

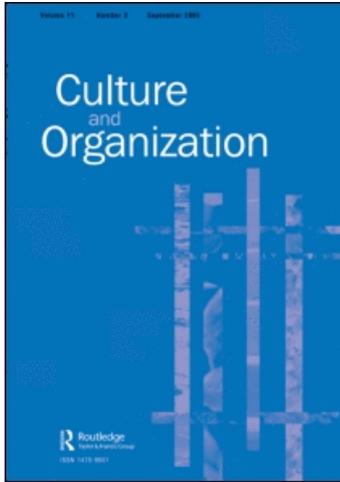
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### African dreams of cohesion: elite pacting and community development in transfrontier conservation areas in southern Africa

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# African Dreams of Cohesion: Elite Pacting and Community Development in Transfrontier Conservation Areas in Southern Africa

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In this paper we argue that there is a paradox in the managerial attempt of the South African Peace Park Foundation, to foster cohesion within the development of Trans Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) in southern Africa by focusing on community participation and development. Cohesion is mainly found at the level of the elite – both European and African – promoting the idea of the TFCAs, which provides them with opportunities to develop ‘Super-African’ identities, based on identifying with nature and the landscape rather than the nation-state. The imagery about the African landscape on which this process is based has its roots in colonial and primitivist discourse on Africa and Africans which includes Africans in the concept of landscape, but only if apparently unadulterated by modernity. This ultimately presents a problem for the TFCAs development and its aim to develop local communities: if local people would indeed economically develop, with all the material consequences, they would no longer belong in the inclusive European aesthetics of the African landscape.

**Key words:** Trans Frontier Conservation Areas; African Identities; Community Development; National Parks; Images of African Landscape

## AN AFRICAN DREAM: ‘THE GREATEST ANIMAL KINGDOM’

According to the former South African Minister of Environment and Tourism, Mohammed Valli Moosa,

Southern African boundaries have begun to fall as we and our neighbours embrace the world’s most ambitious conservation project, the creation of Africa’s ‘superpark’. This is the stuff dreams are made of. We are the fortunate generation of South Africans who have witnessed dreams turn to reality. [...] John Lennon shared his dreams with us when he sang: ‘Imagine there’re no countries. It isn’t hard to do. Nothing to kill or die for ...’ The creation of the great Gaza-Kruger-Trans-Frontier Park is the single most significant and ambitious conservation project in the world today. It promises to bring a better life to some of the poorest citizens of southern Africa, and is also a real, living and demonstrable manifestation of the African Renaissance. [...] Nature and dreams know no boundaries. As John Lennon sang: ‘You may say that I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one; I hope some day you’ll join us, and the world will live as one.’ (Moosa 2002: 11–12)

Dreaming is a common theme in literature on the Afrikaner white community in southern Africa: dreams about a special relation with God (Sparks, 1991: 110–12; 169; 244), about the necessary order in the political sphere (De Villiers, 1988) and about the future of South African business (Hunt and Lascaris, 1998). Most recently a post-national dream has

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crystallized in visions of large cross-boundary conservation areas to serve peace and stability in the region - Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas (TFCAs) (Hanks, 1999).

There is no single definition of TFCAs (de Villiers, 1999), but the one most commonly used is 'a relatively large area that straddles the boundaries of two or more countries, and covers large-scale natural systems, encompassing one or more protected areas as well as multiple resource areas' (de Villiers, 1999: 12–13; [www.peaceparks.org/faq](http://www.peaceparks.org/faq)). The creation of TFCAs involves establishing organizational networks linking the public domain, the private sector, NGOs and communities living in and around these areas. One of the prime lobbying and facilitating organizations for these TFCAs in southern Africa is the South African Peace Park Foundation (PPF), presided by Anton Rupert who started his career as a nationalist thinker in the Afrikaner *Broederbond*, which sought to empower Afrikaners in the business world (Wilkins and Strydom, 1978). The establishment and development of Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas as a vehicle for conservation and sustainable use of biological and cultural resources has the objective of facilitating and promoting regional peace, cooperation and socio-economic development ([www.environment.gov.za](http://www.environment.gov.za)).

By arguing that the creation of TFCAs will be a prime motor for economic development of local communities in southern Africa, the initiative claims social and economic legitimacy. With this claim the proponents follow the new global conservation priority of 'people and parks', which developed in the wake of the Bali declaration of 1982, that protected areas should 'serve human society' (Carruthers, 1997: 134). In 1987 the Brundtland-report confirmed this political line in which environmental concerns were linked to economic development through the agenda of 'sustainable development' (Brundtland Commission, 1987: vii).

The PPF has taken this global vision to heart and started a 'Peace Park Development Programme' (PPDP). In an overview of its mission statement the then Director of the PPDP, Mr Leonard Seelig (in Speets, 2001: 14), formulated it as follows:

The mission of the PPDP is to bolster the sustainability of southern African transfrontier conservation areas in which the PPF is active, by promoting rural economic opportunity and development based on the sustainable consumptive and non-consumptive use of indigenous resources while fostering ecosystem integrity and biodiversity preservation.

The PPF worked through the media to disseminate this message, mainly through the formidable lobbying and fund-raising capacities of John Hanks, its then Executive Director (Addison, 1997: 66). When the first TFCA was launched in 1999 the *Saturday Argus* reported that 'in a move hailed by conservationists as a model for the future, South Africa and Botswana have signed an historic agreement that will see the creation of the Kgalagadi Trans-Frontier Park – the first official "peace park" on the African continent' (*Saturday Argus*, 17/18 April 1999).

Dr. John Hanks is adamant that communities living adjacent to Peace Parks will benefit directly from the tourism generated, resulting in stability and the use of land for conservation. [...] 'We feel very strongly about making the communities *our partners* in the growth of tourism – small loans will go to local communities associated with Peace Parks who want to do anything associated with the tourist industry from small campsites to the marketing of quality curios', he said.<sup>1</sup>

In the Afrikaans newspapers, the PPF and its president Anton Rupert are promoted as a beacon of hope for Africa's future (see for example *Die Burger*, 26 May 1999). It seems clear that TFCAs are 'conservation's grand dream for Africa'. The local and global press are almost universally enthused with this dream-come-true (see for example *Avis Companion*, 1998; *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 21 March 1998).

<sup>1</sup>Unknown, 'Mandela approves first Trans-Frontier Conservation Area'. Emphasis added.

However, in the midst of all this enthusiasm, some critical voices can be heard as well (see for example *The Mail and Guardian*, 26 April 2002). TFCAs, and especially the Great Limpopo – the largest TFCA to date, linking three countries in the region: South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe – have come to represent much that begs for explanation. Realistic analysis that digs deeper than the prolific hopeful gloss, and examines the historical and social forces at work, is called for. Carruthers – whose work has highlighted the influence on nature conservation of surges of global protectionism, coinciding with local currents of nationalism – warned that contemporary initiatives like the TFCAs bring ‘the possibility of a new kind of imperialism by way of intervention from a power base outside the region’ (Carruthers, 1997: 135; see also Ewing, 2001). Sensitized by this remark, we critically examine the attempts by the PPF to foster cohesion within the organizational network implicated in TFCA development.

The TFCAs attract substantial international capital. According to the South African ecotourism magazine, *Getaway*, the remaining wildness of Africa may be its only hope for overcoming its poverty and competing in the global economy: ‘Probably the safest prediction that one can make is that shortly the world’s fastest-growing market, tourism, will be chasing the world’s fastest shrinking product: wilderness’ (Pinnock, 1996: 18). In order for TFCAs to contribute to poverty alleviation, a sense of cohesion among all stakeholders is required. However, whether local communities will actually become equal partners in the TFCAs, as John Hanks claimed, and will benefit from them, is a moot point.

In this article, we argue that through the TFCAs the PPF manages to foster cohesion between the old – mainly white – and new political and business elites in post-apartheid South Africa. This is done by developing a new ‘Super-African’ identity based on bonding with nature. Furthermore, in the new South Africa the old elite needs to show concern for the formerly disadvantaged groups, and one way of doing so is through community conservation. However, we also maintain that the bonding of old and new elites in nature evolves around the invocation of a de-politicized, aesthetic Edenic landscape. This invocation seems to be based on a colonial – rather primitivist – discourse on Africa and Africans. According to Neumann (2000), in this discourse, still prevalent in many conservation and development agencies, African local communities tend to be divided into ‘good’ and ‘bad natives’ depending on how close they are to nature. The closer they are to nature the ‘better’ they are and the more they have the right to stay in the area and benefit economically from conservation initiatives. The more ‘modern’ they are, the more they pose a threat to the success of nature conservation and the farther away they should be kept from these conservation areas (Neumann, 2000: 212). Hence, we argue that the cohesion created among old and new elites through representations of nature causes a problem in relation to the justification forwarded for the TFCAs – the need to develop the poor local communities – because if the poor communities would indeed economically develop, with all the material consequences, they would no longer belong in the inclusive European aesthetics of the African landscape. In other words, they would develop from ‘good’ to ‘bad natives’. In managerial terms, the specific attempts made by PPF to foster cohesion among all parties involved, paradoxically lead to the further marginalization of the intended beneficiaries of TFCA development.

## **SUPER AFRICANS AND SUPER PARKS: ELITE PACTING IN TFCA DEVELOPMENT**

In October 2001, 30 elephants were released from the Kruger National Park into Mozambican territory. This occasion coincided with Anton Rupert’s 84th birthday. Symbolically

presided over by Nelson Mandela in October 2001, it was an extraordinary celebration of Africanism running roughshod over the wishes of an estimated 30,000 affected villagers across the border who feared that the elephants might threaten their crops (*Mail and Guardian*, 26 April, 3 May 2002; RRP, 2002: 3). One reading could see it as a celebration of the marriage of nations, with the elephants being Mandela's *lobola* (bride price) for his wife, Graça Machel.<sup>2</sup> It could also be interpreted as a culmination of Rupert's career, which has spanned being founder and chairman of the Rembrandt Tobacco Company and head of Rothmans International, and close involvement with the Afrikaner secret society, the *Broederbond*; he is one of the richest men in South Africa. He was involved in establishing the South African Nature Foundation (SANF) in the late 1960s, early 1970s. This was the local division of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF, formerly the World Wildlife Fund) and was established when the world had begun to isolate South Africa. The SANF was conceived through close alliance with the WWF's first President, Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, who was considered to be an ally of white South Africa (Ellis, 1994: 59).

The Mandela–Moosa–Rupert initiative represents a push for an inclusive African identity – a new idea of homeland. Moosa's vision of 'the greatest animal kingdom' is a sincere attempt at resolving the riddle of the national question in South Africa, through identifying with nature and the region, above the nation state. The issue of identity is as acute for Indian South Africans as it is for Afrikaners.<sup>3</sup> Kader Asmal made it clear upon taking office as Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry in 1994, that he did not believe that the borders inherited from colonial legacy are real:

[...] no one can tell me that my moral obligation stops with the Tsongas in the Eastern Transvaal and does not encompass those who live in the western parts of Mozambique.' Asmal was careful to point out that South Africa was not going to be the leader as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) embraced internationalism. South Africa would play an important but not a '[...] hegemonistic role [...] Modesty is part of reconstruction [...] We must learn some modesty in our relations with our neighbours too.<sup>4</sup>

Those were the days of SADC and the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which was the ANC's election promise document, drawn up in consultation with organized labour and civil society. It foresaw heavy state intervention in the economic sphere to bring about a better life to all. Within a couple of years, the government's macro-economic policy changed to the neo-liberal supply-oriented approach to development of GEAR (Growth, Equity And Redistribution) that emphasized the opening up of trade and a heavy private sector role in development. The switch took place at the level of the elite following the trend of the pacts made in the negotiation process prior to 1994 (Bond, 2000; Hart, 2002). An increasing number of prominent ANC negotiators ended up joining the companies of members of the white business elite who also participated in the negotiations. This was a further step in the process of 'elite pacting' (see Carmody, 2002). This process had started when members of the white business elite, among them Anton Rupert, had come to the conclusion that apartheid was not (any longer) in the economic interests of corporate South Africa (Adam *et al.*, 1998).

While the shift towards GEAR may have revealed confusion about the way development should be brought about by the new government, it also had a good deal to do with coming to terms with government's limited capacity in terms of economic and other forms of capital. In

<sup>2</sup>Graça Machel, who is married to Nelson Mandela, is from Mozambique. She is the widow of the late Mozambican President, Samora Machel.

<sup>3</sup>This became particularly acute in 2002 with the controversy around Mbongeni Ngema's song 'AmaIndia' which popularises the stereotype of South African Indians lording it over and exploiting black Africans.

<sup>4</sup>Asmal, K. (25-27 November 1994) 'Opening Address' *Greening the RDP: People, Environment, Development*, Environmental Justice Networking Forum Constitutive Conference, Johannesburg.

relinquishing an important part of its responsibility to the private sector, the new government lost control over the development process (Carmody, 2002). 'Modesty' in international relations was replaced by a self-confident, competitive entrepreneurial spirit. As a result, it seems that regional cooperation is increasingly seen as extending entrepreneurial opportunities across the borders.

The loss of modesty is best illustrated by Cyril Ramaphosa's presentation, which followed Minister Moosa's opening of the World Wilderness Congress in 2001. Ramaphosa, a former giant of ANC politics and leader of the country's biggest trade-union federation, COSATU, left politics for business where he leads initiatives for black economic empowerment. Introduced by a dramatic overture of an African wildlife film, his face was projected onto the screen and he boomed into the microphone 'Did you hear the lion roar? That's ME!' He had come to announce the 'My Acre of Africa' project at Kruger National Park, seeking to raise, mostly foreign, capital for conservation and black empowerment by appealing to donors' desire for, amongst other things, immortality. Ramaphosa's company 'Johnnic' is poised, however, to take the lion's share. Mark Gevisser (*Mail and Guardian*, 11–17 October 1996) wrote in an insightful biographical sketch of Ramaphosa that:

As the Randlords harnessed capital in the service of Empire and the Broeders harnessed it in the service of Afrikaner Nationalism, Ramaphosa goes to battle for Black Empowerment. In all three of these phases of South African capitalism, there is a synergy between the ideological aspirations of a ruling class and the personal ambitions of the entrepreneurs themselves: it is not inaccurate, on one level, to compare Ramaphosa to a Rhodes or a Rupert.

Rhodes sought immortality on a granite hill in the Matopos National Park in Zimbabwe. Ramaphosa is well remembered for his fishing trip with the Nationalist's Roelf Meyer during a deadlock in the Kempton Park negotiations in 1992. They bonded in nature sufficiently to get the peace process on track again (Draper, 2002). Like Moosa, Ramaphosa is given to lyricism about our natural heritage, his soul, and the eco-poetics of nature.

The project of expanding the Kruger over the neighbour's borders seems to be driven by a combination of a new form of 'Super-African' nationalism, coupled with local and international capital interests. 'Nationalizing' through identifying with nature is not new. A settler's desire for an African identity provided a major impetus in the creation of the WWF. It came in the form of a letter from Victor Stolan to Sir Julian Huxley in 1960:

Since my naturalisation, I am proud to call this country mine, but I cannot help feeling that it has become a country of understatements, of gentle talk with not enough push behind it. If [...] what is left of wildlife in Africa (and elsewhere for that matter) is to be saved, a blunt and ruthless demand must be made to those who, with their riches, can build for themselves a shining monument in history [...].

Stolan was clearly identifying his *naturalization* with Africa's *nature* rather than any particular nation. It was this concern that prompted him to declare that there is 'no time for Victorian procedure' (Scott, 1965: 26–7). The 'blunt and ruthless demand' was for African land on which people lived. Writing during the apartheid government's twilight, Ellis (1994) saw in Rupert's dream of extending the Kruger into Mozambique, the drive for territorial control and a *boerestaat* (white homeland) outside of the South African constitution in which some control over the means of violence was retained. In other words 'a Super-Park for Super-Afrikaners' (cf. Wilkins and Strydom, 1978).

The quest for identity and fulfilment by the global elite is that of the restless settler. As Mamdani (1998: 6) defines settlers, they need not be white, only constantly on the move. They may be in quest of greener pastures for profit making, or perhaps manipulating global capital in an elusive quest for homeland. The response of local communities, however, has been a concern for livelihood strategies and a call for environmental justice: 'not in my backyard', especially no elephants!

## THE SETTLERS' QUEST FOR IDENTITY: IMAGERY ABOUT AFRICAN LANDSCAPES AND AFRICANS

In the process of 'naturalization' through identifying with nature, imagery about landscapes plays an important role (cf. Schama, 1996). Conservationists Adams and McShane (1992: 5–7) argue that even today, western imagery about Africa's landscape is often expressed in terms of the ultimate aesthetic natural icon, the 'lost Eden'.

Much of the emotional as distinct from the economic investment which Europe made in Africa has manifested itself in a wish to protect the natural environment as a special kind of 'Eden' for the purposes of the European psyche rather than as a complex and changing environment in which people actually have to live [...]. Africa has been portrayed as offering the opportunity to experience a wild and natural environment which was no longer available in the domesticated landscapes of Europe. (Anderson and Grove, 1987: 4)

Africa became synonymous with a European sense of authenticity, both naturally and as a model of how people should relate to nature, and blend into it.

The Edenic vision of the landscape was capable of accommodating an African presence, because incorporated in the Eden myth is the myth of the noble savage. The noble savage, being closer to nature than civilization, could, hypothetically, be protected *as a vital part* of the natural landscape. (Neumann, 1998: 18, italics added)

It seems that in the European perspective Africa and its people only get shape, meaning and personality against the physical background of the landscape. Europeans developed a paradoxical image of the African Other. On the one hand the African was considered an authentic 'noble savage', on the other hand a violent and promiscuous barbarian. This primitive Other was crucial in the construction of a European identity: 'In this way the production of images of the non-Western Other and its place is integral to the formation of a *contrasting* identity of self' (Neumann, 2000: 227; see also Torgovnick, 1990). It led to a highly ambivalent primitivist discourse based on a very asymmetrical power relation in which Europe was the dominant party.

European standards of aesthetics, i.e. ethnocentric aesthetics, both with regards to landscape and African people, played an important role in the representations through photographs, literature and art on Africa and Africans in Europe. Most representations depict the paradoxical attitude of fear and attraction, which many Europeans had with regard to Africa and Africans. Such a combination was often deliberately manipulated in visual and literary representations to keep the audience fascinated. A complete 'Otherness-industry' emerged in Europe in the second half of the 18th century to represent Africa and Africans to a European audience (Schipper, 1995: 9). It manifested itself in Europe in various forms such as photographs, postcards, museums, travel-literature and world exhibitions. All manifestations were primarily oriented to Europeans who did not have the opportunity, or did not dare, to travel to Africa themselves, but who nevertheless wanted to experience 'the authentic Africa' through the representations of people 'who had been there'. It seems that the more exotic and deviating from European standards the representation, the more possible it seemed. Or, the higher the contrast, the more it seemed to validate European superiority. The African Other became typecast as a contrast to European standards, against the backdrop of a powerful image of the African landscape.

The old Romantic and European rhetoric of the aesthetics of African landscape is still the dominant unique selling point of TFCAs to the international tourist. Wherever TFCAs are advertised it is by referring to 'the myth of wild Africa' – note the frequent use of the word 'pristine'. The in-flight magazine of South African Airways '*Sawubona*' in January 2001 contained an article on the Kgalagadi TFCA. The title of the article is 'Mega desert' and the photos accompanying the article all refer to the aesthetics of landscape, like 'A pristine place [...] the magical, mysterious Kalahari Desert'. The Great Limpopo Trans-Frontier Park is promoted as to ' [...] include South Africa's world-famous Kruger National Park with its

extraordinary abundance of wildlife [...] as well as the stunning geological splendour of Gonarezhou in Zimbabwe. A superb wildlife area in Mozambique will be added and introduced for the first time to the general public [...].<sup>5</sup> In the PPF magazine, *Peace Parks News*, the back page is reserved for 'Travel news'. In every issue a new stunning destination is promoted in which the landscape usually plays a dominant role. '(Phinda) (s)ituated in the heart of Maputoland in South Africa's picturesque KwaZulu/Natal region, where the myth and mystery of wild Africa first began [...]' (*Peace Parks*, 1998(2): 8). Or take the advertisement for an exclusive member tour through the Kgalagadi TFCA: 'Listen to the sounds of the Kalahari by night and treasure the unique opportunity of experiencing one of Africa's most pristine eco-systems' (*Peace Parks*, 1998(2): 8). And to conclude: '[...] you will spend the morning quietly exploring the mysteries of Africa [...] you will soon leave life's stresses far behind' (*Peace Parks*, 1999(1): 8). As argued above, the African landscape actually included the Africans as well, that is, only those Africans who 'fit' the myth of 'wild Africa'. In other words, Africans have to blend in our image of African landscapes (Wilmsen, 1995: 2). European tourists usually perceive huts with thatched roofs and African women with water buckets on their head as 'authentic Africa', while cosmopolitan Cape Town, for instance, is considered 'not the real Africa'. Can this myth be reconciled with the notion of community development?

### MANAGING COHESION: 'GOOD NATIVES' VERSUS 'BAD NATIVES'

Here we wish to explore Neumann's distinction, introduced above, between 'good' and 'bad natives' in relation to the history and current practices in nature conservation. 'Good natives' are those having a 'traditional' livelihood sustained by 'indigenous knowledge'. They are perceived to be closer to nature and thus compatible with the environmental managers' design for parks in protected areas. Bad natives are those who are in some sense 'modern', and thus removed from nature, their modified lifestyles and greed for consumer goods representing a particular threat to the natural treasures enclosed' (Broch-Due, 2000: 29). The good native is given a place to stay in wildlife areas. The bad native is 'naturally' evicted. Many stories from the early wardens of protected areas in southern Africa testify to this categorization. When one reads the *memoirs* of pioneer wardens like Colonel James Stevenson-Hamilton of Kruger National Park in South Africa or Ted Davison of Wankie National Park in Zimbabwe, one can find numerous illustrations of Neumann's categorization. The white warden feeling himself heir to this wild world and responsible for keeping it in, or bringing it back to, pristine condition, primarily defending it against the 'bad' native, that is, the malign native 'poacher' who solely seeks to gain financially from wildlife.

James Stevenson-Hamilton was the celebrated first warden of what finally became the Kruger National Park, serving from 1902 until 1946. In his extensive *memoirs* he relates that

[b]efore leaving Pretoria it had been impressed on me that the first difficulty would probably be with the natives, since these and the game could not be expected to exist together. I had already decided in my own mind that, so far as it might prove possible, the game reserve would have to be cleared of human inhabitants if a beginning was to be made at all. (Stevenson-Hamilton, 1993: 48)

because '(g)iven full opportunity, the lowveld natives were ever more destructive to game than white men' (Stevenson-Hamilton, 1993: 65). His image of the 'natives' was so strongly

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<sup>5</sup>Brochure: Gaza-Kruger-Gonarezhou Trans-Frontier Park. A new era in ecosystem management and cooperation for southern Africa.

imprinted in his mind that he could hardly see anything else than confirmation of his ideas in their behaviour:

The kraal natives were surly and disobliging, especially when they understood my mission, and would tell me nothing of the country. From their hangdog look I judged them capable of murdering any number of traders, but no doubt I was prejudiced. Afterwards we had considerable trouble with them, and a few years later I had the kraal moved out of the reserve. (Stevenson-Hamilton, 1993: 98).

The definition of a 'good native', in Stevenson-Hamilton's view, is one who would tell all about the country. Not only was it native wisdom that should be shared but also everything known about the business of other local Africans, most significantly poaching: 'As scouts and guides, Stevenson-Hamilton could not do without the "native police". They accompanied him wherever he went, teaching him veldlore' (Carruthers, 2001: 94).

The Southern Rhodesian equivalent of Stevenson-Hamilton was Ted Davison who was the first warden (serving from 1928 until 1961) of its biggest National Park, Wankie, now Hwange National Park. The 'poachers' Davison had to deal with were Bushmen.

These people fell into two classes, the 'wild' bushmen and the 'tame' bushmen. The tame ones were those who had drifted into the settled areas and taken up occupations with farmers or Railway Employees. In contrast to these 'tame' bushmen, were the 'wild' bushmen who were not under white control, but lived permanently in the 'wilds' of the area'. (Davison, 1998: 231-2; see also Gordon and Sholto Douglas, 2000)

It is noteworthy that in his introduction to the *memoirs* of Ted Davison, former PPF executive John Hanks who has repeatedly stated that local communities must be seen as *partners* in TFCAs, is convinced that Ted Davison's legacy is supportive of the idea of TFCAs as 'peace parks', saying that 'Hwange National Park can take the lead in making the dream of peace parks become a reality. Ted Davison would surely have championed such an initiative' (Hanks in Davison, 1998: VIII).

The creation of the Maputoland game reserves involved the passing of legal acts that made many aspects of people's behaviour in their relationship with nature illegal, which resulted in prosecuting by conservation officers. Ian Player, the globally celebrated conservationist, came to find this prosecution distasteful. He recalls the beginning of his career establishing the Ndumu reserve in the 1950s:

There were unpleasant tasks too, and the main one was to arrest people who lived in the reserve when they committed even a trivial offence. It was the policy of the Department to try and have the reserve cleared of human beings. Many years later when my interest in Jungian thought was growing, I wondered if not wanting anyone to live in the reserve was not part of our shadow. It was an equivalent to the Garden of Eden in which there was not room for both Cain and Abel. In retrospect I believe it was a mistake not to have left at least half of the people there. After all they were part of the ecology. (Player in Saayman, 1990: 112-13).

Player, a self-confessed romantic, was moved by such wilderness people, mainly in a spiritually way since they

[...] blunted our Western mindset and subconsciously led us on new paths [...]. Their situation would come to haunt us. They had been part of the landscape, and although it was true that they had killed most of the antelope, it was their slash and burn practices that later enabled the game to increase dramatically when the last person left. (Player, 1997: 47)

In 1977, Player founded the World Wilderness Congress, inspired by a vision of Magqubu Ntombela, his Zulu game scout mentor, friend and spiritual guide. Player claims that the Congress, which from the outset provided a platform for indigenous people to voice their concerns, was part of his repayment of a debt to the people whom he disinherited from their land. However, judging from the papers and debates of the last meeting in 2001, it continues to be dogged with ambivalence about the place of people in wilderness. Hence the accord that came out of Port Elizabeth included the following:

Wilderness – all of its many services and values – undeniably informs and supports human communities and is an essential element of the spirit and practicality of the 21st century. HOWEVER, our convention recognized the inescapable truth: where vast wilderness once surrounded and supported humankind, pervading and persisting with ease, it is now small and dispersed islands in a sea of humanity, retreating daily while assaulted

by human numbers and greed, and cloaked by an atmosphere which is not of its own making, nor life-giving. ([http://www.worldwilderness.org/7th-resolutions/pe\\_accord.htm](http://www.worldwilderness.org/7th-resolutions/pe_accord.htm))

This is a rather interesting resolution given the title of the Seventh World Wilderness Congress, 'Wilderness and Human Needs, the Spirit of the 21st Century'. At the same time, one of the major signs of hope for the Congress was that of the 'mega-wilderness' promised by the development of TFCAs, which could indeed function as vehicles for combining wilderness conservation and human needs.

## TFCAS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In his opening speech at the official launch of the Kgalagadi TFCA, President Mogae of Botswana stated that the further development of the Kgalagadi should also

[...] include the mobilization of our respective local communities for meaningful participation in the sustainable commercial exploitation of natural and tourism resources within their vicinity. It should also promote the respect, protection and preservation of their cultural and social environments. [...] The communities *should* [...] *realise* that they also have a major responsibility to assist the Conservation Authorities we have entrusted with the joint management of this park by co-operatively working with them to promote environmental conservation and to combat poaching.<sup>6</sup>

Central in the representation of 'local communities' by these authorities is the idea that the Others (that is, the communities) should become aware of their role and function in nature conservation policy. The centrality of this idea also becomes clear when one looks at the answers in an interview of the then head of the PPDP of the PPF, Leonard Seelig, to a question about the 'criteria for choice of communities' to be included or financed by the PPDP:

I turn down a lot of requests of communities that are just too far away. That's how we keep the focus. [...] So, our first criterion is obviously a geographical criterion. The second criterium is a *commitment* criterium. [...] I want actually see people *commit* to these projects. So commitment, not financial, but in the form of time and what we call 'sweat equity'.<sup>7</sup>

The 'commitment' Seelig is referring to is made explicit later in the interview where he emphasizes the importance of basic environmental and conservation education:

It's critical for any other work we want to do, that *they* begin to understand what this is all about and why they shouldn't chop down the trees and why they shouldn't let their cattle eat everything. [...] I would say that almost anything I do is basically within the context of CBNRM because what I'm trying to show communities through small projects is that they can actually benefit from the preservation of their environment and by taking care of their environment *properly*.<sup>8</sup>

So the required commitment refers to the PPF conservation policy of the 'proper way' to deal with the natural environment. If communities show that commitment they will be considered 'good natives' and granted project money. If not they will be labelled 'bad natives', and considered a problem for the further execution of the PPF nature conservation policy. In other words, 'good' communities must live up to the parameters which are formulated by the (Western dominated) (inter)national conservation agencies like IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources), WWF, or the PPF. They must constantly show a state of 'purity', which in Western thought means that they have to show a certain 'primitivism' and 'simplicity' (Neuman, 2000: 227). The ambivalence inherent in the discourse of conservation has a long tradition in western thought as we have shown above. This is not to argue that international conservation bodies are unaware of the problems

<sup>6</sup>Speech by His Excellency Mr F. G. Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana. On the occasion of the official launch of Kgalagadi Trans-Frontier Park at Two Rivers on 12 May 2000, point 10 and 12. Emphasis added.

<sup>7</sup>Interview of Stephanie Speets with Leonard Seelig, PPF/PPDP, date unknown, italics added.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid. Italics added.

of so-called ‘enforced primitivism’; their researchers have been pointing it out for some time (McNeely and Pitt, 1985). We argue however, that enforced primitivism may not be a conscious policy, but becomes practice through latent, but deeply held values.

The assumption is that many of the ideas about conservation and the specific role of communities in it, fall outside the consciousness of the community members themselves. It reserves the ‘true’ consciousness and knowledge about these issues for the policy makers of conservation bodies. The Other is naturalized and objectified, and, in the same process, separated from the policy makers. The conservation authorities increasingly assume airs of superiority in their own construction of reality, to the neglect of those of Others. The distance is increased through the use of a distancing vocabulary, which, in its application, seems a replica of the discourse on Othering as we have described above. Looking, for instance, at the booklet produced by South African National Parks, to position themselves in the debate on the involvement of communities in nature conservation, particularly striking are the photographs of the Other, that is, the communities which they promise to give their fair share. The opening photograph of the chapter on Kalahari, Gemsbok National Park for example, is a familiar ‘descendant’ of colonial photography showing a San family, a man and a woman carrying a child, in front of their hut, wearing traditional clothes. Like most photographs in the booklet it is a strictly composed picture. The text accompanying the picture fits the colonial image of the subservient ‘natives’, accommodating their white ‘masters’: ‘The Nama welcomed all who came to inhabit this land. After all the suffering as a result of that, *they* can still smile’ (SANP, 2000: 68). A particular poignant illustration of Neuman’s distinction is provided by Sylvain who argues and illustrates how a group of San who had lost their lands to nature conservation, but were awarded a substantial land claim within the Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (now part of the Kgaligadi TFCA) in 1999, were forced to legitimise their claim by referring to essentialist cultural characteristics: ‘[...] the identity that will be returned to them with the land is their “traditional lifestyle” as “spear-carrying bare-foot hunter-gathers clad in loincloths”’ (Sylvain, 2002: 1081). Sylvain describes how another group of San who had lost their lands to commercial farmers and had ended up as impoverished farm labourers, having lost all ties with and possibilities to return to a hunter-gather lifestyle, were denied a claim to land. They had lost the cultural characteristics associated with San, and their pristine desert landscape had been transformed into farm land (Sylvain, 2002: 1076).

The ambivalence of the PPF concerning the development of equal partnerships with all local communities within or close to TFCAs can be further illustrated by the following. In order for communities to participate fully, a prerequisite is that they are being aware and informed of the policy and plans involving their areas in TFCA development. In a PPF commissioned report by Suni/CREATE, it is stated that each family in the area of Coutada 16 Wildlife Utilization Area, which now is part of the Great Limpopo TFCA, has been informed personally that Coutada 16 has been declared a National Park (Suni/CREATE in RRP, 2002: 7), i.e. excluding the possibility of human habitation. A later survey conducted by the Refugee Research Programme of the University of the Witwatersrand showed that only 60% of the households to the west of Limpopo River had heard about plans to develop a game park. ‘But even when these 60% were asked how informed they felt about the park, 71% responded that they had almost no information, and 83% said that they had never been consulted about the Park’ (RRP, 2002: 7).

The Great Limpopo TFCA was meant as a multiple use area, supposedly to help impoverished communities especially in the communal areas in Mozambique ([www.peaceparks.org/profiles/kruger.html](http://www.peaceparks.org/profiles/kruger.html)). Looking at the map accompanying the objectives it is clear that, initially, the communal areas enclosed in the TFCA-plan were much larger than the protected areas included; namely Coutada 16 (directly opposite South African Kruger National Park),

Zinhave National Park and Banhine National Park combined. Just as in the other TFCAs, ‘funders and park planners hoped that through the use of participatory approaches local people would feel that they have a real stake in protecting wildlife’ (Duffy, 1997: 444). However, what started as an attempt to create a Transfrontier *Conservation Area* ended in an agreement about a Trans-Frontier *Park*.<sup>9</sup> According to one member of the National Steering Committee and the Technical Committee for the Great Limpopo, what they agreed upon was something ‘completely different’ from that which they worked so hard to establish for five years.<sup>10</sup> In contrast with official statements about the need to economically uplift local communities, soon after the agreement establishing the Great Limpopo was signed the PPF dropped a community project near Zinhave National Park for which it had promised US\$300,000. After only US\$8,000 was spent, the project was halted through ‘writing one single letter’ and no further comments.<sup>11</sup>

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, it can be said that though the PPF forms an important platform for black and white political and business elites from different countries to come together, the cooperation with local communities shows that some groups receive preferential treatment based on their alleged relationship with nature. In the case of the Great Limpopo TFCA, local communities, especially those on the Mozambican side are missing the boat. Instead of granting them further access to the benefits generated by the natural resources in the TFCA, they are now even further marginalized and excluded. According to Mozambican counterparts, Coutada 16 will become an appendix to Kruger National Park.<sup>12</sup> A problem with proclaiming Coutada 16 a national park and fencing it in is a community which, according to some, comprises approximately 4,000–5,000 people,<sup>13</sup> others have estimated the number of people living in the area at around 30,000 (Hughes, 2002). The brochure about the establishment of the Great Limpopo reflects the above-mentioned change in policy:

[...] all a Trans-Frontier Park means is that the authorities responsible for the areas in which the primary focus is wildlife conservation, and which border each other across international boundaries, formally agree to manage those areas as one integrated unit according to a streamlined management plan. These authorities also undertake to *remove all human barriers* within the Trans-Frontier Park so that animals can roam freely. (Italics added)

John Hanks’ successor at the PPF, Willem van Riet, is self-conscious about accusations of ‘managing by prescription’ and declares that the organization has altered its management style (Michler, 2003: 80). Yet, a recent statement by the project coordinator of the PPF does not seem to reflect much change:

For community representatives to participate on the actual management of a national park is something unfair to the community themselves. In most cases the people that are appointed to manage a national park have gone and done years of studying to gain a tertiary education. They’re well qualified [...]. I know a lot of critics are advocating for it [community involvement], but in my mind it is the same as having someone living next to an airport come and sit next to the air traffic controller [...]. You can’t make them air traffic controllers’ (in Tanner, 2003: 83).

<sup>9</sup>Interview with Mrs Dr Nhantumbo, IUCN, Maputo, 2 February 2001. Interview with R. de Vletter, World Bank, Maputo, August 2003.

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Dr Reino, EWT, Maputo, 2 February 2001.

<sup>11</sup>Interview with Dr Soto, DNFFB, Maputo, 2 February 2001. Also mentioned in interview Dr Reino, EWT, Maputo, 2 February 2001.

<sup>12</sup>Interview with Dr Reino, EWT, Maputo, 2 February 2001.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

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