Shifting Species in South Africa - Summary

The answer to the main research question on how wildlife is officially classified in South Africa lies in the process of boundary making. Within this work I have dissected boundary making into three particular types of boundaries, namely material boundaries, policy boundaries and imagined boundaries. I noted that the three boundaries are closely related and sometimes overlapping. Stemming from a social constructivist angle, I depart from the idea that boundaries, however natural they may seem, are imagined boundaries and are socially constructed. These imagined boundaries in nature, may lead to official boundaries by means of politico-legal agreements that are backed by state power. Official boundaries come in the form of wildlife classifications, which have underlying frameworks of incentives that may prescribe material boundaries such as fences, walls, signs or armed patrols. Vice versa; material boundaries may inspire new thinking about policy boundaries and can thereby both influence and shape them. In the case of wildlife in South Africa, I argue, a significant shift has taken place over the last few decades in this boundary trinity. The thinking about wildlife has been shifting, the policy categories have been shifting, material boundaries have been shifting, and all this has resulted in vast consequences to the way humans interact with each other, with animals, and with South Africa’s land. To scrutinize these alterations I delved deeper into four research threads:

- How did South Africa’s distinctive rules and regulations regarding wildlife ownership historically and politically develop and what consequences did shifting power relations during South Africa’s 1994 transition to democracy have on these rules and regulations?
- What is the scale of South Africa’s land-based conversions to wildlife utilization and what are the driving forces behind them?
- What organizations and institutions currently operate within the field of wildlife politics and how do they advance their positions in relation to each other?
- What perspectives do various wildlife producers, representatives and policymakers have on the sector’s relation to rural development?

I will summarize the answers to these questions one by one below. The last question will not be dealt with separately however: the question of wildlife and development relates directly to the first
three questions and will be integrated in each paragraph. Methodologically, the three blocks broadly correspond to the three sets of data I collected: from archives (historical tendencies), from game farmers in the Cacadu region (driving forces) and from wildlife governance representatives (wildlife politics). I will start out with a paragraph that presents the context in which the wildlife sector and these research questions emerged.

**Wildlife Ranching in South Africa**

Owing to its fugitive mobility, its intractability to domestication and its complex ideological associations with nature, wildlife has globally and historically resisted enclosure (Robbins & Luginbuhl, 2005, p. 25). In most countries today, private possession and commercialization of wildlife is therefore prohibited by law (Muir-Leresche & Nelson, 2000). Undomesticated animals are still considered *res nullius* and are accordingly regulated and managed strictly by the State. In Southern Africa however, a number of initial economic successes with wildlife on privately owned property triggered an exceptional shift in wildlife policy design (Carruthers, 2008; Dasmann & Mossman, 1961; Wels, 2003, pp. 18–32). Where the prevailing aphorism used to be that ‘one cannot ranch in a zoo’, South Africa fundamentally changed its perspectives on wildlife management and ownership (Child, 1988; Muir-Leresche & Nelson, 2000, p. 7). Backed by state empowered institutions, landowners gained the option to acquire full control over wild animals on their land. Covering approximately one sixth of South Africa’s land, some 9500 private wildlife producers (of which a substantial sum are international business men) are engaged in various modes of wildlife-based production; i.e. ecotourism, hunting, venison production and livestock trade (Du Toit, 2007; Bothma, 2009). According to a study by Flack (2002), 5000 km² of South African land was fenced off with 2.40 meters high boundaries during the nineties, leading to a total enclosed wildlife area of at least 205 000 km² in 2006 (NAMC 2006, iv; Du Toit 2007). Little quantitative research has been done on this subject since. Smith and Wilson illustrated that most agricultural farmers diversified their business by running traditional stock-farming activities in tandem with wildlife-based ventures in the nineties (Smith & Wilson, 2002, p. 1). Studies in the Eastern Cape Province substantiate this assertion and show that ninety percent of farms are now mixed farms, while nearly seven percent of landowners in this province have removed and replaced all domestic stock by wildlife (Interview Prof. Van Niekerk, 2008). In a personal interview, an executive-manager of WRSA stated that ‘there’s no free roaming game in South Africa anymore;
there may be some springbok or impala, but at least ninety-five percent of game is owned by people’ (Interview A. Pretorius, 2008).

These wildlife-related physical enclosures of land occur amid larger political economic transitions in the field of agriculture (Robbins & Luginbuhl, 2005, p. 25). With the emergence of large scale, feedlot-centred production systems and decreasing agricultural subsidies after the demise of Apartheid agricultural policy, producer margins have declined and have put traditional farming properties in peril (Love & Burton, 1999). I argue in this thesis that these challenges, combined with new societal goals such as increased conservation and the redistribution of land and labour have led to the ‘biodiversification’ of farm properties. Hereby landowners diversified their businesses to include new bio-entities and reconfigured existing bio-entities for production purposes, game farming is the prime example. Wildlife production has ‘been predicated on the need to reduce farm labour, the prevalence of farm murders and security issues generally as well as the threat of land restitution claims and expropriation’ (Carruthers, 2008, p. 161). In this context, South Africa is experiencing an on-going shift in land use from conventional farming to so-called amenity ownership – ‘where land in current production is purchased by […] buyers who are interested in non-developed landscapes and good views’ (Robbins & Luginbuhl 2005:27). This transition is especially prominent around national parks and other ‘wildernesses’ (Travis et al., 2002) and is claimed to result in rising land prices and (forced) migration of rural residents and communities (Del Grande, 2006; Luck, 2005; Naidoo, 2006; Wegerif et al., 2005).

Neumann famously stated that a conflictual relationship has come to exist between rural African population and predominantly white wildlife managers in his book ‘Imposing Wilderness’ (Neumann, 1998, p. 4). In South Africa this seems to be consistent as the wildlife industry’s great geographic expansion and European ideals of pristine wilderness take place in a country that has a large rural and agrarian population that compete for the same land and natural resources. Commercial exploitation of wildlife is thereby often criticized to be an exclusive and excluding ‘white-owned’ form of property management (Kepe et al., 2002; Slater, 2002; Spierenburg & Wels, 2006; Wolmer, 2007). Privately protected areas are in the media regularly portrayed as ‘wildlife playgrounds for a privileged elite’ (Kepe et al., 2002). Since South Africa is challenged with a frail process of land reform\(^1\) - aimed at redressing its history of white-ruled resource

\(^1\) See Ntsebeza and Hall 2007 for an overview of this process.
dispossession under apartheid the expanding industry is highly contested. Since wildlife ownership does not come about without land rights and plot sizes are typically much larger than in traditional agriculture, the questions ‘who owns land?’ and ‘who should own land?’ are particularly sore in this sector.

Regarding the magnitude of the industry’s growth and the contestation over land-use in the popular press and in NGO reports (e.g. R. Carroll, 2004; Del Grande, 2006; e.g. Naidoo, 2006) it is remarkable that very few studies have been conducted on wildlife politics and its relationship to rural development. The studies that have been conducted on wildlife ranching in South Africa are generally based on self-administered surveys with limited respondents (See Langholz & Kerley, 2006; Sims-Castley, Kerley, Geach, & Langholz, 2005; Smith & Wilson, 2002). Moreover, they present starkly contrasting results to the aforementioned public reports. Two popular economic studies for instance present wildlife production as a win-win strategy that fosters both ‘pro-poor’ development and nature conservation (i.e. Langholz & Kerley 2006; Sims-Castley et al. 2005). It is noteworthy that analogous narratives are produced in reports by the Department of Agriculture and the National Agricultural Marketing Council (Department of Agriculture, 2006; The National Agricultural Marketing Council, 2006). Langholz and Kerley find that private wildlife reserves diversify the rural economy, multiply land prices and increase labour opportunities and wages (2006). However, their survey does not differentiate between salaries of managers and operational staff, making it difficult to establish whose wages increase, and who exactly benefits from wildlife utilization. As wildlife farms are generally much larger than traditional farms, conversions frequently go paired with farm consolidations; Langholz and Kerley note an average of 8.2 conventional farm mergers per wildlife reserve (2006, p. 4). It is unclear in their study if the dismissal of former merged farm employees is taken into account in labour statistics. Maybe a wildlife reserve has in an absolute sense more employees than a stock farm but if it has absorbed eight stock farms it may have relatively less employment per hectare. A study by Smith and Wilson seems to suggest this and shows that landowners ‘regard game farming as an alternative to stock farming, as it is considered to be potentially less labour intensive than traditional stock farming’ (2002). This implies a potential negative impact on the labour market and a potential dismissal of active employees. Adding to these negative impacts, Kelly Luck reports that commercialized

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2 For example, the notorious Land Act of 1913 resulted in ‘whites’ appropriating 87 per cent of South Africa’s land for their exclusive use.
wildlife farms are ‘both a cause and symptom of a general trend in South Africa towards farm worker retrenchments and eviction’ (2005, p.86). Various NGOs concur and report a range of negative livelihood impacts as a result of wildlife-based conversions, including increased vulnerability, loss of wildlife resources and large-scale evictions (cf reports of NGO’s such as AFRA and ECARP in Naidoo, 2006; Del Grande, 2006; Andrew et al., 2013; Brandt & Spierenburg, 2014; Brooks, Spierenburg, Van Brakel, Kolk, & Lukhozi, 2011).

**Historical Tendencies**

I argue that South Africa is particularly path-dependent in its attitude towards land and wildlife and so I found it necessary to dig up South Africa’s ‘archaeological residue’ by looking at debates, rules and regulations concerning human-wildlife relations in Apartheid and colonial times. In doing so, we are presented with a diffuse and complex set of intersections involving scales of class, race, gender, nature and technology. This work shows that there is a long tradition of wildlife politics in South Africa, in which powerful actors have continuously attempted to gain control over these natural resources by restricting access to others. An important way to do this was by linking the economic institutionalization of wildlife to the creation of various ‘fluid’ policy categories. From the moment the VOC arrived in the Cape, wildlife became the subject of classification and relentless reclassification; carnivorous species became vermin and were to be shot, while species that were popular to the well-heeled were to be protected. When policy was not effective in preventing persons from utilizing wildlife, officials created economic machinery to advance their goals by means of taxes, hunting licences, bounties and transportation tariffs. South Africa’s rural population and especially the economic elite have never stopped reacting to these measures by opposing them, disregarding them, creating workarounds and brokering deals.

An important alliance this work highlights is the historical alliance between landowners and (conservation) officials. The 1886 game laws, which aimed to protect wildlife and land by limiting the interaction between citizens and wildlife, provide us with an historical example. Landowners who favored this set of laws received liberties in return such as the right to hunt any animal on their land without permits, the right to cultivate, sell and donate animals on their land without licences, and the extension of hunting rights throughout the year. Officials thereby booked significant success in establishing public parks as well as gaining support for new hunting regulations. In the following century, similar but more racialized accords were struck between
conservation officials and landowners. Africans were increasingly restricted from hunting, trading, and owning wildlife. Explicitly racist policy was enforced, although restrictions were mostly implemented by proxy; by either prohibiting the use of common hunting methods, fire-arms, access to land, or by requiring certain education of particular family ties. At the same time, from the 1950s onwards white farmers were openly credited as important conservationists in policy meetings. To honour this, a system was devised in which landowners were exempted from most permits, could disregard hunting seasons, and were allowed to market, sell or donate animal commodities at will. To apply for these exemptions one needed to fence one’s land with elevated ‘game-fencing’.

Ultimately, the Game Theft Act of 1991 gave all landowners with such game-fencing full property rights over wildlife on their land. Arguably this was one of the largest and most unnoticed transfers of common goods to private landowners in the country’s history. It awarded game farmers with considerable wealth overnight and more importantly, made it possible for wildlife assets to be absorbed into the financial market, to lower their financial risk, and to acknowledged them as legally tradable goods. Such legislation strengthened the farmer’s inherent command over land, and simultaneously weakened the position of those who did not own land – particularly the large rural black population. Most wildlife was no longer res nullius, for all to enjoy, but belonged to a small group of landowners.

SA’s political transition of 1994 was in many ways a breaking point with the past. A new government faced the paramount task of addressing poverty, dispossession and inequality, as well as food security and an increasing (international) call for biodiversity conservation. Landowners were forced to diversify and reposition themselves in society due to the deregulation of the market and decline of marketing boards and subsidies. As borders opened, the country was flooded with international markets, rules, tourists, foreign investment and ideas on nature. Whereas there have been gargantuan changes to the nation, it is remarkable to see that the described trends of commoditization and cooperation between landowners and conservation officials remain strong. Environmental institutions that were created during the Apartheid era were not abandoned, developed or amended. On the contrary, the trend to privatize wildlife and to secure land by means of physical boundaries continued through environmental legislation. A good example of this is the described stewardship programs (Chapter IV), which intensify the control over wild property by devolving state tasks and thereby repositioning landowners as officially endorsed conservationists.
The state’s lack of funding for conservation plays an important role in this policy of deregulation. One sees that private conservation is consistently framed as ‘a cost-effective mechanism for government to carry out its conservation mandate and achieve biodiversity and protected area targets’ (SANBI/DEAT, 2008b). Once conservation laws are accepted by landowners, economic incentives - such as tax deduction for the removal of alien species or even the deduction of the value of the land from one’s taxable income - apply. Those with large swaths of land can thereby benefit from government subsidies while gaining a tighter control over their property. The new set of environmental policies thereby continue to prescribe a highly secured form of fortress conservation that intrinsically contain a wilderness vision in which humans (and human artefacts) are unwelcome.

By examining specific wildlife institutions that shaped human-nature relations, I aimed to show how a rationale of economic liberalism (Tisdell, 2004) increasingly moved into the domain of human-wildlife relations in South Africa. Whereas the examined institutions were implemented to regulate wildlife theft and to expand public conservation, they had underlying economic principles that resulted in a process of individuation: they enforced material and legal boundaries on nature to facilitate the privatization and commodification of wild animals. The currently upheld Game Theft Act of 1991 is the pinnacle framework in this regard as it creates a legal framework in which natural entities that were beforehand classified as common goods could now be opted for private property. Fencing always provided the key mechanism to reinforce entitlement over wild animals, while simultaneously establishing physical control over private land.

**Driving Forces behind Wildlife Conversions**

By questioning game farmers about their motivations to choose for wildlife production and ‘biodiversification’ I delved into four dimensions, namely financial motivations, land-reform related motivations, safety and security reasons, and labour reform policy. What is clear is that the environmental policy framework and specifically its accompanying property regulations lead to an immense increase of individual wealth in the years after the Game Theft Act was adopted. The property framework added value to land as wildlife-based land is sold for far higher prices than agricultural land (Chapter IV). Besides this it led to the sky-rocketing of wildlife prices. For instance, whereas a record price of 7000 Rands was paid for a sable antelope in 1987, a buyer put down 12.2 Million Rands for such a creature in 2012 (Louw-Carstens, 2012). Whereas the average
price of buffaloes was not more than 5000 Rands in 1995, a buffalo and her calf fetched 20 Million Rands in 2012. In Chapter V I showed that the steady influx in wildlife prices is a broad trend. South Africa has now got a breeding industry worth billions of Rands as well as the continent’s largest hunting industry. Bringing environmental policy into the equation once more, there is no country where so many species can be hunted commercially as in South Africa. Through advanced breeding practices ‘new’ species (such as golden gnus or chocolate impalas) appear each year.

Despite the enormous amount of (inter)national capital that flows through the wildlife industry, I found that landowners do not sell or convert their land ‘simply for the money’. Some respondents stated their wildlife reserves made a large and continuous loss. Reasons to keep these lands were for lifestyle-reasons (enjoying nature and tranquillity) or for reasons of land speculation. Besides financial motivations however narratives on rural security are on the tip of many game farmers’ tongues. The heavy security boundaries that game farms provide, I argue, are seen to add security benefits for protecting one’s expensive wildlife but also for oneself. The institutional blueprint of wildlife reserves securitizes the land against malevolent animals as well as humans. Predators and poachers, two renowned adversaries of farmers, are hereby barred from access. The game farms setup allow one to have vast plains, large and dangerous animals, heightened electric fences, double-fenced housing, 24/7 manned security, barbed wire, live wire, offsets, fenced river access, armed patrol guards, roads with security checks and boom barriers, as well as significant amounts of firearms which are all legally held for conservation purposes.

What ties into this security narrative is a general distrust in the South African state that I observed amongst many of the landowners I interviewed. Large central policies to redistribute wealth and property seem particularly unpopular. Land reform is one of these reform policies and adds an important dimension to the land conversions. By providing case studies I argue that land reform programs lead to game farmers both opting out of the land market as well as being a catalyser for some landowners to convert to game farming. I also make a case for studying public-private conservation partnerships such as stewardship programs in the context of land reform as they determine how a significant slice of South Africa ought to be utilized. Conservation mandates, determined by national legislation and informed by international conventions such as the CBD, prescribes that 12% of South Africa’s land ought to be ‘protected’ by 2015. As only half this percentage was considered protected area in 2011, many millions of hectares of land are to be
amalgamated in the coming years. Three ways that government outlines to reach these targets are by means of a) acquisition of private land, b) declaration of state land as protected areas, and c) by means of contract agreements with private landowners. As the state sees only limited applicability in the first two options due to fiscal constraints, public-private partnerships have actively been pursued. Now that wildlife production covers almost three times the amount of land that government has set for conservation purposes, the reclassification of private wildlife land to conservation land is attractive for government’s goal to realize its protected area targets. After a successful pilot project in the Western Cape a stewardship program has been adopted at a national level. Through this program landowners are recognized as conservation custodians of their land. Particularly game farmers who sell and produce nature and do not have stock overgrazing the land find their way to these programs. The stewardship program helps towards gaining South Africa’s conservation goals, and can also be called a catalyst for game farm conversions as it incentivizes game farming and its model of large-scale landownership in many ways.

Finally, the current labour reform, which occurs within an economic framework that pushes for privatization, deregulation and persistent growth, contributes to land-use such as game farming. WBLU can be seen as the arrangement that strikes a chord between two clashing policy sets. That is, landowners are inclined to have business models that are less dependent on human low-skilled labour as they are compelled to make their businesses grow both physically as financially while operating in an increasingly technical and international market. Simultaneously the government is pushing for social reform and an expanding welfare state through measures as an increased minimum wage, improved social security and tenure rights for those who dwell on land for a certain amount of time. WBLU provides an option for landowners to both employ less people because the labour is less intensive, as have less people residing on their land because farm dwellers and their properties do not fit the imagined blueprint of a private nature reserve. As a large amount of land is necessary to run a profitable game reserve, these type of landowners tend to amalgamate adjacent land to increase their size, thereby leading to a decrease in the absolute number of farms. Because wildlife-based land has higher prices than common farmland and these

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3 South Africa has now accepted that 12% is too high a target and unsuccesfully aimed to protect an additional 2.2% (2.7m ha) by 2014, which is in line with additional international conventions, namely Goal 7 of the Millennium Development Goals.

4 Successes thus far in the Western Cape include: 40 Contract Nature Reserves, 12 Biodiversity Agreements and 19 Conservation Areas through the Stewardship Programme.
prices are on the rise, it has become attractive to convert land to WBLU and also to speculate with such land. This land-trend happens within a larger agricultural context but has contributed to the shedding of about one million workers in the agricultural sector over the past forty years. Sandrey et al. have shown that employment on farms fell by 50% or 800 000 workers from 1968 to 2008 (See figure 8.1). And although much of the decline took place before 1994 ‘since 2003 almost 200,000 additional employment opportunities have been lost in primary agriculture’ (Sandrey, Punt, Jensen, & Vink, 2011).

The abundance of labourers and the lack of work, combined with the limited amount of resources the government has to monitor and inspect environmental and labour regulations, has led to a situation in which much tension exists between farm owners and farm workers (Ewert, 2012; cf. Human Rights Watch, 2012). Besides large-scale strikes there have been frequent reports of illegal evictions, illegitimate hiring and shedding processes, and human rights abuses.

\textbf{Figure 8.1: employees in South Africa’s agricultural sector since 1968 (Sandrey et al., 2011).}
Wildlife Politics

Morgan Robertson observed that neoliberal nature is often understood to operate outside the formal state by means of free-market instruments and supportive non-governmental flanking mechanisms. In practice however, Robertson shows it has led to numerous ‘stakeholder forums’, where bureaucrats and business partners team up to discuss and implement market-led environmental governance (Robertson, 2007, p. 504). In the section on wildlife politics (Chapter VI&VII) I attempted to grasp the concept of neoliberal nature by asking how changes in wildlife policy are brought about in a political force field, and what roles stakeholder forums play in this process. To do so, I adapted a discursive perspective which emphasizes the role of language, arguments and narratives in the shaping and legitimizing of policy (P. Dickson & Adams, 2009, p. 113; Hajer & Versteeg, 2005). I broadly distinguish between three parties, namely government, industry and civil society organisations and, on closer examinations, attempt to show how these groups are internally fragmented and how different discourse coalitions are created between individuals and clusters.

Firstly, contextually, I showed how wildlife authority in South Africa has been shifting organizationally as well as spatially. The country changed its governance structure in 1994 when Mandela’s ANC was elected to lead government. By spatially redividing the country, nine provinces were established and thereby nine new environmental structures were superimposed on the existing provincial and homeland conservation institutions. Because government announced a new superseding national environmental framework (breaking away from the previous government structure which gave provinces authority), different sets of legislation were not aligned and are until today deemed confusing by virtually all stakeholders. Pressure to implement the national framework has been extended a) by these frustrations, b) by international environmental conventions that South Africa signed, c) by a steadily increasing wildlife industry which has to abide by environmental legislation and d) by a variety of environmental activists who attempt to pressurize the existing institutional framework. A politically inclined organizational field has thereby emerged in which organizations attempt to influence, modify, abolish, or create institutions. As institutional power is moving from provinces to the National Department of Environmental Affairs, this force field is spatially establishing itself in Pretoria. This goes paired with the formation of field configuring events such as the Wildlife Forum, a discursive social
organization in which persons assemble to discuss and tinker with the field’s standards and institutions.

What can be said generally about the membership to this FCE is that it upholds a strong established group of insiders from initiation and is not easily accessible to outsiders. It upholds strong borders particularly towards external actors that fall outside the sphere of government, industry and hunting organisations. As the Forum’s ‘institutional logic’ is produced in a utilitarian manner by the field participants, it favours those who are involved and holds back those who are not. The definition of the Wildlife Forum and its make-up has thereby been translated from being broadly inclusive in founding documents to an ‘industry forum’ in its actual composition. Its boundaries are defined rigidly on the basis of strict requirements, although these definitions seem weak inside the forum. Topics that go beyond the strictly defined jurisdiction of wildlife or conservation policy, such as racial transformation, labour issues but also animal welfare, may be reasons for outsiders to be kept out, while being considered for discussion internally.

By means of organisational and discursive restructuring government and industry actors have promoted a narrative that endorses both government’s conservation and industry’s development interests. Business has thereby been endowed with a privileged position through which environmental policy ‘can be shaped in ways that accommodate the interests of capital accumulation and seek to control the conditions under which regulation is imposed’ (MacDonald, 2010b, p. 531). Thereby, I argue that the exclusion of narratives in an FCE can institutionalize a bias of inequality that affects the broader organizational field.

**Final words**

By looking at the privatization of wildlife from various angles this dissertation shows that South Africa’s wild animals are increasingly defined as financially attractive resources. They are seen as highly mobile, self-reproducing survival machines that are adapted to the country’s land, climate and biodiversity. By removing threats to their existence – such as predators, poachers or diseases – and applying various domestication practices, game reserves are capable of producing surplus biomass effortlessly. What distinguishes game from traditional farm animals is that human predators are willing to pay not only for the corporeal resource, but also for ‘experiencing’ wild animals and removing them from the land. In this way, the animals can be knotted into capital flows multiple times. The ecotourist pays for the experience of seeing the animal, the trophy hunter
buys the experience of hunting and killing the animal, game-capture teams pay to translocate
animals or cull surplus creatures for meat, the abattoir buys the carcasses of the animal,
taxidermists pay a commission for the skin and horns of the animal, tourists buy leftover body
parts that are produced into ornaments and employees accept residual meat as partial wages.

More than ever, South African wild animals now are commodities; an increasing list of
species may be kept, sold, traded, and consumed, but they are distinct from most other
commodities in terms of control. One cannot merely keep a wild animal on a shelf, in a box, or
ship it to any place in the world. Strict restrictions apply in terms of usage, production,
consumption, and trade. Wild animals are understood to be entities that have certain freedom and
even certain entitlement to land. Man may be seen as their steward, but they are also acknowledged
as intrinsic beings that deserve space now their land is being parcelled and their numbers are
waning. Keeping wildlife on land that is not large enough is seen as bad practice, an inhumane
treatment of beings. Provisions for wild property hereby cook up a paradoxical concoction: one
must respect the wildness of an animal, while also showing the intention to own it. The result of
this seeming contradiction is a system that insists on borders that are high and strong enough to
incarcerate any animal, while also insisting on substantial terrain that respects their fugitive nature.
Wild property therefore is exclusive; only those who can afford large tracts of land and can erect
costly electrified fences are to be owners. They can enjoy relatively high turnovers as well as
significant side-effects related to aesthetics, privacy, and protection. The fortified borders of a
game farm, as well as the presence of dangerous animals, guns and guards, contribute to a sense
of human security in a country that is recognized for its prevalent physical crime. In South Africa’s
post-Apartheid state wild animals are thereby taking on new roles as proxies to legitimate land
ownership. Their containment may be costly and inflexible, but it endows owners with an
impressive strongbox that can be subsidized through public-private partnerships with conservation
officials. Guided by conservation decrees, owning wildlife thus does not only legitimize the
possession of large tracts of fenced land, it also legitimizes a particular wilderness landscape that
is void of domestic animals, crops, houses and humans.