutely correct to critically challenge the IWPA and other official authorities. The disputed money paid to the traditional authorities, which led to resentment from the group, must be examined. Local groups social hierarchies and interactions must also be understood to achieve a more nuanced interpretation of the situation which can be used to strengthen, not undermine, their legal claims.

9. Conclusion

Conservation arrived into this world as a concept not merely as a benevolent concept intended to safeguard endangered zones from ‘destructive’ human practices and processes. It had developed in the USA and Europe as a response to rapidly industrialising cities and the encroachment on spaces intended for use by the richest in the society. The Romantic period in Europe and the turn to gazing at the natural world was a reaction to the choking conditions of this new urban environment, and the problems - intellectually, psychologically, emotionally – that people were having with it. These factors, combined with the exotic, fantastical, evocative language of conquest adventure from African colonialization formed new ways of imagining the world. Even if it had emerged benevolently, the early practices of conservation were mainly an exercise in control and elite privilege – creating spaces for hunting and leisure for the select wealthy few.

While there have been deviations in conservation thought and practice around the world from then up to the present day, many similarities are evident cross-culturally. One of the most common features of land tenure globally has been the removal of the poorest and most discriminated members of the country. Nowhere is this as clear as it is in South Africa.

It is true that IWP is still relatively young and it can list many natural conservation projects as successes. It has welcomed thousands of visitors through its gates and exceeded their wildest dreams. It fended off the challenge of an international mining company and has consistently done so for the past two decades. It has created some jobs and generated some money through tourism and the influx of capital from those means. Its formation in a post-Apartheid state has brought many challenges; the hangover of distrust between person and authority based on decades and centuries of subjugation has carried over into relations between communities and the IWPA.

These “successes” are dependent on defining what success is and how it should be viewed and perceived. Undoubtedly the situation was terrible in the 90s, when the country was celebrating the emergence from apartheid but, policy-wise, was bleary-eyed and stumbling around in the dark trying to get a grip on how to manage the resources of the country and come to terms with

decades upon centuries of oppression.

Despite acknowledging these complex problems, there are clear shortcomings when it comes to the disparity between the aims and achievements claimed by the IWPA, and the contested marginalization felt by people on the ground. The research conducted by multiple independent writers simply cannot be ignored. Different perspectives in the area highlight how governance structures are seen in contradictory terms. The convoluted nature of the IWP answering to a global institution, as well as national and local authorities complicates and confuses people both working and living in and on the fringes of the park. There is ample evidence to suggest that economic logic and ideological preferences are leading to certain actors in the area receiving many more benefits than others, and this has been a result of a continuation of policies in the country at large. IWP has spoken about trying to arrest this cycle but the reporting of excluded voices on the ground in the pursuit of bureaucratic arrangements with governance structures is testimony to the opposite happening.

There is strong advocacy from the park for a tourism-based approach to alleviating poverty. The successes in this regard are small and there are more and more cases emerging that show it is having the opposite effect for entire communities. Some of the strategies adopted have had successes, but each situation must be dealt with uniquely, accounting for the complexity of historical contexts in that area. Democracy arrived in the country twenty-five years ago, but the wealthy class did not suddenly lose influence or power. Rich landowners and businesspeople maintained their control and, based on free-market principles, have sought to enrich and improve upon their status. An ideological battle exists between those who want to expose the park to as many profit-generating enterprises as possible and those who argue that this is counter-intuitive to promoting and maintaining inclusive development strategies for communities. It is clear from case studies in the park that privileged actors are being presented with access, resources and business opportunities while others are being systematically marginalised through either physical restriction, a lack of access to opportunities and knowledge or/and the creation and implementation of western-style instruments of power that require people to apply for permits that they never receive or, in some cases, are completely ignored. It is understandable in these circumstances that local communities respond by flaunting these regulations. Their deep-seated distrust of authorities that they perceive to exclude them has manifested itself in resistance, both

physical and non-confrontational. Far be it for me to put forward actionable future solutions but it seems clear that for any measure of real co-management to become a reality, there must be arduous, pain-staking work done to build trust and communication at the local levels of communities. The trust and mutual respect between local communities and administrative bodies has been eroded, if it had ever established in the first place, and is one of the key areas that needs to be addressed for participatory conservation to be a realistic aim.

While there has been a lot of criticism towards western-style governance supplanting local and traditional hierarchies, it has also been evident that some of these leaders are flawed too, so looking to implement changes at a national or regional administrative level alone is not going to work. A challenge going forward for discourse around sustainable development and conservation has been highlighted through the case of IWP – there is no template or fixed strategy that will bring harmony and prosperity to places of disputed land ownership and displaced peoples. Promoting a park as a new and innovative model that can completely reshape the current environmental landscape appears to be a wonderful marketing strategy for attracting tourism and revenue, but it is also misinformed and disingenuous with regards to the wider effects occurring within local communities in the area.

The studies that are grounded in fieldwork and grassroots activism strongly advocate for local people having a say in how the community manages resources and distributes wealth. The absence of understanding among people in these communities about their supposed stake in lodges and tourist ventures shows that much work needs to be done to realise the alignment of the lofty aims on paper with real action on the ground.

Effectively, one has to conclude that IWP is not providing benefits for every community and opening up opportunities for massive amounts of local residents. That is clear from a statistical point of view alone. Given the fact that there are 600,000 people around the park, and it is one of the poorest areas of the country, it is not feasible to produce enough work to support everyone there. However, the yard stick of failure or success is being judged on how well it is doing within the context of a neoliberal economic management structure. The management plans and proposals we have seen all outline booms and busts, ups and downs, peaks and valleys in global tourism flows, in opportunities to create businesses. That is the history of capitalism as a whole. IWP is both succeeding and failing within that model, and it has been viewed as both an

admirable and crusading success (and failure) by its fans and also as an abject failure by its critics.

The park operates within a country that operates in a capitalist system and all of the available evidence points to a management apparatus and approach that favours the conservation of land for the purpose of keeping it wild. This is argued to have a number of beneficial purposes in the conservation paradigm; it protects and allows a 'wild' or 'natural' ecosystem that prevents human activity from affecting the plant or animal life in the area; it reverses and replenishes the natural life there to conditions not seen since heavy human intervention; it allows for ecotourism and eco-business to thrive because of the richness and uniqueness of the area.

One of the central issues that arises with this approach from critics is that it writes out previous generations of humans who have lived on this land for centuries. It erases their entire history of interactions with the environment and places a blanket use restriction over the area as it is too risky and damaging to the park to have human processes undermine their efforts. Scholars and locals in the area point out a number of hypocritical assumptions in this approach; it assumes that because western nations came and engaged with the land in a highly destructive way that that is the only way humans will interact with the land; they don't actually restrict use on the land completely, they just limit who is seen to be worthy of having access to it and under what conditions. Wealthy tourists who can afford to travel are afforded every right to drive through the park and lodges receive the lion's share of permits to fish. This reduction of potential human processes in the area totally obfuscates the generations of subsistence communities in the area who got by through fishing and farming the land.

In private conversations with many people who had some modicum of power or steady jobs and also with observers of the situation from the outside I heard on many occasions that it was not possible to have this utopian concept of the Africans living on this land. "I can assure you", one academic told me, "that the Africans would destroy the land and ruin it in a few short years." There is a sentiment among many people with a stake in the park that it is inconceivable that the local population would have the knowledge or skills to maintain the environment in a sustainable way.

Before leaving for the fieldwork phase in 2015, my leading hypothesis was that the local people

were not receiving benefits and, in some cases, being forcibly removed from their land and denied access to resources because of neoliberal free-market principles and practices. The time spent there for fieldwork shed some light on this but as it was very limited in scope and time, it not substantive enough alone to come to a clear conclusion one way or another. After returning from the fieldwork, I conducted further secondary research which again pointed heavily in the direction of supporting the initial hypothesis. The current state of the research is that the majority of authors on the topic support the view that local populations often face harsh penalties for encroaching on protected land, much of which was historically taken from them in the first place. This situation is not unique to IWP, not to South Africa.

Whilst the situation in IWP at the moment is predicated on a neoliberal system of maximising profits, the historical evidence in the area shows that there have been major issues with land tenure under multiple governance structures. However, when assessing the current governance system, the research and data points toward a massively unequal distribution of access in favour of tourism-led operations, not toward understanding what system would work best for the local communities. As the vast majority of other ecotourism destinations around the world have illustrated, imposing western-style instruments of tourism and governance lead to some minor successes but do not at all help to integrate local people into the environmental stewardship of the land or create a framework for sustainable living going forward.

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Abstracts

English abstract

Climate change is currently experiencing a surge in public interest due to the immediate threats facing the survival of many species on the planet. Environmental protection and conservation are key points of intersection that require thorough discussion and planning. With that in mind, now is an interesting time to examine the role that historical forces continue to play in conservation practices today, and iSimangaliso Wetland Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site located in South Africa is an ideal location as a case study. Proclaimed as a World Heritage Site 20 years ago, it has endured a troubled and turbulent history, and in its short time as an international conservation site has implemented many policies that have some commentators calling it the future blueprint of national parks in Africa. However, critical voices are also present, and they point to the effects that free market principles have on the management of such a park and the local communities affected by it. This paper will examine the history of conservation in South Africa, as well as internationally, and analyse how iSimangaliso Wetland Park is coping 20 years into its life as a global leader in conservation.

Deutsches Abstract

Der Klimawandel erfährt derzeit aufgrund der unmittelbaren Bedrohung des Überlebens vieler Tierarten einen Anstieg des öffentlichen Interesses. Umweltschutz und Naturschutz sind wichtige Schnittpunkte, die eine ausführliche Diskussion und Planung erfordern. Vor diesem Hintergrund ist jetzt ein interessanter Zeitpunkt, die Rolle historischer Kräfte zu untersuchen, die auch heute noch die Naturschutzpraxis beeinflussen, und der iSimangaliso Wetland Park, ein UNESCO-Welterbe in Südafrika, ist ein idealer Ort für eine Fallstudie. Vor 20 Jahren zum Weltnaturerbe erklärt, hat er eine bewegte und turbulente Geschichte hinter sich und in seiner kurzen Zeit als internationales Naturschutzgebiet viele Maßnahmen umgesetzt, die von einigen Kommentatoren als die zukünftige Blaupause der Nationalparks in Afrika bezeichnet werden. Vor 20 Jahren zum Weltnaturerbe erklärt, hat der Park eine turbulente Geschichte hinter sich. In seiner kurzen Zeit als internationales Naturschutzgebiet wurden hier viele Maßnahmen umgesetzt, die von einigen Kommentatoren als zukünftige Blaupause der Nationalparks in Afrika bezeichnet werden. Es gibt jedoch auch kritische Stimmen, die auf die Auswirkungen der Prinzipien des freien Marktes auf die Verwaltung eines solchen Parks und die von ihm betroffenen lokalen Gemeinschaften hinweisen. In diesem Beitrag wird die Geschichte des Naturschutzes in Südafrika, wie auch auf internationaler Ebene untersucht und es wird analysiert, wie nach 20 Jahren iSimangaliso Wetland Park als führendes Naturschutzgebiet zurechtkommt.